

Noah's Flood – Fairy Tale or God's Truth?

A Message on the Scripture portions associated with *Torah* Portion *Noakh*
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Scripture Portions: Torah – Genesis 6:9 - 11:32; Haftarah – Isaiah 54:1-20;

New Covenant – Hebrews 11:6-7

Last week, we covered the first portion in Genesis, called *B'raysheet*, as well as the Book of Genesis itself. We discussed the differences between the scientific understanding and Biblical understanding of the origins of life and we also discussed the fall of Adam and Eve.

We saw the impact of the fall, now things would decay and die, including Adam and Eve. Additionally, one of their sons was murdered by his brother, and the ultimate effect of the fall is the need for the death of *Yeshua*. As sinful humanity, we are no longer sufficiently righteous to go on living, we deserve death. But the Lord established the sacrificial system to show that an innocent animal could die in our place, pointing to the sacrifice of our sinless Messiah. *Yeshua's* death would satisfy God's standards of righteousness and justice. He would willingly take our sins upon himself, and offer up himself as the sacrifice that enables us to obtain atonement.

As a result of the fall, humanity becomes more and more evil and the Lord is ready to wipe out all mankind. And I'm not sure that things are all that much better today. Many of the movies and TV shows today glorify evil, especially this month, where the TV stations tell us that we are supposed to be excited that this is the month when they show us all of their horror movies. Would you watch these movies or TV shows if God were sitting right next to you? Well, you're right, he is not sitting next to you, His Spirit dwells inside of you. He is right there watching with you. We all need to think about what the media is trying to feed us these days.

It is only by the grace of God, that God sees righteousness in our world today; He sees the righteousness of his Son that has been imputed to us. And God saw *Noakh*, who in the midst of the depravity, demonstrated sufficient righteousness that he finds grace in the sight of the Lord according to the last verse in last week's *Torah* portion.

Now let's take a look at the *Torah* portion for this week called *Noakh*. It has been only 10 generations since the creation of Adam, but the effects of the fall were being seen throughout the earth. Evil rages so intensely that God is ready to destroy every living creature.

And I'm not sure that evil was all that much more rampant back then than it is today, that's the scariest part. In the first verse of the portion, we see that Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. Though he lived in the midst of all sorts of perversion and depravity, *Noakh* is described as walking with God. This should give us hope and encouragement that we too can walk with God, that we might grow closer to Him despite the corruption that is all around us today.

After seeing the righteousness of Noah, God decides to send a flood that will destroy all humans and land animals, except for Noah and his sons and their wives. How do we know that He won't send a flood to destroy us because of the extent of the evil in our world today? Two reasons...

The first is that He promised not to, as part of His covenant with *Noakh* as we will see later in our portion. Genesis 9:11 says,

“And I will establish My covenant with you (He says to Noah); neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Secondly, *Yeshua* told us, when He was here, what things would look like just before His return. In Matthew 24:36-38, we read

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark.”

These verses give us one more reason to believe that the Lord's return will be soon.

As we examine the events in the life of Noah and in particular, the flood, there is so much that we could talk about that we could do a number of Sabbath messages on the subject. Instead, I am going to attempt to focus on a few key aspects that we will cover tonight, which hopefully will stimulate you to research the Scriptures further for yourselves on this topic.

God warns Noah that He is going to send a flood, and tells him to build a boat so that he and his family might survive the coming deluge. The flood will kill everyone except for the righteous *Noakh*, his 3 sons and their wives. The only land animals that will survive are those that were taken aboard the ark. The Lord instructs Noah to take 14 of each of the clean animals and two of every other kind of animal for repopulating purposes. What is a clean animal? Many believers think the concepts of clean and unclean were introduced with the Mosaic Covenant, but here we see that the concept of clean and unclean goes back in time before God's covenant with Moses, before God's covenant with Abraham, before the Jewish people existed, it goes all the way back to the time of *Noakh*.

The events of the flood conclude with God's covenant with *Noakh*, with every living creature, and with the Earth, symbolized in the rainbow. He promised that He would never again send a flood to destroy the Earth.

According to 1 Peter 3:20, God's patience was being displayed -- while the ark was being built, God was giving the people time to repent. But the world did not repent; God would start over through Noah. A flood was coming, and *Noakh* and his family needed to be able survive. The Lord tells Noah to make an ark out of gopher wood, the Hebrew word for the wood is *gofer*, thought to mean cypress. Noah is told to cover the ark with pitch inside and out so that it will be waterproof. The Hebrew word for pitch is *kofer*, from the same root as *kippur*, this covering to make the ark watertight uses the same Hebrew root as the covering of our sins on the Day of Atonement.

The Lord also told Noah how big to build the ark. A lot of people may imagine that the ark looked like some of those little cartoon boats in children's story books or in bathtub toys, with a couple of elephants' trunks sticking out the windows and giraffes' necks sticking out the top. We would have to tell them, "*lo, lo, lo*," Hebrew for "no, no, no."

Genesis 6:15 tells us the length was 300 cubits. A cubit is generally thought to be the length of a man's arm from fingertips to elbow, about 18 inches. That would make the length about 450 feet, one and one half times the length of a football field. It would then be 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high! Sometimes, a cubit was even larger than 18 inches, so the ark may have been even larger.

Genesis chapters 7 and 8 tell us about the flood itself and we find a number of clues in the Scriptures that suggest that this was not a local flood. First, we are told that all of humanity was corrupt (Genesis 6:12), so all of humanity would need to be destroyed to start over again with Noah.

Noah was told to build an ark to escape the ravages of the flood. If the flood was local, it would have been easier for God to just tell *Noakh* to move away to a location that would not be flooded. Some have said that if there had been a worldwide flood thousands of years ago, there would not be sufficient time for the world to have recovered, based on how long it was thought that recovery from this type of devastation would take. Then we had the destruction caused by Mount St. Helens in 1980, and the recovery of that area took significantly less time than expected by the scientists. Their argument that the current state of plant life on earth could not have taken place with a devastating flood approximately 5,000 years ago was shown to be incorrect.

The rain that produced the flood lasted 40 days and nights (Genesis 7:12). In addition to the water from the rains, the fountains of the deep opened up (Genesis 7:11). The rains started in the second month when Noah was 600 years old (Genesis 7:11) and the land was not dry enough to leave the ark until over 1 year later (Genesis 8:14). At the height of the flood, all of the mountains were covered, to a depth of over 20 feet (Genesis 7:20). Every animal that wasn't in the ark died. (Genesis 7:21)

This great judgment of the past should also remind us that another great judgment is coming in the future. *Yeshua* said that there will be many similarities between the days of *Noakh* and the world of the Last Days.

Therefore, we will probably soon see to an even greater degree than we do now; the pursuit of pleasure, a greater effort to satisfy the lustful and insatiable desires of the flesh, a greater rejection of the things of God, an increase in violence, many of the righteous falling away, and the majority of the world rejecting the call to repentance during God's time of patience and the world likely will ignore the warnings of coming judgment.

We have a number of places where the scriptures talk about the flood and Noah's deliverance. We saw one in our *haftarah* portion this week. King David wrote of the flood in Psalm 29:10, where he described the Lord as King at the Flood.

Ezekiel writes of Noah in Ezekiel 14:14 referring to a country the Lord might be ready to destroy, "Even though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, by their own righteousness they could only deliver themselves." In 2 Peter 3:6, we read, "the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water." *Yeshua* also refers to the Flood. In Luke 17:26-27, he describes the scene prior to his return as being similar to what was happening in the time of Noah.

After being delivered from the flood, Noah builds an altar to present an offering to the Lord. This is the first mention of an altar in the Scriptures, a special location set aside for giving offerings to the Lord. *Noakh* offers up a burnt offering, because he understood the principle that true worship of the Lord must be based on the blood of a sacrifice. That is how we come closer to God. We are to offer up our lives as living sacrifices unto him for the deliverance from sin that He has provided for us.

Now, even though Noah and his family bring a fresh start for humanity, the fallenness of Adam remains. Man is described by God in Genesis 8:21 as having a heart with an imagination that is evil from its youth. Man still has a natural propensity to go astray from God's commands, to disobey God, to ignore the Creator. It takes more than judgment, even one as devastating as a worldwide flood, to change man's nature. When we become believers, the *Ruach Ha Kodesh*, the Holy Spirit comes to us and will guide our spirits when we submit them to Him. This is the only way that our natural inclination to sin, to rebel, to go astray, can be overcome.

After the flood, Noah and his family are given the same instruction that Adam and Eve received in Genesis 1:28, “Be fruitful and multiply.” (Genesis 9:1) The Lord wants humanity, which has been reduced to 8 human beings, to increase, so that they can repopulate the planet.

Next, starting with chapter 9 verse 2, we have the covenant that God is making with *Noakh*, and with all human beings. This covenant is a *brit olam* – an everlasting covenant, meant for *dorot olam* – all succeeding generations throughout the ages. It contains laws regarding blood and murder that are applicable to all human beings, sometimes referred to as the Noachide laws.

God tells Noah that animals can now be eaten, but the blood of the animal is not to be eaten. God is now showing us that blood is special to him. Blood represents life, blood cleanses (such as when the *Kohen* sprinkles it upon the altar on the Day of Atonements in Leviticus. 16:19). According to Leviticus 17:11, blood is required for there to be atonement.

Noah is also told that murder is prohibited as a crime against God, in whose image man was originally made. The murderer is to be put to death because of this sin against man and God.

As was the case with Adam and Eve, God decides that His covenant will go through only one of the sons of Noah, Shem. Canaan is cursed, because of His father Ham betraying Noah’s modesty, and Japheth will live with Shem. Canaan becomes the Father of the Canaanites, a people who will be driven from the land because of their serving other gods.

Chapter 10 gives us the results of the prophecies concerning the sons of Noah. From these three came seventy nations, who all spoke the same language.

A descendant of *Kham* (Ham) - Nimrod, whose name means "rebel," is the first to accrue power. He uses his strength to begin a kingdom in ancient Babylon. Nimrod is thought by some to have been the person in charge of the building of the tower of Babel, the attempt of repopulated humanity to build a tower up to the heavens. As a result, God confuses the effort by having all of the people speak in different languages.

This event may well be reversed through the miracle described in Acts 2:5-11. The KJV translation gives us the best chance of seeing this. Because it uses the term confound in both cases. At Babel, the language is confounded and in Acts, the people are confounded at the miracle. At the tower of Babel, additional languages were added to confuse the message, to make it difficult for people to communicate with one another. In the miracle of Acts 2, we see an improvement in communication by another supernatural altering of language. In this case, the message of Salvation through *Yeshua* the Messiah, comes to each man in his own language so that he is able to fully understand it.

Our *Torah* portion closes out with the genealogy of Shem down through his line to *Avraham Avinu*, *Avram ben Terach*, Abraham our Father, Abram, son of Terah. *Avram* marries *Sarai*, and together with his nephew Lot, they settle in Haran. In next week's *Torah* portion, we will discuss in detail the life of Abraham, and his special relationship with God.

Now let's discuss for a moment the *haftarah* for this week. We read earlier from Isaiah 54, and this is actually the second time Isaiah 54 is chosen for the *haftarah* portion. Seven weeks ago, we read this portion as one of the 7 "*Haftarot of Consolation*" that is read following the 9th of Av, a day of calamities on the Hebrew calendar. Even though we read Isaiah 54 twice annually, the chapter before it (Isaiah 53) is not read in the traditional Jewish cycle of readings. I wonder why?

Isaiah 54 is chosen here because it contains a reference to the days of Noah. Israel is being described as a barren woman, but the Lord is her husband, He shall be called the God of all the Earth. The woman is forsaken but for a moment, with great mercies will she be regathered. In His anger, He has hidden His face from her, He has withheld His love, but with *chesed olam*, with everlasting kindness, He will take her back and have mercy upon her, says *Adonai Ts'vaot*, the Lord of Hosts, her *goel*, her Redeemer. The Lord now compares His promise to take her back as being like His promise to never again flood the earth. He says, "Just as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor will I rebuke you. Whoever attacks you will surrender to you."

We have seen this prophecy fulfilled on several occasions in Israel's recent history. God continues as He tells His people, "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that rises against you in judgment, you will be able to successfully refute." This is a promise of blessing to Israel that we have seen fulfilled in our day.

The events of Noah teach us that God is longsuffering, but He will not tolerate those who rebel against him forever. At some point, judgment will come. Noah's faith is applauded in Heb 11. Hebrews 11 is known as the chapter of Faith.

Hebrews 11:7 reads, "By trusting, Noah, after receiving divine warning about things as yet unseen, was filled with holy fear and built an ark to save his household. Through this trusting, he put the world under condemnation and received the righteousness that comes from trusting."

Noah spent years building a boat in the midst of dry land, when it had never even rained before, because he believed God when He told him to build an ark so that he would be delivered from the coming judgment of the flood. Noah became an heir of righteousness because of his faith, a faith that we can demonstrate every time we trust and act upon God's promises instead of our own understanding. Will you trust in Him tonight? Will you have faith in His promises? He promised to never again destroy the world by flood. He promised to take his people Israel back, bring them into the land, and protect them from their enemies, as long as they were not serving other gods.

I said recently that it was Mark Twain who described the existence of the Jewish people as proof of God. Mark Twain had some very favorable words to say about the Jewish people in 1898, but it was Blaise Pascal, noted French mathematician and philosopher, who several hundred years earlier responded when King Louis XIV asked him for proof of the supernatural, "Why the Jews, your majesty, the Jews."