

Giving rest from the work and toil of our hands?

This weeks reading is from Parashat Noach (*Bereshit / Genesis 6:9-11:32*), which opens with the Lord seeing the wickedness of man on the face of the earth (וַיִּרְא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בְּאָרְץ וְכָל-יֶצֶר מַחְשַׁבַת לִבּוֹ רָק רַע כָּל-הַיּוֹם: ו וַיִּנְחָם יְהוָה כִּי-עָשָׂה אֶת-הָאָדָם). The Scriptures tell us that the heart of man was consistently set upon evil (*Bereshit / Genesis 6:9*). The Aramaic Targum (Onkelos, *Bereshit / Genesis 6:10*) states that it grieved the Word (בְּמִלְרִיָּה) of the Lord God that He had made man. As a result, the Lord brought a great flood to destroy all life having breath from the face of the earth. God instructs Noah to build an ark to save a remnant of righteous people, and some of the clean and unclean animals. Following the flood the Lord God says in *Bereshit / Genesis 9:11* וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם *“and I will establish my covenant with you,”* declaring that He will establish His covenant with Noah. The Scriptures from this week’s reading describes God’s faithfulness to keep His promises in saving His people. Today we know the might and power of God according to His Word (the Bible) and by how He works in our lives. He has a plan for us to live and to dwell in our midst and this is achieved in His son Yeshua the Messiah. According to the Scriptures, Noah (נֹחַ) was the grandson of Methuselah (*Bereshit / Genesis 5:25-29*, who lived 969 years). Studying the genealogies, Noah was born 250 years following the death of Adam. Methuselah was the son of Lamech who was the fifth in descent from Cain and Lamech was the first man to take in marriage more than one wife (see *Bereshit / Genesis 4:23-24*). The word Noah (נֹחַ) when used as a noun is a proper name and when used as a verb (לְנוּחַ) means *“to rest.”* The meaning behind the name that Lamech gives to Noah is explained in *Bereshit / Genesis 5:29*, the Scriptures say *‘This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed.’* How did Noah give rest from the work and toil of our hands that arises from the ground which the Lord has cursed?

שְׂדוּקָה יִתֵּן / The Holy Scriptures	
<p style="text-align: center;">ספר בראשית פרק ה פסוק כח-ל</p> <p>כח וַיְחִי-לְמֶדֶד שְׁתַּיִם וּשְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה וּמָאֵת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֵד בֶּן: כט וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ נֹחַ לֵאמֹר זֶה יִנְחַמְנוּ מִמַּעֲשֵׂנוּ וּמִעֲצָבוֹן יְדִינוּ מִן- הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אָרְרָה יְהוָה: ל וַיְחִי-לְמֶדֶד אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת-נֹחַ חֲמִשָּׁ וַתְּשֵׂים שָׁנָה וְחֲמִשׁ מֵאֹת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֵד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת:</p>	<p><i>Bereshit / Genesis 5:28-50</i></p> <p><i>5:28 Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. 5:29 Now he called his name Noah, saying, ‘This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed.’ 5:30 Then Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years after he became the father of Noah, and he had other sons and daughters. (NASB)</i></p>

This week’s reading speaks of Noah and the wicked men on the earth in those days. The section of verses quoted above is actually from Parashat Bereshit that speaks of Lamech the father of Noah and the reason why Lamech named his son Noah. The Scriptures say *5:29 Now he called his name Noah, saying, ‘This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed.’ (NASB)* In the world today, I have to ask the question *“what is the difficulty in the work of the ground?”* The reason I ask that question is that I really enjoy the work that I do. It is neither burdensome nor tiring, I am a scientist during the day and bible scholar at night, and I really enjoy the work that I do. So when reading these Scriptures about work and its burden, what do the Scriptures mean by *“the work and toil from the ground which the Lord cursed?”* What was it like in the garden of Eden? Did the generation during Noah’s time remember Adam and Eve? Did Adam and Eve spend enough time in the garden to understand work and toil? All of these questions and more come to mind while studying these Scriptures. When thinking on the topic of toiling over work, our jobs might not be so difficult per say as much as it is difficult to balance the check book. We struggle each week to make a living, and to balance our bank accounts. This can become very burdensome, grinding, and toiling work. It is the sweat, anxiety, and pressure that is placed upon us constantly in the endless race of life that is the result of the curse and man is reduced to unending toil and sorrow to make a living. Work in and of itself is not the curse that was given to mankind, it is the toil to stay alive that is the curse. If one does not have work to do, then such a person of all people is most miserable. Work and being able to work is in fact a blessing from God (see *Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:18*) and is a part of the covenant blessing. The Scriptures also say *“For dust you are and to dust you will return” (Bereshit / Genesis 3:19)*. According to the Apostolic Writings, the rich man who built barns and filled them up said to himself, *“Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”* However, the Lord said to him, *“You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you...” (Luke 12:19-20)* and He asks the question *“Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?” (Luke 12:20)*. The author of the book of Ecclesiastes struggled with these concepts saying we amass property and all the good things of life, and then realize what a sense of futility there is in having to pass them along to somebody else, someone who didn’t turn a finger to gain them. What then is the reason for our struggling and toiling in life? I believe this curse is intended to remind us of the truth of God’s Word and to counteract the pride of life. We are not the masters of this world, we are not in control and we are not capable of handling and solving all of the problems in life. Death, suffering, toil, and subjection are limits that we cannot escape. These things remind us of the curse and cause us to look to and have a dependance upon the Lord God Almighty. We desperately need God and His Messiah Yeshua. The hour of greatest hope in our lives is when our eyes are opened to this basic truth realizing our own sinful lives and the need for salvation in God’s Messiah. It is only when we say, *“Lord, I can’t make it without you ... I need you desperately”* that the Lord begins a miraculous work in our lives. Thank You, Lord! for the trials and limitations of life that keep us dependent upon You in Yeshua the Messiah!