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THIS IS A WEEKLY LIST OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PORTIONS OF THE BIBLE READ BY JEWISH COMMUNITIES EVERY SABBATH, WITH COVER ART BY OUR FRIENDS. DO YOU LIKE OUR PROJECT? DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS OR ANOTHER PARSHA? SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS AT: persnicketyfinicker@gmail.com

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GENESIS 6:9-11:32

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Q1: Why a flood as the mode of destruction, and an ark as the mode of salvation? What is their symbolic value?

Q2: What does it mean for all flesh to be corrupted? Are there standards of conduct for animals? How does Noah know which to save?

Q3: What does it mean for God to "remember" Noah at the end of the flood?

Q4: The rabbinic tradition holds an idea that all creatures, humans and animals, were celibate during their stay on the ark. What motivates this idea of a sexual winter?

Q4: What does Noah want from the birds he releases from the ark? Do they comply? How does he interpret their behavior, and why is it important?

Q5: Does the destruction of the flood produce any lasting changes in God's feeling and expectations for humanity once the flood subsides? What can you learn from the blessing he gives to Noah?

Q6: Are fear and dread new aspects of the animal relationship to humans? If so, how do they contribute to the security of the post-diluvian world order?

Q7: Why are people allowed to eat meat after the flood? Is God's approach to human carnality and violence changing?

Q8: When God describes the (new?) order of justice for bloodshed, is it a description of a kind of natural order, or an injunction for a human justice system?

Q9: Rabbinic tradition holds that Noah invented agricultural tools. Did he do it before or after the flood?

Q10: What is really going on with Ham's crime against his father? Recall the nakedness theme from last week. Why is his son the one cursed for it?

Q11: In the story of Babel, are the multiplicity of languages and subsequent dispersal a curse? Or are they some kind of protection? Ideally, would there be one language or many?

Q12: What is the relationship between technology and language in the city of Babel?

Q13: What doesn't God like about the tower of Babel? Are they sinning? How? The story lacks overt anti-urban, anti-technological tropes (hierarchy, exploitation, greed). Are they implied?

Q14: Pay attention to the demographic information (age of fertility, lifespan) in chapter 11, and compare it to earlier genealogy in chapter 5. What patterns do you notice? What are these genealogies saying about human vitality?