

Torah Portion: Noah (Genesis 6:10-11:32)

[The focus of this Torah portion series is family structure and function as revealed in Scripture. I.e., headship, patriarchy, marriage, etc, graduating to understanding community and Israel as a whole. If you have not read other portions up to this point, you may want to as parts build on previous lessons in Torah.]

In our last Torah Portion, we saw God give commands to Adam that he was responsible to keep and teach to his woman. With the simple beginning that Noah was 'a righteous man, blameless in his generations; Noah walked with God,' we see several parallels with Adam. Adam was created righteous, perfect in his generations and he walked with God.

Like Adam, Noah is given very specific instructions. He is told to build an ark and is clearly instructed in how to do it and with what materials. The point, repeated in the next portion, Lech Lecha, and many more afterward, is that God works within His established authority structure. It is with very rare exception that God deals directly with a woman. Over and over, throughout Scripture, we see God speaking to a man or to men in general and expects the hearer(s) to then perform what Adam did not: instruct and lead his woman/women.

We also see, evidenced several times in this portion, that the man is to function as a priest or intercessor for his family. As their head, the man is their covering.

Gen. 6:18 But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

7:1 Then the Lord said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you *alone* I have seen *to be* righteous before Me in this time.

7:7 Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood.

7:13 On the very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,

Unlike Adam, Scripture clearly states that Noah was fully obedient,

Gen. 6:22 Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

A major point that we should consider is the relationship between the sins of the father and the blessings or protections over the family. While I certainly believe that blessings or curses affect the whole family, it is important to note that the guilt is incurred and borne primarily by the males. Over and over in Scripture we see that the actions of the father, whether sinful or righteous, affect the sons to the third or fourth generation. Many times, much more. In our present case, the obedience of Noah

directly affected the rest of the family and all mankind, but later in this portion we'll see the sin of Ham affecting Canaan for many generations. (As a side note, consider, if the incurred guilt is primarily borne by the males, then it is incumbent upon a wise woman to choose very carefully the man to whom she will belong. Covenanting with and becoming one flesh with an unrighteous or unwise man is an exceedingly unwise thing to do.)

Adam was our first example, the sin of one man brought death to all of his progeny. Noah's actions saved the lives of his family. Abraham's obedience brought life, blessings and redemption for his family. The actions of Reuben, Levi and Simeon removed the headship from them while later the heads of the Levite tribe restored their role by strapping on swords and standing with the Father, their authority, instead of their brothers. Headship and its adherence to righteousness is *extremely* important, not just to this generation but to many, many future generations. Men, you bear a heavy responsibility!

Ex. 32:25 Now when Moses saw that the people were out of control—for Aaron had let them get out of control to be a derision among their enemies— 26 then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, “Whoever is for the LORD, *come* to me!” And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him. 27 He said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Every man *of you* put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.’” 28 So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day. 29 Then Moses said, “Dedicate yourselves today to the LORD—for every man has been against his son and against his brother—in order that He may bestow a blessing upon you today.”

Over and over, throughout Scripture, the actions of the head, whether for good or evil, directly affect the whole family, but are particularly borne by the sons. In the same vein, it is also clearly taught that a man is not bound by inherited curses. A man has the authority to change the direction of his family through confession, repentance and obedience to the ways of the Lord. Consider these examples,

Lev. 26:40 ‘If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me— 41 I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies—or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, 42 then **I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham** as well, and I will remember the land. 43 For the land will be abandoned by them, and will make up for its sabbaths while it is made desolate without them. They, meanwhile, will be making amends for their iniquity, because they rejected My ordinances and their soul abhorred My statutes. 44 Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My

covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. 45 But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD.’”

Deu. 30 “So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, 2 and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, 3 then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 If your outcasts are at the ends of the [d]earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. 5 The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

6 “Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.

Ezekiel 18 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2 “What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying,

‘The fathers eat the sour grapes,
But the children’s teeth are set on edge’?

3 As I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore. 4 Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die.....

19 “Yet you say, ‘Why should the son not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity?’ When the son has practiced justice and righteousness and has observed all My statutes and done them, he shall surely live. 20 The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.

Men, if there are curses in your family, confess and repent, then walk in the ways of the King leaving those things behind!!

The role of the man as head (king) and priest for his family and future progeny is a major theme throughout Scripture. His action or inaction, obedience or disobedience, etc deeply affects current and future generations.

It is important to note that man is not the *sole* responsible party, however he is clearly the *primary* responsible person. There are a few important women highlighted in Scripture who turned the course of their families and even history through righteousness. Consider Tamar (Gen. 38), Rahab (Joshua 2), Ruth, and Avigail (I Samuel 25). In most cases, the women were making up for men who did *not* do what they were supposed to do. (I say this not to minimize their righteousness, but to highlight the men who were not fulfilling their roles properly.)

To return to Noah, God gave *him* a specific vision and calling: build an ark. The vision was not given to Noah's wife or to his sons, however, they, under his headship, were responsible to follow Noah and be obedient to his call. In their obedience, they were saved. Maybe it was wholehearted? Maybe it was not... we can surmise that they weren't rebellious, even when the world around them laughed.

In this example, we can see the mammoth importance of being obedient to the authority over us, whether men, women or children. As the days/world around us grows darker, we must learn to walk in submission to the authority over us *so that* we be counted worthy of salvation. Men? Are you in *full* submission to the Messiah? Are you listening to His voice and willing to do as He instructs, even if contrary to the world? Women, are you looking to and trusting in the authority, the man who is your head? Children? Are you following the head of your home? Ponder this very carefully in light of Noah and his sons.... Would the world and its acceptance have been more important than the the very radical move of building a gigantic ark, far inland? It was the Disney World event of that day... No doubt, Noah was laughed at because he was not interested in the culture of the day....

Our portion details the flood and the dates/times involved. We'll not delve into or speculate on the times/seasons and possible relations to today. What we can simply say is that life leading up to and on the ark was probably very busy and a lot of work, but the headship of Noah remains.

God often gives a vision to one man and then expects him to lead his family and those others under his authority into completing it. Men: What vision has the Father given you? Have you articulated your vision to your household? Women: Do you know your husband's vision or calling? Can you articulate it? Are you following? Remember, woman was made as a helper for the man.

Genesis 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." 19 Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. 22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

Noah performs the function and duties of priest for his family and all creation demonstrating that the man is the mediator for his family before God. We will see an aspect of this change in the future as parts of the priestly function are transferred to the Levites and eventually the Cohen Gadol (High Priest), but an aspect of that remains today as each man is head of his home and intercessor for it.

God then blesses Noah and his sons and covenants with them and their seed.

Genesis 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth....7 "As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it."

8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, 9 "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; 10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.

Notice the covenant is with Noah, his sons and their 'seed.' Every living creature that is with them is included, but their 'seed' indicates the male progeny. Women are included in an indirect sense, they come from man, but the direct covenant, as we will see at Sinai, is with the men who are then responsible for the women. This confirms the authority structure God established in the first Torah portion.

The end of chapter nine indicates that sin dwells in the heart of man and rebellion leads to consequences that affect future generations.

Genesis 9:18 Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan. 19 These three *were* the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.

20 Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. 21 He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. 22 Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. 23 But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness. 24 When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. 25 So he said,

"Cursed be Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brothers."

26 He also said,

"Blessed be the LORD,
The God of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.
27 "May God enlarge Japheth,
And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant."

28 Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood.

Verses 20-21 indicate a passage of time. Typically, it takes a few years to plant a vineyard and harvest enough grapes to make wine. And, the wine making itself demands a passage of time for fermentation, etc.

Noah got drunk and then something involving Ham happened. Scripture is not clear, however, based on the fact that the son of Ham, Canaan, is cursed and the nakedness of a man is his wife, I am inclined to believe that in Noah's drunkenness, Ham had relations with Noah's wife. The result, in my opinion, is Canaan, explaining the curse on the son and not directly on Ham, though Ham sinned grievously. The sins of the father effect future generations!!

The actions of the sons can have a beneficial, or blessed effect. Consider Shem and Japheth for receiving a blessing, some of which holds even today, for their actions.

Of import in the scope of considering headship and patriarchy is the authority of the man to bless and curse those under his authority. Noah did both with long term effect. How many men inadvertently curse their sons? And, how many men fail to intentionally bless their sons? Men, be intentional! Train your sons correctly, then bless them! We will see many instances of fathers blessing sons as we proceed through Torah. This is a God-given 'power' that a man has in his home. As the authority, the priest and king, you can call for blessings or curses. We must guard our tongues against curses, even unintended, and call forth blessings, intentionally! When we get to Numbers 30, we will see that an additional authority a man has is the cancellation of vows that his wife or daughter makes if he does so in the day of his hearing it.

So, Noah displays both the power to bless and the power to curse, and we see the enduring effect of each through Abraham's descendants and the Canaanites. The beginning of this the fulfillment of Noah's blessing/curse is in the genealogies of chapters 10 and 11 and the divergence of Shem and Ham.

The major thought that men should come away from this portion with is a consideration of Noah's call and vision. Women should note that the silence in the text regarding Noah's wife and those of the sons does not mean they were not involved in helping Noah. In fact, quite the opposite. I would only expect a mention if they acted contrary to Noah. The simple fact is, we see a family working together under the headship of Noah and his God-given vision for more than a 100 years despite certain ridicule. Let that sink in.