

the generations that follow, could be discussed.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the birth of Noah and God's regret that humanity had devolved into great debauchery could be analyzed.<sup>12</sup>

As important as each one of these things is—in order to even begin to properly analyze these profound foundational subjects related to our faith—you are required to have **the light and illumination of the Holy Spirit**. Without the Spirit, you will certainly be in the dark. The more time you spend in the light of God's Word, the more you will be able to understand the profound aspects of it.

It is beneficial for you to spend a specified period of time in His Word every day to receive the benefits of spiritual illumination. Perhaps this is why our Jewish brethren have developed a system of study that annually takes people through the Torah, to be taught more and more about our Creator, and the light He is dispensing to His people. Perhaps as we study the Torah—**especially knowing that Yeshua is the Messiah**—we will have our hearts and minds illuminated in such a way that when we hear His voice proclaim, “Let there be light!” it will take on many profound dimensions. *The light of Yeshua dispels the darkness of sin*. Because of the Father's mercy toward us, we can then become a bearer of truth and light to all we encounter!

## **Noach** נֹחַ Noah “Walking by Faith”

Genesis 6:9-11:32  
Isaiah 54:1-55:5 (A); 54:1-10 (S)

The second Torah portion begins with the words, “These are *the records of* the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God” (Genesis 6:9). The first two Torah portions, which initiate the annual Torah cycle, each condense thousands of years of human history into six chapters of Scripture. In *Bereisheet*, the creation of Adam and Eve concludes with the introduction of Noah. *Noach* focuses intently on the life of Noah and his immediate descendants, concluding with the introduction of Abram.

As I read and meditated upon the story of Noah, his life experiences, and his interactions with the Creator God, it became apparent to me that Noah and his example of faith are recorded as an encouragement to each of us, as we deal with our own personal walks of faith and interactions with God. The author of Hebrews writes that we are required to exercise faith, as Noah did, in order to receive the righteousness that will reward our pursuit of God:

“And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. By faith Noah, being warned *by God* about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Hebrews 11:6-7).

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 4:25; 3:15.

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 5:29-6:8.

This Torah portion, devoted to the life of Noah, has been used throughout the ages as a prime example of how we, as people of faith, should behave in the wicked and perverse generations into which we have been born. No matter where we are on our personal journeys, we should each seek to emulate the walk of faith described in this reading, if we want to know how to please God.

## “God Said”

When you read this portion, you will discover that the Lord looks upon Noah as a righteous man who was blameless or perfect in his time. Our *parashah* begins with the words, “These are *the records of* the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God” (Genesis 6:9).

The Hebrew text records that Noah was an *ish tzadiq* (אִישׁ צַדִּיק). Two important Hebrew words are introduced into the Biblical text in the opening verse of *Noach*, which become critical components of the faith system developed in the balance of the Hebrew Scriptures. The before mentioned *tzadiq* (צַדִּיק), often meaning “righteous” or “just,” or various other derivatives,<sup>13</sup> and *tamim* (תָּמִים), often meaning “blameless,”<sup>14</sup> are two very important terms. As you encounter these terms in the Scriptures, you find that “righteous(ness)” and “blameless(ness)” are used liberally throughout the Tanakh, often to describe the requirements for proper communion with the Creator. A holy and righteous God imputes these attributes to the people whom He uses to accomplish His purpose:

“Then the LORD said to Noah, ‘Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you *alone* I have seen *to be* righteous [*tzadiq*] before Me in this time’” (Genesis 7:1).

As you can read, Noah is apparently the only human in his generation who the Lord considered righteous before Him. What was it about Noah that made him righteous? Is it possible that when he heard the voice of God telling him to construct the ark, that his response of faithful obedience to the command resulted in righteousness? The account says that God commanded Noah, and he simply did what he was supposed to:

“Then God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth’... Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did” (Genesis 6:13, 22).

According to the closing verses of the Torah portion *Bereisheet*, as God observed the perversity and wretchedness of Noah’s generation, His survey of humanity allowed Him to determine that only one man and his family were worthy to be spared:

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, ‘I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.’ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD” (Genesis 6:5-8).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Harold G. Stigers, “צַדִּיק,” in R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:725-755.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 1988), 391.

Apparently, Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. He was considered righteous and blameless because he “walked” with Him. We were introduced to the concept of “walking with God” last week in *Bereisheet* when we read about God taking Enoch:

“Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had *other* sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him” (Genesis 5:22-24).

The author of Hebrews gives us more insight into why God “took” Enoch, when Enoch is also included in the chapter often called “the Hall of Faith”:

“By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God” (Hebrews 11:5).

While this statement asks more questions than it answers, suffice it to say it was only because Enoch was living properly—that he was taken up by God. But as we are contemplating the life of Noah this week, we are reminded of the interconnectivity of walking by faith and living in a righteous and blameless manner. We see numerous examples in the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) that walking by faith is definitely something that pleases our Heavenly Father. As stated earlier, “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6, NIV).

## Pleasing Him

While digging into the subjects of walking by faith, and being righteous and blameless before the Holy One, images of different saints of old come to mind. I am reminded of Joseph, Daniel, Job, and countless others who have been listed as faithful in their respective walks of faith—many of whom are listed in Hebrews 11, but others who are seen throughout the whole of the Biblical narrative. Throughout the ages there have been others who have exhibited a steadfast walk of faith, and have been righteous and blameless, similar to Noah. There is a specific scene I think of in the Gospels, where the Lord used some people who are described just like Noah, for His redemptive purposes. One such couple is Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Immerser:

“In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord” (Luke 1:5-6).

Zacharias and Elizabeth were a couple who feared the Lord and “were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly” (NIV). As a result of their Torah obedient walk, the Lord chose them to conceive and bear a child whose unique prophetic ministry would immediately precede the ministry of the Messiah.

The birth of John the Baptist, and the subsequent description of the announcement of Yeshua's birth to Joseph and Mary, have become a critical part of our faith. After all, the progressive revelation that has come forth since the days of Noah has further specified the requirements for communion with the Creator God. Believing in the atoning work of Yeshua at Golgotha (Calvary) is now necessary in the post-resurrection era in which we live. Yeshua Himself said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6).

## Walk by Faith

In spite of the fact that we did not live multiple millennia ago during the time of Noah, one thing is certain: **the necessity to walk by faith, with the revelation that you have received, has never changed.** Enoch walked in the knowledge that he had, and it pleased the Creator. In a like manner, Noah walked in righteousness blamelessly, and because of his obedience to God, he and his immediate family were preserved from the judgment of the Flood. Millennia later, Zacharias and Elizabeth walked by faith in obedience to God's Torah, and they were used to produce the one who would be used to point others to the Messiah. Zecharias, moved by the Holy Spirit, declared at John the Immerser's circumcision,

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; to give to His people *the* knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:76-79; cf. Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 9:2; 59:8).

Zacharias and Elizabeth both knew by revelation, that the coming Child, Yeshua—the yet to be born Son of Joseph and Mary—was going to be a special gift. He would have the power to bring salvation and forgiveness to those who walk in darkness.

In the post-resurrection era, further teaching has come forth from the Apostolic Writings which continue to proclaim the need to walk by faith. The Apostle Paul wrote the Corinthians the following admonition, so that they would more fully understand the meaning of “walking by faith”:

“Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. We are not again commending ourselves to you but *are* giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have *an answer* for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. For the love of Messiah controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf” (2 Corinthians 5:5-15).

Here, Paul clarifies the admonition to “walk by faith, not by sight,” to the Corinthians. Paul tells them that his ambition, whether in the body or absent from the Lord, is to be “pleasing to Him.” It is not too dissimilar from what Enoch experienced in his life. But the big difference that makes us as post-resurrection saints different from those who preceded the arrival of the Messiah—is the fact that we now have the specific knowledge of how Yeshua died for all. **If we believe this, we can be sure to have redemption.**

Possessing faith also requires that we recognize that those who do not believe will experience punishment. The additional requirement to avoid the future judgment is absolutely critical for the Body of Messiah. As the Apostle Peter puts it, faith in the finished work of the Messiah is without substitute. In fact, he says that it was the good news to which angels long to look, only intensifying its significance:

“In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Yeshua the Messiah; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Messiah within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Messiah and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look” (1 Peter 1:6-12).

## Relevant Faith

Today, the true faith is under considerable attack from mockers who have been predicted since the days of Peter. Some in the Messianic community challenge the veracity of the Apostolic Scriptures because they were written in Greek, and not Hebrew.<sup>15</sup> In doing so, there has been a subtle tendency to deny or pervert the Spirit-inspired revelation that has come forth from these documents. As a sad consequence, in recent years, various people who had claimed to know the Messiah of Israel have lost their sure moorings in the Rock of Salvation. They have been cleverly convinced that a form of “works righteousness” is the only way they can walk, as found in their own human method of “Torah observance.” This kind of life diminishes or discounts the atoning work of our Messiah Yeshua, as opposed to a proper obedience coming forth as we learn to walk by faith *and emulate Him*.

As each one of us seeks to “walk by faith,” let us all remember that in order to please our Heavenly Father, we must recognize and believe in the work His Son performed for us at Golgotha (Calvary). We must not allow ourselves to be tempted by mockers, who will scorn and ridicule not only the life-changing message of the gospel—but most especially the declaration of the final judgment required of human beings. Peter states this predicament most clearly, relying upon the account of the Flood:

“Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.’ For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:3-7).

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<sup>15</sup> Consult *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic* by J.K. McKee.

Today, each one of us must “walk by faith” in the righteousness and blamelessness that has been provided for us in the work of the Messiah. May this profound truth keep us all from the definite judgment to come! May all come to repentance, so that no one need experience such punishment!

## **Lekh-Lekha** לֵךְ-לְךָ **Get yourself out** **“Trials, Faith, and Blessings”**

Genesis 12:1-17:27

Isaiah 40:27-41:16

Our Torah portion for this week, *Lekh-Lekha*, begins with some very important words, which will guide a great deal of the Biblical story and narrative from this point onward:

“Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed’” (Genesis 12:1-3).<sup>16</sup>

After the first two Torah readings have jumped through multiple millennia of human history, *Lekh-Lekha* begins to focus on Abraham, the father of faith (Romans 4:12-16). In this reading, we are told that God has chosen one man and his descendants to be either a blessing or a curse to the rest of humanity. We read that Abram experienced trials, exercised faith, and received the blessings of faithful obedience. His life, in many ways, exemplified a standard of how each of us should approach our loving Creator. We ultimately discover how in Abraham, “all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you” (NJPS).

As you will recall, we were briefly introduced to Abram as last week’s Torah portion, *Noach*, concluded. Interestingly, as you read about Abram’s immediate family, you might conclude that it was actually his father Terah who was called out of Ur:

“Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there” (Genesis 11:31).

Abram, his wife Sarai, and his nephew Lot, were supposed to go to the Land of Canaan. But as the text indicates, they went as far as Haran, which was the crossroads in the upper Euphrates east of Assyria, and part of the trade route that connected Egypt with those in the Tigris and Euphrates River valleys. They all settled there until the death of Terah. In a cursory reading of these statements, it appears that Terah “took”<sup>17</sup> Abram and his other relatives. However, the Scriptures give us three specific testimonies of how the call to come out, from among the people and circumstances of Ur, was definitely made to Abram.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Galatians 3:8.

<sup>17</sup> Heb. *laqach* (לָקַח), “take, lay hold of, seize” (*CHALOT*, 178).