

פרשת

נח

Parashat Noach

*Bereshit / Genesis 6:9-11:32, Isaiah 66:1-24
Luke 1:5-80*

The Torah has a Transcendancy that goes Beyond Systematic Theology or Rigid Dogma

Paul teaches us that the Torah has a transcendancy that goes beyond systematic theology or rigid dogma. Paul's view of Torah is not unlike other Jewish thinkers in the first century. His way of thinking is very contrary to Marcion, who as we know became the leader of an influential movement that viewed Torah as the dark teachings of the *"Old Testament."* Marcion maintained that the legalism of the Hebrew Bible had been fulfilled and a new dispensation of grace had been inaugurated. (*Doesn't this sound a lot like Dispensationalism?*) In ancient Jewish thought, (i.e. Mishnah Pirkei Avot) the Torah was compared to light. Paul taught us that the Torah contains a mysterious transcendence that reaches beyond finite human comprehension that goes to the very essence of the divine nature of God and His will for mankind. Both Paul and Yeshua held the same view of the Torah as Jewish rabbis. It is through the lenses of Christian history that cause us to see the Torah in a negative light and draws questions, doubt, and prejudices towards the Torah. The questions we ask ourselves, *"was Yeshua (Jesus) faithful to Judaism in his interpretation of the Torah?"* and *"Did Paul change the meaning of the Torah in a new dispensation?"* The answers we give to these questions reveal a lot about our

understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures and the influences of the presuppositions we have been taught. The answers to these questions may speak volumes about our understanding of Judaism and about faith. Though Marcion was condemned as a heretic in 144 AD, his approach to Paul, the Torah, and the Jewish people has enticed many Christian thinkers who feel uncomfortable with the Jewish roots of Yeshua's early followers. I have mentioned in the past the importance of looking at the Jewishness of the Scriptures, and the knee jerk response is generally that *"we don't become Jews"* as if that was the meaning of *"the Jewishness of the Scriptures?"* This mind-set goes so far to say that if one chooses to following the Torah and obey God's Moedim, or even to say that one is interested in learning about the *"Jewishness of the Gospels,"* for the one who is non-Jewish, he is either trying to be Jewish or believing that we become Jews through the obedience of God's Word. The modern Christian view is Paul removed the Yoke of the Torah by preaching against the Law. Over and over again Paul's Words are quoted and miss-quoted through the Marcion-like distortions of the apostles message. In these cases, it is important to remember that the Lord God says *"follow My commands and My statutes"* (*Vayikra / Leviticus 26:3*) these are His commands that are given to His people. We are His people both Jew and Gentile. Obeying Torah in an of itself does not make a person Jewish, it reveals that a person is a child of God!

In the teachings of Yeshua, the good works of his followers were compared to light *"let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."* (*Matthew 5:16*) Yeshua never taught that grace had replaced the need for maasim tovim (good works as Paul wrote in *Ephesians 2:10*). He compared the disciple who put his teaching into practice to the source of light, and for Yeshua, light was the Torah put into action. This is what we read in Parashat Noach, where God describes Noach as a righteous man in the midst of a generation of wickedness. The opening passages to Parashat Noach say the following:

Bereshit / Genesis 6:9-17

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו אֵת־
הָאֱלֹהִים 6:9 *This is the line of Noah.—*

Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his age; Noah walked with God. וַיֵּלֶד נֹחַ שְׁלֹשָׁה בָנִים: 6:10 Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים. 6:11 The earth became corrupt before God; the earth was filled with lawlessness. וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וְהִנֵּה נִשְׁחָתָה כִּי-הִשְׁחִית כָּל-בְּשָׂר אֶת-וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְנֹחַ קֵץ כָּל-בְּשָׂר בָּא לִפְנֵי כִּי-מָלְאָה, (ס) 6:12 When God saw how corrupt the earth was, for all flesh had corrupted its ways on earth, וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְנֹחַ קֵץ כָּל-בְּשָׂר בָּא לִפְנֵי כִּי-מָלְאָה, 6:13 God said to Noah, “I have decided to put an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with lawlessness because of them: I am about to destroy them with the earth. עֲשֵׂה לְךָ תֵּבָה. עֲצִי-גֹפֶר קוֹנִים תַּעֲשֶׂה אֶת-הַתֵּבָה וְכִפַּרְתָּ אֹתָהּ מִבֵּית וּמִחוּץ בַּכָּפָר: וְזֶה אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתָהּ שְׁלֹשׁ מְאוֹת אַמָּה. 6:14 Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make it an ark with compartments, and cover it inside and out with pitch. וְזֶה אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתָהּ שְׁלֹשׁ מְאוֹת אַמָּה. אַרְבֵּי הַתֵּבָה חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה רְחֹבָהּ וּשְׁלֹשִׁים אַמָּה קוֹמָתָהּ: 6:15 This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. צִהַר וּתַעֲשֶׂה לַתֵּבָה וְאֶל-אַמָּה. תַּכְלִינָה מִלְמַעְלָה וּפְתַח הַתֵּבָה בְּצַדָּהּ תִּשְׂאֵם תַּחְתִּים שְׁנַיִם וְאַנְי הַנְּגִי מִבְּיַד אֶת-הַמְּבּוּל. מַיִם עַל-הָאָרֶץ לְשַׁחַת כָּל-בְּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ רוּחַ חַיִּים מִתַּחַת 6:17 “For My part, I am about to bring the Flood—waters upon the earth—to destroy all flesh under the sky in which there is breath of life; everything on earth shall perish.

The Torah portion opens speaking of the generations (תּוֹלְדוֹת) of No-

ach. Noah walked with God as the text states that He was a righteous (צַדִּיק) man and upright (תָּמִים) in his generation. The Scriptures state that Noah found grace in God's eyes. (ח וְגַם מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה:). Reading about the life of Noah, we can conclude that he was personally righteous, which was how he was found worthy to preserve mankind, but he did not teach others about God as Abraham did. This time of wickedness in human history, the Scriptures say that men had evil on their minds at all times (ה וַיִּרְא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בְּאָרְצוֹ) (וְכָל-יִצְרָר מִחֻשְׁבַּת לְבוֹ רַק רַע כָּל-הַיּוֹם: and so they would not listen even if one were to preach.

The extent of unrighteousness on the earth is described by Rashi in the following way.

Rashi on Genesis 6:12 Part 1

“כִּי הִשְׁחִית כָּל בֶּשֶׂר FOR ALL FLESH HAD CORRUPTED — even cattle, beasts and fowl did not consort with their own species (Genesis Rabbah 28:8).”

Rashi's interpretation was that all flesh being corrupted (הִשְׁחִית) meant that it wasn't just men who gave up their desire for natural relationships, but also the beasts of the field and fowl of the air gave up their desire for natural relations and looked to creatures from other species for the sole purpose of gratifying their lusts. This is the description of the world that Paul gives us in his letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:1-8

2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2:2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 2:3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 2:5 even when we were dead in our transgressions,

made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 2:6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 2:7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; (NASB)

Paul describes one being dead in sin as walking in the course of this world, and according to the prince of the power of the air (Satan) which is the spirit that is working in the sons of disobedience. The world lives in the lust of the flesh indulging in the desires of the flesh and of the mind. These things cause one to be a child of wrath being ripe for judgment. However, the Lord God Almighty is merciful, He sent his Son Yeshua the Messiah to raise us up in Him and empowering us to overcome this world and its ways. Because this was on the thoughts of men all day long, and all their days, the Lord said that He will put an end to all flesh.

The rabbis continue to say according to the commentary Or HaChamin the following:

Or HaChaim on Genesis 6:13 Part 1

ויאמר אלוקים קץ כל בשר, G'd said: "The end of all flesh, etc." If we accept the sages' interpretation that the "violence" mentioned here comprised such sins as bloodshed, incest, and idolatry, we can understand the harshness of the retribution. If however, the word חמס refers to robbery with violence (compare Rashi based on Sanhedrin 108), why would the victims of the robbery suffer the same fate as the perpetrators of the crime?

The Sages say that it wasn't just the sin of lust and immorality, but of robbery, violence, murder, bloodshed, idolatry, and revenge that led to the need to destroy the earth and all life upon the planet. The illustration that is given is why those who were robbed also suffer the

same fate as the thief? Why do the innocent suffer with the wicked? The point was men are not innocent, but that generation had evil upon their hearts all the days of their lives. There was never a reprieve from wickedness.

The commentary Chizkuni states the following concerning Noach.

Chizkuni, Genesis 6:9 Part 1

אלה תולדות נח, "These are the descendants of Noach;" according to B'reshit Rabbah 30,3, whenever a paragraph commences with the word: אלה, this is equivalent to dissociating what occurs from then on with what had been discussed previously; Noach, was not a continuation of the history of mankind up until now, but represents a 180 degree turn from that history. Whereas the generations prior to him progressed toward their destruction, he represented a new beginning for mankind. He founded a new type of human being.

Here the rabbis look at the way in which the Hebrew text is written saying that the word אלה differentiates between Noach and the generations of the earth prior to him, that the mention of Noach here and his generations was to indicate that He was taking a 180 degree turn from history, he lived his life for the Lord, and he chooses to walk in God's ways for the glory of God. This seems to be a description of repentance. This was a turning point in history, mankind previously was progressing towards destruction, and Noach was found to be righteous in his ways and was chosen as the person through whom the world would start over. The rabbis attribute the demise of his ancestors as basically due to their wickedness, even though a few individuals in each generation had not been wicked. Daat Zkenim goes on to say the following:

Daat Zkenim on Genesis 6:9 Part 1

אלה תולדת נח נח, "these are the generations of Noach, Noach;" why has the name of Noach been repeated

here twice? He was exemplary vis a vis spiritual beings in the heavenly spheres as well as vis a vis his contemporaries on earth. (B'reshit Rabbah, 30,4) The meaning is to tell us that whenever we encounter such a construction of a person's name appearing twice in a row, it is to remind us that the person concerned was a righteous person. An example for this is found in Genesis 2,11, where the name Avraham appears twice in a row. This interpretation has been challenged in the Jerusalem Talmud where it is pointed out that we find the same repetition of a man's name applied to Avraham's father Terach, a renowned idolater and seller of heathen images (Genesis 11,27) The answer provided by B'reshit Rabbah is that Terach, though an idolater had become a penitent. It is this very fact that convinced our sages that he had become a penitent before his death. This also explains why Avraham was told by G-d in Genesis 15,15, that he would join his fathers in the hereafter.

Daat Zkenim speaks of Noach being a righteous man in both the spirit and the flesh. The interpretation on the repetition of his name in *Bereshit / Genesis 6:9* (אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו) (אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלְּקֵנּוּ) is an indicator that he was a righteous man. An example of Abraham who lived by faith is given. In *Midrash Rabbah Vayikra / Leviticus 9:9*, we are told that the people of Israel were with one accord when the Torah (God's commands) was given to them at the mountain of Sinai. When the community of faith is with one accord, it acts like a magnet to attract the divine presence. This motif seems to be part of the background imagery that is employed in the book of Acts to describe the giving of the Holy Spirit of God to His people. (*Note also the direct correlation to Chag Shavuot/Pentacoſt/Feaſt of weeks and the giving of Torah at Sinai, and the empowering of the Spirit of God, the new man, and obeying God's Word.*) A similar motif seems to be at work here in Parashat Noach, the righteous deeds of Noach attracted the Lord God Almighty to him and His declaring that Noach was righteous in his generation. The common theme is

in the child of God who obeys God's commands. This is connected to God's redemption, of God's salvation of Israel from bondage and sin (Egypt), the Lord's great provision in the wilderness, His promise of His presence in their midst, and having redeemed them as a holy and priestly nation, giving them His commands to live by. In the wilderness wanderings the people were overwhelmed with God's glory when He revealed the Torah to Moshe (*Shemot / Exodus 19-20*). In the rabbinic literature (see *Talmud Bavli Shabbat 88a*) the power of the Word of God was compared to a hammer that strikes an anvil, when sparks fly out by the force of the blow, the Word of God goes forth as fiery sparks in every direction symbolizing that each divine utterance (command) was heard in every language. The word of God in His Torah flowed out giving revelation to His people. God's will and ways had been revealed to His people for how to live their lives. This is the background information to what Yeshua was saying in *John 12* when he states that he knows there is life in the commandments

John 12:43-50

12:43 for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God. 12:44 And Jesus cried out and said, 'He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. 12:45 'He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. 12:46 'I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. 12:47 'If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 12:48 'He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. 12:49 'For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. 12:50 'I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.' (NASB)

12:43 ἠγάπησαν γὰρ τὴν δόξαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων μᾶλλον

ἤπερ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ 12:44 Ἰησοῦς δὲ ἔκραξεν καὶ εἶπεν ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ πιστεύει εἰς ἐμὲ ἀλλὰ εἰς τὸν πέμψαντά με 12:45 καὶ ὁ θεωρῶν ἐμὲ θεωρεῖ τὸν πέμψαντά με 12:46 ἐγὼ φῶς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐλήλυθα ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ μὴ μείνη 12:47 καὶ ἐάν τις μου ἀκούσῃ τῶν ῥημάτων καὶ μὴ φυλάξῃ ἐγὼ οὐ κρίνω αὐτόν οὐ γὰρ ἦλθον ἵνα κρίνω τὸν κόσμον ἀλλ' ἵνα σώσω τὸν κόσμον 12:48 ὁ ἀθετῶν ἐμὲ καὶ μὴ λαμβάνων τὰ ῥήματά μου ἔχει τὸν κρίνοντα αὐτόν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἐλάλησα ἐκεῖνος κρινεῖ αὐτόν ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ 12:49 ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐξ ἐμαυτοῦ οὐκ ἐλάλησα ἀλλ' ὁ πέμψας με πατὴρ αὐτός μοι ἐντολὴν δέδωκεν τί εἶπω καὶ τί λαλήσω 12:50 **καὶ οἶδα ὅτι ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιος** ἐστὶν ἃ οὖν ἐγὼ λαλῶ καθὼς εἶρηκέν μοι ὁ πατὴρ οὕτως λαλῶ

כי אהבו כבוד אנשים יותר מכבוד האלהים: ויקרא ישוע ויאמר המאמין בי לא בי הוא מאמין כי אם בשלח אני והראה אתי את אשר שלחני הוא ראה: אתי: באתי לאור אל העולם למען כל אשר יאמין בי לא ישב והשמע את דברי ולא ישמרם אני לא אשפט אתו בחשך: כי לא באתי לשפט את העולם כי אם להושיע את העולם: ואיש אשר יבזני ולא יקח אמרי יש אחד אשר ידין אתו כי אני הדבר אשר דברתי הוא ידין אתו ביום האחרון: לא מלבי דברתי כי אם אבי השלח אתי הוא צוני את אשר ואני ידעתי כי מצותו חיי עולם אמר ואת אשר אדבר: לכן כל אשר אדבר כאשר אמר אלי אבי כן אני מדבר:

Yeshua was speaking of Knowing God our Father in heaven by knowing Him (the Messiah) and walking in His commands. Just as Yeshua compared the disciples' Maasim Tovim (Good Works) to the light that shines forth, the ancient rabbis also spoke about good deeds that led to helping others. These actions of mercy result from obedience to the teachings of the Torah. This is also only possible by God dwelling in our midst as Lord of our lives. This is how Yeshua could make the statement that he did saying, *12:50 'I know that His commandment*

is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me. (NASB) Yeshua taught God's Torah as a way of life. He recognized that God's commandments are life everlasting (יְאֵן יִדְעָתִי כִּי מִצְוֹתַי חַיֵּי עוֹלָם, καὶ οἶδα ὅτι ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιος). The reason being, one does not have fellowship with the Messiah or with our Father in heaven if he or she is living in sin (see *1 John 3*). In addition, the only way one can live an overcoming life is if the Lord God Almighty is dwelling in our midst meaning that we are already saved. The commandment is a follow-on, it is something that we do as a result of what we have become because of our faith in our Father in heaven and His Son Yeshua the Messiah.

What this week's Torah portion (Parashat Noach) and all of these things are revealing to us is the teaching of the Torah must be studied and interpreted in a way that captures the force of God's will for our lives in daily living. This is why the Torah has a transcendency that goes beyond systematic theology or rigid dogma. The power of God flows from the Spirit of God which enables a person to live for God in the same way that Moshe as a prophet experienced the Holy Spirit in his life empowering him for effective service. Yeshua emphasized good works in his teaching, and Paul held the Torah (God's Word) in high esteem. The piety of Yeshua's disciples was not done in order to earn grace. The commandments in the Torah were not a means for one to earn grace. The Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system were also not a means for one to earn the grace (mercy) of God. Salvation is not by works. Notice how all of these things, the commands, the priesthood, the sacrificial system were meant for a covenant people. These things were given to a people who believed by faith in the living God and wanted a relationship with Him asking Him to dwell in their midst (asking Him to come into their lives). The Torah command is a way of life for those who are already God's people by faith. When the message of Yeshua is put into action, the works of his disciples goes forth as a shining light.

How can one have faith in the goodness of God without corresponding actions?

The Torah is light, and all who following Yeshua must not only hear

the word but also live a life of obedience. These are the wise men who build upon a firm foundation. Theologies such as Hyper-grace movement undermine the teachings of Yeshua and the gospel message of repentance and the life of salvation. Turning towards God's ways (i.e. Teshuva / Repentance), this is the life of those who are faithful to God and His Messiah, and who have God Himself dwelling in their midst! The followers of Yeshua and Paul place the light upon a lamp when they put the teachings of the Torah into practice. When hearing the words of the Torah (the Word of God), they do them!

The question remains for each one of us, *"Am I a child of God?"* and *"Do I put God's Word into action in my life?"* This is a Salvation issue. Do you have the Salvation of God, and is His Salvation manifest in your life? *"Do you have a desire to obey God's Instructions?"*