



ב"ה

**Parshas Noach in a Nutshell**

*(Genesis 6:9–11:32)*

G-d instructs Noach — the only righteous man in a world consumed by violence and corruption—to build a large wooden teivah (“ark”), coated within and without with pitch. A great deluge, says G-d, will wipe out all life from the face of the earth; but the ark will float upon the water, sheltering Noach and his family, and two members (male and female) of each animal species.

Rain falls for 40 days and nights, and the waters churn for 150 days more before calming and beginning to recede. The ark settles on Mount Ararat, and from its window Noach dispatches a raven, and then a series of doves, “to see if the waters were abated from the face of the earth.” When the ground dries completely—exactly one solar year (365 days) after the onset of the Flood—G-d commands Noach to exit the teivah and repopulate the earth.

Noach builds an altar and offers sacrifices to G-d. G-d swears never again to destroy all of mankind because of their deeds, and sets the rainbow as a testimony of His new covenant with man. G-d also commands Noach regarding the sacredness of life: murder is deemed a capital offense, and while man is permitted to eat the meat of animals, he is forbidden to eat flesh or blood taken from a living animal.

Noach plants a vineyard and becomes drunk on its produce. Two of Noach’s sons, Shem and Japheth, are blessed for covering up their father’s nakedness, while his third son, Ham, is punished for taking advantage of his debasement.

*(continued next column)*

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The descendants of Noah remain a single people, with a single language and culture, for ten generations. Then they defy their Creator by building a great tower to symbolize their own invincibility; G-d confuses their language so that “one does not comprehend the tongue of the other,” causing them to abandon their project and disperse across the face of the earth, splitting into seventy nations.

The Parshah of Noach concludes with a chronology of the ten generations from Noah to Abram (later Abraham), and the latter’s journey from his birthplace of Ur Casdim to Charan, on the way to the land of Canaan. ❖

*Bulletin  
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**Halachic Zmanim**  
Shabbos, October 24  
Eastern Daylight Time  
Earliest Tallis ..... 6:21 AM  
Latest Morning Shema .... 9:57 AM  
Earliest Mincha (Gedola) ..1:08 PM  
Plag Hamincha .....4:59 PM  
Earliest Evening Shema ....6:31 PM

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**Shabbos Schedule**

**Erev Shabbos – Oct 23 / Cheshvan 5**

Candle Lighting.....5:45 pm

Mincha .....5:45 pm

**Shabbos Day – Oct 24 / Cheshvan 6**

Shacharis..... 9:30 am\*

Torah Reading .....10:30 am

Rabbi Drasha ..... 11:05 am

Kiddush ..... 12:05 pm

Mincha .....5:45 pm

Rabbi’s Drasha.....6:15 pm

Shabbos Ends .....6:44 pm

*\*Latest morning Shema is now 9:57 AM. Be sure to recite the Shema at or before that time (even if at home).*

**Weekday Schedule (not on a holiday):**

**Minyan**

Shacharis (Mon-Fri) .....6:15 am

Shacharis (Sunday) ..... 9:00 am

Mincha (Sun-Thurs) .....1:45 pm

Maariv (Sun-Thurs) .....9:15 pm

Doing mitzvahs with joy and loving G-d, who gave them to us, is a great form of Divine service

-- Maimonides

## Chassidic Masters

### “Hollow Tower”

*Based on the teachings of  
the Lubavitcher Rebbe  
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*They said to one another: “. . . Let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top shall reach the heavens; and we shall make for ourselves a name, lest we be scattered over the face of the entire earth . . .”*

*G-d dispersed them from there across the face of the earth, and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel (confusion), for there G-d confused the language of the world . . .  
(Genesis 11:3–9)*

What was their sin? Their motives for building a city with a tower “whose top shall reach the heavens” seem quite understandable. Mankind was only just reconstructing itself after the Flood that had wiped out the entire human race, save for Noah and his family. If fledgling humanity was to survive, unity and cooperation were of critical importance. So they set out to build a common city to knit them into a single community. At its heart, they planned a tower which would be visible for miles, a landmark to beckon to those who had strayed from the city, and a monument to inspire commitment to their common goal — survival. All they wanted was to “make for ourselves a name” — to ensure the continuity of the human race.

And yet, their project to preserve humanity deteriorated into a rejection of all that humanity stands for, and an open rebellion against their Creator and purpose. Their quest for unity resulted in the breakup of mankind into clans and factions, and the onset of close to four thousand years of misunderstanding, xenophobia and bloodletting across the divisions of race, language and culture. Where did they go wrong?

But precisely that was their error: they saw survival as an end in itself. “Let us make a name for ourselves,” they said; let us ensure that there will be future generations who will read of us in their history books. But why survive? For what purpose should humanity inhabit the earth? What is the content of the name and legacy they are laboring to preserve? Of this they said, thought and did nothing. To them, life itself was an ideal, survival itself a virtue.

This was the beginning of the end. No physical system will long tolerate a vacuum, and this is true of spiritual realities as well: unless a soul or cause is filled with positive content, corruption will ultimately seep in. A hollow name and shrine soon becomes a tower of Babel.

#### **After the Flood**

Never has the lesson of the Tower of Babel been more pertinent to our people than it is today.

We, too, are a generation struggling to recoup after a holocaust of destruction that threatened to erase us from the face of the earth. Reconstruction and survival are uppermost in our minds, and together, with the Almighty’s help, we are succeeding.

At a time like this, it is extremely important that we not repeat the error of the builders of Babel. Rebuild we must, but the objective must be more than a more enduring name, a greater city, a taller tower. If we are to survive, we must give import to our survival, reiterate the “why” of our existence. We must fill our name with value, our city with significance, and crown the tower of our resurgence with the higher purpose for which we were created. ❖

### **Incense Portion**

#### ***Exodus 30:22–38***

Although we unfortunately no longer have the Temple, the Kabbalists say that by reading the portion in the Torah that discusses the incense, it is as if one actually brought it. Thus, although many have the custom to recite this portion daily, one should take extra care to learn and recite it at the time of an epidemic.

## From Our Sages

***In thG-d said to Noah: “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them” (6:13)***

*Why was the generation of the Flood utterly destroyed, but not the generation of the Tower? Because the generation of the Flood were consumed by robbery and violence, while amongst the generation of the Tower, love prevailed.*

-- (Midrash Rabbah)

***G-d said to Noah . . . “Make yourself an ark” (6:13–14)***

*G-d has many ways to save someone; why did he make Noah toil to build the ark? In order that the people of his generation should see him occupied with the task for 120 years, and they should ask him, “Why are you doing this?” and he would tell them that G-d is bringing a flood upon the world. Perhaps this would cause them to repent.*

-- (Rashi; Midrash Tanchuma)

*When G-d said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me,” Noah said: “What will You do with me?” But he did not pray for mercy for the world, as Abraham would pray for the city of Sodom. . . . This is why the Flood is called “the waters of Noah” (Isaiah 54:9)—he is culpable for them, because he did not appeal for mercy on the world’s behalf.*

-- (Zohar)

*Noah tried to save his generation by calling on them to repent. But the fact that he did not pray for them implies that, ultimately, it did not matter to him what became of them. Had he truly cared, he would not have sufficed with “doing his best,” but would have implored the Almighty to repeal His decree of destruction—just as a person whose own life is in danger would never say, “Well, I did my best to save myself” and leave it at that, but would beseech G-d to help him.*

*In other words, Noah’s involvement with others was limited to his sense of what he ought to do for them, as opposed to a true concern for their wellbeing. He understood the necessity to act for the sake of another, recognizing that to fail to do so is a defect in one’s own character; but he fell short of transcending the self to care for others beyond the consideration of his own righteousness.*

*This also explains a curious aspect of Noah’s efforts to reach out to his generation. When the Flood came, Noah and his family entered the ark—alone. His 120-year campaign yielded not a single baal teshuvah (repentant)! Perhaps public relations was never Noah’s strong point, but how are we to explain the fact that in all this time he failed to win over a single individual?*

*But in order to influence others, one’s motives must be pure; in the words of our sages, “Words that come from the heart enter the heart.” Deep down, a person will always sense whether you truly have his interests at heart, or you are filling a need of your own by seeking to change him. If your work to enlighten your fellow stems from a desire to “do the right thing” but without really caring about the result, your call will be met with scant response. The echo of personal motive, be it the most laudable of personal motives, will be sensed, if only subconsciously, by the object of your efforts, and will ultimately put him off.*

-- (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

## Haftorah Noach in a Nutshell

*Isaiah 54:1-10*

Forsaken Jerusalem is likened to a barren woman devoid of children. G-d enjoins her to rejoice, for the time will soon come when the Jewish nation will return and proliferate, repopulating Israel's once desolate cities. The prophet assures the Jewish people that G-d has not forsaken them. Although He has momentarily hid His countenance from them, He will gather them from their exiles with great mercy. The haftorah compares the final Redemption to the pact G-d made with Noah in this week's Torah reading. Just as G-d promised to never bring a flood over the entire earth, so too He will never again be angry at the Jewish people.

*"For the mountains may move and the hills might collapse, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace collapse." ❖*  
ed.

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**שבת שלום גוט שבת!**

