

Noah and the Flood

Noah (or **Noe**, **Noach**; Hebrew **נֹחַ**, Standard *Nóaḥ* Tiberian *Nōḥ*; *Nūḥ*; "Rest"^[1]) was, according to the Bible, the tenth and last of the antediluvian Patriarchs. His story is contained in the book of Genesis, chapters 5-9. Noah saves his family and all animals in groups of two or seven from God's Deluge. He receives a covenant from God, and his sons repopulate the earth.

While the Deluge and Noah's Ark are the best-known elements of the account of Noah, he is also mentioned as the "first husbandman" and the inventor of wine, as well as in an episode of his drunkenness and the subsequent Curse of Ham. The account of Noah was the subject of much elaboration in the later Abrahamic traditions, and was immensely influential in Western culture. Jewish thinkers have debated the extent of Noah's righteousness, Christians have likened the Christian Church to Noah's ark, and in Islam he is revered as a prophet of God.

According to chapters 5–9 of the book of Genesis, Noah was the son of Lamech, and the tenth generation after Adam. "And [Lamech] called his name Noah, saying, "Out of the ground which the Lord has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands." From Noah's sons, Shem, Japheth and Ham, all the peoples of the world would be descended.

When Noah was six hundred years old, God, seeing man's wickedness which had become abundant in the earth, was saddened, and decided to send a great deluge to destroy disobedient mankind. But He saw that Noah was a righteous man, and instructed him to build an ark and gather himself and his family, "and of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. And so the Flood came, and all life was extinguished, except for those who were with Noah, "and the waters prevailed upon the earth for one-hundred and fifty days" until the Ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.

There Noah built an altar to God (the first altar mentioned in the Bible) and made an offering. "And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odour, the Lord said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease'."

Then God made a covenant: Noah and his descendants would henceforth be free to eat meat ("every moving thing that lives shall be food for you, and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything"), and the animals would fear man; and in return, man was forbidden to eat "flesh with its life, that is, its blood." And God forbade murder, and gave a commandment: "Be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly on the earth and multiply in it." And as a sign of His covenant, He set the rainbow in the sky, "the sign of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth."

After the Flood, "Noah was the first tiller of the soil. He planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine, and became drunk, and lay uncovered in his tent." Noah's son Ham saw his father naked and informed his brothers, who covered Noah while averting their eyes. Noah awoke and cursed Ham's son Canaan with eternal slavery, while giving his blessing to Shem and Japheth: "Blessed by the Lord my God be Shem; and let Canaan be his slave. God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his slave."

Noah died 350 years after the Flood, at the age of 950, the last of the immensely long-lived antediluvian Patriarchs. The maximum human lifespan, as depicted by the Bible, diminishes rapidly thereafter, from as much as 900 years to the 120 years of Moses within just a few generations.