



Bridges for Peace
Your Israel Connection ®

■ **International Headquarters**

P.O. Box 1093
Jerusalem, Israel
Tel: (972) 2-624-5004
intl.office@bridgesforpeace.com

■ **Australia**

P.O. Box 1785, Buderim
Queensland 4556
Tel: 07-5453-7988
adminaust@bridgesforpeace.com.au

■ **Canada**

P.O. Box 21001, RPO Charleswood
Winnipeg, MB R3R 3R2
Tel: 204-489-3697, bfp@mts.net

■ **Japan**

Taihei Sakura Bldg. 5F
4-13-2 Taihei, Sumida-Ku
Tokyo 130 0012
Tel: 03-5637-5333, bfp@bfpj.net

■ **New Zealand**

P.O. Box 10142,
Te Mai, Whangarei
Tel/FAX: 09-434-6527
bfpnz@paradise.net.nz

■ **South Africa**

P.O. Box 1848
Durbanville 7551
Tel: 021-975-1941
info@bridgesforpeace.co.za

■ **United Kingdom**

11 Bethania Street, Maesteg
Bridgend, Wales CF34 9DJ
Tel: 01656-739494
bfpuk@btconnect.com

■ **United States**

P.O. Box 410037
Melbourne, FL 32941-0037
Tel: 800-566-1998
Product orders: 888-669-8800
postmaster@bfpusa.org



www.bridgesforpeace.com

BRIDGES FOR PEACE

Israel Teaching Letter

Vol. # 770209

February 2009



THE DAYS OF Noah

THE DAYS OF Noah

Have you ever considered that the violence, immorality, and uncertainty that surround us today are really nothing new? They have been the unfortunate companions of humanity throughout history. The Bible tells the recurring story of God's judgment on such behavior as mankind repeatedly slipped into depravity. There are, however, certain generations that have the dubious distinction of being singled out by the writers of Scripture as the worst of the worst. Noah's was such a generation.

The life of Noah is particularly important to Christians. Of course, God's acknowledgment of him as a righteous man, the building and populating of the ark, the flood, and the subsequent restoration of the earth are all stories that are beloved by Christians and taught widely in our churches and Sunday schools. But the man Noah and the period in which he lived take on much deeper significance in light of Yeshua's (Jesus's) words in Luke 17:22–30:

*"And He said to the disciples, 'The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. They will say to you, "Look there! Look here!" Do not go away, and do not run after them. For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. **And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:** they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed'" (NASB).*

A Picture of an End-time World

Literally thousands of commentaries have been written by authors throughout the centuries discussing these verses and their implications for the Christian anticipation of the return of the Messiah and the everyday Christian life. Combined with other verses from the New Testament, commentators have created a “days of Noah” scenario that they believed would be clearly recognizable as the end of the age. At that time, the stage would be set for the coming of the Messiah and the redemption of all mankind.

Genesis 6 gives us a glimpse into the world in which Noah lived, and perhaps a preview of those days to come: *“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually...The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth”* (vv. 5, 11–12).



• Filled with Violence

Today, as we watch events unfold around the world, many Christians believe we are, in fact, living in those days prophesied by Yeshua in Luke 17 and further identified in Genesis 6. Certainly we recognize that the earth is again filled with violence. There are currently at least 41 wars being fought around the world, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of people every year. Violent crime is on the increase worldwide, with crimes involving the use of firearms and other weapons growing dramatically. Violence against women has reached epidemic proportion worldwide, with rape and domestic violence surpassing cancer, motor vehicle accidents, war, or malaria as a major cause of death for women aged 15 to 44. According to a study done in the 1950s in the United States, the most difficult problems teachers in public schools had to deal with at that time were gum chewing, tardiness, and talking out of turn. Today, physical harassment, rape, and murder haunt institutions of learning across America. Crime is also a prominent issue in 21st-century South Africa. A survey compiled by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime ranked South Africa second for assault and murder (by all means) per capita and first for rapes per capita compared to 60 other nations.



Not only is violence on the increase, but it has actually become big business in the entertainment industry. Movies and television programs with violent themes are box office successes with even children’s programming displaying several acts of violence per hour of viewing. Recent studies indicate that the average child in a first-world country, upon reaching the age of 18, will have watched on the average 1,680 minutes of television per week and witnessed a total of over 200,000 acts of violence. Unfortunately that same child will have been engaged in meaningful conversation by his parents an average 3.5 minutes per week.

A cartoon character from an international hit TV series screened during prime time

By 18,
an average
child has
witnessed
200,000
acts of
violence.



Corrupt leader Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, has plunged his country into disaster.

• Wickedness and Corruption

Violence, however, is not the only criteria for the “days of Noah” scenario. The verses we have looked at in Genesis use two very telling words: “wickedness” and “corrupt.” Both of these words in Hebrew come from roots that indicate rottenness, something that is vile, foul-smelling, and causing everything around it to putrefy. The people in Noah’s generation were not just obsessed with violence. The very fabric of society had degenerated, allowing immorality to thrive on every level. Every thought men entertained was evil, meaning that selfishness, greed, self-centeredness, sexual immorality, and every form of dishonesty were rampant. Wicked, sinful people had infected mankind with decay and were bringing ruin to the world that God had created for His own pleasure.

• Homosexual Marriage

Interestingly, the Babylonian *Talmud* (rabbinic commentary on Jewish tradition and the Hebrew Scriptures) may shed even more light on the world in which Noah lived and Yeshua’s description of it in Luke 17. Rabbis over a thousand years ago taught that Noah’s generation was the most morally degenerate in all of human history and the reason actually points out a very clear parallel between those days and today. Violence was rampant and immorality raged unbridled. But according to Rabbi Aryeh Spero, Jewish-American commentator and radio host, the sages taught that it was actually homosexuality that moved civilization beyond redemption. Of course, there were many other periods of history in which homosexuality was prevalent and biblically wrong, but apparently not reason for God to destroy the earth. What made the difference? The *Talmud* teaches that, in Noah’s day, certificates of marriage were being written for couples of the same sex!

When Christians have read Yeshua’s words in Luke 17:27 (NASB), “they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,” it has been understood to mean that life was just business as usual. No one was paying attention to Noah’s activities or his warnings, and they went about their lives as though nothing were wrong. In the next verses, Yeshua speaks of Lot and the days in which he lived, again indicating that people were engaged in their daily business with no understanding of impending doom. Many believe that it was the sin of homosexuality that precipitated that destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but why not the whole earth in Lot’s day? The rabbis say it is because



Photo by Isranet

A MAN participating in the gay parade that was held in Jerusalem in 2008

the sanctification of the homosexual relationship through marriage only occurred during the time of Noah. Perhaps Yeshua was trying to tell us more than “business as usual” in these verses. Certainly, the parallels with today can’t be denied.

One might ask why the act of formalizing a homosexual relationship through marriage was cause for the destruction of the earth. It might seem that the punishment doesn’t quite fit the crime in this instance. However, from the days of creation, God has had a very special and unique purpose for the institution of marriage. Twelfth-century *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.) scholar and Jewish sage Maimonides taught that Adam was created fully in the image of God, a reflection of all of His attributes both masculine and feminine. When God created Eve, it was actually an act of separating His masculine attributes as reflected in Adam from His feminine attributes as reflected in Eve. From that day forward, men and women would come together in marriage, the joining of all God’s attributes into one flesh, to present a picture of Him to the world. His purpose for marriage has always been to reflect the fullness of His character through the interaction between husband and wife. Consequently, a homosexual marriage disabuses God’s purpose and creates a perverted picture of His nature. According to the Jewish sages, in Noah’s day, this activity had become so prevalent that, apparently, God felt He had no recourse other than to destroy mankind and start over.



www.israelimages.com/IsraelTalby

God's purpose
for marriage
has always been
to reflect the
fullness
of His character.

Noah, Our Example

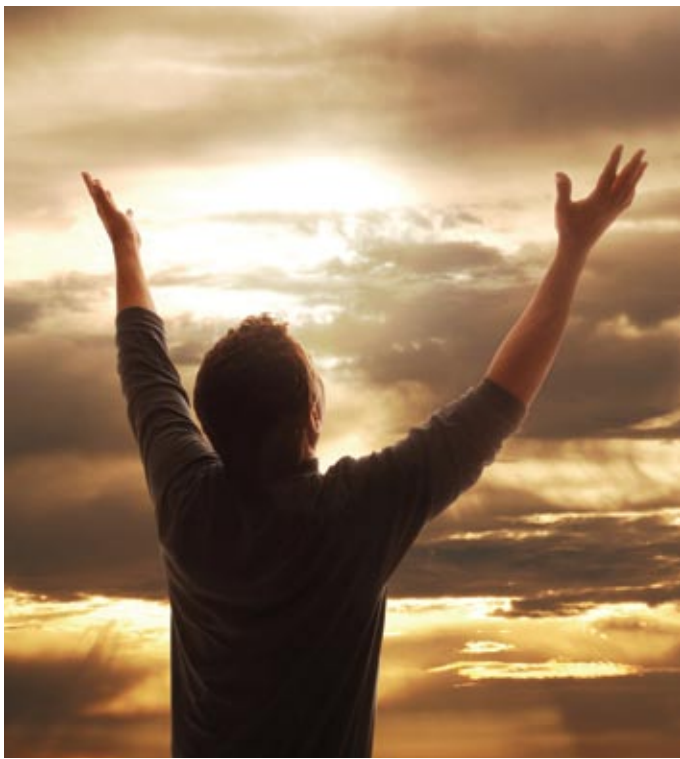
As we look at the “days of Noah” scenario, I believe there are even deeper lessons for us to learn as Christians. The New Testament is clear that we are to discern the times, so finding the parallels between our day and Noah’s day is critically important. But we must not get so caught up in looking at the “times” that we forget to look at Noah himself. Since he lived in some of the darkest days the world has ever known, his light must have shone brightly. If our days are to be equally as dark, how can we live our lives with the same righteousness that Noah displayed?

• A Just Man

Scripture uses some very specific adjectives to describe Noah and his relationship with God. We are told in Genesis 6:9 that he was a just man. The Hebrew word used here is *tzaddik*, which comes from a root having several meanings. It is often used to refer to the loyalty demonstrated by a king as a servant to God, such as David, whose life demonstrated unflinching loyalty and commitment to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It also refers to truthfulness, honesty, and innocence. It is sometimes translated “righteousness” and embodies all that God expects of His people. The verbs associated with righteousness indicate the practicality of life. One judges, deals, sacrifices, and speaks righteously; and one learns, teaches, and pursues righteousness with his whole heart.



www.israelimages.com/DouglasGuthrie



In all its forms, the word has to do with relationship: a king to his God, God to His people, men to one another, and a nation with its God. In every instance, it refers to those who are upright, just, and righteous, conforming in every way to God's laws. In modern Hebrew, a *tzaddik* is a righteous man, one whose life is dedicated to the study of *Torah* and who is true to the Lord in all his ways. Modern Hebrew dictionaries define a *tzaddik* as one who is a righteous figure in his generation, extremely honest and just. From the same root, the word *tzedakah* is derived. In modern Hebrew, it means righteousness, justice, and charity interchangeably. Living a life of faithfulness and virtue are inextricably linked to demonstrations of mercy. A just man follows his God with commitment, integrity, humility, and generosity.

Finally, the word can be used in a causative sense, as to make something right or to correct a wrong. It also has the connotation of cleansing or clearing away evil. As a just man living in a very unjust and unholy world, Noah's choice to live a life of godliness and purity made him the only countering force against the corruption that was filling the earth with decay.

NOAH,
ENOCH,
and other great
heroes of the
faith lived in
constant, close
RELATIONSHIP
with GOD.

• A Perfect Man

Next we are told that Noah was a man perfect in his generation. The Hebrew word here is *tamim*. It describes a life that is blameless, sincere, and complete. When one is described by this word, there is nothing in his outward activities or internal disposition that is odious to God. The word describes one's entire relationship with God on every level, a relationship that is sound and filled with integrity. Another definition important to our discussion is morally innocent. Noah lived in a world rife with wickedness and sexual impurity, yet he is described as being morally innocent. Surrounded by evil, he had to have made decisions every day to avoid those things that would have brought decay into his life, focusing on his relationship with God and the work he had been called to do.

• A Man Who Walked with God

Finally, we are told that Noah "walked with God." Here, the Hebrew word is *halak*. It is the same word used in Genesis 5 in relation to Enoch and his experiences with God. Essentially, this root refers to movement, whether of men, animals, inanimate objects, or even the wind. At its most basic, it means to walk. However, it can also be used to describe behavior or the way one "walks with God." He who walks uprightly shall be blessed of God, Isaiah tells us, encouraging a righteous life (33:15ff). *Vine's Expository Dictionary* tells us that the pious follow or practice God's commands; they "walk" in righteousness, in humility, and in integrity. They "walk with God" and live in His presence. *Halak* can also have the connotation of pursuit, as those who walk hard after God, seeking Him continually. Finally, and most important for our discussion, the word implies constancy or habitual behavior. Those who walk with God have a consistent manner of life, which the New Testament describes as abiding. Men like Noah, Enoch, and other great heroes of the faith lived in constant, close relationship with God and in obedience to His commands.

In modern Hebrew, the word *halakhah* is translated as “Jewish Law,” although a more literal (and more appropriate) translation might be “the path that one walks.” Based on the same root, *halakhah* refers to the entire body of Jewish tradition and teaching that is meant to elevate the mundane and sanctify the ordinary, so that every movement in life reminds the Jewish person of the need to abide in God. Not only does *halakhah* define what is proper or improper behavior, but it also implies constant, unwavering, continual direction. In modern Hebrew, *halakhah le-ma’aseh* means “rule of thumb”—a constant, unchanging standard.

How to Live in the “Days of Noah”

For many Christians in recent years, there has been a growing preoccupation with the “end times,” although such a mindset is not new. Nearly every generation since the first century AD has had its members who believed they were living in the end of days. Even the Protestant reformer Martin Luther was convinced that his was the final generation. However, as events have unfolded over the past few decades, much has happened to bring clarity to many Christian Scriptures that describe the end of the world, suddenly rendering them much more plausible. From satellite broadcasting to chemical weapons, advances in science and technology have made many of the specific end-time prophecies that seemed almost like “fantasy” now very concrete and understandable. As stated earlier, we have watched with horror as violence has increased exponentially across the earth, family values have degraded, and immorality and debauchery have infiltrated nearly every level of society. While the financial world faces collapse, natural disasters are on the increase, and our daily news headlines are filled with war and rumors of war. The evil that permeated the world in which Noah lived is clearly visible everywhere around us today.

As Christians anticipate the Second Coming, many Jewish eyes are also focused heavenward, expecting the arrival of the Messiah at any moment. Some Orthodox rabbis today are writing and teaching about the imminence of the Messiah’s arrival. Increasing numbers of Jewish fiction books are dealing with end-time scenarios. Russian Chief Rabbi Berel Lazar believes the earth will soon see the coming of Messiah to judge all mankind. He has stated, “We know that he is very near at hand.” Clearly, there is a stirring in the hearts of many of God’s people with a Messianic anticipation and a growing understanding that the days leading up to God’s final redemption of the earth may be very difficult indeed.

The evil that permeated the world in which NOAH lived is clearly visible everywhere around us today.



War

Photo by Isranet



Terror

Photo by Isranet



Natural disaster



As much as Noah's generation has illuminated these days in which we live, Noah himself is our example of *how* to live in them. When God instructed him to build the ark, informing him of the judgment that was soon to come upon the earth, he was about 500 years old. Boats were not in common use where Noah lived nor had rain ever fallen upon the earth. Only a man accustomed to hearing and obeying the voice of God could have brought this peculiar plan to completion.

Like Noah, we must begin now to hear, recognize, and obey the voice of God. We must, like Noah, choose righteousness no matter how difficult or unpopular it might be. We must surren-

Like NOAH,
we must
begin now
to HEAR,
recognize
and OBEY
the voice of
GOD.

der everything to the Lord, allowing Him to direct our lives. We must walk before Him in integrity, humility, and sincerity. Noah's life was marked by habitual behavior, a constant, unwavering relationship with God, living in His presence, familiar with His voice, at ease with obedience. Those habits were formed well before God informed him of impending disaster. It was exactly *because* Noah had cultivated a life of faithful surrender that God chose him to be the individual through whom He would repopulate the earth. Surely his neighbors must have asked him what he was doing; and surely he must have told them of the judgment of God that was soon to come upon them. Surely he must have explained the love and mercy of God, hoping to cause some to turn from their wickedness and join him and his family in the ark. But none did.

The God we serve today is the same God that rewarded Noah's faithfulness by speaking clearly to him and rescuing him in times of extreme peril. May we pursue Him with our whole hearts and develop the same habitual lifestyle that Noah had: walking constantly with the Lord, living in His presence, and abiding always in Him.

By Rev. Cheryl Hauer
International Development Director

Bibliography

- "Chief rabbi sees imminent coming of Messiah." WorldNetDaily.com. August 12, 2005.
 "Halakhah." Judaism 101. <http://www.jewfaq.org>
 Kalish, Carol. "International Crime Rates." Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. 1988.
 Kantor, Mattis. *The Jewish Time Line Encyclopedia*. USA: Jason Aronson Inc, 1989.
 "National Violence against Women Survey." November, 1998.
 Pearl, Chaim. *Theology in Rabbinic Stories*. USA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997.
 Szaflik, Kevin. "Violence on TV: The Desensitizing of America."
The Babylonian Talmud on CD-ROM. USA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007.
Vines Expository Dictionary. NYC: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.
 "WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women." World Health Organization, 2005.
 Wikipedia. "Maimonides." www.wikipedia.com
 Wikipedia. "Tzadik." www.wikipedia.com

All Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

Many pastors, Bible teachers, and lay people have written and asked if they can use these notes for preaching and teaching. The answer is a resounding "yes"! It is our hope that the information contained herein will be disseminated over and over again, whether through the spoken word or by photocopying and redistributing these teachings. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

