

Noah

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“Noah”

Genesis 6:9 – 11:32

Torah Together



This *Torah* portion tells the story of Noah and the Flood. Some people believe the historical account given in this story is true while others believe it to be myth. In either case, by studying this story, there are some truths about God’s character to be discovered that can help us understand how he feels about mankind and how He interacts with us.

1. The Flood - 6:9 - 8:22

a) How is Noah described in 6:9? What do you think it means to be righteous and to walk with God?

To be righteous is to follow God’s principles of justice and mercy. To walk with God implies a relationship with God. Hebrews 11:7 tells us that Noah had faith in God to build the ark at his command. (See Genesis 15:6 and Micah 6:6-8 for more discussion)

b) What was God’s assessment of the earth at this time? What characteristics of man did God find objectionable? Does **Matthew 24:37-39** provide additional insight?

The earth was corrupt. It seems that God particularly objected to the violence that filled the earth. People were oblivious to God’s displeasure.

c) Describe the physical ark that Noah was to build. What were its dimensions in modern units? Do you think it was big enough to do the job?

The ark had 3 decks and measured approx. 450’ long x 75’ wide x 45’ high. It had a large door in the side and vent windows at the top. Logistical studies have been done to prove the ark’s suitability. (See the website www.arkvannoach.com)

d) How many of which kinds of animals was Noah to take into the Ark? How do you think Noah knew about “clean” and “unclean” animals? Was Noah obedient?

Noah was to bring pairs of all unclean animals and 7 of all clean animals and birds. (It is unclear whether this is 2 pairs & 7 pairs or not.) It has been suggested that the extra clean animals were so that there would be animals for Noah to sacrifice when the flood was over. As Noah “walked with God”, He evidently explained clean and unclean animals to him. In verses 6:22 and 7:5, it says that Noah did all that God commanded him.

Scripture Link:

Hebrews 11:7 states, “By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.” Can you imagine what it must have been like to invest the time and energy to build this enormous structure based only on his belief that God was going to do this unbelievable thing?

Would the Ark Float?

Maritime engineers have examined the sea worthiness of a vessel built as described in this passage. It has been shown that such a craft would float low in the water with little chance of overturning and with limited maneuverability. Just what the ark would need!

The First Rain?

Some believe that it had not rained on earth before the flood. (See **Genesis 2:5-6**) Originally, the atmosphere may have held a large volume of water vapor, keeping the environment cloudy with a constant temperature. This cloud cover may also have provided some protection from the deteriorating effects of solar radiation. With the introduction of rain, the cloud cover would have been largely removed. The increased solar radiation may have played a part in decreasing the lifespan of men from slightly less than 1000 years to between 100 and 200 years.



Where is Mt. Ararat?

Mt. Ararat is the highest mountain in Turkey, located in the eastern part of the country in the Anti-Taurus range.

e) How old was Noah when the flood began? Can you date the flood from the time of Adam's creation? At what time of year did the flood begin? From where did the flood waters come?

Noah was 600 when the flood came. Based on the genealogy in Genesis 5, the flood occurred in the year 1656 after Adam's creation. According to 7:11, the flood began on the 17th of the second month (or Iyar), which would be late spring. The flood waters came both from "the fountains of the deep" or underground springs and from "the windows of the heavens" or rain. It rained for 40 days and nights.

f) How was the door of the ark shut once they were all inside? How long did the rain last? How deep were the floodwaters? How long did the floodwaters cover the earth?

Genesis 7:16 records that God himself closed the door of the ark after Noah and his family had entered. The flood waters continued for 40 days and nights covering the earth to a depth of 20 feet above the mountain peaks. When the rain stopped, the waters remained on the earth for 150 days.

g) Where and when did the ark come to rest? When did mountaintops become visible? How did Noah test to see if the flood waters had receded enough to support animal life? When did Noah come out of the ark? How long had they lived in the ark?

The ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat on the 17th of the seventh month (Tishri). The mountaintops became visible on the 1st day of the tenth month (Tevet). Noah released a dove. The first time it returned because it found no resting place. He released it again 7 days later and it returned with a fresh olive branch. After 7 more days he released it a third time and it didn't return, indicating that it found a suitable nesting place. Noah and his family came out of the ark on the 27th of the second month (Iyar) of his 601st year. They had lived on the ark for about a year.

h) What did Noah do first after leaving the ark? Why do you think he did this? Was God pleased?

After leaving the ark, Noah built an altar to God and sacrificed burnt offerings on it. Although God had moved him to do this, it was also an expression of his thanks to God for his and his family's safety during the flood.

2. God's Covenant with Noah - 9:1-17

a) In God's blessing to Noah and his sons recorded in verses 1-3, what pronouncement does He make about the animals of the earth? What do you think life was like on earth before the flood?

God tells Noah that all animals will "fear and dread" man and will be his for food. This seems to imply that prior to the flood, animals and man lived together more harmoniously than they do today and that man was a vegetarian.

b) In verse 4, what restriction does God place on the things man may eat? How are mankind and animals tied together in verse 5? What do you think this means?

God tells Noah that mankind is not to eat meat with the lifeblood still in it. God says that anytime blood is shed, whether man or animal, God will demand an accounting. God places extreme value and importance on blood.

c) Verses 8 - 17 record the covenant that God establishes with Noah. Who are the parties to this covenant? What is promised and by whom? Was this covenant conditional or unconditional? What is the sign of this covenant?

The Noahic Covenant is between God as one party and Noah, his descendants, and with every living creature as the other party. God promises unconditionally to never again destroy all life of the earth by flood. The sign of this covenant is the rainbow.

Humans and Animals

The implications of **Genesis 9:2-3** are very interesting. It can be assumed that before this time, the relationship between man and animals may have been much closer than what we experience today. Furthermore, since God tells Noah that "everything that lives and moves will be food for you," it may also be that before this, man lived on a total vegetarian diet.

The Concept of Covenant

A **covenant** is a **contract** or a **promise** between two parties. In the ancient middle east, when two parties "cut a covenant," a solemn ceremony was undertaken, usually involving an animal sacrifice. The idea was to agree that "may it be done to me as was done to this animal if I break the promise I am entering into today." Covenants could be **conditional** (involving acts that were required of one or both of the parties for the covenant to take effect) or **unconditional**. There were often **witnesses** to the covenant and sometimes a **sign** was defined as a reminder and outward symbol that the parties were in a covenant relationship.

"So God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.'"

Genesis 9:17

Why curse Ham's son, Canaan?

This entire incident may seem strange - what exactly had Ham done that was so wrong? At the very least, Ham was guilty of not honoring his mother and father, the fifth commandment. It also shows a moral flaw in Ham's character, perhaps a preoccupation with sex and the misfortune of others. The fact that Noah pronounces his curse not on Ham, but on his fourth son, Canaan, can be seen as prophetic. When God instructs the Israelites as they prepare to enter the Promised Land several hundred years later, He tells them to "totally destroy" the Canaanites because of their complete depravity (**Deuteronomy 7:1-2**).

3. The Sons of Noah - 9:18-29

a) After the flood, what agricultural activity did Noah pursue? Describe the incident that this led to. Which of Noah's sons acted honorably and which acted dishonorably? What do you think God is telling us through this episode?

After the flood, Noah planted a vineyard. One day, he got drunk on his wine and lay naked in his tent. His son Ham found him and ridiculed Noah to his brothers. His brothers acted honorably, respectfully covering their father. Several lessons can be taught here, but one is certainly God's commandment to honor your mother and father. (Another school of thought is that the phrase "saw his father's nakedness" is a Hebrew idiom meaning that Ham had sexual relations with his father's wife. The word 'nakedness,' which is "ervah" (Strong's 6172) and means "to shame or to leave destitute," is also used in Lev. 18:6-19; 20:11, 19-21. This is not a widely held view.)

b) As a result of this incident, Noah pronounces a prophecy over his sons. Which son is cursed? How? What do you find interesting about this prophecy?

Noah curses Ham (interestingly, through his son Canaan) declaring him to be a slave to his brothers. Noah also indicates that Shem's descendants will have preeminence over Japheth's, although Japheth's will be more numerous. It may be that Canaan is specifically mentioned because it is his descendants that are living in the promised land when the Israelites come in to possess it.

c) How old was Noah when he died? What year was this from the creation of Adam?

Noah died when he was 950 which would be the year 2006 from Adam.

4. The Table of Nations - 10:1-32

a) The descendants of the sons of Noah are the founders of the nations of the earth. Identify as many nations as you can from their ancient names given in this chapter. Do you see any general pattern in the location of these nations? (See map on page 14)

The Japhethites included Gomer (Slavic), Magog (Russia), Javan (Greece), Tubal & Meshech (Asia Minor), Kittim (Cyprus) & Rodanim (Rhodes). The Hamites included Cush (Ethiopia), Mizraim (Egypt), Put (Libya), Canaan (Israel). The Shemites include Asshur (Assyria), Aram (Syria), Arphaxad (Media), Joktan (Arabia). In general, it appears that the Hamites populated Africa, the Japhethites populated Europe, and the Shemites (or Semites) populated Asia. There are 70 nations in all, a number which symbolizes universality in the Bible.

b) What descendant is specifically called out as a “mighty hunter”? What cities did he found?

Nimrod, a Hamite, founded Babylon, Akkad, Ninevah, and Resen, all cities in Shinar, the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Some believe that Nimrod became the first king over men and it was he who oversaw the construction of the tower of Babel. (See map on page 10)

5. The Tower of Babel - 11:1-9

a) What materials were used to build the Tower of Babel and where was it constructed? What might this indicate about the state of mankind at this time?

The tower was made of baked bricks mortared with tar and built on a plain in Shinar, present day Iraq. Civilization had evidently become somewhat complex involving specialization of labor and governmental organizations.

b) What was the stated purpose for building the tower? What was God’s conclusion after he observed this activity? What did God do about this situation?

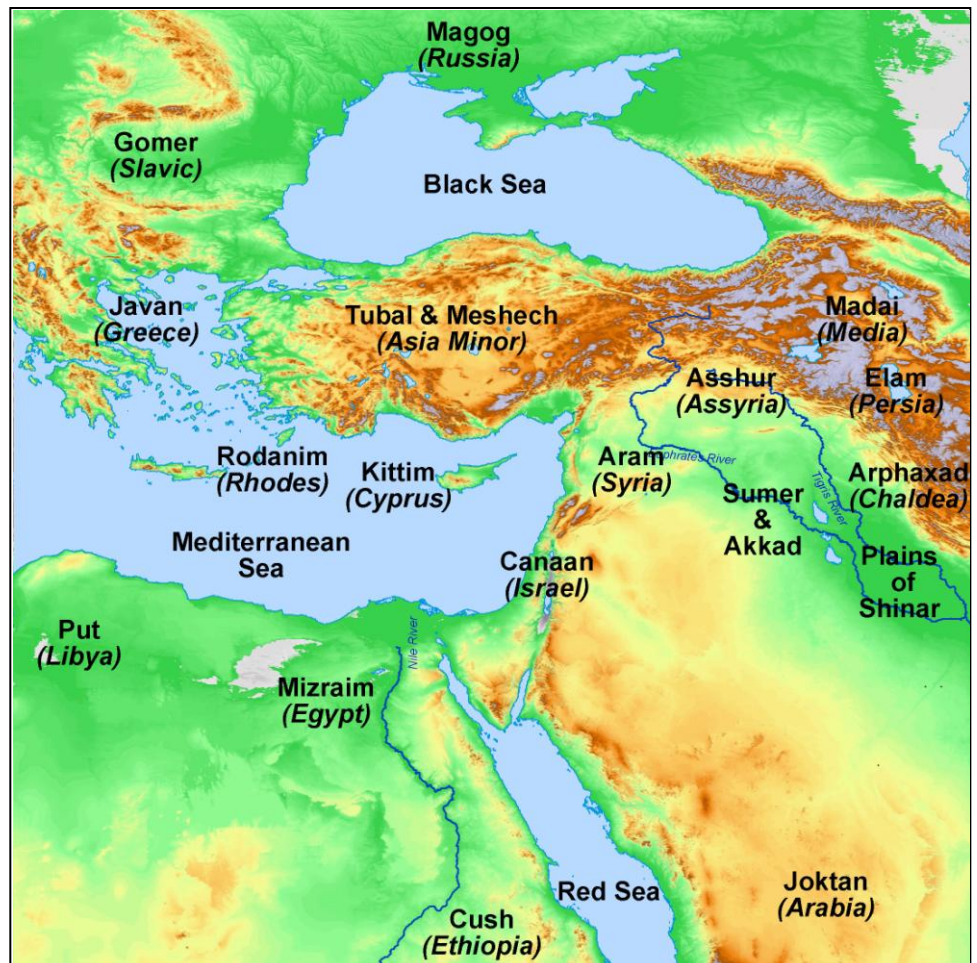
The people wanted to “make a name for themselves and not be scattered over the earth” (verse 4). God saw that by living together and speaking one language, nothing that the human race could conceive was beyond their capabilities. God confused their language, giving different languages to Noah’s descendants. Thus they quit work and separated themselves.

c) Given where the Tower of Babel was constructed and who was active there at this time (see **Genesis 10:8-12**), who do you think might have initiated this project?

According to Genesis 10:8-12, it was Nimrod, a Hamite, who lived in this geographical area and it may have been him who became a ruler over the people and initiated the construction project.

The Order of Events

Most Bible scholars believe that the events in **Genesis** Chapter 10 happened after those in Chapter 11. This seems reasonable because Chapter 11 gives the account of the Tower of Babel in which mankind’s languages were confused and yet Chapter 10 tells of the dispersion of the various people groups throughout the world. Thus the event described in Chapter 11 caused the events described in chapter 10. Why are they in reverse order? It may be because the writer (Moses) wanted to list the genealogy of Abraham before beginning his story in Chapter 12.



The Table of Nations

This map shows what many scholars believe to be the areas settled by the various groups described in **Genesis** Chapter 10. Because of a lack of historical records, there is disagreement about some of these locations. Notice that the “Plains of Shinar” are located between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, in Mesopotamia (a word which means “between rivers”). According to **Genesis 10:8-11**, this was the area settled by Nimrod and his followers. This is also the area in which the Tower of Babel was constructed (**Genesis 11:1-2**) leading many to believe that Nimrod was the leader of the group that constructed the tower.

6. From Shem to Abram - 11:10-32

a) Can you calculate the year that Abram was born from the creation of Adam? Was Noah alive when Abram was born? Was Shem? If so, how old were they?

It was previously calculated that the flood occurred in 1656 after Adam. From the information in verses 10-26, we can calculate Abram's birth in 1948. Noah lived 350 years after the flood (Genesis 9:28) and therefore, died in 2006 which would have made him 892 at Abram's birth. Similarly, Shem was 390 when Abram was born.

b) Relate the story of Terah and his sons. What were the names of his sons and their wives? Where did they live originally? Which of them went to Haran? Can you locate these places on a map?

Terah had 3 sons: Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran was the father of Lot. They originally lived in Ur of the Chaldees (near the mouth of the Euphrates river). Haran died prematurely. Abram's wife was Sarai and Nahor's was Milcah. The Jewish sages believe that both Sarai and Milcah were the daughters of Haran. Terah, Abram, Sarai, and Lot (along with their households) left Ur for Canaan but stopped and settled in Haran, near Damascus.

Scripture Link

Acts chapter 7 tells the story of Stephen, a believer in the Messiah in the early church. As a part of his defense before the Sanhedrin, he gives a brief summary of the history of Israel. In **Acts 7:2-4**, he tells the story of Abram leaving Ur and going to Canaan, which of course is consistent with the story in **Genesis 11:31-32**. The original event occurred about 4000 years ago and the event in Acts occurred about 2000 years ago. There is no document in the history of mankind that has accuracy and consistency of the Bible.

Digging deeper

1. The story of Noah's ark is often used to symbolize some of the more important aspects of *Yeshua's* redemptive life, death, and resurrection. What symbolism do you find in this story?

Like Noah, Yeshua was chosen by God to redeem or save all humanity. The flood waters are symbolic of the water of baptism (death of the old nature and rebirth into life by the Spirit). The dove is symbolic of God's Holy Spirit which resides in believers after baptism.

2. In **Genesis 6:18**, God tells Noah that he will establish his covenant with Noah and in Chapter 9 this covenant is described. See what additional information you can find about covenants and how it applies to this story.

- ***A covenant is an agreement between two parties***
- ***It differs from a contract in that it has no termination date***
 - ***It is sometimes called a promise***
 - ***It can be conditional or unconditional***
- ***Ancient covenants were enacted with a ratification ceremony***
 - ***It involved animal sacrifice and cutting or parting the animal***
 - ***Hence it was referred to as "cutting a covenant"***
 - ***The Hebrew word for covenant is "brit" or "berit"***
- ***Often defines a sign so parties would be reminded of the responsibilities or promises to which they agreed***

God's covenant with Noah:

- ***Parties: God as one party and Noah, his descendants, every living creature on earth as the second party***
- ***Unconditional promise: God would never again destroy all life on earth***
- ***Sign: Rainbow in the clouds***
- ***Recorded in Genesis 9:8-17***

Much more about covenants in future lessons

For further study, see

Haftarah : Isaiah 54:1-55:5

Brit Hadashah : Matthew 24:36-44; Luke 17:26-37; Acts 2:1-16;
1 Peter 3:18-22; 2 Peter 2:5