

PARSHAT NOACH
GENESIS 6:9-11:32
HAFTARAH ISAIAH 54:1-55:5
1 CHESHVAN 5786/23 OCTOBER 2025



A triptych from the Rothko Chapel, Houston, Texas
Mark Rothko

LIVING THROUGH HARD RAIN

1. Behold, I am about to bring the flood (מבול) of water upon the earth to destroy from under the heavens all flesh in which there is a breath of life; everything on earth will expire. (Genesis 6:17)

מבול – Because it decayed everything. Because it confused everything. Because it transported everything. Because it caused all things to float away from their places and brought them to Babylonia.

נבל – to decay, languish, wither, fade; n., senselessness, disgrace, folly

בלל – to confuse, confound; n., confusion, obscurity

יבל – to bring along, carry away; n., watercourse, stream

2. “Go into the *teivah*...” (Genesis 7:1)

Go into the word... (Baal Shem Tov)

3. Between *Mitzrayim* and *eretz zavat chalav u'dvash* (“land of milk and honey”) is *midbar*.

First, *oseh atzmo k'midbar* (“make oneself like the wilderness”). (Midrash, B'midbar Rabbah 1:7)

“If one wishes to merit the receiving of Torah, one must...be naked and completely empty, like *Midbar*.” (*Itturei Torah*)

4. The chapel space makes you feel small, like the tiny dust particle in the endless carpet of the universe that in fact you are. Your task, as you face the infinite suggested by the fourteen murals, is to reassert – to find new credibility in – your uniqueness, your reason to exist, your greater-than-dust status. (Christopher Rothko, *Mark Rothko From the Inside Out*)

In the Rothko Chapel we find a single voice, singing a melody of its own composition. A song Rothko has written just for that time and place but representing the culmination of all he has sung before...a conch shell with Rothko's voice. And yours?

5. Fearlessness is what love seeks. Such fearlessness exists only in the complete calm that can no longer be shaken by events expected of the future...Hence the only valid tense is the present, the Now.” (Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*)

6. And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, and it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall

....

Then I'll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin', but I'll know my song well before I start singin'...

(“A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall,” Bob Dylan)