**NOAH – THE EARLY YEARS**

Long, long ago, about nine generations after G-d created Adam, a beautiful baby boy was born. His mother noticed, however, that he was different. Instead of having the darker skin children usually had in those early generations, this child had light-colored skin. His hands were strange also. Until that time, all five fingers were connected, and hands looked a little like mittens. This baby had five separate fingers on each hand. Because this infant was so different, his parents were frightened.

His father, Lamech, decided to ask his father, Methusaleh, about the unusual child. (Now Methusaleh was 370 years old at this time, and he was going to live another 600 years.) Methusaleh was very wise, but he decided to ask his father, Enoch, about why the infant was so different.

Enoch told Methusaleh that G-d had blessed this new baby more than anyone else on earth, and that this child would bring comfort and joy to all mankind. The baby was named Noah, which means “pleasing, giving pleasure, and to be at rest.” His father, Lamech, said, “He shall comfort us in our work.”

Before the time of Noah, floods and starvation plagued the people of the earth. When Noah was born, the floods stopped and the earth grew the crops the farmers had planted. The famine disappeared and life was better.

As Noah grew older, he watched his father hard at work in the fields. He saw how Lamech used only his mitten-like hands to turn the soil, piece by piece, so that the seeds could be planted. Noah really wanted to help his father with the long, hard work. He looked at his own hands and fingers and thought of so many things he could do with his hands that his father could not.

Noah thought he could make a really good tool that would work well in the soil, and he did. He designed what we call a plow and even taught his neighbors how to have a cow pull the plow. Then he designed a tool called a harrow to help his father plant the crops. He invented other tools to revolutionize farming; and in time, the curse of hard, backbreaking work was gone from farming – the curse that had come when Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden.

As Noah approached manhood, he began to study with Methusaleh. The farm tools Noah designed made his work easy, and the crops grew well. Noah had more than enough food for his own family, and he wanted to share all that he had with his father and grandfather as well. In fact, Noah wanted to take care of all the really old people in his family.

G-d was pleased with Noah. He was the first person in history to really care for his older relatives.

It was a fruitful time on earth. Farming was easier. Crops grew. The weather was good.

Only the people weren’t good.