



Shabbat Table Talk Page

Overview

- **Parashah: Noach** (נֹחַ, "Noah")
- **Chapters: Genesis 6:9-11:32**



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה

– Torah Study Blessing –

Synopsis

Last week's Torah portion (*Bereshit*) showed how the Fall of Adam and Eve caused humanity to plunge into idolatrous chaos. The wicked generations of Cain (and the ungodly mixture of the human and the demonic through the "nephilim") caused the world to be entirely steeped in anarchy and bloodlust, so that "every intention of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually." After nine generations, the LORD "had enough" and was ready to wipe humanity from the face of the earth. However, God recognized Noah (from the godly line of Seth) as a *tzaddik*, a righteous man, and graciously made provision to save him from the wrath to come. Noah's name comes from the Hebrew verb *nacham* (נָחַם) meaning "to rest." He was named by his father Lamech who said, "Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us *relief* (i.e., *zeh ye'nachamenu*: זֶה יְנַחֵמֵנוּ) from our work and from the painful toil of our hands" (Gen. 5:29). As such, Noah is a type of Messiah who saves the world and gives lasting comfort and rest...

In our reading, God revealed to Noah his intention of destroying all the inhabitants of the earth with a great flood (*mabbul*), and therefore instructed him to build a 450 foot long, three-tiered wooden *teivah* ("ark") coated within and without with pitch. Noah took his wife, his three sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth) and their wives, and two (male and female) of every sort of unclean animal (and seven of every clean) into the ark to be sheltered from the coming deluge.

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month (Cheshvan), on the 17th day of the month, all the "fountains of the great deep" burst forth, and the rain began to fall for 40 days and nights. The waters eventually covered the entire earth, overwhelming even the tops of the highest mountains. After 150 days, the water began to recede, and on the 17th day of the 7th month, the *teivah* came to rest on Mount Ararat. From its perch, Noah dispatched a raven, and then a series of doves, "to see if the waters were abated from the face of the earth." In the six hundred and first year of Noah's life, in second month, on the 27th day of the month, after a stay of 1 year and 11 days (i.e., a complete solar year), the ground was finally dry.

Noah then removed the ark's covering and built an altar to offer sacrifices to God. The LORD then made covenant with Noah and his descendants never to destroy the earth with a flood, and gave the rainbow as its sign.



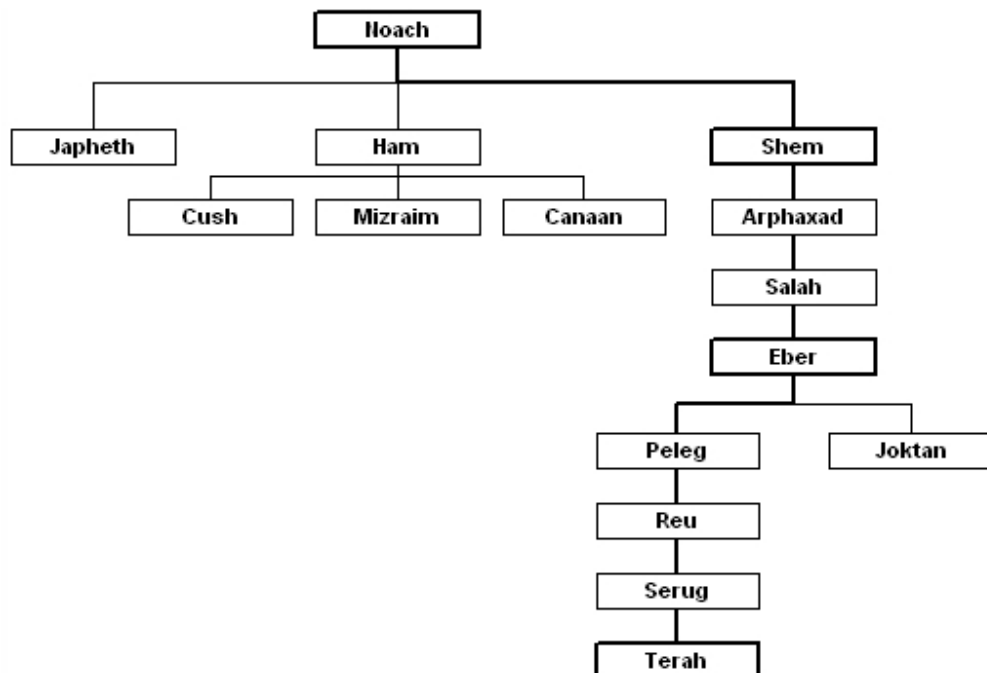
The specific commandments given to the sons of Noah may be summarized as follows:

- The command to be fruitful and multiply (9:1,7)
- The prohibition about eating blood (9:4)
- The prohibition of murder and the institution of capital punishment (9:6)

The parashah then explains the early life of the survivors. “Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Cham (Ham), the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside” (Gen 9:20-22). Because of this Noah cursed Ham’s son, Canaan (though he blessed Shem and Japheth, who “covered the nakedness of their father”).

After this, the parashah describes how the earth was repopulated through Noah’s three sons (as the founders of the “seventy nations” of the Gentiles - as described in the detailed genealogy of Genesis chapter 10). The descendants of Noah remained a single people group with a single language (lashon hakodesh) for ten generations. However, they eventually returned to the evil ways of the “sons of Cain” by uniting in an idolatrous religion that led them to build a “tower with its top in the heavens.” God confounded their evil religion, however, by “confusing their speech” and thereby dispersed the people into the seventy nations of the earth (the abandoned tower was called Bavel (Babel) and is considered by many to be the origin of “Mystery Babylon”).

The Torah portion concludes with a genealogy of the generations from Noah to Terah, a Chaldean (Kasdim) who was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Now Haran (Abram’s brother) died in the city of Ur (in Eastern Babylon) but had a son named Lot, who was made part of Terah’s extended family. Abram married his half-sister Sarai. The reading ends with Terah’s family leaving Ur for the land of Canaan, but stopping to settle in the City of Haran, at the western edge of the Babylonian Empire...





Parashah Questions

1. What does the name *Noah* (נֹחַ) mean? (Gen. 5:29) ¹
2. Why did God want to destroy the world with a flood? ²
3. How does the Torah describe Noah? (Gen. 6:9) ³
4. What did Noah “find” in God’s eyes? (Gen. 6:8) ⁴
5. What did God ask Noah to build? ⁵
6. What were the basic dimensions of the ark? ⁶
7. How many floors or levels (or decks) did the ark contain? ⁷
8. How long did it take to build the ark, and why did it take so long? ⁸
9. What people did Noah take with him onto the ark? ⁹
10. How many of each living thing was Noah to take on the ark? ¹⁰
11. How long did it rain? ¹¹
12. How long was the earth completely submerged under water? ¹²



¹ Noah means “comfort” or “relief,” from the root word *nu’ach* (rest).

² God saw that every intention of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually (Gen. 6:5-7).

³ Noah is called *ish tzaddik* (אִישׁ צַדִּיק), a righteous man, blameless (תָּמִים) in his generation; one who walked with God.

⁴ Noah found “grace” in God’s eyes. The word grace (חֵן), from the verb *hanah*: (חָנַן) means “favor” or “kindness” freely bestowed upon another, not gained through a sense of obligation.

⁵ A *teivah* (תֵּבָה), or a “box” or “ark.”

⁶ 300 amot long (450 feet) by 50 amot wide (75 feet) by 30 amot high (45 feet).

⁷ Three: the top was for people; the middle for animals; and the bottom for storage and garbage...

⁸ It took 120 years to build the ark, which was time for the people of earth to repent and turn to God (Gen. 6:3).

⁹ His three sons and their wives along with his wife.

¹⁰ Two of everything except the clean [kosher] beasts (seven pairs of each) and fowl (also seven pairs).

¹¹ 40 days and 40 nights (Gen. 7:4,12).

¹² 150 days (five months).



13. What bird did Noah send out first? ¹³
14. What bird did Noah send out next? How often, and with what result? ¹⁴
15. How long was Noah and his family in the ark? ¹⁵
16. Where did the ark finally settle? ¹⁶
17. After Noah and his family left the ark, God blessed them and gave them a commandment. What was it, and how often did He give it? ¹⁷
18. What are the so-called seven “Noahide Laws” (*sheva mitzvot b’nei Noach*)? ¹⁸
19. What is the sign of God’s covenant with the creatures of the earth? What was the purpose of this sign? ¹⁹
20. What are the names of Noah’s three sons? ²⁰
21. Ham had four sons. Name three of them and the countries their names represent. ²¹
22. According to Jewish tradition, who was Nimrod? ²²
23. Years *after* the flood, the people of the earth build a tower. Why did they do this? ²³



¹³ The raven (עֹרֵב).

¹⁴ Dove (יוֹנָה). Three times: The first time it returned with an empty beak; the second time it brought an olive leaf; the third time it did not return.

¹⁵ A complete solar year.

¹⁶ The ark settled on the mountains of Ararat (Gen. 8:4).

¹⁷ God told them to “be fruitful and multiply” three separate times.

¹⁸ Not to commit idolatry; not to eat blood; not to murder; not to blaspheme; not to commit incest; not to steal; to establish courts of law. Note that some of these laws are thought to first be given to Adam in the garden.

¹⁹ God put the rainbow (קֶשֶׁת) in the clouds as a memorial of how God promised never to flood the earth again.

²⁰ Shem, Japheth, and Ham (Gen. 6:10).

²¹ Cush (Ethiopia), Mizraim (Egypt), Put (Libya), and Canaan (Phoenicia). See Gen. 10:6.

²² Nimrod was a son of Cush, grandson of Noah, who became a mighty warrior on the earth (Gen. 10:8).

²³ The people build a tower (midgal) to fight against God (or to protect themselves from the threat of another flood). The ringleader of this “new world order” project was Nimrod of Babylon. God judged the people by confounding their language so that they could not complete the tower (midrash: 70 languages were created at this time). Therefore it was called Babel (בְּבֶל), meaning “babble,” though originally the word meant “Gate of God.”



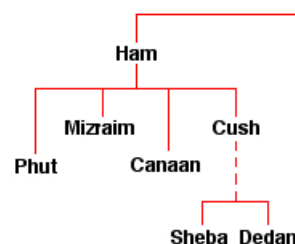
24. Who was Terah and can you name his three sons? ²⁴

25. Who was Lot to Abram? ²⁵

26. Who was Nahor? ²⁶

27. Why is Noah not as highly esteemed as Abraham in Jewish tradition? ²⁷

28. What is the Hebrew blessing for seeing a rainbow? ²⁸



For Next Week:

- Read parashat **Lekh Lekha** (i.e., Genesis 12:1-17:27)
- Read the Haftarah (Isaiah 40:27-41:16)
- Read the New Testament (Rom. 4:1-25; Gal. 4:21-5:1; Heb. 7)



שַׁבָּת שְׁלוֹמִים

S h a b b a t S h a l o m !

²⁴ Terah was a descendent of Noah's son Shem and the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

²⁵ Lot was Abram's brother Haran's son, and therefore was his nephew.

²⁶ Abram's oldest brother who did not go to Canaan but instead remained in Mesopotamia. Later, Isaac's wife Rebekah would come from this family, as would Jacob's wives Leah and Rachel.

²⁷ The rabbis point out that God told both of them that he was going to destroy people; Abram interceded on behalf of others, but Noah didn't, which suggested to them that Abram was more compassionate than Noah.

²⁸ The blessing goes: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם זֹכֵר הַבְּרִית וְנֶאֱמָן בְּבְרִיתוֹ וְקִיָּם בְּמֵאֲמָרוֹ - *barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melek ha'olam, zokher ha'berit ve'ne'eman bivrito, vekayam be'ma'amaro*: "Blessed are you LORD our God, who remembers his covenant and is faithful to his covenant, and whose word endures forever."