

Introduction to Parsha #2: Noach¹

READINGS: **Torah:** **Genesis 6:9 -11:32**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 54:1-55:5**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I Peter 3:18-22**



I will establish My covenant with you.

[Genesis 6:18]

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the *Gevurot*, the Prayer of His Powers

Eleh toldot Noach – *this is the epic, trans-generationally impactful story of Noach*
.... **Genesis 6:9a.**

Take a deep breath, Beloved - we have survived the first Great Shaking! Wave after wave of Divine energy has been released usward – and somehow we are still here. The protocols of creativity through Divine Will and Speech have been inaugurated – and our hearts are beginning to vibrate in sympathetic resonance with Heaven's healing, true-tone sounds and songs. The Heavens above declare the Creator's wisdom, glory, power, and steadfast love; the Earth and its firmament testify powerfully of both His beautiful vision and magnificent artistry. Mankind has had a dramatic first encounter with his Creator, and has discovered his calling, mission, and destiny. Humanity has tasted of the Garden of Eden – and the longing to return there has been made an integral part of every man's DNA forever. We are still contemplating – and trembling at - the ramifications of Adam's ingestion of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is so much to ponder! But there is not time for that now. Trouble is brewing on our planet – and it is BIG, BIG TROUBLE! The Holy One has seen it coming, of course, and He has a plan – and a stunning strategy – to save the Ecosystem from this existential threat. He knows what it is going to take for mankind – and earth – to survive. It is radical –

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and may will shock our misguided, short-sighted, woefully ignorant and uninformed moral sensitivities. He about to initiate a second Great Shaking to deal with, and empower Creation to overcome, the ‘big, big trouble’ that is crouching at our door. And so, with three simple Hebrew words - *Eleh toldot Noach* – He begins another movement of the Great *Creation Opera*. Even though our ears are still buzzing from the beautiful *devarim* – *i.e.* spiritually awakening and energizing buzzwords – of parsha *B’reshit*, the Holy One has dimmed the house lights to inaugurate the next phase of the Great Adventure. Cue the orchestra. Open the curtain. Act II of the Great Drama is about to unfold. We have seen the Creator of the Universe’s Brilliance and Creativity; now we will see the lengths to which He will go to preserve Creation when its very existence is threatened by man’s toxic, flesh-obsessed, fruit-of-the-tree-of-knowledge infected self-will.

Remember the Immaculate Protagonist?

Who is the Immaculate Protagonist? It is the Glorious ‘Elohim’ - the Creator and the Ultimate and Exquisitely Trustworthy Powerful Authority Figure in the Universe. I hope He has your attention. I hope He has your admiration. I hope He has thoroughly captured your heart and imagination the way He has mine. I hope you cannot wait to see what He will do next. I hope you are excited about getting to know Him better. And I hope you are on His side, not cuddling up with the antagonist - whose name shall not be mentioned.

We should already be stunned by ‘Elohim’s’ vision of – and His Plan for - us. We should be humbled by the fact that He actually sees us, both as individuals and collectively, one day functioning as His earthly *tzel*, or shadow. We should be inspired – if not a little intimidated - by His ambitious Plan for us to become *creative* the way He is; to enable us to bear much ‘fruit’; to ever expand/increase in positive influence and impact; to empower us to bring fullness to the entire earth; and to co-labor with us to release every fragment/spark of potential for *tov* that exists in each element, every species, every ecosystem, every dimension, and every realm of the Universe that He - our Beloved ‘Elohim’ - has created.

As a result of what we read last week, Hebrew verbs are alive and active in our spirits. What verbs? Verbs like *bara* [to ‘create’ by carving, cutting out, infilling, and empowering the pieces], and *rachaf* [to brood; to move with great emotion, to prepare that which is brooded over for a transformative release of creative energy]; words like *amar* [to illumine and activate through speech]. Other verbs - like *badal* [split, divide, separate, in order to enable to flourish/cause to thrive], *yatzar* [cause to take shape, form, direction, and meaning], *yadah* [know intimately, to the point of thinking, speaking, and acting in unity] and *yaldah* [beget, bear, bring forth life] - are dancing in our heads. Meanwhile, as a result of our discussions concerning parsha *B’reshit* this past Shabbat, Hebrew nouns like

ha-shamayim [the heavens] and *ha-aretz* [the earth], *Ruach* [breath, spirit]; *chosech* [darkness]; *ohr* [light]; *erev* [evening]; *boker* [morning]; *gan* [garden]; *Eden* [delight]; *keruv* ['cherub']; and *derech* [way, path] have suddenly become part of our consciousness as well. As a result of reading their *toldot*/stories, people we have never even met in person - like Adam, Chava, Kayin, Hevel, Shet, Chanoch, Metushelach, and Lamech – have begun to seem like long-lost family members to us. Our spirits are now all abuzz with the Sweet *Song of the Seven Days*, the Beautiful Energy of *the Sabbath*; with the Release of *the Four Revelation Streams*; with the Rhythm of the Beating Heart of *Nish'mat Chayim*; with the Bittersweet Memory of *Eden*; and with the Plaintive Cry of *Hevel's blood*. What could possibly top that, you ask? Get ready, Beloved: the greatest of all human adventures – *i.e.* getting to know, coming to revere and love, and learning to walk with and serve the Creator of the Universe - has only just begun! This week the Holy One does not just plan to educate us about some of the most relevant 'climate change' history in relation to our planet; He plans to give us an introductory course on His *chen* – or 'grace'. He wants us to learn grace's substance. He wants us to understand grace's purpose vis-à-vis humanity and Creation. And He wants us to get familiar with the ways in which 'grace' does - and does not - affect real human experience in real time.

The Days of Noah: Wait! Is this History ... or Prophecy?

In parsha *Noach* the Brilliant Master of Creativity to Torah calls 'Elohim' will prove exactly how wholly dedicated He is to the Grand Ecosystem that He created and the 'Second Adam' Ecosystem-Management Plan He has devised. He is long-suffering. He is generous. He is merciful. He is kind. But if any human being – or any collection of human beings - insist on messing with what is precious to Him, insists on trying to rewrite the great script He has authored, and absolutely refuses to desist after being given fair warning, no one should be surprised when He does whatever it takes to quell the rebellion and put the Grand Plan of Creation back on track.

Men/women/nations/governments/institutions/organizations/humanist movements will never 'get by' with committing atrocities against anything or anyone the Creator loves. If any person/nation/government/institution/organization/humanist movement decides to become an enemy of all He holds dear, well don't accuse the One rebelled against of being unreasonable or cruel when He does what is necessary to confound the pseudo-intellectual, humble the arrogant, and eliminate the threat.

Who by flood; who by exile; and who by fire?

Setting the Stage for the Next Act in the Great Wisdom Play

May I set the stage for you? The stress level on planet earth is through the roof. Men and women all over the world have lost their spiritual moorings. Instead of walking with the Holy One and following His Grand Plan of Ecosystem Management, they have embraced the always catastrophic way of self-will. They have become flesh-driven, sensuality/sexuality-obsessed, lustful, greedy, and violent. They think themselves 'awakened', but what they really are is willfully deceived. Their reprobate minds can think only futile, pseudo-intelligent thoughts and vain imaginations. Their unclean lips spew arrogance, hate, divisiveness, blame, and blasphemy. Their toxic behavior patterns have put the very survival of the earth and all its genres and species in jeopardy. All kinds of stress-related maladies and anxiety-exacerbated conditions now run rampant. Agitators with a chip on their shoulder and demagogues with self-serving agendas continuously spew class envy, agitate racial tension, and stir up gender competition. Someone is always being accused of saying or doing something scandalous, and everyone is always up in arms about it. This is the prototype one-world order. There are no nations. There are no governments. There are no borders. There is no law. There is no fear of Heaven. There is, therefore, no recognition of either rights of privacy, of property ownership, or life. There is no order. There is no police protection. There are no first responders to rush into the fray when someone's life is in danger. If someone doesn't like the way some random person looks, or gets offended by something that person says or does, or just wants to, he or she just kills the poor schmuck. If someone sees something he or she wants, he/she just takes it - by force or by stealth, according to mood and personal taste. Ethnicities spew hate-speech at each other, and plot genocides. Women despise and belittle men; and men respond with equal contempt. Generations mock one another. Economic classes blame each other for all social ills. Violent gangs of thugs commit unspeakable acts of violence in the streets – oft-times while pretending to act as enlightened champions of a mythical god they like to call 'social justice'. Powerful warlords control the marketplaces. Pricing is predatory. Violence, sexual perversion, paranoia, famine, and pathogen-driven diseases are allowed to run rampant through society. No one is exempt. No one is safe. No one is trying to come up with a solution. No one – well, except one simple, humble man and his family - is even thinking about turning back to the Holy One and His Ways. Crime rates are skyrocketing. Institutions of education have morphed into propaganda factories. Information and entertainment outlets have turned into mouthpieces for the thugs and warlords. The world is spiraling out of control, and there seems to be no way to fix it. This is what happens any and every time human beings do what Kayin did, *go out from the Presence* of the Creator, and build a city and an ivory tower of self-will for themselves instead of tending and keeping Creation.

These are drastic times – and drastic times call for drastic measures. Enter the Immaculate Protagonist, ready to establish a partnership with the one human being in the earth who still shares His Grand Vision for Creation. That man’s name, of course, is Noah.

***Introducing the 2nd Movement of the Great Creation Symphony –
Enter a New Character, Without Scene or Costume Change***

Noach Ish tzaddik – *i.e. Noah was a ‘righteous’ man!* Thus begins the narrative of *Noach*² [KJV ‘Noah’] - the 2nd Act of Torah’s great Wisdom-And-Understanding Play. Did you think last week’s study was a great adventure? Just wait until you see what the Creator has up His Sleeve for us *this week!* This parsha is going to introduce the Holy One’s Grand Redemptive Plan for Mankind and Creation - and set forth the essential elements of our part in that plan. This is the parsha in which the Holy One begins to identify and call forth a *sh’ma*-people who will radically reshape life on earth. *He who has an ear ... let him sh’ma!* And may all who *sh’ma* awaken with awestruck hearts to both the majesty of the Covenant and the glorious mystery of our Creator’s *chen* - *i.e. ‘grace’*.

Last week’s parsha ended with this stunning announcement: ***v’Noach matza chen b’eynei Adonai*** – *i.e. and/then Noah found grace in the eyes of the Holy One. Genesis 6:8.* Let’s meditate on that, shall we?

The Man Who First Embraced and Wore ‘Grace’

Noah walked with the Holy One. That means that when the Holy One moved, Noah moved; and that where the Holy One went, Noah went. All his life Noah followed the Holy One around as if he was a sheep and the Holy One was his Invisible Shepherd. All his life Noah let the Creator of the Universe disciple him in ‘*righteousness*’. All his life he had made the tough choices that enabled him to stay ‘*blameless in his generation*’. This is not a man who suddenly decided to get on board with the Holy One’s Ways after he got wind of the news that Hell was waiting or that judgment was coming. Noah’s well-established pattern of *responsiveness* and *receptivity* to Divine Initiative and prompting was deeper than that. Noah’s deep, abiding relationship with the Holy One as a Divine Persona – not as an abstract idea or concept – made him different. That is what brought Noah to the point where the Creator of Heaven and Earth felt comfortable enough with him to share with him both the *intentions of His Mind* and the *emotions of His Heart*. May it be so for you and for me, Dear Reader.

² The sages typically avoided giving a parsha of Torah a mortal’s name. Only 5 of Torah’s 54 parshot – *i.e. Noah, Chayei Sarah, Yitro, Balak, and Pinechas* - derive their names from a human being mentioned in them. This is more significant when you consider that neither Adam, nor Chava, nor Avraham, nor Yitzchak, nor Ya’akov, nor Yosef, nor Moshe, nor Aharon, nor Miryam was afforded this distinction.

The Holy One knew He could talk to Noach – a mortal man, and that Noach would listen. He knew that there was nothing He could say that would offend Noach. And for this reason He knew He could reveal to Noach not only *what He planned to do in his lifetime*, but *how - and why - He planned to do it*. How incredible! How inspiring! How overwhelming! How humbling!

So ... how is your *responsiveness track record*, Dear Reader? What would your life look like if you received a revelation of Divine Purpose and Plan? How would the way in which you see the world – and your purpose in it – have to change for you to accommodate the manifest wisdom of your Creator for the age in which you live? How would the way you spend your time, your energy, your money, and your passion be affected by a download from Heaven of His plans for the world in which you work, shop, educate yourself, entertain yourself, raise children, recreate, medicate, and pontificate? How would the conversations you have every day – with your loved ones, with your neighbors, your marketplace acquaintances, and with perfect strangers you happen to meet – be altered by a visitation from the Holy One?

Let's take a closer look at Noach – and the times in which he lived.

What a Difference a Little Serpent/Yetzer Hara Collaboration Makes!

Last week as we began our studies the universe we live in was still *pristine, spotless, and new*. The Creative Force of the Word of *Elohim* was everywhere - shaping, forming, enlivening, ordering, empowering and blessing everything in sight. All of Creation was basking in Divine Light. The Heavens and the earth were *brimming with life, surging with hope, and swelling with breathtaking beauty*. Creation was filling our senses with *invigorating fragrances and dazzling symmetry*. The *oceans roared; the mountains echoed. The rivers danced; the deserts burst into bloom. The trees of the forest clapped their hands; and so did we*. Everything that had breath praised its Maker. All Creation joined in a delicious song of celebration testifying of the Creator's majesty and proclaiming exquisite delight in His amazing artistry. All created beings reveled in the life-giving touch of the Master's Hand. Over and over again the message being broadcast in our hearing was '***ki-tov*** – i.e. *it is for good*.'

But then, suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, *another voice* spoke. *Another message* began to be broadcast. The '*ki-tov*' message of the Holy One was twisted and misapplied. According to the tempting deceit of the serpent Creation was not to be viewed as an *awesome wonder for man to enjoy* or as a *beautiful garden for man to lovingly tend* as intended, but was instead to be viewed as *a plaything for man to exploit for his own selfish purposes*. The serpent's subliminal message to

man was – and *still is* - fourfold:

1. The Creator ***does not really communicate His will to you*** [i.e. ‘*Did God truly say ...?*’]
2. ‘*You don’t need the Creator*’. [i.e. “*You shall not surely die!*”]
3. ‘*You can’t trust the Creator*’ [i.e. “*God knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened ...*], and
4. ‘*You can’t get what you really want from the Creator*. [i.e. “*....and you will be as gods.*”]

The impact of listening to *serpent-speak* on man proved to be stunning. He who was designed to *inhale the Divine breath of life* regularly in the course of a lifestyle of intimate communion with the Creator and, powered by that Breath, was commissioned to go forth *spreading Divine Light throughout Creation*, turned instead to living like the animals over which he was supposed to take dominion. Man’s relationship with God thus became totally focused upon ‘*covering up*’. Instead of *pursuing intimate communion with God* man tried to *distance himself from God*. He *ran*. He *hid*. He *covered*. When he was apprehended and confronted in love he *refused to repent*, and resorted instead to accusations *against the Holy One* and *against his dearest companion*. He placed the blame on the woman that YOU GAVE TO ME and he excused his involvement in the sin process by saying “*she gave me of the tree, and I did eat*”. Things then started downhill rapidly. Before the week was over we were reading about how Kayin hated and murdered his own brother, and about how Kayin’s descendant Lamech followed his example and actually bragged about it. Then as last week’s parsha drew to a close we read to our horror about how from that point man’s wickedness increased generationally and exponentially to the extent that, by the time of Noach, ‘*every inclination of the thoughts of [man’s] heart was only RA- i.e. toxically narcissistic³ - all the time.*”

³ Toxically narcissistic traits include:

- Exaggerated sense of self-importance;
- Extreme selfishness in relationships;
- Feeling entitled to, and demanding of attention, agreement, recognition, respect, deference, praise, and admiration;
- Seeing themselves and their ideas as intellectually superior to and more moral than others;
- Seeing any rival, competitor, or enemy as morally and intellectually depraved and therefore deserving of rejection, criticism, mocking, humiliation, cursing out, and even violence;
- Insistence on associating only with people like them, who agree with their viewpoint of their own worth as well as whatever ideas they espouse in order to draw attention to themselves;
- Lying about, making up or exaggerating favorable background matters, honors, and/or achievements;
- Preoccupation with fantasies of great achievements, power, or recognition.
- Tendency to preach about sympathy and compassion as if they were capable of it, but having no actual fruit or evidence of either in their lives or relationships [except in relation to their own domesticated pets, who seem to adore them as the ‘sons of the gods’ they consider themselves to be];
- inability to comprehend the feelings and experiences of loved ones and other companions;
- Judgmentalism/critical speech reflecting a lack of capacity for empathy;

Genesis 6:6. *Did you catch that: EVERY inclination of the thoughts of man's heart was ONLY RA [i.e. toxically narcissistic] - ALL OF THE TIME! Wow. What a difference a little cuddling up with the serpent - makes!*

What can be done about a world gone so terribly awry? How can the beauty and splendor of the Creation we read about in Genesis 1 and 2 be salvaged? How can mankind be redeemed? Ah Beloved – you might not like the Holy One's answer to those questions. Sometimes, to human understanding, the *cure* seems worse than the *disease*. Welcome indeed to parsha *Noach*.

An Overview Of the Parsha Known as 'Noach'

Parsha Noach begins with an inspired narrative consisting of two blatantly contrasting and offsetting descriptions. The first description is of a man named Noach – a very real descendant of Shet in the 10th generation of mankind's existence named Noach. The inspired narrative describes Noach as a *righteous man, blameless in his generation, who walked with the Holy One his God, and had three sons*. This glowing description is then put in stark contrast with the *description of the corrupted state of the world in which Noach lived*. That world – called *ha-aretz* in the Hebrew text – is described as having been *corrupt before Elohim and full of oppression in its most violent and malevolent form*.

'*Noach's generation*' represents what happens the spiritual 'pressure points' - or areas of extreme vulnerability – that the Holy One designed into human beings to serve as 'backdoors' for Him to enter to make necessary upgrades and adjustments, are hacked, taken over, and exploited by the *yetzer hara*. What 'pressure points' am I talking about? They include, most prominently:

1. our physical senses - *i.e.* what we see, hear, touch, smell, taste;
2. our fleshly urges, drives, and desires;
3. our capacity of free will;
4. our capacity to know delight, pleasure, adventure, thrill, and fleeting moments of feelings of 'happiness';
5. our illusion of information, knowledge, intellect, reason, and logic;
6. our emotions – especially easily manipulated ones like anger, outrage, fear, sympathy, sadness, and jealousy;
7. our curiosity [i.e. our desire for excitement, fun, thrill, knowledge, and adventure];

- Feelings of entitlement – expecting/demanding to be pampered, coddled, waited on, or otherwise taken care of by everyone they encounter;
- Jealousness/envy of other's possessions, accomplishments, promotions, or awards;
- Seeing and projecting bad intentions, depraved morals, or mental illness onto everyone else; and
- Cynicism toward anyone else who professes or is thought by others to be motivated by compassion, ethics, benevolence, or patriotism.

8. our thought life/self-talk;
9. our vanity/self-image;
10. our tendency to absorb mood, attitude, emotion, values, priorities, opinions, culture, and vocabulary environmentally and then to mirror whatever culture we see and/or immerse ourselves in;
11. our craving to judge everything through the lens of ‘good’ and ‘evil’; ‘right’ and ‘wrong’; ‘just’ and ‘unjust’; ‘worthy’ and ‘unworthy’; and ‘moral’ and ‘immoral’.
12. our desire to be favorably judged and accepted by others.

When instead of reserving these pressure points for use by the Holy One alone, as we are supposed to, men choose instead to allow all or even a significant number of these areas of vulnerability to be infiltrated and corrupted by the dark [Hebrew *choshech*], unclean [Hebrew, *tamei*], and/or profane [Hebrew, *chol*] elements of Creation, the result is always behavior controlled by the lust of the flesh; by the lust of the eye; by the pride of life. This leads to running from the light; cover-ups; blame assigning, accusation-levying, jealousy, anger, murder - and a world like Noah’s. *Selah!* It is happening all around us, even now - isn’t it?

The Holy One’s Thoughts are Revealed

In a moment reminiscent of Genesis 1:26, the writer of Torah then lets the reader eavesdrop on the very thoughts and planning processes of the Creator. The Holy One was watching what was happening. He knew humanity, as presently configured, was taking the world in a very, very dangerous direction. He saw the extent of the *mish’chat* – *i.e. corruption*. He saw the increasing *chamas* – *i.e. oppression through threats and acts of violence*. He knew that something – indeed, something pretty drastic - had to be done to save it. He was up for the challenge. The Holy One had, after all, designed Creation. He, the ultimate architect and engineer, knew exactly what stress factors of corruption and oppression the world could withstand - and what would, if left alone, destroy it. So as parsha *Noach* begins He is about to share His radical blueprint for remediation and replenishing with the one man in the entire earth who would listen and cooperate.

The man, of course, was *Noach*. Through Noah and his family the Holy One would keep His Glorious Redemptive Plan for mankind and Creation moving forward.

The Initial God-Encounter of Parsha Noach

The first recorded God-encounter of the tenth generation of mankind begins with the Holy One stepping out of eternity into time and out of invisibility into manifestation and speaking to His friend Noah.

The Voice that spoke forth ‘Yehi Ohr’ now tells Noah: *An end/new beginning* [ketz – i.e. an end that is also a new beginning/fresh start] *of all flesh* [basar] - *has come before Me.*

The Season of Prophetic Warning and Practical Preparation

The Holy One then tells Noah what He is about to do – and what He wants Noah to do to co-labor with Him in the grand redemptive enterprise. He instructs Noah to build a great floating vessel for his family - and for thousands of animals representing the future of every kind of species of living creatures on the face of the earth.

The Season of Building an Ark, Exactly According to the Holy One’s Specifications

Torah does not specifically tell us how long it took Noah to build the ark. Rashi says that it took 120 years – i.e. at least an entire generation. Did people see Noah building the huge contraption, and ask him what it was for? Did people laugh at him? Did governments try to stop him? We are not told. But what is clear is that the Holy One afforded the people of the world ample time – indeed abundant time - to change their ways. The sons of men all just refused. After all, in those days *every inclination of the thoughts of [man’s] heart was only evil all the time.* Genesis 6:6.

Preparing for Departure

In the next God-encounter of the parsha the Holy One instructs Noah to take into the ark seven pairs of every *tahor* [‘clean’, i.e. designed by the Holy One as potentially useful for ingestion by mankind] species of animal, but only one pair of any species of animals that was *lo tahor* [unclean; i.e. designed by the Holy One for purposes excluding them from being useful for ingestion by mankind – i.e. as predators, as scavengers, as garbage disposals, and/or as decay accelerators].

The ‘Hard Rain’ Begins to Fall

One thing the Noah narrative teaches us about the Creator is that is 100% committed to the continuation His Creation. Human beings mess with and misuse things, creatures, and people that He Created at their peril. He is uncompromisingly patient with those who stray, and merciful to those who are merciful, but He is also a realist. He is not committed at all to the continuation of arrogant, narcissistic human beings who continually practice violence and oppression against their fellows and pollute the world He Created with toxicity.

Who by water; who by fire? According to tradition the first rains earth had ever seen began on the 17th day of the month of Cheshvan – i.e. approximately one month after Sukkot. Torrents followed – and the fountains of the earth burst forth

as well. Water from seemingly everywhere just kept coming, for a full forty days and nights.

Floodwaters Cover the Entire Earth

The waters rose and rose, and kept on rising – until all continents were completely covered. It was as if Day 3 of Creation – when the dry land appeared – never happened. The waters rose to a height of 22-1/2 feet above the tallest peaks of the highest mountains on the planet. Everest in the Himalayas disappeared under the waves. Aconcagua and Chimbarazo in the Andes were nowhere to be seen. Kilimanjaro in Africa, McKinley in Alaska, and Mont Blanc in the Alps, all succumbed to the vast inundation. It didn't just last for a few hours or days; instead, the waters remained in full force upon the entire earth for a whopping five months. Every human being, animal, creeping thing, and fowl that had not been safely tucked away in the ark when the waters started to rise perished.

The Aftermath of the Great Flood

Finally the waters began to recede. But not until 6 more months of floating aimlessly – making a total time in the ark of 11 months - did the ark finally wash up on dry land. They were near the top of mount Ararat. The Holy One then told Noah to leave the ark, and leave it he did - with his wife and his sons with their wives and all the living creatures that the Holy One had caused to accompany them on their amazing aquatic odyssey.

The Blessing of Noah's Descendants

Noah then built a *mizbeach* (altar) to express his gratitude to the Holy One for His protection and preservation of his family. The Holy One responded by promising that He would never again destroy all living things with floodwaters. The Holy one then blessed Noah and his sons as He once had Adam – empowering them all to *be fruitful, multiply/expand/increase in influence, and bring fullness to all the earth.*

The Holy One's Instructions for Replenishing the Earth

For as long as necessary to replenish the earth with vegetation, the Holy One gave mankind permission to eat the flesh of some of the animals that had accompanied his family on the great journey of redemption. Noah and his family were still not, however, to eat the flesh of any animal while it was still alive. The consequences for the shedding of blood were then spelled out for all time.

The Noachic-Covenant – Its Provisions, and Its Sign

A Covenant was then cut between the Holy One, on the one hand, and *with Noah, all his seed, and the earth* on the other. The specific terms of the covenant are:

1. Noah and his seed will step into the place of Adam and his seed, and

- will be responsible for bearing Covenant-consistent fruit, multiplying/expanding/increasing in territory and influence; and bringing fullness and fulfillment of potential to the earth;
2. To facilitate the foregoing, the Holy One will cause the fear of Noach and his seed to fall upon every beast, bird, and creature of the earth, and all creatures of the sea;
 3. Every moving thing will - for a time of replenishing plant life after the Flood, at least - be consumable by Noach and his seed; but, even yet, he and his seed are forever to refrain from ingesting the flesh of any living creature having its blood/lifeforce in it;
 4. An accounting of blood will be required of every man or animal regarding every other human life that enters his sphere of influence;
 5. Never again will a flood cut off all flesh or destroy all life on earth; and
 6. The rainbow in the cloud will be for a Covenant Sign.

The Reintroduction of Perversion –

Who Will Choose to Judge and Mock, and Who Will Choose Instead to Cover?

As part of the Holy One's replenishing-of-the-earth program Noach then went forth and planted a vineyard. In the season of *Sukkot* he harvested the grapes, made some wine from the grapes, drank of it, and became overcome by intoxication. He passed out in his tent. In his stupor he became hot from the wine. He tore off his clothes. One of Noach's sons, Cham, found him in this helpless condition, and made a mockery of him. This reintroduced to human experience self-righteous, mocking, spirit of judgment. This is something we all now must face and overcome. How? By following the example of Noach's other two sons, Shem and Yafet. They refused to be amused. They refused to judge either their father or Cham. They resisted the temptation to join him in the folly and express their opinions. They realized their father was just a very real, very traumatized human being – as, for that matter, was Cham, and as were they. They chose not to join Cham in his folly. Even knowing of their father's exposed condition, they chose to approach with their backs turned. They went on to cover Noach so that they – and we – would never see or think of him the way Cham saw him – but as the Holy One saw him. Noach was, after all, in the eyes of the Holy One, *ish tzaddik* – *i.e.* a righteous man, and blameless in his generation. He had found *chen* – *i.e.* grace - in the eyes of the Creator ... so who on earth were they to judge him? Indeed, who are any of us?

Noach's Prophetic Blessing/Curse Over His Progeny

When Noach awoke and discovered what had transpired he proclaimed a blessing over Shem and Yafet. But he declared prophetically that Cham's grandson, Kana'an, and all his progeny, would thenceforth live under severe restrictions and limitations. He decreed that Kana'an's progeny would forever be subservient to the

descendants of both Shem and of Yafet.

For posterity, Torah then lists the descendants of Noach's three sons for several generations - and describes the nations and people groups that devolved from the ones that are named.

***The City Built With Human Hands, Whose Builder and Maker is Man,
and Its Ill-Fated Tower***

Despite being given a second chance, mankind as a whole resisted – and refused to follow - the Holy One’s direction to go forth, fill, and replenish the earth. People in the generations after Noach decided instead to settle in the plain of *Shinar*. They did not pursue relationship with or *sh'ma* the Voice of the Holy One. They decided to build a city to their own glory – replete with an impressive tower that they believed would reach into, and allow them to control the forces of, the heavens. This was the original – and prototypical – one-world order plan. But the Holy One thwarted the plan then – and will do so again - by confusing the people, and causing them to divide and separate according to languages and dialects.

Time Passages: Bridging the Great Gap Between Noach and Avram

Parsha Noach then concludes with a listing of the descendants of Shem – culminating in Avram, the first patriarch of Israel. But we are really getting ahead of ourselves now, aren't we? Let's go back and consider what the name of the parsha might be saying to us – if we had ears to *sh'ma* and eyes to see.

What Is In A Hebrew 'Name'?

The Hebrew word *Noach* literally means:

- [a] *to bring something that is moving to a condition of rest;*
- [b] *to cause something noisy to become quiet;*
- [c] *to set something down after having picked it up and moved it; and /or*
- [d] *to remove something from a crowded place where its essence is hidden and put it in solitary place where it can be displayed.*

Picture a toy “top”, gaily painted and decorated, spinning wildly across your floor, amidst a clutter of people, other toys, furnishings, and so forth. It bumps into things. Some things it knocks over. Off of others it careens out of control. Now picture a benevolent father, the master of His household, reaching down to pick up the top, placing His hand gently upon it so as to stop its wild spinning, lifting it out of the maelstrom, and delicately placing it atop [no pun intended] a shelf, all by itself, to rest. Got the picture? Good - you have the essence of the Hebrew word *Noach*, of the man who bore that name, and of the subject matter of this week's parsha!

Oh - did I forget something? Oh yes, it seems there was that untidy little detail of how the pipes burst in the basement and the ceiling simultaneously and water started pouring in from everywhere and ...well, I suspect we will get around to that soon enough!

Prophetic Types and Shadows of the Latter Days?

*What would you do if the world as we know it really was about to cease to exist? What if some “force” outside of earth, which could not be stopped by anything conceivable by the mind of man, threatened **your** world with destruction?*

Allow me to be more specific. What if one day like any other day, as you were going about your daily activities, out of nowhere *GOD* appeared to you. As if that’s not enough, what if He skipped the chitchat and “fear nots” and announced matter of factly that in just a few days He was going to bring about “*the end of all flesh*”?

For a very real man named Noah living in the tenth generation after the Fall, and (albeit unbeknownst to him) in the tenth generation before the call of Avraham, the scenario described in the preceding paragraph was neither an entertaining silver screen fantasy nor an interesting intellectual exercise. For the son of *Lamekh* [Lamech], the scenario described was not only a terrifying vision but an *inescapable reality*. The call to Noah was a very humbling call. Unlike Yonah [Jonah] and Yochanan [John], he was not given a message that would bring anyone to repentance. His instructions were to go get gopherwood and a year’s worth of provisions, build something he had no means to control or manipulate [the ark had no rudder, sail, or means of propulsion, but was merely to float upon the water, wherever and at whatever speed the tide took it], and to prepare to start life over with only the Holy One’s covenant of grace toward Him to rely upon.

Why such a call at such a time? To understand this we must step back and try to *see the “days of Noah” through the eyes of the Holy One*.

The Days of Noah – the Prototypical Description of the ‘Humanism Signature’, and the Havoc It Wreaks

Noah lived in the tenth generation from Adam and Chava. That meant he was ten generations removed from the garden of delight and relationship with the Holy One into which man was created. Noah was no religious recluse living out a vow of celibacy and poverty at a remote monastery. Hebrew *midrash*⁴ says he was an inventor of agricultural tools and implements that to some degree lightened the

⁴ *Midrash* consists of legends or stories used by rabbis and sages to homiletically fill in historical details that are omitted by the Bible.

burden of the curse that the Holy One had placed on the soil as a result of the disobedience of Adam and Chava [Eve]. Hebrew sages disagree as to whether Noah was “righteous” in all things, or was merely somewhat more righteous than the depraved generation in which he lived.

Torah tells us plainly that Noah was married to one woman, and that the two of them had three sons. Torah also tells us that Noah had a rich spiritual heritage. His father Lamekh had been born and had grown to manhood at a time when Adam was still alive and had certainly heard - and passed on to his son - stories of the garden told by his ancestor. Noah’s grandfather *Metusaleh*, the ancient one, was still alive at the time of Noah’s call.

Both Lamech and Metusaleh surely told Noah of his great grandfather, Enoch, a righteous man who walked with the Holy One for 365 years then strangely disappeared some 69 years prior to Noah’s birth - it was said of Noah’s great grandfather “*he was no more, for the Holy One had taken him*”. The Creator with whom this ancestor of Noah was so intimate spontaneously whisked him away to Heaven. “*Why?*” Noah must have wondered. But whenever Noah looked around at his world and the corruption and violence of its population, perhaps really it was no wonder at all. A man who “walked with” - kept in step with at all times - the Holy One, and who as a natural outgrowth of his intimate relationship with and love for the Holy One insisted on living righteously, had no place in such a world.

What was valued amongst the populace of the earth at the time was certainly not righteousness. Nor was communion with the Holy One something sought after – much less cultivated – in or by that culture. Profit and pleasure and self-indulgence were the order of the day. To *acquire things* [by whatever means], to *indulge one’s passions and tastes* – [however macabre], and to *express one’s individuality and make one’s mark on society* [however perverse that expression or however damaging that mark], these were looked upon as the essence of life. The Holy One and the standards of righteousness that characterized Him and those who walked with Him were looked upon as the greatest threat that existed to society. A man who “walked with God” did not belong - and certainly was not welcome - there. So what of Noah? At least in comparison with his contemporaries, we are told that he was “righteous” like his great-grandfather. And yet unlike his great-grandfather Enoch, Noah was not “taken”. The Holy One called him to a very different destiny. He was ‘left behind’ on earth, ostensibly to live a lifestyle in the midst of a perverse generation that would constitute a proclamation of righteousness. See II Peter 2:5.

Noah’s First ‘God-Encounter’

The writer of Hebrews summarizes Noach's story as follows: *By emunah Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear prepared an ark for the saving of his household by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is according to emunah.* Hebrews 11:7. How did this come about? It all started with a *God-encounter*. One seemingly ordinary day when Noach was going about his business and trying to remain righteous in the midst of the downward spiraling of his society, suddenly the Creator who had "taken" his great-grandfather stepped into his world, spoke to him, and stunned him with the following message [Genesis 6:13]:

Ketz kol-basar ba l'fanai

'An end⁵ of all flesh has come ...

v'hineni mash'chitam et-ha-aretz

And Behold, I will destroy⁶ all mankind with the earth'.

Then, the same voice that uttered these words of devastation announced the first recorded covenant between God and post-Edenic man. Noach found 'grace' [Hebrew *chen - chet, nun sofit*] in the eyes of the Holy One, Who said:

V'ani hineni mevi et-ha-mabul mayim al-ha-aretz

I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth

L'shachet kol-basar asher-bo ru'ach chayim

to destroy all creatures in which is the breath of life

mitachat ha-shamayim

under the heavens,

kol-asher b'aretz yig'va

Everything on land will die.

V'ha-kimoti et-briti itach

But I will establish my covenant with you,

uvatah el-ha-teivah

and you will enter the ark—

atah uv'neicha v'ishteicha ush'nei-v'neicha itach

you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you.

[Genesis 6:17-18]

You know the rest of the story don't you?

... family devotion time ...

⁵ The absence of the definite article 'the' [*ha* in Hebrew] as a modifier for 'end' [Hebrew, *katz*]. This is not 'the end' of all flesh – it is merely an end to one era or epoch and therefore, the beginning of another.

⁶ The word translated as 'destroy' is a form of the Hebrew word *shachat*, translated as 'corrupted' in Gen. 6:11. This is not a threat of extinction by the Holy One – it is a Hebraic play on words, indicating a judgment 'measure for measure'. As, and to the extent, mankind has *shachat* 'corrupted' the earth, so will the Holy One *shachat* 'corrupt' mankind, in order to root out the corruption mankind has introduced.

... gathering gopherwood together ...
... making lots of measurements ...
... sounds of hammers and saws...
... collection of provisions for a long journey ...
... animals coming two-by-two ...
... peals of thunder in the distance . . .
... Is that the sound of pipes bursting? ...
... the door closes ...
...the ark breaks free ...
... floating ...
... floating ...;

See you on the other side?

Getting to the Point

What is ‘the point’? Oh Dear Reader - *look around you. Stop* for a moment, and *listen*. The top is spinning out of control. Yeshua said:

***the Son of Man’s coming will be just as it was in the days of Noach ...
eating and drinking, taking wives and becoming wives,
right up till the day ...”***

[Matthew 24:37-38, emphasis added]

And the eyes of the Creator run to and fro all throughout the earth. Angels peer into doorways, fields, and office buildings, whispering:

“*Where is the man who is faithful and true?*”

“*Where is the woman who is righteous?*”

“*Where is the youth who humbly worships Me in Spirit and truth?*”

“*Where is the little one who believes My Word
and who hungers for My kingdom?*”

*Where is the one in whom the promise of the ‘seed of woman’ resides
for this generation?*

Where indeed, Dear Reader? Where *indeed*.

Time For Someone to Arise and ‘Walk With God’

Now more than ever it is time for the descendants of Enoch to “walk with God”. As you read of the call of Noach, the Ark, the Flood, “the Noachide laws”, the sin of Cham [Ham], the curse of Kena’an [Canaan], and the rebellion at Bavel [Babel], realize that friendship with the world really is enmity with the Creator.

Do not love anything of this world so much that you would curse God if you were deprived of it.

Getting to Know the Attributes of a Man Who Found Favor With The Holy One

In the concluding verse of parsha *B’reshit* we learned something absolutely critical to our understanding of this week’s parsha. We learned in that concluding verse the secret to all we will read in the rest of Torah. The secret is that, according to Genesis 6:8 Noach – ten generations removed from Adam - “*found grace*” in the Holy One’s eyes. As Torah puts it:

V’Noach matza chen b’eynei Adonai
But Noah found grace/favor in God's eyes.

He found **GRACE? Really? Grace?** Remember that this was long, long before Messiah Yeshua was born in a *sukkah* in Beit-Lechem circa 4 BCE. It was thousands of years before His blood flowed down the grisly Roman execution stake we have come to call ‘the Cross’. Grace is not a ‘new testament’ doctrine. It was not something ‘introduced’ to mankind at Messiah’s first advent. It is a central – perhaps the most central – theme of Torah. Let us therefore try to get a grasp of the nature of that grace before we go any further.

The Kind of ‘Grace’ that Noach Knew

The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as “*found favor/grace*” is *chen*⁷. It comes from the verb root *chanan*⁸, which means to voluntarily and unilaterally go beyond covenant commitment or obligation, and extend or incline oneself toward someone, and thereby to reach out to someone, and meet him more than halfway, solely because the relationship involved is deemed more important than the quality of the other person’s performance.

The Hebrew word picture provides an apt description of what the Holy One is going to do in the days of Noach and in the course of all subsequent God-man relations. In the midst of a season of judgment on the evil in the world, the Holy One is going to reach out, in goodwill, toward His Creation. He will choose to see

⁷ *Chen* is *chet, nun sofit*. Strong’s Hebrew word # 2580, it is pronounced *khane*.

⁸ *Chanan* is *chet, nun, nun sofit*. Strong’s Hebrew word #2603, it is pronounced *khaw-nan*’.

good, and so He will look for, and find, good. He will find it in the form of Noah. But do not presume, Dear Reader, to equate the ‘good’ the Holy One saw in Noah with ‘sinlessness’. Noah was by no means *sinless*. But what he did that the Holy One found ‘good’ was that he *sh’ma-ed* and *sh’mar-ed* the Word of the Holy One, and chose to pursue relationship with the Holy One over the pursuit of pleasure.

Did Noah sometimes ‘slip up’? Undoubtedly. Did Noah’s fleshly appetites and drives sometimes win out over his spiritual side? Most likely. Did Noah’s *yetzer ra* [what the sages call the human inclination toward evil] sometimes manifest itself in improper thoughts, harsh or deceptive words, and less-than-Godly actions? What do you think? But that is not the lens through which the Holy One chose to see Noah. He ‘backed-up’ to Noah in pretty much the same way Shem and Yafet did. He could have looked at Noah’s sin – but He chose not to, for the sake of the *Covenant and His Grand Redemptive Plan for mankind and Creation. In light of the chen [grace] that Noah found in His eyes – the Holy One spoke over Noah only words of grace. If you will but sh’ma* the Words the Holy One spoke over Noah - i.e. if you will listen for them, hear them, give them precedence in your life, and let them spring to life in your thoughts, words, deeds and relationships - those words will empower *you* as well. That is, you see, what the Holy One’s *chen* [grace] *is all about*.

Questions Noah Might Ask Us Today

So here are the questions Noah, who knew the *chen* [KJV ‘grace’] of the Holy One might ask. Are you walking *in the will of God for your life*? Are you *fulfilling the purpose for which you were created*? Are you *actively involved in becoming who you were created to be*? Is your lifestyle *a proclamation of righteousness*? Is the life you are living *a testimony to the glorious ‘grace’ of the Holy One*? And by the way, in the midst of a society clamoring to acquire more and more, experience every pleasure, indulge every appetite, and acknowledge every perversion in the name of ‘diversity’, have you left ‘your mark’ on the world around you ... or have you left *His*? Hmmmmn. Do you know where I can find any gopherwood?

A Brief Look at the Associated Haftarah

Isaiah 54:1 – 55:5

This week’s haftarah readings are from the prophet *Yeshayahu* [Isaiah]. In chapters 54 and 55 of his great prophetic work, Yeshayahu speaks prophetic words over a group of people who like Noah and his family found *chen* in the sight of the Holy One and made a fresh start, departing from the “norm” of society. In Yeshayahu’s case it was the remnant of *sh’ma-ing* Hebrews who returned to the land of promise after the Babylonian captivity. Only a handful of those who had been scattered returned. Those who did so faced a seemingly impossible task. *The rubble* was so

great, and *the enemies* were so strong, that it seemed hopeless I am sure. The only thing they had to rely upon was ... *the Word of the Holy One*. And *that was enough*.

The same holds true for us today. Those who *sh'ma* the Words of the Holy One in the Torah are called away from all that is “normative” in our society and to trust only in the instructions and covenant of the Holy One to sustain us. In today’s Haftarah we find bread upon which to survive and prosper:

*Sing, barren, you who didn't bear;
break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you who did not travail with child:
for more are the children of the desolate
than the children of the married wife,* says the Holy One.

*Enlarge the place of your tent,
and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations;
don't spare: lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes.
For you shall spread aboard on the right hand and on the left;
and your seed shall possess the nations,
and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.*

* * *

*In overflowing wrath I hid my face from you for a moment;
but with everlasting lovingkindness will I have mercy on you,
says the Holy One your Redeemer.*

*For this is [as] the waters of Noach to me;
for as I have sworn that the waters of Noach shall no more go over the eretz,
so have I sworn that I will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.
For the mountains may depart, and the hills may be removed;
but my lovingkindness will never depart.*

[Isaiah 54:1-10]

Yeshayahu also wants us to know about the amazing things that the Holy One has planned for those who return to the ancient paths. First, He speaks to us of the glorious city that He is preparing for us:

*... Behold, I will set your stones in beautiful colors
and lay your foundations with sapphires.
I will make your pinnacles of rubies, and your gates of emeralds,
and all your border of precious stones.*

[Isaiah 54:11b-12]

Second, He informs us that He Himself will take responsibility for the education and training in Torah of our children:

*All your children will be taught of the Holy One;
and great will be your children's shalom.*

[Isaiah 54:13]

*Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters,
and he who has no money; come, buy, and eat;
yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

*Why do you spend money for that which is not bread?
and your labor for that which doesn't satisfy? Listen [sh'ma] diligently to me,
and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.
Turn your ear, and come to me; hear [sh'ma] and your soul shall live:
and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

[Isaiah 55:1-3]

May these things – and everything else the prophet promises in this haftarah, come to pass, quickly, in our hearts and households, for all the world to see. *Selah*.

A View From the Perspective of the Apostolic Writers

I Peter 3:10-4:19

In the apostolic writings we will read this week, *Kefa* [Peter] will define for us the basics of what a true Torah-based lifestyle must look like to others. Here is what he says:

*Finally, be all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brothers,
tenderhearted, courteous, not rendering ra for ra, or reviling for reviling;
but instead blessing; knowing that to this were you called,
that you may receive and be good stewards of a blessing.*

The reason the author chose this particular passage to coordinate with parsha *Noach* is found in the following verse:

*... God waited patiently in the days of Noach while the teivah was being built.
In it a few [that is, eight] souls were saved through water.
This [the Flood] is a symbol of mikveh-immersion, which now saves you –
not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,
but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection
of Yeshua the Messiah*

*May the words recorded in Torah concerning Noach bring about for you and your loved ones
a God-encounter that will stir you to arise, and walk with the Creator!*

The Rabbi's son

Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week

Gevurot - The Prayer of His Powers

Atah gibor l'olam Adonai m'chai'ai maysim atah

You are incomparably mighty, My Lord! You bring the dead back to life

rav l'hoshea m'chalkel chayim b'chesed

Captain of our Salvation, Who sustains the living with covenant love

m'chai'ai maysim b'rachamim rabim

Who resurrects the dead with overflowing compassion

somech nof'lim v'rofei cholim u'matir asurim

Who lifts up the fallen, and heals the sick, and sets captives free

u'm'kayam emunoto li-sheneh afar

and is faithful even when we fall asleep in the dust

Mi chamocha ba-al gevurot Melech maymis u'm'chai'ah

Who is like You, Master of Miracles? O King, Who causes death, then restores life

u'm'tz'miach yeshuah

and Who causes salvation to burst forth like a sprout

v'ne-aman atah l'hachai'ot maysim

and Who can be trusted to resurrect the dead

Baruch Atah Adonai m'chai'yah ha-maysim

Blessed are You, O Holy One; in You the Dead have life.