

Noach **Noah (rest in Hebrew)**
Torah: Genesis 6:9-11:32
Haftarah: Isaiah 54:1-55:5
Brit Chadashah: Matthew 24:36-46

The first eleven chapters of Genesis are the most unique portion of the Bible. There are four main redemptive themes: Creation, the fall of our first ancestors, the flood and the scattering at the Tower of Babel. These were actual events and not just good stories, but they were never intended to be seen as a complete history of the world. Too many believers have come up with weird and wonderful ideas about this portion of the Bible, so when I teach, I want you to be inoculated against any content which was neither given, nor intended by the Bible.

In doing this, I want to repeat that the use of symbolic language is just as effective as literal language when it comes to sharing the truth. Building word pictures helps us to better understand what is being taught. When it comes to the description of the flood we have both literal numbers and symbolic numbers describing how long the flood lasted.

Once the ark was completed and the animals came on board, the flood began in the six hundredth year of the life of Noah, on the 17th day of the second month (7:11). It was in the six hundred and first year of Noah's life, on the first day of the first month that the flood was over (8:13). The earth was dry on the 27th day of the second month of the same year. These are literal numbers, not just symbolic numbers.

If you take a year to be 365 days and add the ten day difference between the start and the end of the flood you have the flood lasting for 375 days. If you consider the end of the flood to be on the first day of the first month of the six hundred and first year of Noah's life, you are saying that it lasted for some 318 days. I consider the flood to have been over when the ground was dry or after 375 days.

Lets look at the symbolic numbers which also deal with the length of the flood. First, it says that the rain fell for 40 days and nights (7:12) and lasted another 40 days while the waters were rising (7:17). After this the rain stopped, but the waters from the deep were unleashed for an additional 150 days. The waters began to diminish for another 150 days (7:24) As the waters diminished, the tops of the mountains began to appear and the ark came to rest on Mount Ararat (8:4).

Noah waited for another 40 days before he opened the ark's window and released the crow and it flew back and forth from the ark until the land was dry (8:7).He also released the dove, but it could not find any dry land and returned to the ark. Noah waited another seven days before he released the dove again, but it came back to the ark. He released the dove again after seven more days had passed, and he knew that the ground was dry because it did not come back.

Lets add up the number of these days: $40 + 40 + 150 + 150 + 40 + 7 + 7 = 434$ days. No matter which date you accept as the end of the Flood, the totals do not match. Using the calendar dates of Noah's life, you get either 318 or 375 days. When you go by the number of days given, you have 434 days. Which total is correct? There is either a 59 day or an 116 day discrepancy between the calendar dates and the count of the days. However, both totals should be seen as correct. But how?

In Hebrew, 40 days is a painfully long period of time, while 150 days is an extremely painful, long period of time. Seven is the number of G-d. Forty is used three times, while 150 and 7 are each used twice. What began as a painfully long period of time (40 days and nights), became an extremely long and painful period of time (150 days, twice). The mention of seven days means that everything was still under G-d's control.

What happened to the earth while the ark floated on the waters is not mentioned by the Bible, but most of the water came from fountains of the deep and not just from the rain. Several years ago, a scientist received the Noble prize for determining that there is three times as much water in the earth's crust than there is on the surface. If the depths of the earth were to open again, there would be no dry land left, even if people fled to the top of Mount Everest.

I have said before that scientists do correctly determine that the earth used to be a single continent, but for some unknown reason, this continent began to drift apart into the continents we have today. This was an actual historical process, I just do not agree with their timeline. It may be that the weight of all the water caused areas of the earth's crust to collapse and now we have several sea beds into which the waters of the flood flowed as they diminished.

There are several scientific theories (educated guesses) as to how it happened, but no scientist has any explanation for why it happened. The Bible gives us a majestic description of how it happened and also why it happened. YHVH was cleansing the earth from all the filth and violence which the sinful core had filled it with. YHVH also promised Noah that there would never be another universal flood, as long as the earth exists (8:22). Next time, YHVH would dissolve the entire universe and make it again from scratch.

Right after Noah and his family came out of the ark a shameful event occurred (8:20-27). speaking euphemistically, the account records that Noah's grandson, Canaan, raped his grandmother. He is called Noah's youngest son and this could not be talking about Cham who was Noah's second son. As well, the curse upon Canaan was not somehow passed on to the Canaanite people. They were cursed and annihilated for the sins they committed and not because of a sin which one of their ancestors committed (see Ezekiel 18:20).

The next major shameful event was actually a twofold violation of what YHVH wanted them to do. They were to multiply and fill up the earth again. Instead of obeying, they stayed together in one single community and sin quickly began to dominate them again. They built the Tower of Babel, whose summit touched the sky (11:4). It was some kind of idolatrous horoscope which they consulted instead of calling upon G-d. To prevent another sinful core from quickly taking over mankind again, YHVH came down and confused their language. They were now divided into various linguistic family groups which then scattered over the face of the earth (11:8)

When chapter ten lists 70 different people groups, it could mean that there were 70 different language groups that later developed into related languages. However, the awesome array of various languages was G-d's redemptive solution to slow down the spread of sin. It was not until the 1900's that a single language could claim to be the new universal language, and that language is English. The Flood and the Tower of Babel should both act as a warning to the peoples of the earth and give us comfort because the redemptive purposes of G-d are unstoppable. As we head towards a new universal darkness, our faith becomes the ark we must enter, so that when the final judgment comes, we are not destroyed along with all the wicked people who are taking over our world once again.

Sermon: Making Balanced Spirituality a High Priority

This coming Monday is Halloween and I want to briefly discuss the origin this ancient Celtic festival before we read our passage and make sure that we are making balanced spirituality a high priority in our lives.

Before the ancient Irish Celts converted to Christianity, they had many strange and even bloody customs which have not totally disappeared. On the day which is equivalent to October 31st, (Samhain in Celtic) they believed that the dead were released from their graves and wandered the land doing evil deeds and even killing people. To protect themselves from these evil spirits, people had to both scare them away and make offerings to them, if they wanted to survive the night. It eventually turned in a silly evening where people played pranks on each other and went door to door to get gifts and treats from their neighbours.

People still vaguely believed that the dead walked abroad at night on October 31st, so the Catholic Church stepped in and came up with All Saints Day on November 1st to take attention away from Samhain and to celebrate all the saints whose names remain unknown. The evening before all Saints, called Holy Evening (or Halloween), became the third most important Christian celebration, after Christmas and Easter.

Being often very mischievous, the common Irish people still dressed up in scary costumes and pretended that some of the dead had come back to life. When the Irish moved to North America, they taught their neighbours about Halloween and all kinds of fun activities grew up, with going door to door to collect candy remaining the most popular activity. Some harmless and even some harmful pranks are still played on people at Halloween, but it is not a time when the dead walk abroad or when demonic activity increases.

I have a big aversion (dislike) of all the dark images of death which people display, but, besides some of the cruel pranks, usually played on people by adolescents, the greatest danger during this festival is twofold: bullying and poisoning. Older kids sometimes terrorize younger kids and steal their candy – and they might even beat them up. Some mentally unbalanced sadistic people even poison their Halloween treats to make people sick (and even cause them to die).

There are several ways of keeping your kids safe on Halloween. You could just keep them home or if you allow them to go trick or treating, you could go with them as parental body guards. I have never seen any little kids being beat up at this time of the year, but if I did, the perpetrators would experience the mighty wrath of an angry Rabbi. Once you finished, you could go through their candy and remove suspicious looking treats. This year, the police are warning that some packages of marijuana are being put into bags which look like popular candy brands.

It is perfectly acceptable to have nothing to do with Halloween and refuse to answer the door and give out candies. When I was at seminary, I gave out book markers with Bible verses set in beautiful pictures. Some kids even wanted more than one. I have even heard of a church in Texas where all the families gather in the church parking lot and fill the car trunks with treats. Kids go from car to car until their bags are full and I bet you some kids even go around more than once. Follow your conscience and let the ones who do, not judge the ones who don't and let the ones who don't not judge those who do!

Passage: “I encourage you therefore brothers because of the mercies of G-d, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and agreeable to G-d. This shall be on your part a reasonable worship. Do not be conformed to this present age, but be transformed by the

renewing of your mind (intelligence or understanding) in order that you will be able to discern what is the will of G-d (for you), that which is good, agreeable and perfect.”
(Romans 12:1, 2)

There has never been a time in history where so many voices are putting so much pressure on us in every area of our lives. The enemy wants to use them to do one of two things. His first objective is to try and destroy our faith and cause us to sink back into the darkness from which we were delivered. If that doesn't work, he wants us to make spiritual compromises to the point that our lives are really no different from the lives of people who have no faith.

If he cannot destroy us, he wants to shut us up and shut us down. Let me ask you a question which somebody challenged me with as a young believer. If you were taken to court and put on trial for being a believer, would there be enough evidence to convict you? We need to live like Heaven bound pilgrims who have different life priorities and who do different things differently, so that we may be salty light as we stick to the bumpy straight and narrow.

We are not called to be praying and studying our Bibles 24/7 as we relentlessly share our faith with anything which moves and virtually live attending services, whenever the building doors are open. I have already told you about a well meaning believer who feels called to share the Gospel with everyone she meets. She does not understand that she is being intrusive and offensive. Unless people give us permission and are actually listening to our presentation of our faith, we are wasting our time and theirs.

We do not have to force our faith upon people, because, at least in my case, every conversation eventually leads to a discussion of faith matters. On my Facebook, I have as many non believers as I do believers. Along with my amazing humour, I regularly share faith insights and if they do not like it, they can unfriend me. I have unfriended people who have become extremely rude or threatening and I delete every post which contains foul language of any kind.

When I am dealing with abortion and my firm stand against homosexuality, my Facebook page suddenly quits working, but I just wait it out because they are never going to shut me down. I would never promote hatred of any kind against anyone or call for violence against those who actively oppose either my faith or my spiritual morality. I will always be polite, even with those who are impolite with me and I walk away when the battle lines are drawn. I am not afraid of hearing ideas which challenge or oppose my faith, but if we cannot build a respectful dialogue where both sides of an issue are given equal time, then I shut down the communication before it turns into an argument or even into violence.

I am well received by many of my secular friends because I never get rude or intrusive when I share my faith. Paul says not to be conformed to this present age and said another way, we should not assimilate into the pagan culture we are surrounded by and which we have to walk through. I get neither my ideas nor my inspiration from this darkening age. I remain a radical thinker who believes totally in the Bible and I am not scared of being assimilated. They should be scared of me because, willing assimilation into the faith, is a primary objective I have for all the non believers in my life.

Part of what it means to shine and to be salty means to build and maintain a balanced, biblical spirituality and not be constantly tossed to and fro by those who either want to destroy us or unbalance us. Some feel that being spiritual means to be in constant crisis and live as if everything in our lives was on the verge of collapsing. Balanced spirituality means that the

whatever's we are going through do not define how we live or how we respond to the valleys we are travelling through. Inside, there is always peace because of the care and protection of our Good shepherd. The outside is driven by the inside and not the other way around.

During the time when the temples stood, the people lived by making sacrifices as a way of staying connected with YHVH and making their lives revolve around what His Word said. Because of what our Messiah accomplished for us on the cross, His sacrifice becomes the centre around which our lives should revolve. Instead of offering sacrifices, our lives and who we are, becomes the sacrifice we offer to YHVH.

Paul and the early Messianic Jewish community never stopped making appropriate sacrifices in the temple, but they were not always waiting for that which they knew had already been achieved. They wanted to celebrate what Messiah had done, as they eagerly awaited for the next stage in His promises. Part of what it means to wait for the coming Messianic kingdom is to be a living sacrifice where both what we do and how we do it, reflect both our obedience to the Word and our confidence in the coming kingdom.

We want to integrate YHVH and His Word into every area of our lives and be holy (separate) as we travel through this life on our way home. There is a considerable difference between making a sacrifice and being a sacrifice and learning to be a sacrifice means that we offer everything in our lives and everything that happens to us in our lives, as if they were personal sacrifices we were making to YHVH. The good, the sad and the bad are received as gifts from YHVH and are offered back to Him as we determine to react to them according to His Word and acknowledge His hand in every area of our lives.

In response to all that He has done for us, we want to do everything as an offering to Him because He is present in our lives and doing this is the only reasonable way of walking with Him. We make the invisible present by walking according to His Word and by responding to the ups and downs of this life as nothing more than stepping stones we are walking on, as we make our way home to our Father's Home in Glory.

This is not always an easy task because of the multiple distractions life will always bring our way. The storms of life will try and batter down the house of our faith and push it towards the sinking sand. The works of the flesh are also always standing by, ready to choke us and make us lose our spiritual focus, as if all that really mattered were the cares, the riches and the pleasures of this life. We still have to meet our needs and the needs of our family, but in the Messiah, this will always remain a secondary function because the realities of the coming Kingdom are what matters the most. What matters most to you in your life?

When we allow love, joy, and peace to infuse our lives as if we were already in the Kingdom, then the reality of the kingdom becomes a reality that we live and not just some future event we are waiting for. In the Messiah, life is always interesting because the challenge for us as believers is not what is happening to us, but how we relate to it. No matter what else is going on in our lives, the practical righteousness of the kingdom needs to be the place where we live. As your life unfolds, where do you live?

Our primary task in life is not to be the most successful at whatever we have found to do. The contents of our bank accounts and the certificates on our walls are not what life in the Messiah is all about. I pray fervently for each of you that your needs are met and I pray the same thing for all the members of my family. Some of you may acquire significant wealth and even become

famous in your particular area of expertise. But, again, the point of life is not to get all you can and to can all you get while you sit on the lid.

This level of fame and comfort is what the world seeks to interest us in as we join in the mad pursuit of what has been called the American dream. There is no real spiritual value in being rich, just as there is no spiritual value in being poor. There is no real spiritual value in being young, just as there is no real spiritual value in being old. Every dream in our fading world will also fade away, but we are destined for higher things and for better dreams.

We need to be transformed by His Word so that we see things differently and so that we live our lives differently. We may go through the same things as our friends and neighbours, but our lives have a different objective and we share a different destiny. The reality of the coming Kingdom needs to be the driving force in all that we do and in all that we refuse to do. This is not as easy as it sounds because of all the voices that are crying out for our attention. In order to be really acceptable as citizens of our modern world, we have to both embrace the social and personal priorities which are currently in favour and to live politically correct lives.

This is not our calling. While we should never go out of our way to be offensive and annoying and while we should do everything in our power to live at peace with our neighbours, more and more frequently, what we believe and how we are called to live our lives will be annoying and there is nothing we should do to make things better in the eyes of our world.

I am a firm believer in the Creator who is the only G-d. I am a firm believer in the truths of the Bible, whether or not they are acceptable to our fast paced, secular world. I am waiting for the coming Kingdom whether or not it is politically correct to do so. I take a firm stand on moral issues that are losing popularity because balanced spirituality is not a popularity contest. We always want to be good people who are helpful and who can be counted on when the chips are down. We need to be people who others will come to for help and for advice. This should never be because we can always be counted on to say the things that people want to hear, but because we can always be counted on to speak the truth, firmly and gently, even when what we say is not popular or trendy.

We are those who live so that our intelligence can be constantly transformed because we live our lives on a radically different quest. We believe that everything and anything which comes into our lives has first been approved or allowed by G-d and with it comes a required reaction which YHVH wants us to adopt. We want our lives to revolve around YHVH and His Word and not around the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Midterm elections are heating up south of the border and the war in the Ukraine rages on. We may be heading into another recession and global warming may continue to give us weird weather that we are not used to.

While I am not a big believer in accepting everything in our lives as the will of G-d, I firmly accept that we should seek the will of G-d for everything that He allows to come into our lives. I wish sickness and poverty on no one and I pray regularly for world peace, even though I know that this will always be an elusive dream. I am anxiously waiting for the coming Kingdom, where everything will be worked out and all the uncertainties of this life will become a fading dream. This is the transformation which should define our lives as we make balanced spirituality a high priority. What is a high priority in your life? Shabbat shalom.