

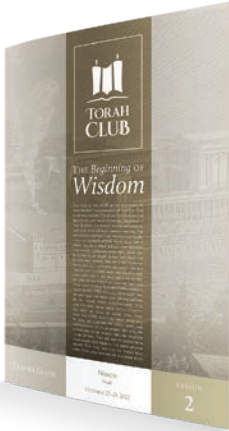


## THE *Beginning* OF *Wisdom*

THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM, AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY ONE IS UNDERSTANDING. FOR BY ME YOUR DAYS WILL BE MULTIPLIED, AND YEARS OF LIFE WILL BE ADDED TO YOU. BLESSED IS A PERSON WHO FINDS WISDOM, AND ONE WHO OBTAINS UNDERSTANDING. FOR HER PROFIT IS BETTER THAN THE PROFIT OF SILVER, AND HER PRODUCE BETTER THAN GOLD. SHE IS MORE PRECIOUS THAN JEWELS, AND NOTHING YOU DESIRE COMPARES WITH HER. LONG LIFE IS IN HER RIGHT HAND; IN HER LEFT HAND ARE RICHES AND HONOR. HER WAYS ARE PLEASANT WAYS, AND ALL HER PATHS ARE PEACE. SHE IS A TREE OF LIFE TO THOSE WHO TAKE HOLD OF HER, AND HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO HOLD ON TO HER. MY SON, DO NOT FORGET MY TEACHING, BUT HAVE YOUR HEART COMPLY WITH MY COMMANDMENTS; TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND DO NOT LEAN ON YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING. IN ALL YOUR WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM, AND HE WILL MAKE YOUR PATHS STRAIGHT. DO NOT BE WISE IN YOUR OWN EYES; FEAR THE LORD AND TURN AWAY FROM EVIL. IT WILL BE HEALING TO YOUR BODY AND REFRESHMENT TO YOUR BONES. MY SON, PAY ATTENTION TO MY WORDS; INCLINE YOUR EAR TO MY SAYINGS. THEY ARE NOT TO ESCAPE FROM YOUR SIGHT; KEEP THEM IN THE MIDST OF YOUR HEART. FOR THEY ARE LIFE TO THOSE WHO FIND THEM, AND HEALING TO ALL THEIR BODY.

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# TORAH CLUB



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**LECH LECHA**  
OCTOBER 30–NOVEMBER 5

**VAYERA**  
NOVEMBER 6–12

**CHAYEI SARAH**  
NOVEMBER 13–19

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# LESSON 2: NOACH

GENESIS 6:9–11:32

## LESSON OVERVIEW

THE DESCENDANTS of the murderer, Cain, filled the earth with wickedness and folly. God saw that the earth had become sick with violence, robbery, hatred, and corruption. Only one man, Noah, walked with God. Noah wasn't perfect, but he was righteous and blameless in his generation. God regretted creating humanity and resolved to wipe the slate clean in a world-ending flood. He entrusted Noah with the task of building an ark to preserve himself, his family, and representatives from each species of animals. When the flood came, only the inhabitants of the ark survived. Our survival likewise depends on our walk with God, for another judgment is coming.

## THIS WEEK ON PORTION CONNECTIONS

JUDAISM TEACHES that every human being has two inclinations: a good inclination and an evil inclination. Where does this idea come from? Is there biblical evidence? This week's *Portion Connections* looks at Genesis 6:5–6. We introduce the two inclinations and offer some tips for the battle against the self.

## FOCUS SECTIONS

FOCUS SECTIONS combine mechanical, text derived questions ensuring familiarity with the lesson content and more in-depth group discussion topics.

1	The Wicked and the Righteous. . . . .	5	5	Noah and the Animals . . . . .	14
2	Blamelessness . . . . .	8	6	House of the Wise Man . . . . .	16
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## A PRAYER BEFORE STUDY

A PRAYER you can use before you start studying or, if you prefer, pray in your own words.

Blessed is He who chose His people Israel from the peoples and gave them His Torah to be a light to the nations. Our Father, our King, on account of our Master Yeshua in whom we have placed our trust and through whom you taught Israel the way of life, open our eyes to behold the wonderful things in your Torah and show us the way of eternal life, for these are the words that testify about your holy Son. Please sweeten the words of your Torah in our mouths and in the mouths of your entire people, the house of Israel. Let it be that we, our descendants, the descendants of our descendants, and the descendants of your people, the house of Israel—all of us—would be those who know your name and study your Torah for its own sake. Blessed are you, O LORD, Giver of the Torah.



# NOACH

## GENERATION OF CAIN

These are the records of the generations of Noah. (Genesis 6:9)

Folly is contagious. The end of the world started with the folly bound up inside one man's heart. Cain harbored hatred in his heart, and that hatred tainted his relationship with God. It poisoned his attempt to worship God and made his sacrifices unacceptable before the LORD. However, Cain's brother, Abel, was righteous and blameless in his time. He walked humbly with God: "By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous" (Hebrews 11:4). "The LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard" (Genesis 4:4–5). Jealousy over God's preference for Abel's sacrifice stirred up Cain's hatred. He slew his brother. "For what reason did he slay him? Because [Cain's] deeds were evil" (1 John 3:12).

The blood of righteous Abel cried out from the ground in protest, but God dealt mercifully with Cain rather than exacting the measure of strict justice. Instead of demanding Cain's life in payment for his brother's, the LORD spared the murderer. He allowed him to live as a wanderer on the earth.

Cain spread his folly throughout the earth, infecting his children and everyone else with the same wickedness. Ultimately, the whole world fell sick with the insanity of violence, robbery, hatred, and corruption. Human beings soaked the earth in blood:

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. (Genesis 6:5–6)

God regretted creating human beings, and He regretted allowing Cain's wickedness to flourish. He resolved to wipe the slate clean through a mass extinction of all terrestrial life on earth: "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them" (Genesis 6:7). That's what He would have done if not for one man who caught his attention: "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:8).

Solomon's proverbs allude to the contrast between Cain and Noah:

The sacrifice of the wicked (Cain) is an abomination to the LORD,  
 But the prayer of the upright (Noah) is His delight.  
 The way of the wicked (Cain) is an abomination to the LORD,  
 But He loves one (Noah) who pursues righteousness.  
 Grievous punishment is for him (Cain) who forsakes the way;  
 He who hates reproof will die. (Proverbs 15:8–10)

The apocryphal book *Wisdom of Solomon* links the sin of Cain to the flood in the days of Noah. It explains that the earth underwent the punishment of the flood because of Cain's folly:

When an unrighteous man departed from [wisdom] in his anger, he perished because in rage he killed his brother. When the earth was flooded because of him, wisdom again saved it, steering the righteous man by a paltry piece of wood. (*Wisdom of Solomon* 10:3–4)

## THE WICKED AND THE RIGHTEOUS

Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time. (Genesis 6:9)



The Torah says that Noah was “blameless in his time.” Those were difficult times to remain blameless. In Noah’s day, humanity was broken. As mentioned above, the human species had gone insane with murder, violence, corruption, deceit, and immorality. Imagine a criminal at large who has committed murder and acts of violence. He’s a man given to fits of violent rage. He’s known to be guilty of robbery, theft, rape, and even cruelty to animals. We would want the police to arrest this person. I would want such a person either put in prison or put to death—not just because he deserves the punishment, but because he’s a danger to the world. Later in the Torah portion, God makes just such a rule: “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man” (Genesis 9:6).

If we look at humanity as a whole, the history of the species tells a story exactly as I have just described it. Consider our history of war, conquest, abuse, misuse, corruption, and self-destruction. We are a violent, impulsive, and self-destructive species of criminals. An extraterrestrial alien studying human beings would be forced to conclude that the whole human race is insane. In Noah’s day, the insanity had reached the point where the criminal needed to be arrested and put to death.

The Bible refers to the type of people populating the planet in Noah’s day as “the wicked.” The wicked are people with severe moral and ethical deficits. The term “the wicked” appears hundreds of times in the Bible, primarily in the books of Job, Psalms, and Proverbs. It appears in both the

singular form (referring to a wicked person) and the plural form (referring to wicked people). In the Bible, the wicked are not your everyday ordinary sinners. They are the type of people who sin flagrantly without thought for God or others. They are the type of people who lie in wait to attack the innocent, spill innocent blood, dig pits for traps, defraud and abuse, lie and deceive, accept bribes, perpetrate injustices, pursue the afflicted, tread upon the poor, and scoff at godliness. They are likened to unreasoning beasts, but their violence and cruelty exceed that of animals. What makes the wicked so very wicked? King David explains, “The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek [God]. All his thoughts are, “There is no God” (Psalm 10:3–4). He applies the same sentiments to describe the foolish who says in his heart, “There is no God.” The wicked are wicked because they have no fear of God:

The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; there is no one who does good. (Psalm 14:1)

Standing opposite “the wicked” are “the righteous.” The term “the righteous” appears more than one hundred times in the Bible, primarily in the books of Job, Psalms, and Proverbs. It appears in both the singular (a righteous person) and the plural (righteous people). The word “righteousness” refers to godly and upright conduct, moral character, and integrity. In a legal context, it refers to the administration of fair justice. If a court of law declares someone “righteous,” it means the judges have found the accused “not guilty.” Simply put, the righteous are people who do the right thing.

In the days of Noah, God looked down from heaven and surveyed humanity. His eyes searched the earth for a righteous person, but He saw only the foolish and the wicked:

The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. (Psalm 14:2–3)

God regretted making human beings at all. Their self-destructive folly grieved His heart and drove His presence away from the world. Rather than bearing His image in the world, they marred His image and defaced His likeness.

## STUDY QUESTIONS | FOCUS SECTION 1

1. Why was it particularly difficult for Noah to be blameless in his generation?

*Humanity was especially wicked at that time.*

2. What does the Bible usually mean by the term “wicked”?

*People who sin flagrantly with no regard for God or others.*

3. What does the Bible usually mean by the term “righteous”?

*People of godly and upright conduct, moral character, and integrity.*

4. Why are wicked people wicked?

*They have no fear of God.*

5. What did humanity do to the image of God in Noah’s time?

*Marred and defaced it.*

GROUP DISCUSSION: Do you consider yourself righteous or wicked?

*Discussion will vary. Theologically speaking, all human beings are wicked because we have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. Disciples of Yeshua, however, stand among the righteous. We fall short, but we rely upon the forgiveness of sins obtained through the grace of God in Messiah.*

## NOAH WALKED WITH GOD

Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. (Genesis 6:9)

But then He saw Noah.

The Torah describes Noah as a righteous man. It describes him as a blameless man. It describes him as someone who walked with God. These three descriptions are closely related. Let’s put it this way: The Torah considers Noah a righteous man because he was blameless in his time, and he was blameless in his time because he walked with God. Life continues today here on planet earth thanks to the merit of one man who walked with God.

What does it mean to walk with God? In last week’s Torah portion, we learned that before their sin, Adam and Eve walked with God in Eden. He walked with them during the cool morning hours of the day. We also

met Noah’s great-grandfather Enoch, of whom the Torah said, “Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him” (Genesis 5:24). And in next week’s Torah portion, the LORD appears to Abraham and says to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless.”

FOCUS  
SECTION

**2**

**BLAMELESSNESS**

Blameless? Was Noah really blameless? How is a person supposed to go about being blameless?

The Hebrew word translated as “blameless” (*tamim*) is the same word we use to describe an animal fit for sacrifice as unblemished. It doesn’t mean “sinless.” As the apostles tell us, all have sinned and fallen short, and if anyone says he is without sin, the truth is not in him. Instead, we could translate *tamim* as “wholeness.” Noah was a whole man. Nothing was missing from his integrity, moral character, or spiritual being. Nothing was false in him. To be whole, in this sense, means you are fulfilling your soul’s mission. It means Noah was living up to his godly potential. He wasn’t perfect. He was as human as you or I, but he was doing his job as a person. He was fulfilling his mission of representing the LORD within the created order. Being made in the image of God, that’s what we are supposed to be doing.

Isn’t that what we all innately long for? It’s the answer to that nagging inner feeling that something is amiss. It’s why we are always looking for wholeness in other people and always being disappointed in relationship after relationship. The wholeness we desire needs to come from within, not from without. Every human being instinctively feels that he or she should be better. Somehow, we know we should be better people. Maybe it’s the spirit within us that desires to become a person consistent with the blueprint of what God designed us to be.

At the same time, we long to be in relationship with people who are whole. I’m thinking of people who are natural and at ease in their skin because they have nothing to hide and no ego to protect. A rare person like that seems unconcerned with the self because he or she is so full of God’s presence. In most of us, too much of the “self” obstructs the image of God we are meant to reflect. We feel blemished and incomplete when we think of ourselves outside of God, forget about our connection to God, and conduct ourselves according to the concerns of the ego. The selfish concerns of the ego sweep us along with the flood of madness called humanity. It doesn’t need to be that way. We can learn to walk with God.



## STUDY QUESTIONS | FOCUS SECTION 2

1. What Hebrew word is translated as “blameless” in this verse?

*Tamim.*

2. How else could we translate this word?

*“Whole.”*

3. What does this word mean in the context of animal sacrifices?

*Unblemished, fit for sacrifice.*

4. What does it mean in reference to Noah?

*He was fulfilling his mission, representing the LORD.*

5. How does the ego make it difficult to walk with God?

*Too much “self” obstructs the image of God we are meant to reflect.*

GROUP DISCUSSION: Do you know a “whole” person? How does it feel to be around him or her?

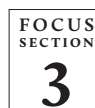
*Discussion will vary.*

## WALKING WITH GOD

The biblical idiom of “walking” refers to one’s behavior and deeds. The path upon which one walks refers to the course of one’s conduct in life. King Solomon said, “I have directed you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in upright paths. When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; and if you run, you will not stumble” (Proverbs 4:11–12).

The common Jewish term for religious law, *halachah*, literally means “a walk” and figuratively refers to how one walks out God’s commandments. Moses enjoins us “to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments” (Deuteronomy 30:16).

Based on that verse, you might assume that to walk with God simply means to keep His commandments, statutes, and judgments. It certainly does entail that. But that’s not all of it. It’s possible to be religious and far from God. The sages distinguished between walking in the ways of God



and keeping the commandments. The sages explain that to walk in God's ways means to imitate Him in the practice of godliness.

The rabbis give us some examples. When Adam and Eve realized they were naked after eating from the fruit of the tree of knowledge, they felt ashamed. They tried unsuccessfully to cover themselves. What did God do? He made garments of skin to clothe them. Just as God clothed Adam and Eve so they would not be naked, we should be concerned for those who need basic human necessities. We should clothe the naked. That's an example of walking in the ways of God. The Talmud offers several more examples. Just as God visited Abraham when he was convalescing (Genesis 18), we should also visit the sick to encourage them. Just as God fed the children of Israel in the wilderness, we should feed the hungry. Just as God attended to the body of Moses and buried him, we should also attend to the dead. Walking in God's ways means following God's example. If God is merciful, we should be merciful. If God is just, we should be fair and just. If God is compassionate, we should be compassionate. The imitation of the deity encompasses the commandments of the Torah and transcends them. It goes beyond the letter of the law or any rote observance and reaches the spirit of the Law. Someone who is walking with God is more concerned with the intention behind the commandments, which is to bring godliness into this world. That's how the sages understood the concept of walking in the ways of God, and that's how our Master Yeshua lived His life.

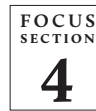
### STUDY QUESTIONS ■ FOCUS SECTION 3

1. In the Bible, to what does the word "walking" idiomatically refer?  
*One's behavior and deeds.*
2. What does it mean to walk in God's ways?  
*To imitate God in the practice of godliness.*
3. What lesson can we learn from God's gift of garments to Adam and Eve?  
*We also should be concerned for those in need of basic human necessities.*

GROUP DISCUSSION: What do all the examples of God's acts of kindness in this section have in common?

*Discussion will vary. They were all kindnesses that the recipients could not repay.*

## THE FEAR OF GOD, THE LOVE OF GOD, AND CLEAVING TO GOD



The Torah pairs walking in God's ways with three obligations: to fear God, love God, and cleave to God.

- ☞ To walk in His ways and to fear Him. (Deuteronomy 8:6)
- ☞ To fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deuteronomy 10:12)
- ☞ To love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and cleave to Him. (Deuteronomy 11:22)

From this, we learn that to walk in God's ways—to walk with God—involves the love of God, the fear of God, and clinging to God.

To love God with all one's heart, soul, and strength is the greatest of the commandments, the one on which all the other commandments are hanging. But what does it mean to love God? It means to serve Him not out of obligation but out of desire. To love God is to reflect back to Him His love for us, to desire to know Him more and more, and to draw ever closer to Him in thought, speech, and deed, with our minds, with our lives, and with our resources.

To fear God is to know that He exists, that He is watching and ever-present, that He sees even our innermost thoughts, and that He punishes sin and rewards righteousness. One who fears God keeps God in mind constantly, never imagining that God is not present with him.

To cleave to God means to cling to His presence. This is accomplished through cleaving to the godly and clinging to the righteous. For example, in this Torah portion, the three sons of Noah are saved from God's wrath, not on the merit of their own virtue but because they cling to godly Noah; as Solomon says, "The descendants of the righteous will be delivered" (Proverbs 11:21).

For disciples of Yeshua, to cleave to God means to cleave to our Master Yeshua through whom God has been revealed to us. We glue ourselves to Him by making Him the most important thing in our lives. He is the only thing that matters and the center of our being. Since He is in the Father, and the Father in Him, we cleave to God when we cleave to Yeshua.

## STUDY QUESTIONS | FOCUS SECTION 4

1. What does it mean to love God?

*To serve Him out of desire, not obligation.*

2. What does it mean to fear God?

*To know that He punishes sin and rewards righteousness.*

3. What does it mean to cleave to God?

*To cling to the godly and the righteous.*

4. How do we cleave to God as disciples of Yeshua?

*By making Yeshua the most important thing in our lives.*

GROUP DISCUSSION: The Talmud poses a famous riddle: How can one cleave to God if He is a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24)? How would you answer this riddle?

*Discussion will vary. The Talmud concludes that one should imitate God's attributes, i.e., perform acts of kindness (cf. b.Sotah 14a).*

## NOAH FEARS THE LORD

The average person in Noah's day had no fear of God. If the average person even believed in the existence of the one true God, he did not expect God to act or intervene in the world. He certainly did not believe God might hold him accountable for his behavior. A wicked person rarely anticipates divine consequences for his actions. "He says to himself, 'God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it.' ... He has said to himself, 'You will not require it'" (Psalm 10:11–13).

Noah was just the opposite. The book of Hebrews says, "By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark" (Hebrews 11:7). A more literal translation would read, "In *fear* he prepared an ark." Noah feared God. He believed God exists and that He punishes sin, and he believed that punishment was coming. Under that healthy fear of God, Noah prepared an ark "for the salvation of his household ... and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Hebrews 11:7).

The Apostle Peter used this story to underscore his conviction that God will ultimately punish wickedness and reward righteousness. Peter

said that just as God “did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly,” He will do so again in the future. He will rescue the godly from trial, but He will keep the wicked “under punishment for the day of judgment” (2 Peter 2:9):

Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.  
(Psalm 32:6)

## PREACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Then God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.” (Genesis 6:13)

By his testimony of building the ark, Noah “condemned the world” (Hebrews 11:7). The apostles taught that Noah labored as a “preacher of repentance” (2 Peter 2:5) who tried to persuade his generation to turn from their wickedness. Simon Peter said, “The patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark” (1 Peter 3:20). The Jewish commentator Rashi explains that Noah took over a century to build the ark to give people plenty of time to repent:

The reason God told Noah to build the ark was so that the people of the generation of the flood should see him laboring on it for 120 years, and they would ask him, “What is this you are doing?” And he would say to them, “In the future, the Holy One, blessed is He, is bringing a flood to the world.” All of this was so that they would repent. (Rashi)

Noah offered God’s wisdom to the world, but the world refused to listen. Wisdom says, “I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; and you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof” (Proverbs 1:24–25). Noah offered the world the knowledge of God, but the wicked “hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD” (Proverbs 1:29). “Fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7).

Simon Peter’s disciple Clement adds some thoughts to the discussion. He says, “Noah preached repentance, and as many as listened to him were saved.” How many listened? Clement probably had in mind the seven people who got into the boat with Noah. And the animals. Clement continues, “Noah, being found faithful, preached regeneration to the world through his ministry; and the LORD saved by him the animals which, with one accord, entered into the ark” (1 Clement 7).



The people of the world ignored Noah. They were too busy with everyday life to pay attention or heed his message. “They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:38–39). In that hour when “dread comes like a storm ... calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come ... Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me” (Proverbs 1:27–28).

FOCUS  
SECTION

## 5

## NOAH AND THE ANIMALS

God appointed human beings as stewards over the lower creatures. He said, “Rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28). He gave humankind the authority to name the animals, “and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name” (Genesis 2:19). In the Bible, naming someone implies taking authority over that person. Likewise, the privilege of naming the animals implied Adam’s authority over them.

The story of Noah’s ark shows us God’s intention behind granting that authority to human beings. He charged us with authority over nature to preserve it and protect it. Ever since human beings designed the first Clovis-point spearheads, our technological advances and reckless disregard for God’s creatures have abused that authority. We are responsible for the extinction of numerous lesser species that God left in our charge. Modern habitat destruction through human development, deforestation, and environmental pollution have dramatically accelerated the losses. The book of Revelation warns that in the final judgment, God will “destroy those who destroy the earth” (Revelation 11:18).

Noah took authority over the lower creatures to preserve life. He gathered seven pairs of every clean species and one pair of all other species into the ark. The animals heeded Noah and came to his summons. It’s almost as if Noah spoke their language.

Jewish tradition says that Solomon could speak the languages of birds and animals. Solomon’s great wisdom included knowledge of the animals and the natural world. After telling us that Solomon’s wisdom exceeded that of all others and that Solomon composed 3,000 proverbs, the Bible says, “He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish. Men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon” (1 Kings 4:33–34).

Solomon learned wisdom from studying the natural world. His proverbs frequently refer to flora and fauna. From the ant, Solomon learned to be industrious and store for the future. From the rock badgers, he learned to build defensible houses on solid foundations. The locusts taught him the power of community solidarity. The lizard taught him that lowliness could grant access to places of power and influence (Proverbs 30:24–28). Likewise, Solomon’s proverbs speak of birds, dogs, donkeys, bears, eagles, goats, horses, leaches, lions, ravens, roosters, serpents, and swine, not to mention trees and plants and the heavenly bodies:

He spoke a parable about every sort of tree, from the hyssop to the cedar; and in like manner also about beasts, about all sorts of living creatures, whether upon the earth, or in the seas, or in the air; for he was not unacquainted with any of their natures, nor omitted inquiries about them, but described them all like a philosopher, and demonstrated his exquisite knowledge of their various characteristics.  
(Josephus, *Antiquities* 8:44)

Jewish tradition embellished Solomon’s wisdom about the natural world to suggest that the king not only spoke about plants and animals but also spoke their language. What language does nature speak? According to the Bible, all creation speaks the language of the praise of God. Everything that exists reveals his glory. The trees of the forest clap their hands and sing for joy before the LORD. The grass of the field lifts its voice. The wilderness shouts for joy; the seas roar, the field exults, the heavens are glad, and the earth rejoices. God’s wisdom sustains “all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth” (Genesis 6:17). “How many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; the earth is full of Your possessions” (Psalm 104:24).

Like King Solomon, we can find wisdom in the natural world around us. Close connection with the natural world should draw us into communion with the Creator who made all things, sustains all things, and reveals Himself through all things.

In Noah’s day, robbery, violence, and bloodshed filled the earth, but the animals in the ark dwelt peaceably under his authority. This alludes to the future when, under the authority of King Messiah (the one who will be like Solomon), the wolf will dwell with the lamb; the leopard will lie down beside the young goat and the calf beside the lion, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. “They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

## STUDY QUESTIONS | FOCUS SECTION 5

1. What responsibility did God give humans concerning other living creatures?

*We are to steward them.*

2. What is the biblical implication of giving someone a name?

*It implies having authority over that person.*

3. What fantastical ability does Jewish tradition ascribe to Solomon?

*He could speak the language of animals.*

4. What language does nature speak?

*The praise of God.*

5. According to the book of Revelation, what will God do to those who destroy the earth (i.e., the environment)?

*He will destroy them.*

GROUP DISCUSSION: Setting aside the politicization of environmental issues, what should our posture be toward preserving God's world and His creatures? How can we be more like Noah?

*Discussion will vary.*

### FOCUS SECTION

## 6

## HOUSE OF THE WISE MAN

As King Solomon considered the wisdom of the animal kingdom, he took note of the rock badgers (also known as hyraxes). The rotund rodents are called *shephanim* in Hebrew. They are ubiquitous in the land of Israel even today. Solomon noted that “the *shephanim* are not mighty people, yet they make their houses in the rocks” (Proverbs 30:26). They are not warriors but prefer defensible points of elevation for their homes. One typically sees rock badgers sunning themselves on craggy heights or even congregating on the tops of towers.

Perhaps Yeshua had this proverb of Solomon in mind when He advised His disciples to build their houses on the rock and not on the sand. A disciple who listens to His words but does not implement His instruction or apply

His teaching is like a foolish man who builds his house on the sand. When the rains fall, the winds blow, and the waters rise, his house is swept away in the flood. The wise man hears His words and does them. Such a man is like a builder who built his house on the rock. Although the rains fell, the winds blew, and the waters rose, his house stood fast. He does not perish in the flood. King Solomon says, “The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand” (Proverbs 12:7).

## STUDY QUESTIONS | FOCUS SECTION 6

1. What are *shephanim*?

*Rock badgers.*

2. What wisdom did King Solomon ascribe to *shephanim*?

*They build their homes in rocky, defensible locations.*

3. Which of Yeshua’s sayings may reference Solomon’s consideration of the *shephanim*?

*The wise man built his house on the rock.*

4. What does it mean to build one’s house on the rock?

*To hear Yeshua’s words and do them.*

GROUP DISCUSSION: What does it mean that the house of the wicked will be swept away?

*Discussion will vary. It means that the wicked will suffer consequences for wickedness in the form of punishment, either in this life or the final judgment.*

## HUMANISTS, NATURALISTS, AND MONKEYS

So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. (Genesis 11:8)

The flood waters swept folly from the earth, but it quickly returned after the waters receded. As the children of Noah proliferated, they said, “Let us make for ourselves a name” (Genesis 11:4). Like modern man building the modern world, they built a tower reaching into the sky. The Talmud relates that some of those building the tower intended to take up residence

in heaven (b.*Sanhedrin* 109a). They believed that by exalting themselves to that high place, men could become like the gods. They did not believe in the LORD; they believed that human beings were destined to become their own gods. Others building the tower at Babel wanted to reach heaven to wage war on God and dethrone Him. They hated God and desired to see Him vanquished. They saw no need for God or any place for Him in the natural order.

The Talmud suggests that in addition to confusing human languages and dispersing humanity, God made some of them into apes and monkeys, and that's where primates come from. Of course, that's not true, but the monkey element creates irony for the modern reader. More than fifteen hundred years after the rabbis in Babylon composed the Talmud, humanists and naturalists appeared, proclaiming that mankind evolved from monkeys. The Talmud says the opposite: monkeys evolved from naturalists and humanists.

FOCUS  
SECTION  
**7**

## TRUE GODLINESS

We are living in the days of Noah. The days of the coming of the Son of Man will be like the days of Noah. If so, we should ask ourselves, “Am I part of the insane human race (folly), or am I like Noah (wisdom), who walked with God?” As we learned above, to walk with God involves constantly exercising these three things: the love of God, the fear of God, and cleaving to God.

The eighteenth-century German pietist, Gerhard Tersteegan, wanted to understand better what it means to walk with God. In his discourse, “True Godliness,” Tersteegan attempts to define true godliness by eliminating things that it cannot be. He determines that it cannot be “anything which the ungodly and the hypocrite can have in common.” Therefore, it does not consist of refraining from vices, coarse language, or social taboos. It is not attained through affecting a particular disposition or attending to outward ceremonies, religious disciplines, rituals, and functions. Nor can it consist of anything that some godly men have possessed but others have not, such as the ability to prophesy, perform miracles, or shine light into divine mysteries. Nor can it consist of things that all the godly possess but not at all times, such as spiritual consolations, inner promptings, moments of spiritual bliss, rapture in prayer, divine communication, ecstatic moments of enthusiasm, or spiritual inspiration and excitement. Having thus eliminated all aspects of religious duty and experience, he asks, “Wherein does true godliness consist?” He goes on to suggest that true godliness consists of being aware that you are standing in the presence of God. He describes an inward knowledge and vision of God:



That the whole heart is, as it were, blissfully taken captive, and entirely made willing to detach and turn away, by thorough self-denial, all its desire, pleasure, joy, and delight, and its whole affection from itself, all that is not God, and to direct and fix it all upon this alone all-worthy object, to love him solely, and to cleave unto him all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and to love nothing outside of him, which cannot be truly loved in him. The ungodly person is one who is detached from God and cleaves to himself and the creature; a godly man is one who is detached from himself and the creature, and adheres to God with all affection. His whole heart says to all that is not God, “I am not for you, and you are not for me. You are not the object of my desire, I can do without you all; God alone is all sufficient. He is my treasure. He is my all. He is the center of my affections. In him alone I have enough.” (Tersteegan, *True Godliness*)

Tersteegan’s words sound lovely. But how does one cleave continually to God in such radical abandon? He continues:

[The truly godly person] embraces this lovely being with all the powers of his love, and seeks in him alone pleasure, joy, consolation, and delight. He cleaves unto him in his inmost soul. He immerses himself in him, until at length, (after every intervention and partition of sin and self-love is cleared away, by the exercise of great fidelity and patient endurance, and through the powerful operation of the grace of God,) he becomes entirely one with God, or one spirit with him (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:17).

This, taken together, is otherwise called in scripture, “Walking before God, or in his presence,” and is in reality nothing else than true godliness, the true service of God, or real religion, in which Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the saints and prophets of the Old Testament, as well as Jesus Christ, our Savior and Forerunner, together with the apostles, primitive Christians, and all his true followers, in every age, have served God. (Tersteegan, *True Godliness*)

According to Tersteegan, true godliness consists of “walking with God” or being “in His presence.” It’s not about any particular religious behavior, habit of study, observance of laws, social deportment, disposition, or specific acts of merit and charity. Instead, all those things are the fruit of the essential thing, which is to constantly cleave to the presence of God, keeping Him ever fixed before us, in every circumstance, in every moment, continually

shedding the self in the divine presence of the Most High. This is what it means to walk with God.

## STUDY QUESTIONS | FOCUS SECTION 7

1. The exercise of what three things constitutes walking with God?

*The love of God, the fear of God, and cleaving to God.*

2. According to Tersteegen, in what does true godliness consist?

*Being aware that one is standing in the presence of God.*

3. What role do religious behavior, study, observance, and action have in cultivating true godliness?

*They are the fruit of the essential thing.*

GROUP DISCUSSION: Analyze your own life, actions, and priorities. Is there anything to which you need to say, “I am not for you, and you are not for me”? What do you need to cut out of your life to make room for “walking with God”?

*Discussion will vary.*

## BABY STEPS

This is our purpose in life. It was our Master’s mission, and it’s the mission He has entrusted to us. There is a flood coming. Not a flood of water, but a flood just the same. God is looking for people who walk with Him as Noah did.

This is the reason you are here. God created you to walk with Him. When God created the world, He concealed His presence. That’s why we call this the world of concealment. But He did not leave the world utterly devoid of revelation. He created man to bear His image, to represent Him within the world. Now that’s our job.

We don’t have to be part of the insanity. We can step outside of time and the illusory world of self and impermanence and cleave to the infinite through our Master Yeshua by practicing the presence of God. Like anything else you want to accomplish in life, it just needs to become a habit. Toward that end, we will continue to study through the Torah until the end of Deuteronomy. But don’t feel as if you can’t get started right away.

The concept is really simple. Use your imagination and remember that God is always present. He is always near; He is always with you; He is always loving you; He is always drawing you closer; He is always whispering to your soul—even now, at this very moment, as you read these words. If you can picture that, believe that, know that, and maybe even feel it, you're already walking with God. Now stay on the path:

He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD  
require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly  
with your God? (Micah 6:8)



## KEY WORDS AND TERMS



### VOCABULARY

<b>halachah</b>	A walk; refers to how one should walk out God's commandments; Jewish religious law.
<b>shephanim</b>	Rock badgers; hyraxes.
<b>tamim</b>	Blameless; whole (Hebrew).
<b>torah</b>	Teaching; instruction; the five books of Moses.
<b>Yeshua</b>	Jesus.



### PEOPLE AND PLACES

<b>Josephus</b>	(37–100 CE) Yosef ben Matityahu; first-century Jewish Roman historian who recorded Jewish history with a special emphasis on the First Jewish Revolt (66–70 CE).
<b>Rashi</b>	(1040–1105 CE) Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki was a medieval rabbi who wrote influential commentaries on the Bible and Talmud.



### PRIMARY SOURCES

<b>Talmud</b>	Foundational collection of Jewish law arranged in sixty-three tractates. The Talmud contains two elements: the Mishnah and Gemara (commentary on the Mishnah). The Talmud was compiled in the early sixth century from long-remembered oral tradition.
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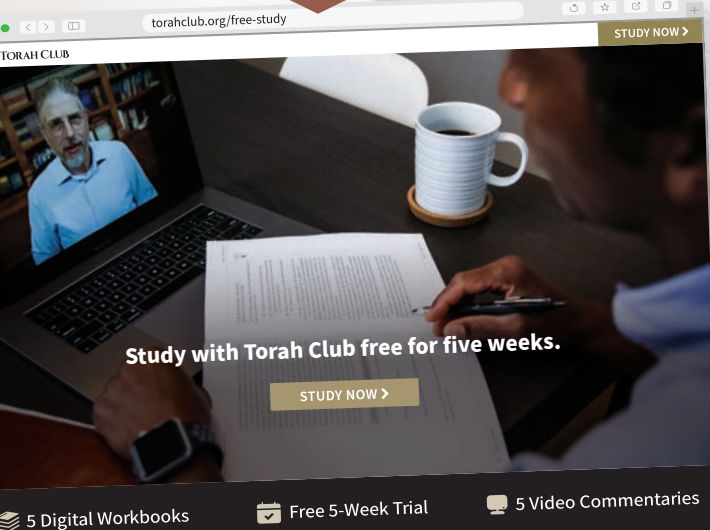
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