

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*.'" And then suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, *another voice* spoke – *and another message* began to be broadcast. The '*ki-tov*' message of the Holy One was twisted and misapplied by the serpent, who re-characterized that which the Holy One had created '*tov*' [i.e. good] only in terms of being *tov l'ma'achal vechi ta'avah-hu la'eynayim v'nechmad l'haskil* - i.e. *good for consumption, and for pleasuring the eye, and for acquiring coveted experience and information.*'

The difference in messages was subtle but profound. 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 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. 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***".

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*'.

Things went 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. As the parsha of beginnings closed 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 the second parsha of Torah, *'every inclination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil all the time.'* Genesis 6:6.

Did you catch that: EVERY inclination of the thoughts of man's heart was ONLY EVIL - ALL OF THE TIME! Wow. What a difference a week – and a little cuddling up with the serpent - makes!

What in Heaven's name 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 Parsha 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*.

The Holy One's Thoughts are Revealed

The writer of Torah then takes the reader into the very mind of the Creator. He designed Creation. He, like the ultimate architect and engineer, knew exactly what levels of corruption and oppression the world He had designed and formed could withstand, and what would destroy it. So when the Holy One inspected the world, He knew something drastic had to be done to save it, and keep His Glorious Redemptive Plan for mankind and Creation moving forward. He carefully drafted a blueprint for radical remediation and replenishing, and shared that plan with the one man in the entire earth who would listen and cooperate. The man, of course, was Noach.

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 telling Noah: “*The end [ha-ketz – i.e. the fullness, or mature state] of all flesh [basar] - has come before Me.*” *The Holy One then tells Noah what He is about to do, and instructs him to build a teivah [i.e. ark] for his family and for representatives of every kind of living species.*

The Season of Ark-Building

Torah does not specifically tell us how long it took Noah to build the ark. Rashi says that it took 120 years – an entire generation. Did people see Noah building the huge contraption, and ask him why? Did people laugh at 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.

Final Preparations 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* [i.e. ‘clean’, or uncorrupted/unpolluted in a Biblical sense] species of animal, but only one pair of any species of animals that was *lo tahor* [i.e. unclean, or corrupted/polluted in a Biblical sense].

The Flood Begins

The flood began according to tradition, on the 17th day of the moon of Cheshvan. It rained – and the fountains of the earth burst forth simultaneously - for 40 days and 40 nights. The waters increased to a height of 22-1/2 feet above the highest mountains. The water stayed upon the entire earth for 150 days. All human beings, animals, creeping things, and fowl, that were not in the ark when the Flood came perished.

The Aftermath of the Flood

Eventually the waters receded and the tevah came to rest on mount Ararat. The Holy One then told Noah to leave the ark with his wife and his sons with their wives, the animals and fowl and creeping things.

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 mankind that He would never again destroy all flesh with floodwaters. The Holy one blessed Noah and his sons and empowered them all to *be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth.*

The Divine Instructions for Replenishing the Earth in the Critical Aftermath of the Flood

The Holy One then, for the season of replenishing, gave mankind permission to eat meat. They were not, however, to eat the flesh of any animal while it was alive. The consequences for the shedding of blood were then spelled out.

The Noachic-Covenant and Its Sign

The Covenant the Holy One made with man after the flood was then memorialized with a sign – the sign of the ‘bow in the clouds’.

Noach’s Vineyard

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 so overcome by intoxication that he passed out. One of Noach’s sons, Cham, uncovered Noach’s nakedness and mocked him cruelly. Noach's other two sons, Shem and Yafet, saw what Cham had done and honored their father by covering him up without allowing their eyes to see him in his worst moment.

Noach’s Prophetic Blessing

When Noach awoke and discovered what had transpired while he was passed out, he proclaimed a blessing over Shem and Yafet. But he also declared prophetically that Cham's grandson, Kana’an, and all his progeny, would live under severe restrictions and limitations, and would forever be subservient to the descendants of Shem and Yafet.

Torah then lists the descendants of Noach's three sons and describes the nations and people groups that devolved from them.

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

Refusing the Holy One’s direction to go forth, fill, and replenish the earth, people in the generations after Noach decided to settle instead in the plain of Shinar. They did not pursue relationship with or sh’ma the Voice of the Holy One, but instead decided to build a city to their own glory and a tower to reach heaven. The Holy One stopped the original ‘new world order’ plan by confusing the people, and causing them to separate according to languages and dialects.

From Noach to Avram

Parsha Noach will then conclude 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 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.***

Are you confused? 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 End of Days?

The American movie industry has spared no expense over the past few years to startle us with graphic depictions of make-believe or hypothetical events which threaten to bring about ‘DOOMSDAY’ - the end of the world (at least as we know it). From the horror of nuclear war to the spectacle of menacing asteroids our senses have been bombarded with image after image, frame after frame, of imaginary devastation, conjured up by teams of sci-fi authors, screenwriters, and special effects wizards. “*Whew!*”, we say, “*I'm glad it's just a movie!*”

Moreover, in most of these human-conceived, fictional accounts, the ultimate destruction which we are caused to fear never really happens - at the last minute the world is rescued by some main character's ingenuity or heroic action, and

humanity is left to carry on much as it was, albeit amidst the make-believe rubble and in theoretically reduced numbers.

Hollywood is always concerned about preserving the basis for a sequel.

For these reasons the citizens of Earth are scarcely in a state of hysteria, despite Hollywood's surreal house of horrors on the one hand, AND despite the horrific 9/11 disaster, bombings and beheadings throughout the world, the constant threat of the outbreak of bio-terrorism, drastic stock market fluctuations, worldwide famine, rampant crime, and increasingly frequent earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, hurricanes, freakish destructive weather patterns, anthrax and E-coli outbreaks, and a myriad of other similar and very real events on the other hand. Most of the planet's inhabitants remain virtually anesthetized, somewhat like a Yellowstone Park bear, momentarily startled by the backfire of an automobile, returning contentedly to graze amidst the garbage heap of the campground.

After all, all is well that ends well, isn't it?

But *what if* - imagination, special effects, and the last minute heroics of on-screen characters aside - 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?

Getting More Specific

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*"?

Not Just a Terrifying Vision

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 grandson of *Metusaleh* and great-grandson of *Chanoch* [Enoch] the scenario described was not only a terrifying vision but an *inescapable reality*.

Mark it well Beloved. The call to Noah was not a call to intercede for his city or to evangelize or engage in public ministry, or even to call those who would listen

to repentance - it was a solemn call to retreat with his family, gather 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 prepare to start 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 begin to *see the "days of Noah" through the eyes of the Holy One.*

The Days of Noah

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*³ says he was an inventor of agricultural tools and implements that to some degree lightened the 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 only explanation [according to Hebrew sages] was that the Creator whom this man loved so much and with whom this ancestor of Noah was so intimate had *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

³ *Midrash* consists of legends or stories used by rabbis and sages to homiletically fill in historical details that are omitted by the Bible.

the Holy One insisted on living righteously, had no place in such a world.

What was valued in Enoch's and Noah's world, amongst the populace of the earth alive at the time, was certainly not righteousness. Nor was communion with the Holy One something sought after or cultivated in that culture. Profit and pleasure and self-indulgence were the order of the day. 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.

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. Somehow a man who “walked with God” did not belong - and certainly was not welcome - there. It was altogether right that God had “taken” Enoch.

But 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 Noah'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 Noah 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:

Ketz kol-basar ba l'fanai

'An end⁴ of all flesh has come . . .

⁴ Note 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.

v'hineni mash'chitam et-ha-aretz
And Behold, I will destroy⁵ all mankind with the earth'.
[Genesis 6:13]

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'neycha v'ishtecha
you and your sons and your wife

ush'nei-v'neycha itach
and your sons' wives with you.
[Genesis 6:17-18]

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

. . . family devotion time . . .

. . . gathering gopherwood together . . .

. . . making lots of measurements . . .

. . . sounds of hammers and saws. . .

⁵ The word translated as 'destroy' is a form of the Hebrew word *shachat*, which is the same word translated as 'corrupted' in Genesis 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'. In other words, 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.

... 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 ... ;
... need I go on?

Getting to the Point

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

Everything is changing – *everything*, that is, *except* the Eternal Word and the Covenants of God.

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 Noah – 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 favor in God's eyes.

He found ***GRACE?*** Really? ***Grace?***

Remember that this was long, long before Messiah Y'shua 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'. So here is the stunning truth - whether our theologies like it or not, *grace* has been that which sustained mankind all along. 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 Noah Knew

The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as "*found favor/grace*" is ***chen***, *chet*, *nun sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word # 2580, pronounced *khane*. It comes from the verb root ***chanan***, *chet*, *nun*, *nun sofit*, [Strong's Hebrew word #2603, pronounced *khaw-nan*]. This Hebrew word means to go beyond covenant commitment or obligation, and extend or incline oneself toward someone, to reach out to someone, to meet someone more than halfway, out of goodwill.

The Hebrew word picture provides an apt description of what the Holy One is going to do in the days of Noah. 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 chose to see good, and so He will look for, and find, good. He will find it in the form of Noach.

Do not misunderstand what I am saying. Do not equate ‘good’ with ‘sinlessness’. Noach 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 Noach sometimes ‘slip up’? Undoubtedly. Did Noach’s fleshly appetites and drives sometimes win out over his spiritual side? Most likely. Did Noach’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 how the Holy One chose to see Noach. Parsha Noach tell us how - in light of the *chen* [grace] that Noach found in His eyes – the Holy One saw Noach. The words are not words of judgment. They are words of *chanan* [*chet, nun, nun sofit*] – words of grace.

If you will but *sh’ma* the Words of the Holy One [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], these words describe how the Holy One sees *you* as well. That is, you see, what the Holy One’s *chen* [grace] *is all about*.

Questions Noach Might Ask

So here are the questions Noach, who knew the *chen* [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**? Hmmmnn. Do you know where I can find any gopherwood?*

*May the words of parsha Noach
bring about for you and your loved ones a God-encounter
which will stir each of 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

You are incomparably mighty, My Lord!

m'chai'ai maysim atah

You bring the dead back to life

rav l'hoshea

Captain of our Salvation

M'chalkel chayim b'chesed

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'rofe 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 g'vurot

Who is like You, Master of Miracles?

Melech maymis u'm'chai'ah

O King, Who causes death, then restores life

u'm'tz'miach y'shuah

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