

A new beginning

Noah's ark, from Genesis 6 – 9



NOAH

TIME PASSED and many people filled the earth. Everyone everywhere had forgotten about God and were only doing bad things all the time.

God's heart was filled with pain when he saw what had happened to the world he loved. Everywhere was disease and death and destruction — all the things God hates most.

Now, Noah was God's friend (which was odd in those days because no one else was). Noah listened to God. He talked to God. He just loved being with God, like you do with your best friend.

"Noah," God said. "Things have gone wrong. People have filled my world with hate instead of love. They are destroying themselves . . . and each other . . . and my world. I must stop them. First, we'll build an ark." (Do you know how to build an ark? Neither did Noah. Luckily, God knew and he would show him.)



"A storm is coming," God told Noah. "But I will rescue you. I promise. I'll send the animals to you — ones that creep and crawl and slither and slime and gallop and hop and bound and climb. And don't forget to pack everyone's food."

The storm was going to wash away all the hate and sadness and everything that had gone wrong, and make the world clean again. God had thought up a way to keep Noah safe, but Noah would have to trust God and do exactly what God told him.

So Noah built an ark (short for very large boat).

Noah's neighbors came out to watch . . . and point . . . and laugh, because they didn't believe Noah about the boat . . . or the storm . . . or needing to be rescued. And Noah must have looked rather silly. His boat was in the desert, the desert was nowhere near the sea, and there wasn't even a cloud in the sky. Why would anyone need an umbrella, let alone a boat?






But Noah didn't mind so much what other people thought, he minded what God thought. So he just did what God told him to do.

When the ark was ready, God said, "All aboard!" and Noah's family and all the animals climbed inside.

Then God shut the door.

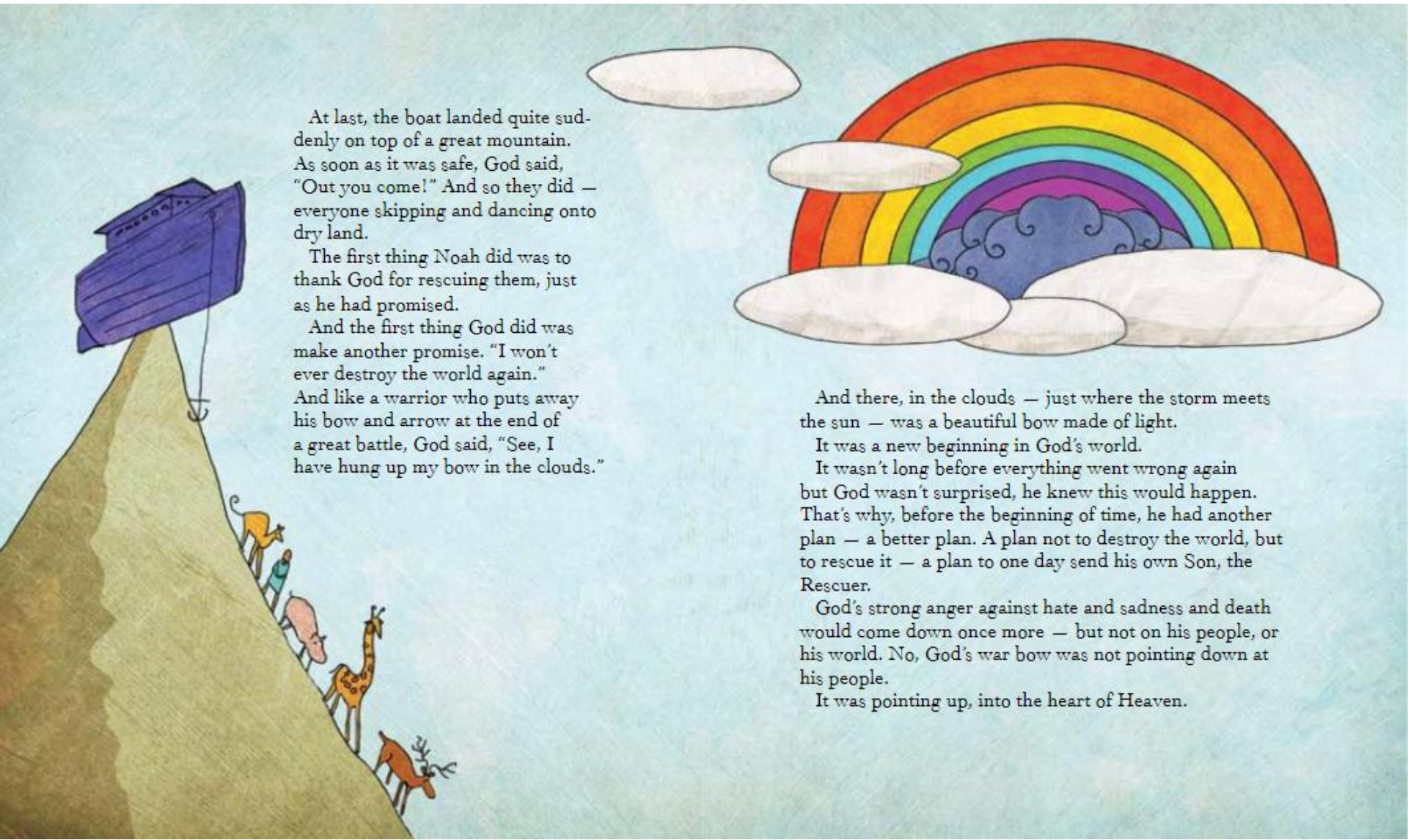


And it started raining — for minutes, that joined up into hours, that joined up into days, that joined up into weeks and weeks. And the rain joined up into puddles, that joined up into rivers, that joined up into lakes, that joined up into a flood that covered the whole world.

Their boat that had once seemed so big, suddenly seemed very small. But in the middle of the huge storm, in the crashing waves, in all the thunder and lightning — through it all — God was with them. And God kept them safe for 40 long days and 40 long nights.

Finally, the rain stopped. The sun came out and Noah threw open all the windows. “Hooray!” everyone shouted.

Noah sent his dove out to explore, and it wasn't long before she brought him back a fresh olive leaf. Everyone knew exactly what that meant: she had found a tree — and land! The water was going down.



At last, the boat landed quite suddenly on top of a great mountain. As soon as it was safe, God said, "Out you come!" And so they did — everyone skipping and dancing onto dry land.

The first thing Noah did was to thank God for rescuing them, just as he had promised.

And the first thing God did was make another promise. "I won't ever destroy the world again." And like a warrior who puts away his bow and arrow at the end of a great battle, God said, "See, I have hung up my bow in the clouds."

And there, in the clouds — just where the storm meets the sun — was a beautiful bow made of light.

It was a new beginning in God's world.

It wasn't long before everything went wrong again but God wasn't surprised, he knew this would happen. That's why, before the beginning of time, he had another plan — a better plan. A plan not to destroy the world, but to rescue it — a plan to one day send his own Son, the Rescuer.

God's strong anger against hate and sadness and death would come down once more — but not on his people, or his world. No, God's war bow was not pointing down at his people.

It was pointing up, into the heart of Heaven.