

TORAHSCOPE
V O L U M E I I

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Life Examined and Understood
Through the Grid of the Torah

William Mark Huey



TORAHSCOPE

VOLUME II

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edited by J.K. McKee

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Abbreviation Chart and Special Terms

Special terms unique to this publication that may be used have been provided in this chart:

Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	LXX: Septuagint
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell & Scott)
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	m. Mishnah
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	NEB: New English Bible (1970)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	NIV: New International Version (1984)
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>	NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
Grk: Greek	RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)	t. Tosefta
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)	Tanakh: the Old Testament
Heb: Hebrew	TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
KJV: King James Version	TWOT: <i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
	YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

Annual Torah Reading Schedule

These are the weekly Torah and Haftarah portions, as employed in both the traditional Synagogue and today's Messianic Jewish congregations

KEY:

A: Ashkenazic S: Sephardic*

[] denote differences between traditional Jewish and Christian verse order

GENESIS

Bereisheet "In the beginning"

Genesis 1:1-6:8

Isaiah 42:5-43:10 (A); 42:5-21 (S)

Lekh-Lekha "Get yourself out"

Genesis 12:1-17:27

Isaiah 40:27-41:16

Chayei Sarah "Sarah's life"

Genesis 23:1-25:18

1 Kings 1:1-31

V'yeitzei "He went out"

Genesis 28:10-32:2

Hosea 12:12-14:10 (A); 11:7-12:12 (S)

V'yaishev "He continued living"

Genesis 37:1-40:23

Amos 2:6-3:8

V'yigash "He approached"

Genesis 44:18-47:27

Ezekiel 37:15-28

Noach "Noah"

Genesis 6:9-11:32

Isaiah 54:1-55:5 (A); 54:1-10 (S)

V'yeira "He appeared"

Genesis 18:1-22:24

2 Kings 4:1-37 (A); 4:1-23 (S)

Toldot "History"

Genesis 25:19-28:9

Malachi 1:1-2:7

V'yishlach "He sent"

Genesis 32:3-36:43

Hosea 11:7-12:12 (A); Obadiah 1:1-21 (S)

Mikkeitz "At the end"

Genesis 41:1-44:17

1 Kings 3:15-4:1

V'yechi "He lived"

Genesis 47:28-50:26

1 Kings 2:1-12

EXODUS

Shemot "Names"

Exodus 1:1-6:1

Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23 (A);

Jeremiah 1:2-3 (S)

Bo "Go"

Exodus 10:1-13:16

Jeremiah 46:13-28

Yitro "Jethro"

Exodus 18:1-20:23[26]

Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6[6-7] (A); 6:1-13 (S)

V'eira "I appeared"

Exodus 6:2-9:35

Ezekiel 28:25-29:21

B'shalach "After he had let go"

Exodus 13:17-17:16

Judges 4:4-5:31 (A); 5:1-31 (S)

Mishpatim "Rulings"

Exodus 21:1-24:18

Jeremiah 34:8-22; 33:25-26

* Ashkenazic Jews are largely those from Eastern and Northern Europe, and Sephardic Jews are largely those from Spain and Muslim lands.

Terumah “Contribution”

Exodus 25:1-27:19

1 Kings 5:26-6:13

Ki Tisa “When you take”

Exodus 30:11-34:35

1 Kings 18:1-39 (A); 18:20-39 (S)

Pequdei “Accounts”

Exodus 38:21-40:38

1 Kings 7:51-8:21 (A); 7:40-50 (S)

Tetzaveh “You shall command”

Exodus 27:20-30:10

Ezekiel 43:10-27

V'yak'heil “He assembled”

Exodus 35:1-38:20

1 Kings 7:40-50 (A); 7:13-26 (S)

LEVITICUS**Vayikra** “He called”

Leviticus 1:1-5:26[6:7]

Isaiah 43:21-44:23

Shemini “Eighth”

Leviticus 9:1-11:47

2 Samuel 6:1-7:17 (A); 6:1-19 (S)

Metzora “Leper”

Leviticus 14:1-15:33

2 Kings 7:3-20

Kedoshim “Holy Ones”

Leviticus 19:1-20:27

Amos 9:7-15 (A); Ezekiel 20:2-20 (S)

B'har “On Mount”

Leviticus 25:1-26:2

Jeremiah 32:6-27

Tzav “Give an order”

Leviticus 6:1[8]-8:36

Jeremiah 7:21-8:3; 9:22-23

Tazria “She conceives”

Leviticus 12:1-13:59

2 Kings 4:42-5:19

Acharei Mot “After the death”

Leviticus 16:1-18:30

Ezekiel 22:1-19 (A); 22:1-16 (S)

Emor “Speak”

Leviticus 21:1-24:23

Ezekiel 44:15-31

B'chuqotai “By My regulations”

Leviticus 26:3-27:34

Jeremiah 16:19-17:24

NUMBERS**Bamidbar** “In the wilderness”

Numbers 1:1-4:20

Hosea 2:1-22

Beha'alot'kha “When you set up”

Numbers 8:1-12:16

Zechariah 2:14-4:7

Korach “Korah”

Numbers 16:1-18:32

1 Samuel 11:14-12:22

Balak “Balak”

Numbers 22:2-25:9

Micah 5:6-6:8

Naso “Take”

Numbers 4:21-7:89

Judges 13:2-25

Shelakh-Lekha “Send on your behalf”

Numbers 13:1-15:41

Joshua 2:1-24

Chukat “Regulation”

Numbers 19:1-22:1

Judges 11:1-33

Pinchas “Phinehas”

Numbers 25:10-30:1[29:40]

1 Kings 18:46-19:21

Mattot “Tribes”
Numbers 30:2[1]-32:42
Jeremiah 1:1-2:3

Mas’ei “Stages”
Numbers 33:1-36:13
Jeremiah 2:4-28; 3:4 (A);
2:4-28; 4:1-2 (S)

DEUTERONOMY

Devarim “Words”
Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22
Isaiah 1:1-27

V’et’chanan “And I besought”
Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11
Isaiah 40:1-26

Ekev “Because”
Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25
Isaiah 49:14-51:3

Re’eih “See”
Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17
Isaiah 54:11-55:5

Shoftim “Judges”
Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9
Isaiah 51:12-52:12 (or finish at 53:12)

Ki-Teitzei “When you go out”
Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19
Isaiah 54:1-10 (or finish at 52:13)

Ki-Tavo “When you come”
Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8
Isaiah 60:1-22

Nitzavim “Standing”
Deuteronomy 29:9[10]-30:20
Isaiah 61:10-63:9

V’yeilekh “He went”
Deuteronomy 31:1-30
Hosea 14:2-10; Micah 7:18-20; Joel 2:15-27

Ha’azinu “Hear”
Deuteronomy 32:1–52
2 Samuel 22:1–22:51

V’zot Ha’berakhah “This is the blessing”
Deuteronomy 33:1–34:12
Joshua 1:1–18 (A); 1:1-9 (S)

The current Torah and Haftarah reading dates, are available online
via the Outreach Israel Ministries website: www.outreachisrael.net

INTRODUCTION

T*orahScope, Volume II* is a second compilation of written commentaries that compliments the teachings compiled in *TorahScope, Volume I*, first published in 2004. These teachings were assembled by employing the traditional, annual Jewish Torah reading schedule, which has divided the first five books of the Bible into fifty-four separate *parashot* or *sidrot*, coupled with corresponding readings from the Prophets and Writings (Haftarah). For all of our time in full time ministry since 2002, our ministry has sent weekly Torah reflections to our e-mail update subscribers. This volume is a selection of messages that was largely written and transmitted within for the 2005-2006 Torah cycle, later updated and revised for the 2010-2011 Torah cycle.

Since becoming Messianic, our family has discovered that studying the Torah is a dynamic and active part of our pursuit of the Holy One of Israel. In 1995 as our family began attending a Messianic Jewish congregation, I first became acquainted with the Jewish tradition of studying through the Torah on an annual basis. Needless to say, it only took a few months before I realized the profound value of studying and analyzing what makes up the foundational stories and accounts of our faith. After all, if one does not have a solid, foundational knowledge of these ancient texts, what kind of spiritual house is one really building?

For nearly two decades as a Believer in Yeshua the Messiah (1978-1995), I found that the history of the world and Israel communicated in the Biblical books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy was interesting reading. For years I had been taught and I certainly read the stories of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses with remote spiritual connections made to my personal walk with the Lord Jesus. It was not until I entered into the Messianic community, and understood that non-Jewish Believers are a part of the Commonwealth of Israel via their faith in the Messiah (Ephesians 2:10-22; Romans 11:13-21), that the heritage of the Torah was a part of my spiritual heritage as well.

Understanding that as Believers in Messiah Yeshua we were a part of Israel, the consistent study of the Torah became a part of our family's weekly routine. As relative newcomers to this practice, we concluded that following the annual pattern established by the Jewish community made the most practical sense. After all, since the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, when the Jews were allowed to return to the Land of Israel after their Babylonian exile, the example of studying the Torah had been refined for nearly 2,500 years:

“And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, **and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel.** Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who *could* listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate

from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law. Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose...Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen!' while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground...**They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading**" (Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8).

Here, we see a description of the eager exiles, having returned, wanting to hear the Instruction of God and diligently obey Him. They did not want to go into exile any more or be punished for any kind of disobedience.

How does this relate to us now? Do we want to go into any kind of spiritual exile? If you have entered into the Messianic movement in a way similar to our own family, do you not feel as though you had been separated from certain parts of the Bible, most notably the Torah? The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 understood that the new, non-Jewish Believers coming to faith had to be instructed in the truths of God's Word weekly from the Torah, as they were to associate themselves with their fellow Jewish Believers and other followers of the Creator God (cf. Acts 15:13-21). Our family's early testimony of becoming Messianic is that we became acquainted with what God wanted us to do every week from a steady reading of the Torah portions.

TorahScope, Volume II is written to encourage a study of the Torah from the perspective of a modern-day Believer in the Messiah Yeshua. To me, it does not matter if you are a Christian Believer familiarizing himself with your Hebraic Roots, or a Jewish Believer who wants to understand more about your Jewish Savior. The call that our Heavenly Father has put upon all of His people is that we be a light to the world. We are to demonstrate proper behavior to others, and have the testimony that committing oneself to a life of Torah obedience makes one more and more like our Lord and Teacher. Our job is to demonstrate His character to others so that God's love, goodness, and the message of salvation may reach forth to all we encounter:

"And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and My God is My strength), He says, **'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth'**" (Isaiah 49:5-6; cf. Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47; 26:23).

It is my prayer that as you read and meditate upon this reflective commentary that you will be empowered to be about God's work in the sinful world in which we live. May our Heavenly Father use *TorahScope, Volume II* to encourage your testimony of faith in Yeshua the Messiah, and make you more knowledgeable about the Scriptures, so you can be most effective for Him!

Until the restoration of all things...

William Mark Huey
Director, Outreach Israel Ministries

COMMENTARY ON GENESIS

Bereisheet בְּרֵאשִׁית In the Beginning "Return to Foundation"

Genesis 1:1-6:8
Isaiah 42:5-43:10 (A); 42:5-21 (S)

With the joy of celebrating the Fall high holidays and *Simchat Torah* immediately behind us, we now have the privilege of once again returning to the weekly Torah portions for regular spiritual nourishment. For Messianic Believers such as myself, who have been taking advantage of the discipline of consistent Torah study over the past decade (1995-2005), the arrival at "In the Beginning" presents yet another opportunity to dig deeper into the mysteries of God, but also important lessons for life. Genesis 1:1-3, as we all know, are some of not only the most well-known verses of the Bible, but they present us with a considerable degree of questions to be asked and subjects to be probed:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."

Also foundational for understanding the Holy Writ is the uniqueness that human beings possess among all of God's creatures. This is established in *Bereisheet* when God asserts His intention to make the man and woman in His image:

"Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:26-27, NRSV).

Much theological discussion and application has centered around the creation of people in God's image, *b'tzelem Elohim* (בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים), precisely over human dignity, value, and the distinct abilities that we possess like sentient consciousness, a mind and reason, and complex memory—in contrast to the animals.¹ The Psalmist actually describes that humanity has been created a little lower than God, *not* a little higher than the animals:

¹ Editor's note: For some useful discussions and subjects for consideration, consult Fazale Rana with Hugh Ross, *Who Was Adam? A Creation Model Approach to the Origin of Man* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2005), and J.P. Moreland & Scott B. Rae, *Body & Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000).

“What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God², and You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet” (Psalm 8:4-6).

God made us as His unique image-bearers so that we could not only reflect key attributes of Him as our Creator, **but also that He might commune with us** and demonstrate His great love and generosity to us. Even with the introduction of sin into our world, as we encounter in the first Torah portion, He has always demonstrated great bounty to His human creations (cf. Acts 14:15-17).

Wisdom and Light

I believe it is important to review the first five books of the Bible, the Torah (תּוֹרָה),³ if we want to please our Heavenly Father—but **most importantly** to know His plan and intentions for His Creation. The Jewish people, who were entrusted with the oracles of God (Romans 3:2), understood the need to *at least try* to understand the mind of God, and accordingly developed a systematic way of studying the Torah. Today’s broad Messianic community, aside from its many internal differences in emphasis in how the Torah may be approached or applied, on the whole still follows the annual Torah cycle. Jewish Believers who have recognized Yeshua as their Savior continue to partake of this edifying tradition from their upbringing, now being able to recognize the Messiah in the Torah. Non-Jewish Believers embracing their Hebraic Roots and being enriched by their heritage in Judaism, get to see how Moses’ Teaching foretells of the Lord Jesus and how He was truly Torah obedient. *The wisdom, in a repetitive study of this often overlooked part of the Bible, should be self-explanatory.*

Acknowledging the importance of the weekly Haftarah too is something which we can all benefit by, as God’s plan does not just involve the Books of Genesis-Deuteronomy, but continues in the Prophets and Writings. In this week’s corresponding Haftarah selection, the Prophet Isaiah makes it abundantly clear how God’s people—most exemplified in the ministry of the Messiah Yeshua—have a responsibility to be a light to the world and be conduits of His goodness to all:

“Thus says God the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and its offspring, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it, ‘I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison. I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, now I declare new things; before they spring forth I proclaim *them* to you’” (Isaiah 42:5-9; cf. Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47; 26:23).

² Heb. *m'at m'Elohim* (מֵעַט מֵאֱלֹהִים).

The Greek Septuagint did render this as *brachu ti par' angelous* (βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους) or “a little less than angels” (LXE), but nonetheless the lot of humanity is cast with the Heavenly host and not with the animals.

³ Also more commonly referred to as the Law of Moses, the Pentateuch, or the *Chumash*.

One term that our ministry will often employ, Moses’ Teaching, is derived from John Goldingay’s *Old Testament Theology: Israel’s Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003).

Followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—but most especially *Messiah followers*—are to be a light to the nations of the world. Yeshua said that we are to be out making disciples of Him (Matthew 28:19-21). With these as our primary responsibilities, would it not then be prudent to have a deeper working knowledge about the foundational building blocks of our faith, starting with the Torah?

I relish the opportunity to see what the Holy Spirit is going to teach me during my next journey through the Torah this year. Inevitably, I have discovered in past yearly readings that it is often never the same. After all, if we are diligently pursuing a closer relationship with the Almighty with all of our hearts, minds, souls, and strength—then where we are today in our respective walks with Him should be further along than from where we were one year ago. Hopefully, with each passing year (and this should be true even if you do not put as much concentration into the weekly Torah portions as I do) we have each grown more mature in our personal faith, and can increasingly handle a greater degree of God’s light within our hearts. This should be most especially present in our attitude and demeanor, and in how our love and affection are most concerned with the things of the Lord. The Apostle John details,

“The one who says he is in the Light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:9-17).

John describes three levels of maturation in a person’s walk with the Lord, defined in terms of: a child, a young person, and a parent. Those who are “little children” of the faith do know the Heavenly Father, but how far they have progressed in knowing His ways and His intention for their lives is uncertain. Those who are “young people” (NRSV) in the faith have matured to a point where they are able to overcome the Adversary, and they can take on a large degree of spiritual challenges. Those who are “fathers” or parents in the faith have matured to a place where they “know Him who has been from the beginning.” While this is a very high level of spiritual development, it doubtlessly includes a person who has been taught and disciplined from the Scriptures, and is able to understand what the Lord’s purposes are *from the beginning*. Such “parents” within the Body of Messiah have an important responsibility in teaching and mentoring the younger Believers in what it means to live a godly life.

The Severe Challenges of Sin

Much of the attention of those who read through *Bereisheet* (Genesis 1:1-6:8) is understandably focused on some of the issues and controversies of Genesis chs. 1-3. While these things are important to consider, we should never overlook the main events of the Fall

of humanity, the introduction of sin, and some of the immediate consequences of Adam and Eve's ejection from the Garden. And, for some reason or another, Messianic Torah readers can have a tendency to overlook the fact that with the birth of Cain and Abel, we see the definite example of at least one person who had some rather serious problems:

"Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, 'I have gotten a manchild with *the help of* the LORD.' Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it'" (Genesis 4:1-7).

The infamous account of Cain and Abel is the first recorded fratricide, as Cain's inability to control his urges caused him to murder his brother (Genesis 4:8-11). We can certainly speculate as to the specific circumstances or reasons as to why Cain murdered Abel, but the general circumstances are simply seen in the fact that every person is affected by the disastrous consequences of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit. A part of the curse issued against humanity to Eve was, "your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16b). When you look closer, this is not at all a good thing, as the Hebrew *teshuqah* (תִּשְׁוּקָה) or "**urge, craving, impulse**" (*CHALOT*),⁴ is precisely what appears in the Lord's admonition to Cain: "Sin couches at the door; its urge [*teshuqah*] is toward you, yet you can be its master" (Genesis 4:7b, NJPS). Just as the curse would inaugurate an ungodly battle of the sexes, with the woman wanting to dominate the man and the man wanting to control her—so does sin want to dominate all people, and people need to be able to control the influence of evil over their lives.

For all to read in the first Torah portion, as we encounter the Cain's violent and most heinous action against his own brother, Abel, is what can sometimes be **the epitome of unredeemed and sinful man**. Many Christian readers think that the reason Abel's offering from the flocks was accepted before the Lord (Genesis 4:4), but Cain's offering from the fruit of the ground was not accepted (Genesis 4:5), has to do with how a blood sacrifice is necessary to cover sin, and it is obvious that plants cannot do this. Yet as we encounter later in the Torah, various grain and cereal offerings, as well as those of oil and wine, become an important part of the Levitical institution and in the Ancient Israelites demonstrating their thanks to God for His provision. The Lord would not have rejected an offering of plants simply because they were plants.

What might be more notable is how Abel presented "the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions" (Genesis 4:4), and Cain only "brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground" (Genesis 4:3). This would mean that Abel gave God the finest of his flocks, and Cain may have given God some rather standard or even sub-standard produce.⁵ Lamentably, Cain did not understand how our Creator expects the best of us. But even

⁴ William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1988), 396.

⁵ Cf. Nahum M. Sarna, "Genesis," in David L. Lieber, ed., *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2001), 25.

more lamentably, Cain took God's disapproval of his offering before Him most personally, and he lashed out in great violence, slaying another of his own flesh and blood. He could have instead simply asked God for forgiveness, and made an effort to present the best of his crops at a future time.

In our human condition, we each have the potential to be as sinful as Cain. Thankfully, though, as we read the Scriptures and understand the history of our planet, none of us ever has to be like Cain or any of his successors. But in order not to fall into the pattern of Cain: **we must master sin.** We must each make the conscious choice to overcome any temptations or negative spiritual influences that surround us. If we are born again Believers filled up with the Holy Spirit, the ability to overcome the power of sin should be something that is accomplished much easier than some of the figures we encounter in the Scriptures, who either did not look to the Savior to come, or chose to reject Him when He arrived.

Recognizing this, perhaps we can better realize why the Jewish Rabbis often spend an inordinate amount of time referring to the good inclination versus the evil inclination in their teachings.⁶ Human beings need to choose good over evil! Even those who have recognized the salvation available in the Messiah Yeshua need to be disciplined, so that they can never fall prey to temptation. James the Just gives us a critical admonition we should never forget:

“Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic” (James 3:13-15).

Return to Foundation

One of the main reasons that I appreciate studying the Torah, on an annual basis, is because I know it challenges me not only to rest upon the foundation of our faith, but that I have to consider whether or not I have heeded its warnings. *Am I going to act like Cain? Will I be able to overcome a culture of sin, representing a culture of righteousness?* While there is a tendency at times to want to read a Torah portion like *Bereisheet* and find some ethereal or symbolic meanings in the Creation, the most important lessons to heed are often staring right at us from the text. How many of us fail to recognize these lessons, and are allowing some kind of sin or ungodliness get the better of us?

As we prepare to begin another year of focusing on the Torah, I encourage you to really seek the Lord and His ways. Do not settle for a mediocre level of spirituality, where you are only looking through the Holy Writ for information. **How can you better emulate what the Torah teaches?** How can you better understand God's plan from the beginning, and live forth as His light in a darkened world?

May we all take refuge in Him as we learn not only more about Him, *but as we learn to be closer to Him*, this year! Let us establish a right foundation, as we aim to accomplish His purposes and shine forth Yeshua's goodness and salvation in a world marred by sin.

⁶ BDB notes how the term *yetzer* (יֵצֶר) is used “in sense of impulse: יֵצֶר הַטּוֹב [yetzer ha'tov] and יֵצֶר הַרָע [yetzer ha'ra] of good and bad tendency in man” (Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979], 428).

Noach נח

Noah

"Walking by Faith"

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

Each year when we reconsider this Torah portion, which deals with the account of Noah, we are faced with another five chapters of Scripture that cover a great deal of human history. As you can imagine, there is much that can be and has been said, as people down through the ages have hypothesized about what transpired from the time from Adam and Eve to Noah, and on to Abraham. While most of this speculation is interesting reading, many of the assumptions have a tendency to muddy the waters of what God is trying to communicate to us who are trying to take this material and reasonably apply it to our lives today. Oftentimes, hungry Torah students spend a considerable amount of time munching on various “nuggets”—mostly pure conjecture—and can overlook the serious spiritual questions that arise concerning God’s judgment upon the world via the Flood. One of those serious questions regards the personal character of Noah, who is stated to be a righteous, blameless man who walked with the Lord:

“But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. These are *the records of the generations of Noah*. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God” (Genesis 6:8-9).

We live in a world that incessantly belittles the record of Genesis chs. 1-11, the Creation account of Adam and Eve and Noah’s Flood. Seeds of doubt can be planted by modern science or “the enlightened,” which can germinate into unbelief or full blown apostasy from belief in God. At the same time, there is also a deliberate ignorance on the part of some Bible readers to never even listen to the critiques of modern science, at least being aware of why liberal Jews and Christians consider this part of the Torah to largely be mythology. Believers in the God of Creation are not to be double-minded people (cf. James 1:6-8), who on the one hand may consider multiple witnesses in terms of establishing facts that directly affect their personal or family lives (i.e., Deuteronomy 19:15), but on the other who keep their ears completely closed to those who attack the Bible. Nowhere are we ever told that we are to have a “blind faith”; the testimony of nature does have to be weighed into what we believe, just as the testimony of Scripture must be considered.

The Fallout from Creation

While pondering *Noach* in conjunction with last week’s Torah portion, *Bereisheet*, you may have found that the lack of details regarding this period of human history can be quite thought provoking. Certainly, no one studying the Torah wants to question the wisdom or immanence of our Creator, but instead we should each want to have an unwavering faith in Him.

In the Creation account, almost like an annual spiritual examination, we have the yearly reminder that God created the Heavens and the Earth out of what is termed in Hebrew *tohu v’bohu* (תֹהוּ וְבֹהוּ), “welter and waste” (Genesis 1:2, Alter), perhaps meaning “astonishingly empty” (ATS). We have to consider that when God said, “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3), that out of the darkness came illumination. We have to believe that

in six *yamim* (יָמִים)—with us not knowing exactly what constituted an actual “day” at this time⁷—that the Almighty prepared the Creation for human habitation. This would include not only the plants, animals, and sealife needed for the human race, but also would involve the formation of mineral deposits, metals, precious stones, and diverse energy sources needed for the advance of civilization.

In terms of people themselves, in reviewing Creation we have to recognize that God not only crafted the first man out of the ground, but that He gave him a unique consciousness or *nishmat chayim* (נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים; Genesis 2:7), something which the animals do not possess. When Adam and Eve began their lives together in the Garden of Eden, a serpent deceived the woman into eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.⁸ And Adam, knowing of his wife’s indiscretion, voluntarily chose to disobey the command of God.⁹ From the Fall of humanity, significant fallout ensued as the man and woman were ejected from the Garden.¹⁰ Curses were placed upon the serpent, the man and the woman, and only future Divine intervention will fix the problems.¹¹ *There are a great deal of events, which are subject to various interpretations and applications, found here.*

In *Noach*, the main feature is that a great Flood judged all of humanity except Noah and his family. For a person like me, without faith in God and the veracity of His Word—especially coupled with the confirmations found in the words of Yeshua the Messiah that treat it as an actual event (Matthew 24:37-39)—I can see how it would be difficult for some to believe that a massive ecological disaster destroyed the inhabited world. Skepticism, combined with human logic, has definitely persuaded the unbelieving world to discount the account of Noah as a story at best, an invented fable at worst, or a repackaged version of Ancient Near Eastern works like the Epic of Gilgamesh.¹²

It is useful for us to examine Genesis chs. 1-11, evaluate how important it is that we treat these events with a high degree of historical reliability, and explore the different perspectives of “origins.” But, these questions are largely those asked by Twentieth and Twenty-First Century people, and were not necessarily asked by the Ancient Israelites. When the Torah was being compiled 3,300 years ago, the main issues at stake were how the people of God were to be instructed by Him in the ways of righteousness and holiness. This is how a Torah portion like *Noach* would have been considered by Yeshua and the Apostles.

The Faith of Noah

In the time between Adam and Eve being cast out of the Garden to the figure of Noah, it is recorded that great evil grew on the Earth. Genesis 6:5 relays how bad things became: “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.” Mayhem was rampant in

⁷ Editor’s note: The Hebrew term *yom* (יוֹם) has a variety of potential uses in the Tanakh Scriptures, primarily meaning a “day of twenty-four hours” (Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. [Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2001], 1:399), but there are most certainly instances when *yom* means “a period of time” such as a “year” (*ibid.*, 1:400), or simply “division of time” (*BDB*, 398) that may or may not be specified.

⁸ Genesis 3:1-7, 13.

⁹ Genesis 3:6-7, 12, 17.

¹⁰ Genesis 3:23-24.

¹¹ Genesis 3:14-19; cf. 1 Timothy 2:15, Grk.

¹² For a further discussion, consult the article “Encountering Mythology: A Case Study From the Flood Narratives” by J.K. McKee.

human society, so that the only option was for God to wipe out all people (Genesis 6:6-7). Genesis 6:13 specifies that “the earth is filled with violence.” Of all those on the Earth, though, only Noah and his family were deemed righteous so that they alone would be spared (Genesis 6:8-9) and would be able to repopulate the planet.

If God really was intending to judge human civilization, then Noah and his family would need to make some kind of preparation in anticipation of such judgment. We know the story all too well, as Noah was instructed by God to build a massive ark which would be carrying many animals:

“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. Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks. Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every *kind* into the ark, to keep *them* alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every *kind* will come to you to keep *them* alive. As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather *it* to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them.’ Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did” (Genesis 6:13-22).

It is probably safe to acknowledge that in recognizing that the days of mankind would be one hundred and twenty years (Genesis 6:3), that about a century had to pass between the Lord’s decree that He would blot out the world of humans and for Noah and his sons to build the ark. The Apostle Peter asserts how God “preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2 Peter 2:5). It is doubtful that Noah was a “preacher” in the sense of actively and forcibly declaring the judgment of God to crowds gathered a kind of “evangelist”; it is more likely that *kēru*x (κῆρυξ)¹³ is to be taken in the sense of a “herald” (ESV), who via his actions and experiences in encountering people who witnessed his building of the ark, would tell them what was to come.

The faith Noah would have to exhibit, in building such a massive boat—with only his three sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth really committed to the project—and with around a hundred years or so *to wait* between the declaration of judgment and the catastrophe arriving, **had to be immense**. When many of us consider natural disasters today like hurricanes or tornadoes, we usually see them on the local news or the Weather Channel, and we know that they are coming in a matter of minutes, hours, or days. *We do not have to exhibit any “faith” that they will come*; we just have to prepare and act accordingly. Noah had to place his trust entirely in the Creator God that His word would come to pass. He had to

¹³ “a herald, pursuivant, marshal, public messenger” (H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994], 432).