

This week's Torah portion of Noach is certainly relevant to our lives today as it discusses strategies for how to navigate a global disaster (answer: build a boat). But perhaps even more relevantly, it addresses how one transitions out of one, no easy task in its own right. Noah and his whole family struggles with this new reality. The flood comes to an end, but for months longer, all they can do is sit on the boat and wait for the water to recede. As Noah wonders how close they are to landing, he sends out a raven, a scavenger, because he knows it will have food to eat from the death floating atop the waters. Then, Noah sends out the dove, and the dove brings back hope that they will return to life on dry land soon. Once the ark comes to rest and the family departs, they offer sacrifices and begin the process of returning to normal. But that life was challenging in all new ways, as the family each struggled in their own ways with the post-traumatic stress after all they had been through. And yet, day by day, by supporting each other with their needs, they are able to put one foot in front of the other and the story progresses with content so boring that it was not necessary to include in the Torah.

As I reflect on this section of this week's parashah, it serves as a reminder to me that global disasters don't just end. There is a moment when the rain stops, but that doesn't mean that everything is fine. Similarly, there isn't going to be a moment where COVID doesn't exist either, at least not for a very long time, we are just going to have the tools to be able to live with it. As such, we cannot simply sit in our boats and wait, nor can we assume that we will walk onto dry land again someday in the future unchanged from our experience. We need start sending out our birds and we need to be willing to take those first steps on dry land even with all of the challenges that will come with it.

Next week, we will be sending out a note to the congregation about some of the ways that we are returning to greater in-person offerings and we will also be beginning to reach out to many of you to better understand how you remain connected to the shul and in what ways we can work to increase that participation. With the arrival of the vaccines and the amazing vaccination rates here in Ottawa, it is time to take the next steps in our COVID journey. I hope you'll continue to join us as we do.