

4 Cheshvan, 5776 (17/10/15) **Parashat Noach: His Redemptive Interventions** J. M. Terrett

Noach	Noah (Rest)	Our Divine Superintendent
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Torah:	Genesis 6:9-11:32
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Haftarah:	Is. 54:1-55:5
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Brit Chadashah:	Matt. 24:26-46
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(Sharon p. 137) Ps. 29 Jewish hero: Joseph L-rd's Table

This week's Torah portion blows me away every time I read it because it covers two of the most awesome redemptive interventions of G-d in human history: the Flood and the Tower of Babel. These interventions meant that the human race could survive long enough to allow all the generations of mankind to do battle with the sin which crouches at our doors and yet never allow the light to be completely quenched until the kingdom comes.

The Haftarah portion explodes with the final victory of our Messiah over all the adversaries which stand in opposition to the Kingdom of G-d and invites all who are thirsty and hungry for His righteousness to come and dine, both in this life and in the life which is to come. It refers to the disciplinary actions of G-d with His people which pale next to His great and tender love and the way He will frustrate our enemies and give us total victory over them.

The New Testament portion is a call for watchfulness because no one can know the time when the Messiah shall return to establish His eternal kingdom over all the generations and nations of mankind. It speaks of the careless spiritual ignorance of mankind as the days of the Kingdom approach and warns believers to be about the business of the kingdom, so that we are not also taken by surprise. This is not an invitation to endlessly set dates for the return because the only way to be in G-d's timing is to be about His business, seeking His Kingdom and His righteousness every day and in every way in our lives.

As we prepare for the L-rd's Table (and for our quarterly meeting next week), I want to select verses from all three portions and weave them into a meditation which highlights how we should respond to His redemptive interventions in the life of the world and in our lives. The whole point of creation is the coming kingdom which is entered by choice and also how we choose to live needs to be our personal response to this coming kingdom. How is your spiritual momentum doing? How is your kingdom living doing?

Let us first look at Noach. So much detail is not given (Deut. 29:29) and the means by which both the flooding of the entire planet and the linguistic dispersal from the tower of Babel were accomplished are not detailed. So, let us look at what is given.

Noah was instructed to build a massive boat – which took him and his sons (we are not told if they subcontracted some of the work) 120 years. Verse 5:32 says that Noah was 500 years old when his sons were born (were they triplets?) and verse 7:6 says he was 600 years old when the flood came. This means he began to build the boat at least 20 years before his sons were born. What are you building for the L-rd in your life?

Why did he take two of every unclean animal and 14 of every clean animal? He needed sacrificial animals while the earth was repopulating. What about dinosaurs? Well all fossils are water formed and most are buried in the earth beneath sedimentary rock, just as if they all

perished in some great cataclysm, scattered over the face of the earth.

How long did the flood last? Just over one year. The rain fell constantly for a long time and then the water took time rising and falling and one year, one month after it started to rain the earth was dry enough for the ark to be opened without the animals perishing in the mud. G-d appeared to both Noah and his children and promised them that no other cataclysm of this magnitude would ever come upon the earth as long as it lasts. This is a strange way of making a promise and leaves room for us to understand that there will be no second chance for mankind if another universal spiritual darkness overtakes the planet again.

What we see in the flood is the total removal of the sinfulness which tried to engulf the planet. It was washed away (purified) and apart from the fossil record and fossil fuel, there is nothing of the pre-flood world which exists to have any more impact on us except a warning. We are heating our homes with the blood of the rebels and just as the supply of this kind of fuel is limited, so is the patience and forbearance of G-d. The next intervention time will be final.

After the shameful episode with the grandson of Noah (called his youngest son – Ham was his second son, Japhet was his youngest), Noah lives another 350 years, but has no more children (why?). It means he was still alive when the dispersal of Babel occurred and when Abraham was born. A little note on the genealogies in the Bible - they are mainly given to identify the people who come into play at a transition point in the story which is being told. After the sons of Ham and Japhet are given, no further details of their genealogies are offered, because once the scattering at Babel occurs, it is the family of Shem, through Abraham where the re-threading of mankind in Messiah begins.

As well, after the flood, the lifespan of mankind drops from around 800 years to around 500 years. After the tower of Babel (during Peleg's lifetime), the average lifespan drops to around 200 years and after Moses and Joshua, it was rare for anyone to pass 100 years. No reason is given but there is something I find very intriguing. Many of the people who were mentioned in the genealogy of Abraham lived through the dispersion and may not have been able to communicate with their children or their parents and did not necessarily become great leaders when the world began to fill up again with great kingdoms and empires.

Our Bible is concerned with the history of redemption and gives us enough detail to be aware of two things. First, that the L-rd is in final charge of human history and will not let things go beyond a certain point without intervening to fulfil His purposes among all the generations and nations of mankind. Secondly, we are the children of Adam and Eve and their blood will continue to flow in our veins until the kingdom comes. We are all brothers and sisters and should give careful heed to the redemptive lessons which too many of our first ancestors ignored. The days of Noah seem to be coming back with a vengeance and as the first universal darkness is doing its best to make a global comeback, we need to shine our lights brightly and speak to whoever will listen about the final kingdom which is coming.

Let's move on to the portion in Isaiah which is also used as part of the Shabbats of consolation between Tisha B'Av and Rosh Hashanah. Isaiah was speaking words of comfort to a people on their way to exile and he did not want them to feel that the destiny of the Jewish people was somehow thwarted, either by their own folly or by the power and might of their enemies who had reduced them to such a meagre estate. No matter what is happening in our lives or in the life of our generation, the greater purposes of G-d will be accomplished

and can never be thwarted, no matter what appears to be on the rise in the world as time goes by.

Once He cleansed the earth and scattered the children of Noah across the face of the planet, He picked one family to bring about the arrival of His Messiah and though great opposition to this wonderful promise has occurred and will occur time and time again, Isaiah wants us to know that His kingdom shall come and His love for us shall never fail.

54:3 and 55:5 speak of the nations coming to faith in the Kingdom of the G-d of Israel at some future time. Israel has always been intended to be both a great nation and a blessing to all nations and this will never change. G-d will never abandon His people and will gather them with great affection and have compassion on them according to His everlasting love, because just as He promised that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth, so He promised to never again be irritated with His people to the point of abandoning them.

He continues to work with His people and no weapon forged against them has prospered because He continues to call the nations and generations of mankind to Himself and to His kingdom. And His unfailing, enduring love for His people Israel continues to be a testimony to the kind of love He calls all mankind to embrace and experience. He offers delights to those who embrace the favours He extends to David as the chief and commander of the peoples. He wants to wean us away from things which do not truly satisfy and extend life to our souls. This has always been His purpose in all of His redemptive interventions and no matter what static and interference tries to get in His way and in our way, His kingdom and His righteousness are unstoppable and inevitable. So is our continual need to choose.

As we embrace the unstoppable and the inevitable, neither the flood waters of this life or the fiery furnaces we are thrown into will have any lasting impact on our lives, both as believers (Jew and Gentile) and as a community which is firmly entrenched into the one new man which shall be revealed once His kingdom explodes throughout the universe and removes all abominations and pain forevermore. This is the kind of G-d we serve and the destiny which is ours to embrace! Not shabby in the least! Let's move onto the New Testament portion.

Once our L-rd turned His face towards Jerusalem, He continued to teach the two aspects of His coming Kingdom as He prepared His apostles for the great and terrible events which were to come. He told them about His betrayal, His death and His resurrection which were to be immediate and He also taught them about the coming of His final kingdom, which was not to be immediate, but which would come on the unsuspecting final generation of mankind in the same way as the flood came upon the earth in the days of Noah. There is a trap which too many have fallen into concerning this glorious kingdom eventuality and I want to end with this as we come to the L-rd's table for the Hebrew lunar month of Cheshvan.

In the passage (24:36-46) He makes a firm statement that the timing of this final event cannot be known, but it will come unexpectedly both for the world in general and for the disciples of the L-rd as well. Ever since the early decades of the 1800's Christians of every stripe have been making predictions (guesstimates) about the advent of the coming Kingdom and for over 200 years they have all said it was coming soon after they made their predictions and they have all been wrong. Trying to set dates is the wrong emphasis.

You see, the end times began when our Messiah arose and ascended in Heaven, because for

us and for all mankind the only thing that needs to happen for the Kingdom to come, is for the King to come back, because everything else is ready, paid for and set in place. Why have people wasted so much energy with guessing and why have they not gotten the clear message of the Scriptures? Besides the evident deception of our adversary who wants to panic us like so many chicken little's (the sky is falling, the sky is falling), our world has been globalizing with an ever increasing speed since the 1800's and for the first time since the days of Noah, we are becoming a one world community.

Events are lining up and darkness and violence are growing along with the wonders of technology and it seems that time is running out quickly, but we must never confuse our perception of quickly with the quickly of G-d. Instead of focusing on the event, we need to focus on the daily reality of the kingdom and on the patient call to the final banquet which our L-rd is extending to all who will listen to His Word and which communion is a symbol of.

I have often said that I believe more in the coming of the final kingdom, than I do in the daily rising and setting of the sun. Why is this? Everything in this life is temporary and one day the sun and the moon and the stars will be no more and our true light shall shine, so I want to live for that which is permanent and not for that which is temporary and which is passing away.

His redemptive interventions have been a relentless, repeated call to seek for His kingship and not to be pulled back into the darkness of sin which has dogged us since our first ancestors encountered the serpent in the garden. Until the battle is over, we need to be in the fight and the events which will lead up to the coming of the kingdom are beyond our control and when the forbearance of the L-rd has run its course, it will come in His timing and never in ours. We need to be focused on living for the kingdom daily as we remember His redemptive interventions and as He continues to intervene redemptively in our lives.

Noah means rest and his ability to find rest and patiently resist the darkness during the 120 years it took to build the ark, needs to be our strategy as we live in the days which are seeing a return to the conditions which precipitated the flood as a mighty redemptive intervention which will be superseded once the Kingdom comes. Are you at rest in Him? Are you living for the Kingdom daily and constantly? Instead of wasting our time trying to figure out when the kingdom is going to come, let us give our mightiest, constant effort to figuring out how to live for the kingdom in how we live our lives every day and through every transition of our lives as we continue to rely on and wait for His redemptive interventions in our lives and in the life of our noisy, confusing and darkening world. Let us exercise eager patience and not resist the yoke of His Word as the Shepherd leads us towards our final home forever. Amen.