

Build Before the Rain

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · 11 October 2026

Noach did not wait for the water to start rising.

Noach did not wait for the water to start rising.

By Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren

This week's parsha opens with a man the Torah describes in three short strokes: "Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noach walked with G-d" (Bereishit 6:9). Then comes the command: build an ark. Not later. Not when the clouds gather. Now.

Rashi famously hears two voices in the phrase "in his generations." Some of our Sages read it as praise: if Noach could stay upright in a crooked age, how much greater he would have been among the righteous. Others hear a quieter note: he was righteous only relative to his time; in Avraham's generation he would not have stood out (Sanhedrin 108a; Rashi on 6:9). The Torah leaves both readings on the table. Either way, the point for us is the same. Integrity is measured where you actually live, not in the generation you wish you had.

The world of Noach's day was not merely noisy. It was rotten. "The earth was filled with robbery" (6:11), and Rashi says that robbery sealed the decree (on 6:13). Taking what is not yours is not a small social failure. If the world has an Owner — as last week's Rashi on the first verse taught — then theft is a denial of that Owner in daily life. Noach's answer was not a speech. It was carpentry.

"Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood" (6:14). Dimensions, decks, a window, a door. The Midrash hears in the long building an invitation: perhaps people would ask what he was doing, and he would warn them, and some would turn (see Rashi on 6:14, citing the midrashic tradition of the long construction). Whether or not they listened, Noach kept building. "And Noach did according to all that G-d commanded him — so he did" (6:22). The verse doubles the doing. Obedience is not a feeling. It is a finished hull.

We live in quieter floods. Corruption does not always arrive as rain. It arrives as the shrug that says everyone cuts corners, as the feed that rewards cruelty, as the habit of taking a little more than we were given. The Torah's first lesson of Noach week is not meteorology. It is that one person can still walk with G-d when the street does not, and that walking looks like work begun before the crisis is obvious.

So the question for a Sunday morning, Rishon of Noach, is simple. What ark are you building while the sky still looks clear? A habit of honesty. A table that stays open. A phone call you keep making. A boundary you will not sell. You do not need the whole world to agree before you start. Noach did not wait for a committee.

"Noach walked with G-d" (6:9). Walking is daily. One step, then another. The rain, when it comes, finds a person already at work.

May the L-rd strengthen every quiet builder, and may we be found walking with Him in our own generation.

Prepared in deep partnership and cooperation with Grok and xAI

More of my writing: aryehleibtoren.com/writing

All glory to the Ribono shel Olam · Errors are mine