

TorahScope

V O L U M E I

Life Examined and Understood
Through the Grid of the Torah

William Mark Huey



TorahScope

Volume I

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by William Mark Huey

edited by J.K. McKee

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Abbreviation Chart and Special Terms

Special terms unique to this publication have also been provided in this chart:

AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*

Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament

ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)

BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)

BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*

CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*

Grk: Greek

HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)

HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2001)

Heb: Hebrew

KJV: King James Version

LXX: Septuagint

NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)

NEB: New English Bible (1970)

NIV: New International Version (1984)

NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)

NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)

RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)

Tanakh: the Old Testament

TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*

YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

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 separation of the emerging Christian Church from its Jewish roots began. These two distinct religions, who both claim 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 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 was 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 was. 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 out that I would be able to solidify my faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

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 forefathers in the faith became a delight. Once I understood what the patterns were for a consistent study, the blessings to my household and me became very apparent to all of us. Let me tell you 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 that 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 the traditional Rabbinical pattern for the order of service and worship, which included our initial exposure to the weekly Torah portions. Before going to this synagogue, we had really never heard the word “Torah,” except as the Japanese word for “attack” used in the film *Tora! Tora! Tora!* Each week as a part of the service, the congregational leader would have one of the men come up to the bema and read from the Torah scroll. We soon discovered that the weekly bulletins informed us that we were going through the Biblical Books of Genesis to Deuteronomy, according to an already ready set schedule known as the annual “Torah Cycle.” This was complemented by what was

labeled 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 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 undisputed 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).

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 go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day or *Shabbat*, and hear the Torah taught. 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' teachings every week.

Consistent study and meditation on the Law of God is something that is certainly been admonished over the ages by many of the writers and characters of the Tanakh (Old Testament). The Hebrew word *torah* (תּוֹרָה), meaning “teaching” or “instruction,” appears 220 times in the Tanakh.¹ 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:

“Because Abraham obeyed My voice, and observed My safeguards, My commandments, My decrees, and My Torahs” (Genesis 26:5, ATS).

Abraham, the father of faith, obeyed the Torah.

¹ This figure was determined using a root search of the Hebrew Tanakh (WTT) in BibleWorks 5.0.

“The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you” (Exodus 12:49).

According to God, the Torah was to be applicable to Israel and all the strangers that attach themselves to Israel.

“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).

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.

“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, 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).

Joshua says that meditation and observance of the Torah is required in order for Israel to be prosperous and successful.

“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 Psalmist reminds us to meditate upon the Torah day and night. The Book of Psalms is replete with admonitions about the benefits of meditating, observing, and obeying the Torah. Psalm 119, in particular, epitomizes this admonition when the description of the Torah is stated no less than 25 times.

“He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination” (Proverbs 28:9).

The wisdom of Proverbs describes the blessings of listening to the Torah. Here, it is stated that if you do not listen to Torah, then your prayers may be an abomination.

“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).

“And it will come about in the last days that the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and the peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, ‘Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths.’ For from Zion will go forth the law, even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:1-2).

“Remember the law of Moses My servant, *even the* statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel” (Malachi 4:4).

The Prophets of Israel were constantly pointing 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. 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.

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 schedule would be used. This was beneficial to the Jewish person who might be away from home and wants to go to the synagogue on *Shabbat* in the city where he was working. By following this schedule, he would know what Torah portion was being discussed, and if led, 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 the consistent study of the Torah. I

thought that perhaps this was one of the reasons that 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 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 scope, that was being used to examine a variety of nearly invisible 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 the diligent study of the Torah could be used as some kind of a scope to observe or detect the deeper, unobservable aspects of our souls and spirits. This consideration led me to write 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 weekly Torah commentary that I would be encouraged 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 or "Torah" made flesh, then would benefit us greatly to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the Torah.**

Torah: The 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 the 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 the State of Israel that 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 commentaries, I was convinced that the Holy One was going to raise up a generation of born again Messianic Believers, who themselves would 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 make an effort to refute His Messiahship. Today, the Messianic community largely lacks Torah commentaries, or simply mere reflections, *from its own perspective*.

One of my incentives to write TorahScope commentaries is that my example can be emulated by other Believers in Yeshua the Messiah. I believe that if I can write a Torah commentary, with all of the personal limitations that I face, that there must be many more gifted people who are going to be raised up by the Lord to provide insight, wisdom, and encouragement for the thousands who are embracing the Messianic lifestyle and becoming Torah obedient. If you are reading this, and you are one of those who is being called

to bring your Spirit-led understanding to the Messianic community, let me clearly say: **start writing**. Our Heavenly Father is looking for faithful servants willing to let Him speak through them.

My prayer for you, as you consider the study of the Torah, is that you will discover what I have discovered about the blessings of studying it. One of Moses' final exhortations to the people of Israel describes that the words of the Torah are God's Instruction are the words for 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 those words do not inspire you to consider the diligent study of the Torah, 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 the 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!"

May you likewise be blessed by His words communicated through the Torah and my attempt to share His thoughts through the pages of *TorahScope, Volume I*.

Until the restoration of all things....

William Mark Huey
Director, Outreach Israel Ministries

COMMENTARY ON GENESIS

Bereisheet בְּרֵאשִׁית In the Beginning "Let There Be Light"

Genesis 1:1-6:8
Isaiah 42:5–43:10

"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).

The beginning of the weekly Torah cycle includes a tremendous amount of information that has been preserved throughout the ages by the followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When you consider that in these opening chapters of the Scriptures, the text takes us from beginning of the universe to the introduction of the generation of Noah, the amount of material covered is overwhelming: almost 2,000 or more years of human history. So many critical foundational aspects of our faith are mentioned that one could literally spend a lifetime considering the topics discussed. Contemplating the concept of Creation, and its implications for interpreting life, 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 benefits of meditating upon the 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 consider the text of *Bereisheet*, and meditate upon the significance of all the different passages, one aspect of it 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 constantly come to mind. Our Creator is so powerful that He simply spoke the word "light," and there was light. After all, the future statements from the Psalmist remind us of that reality, by his saying, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).

Here, the Psalmist reminds us 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 interpret life? What would life be like if the Holy One of Israel had not given us His Word? What would we know about Creation? Would we all be evolutionists? How would we know about Him?

A Light Unto the Nations

As I consider these questions and a multitude of others, the 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 Israel, 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.” In other words, it is the responsibility of Israel to bring the truth of the Creator and His words of life to the rest of Creation. Israel, as a nation, has been preserved to perpetuate the illumination of truth that comes forth from the pages of the Holy Writ, and in particular, the Torah of Moses. Isaiah states this reality two additional times:

“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).

“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).

Light of the World

In pondering the subject of light, I recognize that light or illumination is a concept absolutely fundamental to our faith. In fact, when considering the various aspects of light, I am reminded of some of Yeshua’s words. In the Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua characterizes His listeners as 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 Beatitudes and a description about the validity of the Torah, Yeshua reminds His audience that they are indeed the light, shining in a world that is darkened by 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 days of Creation and the institution of the *Shabbat* (Sabbath) rest are recalled. The creation of Adam and Eve and their fall from grace are articulated. Aspects of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, as compared to the Tree of Life, can be contemplated. The admonitions to be fruitful and multiply and to take dominion over the created order can be discussed. The particulars of man’s rebellion and the judgments brought upon Adam, Eve, and the serpent can be diagnosed. The arrival of offspring in Cain and Abel, and the conflict that ensued between these brothers with contrasting sacrificial offerings, can be debated. The birth of Seth and the promised seed that will carry the blessings promised to Adam and the generations that follow could be discussed. Finally, the birth of Noah and God’s regret that humanity had devolved to great debauchery could be analyzed.

But, 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.

Interestingly, what seems to be consistent with His Word is the fact that the more time you spend in the light of the Word, the more you are able to understand the profound aspects of it. In other words, I believe it would be beneficial for you to spend a specified period of time in His Word in order to receive the benefits of additional illumination. Maybe this is why our Jewish brethren have developed a system of study that annually takes us through the Torah to learn more and more about our Creator each year, and the light He is sharing.

Perhaps as we study the Torah, He will again illumine our hearts and minds, and we will hear His voice proclaim, “Let there be light!” In His mercy toward us, we will 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

“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 “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.² 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 have 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 “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

² 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.

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!

***Lech Lecha* לך-לך**
Get Yourself Out
"Trials, Faith, and Blessings"

Genesis 12:1-17:27

Isaiah 40:27–41:16

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

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

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

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

Abram, his wife Sarai, and his nephew Lot, were supposed to go to the Land of Canaan. But as the text indicates, they went as far as Haran, which was the crossroads in the upper Euphrates east of Assyria, and part of the trade route that connected Egypt with those in the Tigris and Euphrates River valleys. They all settled there until the death of Terah. In a cursory reading of these statements, it appears that Terah “took”³ Abram and his other relatives. However, when we read further Scriptures, we see that the call to come out from among the people and circumstances of Ur was definitely made to Abram.

³ Heb. *laqach* (לָקַח), “take, lay hold of, seize” (William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 1988], 178).

First, we read Nehemiah's testimony that states that he understood exactly what Moses was declaring in his description of the life of Abram, later renamed Abraham:

"You are the LORD God, who chose Abram and brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, and gave him the name Abraham. You found his heart faithful before You, And made a covenant with him to give *him* the land of the Canaanite, of the Hittite and the Amorite, of the Perizzite, the Jebusite and the Girgashite—to give *it* to his descendants. And You have fulfilled Your promise, for You are righteous" (Nehemiah 9:7-8).

Secondly, the testimony of Stephen includes more specific information regarding Abraham's departure from Ur:

"And he said, 'Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, "LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU." Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, *God* had him move to this country in which you are now living. But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and *yet*, even when he had no child, He promised that HE WOULD GIVE IT TO HIM AS A POSSESSION, AND TO HIS DESCENDANTS AFTER HIM'" (Acts 7:2-5).

Here, we are told that Abraham himself had the "God of glory" appear to him when he was in Mesopotamia, "before" he lived in Haran. The command that he was to "Depart from your land and from your kindred and go into the land which I will show you" (RSV) is spoken to Abraham when he was living in Ur.

Finally, the author of Hebrews completes our Scriptural understanding of this great "father of our faith," as it relates to the mission that God gave to Abraham:

"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:8-10).

With all of this confirming Scriptural evidence, we discover that the Holy One was most concerned about His choice of Abram/Abraham to be the recipient of His blessings. The Lord knew from before time that this man would exhibit the heart of faith and the obedience to Him that was required. As the Prophet Isaiah points out in the complimentary Haftarah portion, He has called for men and women to be used by Him from the very beginning:

"Who has performed and accomplished *it*, calling forth the generations from the beginning? 'I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He'" (Isaiah 41:4).

As you read this narrative, it begins with Abram hearing a command from the Most High that appears to be a repeat of the first appearance that occurred while the family lived in Ur. This time, Abram heard the voice of El Shaddai and obeyed, after the death of Terah. After reading Stephen's statement in Acts 7:4, it appears that Abram did not continue on his journey into Canaan until after his father's death:

"Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, and from your relatives And from your father's house, to the land which I will show you'" (Genesis 12:1).

Abram hears the command to "Get thee out" (KJV) or "go forth." The Hebrew is *lech lecha* (לך-לך), the title of this Torah portion. This is not only a command for Abraham to get out of the place he is living, but also to get away from his countrymen and his very own relatives. Here in this portion, the trusting Patriarch begins his walk of faith. As we will learn, Abram soon realizes that representing the One True God among men is filled with trials. But because he listened, believed, and obeyed, his obedience to the Holy One is ultimately blessed in his lifetime.

Faith Trials

As I have pondered the opening chapters regarding the life of Abraham, I am struck by the fact that he, just like the rest of his “faith-filled” descendants, was not spared the trials of life that we all must endure. Perhaps there is a direct connection between faith and trials. On a further thought, it dawns on me that perhaps there is a direct correlation between faith, trials, and the blessings of responding to life’s trials by faithful obedience to our Father’s commandments. After all, the walk of faith we are traversing is certainly beset with personal and corporate trials. **Is it possible that the Holy One of Israel gives us trials so that we can exercise our faith in order to receive more of His blessings?**

These concepts are so elementary, yet so profound to our faith in practice. After all, are not tests, trials, and even tribulations, designed by the Holy One to see if we are living and walking by faith? **And does not God respond by blessing us, when we react to trials by faithfully following His instructions?** Certainly, when one considers the inevitability of trials, many Scriptures come to mind. One of the most quoted brought a smile to my face:

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4).

James the Just encourages his audience in the midst of the trials that they are facing. Here, James states that responding with faith will produce an endurance that will have its perfect result in that the saints. **Talk about a blessing! Can you imagine the blessing of lacking in nothing?** This is not a bad reward for joyfully considering the trials of life, recognizing their Source, and that they have been specifically designed by the Lord for each person as he or she is being perfected in the walk of faith.

The Apostle Peter had a similar approach to handling trials:

“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” (1 Peter 1:6-9).

Peter understood that the trials of life should be handled joyfully by Believers, because we have faith in Yeshua is the Messiah. The ultimate blessing of this is that it will result in the consummation of our salvation. Hopefully, you can readily see **that there is a direct correlation between the trials you encounter, how you respond by faith, and the blessings associated with proper faith based responses.** As I consider this spiritual axiom, I think about the magnitude, severity, and frequency of trials. **Was it possible that the greater the trials and the more faithful the response, the greater the blessings we will receive?**

Certainly, the trials endured by Abraham as described in the Torah, and his faithful responses, were definitely rewarded with huge blessings. Is it possible to detect some parallels in the balance of Scripture that might confirm this observation?

The entire Bible is replete with testimonies about how people are challenged with various trials, and have responded by faith. You can go to Hebrews 11 and read about just some of the champions of faith who were blessed in a variety of ways as a result responding to trials, tests, and tribulation. But even the author of Hebrews reminds us that there are a “cloud of witnesses” that are too numerous to try to humanly list:

“And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of* righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received *back* their

dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (*men* of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:32-40).

The concept of experiencing trials, responding in faith, and receiving the blessings of the Almighty is foundational in both Judaism and Christianity. As I reflect on this truth, I am also reminded of the trials and persecutions that the Apostle Paul endured during his walk of faith. He writes the Corinthians, encouraging them to endure some trials, listing some of the afflictions that he had endured in his ministry for the gospel:

“Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also. For you, being so wise, tolerate the foolish gladly. For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face. To *my* shame I *must* say that we have been weak *by comparison*. But in whatever respect anyone *else* is bold—I speak in foolishness—I am just as bold myself. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Messiah?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Yeshua, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and *so* escaped his hands” (2 Corinthians 11:18-33).

As I think about all of these trials, and Paul’s faithful response to his accusers and those who personally abused him, I am again reminded of the blessings that he has received. The Apostle Paul, as a faithful servant of the Most High, will be receiving his rewards for eternity for how his writings have been used by the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) to bring untold millions to a saving knowledge of the Messiah Yeshua. Once again, the correlation between trials, faith, and blessings are all interrelated.

Personal Application

While thinking through these verses, another viable form of trial kept coming to my mind. This was the inevitability of the persecution that comes with the walk of faith that has been exercised by Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and faithful followers of God throughout the ages. We know that from Scripture that Israel has been persecuted throughout the ages and many have remained steadfast to Him.

But now that the revelation of His Son and His completed work on the cross have been accomplished, belief and proclamation of the gospel is guaranteed to bring persecution and trials. After all, if you are going to walk by faith in the knowledge of Yeshua as the Savior of the world, **you will be persecuted** according to the very words of Yeshua Himself:

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:10-12).

Interestingly, Yeshua also encourages us to “Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven” (HCSB). Have you been enduring any trials lately? Do you consider them to be great trials of the magnitude experienced by Paul, Peter, James, or any of the other Apostles? How about trials that rival the persecution experienced by the Prophets of old? Have you been stoned, flirted with a sword, or sawed in two?

For the most part, many of us have to endure an occasional mocking or putdown, but life-threatening events are few and far between for most Believers. And yet, we all do experience some tests and trials during our Earthly sojourn. **Is it possible that those trials are specifically designed by our Creator to give each of us an opportunity to exercise our faith?** When the trials or tests come, do we exercise our faith by turning to the Scriptures to find the prescriptions for the trials? Do we follow His Word as opposed to the inclinations of our flesh? If we do, then according to the trustful patterns established by our father Abraham, we will receive the blessings of faithful obedience. Perhaps we ought to look at these tests and trials as an opportunity to exercise our faith. Maybe we should examine just how well we responded to what we might perceive as great tests or trials.

Do we follow the commandments that are described in the Torah and the rest of the Scriptures? If the answer is yes, then the blessings should flow. **And do you know what else? Rejoicing will follow in due course. When you realize that you have been chosen to endure certain trials and tests, and that by your faith you choose to follow the admonitions of His Word, you truly have something to rejoice about!**

We should all be rejoicing that our faith results in the salvation of our souls. Salvation is the ultimate blessing that following the walk of faith established by father Abraham determines. **May we all be found thankful for the trials, and rejoicing with the blessings of the faithful!**

Vayera וַיֵּרָא
And He Appeared
"A Faith that Works"

Genesis 18:1-22:24

Isaiah 40:27–41:16

“Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, ‘By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice’” (Genesis 22:15-18).

The Torah portion *Vayera* continues to develop some of the challenges that have been recorded about the life of faith exhibited by Abraham, the father of faith. The Jewish Sages have determined that during his lifetime, Abraham was given ten extremely difficult tests. But no test could ever be more difficult than the one that brings this Torah reading to a close. Here we discover that Abraham has been commanded by the God of Israel to offer up his son as a sacrifice: