Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Noach
October 17, 2026 *** 6 Cheshvan, 5787

Noach in a Nutshell
https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/3155/jewish/Noach-in-a-Nutshell.htm

The Parshah is named "Noach" (Noah) after the protagonist of its major event: The Great Flood. It is found in Genesis 6:9.

G-d instructs Noah—the only righteous man in a world consumed by violence and corruption—to build a large wooden teivah (“ark”), coated within and without with pitch. A great deluge, says G-d, will wipe out all life from the face of the earth; but the ark will float upon the water, sheltering Noah and his family, and two members (male and female) of each animal species (and 7 of the "pure" species).

Rain falls for 40 days and nights, and the waters churn for 150 days more before calming and beginning to recede. The ark settles on Mount Ararat, and Noah dispatches a raven, and then a series of doves, “to see if the waters were abated from the face of the earth.” When the ground dries completely—exactly one solar year (365 days) after the onset of the Flood—G-d commands Noah to exit the teivah and repopulate the earth.

Noah builds an altar and offers sacrifices to G-d. G-d swears never again to destroy all of mankind because of their deeds, and sets the rainbow as a testimony of His new covenant with man. G-d also commands Noah regarding the sacredness of

life: murder is deemed a capital offense, and while man is permitted to eat the meat of animals, he is forbidden to eat flesh or blood taken from a living animal.

Noah plants a vineyard and becomes drunk on its produce. Two of Noah's sons, Shem and Japheth, are blessed for covering up their father's nakedness, while his third son, Ham, is punished for taking advantage of his debasement.

The descendants of Noah remain a single people, with a single language and culture, for ten generations. Then they defy their Creator by building a great tower to symbolize their own invincibility; G-d confuses their language so that "one does not comprehend the tongue of the other," causing them to abandon their project and disperse across the face of the earth, splitting into seventy nations.

The Parshah of Noach concludes with a chronology of the ten generations from Noah to Abram (later Abraham), and the latter's journey from his birthplace of Ur Casdim to Charan, on the way to the land of Canaan.

Haftarah in a Nutshell: *Isaiah 54:1 -10*
https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/578168/jewish/Haftorah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

Forsaken Jerusalem is likened to a barren woman devoid of children. G-d enjoins her to rejoice, for the time will soon come when the Jewish nation will return and proliferate, repopulating Israel's once desolate cities. The prophet assures the Jewish people that G-d has not forsaken them. Although He has momentarily hid His countenance from them, He will gather them from their exiles with great mercy. The haftorah compares the final Redemption to the pact G-d made with Noah in this week's Torah reading. Just as G-d promised to

never bring a flood over the entire earth, so too He will never again be angry at the Jewish people.

"For the mountains may move and the hills might collapse, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace collapse."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A Story of Heaven and Earth by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z'l (5768)

https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/noach/a-story-of-heaven-and-earth/

Set between the pre-history of humanity as a whole and the particular covenant with Abraham, the story of the Tower of Babel is one of the turning points of the biblical narrative, central to its vision of what can go wrong in civilisations and societies.

The story itself - told in a mere *nine verses* - is a compact masterpiece of literary and philosophical virtuosity. The first thing to note is that its historical background is exceptionally precise. The tower - or ziggurat - was the great symbol of the ancient Mesopotamian city states of the lower Tigris-Euphrates valley, the cradle of civilisation. It was here that human beings first settled, established agriculture, and built cities.

As the Torah makes clear with unusual attention to what seems like a peripheral fact, one of the great discoveries of Mesopotamia (along with the wheel, the arch, and the calendar) was the ability to manufacture building materials, especially bricks, made by pouring clay into moulds, drying

them in the sun, and eventually firing them in kilns. This made possible the construction of buildings on a larger scale, and reaching greater heights than hitherto. From this came the ziggurat, a stepped building of many stories, which came to have a profound religious significance.

Essentially these ancient towers - of which the remains of at least thirty have been discovered - were man-made “holy mountains,” the mountain being the place where heaven and earth most visibly met. Inscriptions on several of these buildings, decoded by archeologists, refer, as does the Torah, to the idea that their top “reaches heaven.” The largest - the great ziggurat of Babylon to which the Torah refers - was a structure of seven stories, 300 feet high, on a base of roughly the same dimensions (further details can be found in Nahum Sarna, Understanding Genesis).

Not only is the story of Babel historically precise, it is also shot through with literary devices: inversions, word plays, ironies, and puns. One of the most masterly is that the two key words, *l-v-n*, “brick,” and *n-v-l*, “confuse”, are precise inversions of one another. As so often in the Torah, literary technique is closely related to the moral or spiritual message the Torah wishes to convey. In this case it is the phenomenon of inversion itself. The results of human behaviour are often the opposite of what was intended. The builders wanted to concentrate humanity in one place (“Let us build a city. . . and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth”). The result was that they were dispersed (“from there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth”). They wanted to “make a name” for themselves, and they did, but the name they made - Babel - became an eternal symbol of confusion.

Their pride lay in their newfound technological ability to

construct buildings of unprecedented grandeur. They did not realise (the message signalled in the opening verses of the Torah) that the greatest creative power is language ("And God said . . . and there was"). It was not a technical problem that caused them to abandon the project but the loss of the ability to communicate. What is holy for the Torah is not power but the use to which we put it, and this is intrinsically linked to language - the medium in which we frame our ideals, construct imaginative possibilities, and call others to join us in realising them. The word is prior to the work.

What, though, was the builders' sin? The narrative signals this, again, by a series of verbal cues. The first is the phrase with which the episode both begins and ends, *kol ha-aretz*, "the whole earth." It begins, "The whole world spoke the same language" (Gen. 11:1), and ends, "From there the Lord scattered them all across the face of the earth" (Gen. 11:9). The phrase *kol ha-aretz* appears five times in the nine verses: all three-, five- and especially seven-fold repetitions in a biblical passage signal the presence of a key theme. A framing device of this kind is highly significant.

The second is the phoneme (a basic unit of sound) *sh-m*, either as *sham*, "there", or *shem*, "name". This appears seven times in the passage. It is clearly linked to the word *shamayim*, "heaven" - the place the builders attempted to reach in building the tower. The thematic elements of the narrative are thus clear. This is a story about heaven and earth - but in what way? To understand the point at issue we must return to the opening chapter of Bereishit and its description of creation.

Two words in that account are decisive. The first is *tov*, "good", which appears seven times. God says, "Let there be", there is, and God sees "that it is good". Creation in Bereishit 1 is not

primarily about the power of God but about the goodness of God and the universe He made. In historical context, this is an extraordinary statement. For the most part, the ancients saw the world as a dangerous and threatening place, full of dangers, disasters, famines and floods. There was no overarching meaning to any of this. It was the result of clashing powers, personified as conflicts between the Gods. Religion was either an attempt to assert human power over the elements through magic and myth, or a mystical escape from the world into a private nirvana of the soul. Against this, Judaism made the astonishing assertion that the world is good. It is intelligible. It is the result not of blind collisions and random mutations but of a single creative will. This alone is enough to set Judaism apart as the most hopeful of the world's faiths.

There is however another key word, the root *b-d-l*, to "separate", "distinguish", "divide". This appears five times in Bereishit 1. The goodness of the universe is itself a matter of order, boundaries and distinctions. God separates the different domains (day 1, light and dark; day 2, upper and lower waters; day 3, land and sea) and fills each with its appropriate objects or life-forms (day 4, sun and moon; day 5, birds and fish; day 6, land animals and mankind). So important was this idea to Judaism that we have a special ceremony, *havdallah*, to mark the end of Shabbat and the beginning of each cycle of "the six days of creation." Like God, we begin creation by *havdallah*: making, noting and consecrating distinctions.

This too is fundamental to the Judaic world view. Goodness is order; evil is disorder, an act or person or entity in the wrong place. The word *chet*, sin, comes from a verb meaning "to miss the target." The word *averah*, like its English equivalent "transgression", means to stray across a border, to enter

forbidden territory. Many of the *chukim* or “statutes” of Judaism are about inculcating respect for the inherent orderliness of the universe - and thus not mixing milk (life) and meat (death), wool (an animal product) and linen (a vegetable product) or sowing a field with “mixed kinds” of seed.

Creation itself is seen as the slow emergence of order from chaos. This, as the physicist Gerald Schroeder points out (in *Genesis and the Big Bang*) is implicit in the Hebrew words *erev* and *boker*, “And it was evening (*erev*) and it was morning (*boker*).” *Erev* in Hebrew means an undifferentiated mixture of elements. *Boker* comes from a root meaning "to reflect, contemplate, seek clarity." Much recent work in physics, biology and cosmology has converged on the discovery that the birth of stars, planets and life itself is a matter of the slow emergence of ever more complex systems of order swimming, as it were, against the tide of entropy.

An ordered universe is a peaceable universe in which every form of being, inanimate, animate and human, has its proper place. Violence, injustice and conflict are forms of disorder - a failure to respect the integrity of each life-form or (in the case of humanity, where “every life is like a universe”) each person. That was the state of the universe before the Flood, when “all flesh had corrupted its way on earth.”

This was not an abstract idea. The world of myth, against which Judaism is a sustained protest, was one in which boundaries were not observed. There were human beings who were like Gods and Gods who were like human beings. There were strange mythological hybrids - like the sphinx, half human, half animal. Religious ecstasy was often accompanied by a ceremonial breaking of boundaries in various ways. To the Judaic mind this is paganism, and it is never morally

neutral. God creates order; man creates chaos; and the result is inevitably destructive.

The most fundamental boundary is stated in the Torah's first sentence - that between "heaven" and "earth". Never before or since (except among religions or cultures influenced by Judaism) has God been conceived in so radically transcendent a way. God is not to be identified with anything on earth. "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord", says the Psalmist, "but the earth He has given to man." This ontological divide is fundamental. God is God; humanity is humanity. There can be no blurring of the boundaries.

That was the sin of the builders of the tower. Their aspiration (to "reach heaven") was laughable, and indeed the Torah makes a joke of it. They think that their construction - three hundred feet high - has reached heaven, whereas God has to "come down" to look at it (in general, the one thing that makes God laugh in the Torah is the pretensions of human beings when they think of themselves as like the Gods). However, it was worse than laughable. The Netziv (R. Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, 1817-1893), writing in Czarist Russia and prophetically foreseeing the worst excesses of communism, sees Babel as the world's first totalitarianism, in which to preserve the masses as a single entity, all freedom of expression is suppressed (that, for him, is the meaning of "the whole world had one language and a unified speech"). Intoxicated by their technological prowess, the builders of Babel believe they had become like Gods and could now construct their own cosmopolis, their man-made miniature universe. Not content with earth, they wanted to build an abode in heaven. It is a mistake many civilisations have made, and the result is catastrophe.

In modern times, the re-enactment of Babel is most clearly associated with the name of Nietzsche (1844-1890). For the last ten years of his life, he was clinically insane, but shortly before his final breakdown he had a nightmare vision which has become justly famous:

> Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the marketplace, and cried incessantly, “I seek God! I seek God!”. . . Whither is God?” he cried. “I shall tell you. We have killed him - you and I. All of us are his murderers. . . God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves? What was holiest and most powerful of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this blood off us?. . . Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we not ourselves become Gods simply to seem worthy of it?”

As George Steiner pointed out (in his *In Bluebeard's Castle*) there was less than three-quarters of a century between Nietzsche and the Holocaust, between his vision of the murder of God and the deliberate, systematic attempt to murder the “people of God” (Hitler called conscience “a Jewish invention”).

When human beings try to become more than human, they quickly become less than human. As Lord Acton pointed out, even the great city-state of Athens which produced Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, self-destructed when “the possession of unlimited power, which corrodes the conscience, hardens the heart, and confounds the understanding of monarchs, exercised its demoralising influence.” What went wrong in Athens, he writes, was the belief that “there is no law superior

to that of the State - the lawgiver is above the law."

Only when God is God can man be man. That means keeping heaven and earth distinct, organising the latter only under the conscious sovereignty of the former. Without this there is little to prevent human beings from sacrificing the many for the sake of the few, or the few for the sake of the many. Only a respect for the integrity of creation stops human beings destroying themselves. Humility in the presence of Divine order is our last – best - safeguard against humankind arrogating to itself power without restraint, might without right. Babel was the first civilisation, but sadly not the last, to begin with a dream of utopia and end in a nightmare of hell. A world of *tov*, good, is a world of *havdallah*, boundaries and limits. Those who cross those boundaries and transgress these limits make a name for themselves, but the name they make is Babel, meaning chaos, confusion and the loss of that order which is a precondition of both nature (the world God creates) and culture (the world we create).

Noach: Faith Also Means Caring About Workers
by Rabbi Mike Moskowitz
https://truah.org/resources/mike-moskowitz-noach-moraltorah_2026_/

We are all meant to be a source of blessing to those around us. When we stop caring about the well-being of others, we deny our own attachment to the true Source of All Blessing and, reluctantly, God reciprocates by withdrawing God's grace from us.

God's identity, God's love language, is intimately bound with our quest for being kind. When Moses asks God how God

wants to be introduced to the Israelites, God responds with “I Shall Be What I Shall Be.” The medieval commentator, Nachmanides, understands this cryptic answer to mean: “As you are with Me, so I am with you.” That is, when we open our hand to assist others, God also opens God’s hand. God’s nature is not independent of our actions towards each other, but reflects our way of being.

One can’t clock in and out of the constant expectation for expansive, continuous kindness. Our intentions to help others must manifest in our workplaces as much as in our homes, on the road, and in our houses of worship. Employers are also expected to be a source of blessing. To this end, the rabbis of the Talmud (Bava Metzia 76a) explore a workers’ rights case that involves a manager who hired day laborers to work at a lower rate than the owner had requested. Even though the wages were within the fair market range and the workers had consented to the lower wage before they started working, the rabbis conclude that the workers have a claim against the manager because they can say, “Don’t you have respect for the verse ‘Do not withhold good from one to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do it’ (Proverbs 3:27)?” In other words, part of the job is doing the work in a way that is good for all those involved. Being ethical isn’t just a theological argument, but a legally binding one as well.

We all know that Noah escaped the flood in the ark, but we often forget that he merited being saved because of his desire to improve the working conditions of his generation. Genesis 5:29 states that Noah (literally meaning “Relief”) gets his name because “This one will provide us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands.” Jewish tradition teaches that until Noah, people did not have agricultural instruments. So he constructed tools to help people in working the fields with

much greater ease and efficiency. Noah's technological breakthrough was to work from an internalized, heart-centered place, which consequently produced new tools to express his feelings of benevolence and care. God responded in kind by bringing him into the ark to protect him.

Historically, industrial advancements have often developed from military technology: nuclear power from the atomic bomb, canned food from rations, and even in Genesis 4:22, Tubal-cain forged all implements of copper and iron as murder weapons before they found constructive uses in civil society as plows and shovels. To not repeat the violent cycles of the past, we must approach new tools, like AI, with a focused purpose for communal benefit.

Often, we struggle with the space between our intentions and the actual impact of our actions. When it comes to being kind to others and feeling responsible to help all those we can, it is our attitudes that determine how successful we will be in our pursuits of goodness. We are living in a time of both exceptional advancements in science and huge regressions in human decency. This vast separation can be explained by the greed and callousness that is motivating so much of the effort.

These texts, from scripture and the rabbis, emphasize our agency: the potential and obligation we have to help others. Our ultimate success is in our hands; it isn't determined by how hard or how smart we work, but how much we invest in being able to bring goodness with us wherever we go. It's not the skillful labor that we produce that has the most value, but the altruistic aspirations that inspire the craftsmanship of kindness.

Noah and the other people of his generation all had equal access to the cutting-edge resources of their time. What set

Noah apart was his willingness to teach others how to best use technology, and this, in turn, is what caused him to find favor in the eyes of God. Faith teaches us that our ambitions to help humanity should inform all our interactions, especially utilizing the workplace as a public display and implementation of our values.

(Rabbi Mike Moskowitz is the director of scholarship and multi-faith engagement at The Beacon for Democracy, a project of Union Theological Seminary. He is a Wexner field fellow and senior rabbinic fellow at the Hartman Institute, and the author of "Textual Activism," "Graceful Masculinity," "Seasonal Resistance," and "Ancestral Allyship.")

Noach: Where The Rainbow Touches the Ground
by Anna Veronese
https://yeshivatmaharat.org/noach_where_the_rainbow/

When I was a child, few things filled me with as much joy and wonder at God's creation as the rainbow. For a short while I even believed the legend of the pot of gold waiting at its end—until my father, ever the scientist, explained the optics. A rainbow is light bent through drops of water, and it depends on where you stand: however far you walk toward the place where it seems to touch the ground, that place moves away with you. No one has ever reached it.

I still love that God chose this sight as the sign of His covenant after the flood: "I have set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth" (Bereishit 9:13). The rainbow seems to reach down to the land, and the covenant it signals reaches the land as well.

But why should the earth be a party to a covenant at all? Because in the opening chapters of Bereishit, the earth keeps

paying for human failures. After the first sin, God tells Adam, “Cursed is the ground because of you” (Bereishit 3:17). Cain is “cursed from the ground” that received his brother’s blood (Bereishit 4:11). When Noach is born, his father names him with a hope: “This one will comfort us from our work and the toil of our hands, from the ground that God has cursed” (Bereishit 5:29). And when humanity turns violent, it is the earth that is said to be corrupted: “The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence… for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth” (Bereishit 6:11–12). Adam, the Man, was taken from the adamah, and the adamah shares its fate.

After the flood, God makes a promise that seems to answer all of this: “I will not again curse the ground because of humanity, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from its youth; nor will I again strike down every living thing, as I have done” (Bereishit 8:21).

The word for “because,” “ba’avur,” is the same word God used in Eden. The curse that began “because of you” ends “because of humanity.” But what reason does the verse give? In his commentary to the Book of Genesis, Rabbi Umberto Cassuto notes two possible readings. In the first reading, the clause about the evil inclination explains God’s mercy: since humans are flawed from youth, they deserve forgiveness. Cassuto rejects this, and his reason is simple. Human nature was described in exactly these terms before the flood—”every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all day” (Bereishit 6:5)—and that nature was precisely what brought the flood. It cannot suddenly become grounds for God’s mercy. The clause instead explains the curse itself: God will no longer curse the earth on account of human evil. The ground that paid for Adam, for Cain, and for the generation of

the flood, is released from paying for us.

In other words, nothing about humanity has changed. Cassuto observes that only the tone has softened: “every inclination” becomes “the inclination,” “only evil” becomes “evil,” “all day” becomes “from its youth.” Before the flood, human evil was described in full because it justified the punishment; afterward, it is mentioned only in passing, inside a decision of mercy. What has changed is not us, but God’s stance toward us.

This is where the rainbow comes in. God says, “When the bow is in the cloud, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant” (Bereishit 9:16). The sign is addressed first of all to God. It appears in rain clouds, at the very moment when the verdict of 6:5 could apply again, and it recalls a promise made with full knowledge of who we are. A rainbow is therefore beautiful and humbling at once: it tells us that we are still the humanity of 8:21, and that we are being spared anyway.

Perhaps this is why Jewish tradition surrounds it with such care. When we see a rainbow, we bless God “who remembers the covenant” (Berakhot 59a), echoing the very words of the Torah. Yet the Talmud warns against staring at a rainbow (Chagigah 16a). We are meant to notice it, to bless, and to lower our eyes. Staring at the rainbow might comfort us, but the Rabbis chose otherwise. After all, the sign is God’s to look at, not ours—and a mercy we could gaze at freely might too easily become a mercy we take for granted.

That danger is real. A promise that depends on no one’s merit raises a hard question: if God’s mercy does not wait for us to improve, why try? I think the answer runs the other way. A covenant that depended on our goodness would collapse at our first failure—that was the world of 6:5, and it ended in a flood. Because the promise holds no matter what, we can

strive to be better without fearing that every fall is final. Mercy is not permission to stay as we are; it is the ground that makes trying possible.

Yet the Torah does not leave us with a promise alone. In a world God regretted making, God had seen Noach, a man with the same human heart, but a man in whom there was still hope (Bereishit 6:8). And Noach justifies that hope: his first act when he steps out of the ark is to build an altar, and "God smelled the pleasing aroma," re'ach ha-nicho'ach—a play on Noach's own name (Bereishit 8:20–21). Human nature has not changed, and the offering is not a merit that outweighs it. The offering is a turning toward God, and mercy answers it. The Talmud teaches that in the lifetime of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi no rainbow was ever seen, because a generation with such a righteous person did not need one (Ketubot 77b). Each of us can be that person—not by becoming flawless, but, like Noach at the altar, by turning toward God.

My father was indeed right: there is no pot of gold, and no one ever reaches the place where the rainbow touches the ground. Yet that place—where heaven seems to meet the earth—is exactly what we are asked to aim for. Every time we turn toward God, as Noach did at the altar, we bring heaven a little closer to the ground. And until the day we no longer need the sign, the rainbow keeps appearing, a reminder that God's mercy walks with us at every step. *(Anna Veronese was born in Venice and has lived in Paris since 2009. She holds degrees in Archaeology, History, and Information Science, and works as a project coordinator at Ta Shma, an independent Beit Midrash in Jerusalem. She is vice-president of Kol-Elles in Paris and studies gender, equality, and social justice within Orthodox Judaism, with a special focus on Italian Jewish traditions.)*

We Plant Again After the Flood by Randy Michaels
https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/we-plant-again-after-the-flood/

This October marks what would have been my thirtieth wedding anniversary. My beloved wife, Marlene (z”l), passed away in 2023, and in the years since, I have found myself focused on a strange detail that is in this week’s parashah (Noah)—one I never noticed until I needed it. When the floodwaters finally recede, and Noah steps out onto dry land, the Torah tells us almost nothing about what he felt. There is no accounting of everyone or everything now gone—no crying or description of grief at all. We are simply told of what he did next: he built an altar, and later, he planted a vineyard (Gen. 8:20, 9:20). Before feeling came building. Before understanding came planting.

I’ve come to think that’s not an oversight in the text. It’s the text’s quiet wisdom about how rebuilding actually works.

Noah emerges from the ark into a world nearly empty of everyone he once knew. The rabbis are troubled by his silence; unlike Abraham, who will later argue with God over Sodom, Noah says nothing in protest, offers no eulogy for the world that drowned. Instead, he does something smaller and, I think, more instructive. He builds an altar (vayiven Noaḥ mizbe’aḥ, Gen. 8:20), an act of dedication before he has any language for what he has survived. And later, we’re told, “Noah, ish ha’adamah (a man of the soil), was the first to plant a vineyard” (Gen. 9:20). A vineyard is not a quick harvest. Grapevines can take three to four years before they bear usable fruit. To plant one in a ruined world is to make a quiet declaration: I am building toward a future I may not fully see and for people who are not yet here.

The story does expose a complicated side of Noah and his experience with grief. His drunkenness from the fruits of his planted vineyard and interactions with his sons is painful and unresolved (Gen. 9:21–27), a reminder that grief and trauma can lead to unhealthy and destructive behaviors and that rebuilding is not a clean line of progress. But planting does offer us an investment in the future and is, in itself, an act of hope.

This is not a uniquely modern reading. The rabbis captured the same instinct centuries later, in a teaching attributed to Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, who lived through the destruction of the Second Temple: "If you have a sapling in your hand, and someone tells you the Messiah has come, first plant the sapling, and then go out to greet the Messiah" (Avot D'Rabbi Natan B:31). Even world-ending news does not excuse us from finishing the planting. Grief and hope, it turns out, are not sequential. We do not have to resolve one before the other can begin.

I think about this because three years ago, my own world went quiet in the way I imagine Noah's did. Marlene and I built thirty years of life together, a family, a home, a community, a thousand small rituals that only the two of us fully understood. When she died, I did not have language for what had happened, and I am not sure I do now. What I had, instead, was work: the "altar-building" of getting through each day: of showing up for our children, of showing up for my colleagues and community who had shown up for us over so many years, of staying inside the routines she and I had built together because they were the only ground steady enough to stand on. Moving forward never meant forgetting. If anything, choosing to move forward and build on the foundation we started has become one of the clearest ways I know to honor

what Marlene and I built together, rather than move past it. Hope, I've come to believe, doesn't require leaving someone behind; it just asks you to keep moving, with them folded into everything you build next.

Last year I began a new chapter, joining the administration of The Jewish Theological Seminary after eighteen years working at Camp Ramah California. I did not experience it as leaving the foundation Marlene and I built. I experienced it as doing what Noah does in the second half of the story—not merely rebuilding what was, but reinforcing it, so that it could hold new growth I could not have planted alone. God's covenant with Noah, sealed with the rainbow, is notably not a promise that the world will never again hold loss (Gen. 9:12–17). It is a promise of ongoing presence, a sign meant to be seen again and again, by generations not yet born, that the story continues.

Most of us will, at some point, step out of our own version of the ark: a marriage ended by death or divorce, a career we built for decades now behind us, a community we loved that no longer exists in the form we knew it. Parashat Noaḥ does not ask us to make peace with that loss before we're allowed to build again. It suggests something gentler and, I think, more honest: that the altar and the vineyard can come first, that hope can be an action taken before it is fully a feeling, and that reinforcing a foundation someone else helped lay is itself a form of love that continues.

This October, I will mark thirty years since I stood under a chuppah at Park Avenue Synagogue with my beloved, three years since I stood beside her grave, and nearly two years since beginning this new chapter at JTS, an institution she knew and whose values she lived every day. Like Noah, I

don’t have a tidy word for it all. But I know what I’m doing next. I’m planting. *(Randy Michaels is Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer at JTS)*

****

Yahrtzeits

Mike Schatzberg remembers his father Joseph Schatzberg on Sun. Oct.18
Blossom Primer remembers her sister Rhoda Rappaport on Tues. Oct. 20 and her father Jack Rappaport on Fri. Mar. 23.
Rabbi Lisa Vernon remembers her father Dr. Chester M. Vernon on Thur. Oct. 22