Building an Ark in a World That Needs One

Natan Herc | RMBA Parent

Parshat Noach begins with a world that has lost its way. Humanity has become filled with corruption and violence, and Hashem decides to bring the Mabul—the Flood—to destroy the world and begin again.

Yet within this difficult story, the Torah gives us an important description of Noach:

«“Noach was a righteous man; he was perfect in his generations.”(Bereishit 6:9)»

Why does the Torah emphasize the generation in which Noach lived?

Perhaps the Torah is teaching us something very relevant to our own lives.
We cannot choose our generation—but we can choose who we become.

Noach lived in a world where doing the right thing was not necessarily popular. He could have looked around and said, “Everyone is behaving this way. Why should I be different?”

Instead, Noach built an ark.

And building the ark was not a one-day project. It took 120 years. Imagine the patience, commitment, and faith required to continue building something for more than a century while the world around you questioned what you were doing.

Noach teaches us that sometimes doing the right thing means continuing to build—even when we are not sure that others understand us.

What is our “ark”?

For Noach, the ark was a physical structure that protected his family from the flood. For us, our “ark” can be the environments we create around ourselves and our children.

The school can be an ark.
Our family can be an ark.
Our classroom can be an ark.
A friendship can be an ark.

Every day, we have opportunities to create places where people feel safe, valued, respected, and connected to something greater than themselves.

In a world that can sometimes feel noisy, divided, and overwhelming, our responsibility is not simply to complain about the world outside. It is to ask:

What am I building inside my own ark?

What values and language are we teaching our children?

How do we respond when someone makes a mistake?

Do we teach them that success means being better than someone else—or becoming the best version of themselves?

Do we create spaces where they feel comfortable asking questions, admitting mistakes, and trying again?

These seemingly small moments are actually the building blocks of character.

From surviving the flood to building a better world

There is one more powerful lesson in the story.

When the flood ends, Noach leaves the ark and immediately builds a mizbeach, an altar, and offers a korban to Hashem.

The purpose of the ark was not simply to survive.
It was to emerge and rebuild.

That distinction is important. Judaism does not ask us merely to protect ourselves from the challenges of the world. It asks us to eventually go back into the world and make it better.

We want to educate students who can succeed academically, but also students who are kind, courageous, responsible, curious, and committed to something larger than themselves.

We want them not only to know how to enter an ark when the world becomes difficult—but eventually to know how to step outside, face the world, and help repair it.

A “plank” at a time

Perhaps the most important lesson of Noach is that each of us is responsible for building our own ark—and helping others build theirs.

We may not be able to control the world around us.
We cannot control every challenge our children will face.

But we can control what we build within our families, classrooms, friendships, and community.

This week, let us ask ourselves one simple question:

What is one “plank” I can add to someone else's ark?

Maybe it is a kind word.
Maybe it is patience.
Maybe it is forgiveness.
Maybe it is including someone who feels left out.
Maybe it is simply taking the time to listen.

One plank may seem insignificant.

But an ark is built one plank at a time.

And sometimes, the small things we build today become the very things that carry someone safely through tomorrow's storm.

Shabbat Shalom!