

Parasha Shorts for Noah
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The Torah tells a story *in the way it tells a story*. Our parasha opens with a formula that is found five times in Bereishit: *Eleh toldot X, X... This is the story of X, X...* In the cases of Shem, Terah, and Avraham, we get an account of the birth of the next generation. But in the case of Noah, we are told something different:

Gen. 6:9	אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדִרְתּוֹ אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ־נֹחַ:	<i>This is the line of Noah.—Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his age; Noah walked with God.—</i>
Gen. 11:10	אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת שֵׁם שֵׁם בְּרַמְאָת שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֵד אֶת־אַרְפַּכְשָׁד שְׁנַיִם אַחַר הַמַּבּוּל:	<i>This is the line of Shem. Shem was 100 years old when he begot Arpachshad, two years after the Flood.</i>
Gen. 11:27	וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת תֵּרַח תֵּרַח הוֹלִיד אֶת־אַבְרָם אֶת־נְחוֹר וְאֶת־הָרָן וְהָרָן הוֹלִיד אֶת־לוֹט:	<i>Now this is the line of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begot Lot.</i>
Gen. 25:19	וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת יִצְחָק בְּרַ־אַבְרָהָם אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת־יִצְחָק:	<i>This is the story of Isaac, son of Abraham. Abraham begot Isaac.</i>
Gen. 37:2	אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בְּרַ־שִׁבְעַ־עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה הָיָה רֹעֵה אֶת־אֶחָיו בְּצֹאן וְהָיָא זָעַר אֶת־בְּנֵי בִלְהָה וְאֶת־בְּנֵי זִלְפָּה וְנָשֵׂי אָבִיו וַיִּבְא יוֹסֵף אֶת־דִּבְרֵתָם רָעָה אֶל־אָבִיהֶם:	<i>This is the story of Jacob: Joseph was seventeen years old and tended the flocks with his brothers, as a helper to the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. And Joseph brought bad reports of them to their father.</i>

Each of these iconic verses conveys a central feature in the lives of their subjects. The Torah has already told us (Gen. 5:32) that Noah was the father of Shem, Ham, and Yafet. Noah's *toldot* verse takes us away from genealogy, the subject of the other verses, and directs us to his character, the Torah's focus. For Isaac, there is a bit of 'bait and switch' because the verse starts out with *toldot Yitzhak* but shifts back to Abraham. With Jacob we expect the text to say, *This is the story of Jacob, Jacob fathered Joseph*. But instead, it shifts abruptly to Joseph. *This is the story of Jacob: Joseph...* meaning, Jacob's story culminates with Joseph.

Genesis 6:9 This is the line of Noah... We can piece together a lot about Noah. Tenth generation from Adam; father Lemekh was 182 at his birth. Noah is the first post-Adam person on record; unlike all of his ancestors, he knows of Adam through story and not life. Noah's name is explained: *this one will comfort us for the pain of our hands' work from the soil which the Lord cursed* (Gen. 5:29) Rashi, comments that he invented the plow and made agriculture easier. But some speculate, based on later events, that Noah invented wine-making. The *comfort* Noah brought into the world, was the *comfort* of wine. He must have brought seeds onto the Ark so that he would be able to plant a vineyard immediately after the Flood and quickly return to wine-making. Noah was 500 years old when his sons were born making him the oldest on this list of those who fathered sons. For the previous generations, the range of initiation into fatherhood is from age 65-187. Noah is very late to

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 נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדִרְתּוֹ
 אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ־נֹחַ:
*This is the line of Noah.—
 Noah was a **righteous man**;
 he was **blameless in his age**;
 Noah **walked with God**.—*

the game. Why? My speculation: If Noah had his children at the average age of the others (~117.3) he would have had grand-children and great-grandchildren on the Ark! For the Flood to be the boundary line in history, the new generations have to be born **after** the Flood. But being 500 years old at the birth of his sons, adds other interesting dimensions to the story. Did he experience centuries of loneliness? Disappointment? Ostracization? Infertility? Noah stands out. Item to ponder: in the post-Flood generations Shem, Terah, and Abraham are also unusually late to fatherhood - 100, 70, and 86 respectively, when the average age of those listed is ~31.4. What does that say about them? God **found favor with Noah** (Gen. 6:8) because *Noah was righteous, blameless and walked with God. In his age*: the rabbis are divided as to whether or not Noah would have amounted to anything extraordinary in a different time. What is more remarkable: to be righteous in an evil generation, or to be righteous when there are other righteous people around?

THE TIMELINE OF THE FLOOD

Month	Event	Source	Comment
1	Noah is 600 years old at the start of the Flood.	Gen. 7:6 <i>Noah was six hundred years old when the Flood came, waters upon the earth.</i>	<p>From the beginning of the Flood until Noah's emergence from the Ark, it's just over a year: 370 days. That's a long time to be cooped up on a boat. (Not really a boat; an oblong box with the proportions of a sarcophagus, symbolizing that Noah, his family and the animals are transitioning from the "death" of the world, into a new life. On Day 224 (~7.5 months) from the beginning of the Flood, the mountains appear. Noah opens the window 40 days later, on Day 264, and sends out the birds. On Day 278, he gets the first sign of drying land. On Day 314, he takes off the covering. On Day 370 he disembarks. Question: From the first sign of dry land, Day 278, until he disembarks, Day 370, 92 days elapse. What took him so long? Perhaps he wants to wait until the ground is completely dry, "for the earth to be in the state that it was on the third day of Creation" (N. Sarna). But clearly, Noah was in no rush. Noah is not an initiative-taker. Only after God commands him to disembark, does he do so, but not exactly as God commands. Read closely: Noah is commanded to exit <i>together with your wife</i> (8:16) but he exits <i>with his sons</i> (8:18). Post-Flood Noah is a shattered man, in no rush to re-build a life and to resume a marital bond. God blesses all of them to be <i>fruitful and multiply</i>. Shem, Ham and Yafet comply, but Noah is solitary. He comforts himself with wine. Naked in his tent – presumably alone, his son Ham intrudes. Ham tells his brothers, disparaging his father's dignity even more. Noah, once righteous, now diminished by trauma and disparaged by his son, responds in kind by cursing Canaan, Ham's youngest son, a reciprocal degradation. Noah lives unremarkably after the Flood for 350 years – 1 year/day on the Ark, less 20. (Is there a correspondence between days on the Ark and years off the boat?) He dies at 950. Ponder that over a glass of wine! Shabbat Shalom!</p>
2	Day 1: Flood begins on the 17 th day of the 1 st month.	Gen. 7:11 <i>In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day All the fountains of the great deep burst apart, And the floodgates of the sky broke open.</i>	
3	Day 40: Flooding ends. (27 th of 3 rd month)	Gen. 7:12 <i>The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.</i>	
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7	Day 150: Ark lands on Ararat after 150 days of floating. (17 th of 7 th month)	Gen. 8:3-4 <i>And when the waters had swelled on the earth one hundred and fifty days, the waters then receded steadily from the earth. At the end of one hundred and fifty days the waters diminished, 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 then receded steadily from the earth.</i>	
8			
9			
10	Day 224: Mountains appear. (1 st of 10 th month)	Gen. 8:5 <i>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.</i>	
11	Day 264: Noah opens the window, sends out the raven; sends out the dove. Day 271: Noah sends out the dove again. Dove returns with olive branch. Day 278: Noah sends out the dove; dove does not return.	Gen. 8:6-8 <i>At the end of forty days, Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made and sent out the raven; it went to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth. Then he sent out the dove to see whether the waters had decreased from the surface of the ground. (8:10) He waited another seven days, and again sent out the dove from the ark. (8:12) He waited still another seven days and sent the dove forth; and it did not return to him any more.</i>	
12			
13	Day 314: Noah takes the covering off the Ark. (1 st day of 1 st month)	Gen. 8:13 <i>In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first of the month, the waters began to dry from the earth; and when Noah removed the covering of the ark, he saw that the surface of the ground was drying.</i>	
14	Day 370: Noah disembarks Ark. (27 th of 2 nd month)	Gen. 8:14-16 <i>And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. God spoke to Noah, saying, "Come out of the ark, together with your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives..."</i>	