

ספר תהילים נד | Tehillim / Psalms 54

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Faith, Faithfulness, and Righteousness Living

This week's study is from *Tehillim / Psalms 54:1-7*, the psalm opens saying, א לְמִנְצֵחַ בְּנִגְיַת מִשְׁכִּיל For the choir director; on stringed instruments. אֲלֹהִים בְּשֵׁם ה' וְיִצְדַק שְׁמוֹ לְדָוִד מִסִּתְתָּר עִמּוֹ: *A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, "Is not David hiding himself among us?" (NASB)* The first two verses from the Masoretic Text have become the title for our English translations of *Tehillim / Psalms 54*. David says, אֲלֹהִים בְּשֵׁם ה' וְיִצְדַק שְׁמוֹ לְדָוִד מִסִּתְתָּר עִמּוֹ: *54:1 Save me, O God, by Your name, And vindicate me by Your power. (NASB)* How does God save David by His name? What is it about the Name of God that saves? He expects the Lord to move in His power according to His name. He is seeking the Lord for an answer to his prayer, אֲלֹהִים שְׁמַע תְּפִלְתִּי הֲאִזְנֵה לְאָמְרֵי-פִי: *54:2 Hear my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth. (NASB)* David's case is based on the enemy who surrounds, הָאֹיְבִים הֵאֵפוּ עָלַי וְעָרִיצִים בְּקִשּׁוֹ נַפְשִׁי לֹא שָׁמוּ אֲלֹהִים לְנַגְדָּם סֵלָה: *54:3 For strangers have risen against me And violent men have sought my life; They have not set God before them. Selah. (NASB)* Notice how those who surround David to take his life do not set the Lord God before them. What does it mean to set God before us? David continues saying, הִנֵּה אֲלֹהִים עֵזְרִי לִי אֲדַנִּי בְּסִמְכֵי נַפְשִׁי: *54:4 Behold, God is my helper; The Lord is the sustainer of my soul. (NASB)* How does the Lord sustain the soul? Notice how David calls upon the Lord and then states, יְשׁוּב [יָשׁוּב] הָרַע לְשָׂרְרֵי בְּאֵמַתְךָ הַצְּמִיתָם: *54:5 He will recompense the evil to my foes; Destroy them in Your faithfulness. (NASB)* He asks the Lord to repay his enemies according to their wickedness, and David asks the Lord to do these things based on His faithfulness. He does not say "Based upon my own faithfulness," but rather, based on God's faithfulness. God's faithfulness is what brought the people of Israel into the Promised Land. Man always fails, the Lord always comes through on His promises. David concludes his Psalm saying, כִּי בַנְדָבָה אֶזְבְּחָה-לְךָ אֹדָה שְׁמֶךָ יְהוָה כִּי-טוֹב: *54:6 Willingly I will sacrifice to You; I will give thanks to Your name, O Lord, for it is good. 54:7 For He has delivered me from all trouble, And my eye has looked with satisfaction upon my enemies. (NASB)* David says that he will willingly give sacrifices to the Lord. What kind of sacrifices are David referring to? David attributes his victory over his enemies to the Lord God Almighty. He looks with satisfaction upon his enemies. Obviously, this must be a reference to his victory overcoming his enemies, victory generally resulted in the death of an enemy. Is it OK to look with satisfaction over our enemies and their destruction? Under what circumstances can we have this approach to our attitude towards the unrighteous who seek our destruction? Is David teaching us that it is OK to pray for the destruction of our enemies?

עברית Hebrew	ארמי Aramaic	ελληνικός Greek
ספר תהלים פרק נד	ספר טוביה פרק נד	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 54
א לְמִנְצֵחַ בְּנִגְיַת מִשְׁכִּיל לְדָוִד:	א לשבחא על תושבחתא שכלא	54:1 εις τὸ τέλος ἐν ὕμνοις συνέσεως
ב כְּבֹא הַזִּיפִים וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְשָׂאוּל	ב כד אתו אנשי	τῷ Δαυιδ ἐν τῷ ἐλθεῖν τοὺς Ζιφαιῖους
הֲלֹא-דָוִד מִסִּתְתָּר עִמּוֹ: ג אֲלֹהִים	זף ואמרו לשאול הלא דוד מטמר	καὶ εἶπεῖν τῷ σαουλ οὐκ ἰδοὺ Δαυιδ
בְּשֵׁם ה' וְיִצְדַק שְׁמוֹ לְדָוִד מִסִּתְתָּר עִמּוֹ: ד	ג אלהא בשמך פרוק גבן: ג	κέκρυπται πα ἡμῖν ὁ θεός ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί
אֲלֹהִים שְׁמַע תְּפִלְתִּי הֲאִזְנֵה לְאָמְרֵי-פִי:	ד יתי ובכח ברוח גבורתך דון יתי: ד	σου σῶσόν με καὶ ἐν τῇ δυνάμει σου κρῖνόν με 54:2 ὁ θεός εἰσάκουσον τῆς
	ה יהוה קבל צלותי אצית למימר פומי:	προσευχῆς μου ἐνώτισαι τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ
		στόματός μου

<p>הַ כִּי זָרִים קָמוּ עָלַי וְעָרִיצִים בְּקָשׁוֹ נִפְשִׁי לֹא שָׁמוּ אֱלֹהִים לְנַגְּדִם סֵלָה: וְ הִנֵּה אֱלֹהִים עֵזְרָ לִי אֲדַנִּי בְּסִמְכֵי נִפְשִׁי: זְ יִשׁוּב [יִשְׁיב] הָרָע לְשַׁרְרֵי בְּאֶמְתָּהּ הַצְּמִיתָם: חַ בְּנָדָה בְּהַ אֲזַבְחָהּ-לָהּ אוֹדָה שְׂמָהּ יְהוָה כִּי- טוֹב: ט כִּי מִכָּל-צָרָה הִצִּילָנִי וּבְאֵיבֵי רָאָתָה עֵינָי:</p>	<p>ה ארום נוכראין זידונין קמון עלי וע- לימין תבעו נפשי לא שוו אלהא לקב- להון לעלמין: ו הא יהוה אלהא סעיד לי יהוה בסמכי נפשי: ז יתוב בישא למעיקי בהמנותך אמאיך יתהון: ח בניכסתא אדבח קדמך אודי שמך יהוה ארום טב: ט ארום מכל עקא פצי יתי ובבעלי דבבי חמת עיני נקמתא:</p>	<p>54:3 ὅτι ἄλλότριοι ἐπανάστησαν ἐπ' ἐμέ καὶ κραταιοὶ ἐζήτησαν τὴν ψυχὴν μου οὐ προέθεντο τὸν θεὸν ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν διάψαλμα 54:4 ἰδοὺ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς βοηθεῖ μοι καὶ ὁ κύριος ἀντιλήμπτωρ τῆς ψυχῆς μου 54:5 ἀποστρέψει τὰ κακὰ τοῖς ἐχθροῖς μου ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ σου ἐξολέθρευσον αὐτούς 54:6 ἔκουσίως θύσω σοι ἐξομολογήσομαι τῷ ὀνόματί σου κύριε ὅτι ἀγαθόν 54:7 ὅτι ἐκ πάσης θλίψεως ἔρρυσώ με καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐχθροῖς μου ἐπεΐδεν ὁ ὀφθαλμός μου</p>
<p>Tehillim / Psalms 54 For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, “Is not David hiding himself among us?” 54:1 Save me, O God, by Your name, And vindicate me by Your power. 54:2 Hear my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth. 54:3 For strangers have risen against me And violent men have sought my life; They have not set God before them. Selah. 54:4 Behold, God is my helper; The Lord is the sustainer of my soul. 54:5 He will recompense the evil to my foes; Destroy them in Your faithfulness. 54:6 Willingly I will sacrifice to You; I will give thanks to Your name, O Lord, for it is good. 54:7 For He has delivered me from all trouble, And my eye has looked with satisfaction upon my enemies. (NASB)</p>	<p>Toviyah / Psalms Chapter 54 54:1 For praise, with a hymn. Good teaching composed by David. 54:2 When the men of Ziph came and said to Saul, “Is not David hiding with us?” 54:3 O God, by your name redeem me, and by the strength of your might judge me. 54:4 O Lord, accept my prayer; listen to the utterance of my mouth. 54:5 For arrogant men have risen against me, and powerful men have sought my life; they have not put God before them forever. 54:6 Behold, the Lord is my helper, the Lord is among the supports of my soul. 54:7 May evil return to those who oppress me; in your faithfulness bring them low. 54:8 With an offering I will sacrifice in your presence; I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good. 54:9 For he has delivered me from every trouble; and my eye has seen vengeance against my enemies. (EMC)</p>	<p>Psalmoi / Psalms 54 For the end, among Hymns of instruction by David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Lo, is not David hid with us? 54:1 Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy might. 54:2 O God, hear my prayer; hearken to the words of my mouth. 54:3 For strangers have risen up against me, and mighty men have sought my life: they have not set God before them. Pause. 54:4 For lo! God assists me; and the Lord is the helper of my soul. 54:5 He shall return evil to mine enemies; utterly destroy them in thy truth. 54:6 I will willingly sacrifice to thee: I will give thanks to thy name, O Lord; for it is good. 54:7 For thou hast delivered me out of all affliction, and mine eye has seen my desire upon mine enemies. (LXX)</p>

This week's study is from *Tehillim / Psalms 54:1-7*, the psalm opens saying, א לְמִנְצֵחַ בְּנִגְיֹנֹת מְשָׁכִיל וְאֶל־דָּוִד מְסַתֵּר עַמְּנוּ: בָּבוֹא הַזִּפְיִים וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְשָׂאוֹל הֲלֹא־דָוִד מְסַתֵּר עַמְּנוּ: *For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, “Is not David hiding himself among us?” (NASB)* It is interesting that the first two verses from the Masoretic Text have become the title for our English translations of *Tehillim / Psalms 54*. The title to the Psalm states that this is for stringed instruments, for music. The title continues saying this is the wisdom (Maskil) of David, when the Ziphites came and told Saul that David had hid himself among them. The first thing that catches our attention is the word “*HaZiphim*,” “*The Ziphites*” (הַזִּפְיִים). Who are the Ziphites? Performing a search on the word ziphim or ha'ziphim, as it is spelled הַזִּפְיִים produces only one result, *Tehillim / Psalms 54:2*. There is also a defective spelling זִפְיִים that produces additional results from *1 Samuel 23:19, and 26:1*.

1 Samuel 23:19
23:19 Then Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, ‘Is David not hiding with us in the

strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? (NASB)

יט וַיֵּעָלוּ זִפְתִּים אֶל-שָׂאוּל הַגִּבְעָתָה לְאמֹר הֲלוֹא דָוִד מְסֻתָּתָר עִמָּנוּ בְּמַצְדּוֹת בְּחַרְשָׁה בְּגִבְעַת הַחֲכִילָה
אֲשֶׁר מִיַּמִּין הַיְשִׁימוֹן:

1 Samuel 26:1

26:1 Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, ‘Is not David hiding on the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?’ (NASB)

א וַיָּבֹאוּ הַזִּפְתִּים אֶל-שָׂאוּל הַגִּבְעָתָה לְאמֹר הֲלוֹא דָוִד מְסֻתָּתָר בְּגִבְעַת הַחֲכִילָה עַל פְּנֵי הַיְשִׁימוֹן:

David escaped from Keilah (Citadel) which was a city in the lowlands of Judah (*Joshua 15:44*). According to *1 Samuel*, David rescued the city from the attack of the Philistines (*1 Samuel 23:1-8*) however, the inhabitants proved unfaithful to him, in that they sought to deliver him up to Saul (*1 Samuel 23:12*). The Scriptures say that he and his men “*departed from Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go.*” They fled first to Hareth Hill, about 3 miles to the east, and then through Hebron to Ziph as the Scriptures say, “*And David was in the wilderness of Ziph, in a wood*” (*1 Samuel 23:15*). This was the location where Jonathan sought him out, “*and strengthened his hand in God.*” This was the last conversation between David and Jonathan (*1 Samuel 23:16-18*) as it is recorded in the bible.

Escaping from Keilah, before Saul could gather his forces to march against him, David was left with no choice but to return to the wild hills, valleys and woodlands of southern Judah. It was in the mountain territories that David found the best protection; but finding sufficient food for his soldiers was difficult there. Therefore, David relocated closer to the town of Ziph. The woods was most likely thick and few people passed through them, providing an opportunity for David and his men to make camp, the purpose was so very few people would know of their exact location. In addition to this, as compared to the mountains, there was the possibility of catching game for food and even farming a little in the small clearings that were found amid the trees of the forest. The town of Ziph was close and having saved Ziph from the Philistines would make for a great opportunity to live in relative safety for a short period of time. They could go to Ziph to do their trading, and there was the possibility of having some fellowship with the people of their own nation. David would have undoubtedly offered protection and assistance to the people of the territory like he did to Nabal, something that is consistent with David’s character. The Aramaic Targum and the Septuagint state the same thing, that the Ziphites come and revealed the location of David to Saul.

Toviyah / Psalms Chapter 54

54:1 For praise, with a hymn. Good teaching composed by David. 54:2 When the men of Ziph came and said to Saul, “Is not David hiding with us?”

א לְשִׁבְחָה עַל תּוֹשִׁבְחָתָא שְׁכֵלָא טְבָא עַל יַד דָּוִד: ב כִּד אַתּוּ אַנְשֵׁי זִיף וְאִמְרוּ לְשָׂאוּל הֲלֹא דָוִד
מְסֻתָּתָר עִמָּנוּ:

Psalmoi / Psalms 54

For the end, among Hymns of instruction by David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Lo, is not David hid with us?

54:1 εἰς τὸ τέλος ἐν ὕμνοις συνέσεως τῷ Δαυὶδ ἐν τῷ ἐλθεῖν τοὺς Ζιφαίους καὶ εἰπεῖν τῷ σαουλ οὐκ ἴδου Δαυὶδ κέκρυπται παρῆμῖν ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου σῶσόν με καὶ ἐν τῇ δυνάμει σου κρῖνόν με

The people of Ziph betrayed David and told Saul where he was located. As a result of these things that

transpired in David's life, he composed this psalm.

David opens with a request to God (Elohim) saying, אֱלֹהִים בְּשִׁמְךָ הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי וּבְגִבּוֹרְתֶךָ תְּדַיְנֵנִי : 54:1 *Save me, O God, by Your name, And vindicate me by Your power. (NASB)* How does God save David by His name? What is it about the Name of God that saves? He expects the Lord to move in His power according to His name. How does the Lord move in His name? What does that mean, to move in the name?

According to the Scriptures, God's name is the manifestation of His character, the sum of His revealed attributes. The Psalmist can appeal to it, for He has declared that it is His will to save those who put their trust in Him. According to *Isaiah 48:9-11*, the Lord God says, "For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another." Isaiah states that the Lord's affection towards His people is to bring glory to His name or for His name's sake. In the Apostolic Writings, the Lord God chose His people for His glory, "1:4 He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace." (*Ephesians 1:4-6, 12, 14, NASB*) The Lord created us for his glory, as we read in *Isaiah 43:6-7*, "Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, every one who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory." The Scriptures say that God called Israel for His glory, in *Isaiah 49:3*, that he makes the whole house of Judah to cling to Him for praise and Glory of God (*Jeremiah 13:11*). The Psalms say (*Tehillim / Psalms 106:7-8*) that "Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works . . . but rebelled by the Sea, at the Red Sea. Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power." The apostle Paul said that the Lord raised up Pharaoh to show His power and to glorify His name in *Romans 9:17*, and that the Lord defeated Pharaoh at the Red Sea to show His glory (*Shemot / Exodus 14:4, 18*). The Lord God spared Israel in the wilderness for the glory of His name (*Ezekiel 20:14*), and the Lord gave victory over Canaan for the glory of His name (*2 Samuel 7:23, Who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods?*). The Lord saved Jerusalem for His name's sake, for the glory of His name, the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake (*1 Samuel 12:20-22*). He saves and defends Jerusalem for the sake of His servant David (*2 Kings 19:34, 20:6*). We are told that the Lord also restored Israel from exile for the glory of His name according to *Ezekiel 36:22-23, 32*. According to the Apostolic Writings, Yeshua sought the glory of his Father in all that he did (*John 7:18*). Yeshua instructed us to do good works for the purpose of bringing glory to God (see *Matthew 5:16 and 1 Peter 2:12*). Yeshua also warned that by not seeking the glory of God, faith is impossible in *John 5:44*. Yeshua says that our Father in heaven answers prayer so that He is glorified (*John 14:13*). Yeshua also endured the last hours here on earth suffering for the Glory of the Lord God in heaven (*John 12:27-28*). Isaiah told us that the Lord forgives sin for His own sake (*Isaiah 43:25*), that the Lord pardons sins for His name's sake (*Tehillim / Psalms 25:11*). Why do you think that the Lord God pardons and forgives sins for His name's sake? The Holy Spirit of God is also given to bring glory to the Son of God (*John 16:14*), and the Lord Himself instructs us to do all things for His glory (*1 Corinthians 10:31*). The apostle Peter tells us to serve God in a way that glorifies His name (*1 Peter 4:11*), and Paul says that Yeshua fills us with fruits of righteousness for God's glory (*Philippians 1:9, 11*). According to *Romans 1:22-23*, all are under judgment for dishonoring the glory of God. King Herod was struck dead because he did not give glory to God (*Acts 12:23*). Yeshua returns again for the glory of God and in the glory of His Father (*2 Thessalonians 1:9-10*). Yeshua ultimately desires for us to see the glory of God's name (*John 17:24*) and even in wrath the Lord's aim is to make known the wealth of his glory (*Romans 9:22-23*). We know according to the prophet Habakkuk that God's plan is to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory (*Habakkuk 2:14*). Even at the end of the bible, in the book of Revelation, we are told that the glory of God replaces the sun (*Revelation 21:23*), that His name and His glory provide us with a future expectation of His reshaping and restructuring the new creation into something that we can not even imagine. As can be seen in this brief summary on the name and the glory of God, David expects

the Lord to move in His power according to His name. This concept is very biblically based, God's name is the manifestation of His character, and the sum of His revealed attributes. So when David asks the Lord to save him by His name, the name of God is connected to the Power of God and in the way in which the Lord has revealed Himself according to the Torah, and throughout all of Scripture. It is obvious that David is taking a Torah centric position to his understanding of God's love, who He is, and His saving power to deliver even in the midst of impossible circumstances, just like David finds himself in running from Saul in the forest of Ziph.

David seeks the Lord to answer his prayer saying, **אֱלֹהִים שְׁמַע תְּפִלָּתִי הָאֲזִינָה לְאִמְרֵי-פִי: 54:2 Hear my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth. (NASB)** He asks the Lord to give an ear to his words which means to listen to the words that he is saying. David's case is based on the enemy who is persistent to surround and destroy him, **כִּי זָרִים | קָמוּ עָלַי וְעָרִיצִים בִּקְשׂוּ נַפְשִׁי לֹא שָׁמוּ אֱלֹהִים לְנַגְדָם סָלָה: 54:3 For strangers have risen against me And violent men have sought my life; They have not set God before them. Selah. (NASB)** Notice how the Scriptures say, those who surround David to take his life do not set the Lord God before them. What does it mean to set God before us? This is an interesting topic, and we can gain some insights from the Torah and Parashat Noach (*Bereshit / Genesis 6:9-11:32*).

The opening verses of Parashat Noach tell us that the Lord saw all of the wickedness of mankind on the face of the earth (**וַיִּרְא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בְּאָרְץ וְכָל-יֶצֶר מַחְשֹׁבֶת לִבּוֹ רָק רַע כָּל-הַיּוֹם: 1 וַיִּנְחַם יְהוָה כִּי-)** **(עָשָׂה אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּאָרְץ וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֵל-לִבּוֹ 6:9)**. The Lord said that the heart of man was consistently focused upon evil (*Bereshit / Genesis 6:9*). It grieved the Lord that He had made man. As a result, the Lord was going to bring a great flood to destroy all life having breath from the face of the earth. God instructs Noah to build an ark and then Noah, his family, two of every unclean animal, and 7 pairs of every clean animal enter into the ark. In *Bereshit / Genesis 9:11* the Lord says **וַהֲקִמְתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם** *"I establish my covenant with you,"* declaring that He will establish His covenant again with man. He places His bow as a reminder of this covenant to not destroy the earth by water (flood) again. The interesting topic about this week's portion is found in the opening words that describe Noah as a righteous man. The Scriptures describe Moshe as a righteous man. The question is, based upon the generation that he lived, how righteous would one have to be in order to excel beyond the generations of Noah? How righteous was Noah and are there different levels of righteousness?

Bereshit / Genesis 6:9

6:9 These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. (NASB)

ספר בראשית פרק 1

ט אלה תולדת נח נח איש צדיק תמים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו... אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלְּךְ-נֹחַ:

The question that presents itself with regard to the righteousness of Noah, *"Are there really degrees in truth and righteousness?"* If you were asked this question, how would you respond? Yes, No, Maybe? In Hebrew a *"righteous one"* is called a *"Tsadik"* (צדיק, singular, *"Tsadikim,"* צדיקים, plural). According to Jewish tradition, the Tsadik is a title given to person who is considered righteous, such people as Biblical figures and later the rabbis of blessed memory. The root of the word *"Tsadik,"* is צדק *tzedek*, which means *"justice"* or *"righteousness,"* and is also the root for *"tzedakah"* meaning *"charity,"* or literally *"righteousness."* The term Tsadik, *"righteous,"* and its associated meanings, are well developed in Rabbinic thought which may also be compared to the Talmudic concept of the *"khasid"* (*"pious one,"* from the root khesed חסד). The question is though whether the concept of different degrees of righteousness is really biblical? Well, interestingly enough, Yeshua had something to say concerning levels of righteousness according to *Matthew 5:18-20*.

Matthew 5:18-20

5:18 '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. 5:19 '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. 5:20 'For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. (NASB)

Yeshua commented to his disciples saying, “*unless your righteousness surpasses that of the pharisees.*” This statement is significant because, how can one’s righteousness surpass or exceed that of another? Can a person be two or three times more correct than a disagreeing party? Are there degrees in truth and righteousness? Well, according to the Scriptures it appears that not all righteous persons are equal. There does appear to be different individuals with differing levels of holiness and righteousness. Based upon the Torah portion, here in Parashat Noah, the text appears to call our attention to the righteousness of individuals in the narrative, especially in the cases of Noah and Abraham. We can see this if we compare the different ways in which the Torah describes both Noah and Abraham according to *Bereshit / Genesis 6:9 and 17:1*.

Bereshit / Genesis 6:9

6:9 *These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. (NASB)*

ספר בראשית פרק ו

ט אלה תולדת נח נח איש צדיק תמים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו... אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ-נֹחַ:

Bereshit / Genesis 17:1

17:1 *Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. (NASB)*

ספר בראשית פרק יז

א וַיְהִי אַבְרָם בֶּן-תְּשָׁעִים שָׁנָה וְתִשְׁעֵי שָׁנִים וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי-אֱלֹהֵי הַתְּהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי וְהָיָה תָמִים:

Based upon these Scriptures, the Torah states that Noah “*walked with God*” (אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ-נֹחַ) whereas for Abraham, we are told the Lord speaks to Abraham and says “*Walk before Me*” (הִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי). The difference here is that Noah walked with God, while Abraham walked before God. What is the difference between walking with God and walking Before God? The Torah also tells us the following in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 13:5*, | וְהַנְּבִיא הַהוּא אוֹ חֵלֶם הַחֲלוֹם הֵהוּא יִמָּת כִּי דָבַר-סָרָה עַל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם | 13:5 *‘But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the Lord your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you. (NASB)* In Deuteronomy, we find this concept of walking according to “*the way the Lord commanded,*” which is synonymous to walking after the Lord your God. So within these three scripture verses, there is “*walking with God,*” “*walking before God,*” and “*walking after God.*” How do all of these things fit together? The answer may be found in the Torah descriptions of righteousness. Thinking about righteousness, as you know, righteousness is not an instantaneous thing that occurs in our lives, righteousness and righteous living actually takes time to develop in our lives. For example, after Adam had sinned, we see the onset of a natural order of decay and death. There was not an instantaneous shift in the

world to death, it was more gradual and we can see this based upon the life spans of those recorded in the book of Genesis, where each subsequent person lived shorter and shorter lives. Similarly, the Lord did not seek to correct the world instantaneously, rather, mankind was given instructions to obey the word of the Lord. The significance of these things is in the walk of the righteous, it is a slow, gradual, and steady moral progression that occurs in our lives. For example, when we first come to faith in the Messiah, we did not instantaneously walk perfect before God and I do not think we will ever walk perfectly before the Lord in this life. However, we do strive to do so with each day we live here on earth, for the glory of God.

The rabbis of blessed memory (Chachameinu Zichronam Liv'racha, לברכה) also asked the same questions regarding Noah, righteousness, and the generation that he lived in according to Midrash Rabbah Bereshit, Parashat 30, Part 9 (מדרש רבה בראשית פרשה ל סימן ט).

Midrash Rabbah Bereshit, Parashat 30, Part 9

In his generations. Rabbi Judah and Rabbi Nehemiah differed. Rabbi Judah said, Only in his generations was he a righteous man (by compromise); had he flourished in the generation of Moshe or Samuel, he would not have been called righteous, in the street of the totally blind, the one-eyed man is called clear sighted, and the infant is called a scholar. It is as if a man who had a wine vault opened one barrel and found it vinegar; another found it vinegar; the third, however, he found turning sour. It is turning, people said to him. Is there any better here? He retorted. Similarly, In his generations he was a righteous man. Rabbi Nehemiah said, If he was righteous in his generation, how much more so had he lived in the age of Moshe. He might be compared to a tightly closed phial of perfume lying in a graveyard, which nevertheless gave forth a fragrant odor; how much more then if it were outside the graveyard.

מדרש רבה בראשית פרשה ל סימן ט

ט בדורותיו, רבי יהודה ורבי נחמיה, רבי יהודה אמר בדורותיו היה צדיק, הא אלו היה בדורו של משה או בדורו של שמואל לא היה צדיק, בשוק סמיא צווחין לעווירא סגי נהור, משל לאחד שהיה לו מרתף אחד של יין, פתח הבית אחת ומצאה של חומץ, שניה כן, שלישיית ומצאה קוסס, אמרין ליה קוסס הוא, אמר להון ואית הכא טב מינה א"ל לא, כך בדורותיו היה צדיק הא אלו היה בדורו של משה או בדורו של שמואל לא היה צדיק, רבי נחמיה אמר ומה אם בדורותיו היה צדיק, אלו היה בדורו של משה או בדורו של שמואל על אחת כמה וכמה, משל לצלוחית של אפרסמון מוקפת צמיד פתיל, ומונחת בין הקברות, והיה ריחה נודף, ואלו היה חוץ לקברות עאכ"ו, משל לבתולה שהיתה שרויה בשוק של זונות ולא יצא עליה שם רע, אלו היתה בשוקן של כשרות על אחת כמה וכמה, כך ומה אם בדורותיו היה צדיק אלו היה בדורו של משה או בדורו של שמואל על אחת כמה וכמה.

According to the midrash, rabbi Judah said that it was only in his generation that he (Noah) was considered a righteous man. Noah was a righteous man by compromise. What does it mean “by compromise?” He says that if he had lived in the time of Moshe, he would not have been called righteous. He makes a comparison to the street that contains men who are totally blind. A one eyed man is called clear sighted, and an infant a scholar. Another parable that is used is that of a wine vault, one barrel is vinegar, another is vinegar, the third is found turning sour. The idea is that in comparison to his generation, it did not take much to be considered a righteous man. Rabbi Nehemiah said on the other hand that he was in fact a righteous man in his generation. The comparison that is made is to a perfume bottle laying in the midst of a graveyard. Though there is death all around, within is a fragrant odor. The concept here is taken from the Torah regarding Noah who “walked with God” verses Abraham who “walked before God.” Was Noah only as good as the standards of his time? Does the standard that we live by become flexible depending upon the generation that we live in? Taking the example from Noah, his generation was very wicked, so much so the Lord destroyed all life that had breath from the face of the earth. Yeshua spoke of the last days before his return, *Matthew 24:37*

and *Luke 17:26*, that it would be as in the days of Noah. Destruction would come upon the people without notice. Could Yeshua also have been referring to the state of wickedness in these last days also? By simple observation, there are cultural indicators of an increase in wickedness, e.g. homosexuality, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, suicide, rape, pregnancy, robbery, and assault, even terrorism, and mass murder, rumors of war and wars, etc. Based upon these indicators, the standard of justice, holiness, and righteousness in our culture is waning. Are the rabbis saying that righteousness is relative to a persons cultural setting? Should our righteousness be judged based upon the state of the culture today as compared to 100, 200, or 300 years ago?

Noah, according to the Scriptures, was just and good according to the standards that were prevalent in his day. For this reason the Torah emphasizes that Noah was “*faultless in his generation.*” His level of righteousness was antithetical to the moral expectations of his generation. Abraham on the other hand sought to proclaim righteousness and the one true God to all the world. According to the Rabbis, in *Talmud Bavli Yoma 28b*, Abraham walked before God preparing the world to be ready for the greatest enlightenment of all, the giving of the Torah. As a result of this interpretation on Abraham’s life, the rabbis say that Abraham fulfilled the Torah in his proclaiming righteousness to the world. Abraham’s righteousness was the result of his love and faith in the Lord and His promises. This is exactly what the apostles taught in the Apostolic Writings. The Apostle Paul said the following concerning righteousness in *Romans 10:5-6*:

Romans 10:5-11

10:5 For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. 10:6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: ‘Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down), 10:7 or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).’ 10:8 But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10:10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 10:11 For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.’ (NASB)

Paul makes a clear distinction between the “*righteousness that is by the Law*” and the “*righteousness that is by faith.*” The difference between these two types of righteousness is found within this week’s Torah portion and the comparison between Noah and Abraham and the concept of having faith, and living in faithfulness. We have faith in the Lord, believing in the Messiah Yeshua for righteousness, and by our faith, we live faithful lives according to the righteousness that is described in the Torah. Faith always proceeds faithful living. In the Torah portion, we are not told that Noah was given a set of commands to obey. Therefore, when the Scriptures say “*Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God,*” Noah walked in righteousness and justice because he loved the Lord God Almighty and believed in Him. Similarly with Abraham, he was not given a command to proclaim righteousness to the nations; his proclamation of righteousness to the world was based upon his love and faith in the Lord in heaven. The apostle Paul agrees with this in *Romans 4:1-3* when he states his understanding of Abraham, that Abraham was not justified by works, he was declared righteous through faith. Paul said, “*What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*” (*Romans 4:1-3*) These men are our examples, to live our lives by faith, because we love the Lord and choose to walk in His ways. According to the Torah, God’s ways are peace, love, mercy, righteousness, justice, holiness, and innocence. We are to seek the righteousness of God and His Messiah Yeshua, we are also to have lives that produce these fruits of love, mercy, justice, holiness, and innocence. The level of righteousness according to the Torah is not supposed to change with regard to the extent of wickedness of a given generation. God’s righteousness and standard for living is eternal. With the help of Yeshua the Messiah and the Holy Spirit of God, we are given the power to walk in His ways, to abide in the

Messiah (in Christ), even in the midst of an evil generation.

In addition to this, with regard to walking with God, before Him, and after Him, Moshe walked with God, before God, and after God. He functioned as a prototypical Messiah, (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 18*); it was through him we received the Torah from Sinai. In the same way, Yeshua walked in all three and yet did not sin, he was perfect. We were given the Torah from Sinai by Moshe; God's Torah was written upon our hearts by the Messiah Yeshua (Jeremiah 31). The conclusion is that as our example, we are to follow in the footsteps of Yeshua, walking before God, with God, and following after God according to His commands. In doing these things, we will live lives that are pleasing to our Father in heaven.

David continues saying, הַגִּידָה אֱלֹהִים עֵזְרִי לִי אֲדֹנָי בְּסִמְכֵי נַפְשִׁי: 154:4 *Behold, God is my helper; The Lord is the sustainer of my soul. (NASB)* How does the Lord sustain the soul? Notice how David calls upon the Lord and then states, יָשׁוּב [יָשׁוּב] הָרַע לְשָׂרָרֵי בְּאַמְתָּהּ הַצְּמִיתָם: 154:5 *He will recompense the evil to my foes; Destroy them in Your faithfulness. (NASB)* He asks the Lord to repay his enemies according to their wickedness, and David asks the Lord to do these things based on His faithfulness. He does not say “Based upon my own faithfulness,” but rather, based on God's faithfulness. God's faithfulness is what brought the people of Israel into the Promised Land. Man always fails, the Lord always comes through on His promises.

In Hebrew, faith or faithfulness is expressed by the word “*Emunah*” (אמונה). Studying the word *Emunah* we learn that it is about holding steady, holding firm, or holding to what is true. We hold to the faithfulness of God because He is true, steady, and firm. The concept of “*faith*” (*Emunah*) has classically been held to be a spiritual, ethereal idea or proposition that one gives one's self to. If we take this approach to *Emunah*, we get only half of the picture since faith is more than a proposition or mental exercise, it is a commitment to a promise, like the patriarchs and prophets in the Tanach, we live according to God's commands, and trust in God's promises. Thus, biblical faith is coupled with being faithful. Take for example from the Torah, in *Bereshit / Genesis 15:6* says, “*Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*” (וְהֵאֱמַן בַּיהוָה וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ צְדָקָה:) This verse is very familiar and is the verse that the apostle Paul quotes in *Romans 4:3*. The word used in Parashat Lech Lecha is “*he'emin*” (הֵאֱמַן) which can be translated as “*believe, trust, or have faith.*” Derived from the word *he'emin* is the word *emunah*, meaning faithfulness and trust. The Hebrew Scriptures convey the idea of firmness, steadfastness, stability, steadiness, reliability, and support. One example may be taken from *Shemot / Exodus 17:12* which says the following:

Shemot / Exodus 17:11-12

17:11 So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. 17:12 But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set. (NASB)

א וְהָיָה כַּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מֹשֶׁה יָדוֹ וְגָבַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכַאֲשֶׁר יִגִּיחַ יָדוֹ וְגָבַר עַמְלֵק: יב וַיְדִי מֹשֶׁה כַּבְּדִים וַיִּקְחוּ-אֲבֹן וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ תַחְתָּיו וַיֵּשֶׁב עָלֶיהָ וַאֲהֲרֹן וְחֹר וְאֵתְמוּן וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת-יָדָיו תַּחְתָּי וַיִּהְיֶה יָדָיו אֶמּוּנָה עַד-בֹּא הַשָּׁמֶשׁ:

Note how the Scriptures say that Moshe's hands grew tired, they took a stone, put it under him and he sat on it, and Aaron and Hur held his hands up on each side of him so that his hand remained “*Emunah*” (אמונה) steady till sunset. Notice how the word *Emunah* is translated in *Shemot / Exodus 17:12*. This verse provides us with a picture of *Emunah*, of being steady, steadfast, firm, unmoving, upholding, etc. The children of Israel won the battle so long as Moshe held his hands steady, because his faith strengthened their faith. How important is a father or husbands faith in strengthening the faith of his family? *Emunah* implies perseverance and commitment because the Lord commands and promises we in turn are to trust and obey. The word *Emunah* is attributed to the Lord Himself. Or our faith begins by looking to the Lord God in heaven and His faithfulness, and the Messiah Yeshua whose faithfulness took him to the cross for our salvation.

We also learn from Parashat Ha'azinu, that *Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:4*. "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." Based on this Scripture, the Lord is as firm as a Rock. Note how the Septuagint translates Tzur (Rock) as Theos (God) in Parashat Ha'azinu. The rabbis who translated the Septuagint understood the Rock as a reference to the Lord God Almighty Himself. Like a rock, the Lord endures, stands firm, and can be trusted. *Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:9* states 7:9 "Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him." (NASB) The Lord demonstrates His emunah, He is the faithful God who keeps His promises and His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him. David assures us in *Tehillim / Psalms 145:13* that "The LORD is faithful to all His promises." The apostle John wrote in *Revelation 3:14* that "These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation." Who is the Amen, the faithful and true witness? Yeshua the Messiah! Indeed Yeshua is faithful, he is solid, unmoving, and this is illustrated in the word "Amen" which is derived from the word Emunah for faith and faithfulness. When we say Amen we are affirming and declaring what we are praying for. Note what the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians in *2 Corinthians 1:20* "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Messiah. And so through him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Messiah." (NASB) Paul understood the meaning of Amen, to stand firm, to believe in faith and then walk in that faith. *Habakkuk 2:4* declares, "the righteous will by faith (emunah)" The Lord is looking for people of Emunah. Note the following verses from Proverbs and Matthew.

Mishley / Proverbs 20:6

20:6 Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, But who can find a trustworthy man? (NASB, 1
 רב-אדם יקרא איש חסדו ואיש אמונים מי ימצא:

Matthew 7:20-24

7:20 'So then, you will know them by their fruits. 7:21 'Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter 7:22 'Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 7:23 'And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' 7:24 'Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. (NASB)

What exactly is Yeshua looking for? Will he find faith on the earth? He says plainly what he wants to find in *Matthew 7:24*, that hearing the word of God one puts the word of God into practice. Note how Yeshua says this type of man is as one who builds his house upon a Rock. The Rock metaphor is an obvious allusion to Parashat Ha'azinu and the Lord our Rock who is firm, stable, and faithful (Emunah). Yeshua is writing about how our faith is connected to faithfully living out God's truth, faithfully applying God's word to our lives, and faithfully believing in Yeshua the Messiah. Notice how Yeshua is not looking for people who lean upon themselves. This is not a matter of our own strengths. This is a matter of trusting in the Lord, in His strength, and our willingness to put His words into practice and keep putting them into practice even when difficult times come.

David concludes his Psalm saying, ח בנדבה אזבחה-לך אודה שמך יהוה פי-טוב: ט כי מפל-צרה הצילני, 54:6 Willingly I will sacrifice to You; I will give thanks to Your name, O Lord, for it is good. 54:7 For He has delivered me from all trouble, And my eye has looked with satisfaction upon my enemies. (NASB) David says that he will willingly give sacrifices to the Lord. What kind of sacrifices is David referring to? David attributes his victory over his enemies to the Lord God Almighty. He looks with satisfaction upon his enemies. Obviously, this must be a reference to his victory overcoming his enemies, where victory generally resulted in the death of an enemy. Is it OK to look with satisfaction over our ene-

mies and their destruction? Under what circumstances can we have this approach to our attitude towards the unrighteous who seek our destruction? Is David teaching us that it is OK to pray for the destruction of our enemies? Are you bothered by the prayer that calls for the destruction of our enemies? This sounds a lot like a “*modern moral standpoint*,” regarding the enemy. Let’s take an example from the Talmud regarding praying for the destruction of our enemies.

Talmud Bavli, Berachot 10a

There were certain hooligans who resided in the neighborhood of Rabbi Meir, and they caused him much misery and anguish. Once, Rabbi Meir prayed for mercy regarding them, so that they would die.² His wife Beruriah said to him, “What makes you think that such a prayer is permitted? Is it because the verse states³ ‘Let sinners [chataim] cease from the earth’? But is it written ‘chotim’—sinners? Rather it is written ‘chataim’—that which causes one to sin, namely the evil inclination. Furthermore, the end of the verse continues, ‘...and let the wicked be no more.’ Since the sins will cease, there will be no more wicked men!

The rabbi’s wife concluded, “*pray for them that they should repent, and there will be no more wicked people.*” Note that when we study Yeshua’s teachings from the gospels, we are told to pray for our enemies, not for their destruction. As we can see according to the Talmud, one should not pray for others to be punished, we are to pray for their Teshuvah (repentance), which is consistent with Yeshua’s teaching on praying for our enemies. The difficulty is, according to the psalm, David is doing the exact opposite. The point is that we are to pray for the cessation of sins rather than the punishment of the wicked. In addition to this, it is not wrong to pray for justice with regard to the dealings of the wicked with the righteous. Praying for justice places into God’s hands the work of justice rather than taking matters into our own hands. Based upon the psalms we have studied thus far, David realizes that the wicked fall into their own snares, they fall into the pit they dig for the righteous. Their evil works will lead to their destruction if they do not repent and turn from their evil deeds and turn to the God of Israel. The way in which David seeks for deliverance by the satisfaction of looking upon his enemies, is very likely a pray of repentance for these unrighteous men who pursue him night and day. In similar manner, we should find it pleasing to see our enemy who has repented and puts the Lord God Almighty and His Messiah Yeshua first in their lives. May our prayer always come to this kind of conclusion for the glory of God! Let’s Pray!

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for your mercies and the grace you show us each day. We know that the tongue is full of all kinds of evil, please have mercy on us for the words that we say that do not bring glory to Your name. Lord we know that our own righteousness is nothing but filthy rags and that we desire for Your righteousness, the righteousness that you credit to us because of our faith in the Messiah Yeshua. We ask Lord that you would increase our faith, and help us to bring glory to Your name! You have demonstrated the greatness of Your love for us in Your Son Yeshua the Messiah. Thank You Lord for sending Your son Yeshua that we may enter into the covenant of peace that You have promised to Your people. Help us to grow in our faith, to walk in the spirit, and apply these truths to our lives. We praise Your Holy Name and give You all of the honor, and the glory, and the praise forever and ever.

In Yeshua’s (Jesus’) Name we pray! Amen!

Be Blessed in Yeshua, Christ our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
“Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever

Notes