



Noah's Ark

By Mark D. Chevalier

Protinus

My name is Noah, and I have seen hell. In fact, I reside in hell. Every day, every hour and every minute of my existence is spent as a permanent occupant, for I am the indentured servant of Hades. They say that God is love, but I am living proof that God is not love. In fact, sometimes the Lord of Spirits castigates you in ways that you can't even begin to imagine. Every day you get up in the morning. You shower, get dressed, have breakfast, and get in your car to go to work, run errands, or perhaps bring your children to school. And you, my dear reader, are blind. Blinded to the real world around you as you smother in a haze of the immaterial, the thin veil of reality that assures you that humanity is master of all it surveys. So allow me, if you would, the opportunity to shatter the perception, lift the veil, and share my hell with you.

The first question that you are undoubtedly asking yourself is, am I mad? I don't have the answer to that question because if I am insane would I know it? Professor Albert Einstein said that both time and perception are relative to the observer and truthfully, I believe that life is the other way around. I believe that we all begin our lives in a dreamlike insane state. Yet if you can see past it and truly begin to look at the world as it really is, then you become sane. Even if the perception of everyone else around you is to think that you are insane. Now doesn't that twist the litany of human arrogance, greed, vice, and self-importance on its head?

After that the next question you are probably asking is if we are all insane, then where are you going with this? What are you getting at?

I would like to tell you, truly I would. However, I am inclined to keep that to myself for now. At least until the wheels of my glorious plans are irrevocably set into motion. I will tell you this much. I am a fiend. I do not like people in general, nor do I care for humanity as a whole. Yet unlike someone with no foundation or basis for comparison, I do. Moreover, I have it on very good authority that God does not like you much either.

I have had many names over the years. And yes, people have known and loved me, and I have known and loved them in return. As for taking a wife, or companionship, I have no such appetites anymore. In all my years, I have had three wives. The last of my true loves was Heather,

and with her passing went the last of my humanity. It was then that I realized why I was punished, and could finally see the truth of it. And it was then that I began to construct plans for the account that I now share with you. Not that it matters much. If you are reading these words then those events have already begun, and it will not be long before the end comes.

So where shall I begin? You must know, after all, you are the reader and yes I'm speaking to you. Shall I start from the beginning? Certainly not, that would be an exceptionally long tale and I'm afraid that I don't have the stamina that I once did. But if I were a just a few centuries younger you'd never be able to stop me. Or perhaps I should start with the action, you know, something to really get the old blood pumping. No, too mundane, too predictable.

Instead, I will say it again. My name is Noah Amos Elam Gershom. You got a little more than you were expecting that time, didn't you?

I told you that I have had many names, and it's true. Although back when I was a young man we had no need of surnames. I chose to add the names of Amos Elam Gershom because they are apropos to who I am, and the words themselves have meaning for me. In essence, they define me. For in Hebrew they mean "to bear" or "to carry eternal exile".

So here I am. I am Noah, the man who bears eternal exile, and as you will learn from the pages of this journal, your reckoning of human history is quite mistaken.

Unus

And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died. And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son: And he called his name Noah, saying, "This name shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." And Lamech lived after he begat Noah five hundred ninety and five years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy and seven years: and he died. And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Genesis, Chapter 5: 27-32

"We're here in Kansas City, Missouri, an unsuspecting place for such a monumental occasion. Near the geographic center of the contiguous United States, we are at the ribbon cutting ceremony of what is now the tallest skyscraper in the world."

Michael smiled at the camera. But then again he always smiled for the camera. It wasn't just his job, but his gift. Inside, however, he was grumbling, chafing in fact. This November would conclude five years as a field reporter for KCMTV. Five years of youth and vitality gone forever, but what really bothered him, what he knew his placid expression could never disclose, was that he considered himself a failure. He was forty years old and had worked hard, constantly sacrificing for his profession. He even passed up the love of his life and the possibility of a family in the name of his career. Truthfully, Michael expected to garner enough accolades to be offered a spot at one of the national news organizations.

Yet that hadn't been the case. The competition was fierce. Backstabbing, posturing, and corporate politics gave him the distinct notion that he was playing with the big boys, and was in way over his head. He also toyed with writing, penning two fiction novels, but that had been just as frustrating and demoralizing as his day job. Agents and publishers had sent countless form letters rejecting his most earnest attempts, which even now still set his teeth on edge in

consternation. He could accept it if someone read his work and then decided to pass but to dismiss it out of hand, well that was just plain rude.

No different from being passed over for a national spot, old-boy. Michael thought as he gripped the microphone a little more tightly.

The camera operator took his eye from behind the eyepiece, and Michael realized that he had paused for an inordinate amount of time. "Gershom Tower," he continued, clearing his throat politely while extracting a smile. "Named for the discreet industrialist and entrepreneur, Noah Gershom, is truly an impressive structure. Just to give you an idea, the Burj Dubai, located in the United Arab Emirates, boasts one-hundred-sixty stories and over two-thousand feet in height. Putting that into perspective for our viewers, Willis Tower in Chicago is one-hundred-ten stories, at a height of one-thousand-four-hundred and fifty feet.

"By comparison, Gershom Tower is one-hundred-seventy stories, and nearly two thousand-five-hundred feet tall. In fact, on a clear day, the spire is visible from a distance of seventy miles."

Michael heard the commentator babbling something in his earpiece and nearly cringed. *Bastard doesn't even gather the news; he just repeats it over and over and over.*

"That's right, Bob," Michael replied cordially. "Not much is known about Mister Gershom. We know that he got his start in the transportation industry over six decades ago, becoming the CEO of the shipping conglomerate known as Noföeh International. Earlier today, we received word from KCMTV's field reporter, Gloria Hansen. In her report, she indicates that Noföeh International is a global logistics company headquartered in Chicago. Yet for the most part, Mister Gershom has remained out of the public eye, which is difficult for a man with an estimated net worth of over nineteen billion dollars."

Another question from the newscaster and Michael felt the tips of his toes curl in disgust. While in the recesses of his mind he visualized himself saying. "Well Bob, if you actually got your head out of your ass and came down from the ivory tower to do some real journalistic reporting you might have a fucking clue what's really going on in the world, you pompous-ass, weak-kneed, pin-headed neophyte!"

Instead of saying any of that he smiled for the camera, nodded his head occasionally, and gave the viewers at home the impression that he was listening with rapt fascination.

“That’s right, Bob. We’ve been informed that Gershom Tower will cater to residential customers. Although at a starting price of three-thousand-dollars per month, these luxury condominiums will be out of reach for most of us. Nevertheless, even with the hefty price tag, ninety-two percent of the suites above one thousand feet are under contract. In addition, there are some prime locations that you and I just can’t get, as Mister Gershom reserved the top five floors for his personal residence and related business operations.”

Michael sensed the interview ending, and gave thanks in a silent prayer. “That’s correct, Bob. The official opening of the tower, just two short hours away, will conclude with a brief news conference and ribbon cutting ceremony conducted by Mister Gershom himself. KCMTV will be there live. With the jubilant atmosphere permeating all of downtown today, it’s going to be an exciting event. It is a celebration of this vibrant and growing community, and certainly, this is a proud moment for everyone in Kansas City.”

After that, Michael’s brain was on autopilot as he waited for the red light at the front of the camera to fade. There was the occasional, “Yes Bob,” and the infamous poignant gaze that every newsperson in the industry practiced at home in front of their mirror. Finally, he did sign off, and the light did go out. His smile faded, turning into a grimace of unabridged bitterness that even the towering structure over him could not assuage.



How can I do this? Noah thought.

It was a pertinent question, as important as how to explain the fact that he had just spoken to the Lord of Spirits. His hands were still shaking, with sweat beading into pools that soaked through his tunic. Reaching up he wiped his forehead, becoming alarmed when he saw the blood stains on his sleeve. Communing with the Lord had taken its toll on him, that much was certain.

He recalled the stories that his father told him, but no amount of the telling could have possibly prepared him for the sheer terror and power of the exchange.

He reached a circle of cobbled gray stones and immediately fell to knees that were already weak. It was a hot day, and he began to draw water. Normally he wouldn't think twice about the sweltering sun above him, and the desiccated air which brought many strong men to their knees. Noah was used to it, having lived here all of his life. Yet the added stress of the task before him was daunting, if not impossible. *A boat*, he thought wearily, *in the middle of the desert! They'll think I'm mad!*

Then the thought occurred to him again, relentless in its ability to gnaw away at the fringes of his sanity. *How can I do this?*

Noah drank from a small wooden pale, spilling most of it onto his graying beard. He upturned what remained, feeling some measure of relief when the cool water cascaded over his head and onto his shoulders.

"What say you, Noah, son of Lamech?" Said a deep voice behind him in a tone that was full of confidence, and a resonance that demonstrated his angelic lineage.

First the Lord himself, and now a Shining One, lamented Noah.

As of late, it seemed that the Earth was filled with the offspring of the angels of the Lord. The merging of angelic might with the flesh of men gave them a radiance that Noah found unsettling. Many people were fearful of them, but not Noah. In fact, it was really quite the opposite. He felt sad, because angels, by sleeping with the daughters of men, tarnished the glory of the Lord. The "Shining Ones" were mighty and godlike, of that there was no doubt. But they were not angels, and they didn't hold the same sway over all that is, was, and would be. For lack of a better term, Noah could only consider them as less than glory, less than the true might of the Lord. They were caught in a world that was in-between, never accepted by either of the halves that constituted them. Yet that didn't mean that he was foolish enough to cross one. Not to mention that he knew this one in particular and that his temper was easily as short as his mercy.

"Peace be unto you, Arba," said Noah.

Arba crossed his powerful arms, regarding Noah in almost a cautious manner. Finally, he sat against a large outcropping of rock and smiled. "I felt the presence of the Lord of Spirits, and I came to seek an audience. Yet I arrive to find you, a simple farmer."

"Simple farmer I may be," said Noah. "Yet are we not all equal in the eyes of the Lord?"

Arba sneered with distaste, and for a moment, Noah regretted having replied so pointedly. He watched as Arba's features hardened to stone, the muscles in his arms threading like cords of marble. Then, strangely enough, he relented and his smile returned. "That may be, Noah. But you know as well as I that where the Lord sees balance there is chaos, inequity in the disguise of equity."

Noah rose to his feet, and he was still inclined to look up into the face of the seated Arba. Many words formed in the corners of his mind, but he knew that any or all of them would evoke Arba's wrath. Given that he now had a great deal of work ahead of him, he thought it the wiser course to let Arba make the request that Noah could see at the tip of his forked tongue.

"I see the brilliance all around you Noah, son of Lamech. So tell me, what is the command of the Lord?"

Although the Lord had not ordered him to keep his intentions secret, Noah couldn't help but hold back what he knew about the destruction of all flesh, and the pain in the Lord's heart at having made man in the first place. It was dangerous knowledge, and it was an insight that could see him slain by Arba's hands if he was not cautious. Bracing himself, Noah told him. "What transpired was for my understanding, Arba. I pray you to find your own counsel, if it is counsel that you seek."

Arba's anger flared into a brilliant sun, his body glowing with the power of his angelic lineage. In an instant, he was upon Noah and seizing him by the tunic Arba carried him off his feet and into the sky. Noah was terrified. At first, he struggled to break free, then as the ground grew distant he clenched his hands tightly around Arba's arm. When they had gone to a dizzying height, Arba removed Noah's hands just as easily as a mother might chastise a child. Arba then pulled Noah close by his tunic, his teeth bared as his eyes burned like the fires of Heaven. "You are at

my mercy, son of Lamech! Now you will tell me what I have asked of you...or you shall return to the dust from whence you came!"

If only I should not have come out of my tent this day! Thought Noah, fright building as he hung precariously on the tips of Arba's fingers. Then, at the edge of what was surely his madness, an idea occurred to him. It wasn't much but considering his situation it was the best he could conjure. "Why so quick to murder me...a simple farmer?" Noah shouted. "If it is as you say, and the Lord has commanded me, then why would you, a bondservant to the Sons' of God, wish to evoke the wrath of the Lord? Surely it would be folly for you and all your kin."

"There are many Gods and many Lords!" replied Arba with a dark malice that was so acute it petrified Noah. Yet he stopped their ascent, and a strange look came upon him as he struggled to reconcile the truth of Noah's words.

"I am of no consequence to you, mighty Arba," pleaded Noah. "I pray you not to carry this out, and to go your way from me in peace."

"Peace," Arba let the word fall from his lips like poison. "You know so little, son of Lamech. Your peace is an allusion, just like your faith that the Lord truly cares for you, and your pitiful race." Then Arba's eyes grew wide as he stared at Noah, and he knew. He understood that Noah had passed through the veil and could discern his meaning. His smile was no comfort to Noah as he told him. "So you have gained wisdom, little mortal. Why then do you deny me what I ask?"

Again, the thought invaded Noah's mind, *how can I do this?* Yet he was unable to answer himself, nor Arba, who held his life, quite literally, in the palm of his hand. At last, he said the only thing that he could. "I do as I must. My Lord commands me, and so I must obey."

Arba's anger cooled and slowly they began to descend. Once Arba released Noah, he nodded at him, satisfied that he had gotten what he had been seeking after all. "You know, son of Lamech, there are alternatives to the command of the Lord."

Noah never even considered his words. "Not for me," he said. "Not for any of us."

Arba smiled once more and then straightened. "Then I take my leave of you. I go to drink and have my fill of merriment, and the pleasures of the flesh. And I shall not seek for you, and never shall we meet again."

"I cannot say that I am displeased to learn of it," replied Noah.

Arba laughed, and it appeared to Noah that it was genuine...nearly human. Alone once more, the magnitude of his task and the sacrifices he was being called upon to make sent his hands into tremors. *I must get back*, he thought. His mind began to turn feverishly as he pondered how to tell his family and begin his work. *I must tell Naamah, yes, I must tell my wife first.*