

(God is Great,)

# God is Good

[worshipweekly.com/God-is-Good.html](http://worshipweekly.com/God-is-Good.html)

There was good reason for the ditty sung at the dinner table. Repetition and remembering are important. One can argue good is better than love. Love is a feeling. Whether love is good or evil depends on who or what you love and how you express it. Good, is good. "God is love" is not in the Hebrew Bible. "I will make all my goodness pass before you" (God says to Moses when Moses asks to behold His presence), Exodus 33:19. Let that be a teaser...

# Noah's Ark

## City of Babel

Genesis 6-11

# Sources

**Rational Bible: Genesis, Dennis Prager  
Dennis acknowledges all his sources in  
the book**

**Sefaria.org (Bible translation used here)**

Only 2 volumes out so far. Exodus was published first because of the Ten Commandments, which, if everyone followed, we'd be practically devoid of human-caused suffering.

**6:1-2 When men began to increase on earth and daughters were born to them, the divine beings saw how beautiful the daughters of men were and took wives from among those that pleased them.**



“Divine beings” could also be translated “sons of the gods” – b’nei ha-Elohim. We do not know exactly what the Torah is talking about here. Probably a teaching to the early peoples that there are not lots of little gods but rather one true God. May be one of those areas where the ancients would have understood better than we do now. Comes right before the flood... “You will be like God” was not to happen.

**6:3 The LORD said, “My breath shall not abide in man forever, since he too is flesh; let the days allowed him be one hundred and twenty years.”**



Remember we talked about God eventually choosing to reduce lifespans...



**6:4 It was then, and later too, that the Nephilim appeared on earth—when the divine beings cohabited with the daughters of men, who bore them offspring. They were the heroes of old, the men of renown.**

We don't know what is going on here. Again, may have made more sense to the ancient people. Not sure who the Nephilim are other than giants. This is one of the Biblical stories that is not contained neatly in one spot, rather it spreads out over the Tanakh (Old Testament). Moses' scouts see giants 1,000 years later. Goliath may have been the last of the giants years after that. When we know our Bible well, we read about these giants and know they will play a role later in the wilderness generation, that Joshua will defeat them, and that David will kill the most famous one. They are "renown", but no positive connotation is intended.



**6:5 The LORD saw how great was man's wickedness on earth, and how every plan devised by his mind was nothing but evil all the time.**

Yetzer, here translated as “plan”, is often understood as urge or impulse. Freud would say the Id, primal drives and instincts. Judaism holds we have both good urges and evil urges, always in conflict. But we need both. We do a variety of things for mixed reasons including good and bad. Both urges must be controlled as even the good urge can be played (suckered). And remember, God judges actions, not thoughts or urges.



**6:6 And the LORD regretted that He had made man on earth, and His heart was saddened.**

God regretting? Did he not know how it would turn out? If God regretted, he did not know the future. Free will. He may not know the future when it comes to Man.

God may be the most tragic figure in the Bible. Certainly here, repeatedly disappointed by his favorite creature.

God destroys the world out of sadness more than anger. God does get angry (in other stories); here he is just sad.

Does God have emotions? Given that we are made in God's image, why would we have something God does not.



**6:7 The LORD said, “I will blot out from the earth the men whom I created—men together with beasts, creeping things, and birds of the sky; for I regret that I made them.”**



Mean-spirited God? No, a God obsessed with goodness. Widespread cruelty. That is why the flood. God saved one righteous man and his family. Maybe we should ask why God saved anyone? Why not start completely over? Even from Noah and his family came endless suffering through today. God doesn't explain his thinking in that regard. What we do know is that God hates human cruelty.

Why destroy all the animals? We don't know. They were clearly innocent. Not enough boats? No need for them without Man? If you place equal value on an animal's life as a human, there is no good answer for you. The Bible is anthropocentric.

**6:8-9 But Noah found favor with the LORD. This is the line of Noah.—Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his age; Noah walked with God.**



Tzaddik – righteous man. Just and innocent.

“In his age” could be looked at several ways. Maybe he was an average man but stood out because everyone else was so bad. Or, maybe he stood up against a world of evil. It’s very difficult to be decent if you live among indecent people.

“In his age” also tells us we can only judge a person by the standards of their day, not our day. God judged him in his age and found him righteous. For a current example, it is immoral to judge our founding fathers about slavery based on our standards today. At the time, virtually every society on the planet had slavery. And it was those Fathers who laid a foundation to abolish slavery less than 100 years later. People should be judged “in their age.”



The Biblical Flood story was unprecedented though there were many flood stories about. This one was based on ethical monotheism. God is moral, and demands moral behaviour. All the other flood stories of ancient societies were based on little or nothing to do with fighting evil. Often it was to save a single person because they were wealthy, or handsome, or half-god, etc. One flood story because man was making too much noise.

Whether you believe the literal story or not isn't the point. The fact that the Torah makes its flood story about destroying evil is the point.

**6:12 When God saw how corrupt the earth was, for all flesh had corrupted its ways on earth,**



Unlike the national gods of other cultures at the time, the God of the Torah was concerned about the entire world.

**6:13 God said to Noah, “I have decided to put an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with lawlessness because of them: I am about to destroy them with the earth.**

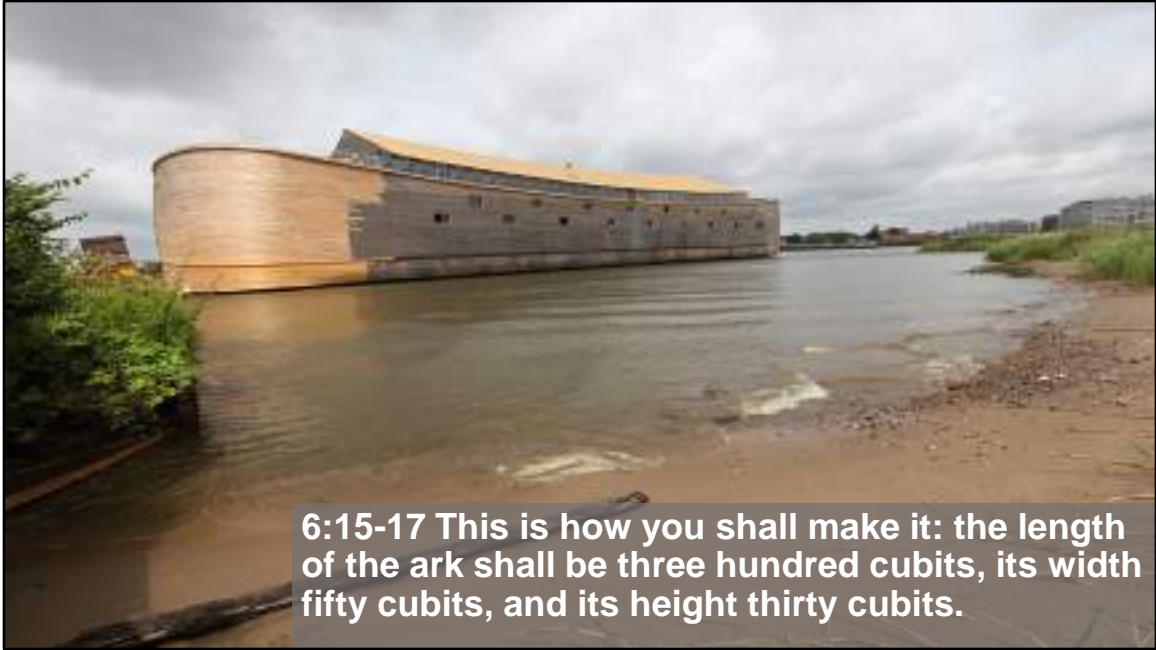


In contrast to other flood stories where the gods kept their plans secret, God confides in Noah. This is also another point to make (God’s confidence in him) when deciding if Noah was in fact good.

**6:14 Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make it an ark with compartments, and cover it inside and out with pitch.**



Ark = tevah. The same word used to describe Moses' rescue basket in the Nile. In both stories, God steers. Unlike other boats, an ark is steered by God. P.S. we have no idea what "gopher" wood was; this is the only known use of the word in the Bible and anywhere else in Semitic languages.



**6:15-17 This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.**

Replica built in Netherlands.  
450 feet long, 75 feet wide, 45 feet tall.  
43,000 ton displacement. Some battleships are similar. The Queen Mary was twice that, 80,000 tons.

6:18-20 But I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall enter the ark, with your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives...

Image: By Source, Fair use, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=41074894>



*Noah* (2014 film). Russel Crowe, Anthony Hopkins, Emma Watson...  
God tells Noah to take only his family; the rest he mistrusts their moral character.  
Only necessary to take land animals; water-dwelling creatures were not in peril.



**6:22 Noah did so; just as  
God commanded him, so he  
did.**



Why didn't Noah argue with God? (unlike Abraham, for instance, arguing for Sodom and Gomorrah)

If the world was as evil as God says, and Noah knew it, why would he argue.

Though Abraham argued, once he knew there weren't even 10 good people, he acquiesced, too.

7:2 Of every clean animal you shall take seven pairs, males and their mates, and of every animal that is not clean, two, a male and its mate;



How many of you remember there were 7 pairs of some animals taken on the ark. The “clean” animals, for sacrifice. Not a contradiction of 6:19, this simply provided further instruction.

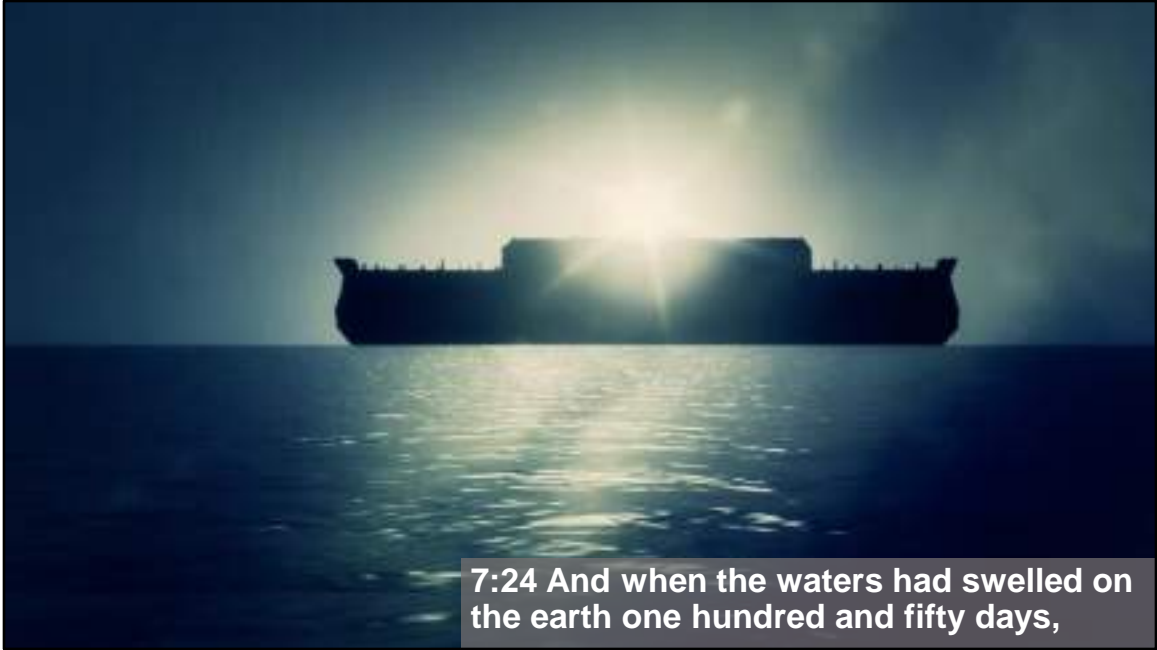
**7:12** The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.

**7:16** Thus they that entered comprised male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him. And the LORD shut him in.



In the Bible, forty is considered an indication of something very important, even divine. The alternative is to believe there was amazing coincidence, 40 days, 40 years, etc.

God shut the door. It is God who is in control.



**7:24 And when the waters had swelled on the earth one hundred and fifty days,**

150 days more... still not done...

**8:1 God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark, and God caused a wind to blow across the earth, and the waters subsided.**



“remembered” = decided to act (not like “forgot”)

God sent a wind across the waters. God is in control, unlike pagan gods who generally could not stop what they unleashed. The whole world worshipped nature (nature gods), so the Torah makes the point over and over that there are no nature gods, only the God of the Torah.

Pagans were not stupid. Simply not made aware (till now) of this other possibility. We are in a post-Biblical age now where we could see (already do?) the return of nature worship.

The Bible is theocentric and anthropocentric. As the theocentric view collapses, Man becomes less as well. Carl Sagan commented on how insignificant man seems.

Stephen Hawking said man is “mere collection of fundamental particles of nature.”

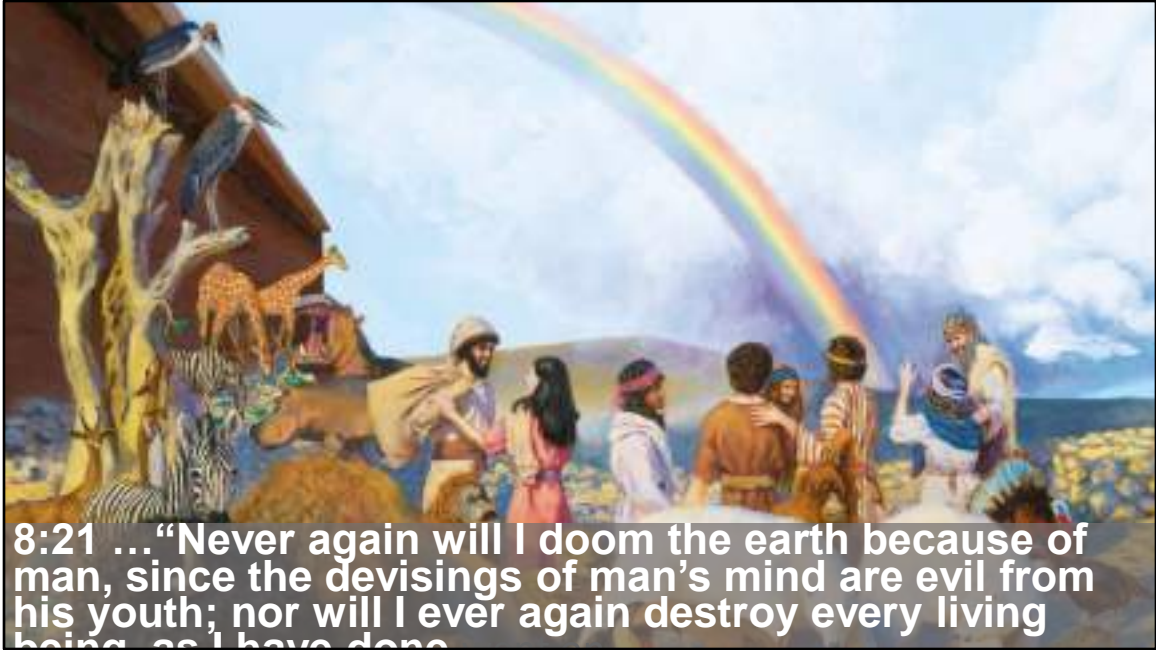
**8:4-5** so that in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. The waters went on diminishing until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible. The waters went on diminishing until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.



May seem a contradiction in timing. But... touched ground after 7 months. There would still be 30-ish feet of water around it. 30-ish feet of water still above the ground. And it took a couple more months for that 30-ish feet to go down world wide.



Forty days after the ark came to rest (not after the deluge).



8:21 ...“Never again will I doom the earth because of man, since the devisings of man’s mind are evil from his youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living being as I have done.”

God vows not to curse the Earth again. “Doom” means “curse”. Not implying God regretted doing so. Note that free will was not abolished. So no more destroying, free will forever... How does God prevent a relapse to evil? More revelation.

This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt to impart good:

- 1 – putting a conscience in man
- 2 – Noahide laws
- 3 – Ten Commandments

If Earth is ever again destroyed, it will be by Man’s hand, not God’s.

A unilateral covenant – man need to nothing in return.



**9:1 God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fertile and increase, and fill the earth.on**

diminishing until the tenth month, in the tenth month, on the first of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.



Same words spoken to Adam and Eve. Starting again. We are all descended from Adam and Eve, and Noah, a just/innocent man. Noah descended from Seth, not Cain, so we are not descendants of a killer. Cain's descendants all perished in the flood. HAVE MANY CHILDREN. Repopulate. Most other pagan stories go the opposite way, over population is the problem not the answer. This command is followed in five verses by the law to eliminate those who murder. They are related. Both laws seek more human beings. Have as many as is possible/rational. Today nations are at risk due to low birth rates. As we become more secular, all that exists is the material during this brief lifetime. Why mess that up by having children to deal with. And it is true they are rarely easy to raise.

## 9:20 Noah, the tiller of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard.

diminishing until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.



The Torah traces the use of alcohol back to Noah. Has been a problem since the beginning, danger ensues. This is all we know about Noah in the 350 years after the flood. Dangers of alcohol are underscored a few chapters later with drunken Lot sleeps with his daughters. Interestingly, historically low rates of excessive drinking and alcoholism among Jews.

Interestingly, today's society is far more focused on the danger of cigarette smoking than alcohol. Both cause disease and death, but alcohol causes far more evil such as abuse, rape, homicide.

## 9:20 Noah, the tiller of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard.

diminishing until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.



In verse 21 Noah becomes drunk and falls asleep naked. Ham disrespects his father by doing something (?) and showing his two brothers. Noah's response is here in 9:25-26 (27 as well). This sequence has been used as justification of black slavery. They argue Ham was the father of the black race and therefore the black race was cursed to slavery.

At least three answers to this vile and baseless belief:

1. The Torah never even hints that Ham is black.
2. Ham is not cursed, Canaan (the land) is.
3. God does not participate. Noah alone dies the cursing.



**9:25 he said,  
“Cursed be  
Canaan; The lowest  
of slaves Shall he  
be to his  
brothers.”**

until the tenth month; in the  
tenth month, on the first of the month, the tops of the mountains  
became visible.

**9:26 And he  
said, “Blessed  
be the LORD,  
The God of  
Shem; Let  
Canaan be a  
slave to them.”**

the  
tenth month, in the tenth month, on the first of  
the month, the tops of the mountains became  
visible.



Noah's curse on Ham's son is clearly understood as unfair. Also violates the principle not punishing children for the parents' crimes.

Some Xians and Jews justify black slavery based on :26. They argue Ha, was the frather of the black race and therefore blacks were cursed to be enslaved.

Baseless and vile:

1. Torah no way hints Ham was black or African.
2. Ham is not cursed here, Canaan is.
3. God does not participate in thei curse; Noah's alone.

## Noahide Laws

1. Do not deny God (no idolatry).
2. Do not murder.
3. Do not steal.
4. Do not engage in sexual immorality.
5. Do not blaspheme.
6. Do not eat of a live animal (no eating flesh taken from an animal while it is still alive).
7. Establish courts and legal systems to ensure obedience of these laws.

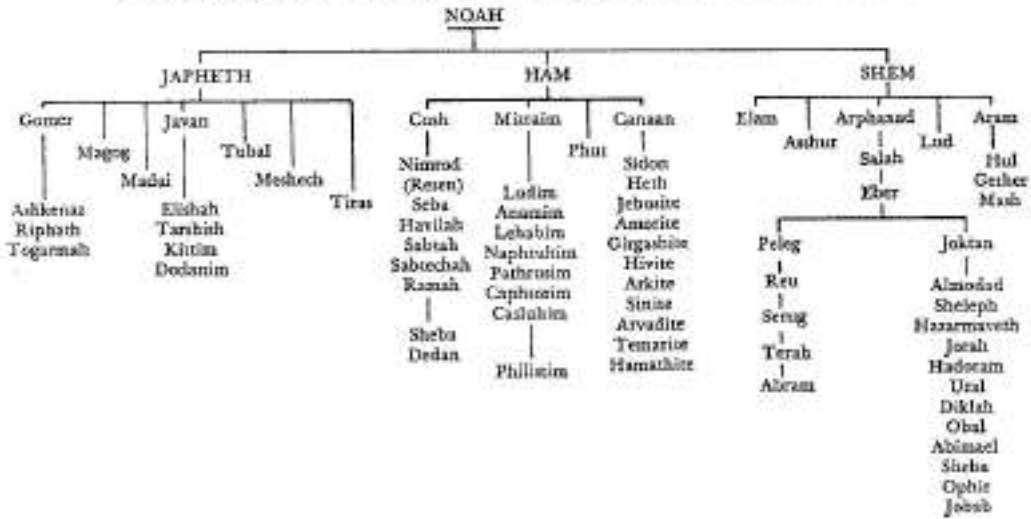
Universal (not just Jews).

Comes from the Talmud, extra-Biblical, not spelled out in the Bible.

First 6 given to Adam and Eve, though #6 not applicable.

Last 2 in covenant with Noah (6<sup>th</sup> became applicable and added 7<sup>th</sup>).

## GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE DESCENDANTS OF NOAH



Chapter 10.

Revolutionary. Only ancient text to enumerate such a thing.

The God of the Torah is the God of all Nations, not just the Hebrews.

The Jews are intended to be a blessing to all nations.

70 nations in all (seventy!)

Aligns with the number of Abraham's seed at the end of Genesis going into Egypt.



## Chapter 11 – City of Babel

We tend to only remember the tower, but all Torah references include the city as a whole, as well.

Big does not mean important, or even relate to importance.

11:4 to make a name for ourselves. Self-destructive pursuit of fame.

What do you want to be when you grow up? Famous.

1. Fame will likely die with the owner
2. Fame is fleeting.
3. The more you value fame, the more crushed you are when it's gone or unattained.
4. There is little more pathetic than watching someone try to retain fame.
5. Fame is only available to a tiny percentage of people.
6. The famous are rarely significant, and the significant are rarely famous.

**11:5 The LORD came down to look at the city and tower that man had built,**

enth month; in the tenth month, on the first of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.



Hard to miss the irony. The tower was to be in the heavens, but God had to come down to see it.

Also note: city AND tower.



## 11:8 ... and they stopped building the city



Not just the tower, the city.

The City is the issue, not just the tower.

This story is a warning against human hubris and often-immoral nature of cities.

The bigger the city, the more anonymous you can remain – and avoid responsibility.

Of course cities have their pluses and rural areas their negatives.

But in the balance, cities are more of a moral problem. And the Torah is all about morality (not art, science, etc. where cities often do well)

Next session: August 25<sup>th</sup>, 6pm PDT

Abraham  
Isaac  
Jacob  
Joseph

3 sessions to get through 11 chapters. Next week we do 38 chapters! Obviously we're going to be hitting the "big truths" as we go, not verse by verse.