

# PARASHAH FOUR

Genesis 5:1–6:8; Isaiah 30:8–15; Matthew 23:1–39

notes by Tim Hegg

Our *parashah* is the second *toledot* (list of generations), a literary device around which the book of *B'reishit* (Genesis) is formed. It is the beginning of the generation of mankind, the fulfilling of the command to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:22, 28). It is likewise the beginning of the unfolding promise given to Chavah (Gen 3;15) that a savior would come who would deal with the treachery of the deceiver, administering a crushing blow to his head, the result of which would be a wound to His heel. In the wake of the rebellion against God demonstrated by Cain, killing his brother who bore the image of God, there is now a ray of hope. The previous *parashah* ends with the notice that “people began to call upon the Name of Adonai (יהוה).” The rebellion of mankind is tempered by their desire to return to their Creator. Deep within the soul of man is the created need to know his Creator.

It is interesting to note that God had revealed Himself as יהוה long before He demonstrated the meaning of His Name (cf. Ex 3:14f; 6:2-3). Yet the fact that “they began to call upon יהוה” shows that the idea of monotheism was the first concept of the divine in mankind. Nevertheless, the covenant relationship of God with His chosen people awaits the further revelation of Himself to Abraham and his descendants. Interestingly, the use of the Name as combined within the names of people does not occur until the time of Moses. Yocheved (יֹחֶכְדִּי), the mother of Moses, is the first recorded name incorporated a theophoric element (יה, *Yah*), emphasizing that the covenant of God with mankind awaited the formation of Israel, the nation of God’s choosing.

*B'reishit* chapter 5 is a listing of genealogies. It reads like dust to those who have no concern for the unfolding story of God’s redemptive plan. But to those who long to know the method of God’s salvation, this chapter holds some key information. First is the manner in which these words help explain the enigma of man being created in “God’s image,” in “His likeness.” We are reminded of this in the opening verses, and then comes the commentary: “Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.” The image of God in which Adam and Chavah were created is passed on to their progeny. This means that the image was not eradicated by the disobedience of Adam and Chavah. God, in His mercy, allows mankind to retain within his own being the very knowledge of their Creator. But secondly, we reason correctly if we understand that, like the image which was passed on to Adam’s offspring, so the heart of rebellion was likewise transmitted. The death which had been given as the penalty for disobedience would be passed on to all of mankind.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned (Rom 5:12).

And so, in the genealogy before us, the repeated characteristic is that each successive generation lives, has children, and dies. Death passes to all of Adam’s offspring. Mankind, who received from God the breath of life, is now characterized by death, and the need for the promised redeemer is therefore made all the more clear. Thirdly, it says that God “blessed them” (v. 2), based upon the previous command to “be fruitful and multiple.” From the very beginning, God’s commandments are blessings, not a divine test to prove mankind’s inability. Mankind, now fallen under the weight of a rebellious heart, is blessed to have children. The divine blessing of children becomes the means of bringing the promise: the “seed of the woman” would come through successive generations experiencing the blessing of “be fruitful and multiply.”

The genealogies of chapter five are interrupted with a change of words for Enoch. Instead of the notice that Enoch lived for a certain number of years, we have “Enoch walked with God for 300 years.” To “walk with God” is reminiscent of Eden where God was walking in the cool of the day. In the notice that Enoch walked with God, one is given the picture of his return to Eden. The

breach between God and man could be healed. Man could fellowship with his Creator. “To walk with God” no doubt portrays a life lived within the scope of His will, enjoying true friendship with Him. It will be used of Noach in Gen 6:9, and (with slight variation) of the ideal priest in Mal 2:6. Moreover, in place of the common “and he died,” the notice regarding Enoch is “and he was not because God took him.” Based upon the story of Eliyahu (2Ki 2), it became the standard belief that Enoch never died but was translated directly into the presence of the Almighty. The apocalyptic book of Enoch was based upon this idea. The writer to the Messianic Jews (Epistle of Hebrews) confirms the fact that Enoch did not die as men normally do:

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 (Heb 11:5).

In the genealogy of Gen 5, in the seventh generation of mankind, there is a word of hope: mankind can escape the penalty of death decreed upon Adam and his progeny. Walking with God is the key. Of course, in this very early text we are not given the information as to *how* Enoch learned to walk with God. We can only presume that God, in His grace, revealed Himself to Enoch, and taught him the way of faith, for walking with God is the exercise of faith: “for we walk by faith, not by sight” (2Cor 5:7).

The first eight verses of chapter six have been notoriously difficult for biblical students throughout the ages. Most importantly, it should be pointed out that the word “God” in the phrase “sons of God” may just as accurately be read as “gods.” The word אֱלֹהִים *Elohim* is not always a designation for the One true God of Israel. The same word can refer to the “gods” of the nations. Moreover, the use of אֵל or אֱלֹהִים as an adjective of greatness or simply as a superlative is also attested (see *KB*, אֱלֹהִים). Note the NIV of Ps 68:15, “The mountains of Bashan are majestic mountains,” yet the Hebrew has הַר אֱלֹהִים, *har elohim*. The fact that אֱלֹהִים may be understood in various ways gives rise to various interpretations. We may summarize them as follows:

| Items            | Theory 1  | Theory 2   | Theory 3   |
|------------------|---|--|--|
| Sons of God      | Fallen angels   | Godly line of Seth   | Dynastic rulers  |
| Daughters of men | Mortals   | Line of Cain   | Commoners  |
| Sin              | Union between supernatural and mortal   | Marriage of holy to unholy   | Polygamy   |
| Supporters       | Philo, Josephus, Justin, Ambrose, Apocrypha (Enoch), Delitzsch, Driver, Cassuto, H. Morris, von Rad, Speiser  | Leupold, Stigers   | Aramaic targums, Rashi, Ramban, Jacob  |
| Evidence         | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The term “sons of God” refers only to angels (Job 1; 38:7; Ps 29:1; 89:7)</li> <li>2. Jude 6-7 perhaps refers to this incident</li> <li>3. It is the clear reading of the text</li> <li>4. The Lxx in Job 1 reads “angels of God.”</li> <li>5. Messiah says angels do not marry; doesn’t say “cannot.”</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The concept of a holy line is seemingly established.</li> <li>2. Hebrew indicates continuity from the previous chapter.</li> <li>3. The sin here becomes a common theme throughout the Torah.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Magistrates or judges are referred to as gods (Ex 21:6; 22:8, 9, 28; Ps 82:1, 6)</li> <li>2. Kings sometimes are called sons of deities (cf. Ps 2).</li> </ol> |

| Items    | Theory 1  | Theory 2   | Theory 3  |
|----------|---|--|---|
| Problems | 1. Lends mythological tone.<br>2. Angels were not previously mentioned.<br>3. Why is man punished by the Flood for the wickedness of angels?<br>4. Apostolic Scriptures do not seem to support this view. | 1. The term “sons of God” never means this elsewhere.<br>2. No evidence that the lines are kept totally separate. The theory does not account for Adam and Chavah’s other children.<br>3. God has not yet begun working through one line.<br>4. The term for “men” is general. It would need further clarification to be understood otherwise.<br>5. In Noah’s time he alone was holy. | 1. Kingship is not expressed in any way.<br>2. Scripture never considers kings to be sons of deity (except for Ps 2:6-7; 2Sam 7).<br>3. Needs the connection of v. 4, but the “mighty men” are the Nephilim, not the children of the union. |

(chart taken from John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament* (Zondervan, 1978), p. 35)

There is not sufficient data to be dogmatic on one interpretation or another. However, it would seem to me that in the overall scope of biblical theology, the idea that fallen angels cohabiting with mortal women is not an option. The following narrative is the generation of mankind, and his continued rebellion against God in spite of the fact that the image of God in which he was created continues to call him to submit to the rule of his Creator. Further, there is every possibility that the text of Gen 6:1-8 is not chronological. The cohabitation portrayed here may have occurred earlier, and simply given notice at this point in the story in order to setup the Flood narrative. It would seem that the primary thrust of the passage is that a select group of people, perhaps secluded and therefore inbred, had degenerated both physically (through inbreeding) and spiritually (in rebellion against God). Their desire to cohabit outside of their own families resulted in a rapid degeneration of the inhabited world, both physically and spiritually. The immediate mention of the Nephilim (cf. Num 13:33; are these connected with the Rephaim?, cf. Deut 2:11; 3:11) might indicate the result of inbreeding, if the Nephilim were giants.

But the primary purpose of this notice regarding the cohabitation of the *benei elohim* with the *banot haadam* is to show that mankind’s rebellion against God had not changed. God’s assessment of the situation is recorded in Gen 6:3,

Then Adonai said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”

The depravity of mankind was increasing at an alarming rate, primarily because the long life of each generation gave the population the ability to multiply. God therefore significantly shortens the average life span to 120 years. Yet even this does not change the heart of mankind and his inherited rebellion.

Then Adonai 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 (6:5).

The problem was with mankind’s basic nature: וְכֹל יֵצֵר מְחֻשְׁבֵּת לְבוֹ רַק רָע כָּל הַיּוֹם Note that the Hebrew word translated “intent” is יֵצֵר, *yetzer*, from which the rabbis taught the *yetzer ra*, the “evil inclination.” They also taught that mankind was created with a *yetzer tov*, “the good inclination,” and that man was basically “free” within himself to abide by one or the other. The Scriptures, however,

give plenty of evidence for the *yetzer ra* but no evidence for the *yetzer tov* in unregenerate man. Until the Ruach HaKodesh sovereignly moves upon a person, and brings that person to genuine faith in the Messiah, the *yetzer ra* is the governing principle in life's decisions and patterns. This is the message of the current text: man's intentions are only evil continually. His basic disposition has no ability to actually strive for righteousness. He is a slave to the master within him, the *yetzer ra*. Thus Jeremiah writes: "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9). In the Apostolic writings, Paul's use of the "flesh" or the "old man" answers to the meaning of *yetzer ra*. It is not until a person is "recreated after the image of the One who created him" (Col 3:10) that a *yetzer tov* is once again extant within him. Paul uses the concept of the "new man" to signify the presence of the *yetzer tov*. What is more, in Messiah, the *yetzer ra* has been crucified—it no longer is the governing factor in the life of the believer.

Thus, apart from a redemptive work in the heart of sinful man, the evil inclination reigns supreme. There is no "pulling himself up by his bootstraps." His spiritual demise is certain, and apart from God breaking in by His sovereign and loving grace, mankind is without hope. Thus Paul speaks of the Gentiles as "having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). Indeed, in our *parashah*, the picture is clear: mankind, left to himself, had degenerated to such a state that there was no hope of reformation. The only possible solution was to destroy mankind and start over. Yet the promise to Chavah, that it would be from her offspring that a savior for mankind would arise, meant that mankind could not be entirely destroyed. The "seed of the woman" would need to remain. And thus our *parashah* ends with a note of grace: "But Noah found favor (grace) in the eyes of Adonai." It is not as though Noah himself was somehow exempt from the evil inclination that dominated mankind. Rather, the difference is entirely cast upon God's sovereign desire to remain faithful to His promise. Noah was chosen by God to maintain the "seed of the woman" in the unfolding plan of God's redemption.

The *haftarah* for this *parashah* emphasizes the same theme, only exemplified in the nation of Israel during the time of Moses. Israel had refused to listen to the gracious message delivered to them by God's prophets. They were rebellious, "false sons" who persisted in the rebellion of mankind. Like broken pottery, they failed to perform according to their created purpose as God's chosen people, i.e., to display the glory of their Master. They would therefore receive the chastening of the Lord, being exiled from His presence through the destruction of the coming enemy, and their removal from the Land to the land of their enemies. But, like the Torah portion which ends with a note of grace, the same ray of hope is given (v. 15): "In repentance and rest (נַחַת, the same root for the name Noah) you will be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength. But you were not willing...." The only hope for Israel, like that of all mankind, was that of repentance in the face of God's grace. A willingness to trust in God (the opposite of rebellion) and to rest in quietness (the characteristic of faith), in the salvation offered by the Holy One of Israel, was the only hope for wayward Israel. But the final line shows Israel's inability (and the same is true for all mankind): "But you were not willing." The ability for man to muster faith in God on his own strength is lacking. The only hope is for a new heart, the work of God in sinful man.

This is the connection to our Apostolic portion. In the time of the Master, the Torah was faithfully read in the synagogue. Israel was in possession of the divine word of God in which is found the way of life. Yet wrapped around the inspired word were the many traditions of the Sages. So encumbered was the Torah that it often was difficult to see, or it was even set aside by the traditions (cf. Mk 7:6-8). Referring to the general portion of the *haftarah* (Is 29:13), Yeshua quotes the prophet:

THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN. Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.

So, in Matt 23, Yeshua rebukes the leaders for putting the teachings of men above the divine in-

structions of God: (v. 23–24)

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the Torah: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Note carefully that Yeshua is not against the traditions in principle. The tithing of substances not specifically defined for tithing in the Torah is still a proper thing if the heart is right. But to neglect the Torah's teaching that should govern the motivations of the heart is the issue at hand. The question of *halachah*, how the commandments are to be lived out in the many circumstances of life, is to be settled by the over arching rule of love for God coupled with love for one's neighbor. This requires a heart governed first and foremost by faithfulness to God, something impossible unless the heart of stone (*yetzer ra*) is replaced with a heart of flesh upon which is written the Torah of God (*yetzer tov*). Such a reality is the result of God's sovereign work of grace, applying the salvation won by Messiah's death and resurrection, and applied by the inner working of the Ruach HaKodesh.

We may apply this principle to our own lives, family, and community. Our own sanctification is dependent upon the work of the Ruach within us. Only as we are lead by the Ruach do we show our true sonship (Rom 8:14). The same is true for our families. As parents who long to see the work of God in the lives of our children, we rightly raise them with the disciplines of righteousness. We apply the "rod" of discipline as the Scriptures teach, and we lovingly lead our children to see the difference between right and wrong, between rebellion and obedience. But it is not our discipline alone that changes their heart. This must be done by the Holy One. We therefore give ourselves to fervent prayer that God will do that inward work in them which we are unable to do. Unless God changes the heart, we have no hope that our children will walk in His ways. The same principle obtains in our community. It is right and Godly that we establish the rule of Torah as the principle upon which we will govern ourselves, for those who love God, love His commandments. But the rule of Torah is not the means of changing one's heart. Unless the Ruach of God is active in each of us, and we are submitting to His faithful urgings, our community will not succeed. It is the spiritual dynamic of the word of God written upon our hearts that will cause us to apply the governing principle of love in our community *halachah*, putting others as more important than ourselves, and seeking to apply the life of righteousness to the building up of each other in love.

Here we find a foretaste of a return to Eden. When each one is being lead the Ruach, applying the word of God in our individual lives and families, do we find a community in which the care of each other remains a top priority—living out the instructions of our Master, so that "every joint supplies" until we all attain to the stature of a mature person, that is, the image of Yeshua in us all (cf. Eph 4:11–12). This, as we know, is a commodity not often found in our world. And we also know how precious it is to live within a community where the presence of God is seen in the dwelling reality of Yeshua. "Messiah in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27).