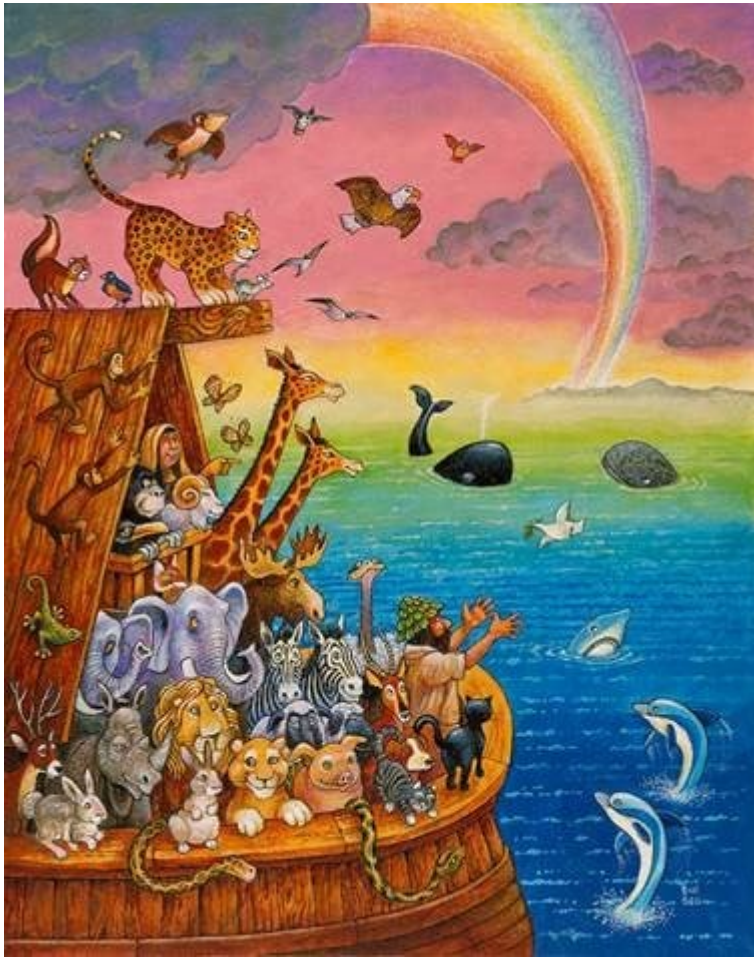


Shabbat Noach ShaLom



Painting by Bill Bell

by Phyllis Chesler

So soon, so soon after Bereshit (which one can study for years and still not be done with it), so very swiftly, we already find ourselves in Noach. Studying Bereshit is always like going home to the beginning and revisiting revered ancestors. The end of Bereshit allowed me my first-ever hiddush or so my chevruta told me. Because men “took anyone they chose for wives,” God immediately said: “My spirit will not continue to judge humanity forever since he is only flesh.” “Lo Yadun Ruchi B’adam l’olam...(6:2-6:3). I connected the word “yadun” to the story of Dina and God’s judgment against sexual violence.

Oh, I am overwhelmed, as if by a flood, as I contemplate the many themes and questions raised in Noach. Unlike Avraham and Moshe, Noach does not plead for the lives of others—and yet he

finds favor in God's eyes. Contrary to the myth of forty days and forty nights—the parsha clearly tells us that the “waters prevailed for one hundred and fifty days—“hameshim u'mat yom” (7:24); worse, the waters took ten months to diminish (8:5); and only after that, after forty more days, did Noach send out the raven (8:6-7). Rashi says that it took sixty days before Noach sent out the dove. And, despite God's decree, Noach is said to have lived nine hundred and fifty years (9:29).

A rainbow—but no one else left on earth? And immediately we set about building a tower to reach heaven? Have we learned nothing?

A Sweet Shabbat Shalom—even if deluged by unanswered questions.