

Torah Weekly

ד'תשפ"ב

PARSHAT NOACH

11 - 17 October 2026

30 Tishrei – 6 Cheshvan, 5787

Torah Reading:

Noach: Genesis 6:9 - 11:32

Haftarah:

Isaiah 54:1-10

WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH, BE LIKE NOAH

Are you anxious? Are you constantly plagued with thoughts of, "What's going to be? How am I going to make enough money to cover my expenses this month? What will happen if my kids come home late from school and don't tell me? Will I ever be stable enough to hold down a job? Will my friends like what I'm wearing tomorrow? What will people think when they see my messy house?"

And on, and on, and on.

It's debilitating.

According to the ADAA (Anxiety and Depression Association of America), anxiety disorders affect 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older, or 18.1% of the population.¹ If you think about it, that's an incredibly high number, if not a tad bit frightening.

So what should we do with all this anxiety? Of course—of course!—if the matter has reached clinical levels (and many times, even before that), a competent professional should be sought for guidance. Anxiety and depression are serious matters, and must be handled with extreme care and sensitivity.

As a baseline, overall positive approach that can certainly help anyone, a great Chassidic master penned a seminal essay over 200 years ago that offers a shining beacon of light for the over-anxious. It's our luck that this essay is set in the storyline of our parshah.

The Waters Lift the Ark

We all know the story, one of the most dramatic and earth-changing of all time. The world has gone entirely off the rails, people are utterly corrupt, and after tolerating their shenanigans for far too long, G-d decides He has had enough. He's fed up with this base and perverted world, so He's going to obliterate it with a giant flood.

Out of the entire world population, there's really only one "good guy"—Noah (and his family). So G-d instructs him to build a big boat, to pack it with a sampling of every animal under the sun, and use it as a rescue device to ride out the earth-cleansing flood.

The skies open and heavy rainwater pummels the ground for 40 consecutive days, destroying everything

underneath. As the water rises, the watertight ark lifts off the ground, floating above with its surviving crew. The Torah describes this part of the story:

Now the Flood was forty days upon the earth, and the waters increased, and

they lifted the ark, and it rose off the earth.

A conventional reading presents us with a pretty straightforward description: the waters lifted the ark off the ground. But in the Chassidic rendering, these words reveal much more; they speak of how raging waters, a monsoon of inner anxiety can, in fact, be something that not only doesn't cripple you, rather, it "lifts your ark off the earth."

Ark = Words

Picture a flood, especially the one that wrecked planet Earth during Noah's times. Endless rain whipped by ferocious winds that tear up the landscape. And it doesn't relent. For over a month, it continuously hammers the terrain, always rising, offering no chance of reprieve.

Is this not the internal state of a mind and heart eaten up with anxiety? The raging thoughts, the feeling of never knowing reprieve, and constantly being haunted by another torrent of concern that will pummel you as soon as you even try to put your foot on the ground. This is the "raging waters of Noah." It's the tormented, anxious mind. So what do you do?

Do what Noah did. Build an ark.

In Hebrew, the word for ark is "teivah" (תבה). Another translation for this word is, well, "word." And so, the Baal Shem Tov taught, when G-d told Noah "enter the teivah," an alternate translation of those words is, "enter the words"—the words of prayer.

Noah had a rescue plan. It was the precious, serene, and calming words of prayer that offered him solace, hope, and rescue.

You, too, can take advantage of the same rescue plan. You, too, can "enter into the words of prayer," pour out your heart to G-d, and thereby find comfort and, more importantly, rescue.

Uplifted Through Prayer

But the good news doesn't stop there. Referring back to the description in the verse, the raging waters "lift the ark off the earth." In other words, when escaping the internal monsoon of anxiety and finding refuge in the words of prayer, it's not just "refuge" or "escape" that you're netting; you're netting far more. Your prayer, your dedication, your connection to the Divine is now enhanced and enriched by the experience.

You see, when a regular person prays to G-d, someone who isn't necessarily plagued with anxieties and concerns, their prayer is definitely worthy, but it lacks a certain intensity, a particular passion and yearning. After all, if life's all hunky dory and it's all a cakewalk, it's nice that you're praying, but you lack the life experience to give it that extra edge.

But when an anguished and tormented soul turns to her Creator in prayer, the angels stop, the world stops, and G-d listens. It's a passionate, soulful, heart-rending experience. It is sincere and deep, a cry from a place of darkness that bares the entire self.

It is such prayers that G-d cherishes, and He's listening out for them. No one wishes to have "raging waters" in their life, but inevitably, they will come. They could very well crash over your mind and heart one day like a tsunami threatening to knock you entirely out of your senses.

If and when they do, remember the powerful refuge you possess. Remember that the words of prayer offer a potent lifeboat that can carry you above those waters.

And to sweeten the deal, you will then appreciate the fact that it is your prayers—not the rabbi's, the rebbetzin's, or even the cantor's—that G-d cherishes most.

By Aharon Loschak

THE BARREN WOMAN AND THE WATERS OF NOAH

This week's haftarah is read twice: once with on Parshat Noach and then again as the fifth haftarah of consolation on the week of Ki Teitzei.

The haftarah has a double theme. First, that when Moshiach comes, things will be so good that we will forget the hardships of the exile.

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).

Sacred material please do not desecrate

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Second, that the redemption will be final, never to be followed by another exile.

The haftarah begins: "Sing, barren one who has not given birth." Who is the "barren one"?

The simple explanation is that G-d is talking to the city of Jerusalem, which feels like a barren woman, bereft of children. Although she had been desolate during this long exile, G-d tells her to sing—as now that Moshiach is here, her streets are once again filled with her children, the Jewish people. She doesn't feel barren any more.

On a deeper level, Hashem is talking to those Jews who claim they are barren and have not given birth to Him. Meaning, he has totally disassociated himself from the Jewish nation. G-d is saying that even He will sing a "new song"—the song we will sing when Moshiach comes.

The revelation will be so great that we will break out in song, just as we did at the splitting of the sea. Every Jewish person will be included, even one who is "barren" of mitzvahs and in the darkest place. The revelation and transformation will be so great that he, too, will break out into song.

The exile will then seem as a fleeting dream, as the haftarah says, "for a brief moment I forsook you." We read in Tehillim (Psalms), when G-d returns the exiles of Zion, we will say that "we will have been as dreamers." A dream feels real, but when you wake up, it fades away. This will be because, as the next verse continues: "With a little wrath, I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness, I will have compassion on you . . ."

When Moshiach comes, it will be so good, that the exile will feel like a brief moment.

Now the haftarah says: "Like the waters of Noah this is to me. Just as I swore to never again cover the earth with the waters of Noah, so have I sworn not to be wrathful with you and not to rebuke you."

This verse is self-explanatory, except that G-d calls the flood "the waters of Noah." Why?

Because the word "Noach" is like the word nachat ("satisfaction"), indicating that it is positive because it changed the world for good. The same is true about this exile. When Moshiach comes, we will see how everything we went through in this exile directly made the world ready for Moshiach. The reading concludes, that when Moshiach comes " . . . My kindness will never depart from you, and my covenant of peace will never falter."

Like bookends, this haftarah is read before and after the holiday season, and it sets the tone for the whole year because bringing Moshiach is at the core of our mission as the Jewish people. Like beacons of light, it is read at the beginning and the end of the year to remind us that though our work is difficult and the exile dark, what we are accomplishing is tremendous and our reward is even greater. Perhaps it is your effort, your mitzvah, which will finally tip the scale and bring Moshiach.

May he come soon.

By Yitzi Hurwitz

THE HYDRO-POWERED ARK

Envision a deluge over all the earth, hellish waves pounding back and forth, crushing every structure, carrying away every living being, until no dry land remains, no life endures.

This is the world into which you were thrown. The waves are the stress and anxiety of indecision, not knowing which way to turn, on what to rely. Up and down, hot and cold—constantly churning back and forth, sucking the life out of you.

The secret you must know is that these are truly peaceful waters. They are called "the waters of Noah"—because their energy can be harnessed to achieve true serenity.

Do as Noah did and build an ark. Ark in Hebrew is teivah—which also means "a word." Your ark shall be the words of Torah and of prayer, of mitzvahs and of kind deeds. When the waves rage—whether from outside or from within your own heart—direct their power into those harmonious words.

Rather than drown you with everything else, let that raw energy of the mighty waters carry you upward—into a serene world you could never reach without them.

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Monday, October 12, 2026 - 1 Cheshvan, 5787

Holy Temple Completed (827 BCE)

The Holy Temple, which took seven years to build, was completed by King Solomon during the month of MarCheshvan (I 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.

Month of Cheshvan Begins

The month of Cheshvan is also called "MarCheshvan." *Mar* means "bitter" -- an allusion to the fact that the month contains no festive days. *Mar* also means "water", alluding to the month's special connection with rains (the 7th of Cheshvan is the day on which Jews begin praying for rain (in the Holy Land), and the Great Flood, which we read about in this week's Torah portion, began on Cheshvan 17th).

Wednesday, October 14, 2026 – 3 Cheshvan, 5787

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.

Passing of R. Ovadia Yosef (2013)

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, a leader of Sephardic Jewry and chief rabbi of Israel, passed away on 3 Cheshvan, 5774 (2013), at the age of 93. A widely published author on Jewish law, Rabbi Yosef was considered by scholars of all backgrounds to be a rabbinical authority with a rare grasp of nearly every area of Torah scholarship. He was known for his encyclopedic knowledge of a wide swath of halachic texts, ranging from the well-known to the most obscure. In his halachic rulings, he would often list dozens of previous rulings and then decide in accordance with what he perceived to be the majority opinion.

Thursday, October 15, 2026 – 4 Cheshvan, 5787

"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).

Shabbat, October 17, 2026 – 6 Cheshvan, 5787

Maimonides Visits Jerusalem (1165)

After leaving Morocco and before settling in Egypt, Maimonides visited Jerusalem and prayed at the site of the Holy Temple. Three days later, on 9 MarCheshvan, he visited Hebron and prayed at the Cave of Machpelah. Maimonides resolved to keep these two days—6 and 9 MarCheshvan—as a personal holiday (Charedim ch. 65 [5744 ed.]).