

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

October 23-29, 2022
28 Tishrei - 4 Cheshvan, 5783

Torah reading:
Noach: Genesis 6:9 - 11:32
Haftarah: Isaiah 54:1-10

Parshat Noach

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzah for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

The Survivor

Everybody makes jokes about Noah and his Ark. There's the one about Noah being the first stock market manipulator in history — he floated a company while the whole world was in liquidation!

The Rebbe saw Noah in a far more serious light. Noah was a survivor.

Noah was saved from the deluge of destruction that engulfed his world and his greatest contribution is that he set out to rebuild that world. We don't read about him sitting down and crying or wringing his hands in despair, although I'm sure he had his moments. The critical thing the Bible records is that after Noah emerged from his floating bunker he began the task of rebuilding a shattered world from scratch. He got busy and picked up the pieces and, slowly but surely, society was regenerated.

Only one generation ago a great flood swept over our world. The Nazi plan was for a Final Solution. Every Jew on earth was earmarked for destruction and the Nazis were already planning their Museum of the Extinct Jewish Race. Not one Jew was meant to survive. So even those of us born after the war are also survivors. Even a Jewish child born this morning is a survivor — because according to Hitler's plan, which tragically nearly succeeded, he or she was not meant to live.

This means that each of us, like Noah, has a moral duty to rebuild the Jewish world.

When I was growing up in Brooklyn, I prayed in a small *shul* in Crown Heights where every other man at the morning *minyan* (prayer

quorum) bore a holy number on his arm. They were concentration camp inmates and the Germans tattooed those numbers onto their arms. Sadly, today, the ranks of those individuals have been greatly diminished. Every time one of them would roll up his shirt sleeve to put on *tefillin*, the number was revealed. They seemed to hardly notice it, as if it was nothing special, but to me they were heroes. Not only for surviving the hells of Auschwitz or Dachau but for keeping their faith intact, for still coming to *shul*, praying to G-d, wearing His *tefillin*.

Today as I am older and more sensitive to the feelings of fathers and children, of family and friends, those men have gone up much more in my estimation. They have become superheroes. After all they went through, to be able to live normal lives again, to marry or remarry, to bring children into this world, to carry on life, businesses, relationships, are mind boggling achievements.

My own father was not in the camps but he is the only survivor of his entire family from Poland. Some years ago, he recorded his story and recently it was published in book form — *From Shedlitz to Safety: a Young Jew's Journey of Survival*. We, his children, never knew half of what he went through. When I imagine him sitting as a teenage refugee in Shanghai, China and discovering that his entire family was wiped out and that he was left all alone in the world, I go numb. How did he continue? How did he stay sane? How did he keep his faith? Thank G-d he did and he started a family all over again, otherwise I wouldn't be here to write these lines. My own father has become a superhero to me.

Says the Rebbe, we all have that same responsibility — because we are all survivors.

Who will bring Jewish children into the world if not you? Who will study Torah if not you? Who will keep Shabbat? Who will keep the Jewish school afloat? Who will rebuild the Jewish world if not you and I and each and every one of us?

In the smaller country communities of South Africa, where I make my home, there are still small bands of dedicated Jews who come together in someone's home to make a *minyan*, or who serve as an ad hoc *chevra kadisha* to bury the Jewish dead according to our tradition. These are not rabbis, cantors or *cheder* teachers. They are ordinary people. In the big city they would probably not be nearly as involved, but in their small town they know that if they don't do it nobody will.

We need that same conviction wherever we are.

Thank G-d for His mercies in that our world is, to a large degree, being rebuilt. Miraculously, the great centers of Jewish learning are flourishing today once more. But far too many of our brothers and sisters are still outside the circle. Every one of us needs to participate. We are all Noachs. Let us rebuild our world.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

Noah Gets
Flooded with
Criticism

I subscribe to a number of weekly e-Torah columns authored by rabbis and writers from around the world. Every single year, as I check out the offerings for the section of Noah and the flood, I

wonder what exactly [Noah](#) did. The Torah records to justify so much criticism.

that Noah was a righteous man, and then adds, almost as a throwaway line, "for his times." Faint praise it may be, and the commentators may well try to justify this thinly disguised put-down; however, it is astonishing how much scholarship has been devoted throughout the ages to explicate in agonizing detail the character flaws which might explain the less than fulsome description of Noah's righteousness.

Some sages explain that Noah deserved censure because he was preoccupied with saving himself and family, with the result that he ignored the needs of others. A subtly different reason given is that, convinced of the hopelessness of the situation, Noah neglected to pray for the salvation of the rest of the world. Another possible explanation concentrates on his lack of faith, while other commentators advance ever-darker descriptions of his perceived inadequacies.

It is surprising that we should go out of our way to highlight anyone's failings, let alone as complicated a character as Noah. Try to imagine the stresses he would have been subjected to on a daily basis: Noah was the lonely man of faith living in a depraved world, full of wickedness. He devoted a good chunk of his life to single-handedly building an ark on G-d's command, all the while suffering threats and humiliation from onlookers. He was the first conservationist, directly responsible for the propagation of plant and animal life after the flood, and had the strength and confidence to pick up the tangled remnants of existence and start rebuilding the world all over again at a relatively advanced age.

And yet, and yet... Noah may well have spent every waking moment of a long and honorable life devoted to [G-d](#), and yet the [Torah](#) still records that more could have been done. There is a subtle but crucial distinction between dedicating oneself to G-d's tasks, and dedicating oneself to G-d.

The fifth Chabad-Lubavitch Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber, once attended a conference of rabbis which had been convened by the Russian government in their effort to ram through massive changes to the traditional Jewish educational system. At the risk of their lives and liberty, the rabbis worked passionately and collectively to protect our common heritage.

After the meetings broke up, Rav Chaim of Brisk came to say farewell to the Rebbe and discovered him sitting in his hotel room, overcome with tears. "Lubavitcher Rebbe," he exclaimed, "you needn't weep. You did absolutely everything within your power!" "Maybe so. But after all that, we did not succeed in foiling their plans."

If you view yourself as an employee of G-d with a job to do, as long as you put in the maximum effort while acquitting yourself honorably and responsibly, then, even if you fail, you can still sleep calmly at night.

However if one is less concerned with one's personal scorecard and instead focuses purely on G-d's purposes and desires, then one can never surrender nor relax, no matter the difficulties that challenge. When Noah assessed the situation and recognized that his prayers would not improve the situation, did that acceptance excuse him from trying again and again?

Certainly no blame can be directed at Noah for the fact that he alone was saved, but we must never make peace with a system where the many are lost and the few are saved. Who among us can honestly state that they've exhausted every option, explored every path on our life-long mission to save the world? And if the world stubbornly refuses to be changed, does that excuse me from continuing to try? Noah did the best he possibly could, under the circumstances, but the lesson the Torah would have us learn is that as long as another person is in physical or spiritual danger we must not accept the inevitability of fate and content ourselves with self-preservation, but must try and try again, risking life and soul, to help save the world.

By Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum

Sunday, October 23, 2022 - 28 Tishrei, 5783

Arrest of R. DovBer of Lubavitch (1826)

[R. DovBer of Lubavitch](#) was arrested due to trumped-up charges fabricated by a jealous relative. Among his alleged "crimes" was that he was sending money to the Turkish sultan, who was at war with Russia at the time. R. DovBer was released six weeks later (see calendar entry for 10 Kislev).

Passing of Rabbi Don Isaac Abravanel (1508)

Today is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Don Isaac Abravanel (1437-1508), one of the leaders of Spanish Jewry at the time of the 1492 expulsion. A minister in the king's court (after having served as treasurer to the king of Portugal), he chose to join his brethren in their exile. He began writing his extensive and highly regarded commentary on the Torah in 1503 in Venice (where it was published in 1579).

Monday, October 24, 2022 - 29 Tishrei, 5783

Passing of Simeon the Righteous (Shimon HaTzadik) (313 BCE)

[Simeon the Righteous](#) was the spiritual and political leader of the Jewish nation during a turbulent time in history—when Alexander the Great conquered and dominated the entire civilized world. Known as "the righteous" due to his saintly character, Simeon was the last member of the [Men of the Great Assembly](#) (*Anshei Knesses Hagdolah*), a 120-member panel of prophets and sages who guided the Jews at the onset of the [Second Temple](#) era.

Wednesday, October 26, 2022 - 1 Cheshvan, 5783

Holy Temple Completed (827 BCE)

The Holy Temple, which took seven years to build, was completed by King Solomon during the month of MarCheshvan (1 Kings 6:38), although not necessarily on this exact day. (Its dedication, however, was postponed until Tishrei of the following year—see calendar entry for 8 Tishrei). The First Temple served as the epicenter of Jewish national and spiritual life for 410 years, until its destruction by the Babylonians in 423 BCE.

Friday, October 28, 2022 - 3 Cheshvan, 5783

Passing of R. Israel of Ruzhin (1850)

The 3rd of Cheshvan is the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of the famed Chassidic master Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin (1797-1850), known as "The Holy Ruzhiner."

Rabbi Israel was a great-grandson of Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch; a close friendship existed between the Ruzhiner Rebbe and the 3rd Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch.

Shabbat, October 29, 2022 - 4 Cheshvan, 5783

"Purim Algiers" (1541)

In 1541, Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and ruler of Spain, led a fleet in an attempted attack against Algiers. Miraculously, a storm capsized many of the attacking boats, resulting in the expedition's failure and rescuing the city's Jewish community from Spanish anti-Semitic rule. In commemoration of the miracle, the local community marked 4 MarCheshvan as a "minor Purim," omitting the penitential [Tachanun](#) prayers and partaking of festive meals (*Zeh Hashulchan* pp. 96-97).