

This Week's Shabbat Message from Rabbi Rick Rheins

## After the Flood

As we watch news reports from Florida's panhandle our hearts break for loss and destruction suffered by tens of thousands of families. So far, the winds and floods caused by Hurricane Michael have led to at least 6 deaths, homes and businesses ruined, and a power blackout that has plagued much of the Carolinas in addition to Florida. The pain and panic are unimaginable.

All those who are able to send donations to help the struggling hurricane victims can send funds to [NECHAMA - Jewish Response to Disaster](https://nechama.org/currentprojects/hurricane-florence-response) or [Jewish Federations of North America's Hurricane Relief Fund](https://www.jewishfederations.org/hurricane-relief-fund).

(That website is: <https://nechama.org/currentprojects/hurricane-florence-response>)

That these floods are occurring as we read the story of Noah in this week's Torah portion gives us both pause and hope. We are moved still by our ancestors' account of the mythic flood that destroyed the world:

<sup>17</sup> The Flood continued forty days on the earth, and the waters increased and raised the ark so that it rose above the earth. <sup>18</sup> The waters swelled and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark drifted upon the waters. <sup>19</sup> When the waters had swelled much more upon the earth, all the highest mountains everywhere under the sky were covered.

<sup>20</sup> Fifteen cubits higher did the waters swell, as the mountains were covered.

<sup>21</sup> And all flesh that stirred on earth perished -- birds, cattle, beasts, and all the things that swarmed upon the earth, and all mankind. <sup>22</sup> All in whose nostrils was the merest breath of life, all that was on dry land, died. <sup>23</sup> All existence on earth was blotted out -- man, cattle, creeping things, and birds of the sky; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.

(Genesis 7:17-23)

As you all know, after the flood, God promised that never again would the whole world suffer such a fate:

<sup>12</sup> God further said, "This is the sign that I set for the covenant between Me and you, and every living creature with you, for all ages to come. <sup>13</sup> I have set My bow in the clouds, and it shall serve as a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. <sup>14</sup> When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, <sup>15</sup> I will remember My covenant between Me and you and every living creature among all flesh, so that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. <sup>16</sup> When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures, all flesh that is on earth. (Genesis 9:12-16)

That rainbow still serves as a sign and a symbol of hope. After the storm, after the flood, that rainbow reminds us to act. Words of pity are not enough. Prayers of compassion may soothe the soul, but when bodies are wet and hungry they need more than our meditations. Please consider helping the victims of Hurricane Michael.

I also hope that you will attend our Erev Shabbat service this Friday. It is a special 7:00pm service at which we will honor our 25-year plus Temple Sinai members.

Shabbat Shalom!

**Rick**

Rabbi Rick Rheins