

TORAHSCOPE: Bereisheet (In the beginning)

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Genesis 6:9-11:32

Isaiah 54:1-55:5

“Walking by Faith”

“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).

It is interesting to note that the first two Torah portions, that 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 life 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 and his walk of faith, it became apparent to me that Noah and his example of faith is recorded as an encouragement to each of us as we deal with our own personal walks of faith. 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).

This Torah portion, devoted to the life of Noah, has been used throughout the ages as a prime example of how we, as inheritors of the “promise,” should behave in the wicked and perverse generations into which we have been born. In other words, no matter where we are on our personal journeys, we should seek to emulate the walk of faith described in this reading, if we want to know Him who is life eternal.

“God Said”

When you read this portion, you will discover that the Holy One looks upon Noah as a righteous man who was blameless or perfect in his time:

“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 to the Biblical text in the opening verse of this portion, that became critical components of the faith system developed in the balance of the Hebrew Scriptures. The beforementioned *tzadiq* (צַדִּיק), often meaning “righteous” or “just,” or various other derivatives, and *tamim* (תָּמִים), often meaning “blameless,” are two very important terms. As you search for these terms in the Scriptures, you will discover that “righteous” and “blameless” are used liberally throughout the Tanakh to further describe the requirements for communion with the Holy One of Israel. A holy and righteous God uses these attributes in the people whom He uses:

“Then the LORD said to Noah, ‘Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you *alone* I have seen *to be* righteous 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 is 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?

“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).

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 up" Enoch, when Enoch is also included in the chapter often called "the Hall of Fame 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).

As we contemplate the life of Noah, we are being constantly reminded of the interconnectivity of walking by faith 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 and Creator. 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. There is a specific incident in the Gospels where the Lord used some people, who are described like Noah, for His redemptive purposes. Apparently throughout the ages there have been others who have exhibited the walk of faith, and have been righteous and blameless, similar to Noah. One such couple is Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Immerser (or Baptist):

"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 God-fearing couple who "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 who became the forerunner to the birth of the Messiah.

This account of 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 defined the requirements for communion with the Creator God. Believing in the atoning work of Yeshua at Golgotha (Calvary) is now a necessary belief in the post-Resurrection walk of faith.

Walk by Faith

In spite of the fact that we did not live centuries ago, 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 Holy One. 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 the Torah, and consequently they were used to produce the one who would eventually point to the Messiah:

“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).

Zacharias and Elizabeth both knew by revelation, that Yeshua, the son of Joseph and Mary, was the Lord in the flesh, and would have the Divine power to forgive sins.

In the post-Resurrection era, further revelation has come forth from the Apostolic Writings that continue to proclaim the need to walk by faith. The Apostle Paul wrote the Corinthians 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. While describing this condition in the Spirit, Paul tells them that our ambition, whether in the body or absent, is to be “pleasing to Him.” This is beginning to sound like what Enoch achieved in his Earthly sojourn. But the big difference that post-Resurrection saints must believe, and walk out by faith, is the fact that Yeshua died for all. We should no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who died and rose again on our behalf. The additional requirement to avoid the future judgment by fire 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, it was the good news to which angels long to look:

“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 the mockers who have been predicted since the days of Peter. Some in the Messianic community are challenging the veracity of the Apostolic Scriptures because they were written in Greek, and not Hebrew.¹ In doing so, there has been a subtle tendency to deny or pervert the revelation that has come forth from these documents. As a sad consequence, in recent years, a few who had claimed to know the Messiah of Israel have lost their sure moorings in the Rock of Salvation. Instead, they have been cleverly convinced that a form of “works righteousness” as is only the way to 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 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), and not be tempted by the mockers, who mock even the declaration of the final judgment required of human beings. Peter states our predicament most clearly:

“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).

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 that truth keep us all from the fiery judgment to come!

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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard, Updated Edition* (NASU), © 1995, published by The Lockman Foundation.

¹ Consult the publication *Scripture Under Scrutiny: Was the New Testament Really Written in Hebrew?* edited by Margaret McKee Huey, for a detailed examination of this subject.