

TORAH PORTIONS PARASHAT NOACH

THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTION

GENESIS 6:9-11:32

Parashat Noach / פְּרַשְׁתַּת נֹחַ

In this week's guide...

Our **COMMENTARY** invites us to look at a story that has troubled biblical students for centuries, Ham's uncovering of Noah's nakedness. This low point in Noah's story contains an odd detail that, if considered, offers sobering insight into the nature of sin. If you've ever been betrayed by someone close to you (or been the betrayer!), this article is going to offer profound wisdom and encouragement..... 1

Our **NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN** transports us to two wildly different locations. Our Torah portion describes events that unfold on the mysterious plains of Shinar, sometime after the Great Flood. Our "tie-in" brings us to one of the Jerusalem locations we visit on our Rock, Road, Rabbi tours of Israel: the Southern Steps of Jerusalem. We hope you will have your sense of purpose and mission renewed. Especially on the heels of our *Sukkot* celebrations!..... 2

Our **HEBREW WORD STUDY** digs into the detailed instructions Noah received for building the ark. As we consider what the nature of the Great Flood (judgment) and the ark's ultimate function (salvation), *how* the ark was able to accomplish this goal is theologically significant. We unpack this significance by examining one "simple" word..... 3

OVERVIEW

Our second Torah portion continues with the seemingly universal stories of the Flood and Noah's Ark, of Noah's subsequent drunkenness and cursing of Canaan, as well as the Tower of Babel. In Hebrew, the name Noah is spelled *Noach*. The word *Noach* is related to the Hebrew word for "rest." Genesis 5:29 says that his parents named him Noah (*Noach*) because they hoped their son would give them rest (*nacham*) from their toil.

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FUSION GLOBAL WITH RABBI JASON

Weekly Torah Portion – *Parashat Noach* / פרשת נח

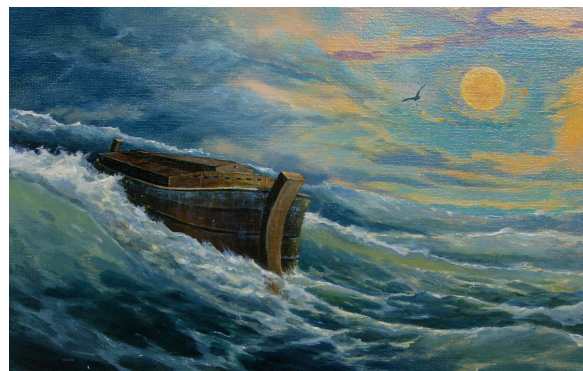
Genesis 6:9-11:32

COMMENTARY

by Staff Contributor

This week, we read *Parashat Noach*, the story of Noah and the Flood (followed by the brief account of the Tower of Babel). In it, we also read the detailed genealogy of Noah, tracing his descendants to Abram.

When we look at the details of *Noach*, we read some rather fascinating notes. First, we see the horrible reality that awaits separation from God: death. The account of the Flood and the loss of life of those separated from the Creator foreshadows the eternal death and separation from our Heavenly Father awaiting those who do not call upon the Name of *Yeshua*.



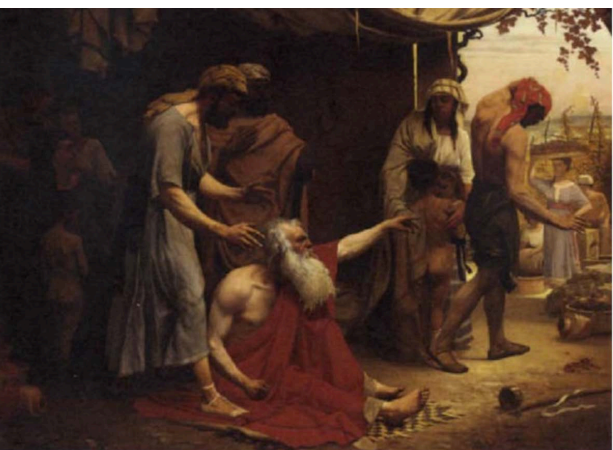
In this text, we see a loving and caring God, One who is merciful and full of grace even in the midst of judgment. He sustains Noah and his sons and their wives out of the world's population. He brings this family into safety from the Flood, providing salvation and replenishing the earth through them. It is confounding to reflect upon just how few generations existed between Adam and Eve and the debacle that was humanity at the time of the Flood. Similarly, one observes the same rapid decline in the account of the Tower of Babel. How could that fiasco transpire so soon after the devastating Flood?

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of this week's *parsha* involves the future history of the people of Israel in the context of the genealogy of Noah's descendants. We read that at some point after Noah and his family left the ark, he became drunk and somehow passed out naked in his tent, apparently in a manner that anyone could have seen. His son, Ham, happened upon him, finding him shamefully naked, and instead of caring for his father, he ran off to speak *lashon hara* (evil tongue/gossip) of Noah to his other brothers. Shem and Yefet (or "Japheth") took pity on their father. Rather than joining in on the *lashon hara*, they took a cover, walked backward into their father's tent (so as not to bring further shame upon him), and mercifully covered his nakedness.

The Torah says that when Noah awoke, he knew what Ham had done and said: "Cursed is Canaan: the lowest slave will he be to his brothers." Then he said, "Blessed be *ADONAI*, God of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, may he dwell in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave." (Genesis 9:25-27).

Lo and behold, Noah proclaimed the future of Israel. See, Kena'an ("Canaan") was the son of Ham (the son who spoke *lashon hara* of his father), and Shem is the beginning of the family line that brings us Abram (later Abraham—as in "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"). Not only was Ham the father of Kena'an, but also of Kush, Mitzrayim, and Put, some of the worst future biblical enemies of the nation of Israel. It is always amazing how the thorns in the side of the people of Israel are always family problems (i.e., Israel and the descendants of Ishmael and Edom, Israel and the descendants of Ham).

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Noah Curses Ham by Josef Schakewits (ca. 1876)

Many times we are scandalized when those closest to us betray us and speak ill of us. Is there a pain greater than that which we endure within our families? On one level, we can take heart in the fact that this relational hardship is no new phenomenon, something unique to our particular situation. But on a deeper level, we should encourage ourselves in knowing that *Yeshua*—the sinless Son of God—endured the worst *lashon hara* imaginable and did so victoriously. Rather than curse His enemies, He blessed them. Rather than seek justice for Himself, *Yeshua*'s words were, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN

by Staff Contributor

The Tower of Babel. Along with *Eve and the serpent* or *Cain and Abel*, this is one of those primordial sorts of stories in Scripture that have been an integral part of Western Civilization's “cultural consciousness.” How many of us learned, at a very young age, that this story reveals the origin of all the various languages of the earth? Like many of the stories in these first eleven chapters of Genesis, the account of what happened at Babel continues to have a seemingly outsized theological importance. That's just a fancy way of saying that we learn some of our most critical “God ideas” in this neck of the biblical woods.

There is a clear link between this tale of **punishment** and a New Testament story of **promise**. That connection is the other famous foreign language passage: The Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. We can learn so much about God's desires and our fallen proclivities by comparing and contrasting these two accounts.

Let's start with similarities that are worth noting. For starters, in Genesis 11 and Acts 2, both groups are marked out by their **unity**.

- **Babel:** “Look, the people are one...” / Genesis 11:6
- **Jerusalem:** “they were all with one accord in one place” / Acts 2:1 (KJV)

But this similarity sets up our first contrast—while the unity of the 120 in the Upper Room was an expression of their loving devotion to *Yeshua*, the unity at Babel was self-serving. The people said, “let us make a name for ourselves” (Genesis 11:4 ESV).

A second similarity is that both scenarios end with people spontaneously speaking in a variety of **foreign languages**. At Babel, the “confusing” of the languages amongst people who previously only spoke one language led to division. In Jerusalem, the gift of the Spirit amongst the disciples released languages that enabled people from all over the world to “hear them declaring in our own tongues the mighty deeds of God!” (Acts 2:11). Again, the similarity is what creates the contrast: foreign languages, but one brought isolation while the other birthed community.

A final similarity worth noting is that both stories ultimately end in **dispersion**. The builders of Babel's tower saw their worst fears realized. When they started their venture, they did so not only to make a name for themselves but also to avoid being “scattered over the face of the whole land” (Genesis 11:4).



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As *Yeshua*'s 120 followers began their time of waiting for the Promise of the Father, He told them what the result would be: “you will receive power when the *Ruach ha-Kodesh* has come upon you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and through all Judah, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The builders of Babel were sent to the ends of the earth, speaking foreign languages as an expression divine rebuke. The believers in Jerusalem were also sent to the ends of the earth, speaking foreign languages, but not in judgment—as an expression of gracious redemption!



Southern Steps of the Temple Mount
Jerusalem (RRR Tour 2020)

HEBREW WORD STUDY: *kopher* (כֹּפֶר) / pitch

by Staff Contributor

Early on in Noah's story, we read detailed instructions for building an ark given by God Himself:

“God saw the earth, and behold it was ruined because all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh is coming before Me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. Behold, I am about to bring ruin upon them along with the land. Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood. You shall make the ark with compartments and smear pitch on it, both inside and out.” –Genesis 6:12-14



When a story is as familiar as this one, it's easy for the reader to miss significant details. Now, let's factor in that most of us are not reading this tale in Hebrew—we're bound to miss even more elements. What we already know, however, is vitally important to this specific word study. Humans had “ruined” the world with sin, and in order to stop it, God announced that He was “about to bring ruin upon them.” God is not reactionary. He is not capricious. The Flood is not an account of a divine knee-jerk reaction—it is a mysterious moment of God's sovereign and loving (!) response to the human propensity for destruction.

In addition to sending floodwaters, God made provision to preserve the population's lone righteous figure (Noah) by having him build an “ark.”

- What did the ark offer protection from? *Supernatural, divinely-order rains and flooding.*
- Why was that deluge “sent”? *Humanity's sinful destructiveness.*
- How did the ark keep Noah and his family from harm? *Kopher* (כֹּפֶר)...“pitch”

God instructed Noah to cover his ark with “pitch” inside and outside. This coating created a protective seal, preventing water from leaking into the ark and sinking it. How tragic (and ironic!) would it have been for Noah and his family to spend all those years building a massive boat, see God draw all those animals peacefully inside its chambers, and watch in astonishment as God closed the door, only to have the vessel sink as water seeped into its hull? There were many components to this divine rescue, but the one that “stood” between Noah's family and the wrathful waters was *kopher*.

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Like most Hebrew words, *kopher* is “built” around three consonants. In this instance, the letters are **k-p-r**: *kaf* (כ), *peh* (פ), and *raysh* (ר). The definition of *kopher* is: “Pitch, bitumen, asphalt was used in early antiquity as an adhesive to hold inlays into statues. It was a logical material for caulking the ark as specified both in the Bible and the Babylonian flood story.”ⁱ The arrangement of *k-p-r* in most Hebrew lexicons is fascinating—the “pitch” definition is **not** primary.

The first listing is typically *kafar* (כַּפַּר), a Hebrew verb that means “to atone, make atonement, cover, appease, expiate.”ⁱⁱ The instructions for Passover observance include “one goat for a sin offering to atone [l’*kafar*] for yourselves” (Numbers 28:22 *emphasis added*). The instructions for the Tabernacle include putting “the mercy seat [*hakkapporet*] on top of the ark” (Exodus 25:21 NKJV *emphasis added*). One obvious cognate of this word is *kippurim*, from which we get *Yom Kippur*—the “Day of Atonement.”

The “pitch” that God told Noah to cover the ark with was a prophetic symbol of the blood of *Yeshua*. His precious shed blood is the ultimate *kopher*—our covering and source of lasting atonement that saves us. We may obediently “build” for God, mindful that only *Yeshua*’s blood “stands” between us and the just consequences of our sin.

Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *Tree of Life Version*.

Rabbi Jason & Fusion Global present
HEBREW WORD STUDY
כֹּפֶר

כֹּפֶר / kopher: n. pitch.

Pitch, bitumen, asphalt was used in early antiquity as an adhesive to hold inlays into statues. It was a logical material for caulking the ark as specified both in the Bible and the Babylonian flood story.

taken from the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*

fusionglobal.org

THOUGHTS for REFLECTION

Take some time this week to prayerfully consider and discuss with friends:

- This week's Commentary takes an ancient saga, a story that has captivated the imaginations of children for generations...and made it personal! Who among us hasn't enjoyed an amazing spiritual experience only to have that followed up with family drama? Who doesn't know the deep pain that is unique to family binds? Noah's story is sobering because it reminds us that our sin can have a "ripple effect." Where are you in this story of Noah and his sons?
- The Father poured out His Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, just ten days after *Yeshua's* Ascension. The world at the time was still living in the isolation and brokenness of Babel, but that fulfillment of *Shavuot* initiated a restoration of unity by the indwelling of the *Ruach HaKodesh*. The Spirit empowers us to go to those who are different and make genuine Kingdom connections. Be sensitive to His leading this week and let's do our part to reverse the isolation of Babel!

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS: *Parashat Lech-Lecha* / פְּרַשְׁת לֶךְ-לְךָ

TORAH

Sunday / Genesis 12:1-13

Monday / Genesis 12:14-13:4

Tuesday / Genesis 13:5-18

Wednesday / Genesis 14:1-20

Thursday / Genesis 14:21-15:6

Friday / Genesis 15:7-17:6

Saturday / Genesis 17:7-27

Prophetic Reading (*Haftarah*): Isaiah 40:27-41:16

New Covenant Reading: John 8:51-58

ⁱ R. Laird Harris, "[1024 תּוֹרָה](#)," ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 453.

ⁱⁱ Adriani Milli Rodrigues, "[Atonement](#)," ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).