

provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:11-13).

Remember that our Eternal God is always faithful to His people: **“If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself”** (2 Timothy 2:13). While various temptations of this world might be keeping you away from a fervent desire to increase your measure of faith, recognize that by exercising your free will, you can choose to walk by faith—just as multiple examples of faith-filled saints have done down through the centuries. You do not have to fall prey to the lure of the enemy, and can do the right thing when you are tempted. In so doing, the Father will be greatly pleased!

However, it is always up to each one of us to individually exercise and expand our faith, by conscious study and reflection. Each of us must be reminded how, **“faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Messiah”** (Romans 10:17). It is my prayer that by hearing, your faith will be expanded in this next Torah cycle. Through such an expanded faith, may our obedience to God’s Word be manifested—in order to fulfill *all of the good works* that each of us was created to complete!

## **Noach** נֹחַ Noah “A Resting Faith”

Genesis 6:9-11:32  
Isaiah 54:1-55:5 (A); 54:1-10 (S)

Perhaps one of the most compelling testimonies of faith and belief in God, witnessed from the opening chapters of Genesis, is the life of Noah. The example of Noah, in association with the disastrous judgment of the Flood brought upon the world, is something from which we all need to take significant instruction. While the tests and challenges faced by Noah have been praised and heeded by followers of the Creator God down through the ages since, our second Torah portion *also* records some significant unfaithful acts, of those many human beings who have rebelled against the Holy One and suffered the consequences of sin. These contrasting examples continually remind Torah students that there are two distinct paths people can choose to follow.

As we each contemplate the multiple centuries of early human history condensed into the chapters of *Noach*, it is critical to note that distinctions, between the faithful and the faithless, have never really changed to our present day. People will either have faith in the Almighty God, and follow His instructions and directions for living as communicated—or they will demonstrate a breach of faith, and disregard His instructions and directions for living. The consequences of what one chooses really do matter, because the final destiny of every person is determined by either his faith in the Almighty *or* his denial of Him. So, with these points already recognized as a premise, let us examine our *parashah* for this week with these sobering thoughts in mind.

## Evil Always

The closing words of our previous Torah portion, *Bereisheet* (Genesis 1:1-6:8), describe the nearly complete dissatisfaction that the Creator God had with humanity, given how civilization had gotten progressively worse. The Lord decreed that He actually needed to blot out—exterminate—the human race because of its wickedness:

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. **The LORD said, ‘I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.’** But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD” (Genesis 6:5-8).

It is difficult to imagine that the Creator God had this amount of grief over His creation of humankind, and that He was sorry that He had ever done it. What He had previously decreed as *tov meod* (טוֹב מְאֹד), or “very good” (Genesis 1:31), had now become something significantly riddled with wickedness and sin. Seeing that *kol-yetzer machshevot l’bo raq ra* (כָּל-יֵצֵר מַחְשְׁבֹת לְבוֹ רָק רָע), “all purpose (of) thoughts his heart only evil” (Genesis 6:5, editor’s wooden rendering), “The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain” (Genesis 6:5, NIV). God was absolutely distressed about what had befallen human civilization, and drastic action had to be taken. Obviously, falling from the status of being “very good,” to God wanting to exterminate the human race, must have been very distressing.

As our Torah portion for this week opens, we see that there was one individual who found favor in God’s sight: “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD” (Genesis 6:8). What needs to be immediately recognized here is how the Hebrew *chein* (חֵן) or “favor,” was translated by the Greek Septuagint as *charis* (χάρις) or “grace.” **There is certainly grace in the Old Testament!** The favor or grace of God has always been a characteristic of Him.

Why was Noah (and his family of course) the only person who found grace in the sight of the Creator? In the narrative from *Bereisheet* last week, some information is given to readers about the birth of Noah, which appears to give us some clues as to the tasks the Lord intended him to fulfill. Upon Noah’s birth, it is communicated that his father Lamech named him *Noach* (נֹחַ), because he was one who would be able to provide some sort of rest:

“Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. Now he called his name Noah, saying, **‘This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the LORD has cursed.’** Then Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years after he became the father of Noah, and he had *other* sons and daughters. So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died. Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth” (Genesis 5:28-32).

Why would Noah provide rest from how, “Out of the ground which the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands” (Genesis 5:29, RSV)? Does this have to do with the promised seed that was anticipated to come (Genesis 3:15)? Does this have to do with the destiny that Noah was supposed to fulfill? If so, why did Lamech regard the ground as “cursed”? Did this come as a result of the Fall, or

could it have been the result of human sin and how difficult life had become for those still seeking to follow the Creator God?

There are many questions that can be asked about why Noah was named Noah, as what Noah did is considered and probed by each of us from this week's Torah portion. *We need to stay away from far-fetched speculation or guessing, and stick to what is communicated to us about Noah's character and belief.* Noah was one of a select line of people, who in spite of the growth of sin throughout the world of humanity, remained in communion with the One True Creator. As Noah found favor or grace in His sight, he was regarded as righteous (*tzadig*, צַדִּיק) and blameless (*tamim*, תָּמִים), walking with Him. Because of Noah's faithfulness to God and His ways, he was given what must have seemed to be an impossible task to fulfill. Noah would have the job of building an ark that would rescue the animals associated with humanity from the deluge, and he followed the instructions that God gave him:

**“But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.** These are *the records* of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks. Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every *kind* into the ark, to keep *them* alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every *kind* will come to you to keep *them* alive. As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather *it* to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them.’ **Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did”** (Genesis 6:8-22).

Reading what Noah was told, its implications for how human civilization had truly fallen into great evil, and how Noah obeyed—is truly daunting. There are definitely debates over what much of this meant for the participants, how the ark was built, and how the Flood actually took place as an ecological disaster, in contemporary Jewish and Christian theology. The main point, of course, is that sin had to be judged, Noah had to rescue what would survive, and above all how Noah—who among all the people of the world, still had faith in God—*kept faith in God.*

## The Flood Arrives

The test of faith for Noah, in what God had commanded him, would have had to be extraordinary. Yet, Noah labored on the ark project with his sons, and presumably also his

wife and their wives—possibly without any other help (Genesis 7:5-6). Noah faithfully obeyed the instruction of the Lord, and also had to endure the ridicule of his contemporaries, who no doubt chided him for what must have seemed to them an utter folly. In 2 Peter 2:5, Noah is regarded as “a preacher of righteousness.” Even if this is rendered as “a herald of righteousness” (ESV),<sup>7</sup> with no verbal declarations really made—we can know that Noah’s actions in obeying God’s command that he build an ark, surely spoke for themselves. The author of Hebrews would attest in the First Century, how Noah was a great example of faith, as he had obeyed God and prepared the ark, and in the process he condemned the sinful world around him:

“By faith Noah, being warned *by God* about things not yet seen, **in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household**, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Hebrews 11:7).

Apparently, God in His infinite wisdom, chose to condemn the unbelieving world that had broken faith with Him, by Noah’s lengthy construction project. God wanted to show how keeping faith with Him *is absolutely necessary*, in order to be spared from His righteous and holy judgment. We see how after the Flood takes place, the waters recede, and Noah and his family were given the job of repopulating the Earth, that a special covenant was made between Noah and the Lord. Most notably, God promised to never judge the Earth again with such an ecological catastrophe as the Flood:

As a reward for Noah’s faithfulness, the Lord established a permanent covenant with Noah and his descendants. This, in essence, reiterated the covenant that was first established with Adam, but now had some additional statements regarding the preciousness of blood, prohibitions against murder, and promises to never flood the Earth again with a visible covenantal sign notable by the rainbow:

“And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth... Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man. As for you, be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.’ Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, ‘**Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.**’ God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.’ And God said to Noah, ‘This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth’” (Genesis 9:1, 6-17).

Following the great disaster of the Flood, and given the job for humanity to literally “start over,” Noah, his sons, and their future descendants would never have to fear another

<sup>7</sup> Grk. *dikaiousunēs kēruka* (δικαιοσύνης κήρυκα).

flood of water destined to wipe out civilization. But in spite of the knowledge of the Flood, which would not only make its way into the record of Holy Scripture, but *also* many Ancient Near Eastern mythologies<sup>8</sup>—human civilization at large has had extreme difficulty remaining faithful to the Creator God, and staying away from the torrent of evil that caused the Flood in the first place!

## The Tower of Babel

The narrative of *Noach*, while dominated by the account of the Flood, does continue on. Noah's descendants had children, and they began to repopulate Planet Earth (Genesis 10). From God's perspective, He desired humanity to expand around the globe, but there was still a problem present within the hearts of people. Would people keep faith in Him as the Creator, obeying His direction—or would people break faith in Him, following their own devices for living? The great contrast between the faithful and the unfaithful is evident in the testimony we see of Nimrod, who was a mighty hunter, and who founded his own kingdom (Genesis 10:8-10).

In the account of what transpired at Babel, the epitome of the unfaithfulness of fallen humanity is witnessed. Nimrod and his followers disobeyed God's specific commands to populate the Earth, by not only building a great city, but making the effort to build a tower that would reach up into Heaven itself. God's response to this action was to confuse human language, so that people would not be able to easily communicate with one another, and they would have no choice but to spread abroad into different linguistic and ethnic communities:

“Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and burn *them* thoroughly.’ And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. They said, ‘Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *will reach* into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.’ The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. **The LORD said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech.’** So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:1-9).

God was certainly not pleased with the actions of Nimrod and his cohorts. If they kept on building their great tower, the observation of the Lord was actually, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them” (NJPS). The building of a tower to reach up into Heaven, into the realm of the Creator, would mean *what*? Going into Heaven to demand a supernatural place of authority alongside of God? Going into Heaven to actually overthrow God? Obviously, either one of these was impossible to do, but human ingenuity and unity *for rebellious*

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<sup>8</sup> Consult the article “Encountering Mythology: A Case Study From the Flood Narratives” by J.K. McKee, appearing in *Confronting Critical Issues*.

*activities* against the Creator was epitomized by the Tower of Babel. So, God confused the languages of people, and forced those at Babel to disband and separate, spreading out across the Earth.

In the scene of the Tower of Babel, a definite example of faithlessness—demanding one’s own will in defiance of God’s will—is crystal clear. People can either keep faith in God, and obey His directions, *or* they can break faith with God and suffer the consequences. Our Twenty-First Century generation needs to surely heed the example of the Tower of Babel and what it represents for global unity, because we largely have no significant language barriers to overcome. The barriers and divisions we have are political, ideological, and economic. Yet, if human civilization were ever to put some of these aside, what might this communicate in terms of our relationship with the Creator? Obviously for people who are faithful to our Heavenly Father and the Messiah Yeshua, it is said, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1). When it comes to those who are unfaithful to the Holy One, we see something more like, “The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed” (Psalm 2:2). **Such will be what takes place when the antimessiah/antichrist finally arrives onto the scene of history.**

## The Days of Noah to Come

Naturally, many skeptics, in today’s faithless world, will disparage and ridicule the account of the Flood and the Tower of Babel, just like they will mock the account of Creation and the Fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden. But, we need to take comfort in knowing that mocking God and His Word are to be expected, as the End of the Age approaches, and as Believers await the return of the Messiah. The Apostle Peter communicated,

“[T]hat you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior *spoken* by your apostles. **Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.’** For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:2-7).

Without wanting to read too much into Peter’s statements above, other than Peter describing how the account of the Flood has significant importance for those who will face the end-times, we can safely deduce that there will be a generation of supposed Bible Believers who will mock the message of Holy Scripture. These will be people who will assume that since life has gone on as it always has gone on, that there will be no Second Coming of the Messiah, and with it the *complete arrival* of the Kingdom of God on Earth. Just as the Flood came suddenly and swiftly, judging a generation of sinful people—so will the end-times suddenly and swiftly judge the final generation when it finally arrives. The Messiah Himself spoke of the days leading up to His return, as being like the days of Noah:

**“For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.** For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in

marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:37-39).

While sudden judgment will come upon the sinful world in the time leading up to Yeshua’s return, we should all be very mindful of how much of what occurred in the time leading up to the Flood will be repeated on some level. There is nothing more horrifying than considering the great evil that was perpetuated in human hearts and minds (Genesis 6:5-7). While in the pre-deluge society, people could probably have only killed other people with primitive weapons of war—today the stakes are immensely higher. **The means to kill people are significantly more advanced and more lethal, as humanity does possess the legitimate ability to suffer self-extinction.** Just this past Summer (2011), when my daughter Maggie was at her CORTRAMID training for the Navy, she spent three days aboard a nuclear ballistic missile submarine, with enough firepower to wipe out the population of half the United States. While an Ohio class submarine with Trident II missiles is intended to be a weapon of deterrence, under the careful control of a responsible government that will only launch nuclear missiles as a last resort—think about all of the rogue states and leaders and groups out there, who would love to have weapons of mass destruction. Unfortunately, given the prophetic reality that we read about in Scripture, such weapons will be used at one point or another by someone.

While each of us must have a steadfast faith in the God of Creation, to believe in His Word, that there was a real Flood that wiped out humanity in Noah’s day, and that we are to learn lessons for the end-times—how much faith do we have to display in recognizing that the Sovereign Lord Himself presently withholds the full force of evil from being unleashed on Planet Earth? Why has there not been a nuclear bomb detonated in a city, since Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945? Why has there not been another 9/11 terrorist attack since 2001? Should we not be grateful for the level of “peace” that was present throughout the Cold War?

As we peruse the Torah this year, with the theme of faith in mind, there is no better admonition for us to consider, than how the Apostle Paul once said, **“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!** Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Yeshua the Messiah is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test” (2 Corinthians 13:5-6). At some point in the future, and we are already seeing it grow today, the evil and sin of the world will reach a point like that manifested in the time of Noah. The people of the world will fall into the two distinct categories (1) of being faithful to God, and (2) being unfaithful to God. While there will surely be more than just the eight righteous who were spared from the Flood (1 Peter 3:20), the need for us to make sure that there are hundreds of millions of righteous people who possess faith in Yeshua is great!

Examine yourself and make sure that you are among the faithful! Make sure that you have a resting faith, in not only the written Word of God—but most importantly in the atoning work of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ)! **Be sure that you are faithful to the Lord, and that you can pass whatever tests are to come!**