

TORAHSCOPE

V O L U M E I

Life Examined and Understood
Through the Grid of the Torah

William Mark Huey

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TORAHSCOPE VOLUME I

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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	KJV: King James Version
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	LXX: Septuagint
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Lidell & Scott)
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	m. Mishnah
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	NEB: New English Bible (1970)
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	NIV: New International Version (1984)
EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>	NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
Grk: Greek	NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)	RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2001)	t. Tosefta
Heb: Hebrew	Tanakh: the Old Testament
	TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
	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'yeishev "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 12:1-15:33

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29).

For millennia, the diligent study of the Torah or the Law of Moses has been primarily embraced by members of the Jewish community. For a variety of reasons, many followers of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) have not been led to pursue the Torah in a similar fashion as established by the Jewish Sages and Rabbis. Instead, the books of Moses have mostly been examined for their value in Biblical history. There is often no consistent, weekly examination of the Torah practiced in the Christian Church, unlike how it is read in Jewish synagogues worldwide.

Since the First Coming of the Messiah and the composition of the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament), most Christians have focused their faith on these writings and their significance. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., the emerging Christian Church began to steadily separate from its Jewish Roots. These two distinct religions—which both confess to serve the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—often approach Him through two different paths: one through the “Old Testament,” and one through the “New Testament.” But interestingly enough, both groups are in fervent pursuit of the Law of God. One believes that the Torah is the words compiled by the teacher Moses, and the other believes that Yeshua the Messiah is the Word made flesh.

As a Believer in the Messiah of Israel, when introduced to the Torah for the first time from a Jewish perspective, I was struck by the reality that studying the Torah would actually *improve* my relationship with God. I concluded that if Yeshua is the Word made flesh (John 1:1), and if I were truly in the process of being conformed to His image (Romans 8:29; 12:2), then it would benefit me greatly to study the Torah and thus better understand who my Lord and Savior is. He Himself *did say*, after all, that Moses had written of Him (John 5:46). The books of Moses contain the foundational building blocks of the rest of Scripture, and by getting a better understanding of their eternal truths, I found that I would be able to solidify my faith.

Consequently, without a tremendous amount of encouragement, but simply the Spirit of God moving on my heart, the desire to follow the ancient paths of my spiritual forbearers in faith became a delight. Once I understood what the patterns were for a consistent study, the blessings to my family and me became very apparent to all of us. Let me tell you a little about what happened.

In 1995 on *Rosh HaShanah*, our family was first introduced to the Messianic movement. We celebrated our first Feast of Tabernacles or *Sukkot* with a Messianic Jewish congregation in Dallas, Texas that was somewhat welcoming to us a family of non-Jews. But, the congregation’s stated mission was to provide a “Yeshua-oriented synagogue” for the many Jewish people who were coming to faith in Yeshua. We did

not fit this profile, but as we persevered in our attendance, we found ourselves taking a new members class that began a few months after our initial visit. In spite of not being Jewish, we were learning so much as a family that the Holy Spirit kept prompting us to continue attending.

It was during this time that we were first introduced to a traditional Jewish *Shabbat* order of service and worship, which included our initial exposure to the weekly Torah portions. Before going to this congregation, I had really never heard the word “Torah,” except as the Japanese word for “attack” used in the 1970 film *Tora! Tora! Tora!* Each week as a part of the service, the congregational leader would have someone come up to the bema, deliver a short teaching, and cant from the Torah scroll. We soon discovered that the weekly bulletins informed us that we were going through the Biblical texts of Genesis through Deuteronomy, according to an already set schedule known as the annual **Torah cycle**. This was complemented by what was labeled as the Haftarah readings, which were taken from the balance of the Tanakh or Old Testament. As you can imagine, we were on a tremendous learning curve!

Within a short period of time, we were diligently following the schedule of the weekly readings. Since the congregational leader would typically refer to some aspect of the weekly Torah portion in his sermons, we were often able to read ahead to prepare for what texts would likely be preached or expounded upon. Our first year discovering the Torah cycle was fairly routine, with a nominal effort made to consider the deeper truths of God’s Word. During these same early days of our Messianic walk, we were also being exposed to the richness of Messianic music, Davidic dance, and the Jewish Roots of our Christian faith.

Torah: Instruction for Life

In the early days of our family adopting a Messianic lifestyle, we were experiencing many of the same things that the first non-Jewish Believers experienced as they turned to faith in the God of Israel. If you will recall from Acts 15, the problem of non-Jews coming to faith in the Messiah of Israel was creating some controversy. There was a debate over whether these new Believers had to be circumcised and convert to Judaism in order to be saved. In the debate as to whether the new Believers needed to be circumcised, Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and ultimately James, the brother of Yeshua, met in Jerusalem, giving their thoughts on the evidence of the Spirit of God taking up residence in the hearts of the new Believers. James, the leader of the Jerusalem Council, made the final ruling on what the new, non-Jewish Believers in Yeshua were supposed to do:

“After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, ‘Brethren, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, “AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT, SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,” SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG

AGO. Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath” (Acts 15:13-21; cf. Amos 9:11-12).

The ruling of the Jerusalem Council was that these non-Jewish Believers were to (1) abstain from pollutions of idols, (2) abstain from sexual immorality, (3) meats that were not butchered in a proper method (Deuteronomy 14:2-20), and (4) from blood (Deuteronomy 12:23-25). They were to do these things so they could enter into the Jewish community, go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day or *Shabbat*, and hear the Torah taught. Once submitting themselves to weekly Torah teachings, they could steadily learn what was acceptable and unacceptable behavior, befitting the people of God. Our family was convicted that if this was what the first non-Jewish Believers in Yeshua were instructed to do, that we too must submit ourselves to Moses’ Teaching every week.ⁱ

Consistent study and meditation on the Law of God is something that has certainly been admonished over the ages by many of the figures within the Tanakh (Old Testament). The Hebrew word *torah* (תּוֹרָה), meaning “teaching” or “instruction,” appears 220 times in the Tanakh.ⁱⁱ When you start reading about the Torah’s significance to the Biblical authors, the evidence is overwhelming that studying, applying, and obeying the Torah is paramount to walking in a way that is pleasing to the Holy One of Israel. Consider these passages that remind us of the Torah’s importance:

- **Abraham, the father of faith, obeyed the Torah:** “Because Abraham obeyed My voice, and observed My safeguards, My commandments, My decrees, and My Torahs” (Genesis 26:5, ATS).
- **According to God, the Torah was to be applicable to Israel and all the strangers who attach themselves to Israel:** “The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you” (Exodus 12:49).
- **As Moses comes to the end of his life, and gives some final instructions to the people of Israel, he reminds them that observance of the Torah compliments a healthy fear of the Almighty:** “Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 31:12).
- **Joshua says that meditation and observance of the Torah is required in order for Israel to be prosperous and successful:** “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth,

ⁱ For a more detailed analysis, consult the commentary *Acts 15 for the Practical Messianic* by J.K. McKee.

ⁱⁱ This figure was determined using a root search of the Hebrew Tanakh (WTT) in BibleWorks 5.0.

but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success” (Joshua 1:8).

- **The Psalmist reminds us to meditate upon the Torah day and night:** “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:2).
- **The wisdom of Proverbs describes the blessings of listening to the Torah. It is stated that if you do not listen to Torah, then your prayers may be an abomination:** “He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination” (Proverbs 28:9).
- **The Prophets of Israel constantly point the people back to the Torah for guidelines on how to conduct their lives, and how they had fallen from the Divine will of God:** “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children” (Hosea 4:6).
- **One of the final admonitions in the Hebrew Bible, from the Prophet Malachi, is that we are to remember the instructions that God delivered from His servant Moses:** “Remember the law of Moses My servant, *even the* statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel” (Malachi 4:4).

TorahScope Inspired

During my initial research into the study of the Torah, I discovered that the Rabbinical community has developed a schedule that was applicable to the Jewish calendar. I found out that if you were traveling around the world, whether in London, Beijing, New York, or Jerusalem, the same Torah reading schedule would be used. This was beneficial to the Jewish person who might be away from home, but who may visit another synagogue on *Shabbat*. By following this schedule, one will know what Torah portion was being discussed, and if led, one might be able to contribute to the study or discussion. I thought this was a wonderful way of how the Jewish people were able to encourage a consistent study of the Torah. I thought that perhaps this was one of the reasons why the Jewish people were able to maintain their identity and relative cohesiveness over the centuries.

As I committed myself to a consistent study of the weekly Torah portions, I found that the Lord was using the Torah in my life for me to dig deeper into different aspects of my personal walk with Him. I found myself becoming more spiritually aware of situations and events around me. I envisioned the study of the Torah like a multi-varied

optical instrument, **or a scope**, which was being used to examine a variety of nearly invisible and remote objects. I thought of a telescope and its ability to see into the stars, a microscope and its ability to magnify small objects, and even a periscope and its ability to see from beneath the darkness of the sea or objects where one did not have a direct line of sight.

Contemplating these thoughts, I coined the term **TorahScope** as my way of communicating what I was envisioning. It appeared to me that a diligent study of the Torah could be used as some kind of a scope to observe or detect the deeper, unobservable aspects of our beings. This consideration led me to start writing some observations under the byline: TorahScope. I knew how much study and diligence it takes to put something in writing. I also knew that if I would make a commitment to write a reflective commentary on the weekly Torah selection, that I would have to faithfully study the weekly Torah and Haftarah portions. I knew that in the long run, I would be the benefactor of a consistent study of the Torah. My walk with the Messiah of Israel would be blessed. After all, I concluded, if we are being conformed to the image of Messiah Yeshua, and He is the Word made flesh, **then it would probably benefit us all to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the Torah**, knowing that He is the one to whom the Torah points (Romans 10:4, Grk.)!

Torah: Words of Life

It was not too long before I began to see many parallels between my weekly study of the Torah, and issues I was dealing with in my own life. Sometimes situations in my family could be understood better through the grid of God's Torah. At other times, circumstances in our congregational lives could be analyzed through the lens of the Torah. On a global scale, I was even able to see things happening to, or in the State of Israel, which at times reflected back on the weekly Torah or Haftarah portions. As you might imagine, every time I experienced these connections, I became more convinced that the Torah of Moses was a living document, just as the writer of Hebrews says that the Word of God is a sharp instrument:

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Hebrews 4:12-13).

As I was writing my initial TorahScope reflections, I was convinced that the Holy One was going to raise up a generation of born again Messianic Believers, who themselves could begin to write commentaries on the Torah portions. One of the challenges that any modern-day Messianic Believer has is the lack of good teaching materials from a distinct Messianic viewpoint. This is especially true when it comes to commentaries on books of the Bible, and the Torah is no exception. Libraries are filled with many Torah commentaries and writings from the Rabbis of Judaism. Much of the information that the Jewish Sages offer is very helpful and insightful. However, they have all failed to acknowledge Yeshua as the Messiah, and some of these commentaries

in places make an effort to refute His Messiahship. Today, the Messianic community largely lacks Torah commentaries *from its own perspective*. (Even this TorahScope commentary, while very useful for approaching the weekly *parashot*, is only intended to provide reflections on the weekly Torah portions, and not provide you with a verse-by-verse commentary of the Pentateuch.)ⁱⁱⁱ

My prayer for you, as you consider the relevance of studying the Torah on a regular basis, is that you will discover what I have discovered about *the blessings* of studying it. One of Moses' final exhortations to Ancient Israel describes how the words of the Torah as God's Instruction—are to be the sphere in which they live their lives:

"[H]e said to them, 'Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, *even* all the words of this law. For it is not an idle word for you; **indeed it is your life**. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess' (Deuteronomy 32:46-47).

If these words do not inspire you to consider the relevance of examining God's Torah, then perhaps the words of Yeshua the Messiah will give you the encouragement you need to take the Torah to heart:

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17-19).

The incentive to those who keep and teach God's Torah is **to be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven**. My prayer is that we will, at least, all be keepers of the Torah so that the Lord may welcome us into His Kingdom by proclaiming, "Well done good and faithful servant!"

I hope that you will be blessed by these reflective commentaries found in the pages of *TorahScope, Volume I*, as I have done my utmost to share His thoughts for us as His people.

Until the restoration of all things....

William Mark Huey
Director, Outreach Israel Ministries

ⁱⁱⁱ For a compilation of useful material, consult the *Messianic Torah Helper* by TNN Press (forthcoming 2011).

COMMENTARY ON GENESIS

Bereisheet בְּרֵאשִׁית

In the Beginning "Let There Be Light"

Genesis 1:1-6:8

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

The Bible begins with words that we are all too familiar with, “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” (Genesis 1:1-3). What do you think about when you read this?

The beginning of the weekly Torah cycle includes a tremendous amount of information that has been preserved down through the ages. When you consider that in these opening chapters of the Scriptures, the text takes us from the beginning of the universe all the way to the introduction of the generation of Noah, the amount of material covered is quite overwhelming. So many critical foundational aspects of our faith are mentioned, that one could easily spend a lifetime considering the topics discussed. Contemplating the concept of Creation, cosmic and human origins, the Fall, and the future new Creation—and their implications for simply living a blessed life today—has generated voluminous material that can fill countless libraries.

One of the challenges that presents itself when a Torah student approaches the opening chapters of the Bible, and the beginning of the annual Torah cycle, is to ask the Lord just what to focus *your attention* upon. Perhaps this is why Psalm 1 reminds us of the simple and practical benefits of meditating upon God’s Torah, and making reflection upon it an integral part of our weekly discipline:

“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! **But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.** He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers” (Psalm 1:1-3).

As I have considered the text of *Bereisheet* many times, and have meditated upon the significance of all the different verses, one aspect of it still keeps coming to my mind. For some reason, each time I read the words, “Let there be light,” the image of the benefits of illumination is something that grabs my attention. Our Creator is so powerful that He simply spoke the word “Light,” and there was light dispelling darkness. Additional statements from the Psalmist may remind us of how “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

Here, the Psalmist asserts that the Word of God is indeed a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths. Without the Word of the Lord, just where would we be headed? How would we view life? What would life be like if our Creator had not given us His Word? What would we know about Creation? Would we all be evolutionists, thinking that we are a part of a comic accident with no Creator? How would we know about Him?

A Light Unto the Nations

As I consider these questions—and a multitude of others—the corresponding Haftarah portion introduces us to the concept of light. In Isaiah 42:5-43:10, the Prophet Isaiah declares what the Most High is communicating to him about the Creation. The opening statement parallels the beginning parts of the Genesis account:

“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’” (Isaiah 42:5-7).

After the Creation account is briefly summarized, the Lord turns to His people, and reminds them of His protective hand and the covenant that He has established with them. He describes Israel in a very powerful way as “a light to the nations,” *l’or goyim* (לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם), meaning that this chosen people has the responsibility of bearing the love and truth of the Creator to the rest of Creation. Throughout history, Israel as a nation was able to preserve the illumination of truth that comes forth from the pages of the Holy Writ, and in particular, the Torah of Moses. Isaiah declares more of this reality, and how both Israel and Israel’s Messiah are to be involved in the redemption of the world:

“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 49:6; cf. Luke 2:32).

“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isaiah 60:1-3).

The Apostle Peter reiterates this concept centuries later, when he communicates the principles of being a holy nation to the Messianic community, who has been given an understanding of who and what “light” truly is:

“But you are A CHOSEN RACE, a royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).¹

¹ Isaiah 42:20; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 43:21.

Light of the World

In pondering the subject of light, I recognize that light or illumination is a concept absolutely foundational to our faith. In fact, when considering the various aspects of light, I am reminded of some of Yeshua's most memorable words. In His the Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua—the Light of the World—classifies His followers as also being the “light of the world”:

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-15).

Juxtaposed between the Beatitudes² and a description about the validity of the Torah,³ Yeshua reminds His audience that they are indeed *the light*, shining in a world that is darkened by the consequences of sin. In John's Gospel, we see further explanation concerning Yeshua, the Light of the World, and those who testify of Him:

“In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but *he came* to testify about the Light. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him” (John 1:4-10).

Yeshua Himself reiterates this theme about who the Light is in His talk with Nicodemus:

“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God” (John 3:19-21).

“Let There Be Light”

As you consider *Bereisheet*, you can focus on a great number of profound subjects that have their roots in these opening chapters of the Bible. The details of the six phases of Creation,⁴ and the institution of the *Shabbat* (Sabbath) rest, are recalled.⁵ The creation of Adam and Eve and their Fall from grace are articulated.⁶ Aspects of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, as compared to the Tree of Life, can be contemplated.⁷ The admonitions to be fruitful and multiply and to take dominion over the created order can be discussed.⁸ The particulars of the introduction of sin, and the

² Matthew 5:1-12.

³ Matthew 5:17-19.

⁴ Genesis 1:1-2:1.

⁵ Genesis 2:2-3.

⁶ Genesis 2:7-3:24.

⁷ Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6, 11-12.

⁸ Genesis 1:28.

judgments brought upon Adam, Eve, and the serpent can be diagnosed.⁹ The arrival of offspring in Cain and Abel, and the conflict that ensued between these brothers with contrasting sacrificial offerings, can be debated.¹⁰ The birth of Seth and the promised seed that will carry the blessings promised to Adam and the generations that follow, could be discussed.¹¹ Finally, the birth of Noah and God's regret that humanity had devolved into great debauchery could be analyzed.¹²

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 נח 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

⁹ Genesis 3:14-24.

¹⁰ Genesis 4:1-15.

¹¹ Genesis 4:25; 3:15.

¹² Genesis 5:29-6:8.

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).

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,¹³ and *tamim* (תָּמִים), often meaning “blameless,”¹⁴ 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:

¹³ 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.

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

“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” 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.¹⁵ 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).

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!

¹⁵ Consult the publication *Scripture Under Scrutiny: Was the New Testament Really Written in Hebrew?* by TNN Press, for a detailed examination of this subject.