

Parashat Noach

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Link to *Parasha*: <https://www.sefaria.org/Genesis.5-22?lang=bi>

SUMMARY

This week's Torah portion is *Parashat Noach*. God tells *Noach* to build an ark to save every species of animal on earth as well as *Noach's* own family from a worldwide flood. It rains for forty days and forty nights. *Noach* sends a raven and then a dove to find signs that the land has reappeared.

Once the ark rests on dry land, God sends a rainbow as a sign of a covenant, promising not to destroy the world again by flood. God reveals seven basic rules for all people to follow. Noah plants a vineyard when he comes off the ark.

Towards the end of the *parasha* we read that many years later a group of people who spoke one language worked together to build a city and a very tall tower--the Tower of Bavel. God foils their attempt by causing everyone to speak different languages, which makes it difficult for them to communicate with one another and to work together.

QUESTIONS

1) Rashi noticed that in the first verse I read today it says that Noach walked “with God.” He compares this to a verse we will read in a few weeks that describes Avraham as walking “in front of God.” What do you think might be the difference between walking “with God” and walking “in front of God?” <<pick 3>>

Rashi taught that walking with God meant that Noach needed God for moral support to do the right thing. It was almost like Noach leaned on God. Walking “in front of God” meant that Avraham didn’t need God in order to make good choices. Walking in front of God meant that Avraham did the right thing by his own effort. He had the strength to lead by himself. Rashi’s explanation makes sense to me, but I’m not sure that one is better than the other. Sometimes, when a person is sad or confused they might need moral support. Walking with God or another person can help.

2) Later in this week’s *parashah*, after we read about Noah’s Ark, we read the story of the Tower of Babel. In the first line of the story the Torah tells us that the entire land was of one language and of few words. What might be the difference between being of “one language” and of “few words”? What might the Torah be telling us about the people who lived at this time? <<pick 3>>

A language has a variety of different words, but the Torah is telling us that the people at this time used just a few. It probably means that they all spoke the same language, but used only a few of the words, so maybe they didn’t make the most of their language.

3) When I read the story I was surprised to see that it never comes right out and says that the people are building a tower to reach God. It just says that they are building a tower to the heavens to create a name for themselves and so that they would not be spread out across the land. When God sees the people building the tower, God says, “If this is how they act when they are one people and one language, then nothing will stop them from doing whatever they may plan.” Then God mixes up their language into lots of different languages. What do you think God might be trying to accomplish by mixing up their language?

<<pick 3>>

The story never says that the people are trying to reach God or to take over from God, so I think that mixing up the languages might not be a punishment. In math, when I have shown my teachers that I can do something, they often give me more challenging work to help me better understand a concept I need to learn. Maybe God was trying to teach people persistence, giving them more challenging work so that they would push themselves harder to accomplish their goals than they would have to if they had just one language.

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Chizkuni Chizkiah ben Manoach lived in the thirteenth century, probably in France.

ותשחת הארץ לפני האלוהים,

At first glance the words: **לפני האלוקים** appear unnecessary; however these words provide the clue to the moral decline of humanity. It started at the top, because the **בני האלוהים**, high ranking individuals, mentioned in [Genesis 6:2](#), had set an example of bad morals; then it did not take long for them to be copied by the people at large. Noach was the only one who “swam against the stream.”