

PARSHAT NOACH

27 Tishrei - 3 Cheshvan 5786
19 - 25 October 2025

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

Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

Psalms 117

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.
2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

Positive Mitzvah 109 Immersing in a Mikvah (Ritual Pool)

A person who chooses to become cleansed of any ritual impurity is commanded to immerse in a Mikvah [a natural pool of water]. According to the tradition of the Oral Law, for a Mikvah to be Kosher it must contain enough water for [an average] person to submerge himself within them - unless it is a moving stream of water, in which case even the smallest amount of water suffices.

CHILDREN'S MATH

How long since you had to look inside a math book? Because here's a question that might have got by you: A down payment on a home costs \$5,000.

Housing one brain-damaged man for a year costs \$20,000.

How many families lose homes to mental retardation?

This extra-credit teaser comes from a Nazi-endorsed schoolbook (currency adjusted). It was the first step in curing society of the unneeded. Shortly after, with the country now ready, beautiful killings ("euthanasia" in Latin) began.

It is comforting to think that Nazis were demons rather than humans. But following their defeat you couldn't find an anti-Semite west of the Elbe. When questioned by Allied troops the mayors around Dachau professed no hard feelings to the Jews. They were not demons; they were people who legalized euthanasia.

Euthanasia makes sense. The animal kingdom, Greek culture and Darwinism all lend their credence. The only one withholding credence is a pesky verse in our Parshah (Torah portion) forbidding murder and suicide, "for in the image of G-d I have created you." An absurd abstraction in the face of home ownership.

What is this "image" of an allegedly formless being? Who are you to tell me how to spend my money? How to run our affairs? You're nothing but a stranger amongst us. Do you know the suffering of caring for this person? Must we foot your bill? Who asked you anyway?

Many if not most Jews of Germany did not see themselves as bearers of any message. Regardless, the messenger with a bad message must be liquidated.

It seems so foreign: jackboots and German shepherds, J's on Jewish stores, marches in the night.

It is so foreign, so unreal, so out of our context, so un-American.

True, it is also the very opposite of what this country was built upon. But...

Nothing ever happens in a vacuum.

Always an abstract, vague undercurrent feeds into, and later evolves into, bold statements and policies. Just after this verse about the murder-image thing, follows the verse to be fruitful and multiply. The verse is repetitive and the juxtaposition so stark that the Talmud equates the lack of procreation with murder and spilling blood. Both at some level deny the G-dliness, the holiness, the sacredness of the human soul and form.

Logic it makes. If human image is divine, then it must be furthered and multiplied. If it is not multiplied, then the sanctity is diminished - and on some level - questioned.

The highest birthrate in the world, I am told, was in the Jewish Displaced Persons Camps of Europe following the war - a courageous and bold revocation and retort to the Final Solution.

My father was once challenged by a woman, "But I want my girls to have the good things in life, dance classes and party dresses. You can't give them these things when you have too many kids."

"Would your kids prefer," asked my father, "to have one sister and four party dresses or two sisters and two-party dresses?"

I have heard it said that having children could tie up free money.

To not have a child because of financial considerations?

Should we do the math?

*By Rabbi Shimon Posner
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NOAH THE PESSIMIST

Who was the greatest financial genius in history?! The hero of this week's parshah, old Noah himself. That's right. He floated a company when the whole world was in liquidation!

There's much discussion about Noah in the commentaries. The Torah states explicitly that he was a Tzaddik, a noble distinction not attributed to many others. And yet, the Talmudic sages debate the extent of his righteousness. Was it objective or subjective? Absolute or relative? Was he only a Tzaddik compared to his corrupt generation, or would he have measured up to the Biblical giants like Abraham and Moses?

And then, when the Flood begins and Noah and his family enter the Ark, the Torah says they went in "because of the flood waters." This can be understood simply, or, as Rashi interprets, that Noah was a man of "small faith." He struggled with his belief; he wasn't entirely convinced that there would really be a flood at all. It was only when the water started coming down in torrents that he was forced to concede and enter the Ark.

In the Haftarah, the prophet Isaiah describes the Flood as "the waters of Noah." The Sages explain that although he was the most righteous man of his generation, Noah bore some responsibility for the Flood. Why? Because he could have done more to persuade his contemporaries to repent and to give up their evil ways of immorality, robbery, and corruption. Noah wasn't into outreach. He just stood there building his Ark and answered questions he was asked directly, but he didn't really

go out of his way to try and change the mindset of the people around him. Had he done so, he might well have changed the situation and saved the world.

So how do we reconcile the Torah itself describing Noah as a tzaddik, a righteous man, and the Biblical commentaries telling us that Noah was, in fact, lacking in faith? Moreover, G-d spoke to Noah directly, which makes it even harder to understand!

Perhaps rather than lacking faith in G-d, Noah lacked faith in humanity. Would anybody really listen to him if he did go out and try to persuade them? A leopard never changes his spots. You can't teach an old dog new tricks. People don't change. There's no hope. It's a waste of time. Why bother?

Like the story of the two old Jews who would meet and sit on the park bench every afternoon. And they would usually argue. About what? About everything. About the state of the world, about Israel, about politics. You know, the usual.

One fellow is the eternal optimist, and the other always the pessimist. One day the pessimist looks at the optimist and says to him, "If you're such an optimist, how come you look so anxious today?"

His friend answers, "You think it's easy to be an optimist these days?!" Noah was a pessimist. He saw the world was in such a mess, there was just no hope and no point in even trying. He had no faith in humanity. But there's also a third interpretation of Noah's lack of faith.

It wasn't that he lacked faith in G-d, or in humanity, but according to Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, Noah lacked faith in himself!

He lacked the confidence in his own capacity to make a difference, to influence, inspire, and be an engine of change.

Noah thought too little of himself. He lacked self-confidence and faith in his own abilities.

In one of his first speeches at our Shul, the late Chief Rabbi Harris told a story about when he was a Jewish prison chaplain in London.

One day he received an emergency call from the chief warden of the prison. A Jewish prisoner was being released that day. He had served his time and was being set free, but there was one problem: he didn't want to leave! "He doesn't want to go! Rabbi, please come down and talk to this guy!"

So Rabbi Harris went to the prison and met the fellow, and asked him, "I don't understand. Don't you want to be free?!"

And the man answered, "Rabbi, I know what's going to happen. I'll be

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OK for a while, and then I'll relapse and do it again, and they'll put me right back. I may as well just stay right here."
How sad.

If we don't have self-belief, we will never achieve anything meaningful in life. Please G-d, we will all learn from Noah. To believe in G-d, to believe in humanity, and perhaps most important to our success in life, to believe in ourselves.

*By Rabbi Yossy Goldman
President, South African Rabbinical Association*

"THE ABRANEL"

Don Isaac Abranel was one of the greatest Jewish statesmen who played an important part in European history. At the same time he was not merely a loyal and strictly religious Jew, but a great scholar, Bible commentator and philosopher. He was the last of the long line of great Jewish leaders and heroes of the Spanish Golden Age.

Isaac was born into a wealthy and learned family in Portugal. His father Judah was state treasurer of Portugal, and a great favorite of Alfonso V, king of Portugal. Isaac received a thorough Jewish education and took a keen interest in languages and philosophy. Later he succeeded his father in the service of the king. In his greatness, Isaac never forgot his humble brethren. He used his vast wealth to support the needy. Thus, when Alfonso captured the town of Arzilla in Morocco, and there were two hundred and fifty Jews among the prisoners, Isaac Abranel appointed twelve representatives to gather funds to redeem them, and he himself was the greatest donor. When they were redeemed, he supported them from his own means for about two years, until they learnt the language and could earn their own livelihood. Abranel also used his great influence to better the position of his brethren in other lands.

When Alfonso V died and Don Joao II succeeded to the throne of Portugal, Abranel's fortune changed. In the year 5243, Don Joao II began a policy that aimed at getting rid of the nobility, and particularly the ministers of state that served his father. Abranel learned just in time that the king beheld several of the highest-ranking officers, and that he was slated to share a similar fate. He was on the way to answer the king's call, but on learning what awaited him, Abranel fled to Toledo in Spain, where his family had once lived. Accompanied by his wife and two children, Abranel arrived in Toledo

almost penniless, as the ungrateful John had confiscated all his wealth.

Abranel quietly obtained a position with a Jewish banking firm and was glad to have time to pursue his studies and literary work. He continued his commentaries on the Bible which he had been forced to interrupt because of the pressure of state affairs. He wrote his commentaries on Joshua, Judges and Samuel, but when he began his commentaries on the book of Kings, the king of Spain summoned him to take over the state treasury. Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain knew that they could find no greater financial genius, and in the very same year when the notorious Torquemada became head of the Inquisition in Spain, Abranel officially became treasurer to the king and queen (two years before the expulsion of the Jews from Spain).

When that terrible decree of the expulsion of all Jews from Spain except those who would give up their faith, became known, Abranel tried hard to avert the catastrophe. He begged of the king and queen to reconsider their cruel decree, and he offered a huge sum to the king's treasury. The king and queen turned a deaf ear to all his personal pleas and declined his gifts of money. On the 9th of Av, 5252 (July 30, 1492), Abranel and his family were on the march with the rest of their co-religionists. He gave up his exalted position and joined his beloved brethren in exile and suffering. The unfortunate refugees finally reached Naples in Italy. When Ferdinand learned that the Jews found a haven in Naples, he requested the king of Naples (also called Ferdinand) that he should not permit the refugees to remain in his land. The young king of Naples, however, ignored the protest and demands of the cruel rulers of Spain. Moreover, he invited Abranel to the royal house and appointed him as his adviser. Abranel served both him and his son Alfonso II who succeeded to the throne in 1494. Unfortunately, Naples was captured by King Charles of France in the following year, and King Alfonso II fled to Sicily. Abranel accompanied his Majesty in exile, and continued to serve him with a fatherly devotion, until the exiled king died. Then Abranel left for the island of Corfu in the Mediterranean.

Having lost all his wealth to the French conquerors, Abranel suffered poverty and hardship. He moved to Monopoli, a town in the Kingdom of Naples, and 8 years later finally settled in Venice. Here it was not long before the rulers of Venice invited him to the council of state, and Abranel became one of the leading statesmen of that Venetian Republic. Here in Venice Abranel died in the year 5269, at the

age of 71, deeply mourned by the Jewish and non-Jewish citizens of Venice. The leading rulers of Venice attended his funeral, and he was laid to rest in Padua.

By Rabbi Nissan Mindel

NOACH IN A NUTSHELL

The Parshah is named "Noach" (Noah) after the protagonist of its major event: The Great Flood. It is found in Genesis 6:9.

G-d instructs Noah - 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 Noah and his family, and two members (male and female) of each animal species (and 7 of the "pure" 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 Noah 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 Noah to exit the teivah and repopulate the earth.

Noah 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 Noah 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.

Noah plants a vineyard and becomes drunk on its produce. Two of Noah'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.

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.

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Tuesday, 29 Tishrei 5785 - 21 October 2025

Passing of Rabbi Don Isaac Abranel (1508)

Today is the Yahrzeit (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Don Isaac Abranel (5197-5269, or 1437-1508), one of the leaders of Spanish Jewry at the time of the 5252 (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 5263 (1503) in Venice (where it was published in 5339, or 1579).

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. He passed away on 29 Tishrei 3448, (313 BCE).

Thursday, 1 Cheshvan 5786 - 23 October 2025

Holy Temple Completed (827 BCE)

The Holy Temple, which took seven years to build, was completed by King Solomon during the month of MarCheshvan 2934 (827 BCE), although not necessarily on this exact day. (Its dedication, however, was postponed until Tishrei of the following year). The First Temple served as the epicenter of Jewish national and spiritual life for 410 years, until its destruction by the Babylonians in 3338 (423 BCE).