

BIBLE TALES

FOR AGES 18 AND UP

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NOAH SCROLL

(from Cave IV)

MY NEXT SELECTION concerns the period of the Noachian Flood. Certainly this event has to be the second greatest event in world history, yet in Genesis, chapters 6 and 7, the events leading up to the greatest of cataclysms to date are insufficiently detailed. Here my Terminally Ill Sea Scrolls demonstrate their superiority over the scraps of scribbles found at the Dead Sea, for in the “Noah Scroll” the drama of the pre-Flood days, when preparations were in progress, is magnificently detailed.



NOAH MOVED SLOWLY, feeling every one of his 600 years. He was wondering if being Yahweh’s favorite boy was really such a privilege. Once talking with Yahweh was a special thrill, but ever since Yahweh decided on the Flood and laid on him the burden of preserving breeding stock to repopulate the planet with humans and animals, Noah had been feeling that was too big a load for a 600-year-old man. If only he was two centuries younger — or even just one! — he would’ve had the energy. Noah wondered if Yahweh had picked him for lack of good sense rather than for possessing superior virtue. He had been wondering how much good sense he had ever since he had been crazy enough to get into fatherhood after 500 years of childlessness.

This latest from on high was not making his job any easier. He didn't even want to tell his sons and daughters-in-law. Why, he wondered, was the Lord so unreasonable and unrealistic? Such a sinful thought never would have occurred to him before that day when Yahweh told him about the Flood.

The day of the awful annunciation was cloudless and sunny. Noah was sitting in the sunshine and thinking about the big birthday party coming in a few months (he always celebrated starting a new century of life in a big way). In his hand was a jug of his best wine, which he swore was the secret of his impressive longevity as well as equally impressive virility through nearly six centuries. Just when he thought he had it made in the shade, the cork on the small table by his chair burst into flames, scaring the Sheol out of him. It didn't help matters when the flames started talking.

"The end of all living things is in sight," the deep, thunderous voice declared, "for the land is filled with violence because of them. Watch while I destroy them with the land."

Noah relaxed a little. It had to be Yahweh, though of course Noah didn't know Yahweh's name. Nor did anyone else at that time and in the times that followed, because Yahweh had not yet found exactly the right historical moment to reveal his name to humans.

Noah just called him "Lord," which was not terribly imaginative, but it was what his father had called Yahweh and his father before him, and so on for who knew how many generations; and Noah had a fondness for family traditions.

Noah settled down and considered what Yahweh had said. It seemed a somewhat extreme reaction to ordinary human behavior. So the old guy asked, "Isn't that overdoing it a bit, Lord?"

Yahweh replied, "I don't think so. The end has come

for everybody and everything. I have decided this because the earth is covered with human violence, so I'm wiping out every living thing on the earth."

Noah admired his god's oratorical skills, yet he couldn't just let it slide (especially since he was one of the living things and did not yet know what Yahweh had in mind), so he said with sweet reason, "Couldn't some lesser punishment do, Lord?"

"What should I do, send them all to bed without their suppers? Come on, I'm the Supreme Being! No other god or goddess is more supreme than me! I have to do things *big*."

Noah shivered a bit at Yahweh's awesome annoyance, yet felt he had to try to talk Yahweh out of this drastic act. "OK, I'll grant that humans aren't perfect, but really, Lord, we ain't so bad."

"There's a lot of adultery going on."

"There's a lot of loving, faithful marriages."

"There's a lot of juvenile delinquents."

"There's a lot of kids who are good sons and daughters. And what about the infants and toddlers? How wicked can they be? Yet you want to drown them like unwanted kittens? Come on."

"Here's what I'm thinking: I'm just going to kill them all and sort them out later. Anybody doesn't deserve it, they get special liberty privileges and can wander around outside Limbo as long as they don't get to be a nuisance. If they don't like it, I can deal with that too!"

The belligerence in the voice coming out of the flames that did not consume the cork intimidated Noah, but still he found the courage to try to dissuade his angry god. "Surely, you don't want to act so inhuman, Lord."

"You're telling me humans don't murder every day, all day long, for the most ridiculous reasons? I've seen it all, and it isn't pretty."

"But most people don't murder," Noah pleaded.

“Most people also don’t worship me!”

“But you don’t make much effort to prove you are who you are. Don’t condemn people for what they do or don’t do in ignorance.”

“Alright, smart ass, here’s another justification: you humans invented politicians and bureaucrats!”

Noah looked aside in silent shame. The flames burned smugly.

Triumphant, Yahweh declared in his most awesome voice, “Yeah, got that right, didn’t I? Humans have corrupted the earth. The planet is so corrupted by the ways of all flesh I don’t even like the plants and other animals anymore. None of you obey the law!”

Just when hope seemed gone, a glimmer of it glowed in Noah’s heart, and he said, “Look, Lord, maybe you could give us a uniform code of earthly justice. You can’t accuse us of lawlessness. We’ve got plenty of laws! We got more laws, I think, than we got people to obey ‘em! Every nation has different laws. Sheol, every dinky group of mud shacks that thinks it’s a town has different laws! If laws were fleas, we’d have all scratched ourselves to death long before you finally got all peckish. What’s legal here ain’t legal there. I mean, who’s being unlawful depends on location. What we need is one set of laws for everybody. Wouldn’t that make more sense than destroyin’ us for a confusion that’s really failure of leadership from the top?” The instant the words were out of his mouth, Noah’s face showed the horror that filled him. He croaked, “Er, uh, you know, meanin’ no disrespect, Lord.”

Yahweh, ever merciful to the Hebrews (or at least the ones he liked), pretended not to have heard the last part and said, “Hmmm, not a bad idea.”

“Great!” Noah said much too enthusiastically. “Let’s have ‘em, then maybe we can get our act together.”

“Maybe later, but not now, boy. That’s not on my schedule. If I give humans universal laws, it’ll be when I

want to. The Flood script's written, and I'm not in a mood for rewrites."

Noah filled his voice with reason so sweet that it might have gagged a humanist and argued, "Lord, why punish us for not obeying laws you never revealed?"

The flaming cork burned brighter. "Damn it, I want to destroy the earth! I created it, so I can destroy it if I want! I've already announced it in Heaven. I just know Satan will have a field day ragging on me if I back down. And you damn Hebrews, if I ease up any on the heavy hand, you all turn into idolaters faster than you can say 'Baal.' So let me put it to you this way: I mean to bring a flood, and cover the entire earth, to destroy every living plant and creature under Heaven. There's going to be only dirt, rocks, and water left! It's going to happen whether you like it to or not. Now, I've been thinking I'd keep a small group of humans alive — I'm talking about you and your family, in case you can't figure it out — and breeding stock for all the other species to give you all a second chance, but you've just about argued me out of that. Now the question is, do you want to make me really peckish by continuing to argue with me about this plan, or do you want to get with the program?"

After 599 years, a guy becomes accustomed to living, so Noah said humbly, "When you put it like that, Lord, I say hard lumps to all them sinners!"

The flames burned warmly with satisfaction. "That's my boy! I knew I could count on you being all too human. Now, this is what I want you to do"

— Missing Text —

EVER SINCE THE DAY Yahweh had announced the flood to Noah, his life had been a tough trek that was uphill in every direction. First, his sons thought he had had too much wine (which, he had to admit, wasn't a bad guess). He persuaded them to cooperate after hours and

hours of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Would Yahweh help out? No way, even though the whole idea was his (and Noah couldn't help feeling resentful, but not enough to count as a sin, or so he hoped).

That was not the end of his troubles. The Ark was the joke of the town, but nevertheless it was seen by all to be a golden opportunity. The prices on resinous wood, reeds, and pitch went up 300% almost overnight. The unions soon knew they had him by the stones and struck for higher wages and creation of new, unnecessary jobs. Before he knew it he was paying unbelievable wages to a work force so large that it spent most of the time at the job site drinking wine and discussing the chariot races. Every other day a bureaucrat came around with some sort of new permit he had to buy or some new safety regulation he had to obey — unless he bribed his way out of it.

Noah was mortgaged up to his earlobes. He had taken out far too many loans at larcenous interest rates. Hebrews should have been ashamed to put it to another Hebrew like that while pretending they were doing him a favor! But Hebrews were just like every other breed of humans. Noah now had to bitterly admit he didn't understand why Yahweh seemed to like them better than other humans, though being Yahweh's favorite people wasn't all fertility festivals and free wine.

Noah figured he might just be able to make it through the next seven days, which he now knew by way of divine revelation was when the Flood was scheduled to begin. His dread was that Yahweh might yet go soft on him and decide a plague or earthquake was punishment enough. If no Flood happened, he would have to live another 600 years just to get out of debt!

One thing building the Ark had done for him: he now was firmly convinced the human species deserved to be wiped out.

Noah topped a hill and saw the Ark. What an ugly boat!

No style at all. He hoped it wasn't sinful to wonder why Yahweh had designed such an unattractive tub. And the stench! He could smell it from the hilltop. As Yahweh had instructed, it was covered with pitch inside and out. Whew! Noah hoped the Flood wouldn't last long.

The unsightly boat looked done. There was just some interior work left to do. Noah glanced at the ominous, overcast sky and smiled vindictively. As the Ark got nearer and nearer to completion, the weather got worse and worse. It had been overcast for days. When he thought of all the rip-off maggots he would never have to repay, a warm satisfaction filled him.

He entered the construction site looking for Shem, the foreman. He found him confronting the union representative.

"We don't need the construction crews any longer," he was saying hotly. "The boat is built! There's only some interior decorating left to do. It's absurd I should pay all these men to sit around getting half smashed and talking about their adulteries and fornications!"

The union rep smugly replied, "We gotta contract! The old man here signed it. All our boys stay on at full wages 'til the job's done. You try to break the contract, we shut this site down! You try to do the interior work yourselves, we go to court!"

Shem whirled about to face his father. His young, handsome face looked much older than his 99 years, a sign of how heavy the stress of supervising the construction of the Ark had been from just about day one. He cried out, "How could you?"

"I had to get 'em back to work," Noah grumbled defensively. "The Lord was giving me Sheol about all the delays."

The union rep sniggered derisively. Like every person throughout the land, he thought Noah was bonkers. Shem's face flushed. Though he wondered about his

father's sanity at times, he did have family pride. He turned on the union rep.

"That's enough, you! Everybody stays! Just get the job done with no more delays. I mean, it gets finished in six days with no more clamjamfry from you or anybody else!"

Noah pulled Shem away when the youth's face went purple, saying, "Come on home. We have to have a family meeting now that Japheth's back. I've been talking with the Lord again."

"Oh, *great!*" Shem groaned. "What now?"

"I'll tell everybody at once," Noah replied nervously.

Noah's son Ham greeted them at the door with a cocky, "Hi, Pops, how's it hangin'?"

Noah glared. "Your disrespect for your father will be your undoing, young man!" he cautioned the 82-year-old boy.

Ham grinned, feigning innocence. "Disrespect? Forget about it! Any guy that can still get it up at *your* age has *all* my respect."

Noah considered spanking the youth, but a look at the boy's muscular body put an end to that thought. Instead, he said gravely, "We must have a family meeting. I've been talking with the Lord."

"Yikes!" Ham groaned. "Break out the lube!" Nevertheless, he followed his father and his brother.

They found the wives in the kitchen gathered about Japheth with worried expressions on their lovely faces. No stranger would have guessed Mrs. Noah was just 20 years younger than her husband. She didn't look a day over 400. The 96-year-old boy was at the table eating voraciously. He looked as if he had been starved and physically abused for the past three or four decades. He had left right after the first revelation about the Flood to take a survey of all living creatures and select the lucky pairs to survive. He had been gone a long time — much longer than Noah had thought he would be — and had come back just yesterday. He had been a quiet, serious,

humorless boy. Now he was disturbingly spooky.

“OK, people,” Noah began as soon as he had their attention, “here’s the latest from the Lord. Of the unclean animals, we still take a single breeding pair. The clean animals, now it’s our wise and merciful Lord’s will we take seven breeding pairs, and seven of all the birds, too.”

Ham chuckled, “I guess the Lord wants to make sure we have plenty of guano to fertilize our fields with.”

Noah opened his mouth to rebuke his uppity son, but Japheth stole the spotlight by jumping up. His gaunt, weather-battered face showed much agitation. “The Lord must be out of his friggin’ skull!” he cried out. “Doesn’t he know how many different species there are? Well, *I damn well know now!* There’s millions of ‘em! *Millions!* Even taking a single pair, no way we’re gonna get ‘em into a boat only three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high! And we’re supposed to feed ‘em! Damn near every stinkin’ critter out there has a specialized diet that it has to have to live. It’d take a thousand Arks just to stock all the varieties of food! And how’re we gonna get ‘em here? Huh? Huh? Do you have any idea how big this planet is? No, you don’t! Ain’t none of you been hardly a hundred thousand cubits away from this town in your lives. Well, *I damn sure know how friggin’ big this planet is!* It’s *huge!* If it was a human body, this stupid town and the whole region it governs would be about one friggin’ hair! An’ there’s animals everywhere on it. Animals like nobody ain’t never imagined ever existed! Millions and millions of species! *Everywhere!* All over! Near and far and farther than far! We couldn’t get most of ‘em here in six friggin’ *years* an’ the Lord’s talkin’ six *days!* There’s millions an’ millions an’ millions an’ —“ Here he broke down into hysterical weeping.

It took the women a long time to calm down the upset lad. Meanwhile, Noah hoped Yahweh would make a flaming appearance and solve the problem. No such luck.

He glumly accepted that he had to make a decision, so he made one. He said rationally, “Japheth has a point. So, look, we’ll just round up all the local animals we can and see if the Lord will let us slide with that. All the rest of these animals Japheth’s talking about, we never heard of ‘em before, so who needs ‘em, right?”

“Right on, Pops!” Ham exclaimed sarcastically. “If the Lord can drown every little baby for the crimes of the adults, I’m sure he won’t be upset if a few million species of animals go extinct.”

Noah glared at his smart ass son, but he stuck to business. He went on grimly, “The Lord also wants us to take along the microbes —”

“What the Sheol is a microbe?” Shem demanded impatiently. He just knew the lazy union pukers were goofing off while he was away from the construction site.

“Well, it seems all diseases are caused by little animals so small you can’t even see ‘em. If we don’t take ‘em along, well, then there’ll be no diseases after the Flood. The Lord said he created disease microbes because there’s nothing like a serious illness to make impious people remember our loving and forgiving Lord.”

“That’s definitely our Lord,” Ham laughed. “The Lord is virtuous and benevolent; his compassion never fails. He keeps us from becoming humanists.”

“Oh, bite me!” Shem snapped nastily.

“What does this all mean?” Mrs. Noah asked fearfully, for she could tell her husband was none too happy to be the bearer of this news. After 567 years of marriage, spouses get to know each other pretty well.

Noah sighed unhappily. What a burden it was sometimes being the holiest man on the earth! He reluctantly explained, “Well, it means we all have to become diseased. The Lord wants to ensure the repopulated earth also has...” — he scrunched up his brow as he struggled to remember it right — “smallpox, polio, encephalitis, influenza,

pneumonia, meningitis, tapeworms, trichinosis...” on and on he went with dreadful and awful names until even Ham was pale and trembling.

When Noah got into the sexually transmitted diseases, Mrs. Shem burst into wretched tears. “I don’t want any STDs!” she wailed. “I’ve been a good girl all my life. I don’t deserve any STDs!”

“Now, now,” Noah said as soothingly as he could, “we must do the Lord’s will.”

“I’d rather drown with all the other millions of condemned species,” Japheth cried. “We’ll die anyway with all those diseases in us!”

“I second that emotion!” Ham exclaimed passionately.

The women didn’t say anything—just wept and wailed and gnashed their pretty, white teeth.

“Now, now, it isn’t all that bad!” Noah pleaded desperately. “A lot of the animals will carry a lot of the diseases, so it’s not like we’ll be carrying all of ‘em. Remember, the Lord wants us to survive, so he’ll make sure the diseases won’t kill us.” When that proved unmollifying, he tried religious exhortation: “Come and let us sing to the Lord. Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our liberation. Let us enter his presence with thanksgiving, and shout joyfully to him with music. The Lord is a powerful god, and a mighty king. He outranks all other gods. The depths of the land are in his hand. The mighty mountains belong to him. The sea belongs to him. He conjured them up. His hands molded all living things. Come and let us pay homage and kowtow to our Lord. He is our god. We are his sheep and our hearts fill with joy when he fleeces us.”

“Happiness is trusting in the Lord,” Ham replied bitterly, and for once the rest of the family agreed with him.

Noah was totally distraught. The holiest family on earth was on the point of rebellion, perhaps even on the verge of straying after other deities, and he couldn’t think

of a thing to do about it except cry out, “Lord, Lord, a little help here wouldn’t be such a bad idea!”

“I’m glad Satan isn’t here right now!” Yahweh said to Michael, who was by his side in Heaven watching the scene in Noah’s kitchen. “He’d have a few things to say about this, wouldn’t he?”

“Yes, sir. Smart ass doesn’t ever miss a chance to be in your face,” Michael agreed.

They glanced over at the South Pacific island where Satan was enjoying some R&R in the flesh by pretending to be some kind of bizarre volcano god who required virgins to sacrifice their virtue in order to keep him from erupting — well, erupting, that is, in the way the islanders didn’t want him to. Archangel Michael was envious. Really envious. He just had to get in one last R&R in the flesh before the Flood!

“These humans!” Yahweh said with much disgust. “I can’t get any of them to obey me! I pick a group of them to be my favorite people, and it’s as if I picked the one group with the most talent for disobeying me. Look, that’s the holiest family on the whole stinking planet! Look! Ask the holiest family on the whole stinking planet to bear one little hardship and all I get is bitching and moaning!”

“Sir, meaning no disrespect now,” Michael said cautiously, “but they’re pretty much behaving just like you created them to behave. I mean, sir, if you dumped the Hebrews and picked some other people to be your favorite, would it be any different?”

Yahweh scowled fearsomely, and Michael would have soaked his pants if angels were biological and wore pants. After a very terrible silence, Yahweh said, “Yeah, yeah, I know, but you would think by now I could at least get eight of the maggots trained!”

Michael dared to say, “But, sir, wasn’t your reason for creating them in the first place amusement? Don’t tell smart ass this, but he was right. Those humans put on a

show, and every day it's something different. Something amazing. And R&R in the flesh down there's the best thing you did for us angels since creating us. You've seen how high morale's been since you started the R&R program. I mean, sir, no angel wants nothing other than to worship you every moment for all eternity, but getting a little extra's sure nice. Them earth chicks! Every single one of the ding-a-lings falls for that 'I'm a god' line. Turn some water into wine or walk on it and they're all over you like you got the only serpent on the planet! You don't even need to pretend to be a goddess with guys. You just show up warm, willing, and female, and they're jumping outta their clothes like their brains're in their serpents. Sheol, lots of guys don't even require you being female, or even human! I ain't kissing buns, sir, when I say you get a hundred percent approval rating for creating the universe and the humans. Uh, not that you wouldn't get a hundred percent no matter what you created or didn't create, sir!"

"Yes, yes, I know," Yahweh admitted. "I just have this thing about obedience. I like being obeyed. I am who I am, aren't I?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Well, then, they ought to obey me even though I created them with the ability to disobey me! I mean, they could obey me if they really wanted to."

"Sir, I'm not being uppity, you know I can't do that; you didn't create any uppity in me or any other angel except smart ass. So it isn't uppity when I tell you it's not ever going to happen. You'd have to make them different to get the obedience you want, and, if you did that, then they'd just be another type of angel. How amusing would that be for you, sir? I mean, you were pretty bored before creating the universe and the humans. You haven't been bored much since. Seriously peckish a lot, yeah, but damn sure not bored."

"So maybe I should just let them do any damn thing

they please no matter what I think about it?”

“Yes, sir. Why not? They don’t live long enough to be good for anything except amusement.”

“You mean I should stop interfering in their lives?”

“No, sir! You are who you are! Keep on trying to train them if that amuses you, and kicking their buns if they don’t get in step. The way it messes up their heads cracks me up. I’m just saying, sir, lower your expectations so they don’t get to you like this. I mean, sir, they’re human, all too human! They aren’t worth getting so worked up about.”

“There’s wisdom in what you say, Michael. I think I’ll call off the Flood. Just so they won’t think I’m turning humanist, I’ll hit them with a plague and an earthquake. Maybe a swarm of locusts too. They really go bonkers when insects are all over them!”

“Yes, sir, that’s always fun to watch, but will you permit one more suggestion?”

“I’m listening.”

“Go through with the Flood, sir, just like you planned. Remember, the humans are for amusement, and wouldn’t watching them deal with the Flood be about as amusing as they can get?”

Yahweh chuckled, “More wise words, Michael. I’m glad I created you. Well, I guess I better go down there and kick buns and take names.”

Noah and his family were awed into silence when one of Mrs. Noah’s dish towels burst into flames, but was not consumed. And those flames looked angry!

“All right, pukes,” boomed Yahweh terrifyingly. “You will get with the program! You will do things *my way!* Knock off the bitching and the moaning right now! When you get to be God, you can destroy the world your way. While I’m God, I’ll destroy the world *my way!* Got that? OK! Now enough with all this loose clamjamfry and get this Flood on the road. I’m tired of waiting. Take it away,

Noah!”

The flames vanished, and Noah looked at the resigned, submissive faces of his family. “Any further comments?” he asked.

Not even Ham said anything.

“OK,” said Noah, “let’s go out and get diseased!”