

Triennial Torah Study – 4th Year 23/11/2013



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This week's Triennial Torah reading can be found at:

https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf

Gen 11	Judges 1-2	Ps 23-25	Mat 14:22 – 15:39
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The Postdiluvian Rebellion (Genesis 11)

When Noah and his family disembarked from the ark, God said, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 9:1 KJV), and the words suggest that God intended the people to diffuse themselves widely over the land. When they came to Shinar, or Mesopotamia, the people made a fateful decision. They decided to gather together to build large cities, contrary to God’s original intent. “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth” (11:4). The statement is revealing on several levels. It reveals that the express purpose for building the city and the tower was to prevent wide population dispersion. The design to build a tower (probably some type of ziggurat or pyramid) indicates that concentration of population would be achieved through highly organized governmental projects. History provides evidence of a centralization of religious authority as well. And the phrase “let us make a name for ourselves” is an idiomatic way of saying “let us get power over others.” Furthermore, the choice of a tower whose top is in the heavens may indicate a deliberate disbelief in God’s promise to not send another great flood, effectively calling God a liar. Thus, we see the formation of a political and religious power center, opposed to God’s will and using its power to dominate others. It appears that the leader of this effort was Nimrod, who built an empire from here (10:8-12).

Verse 5 tells us that God “came down” to see the city and the tower. Besides its literal meaning, when God is said to “come down” it is frequently a way of expressing impending judgment (compare Genesis 18:21; Exodus 3:8; 2 Samuel 22:10; Psalm 144:5; Isaiah 31:4; Jeremiah 21:13). It is a way of expressing the seriousness of the action as well as God’s personal involvement in the punishment. When God saw the work of the men He said, “Indeed, the people are one and they have all one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them” (Genesis 11:6). Man had once again decided to use his intellect and energies to live contrary to God. The last century bore stark witness to what human beings working together can do. Without God, evil permeates— and among

wonderful technological advances comes also the ability to destroy the world. But God is never out of options. To end this ungodly effort, and to accomplish His purpose of widely dispersing men over the face of the earth and preventing rapid technological development that would lead to weapons of mass destruction sooner than His time frame allowed for, God confounded the language of men. And thus the name of this place is Babel, the first Babylon of history. As an aside, notice that God said the people, though many, were one—a plurality in unity, just as Elohim, the Hebrew word for God, indicates a plurality in unity.

Introduction to Judges (Judges 1)

The second book of the Prophets, Judges spans the approximately 325 years from the death of Joshua, some 25 years after Israel's entry into the Promised Land, to shortly before the coronation of Israel's first human king, Saul. Though it may have been written by various authors, adding to the storyline as events transpired—e.g., the Song of Deborah and the parable of Jotham—it was probably put into its final form by the last of the judges, Samuel, in the 11th century B.C. The Talmud states, "Samuel wrote the book which bears his name and the book of Judges" (Baba Bathra 14b).

Moses and Joshua were, of course, the first of Israel's judges. But once in the Promised Land, others followed. The judges were military men and governors whom God led to deliver Israel from foreign oppression and who then had a responsibility to "judge" the people in concert with the priests and Levites (Deuteronomy 17:8-9). Each judge acted in a capacity similar to the later kings of Israel, except no hereditary line was involved. No judge after Moses and Joshua exercised authority over all Israel, but each functioned within a limited geographical area for a particular period of time.

As for general themes, the book of Judges shows that Israel's national existence depended on her obedience. In a monotonous cycle: Israel rebelled; God allowed them to be conquered by an enemy king; they were vassals to a foreign nation for a period of years; Israel cried to God; and God raised up a judge to deliver them. The cycle may be described as sin, servitude, supplication, salvation. (Notice that God always gave more years of peace than years of captivity—often at a five-to-one ratio.)

Judges also shows the necessity of right leadership. Each time God delivered Israel, He called a specific individual to lead them into battle, and to be judge over them when they were freed. And when that leader died, the nation returned to its apostasy (with the exception of Samuel, the last judge, whose situation was rather different, as we will later see).

Judges is a book about people set on "doing their own thing" ("In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes"—Judges 21:25; also 17:6; 18:1; 19:1). The absence of a human monarch allowed the people a great deal of personal freedom. But such freedom without adherence to God's moral instructions inevitably leads to anarchy and confusion. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries on Judges notes that the period of the Judges set the stage for the apostasy that later led to the national punishments God visited upon Israel and Judah. "Few periods in Israel's eventful history are as important as the period of the judges. During these centuries the nation took the wrong turning that led to her downfall and near-destruction. The apostasy of the later generations has its origin in the early years of the settlement, and there is a clear line between the time when the nation first went after Baal and the dark age when the Jerusalem Temple itself was defiled with all the trappings of the Baal worship, not excluding cultic prostitutes (2 Kings 23:4-7)" (p. 11).

Because many of the tribes allowed Canaanites to continue to dwell in the land, the influence of Baal and Asherah worship retained a foothold. Worship of these pagan gods involved the most vile acts, including sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals. For these and other abominations, God would eventually send His people into captivity.

Bible scholars have a problem with Judges because "there is general agreement that the problem of harmonizing the chronological data presents insurmountable difficulty" (Soncino Commentary, introductory notes to Judges). Some 50 different methods of calculating the chronology of Judges have been offered. This is because many of the judgeships overlap, the last chapters of the book are out of sequence, and many scholars—dating Israel's conquest of the land too late—do not allow the full amount of time between the conquest and the beginning of the monarchy.

Halfhearted Conquest (Judges 1)

After God had brought Israel out of Egypt, He told them that He would bring them into a blessed land whose inhabitants were to be utterly destroyed (Deuteronomy 7:1-2). Israel was to show no mercy, nor make any covenant with them. Nevertheless, God said He would not expel the Canaanites immediately, but would, little by little, drive them out before Israel, lest a sudden depopulation of the land be to Israel's hurt (Exodus 23:29-30). This God would have done, if only Israel would have remained faithful to the task.

The business of conquering the land was begun under Joshua. All the days of his life it appears that the Israelites remained generally faithful to the task, though Joshua complained about their lack of zeal even during his lifetime (e.g., Joshua 18:3). But after Joshua died, Israel's zeal definitely slackened. The people became more interested in enjoying God's blessings (a settled life in a new land) and less interested in carrying out His directives (exterminating the Canaanites). Their shortsightedness would haunt the new nation throughout its entire history and ultimately lead to its downfall.

Judah and Simeon began well, working together to clear their inheritances of the Canaanites. Most of the highlands were secured for Judah and Simeon, but the Canaanites of the lowlands were better armed and resisted the two tribes. God was not willing to then remove those Canaanites. Instead, they would be removed later.

The people of Benjamin, however, were not so zealous. When they could not drive the Jebusites from Jerusalem—Jebusites who had been driven from the city by Judah, but then had returned to reinhabit it—the Benjamites did nothing. They did not seek assistance from their brother tribes but instead chose to allow the Jebusites to remain. Benjamin pursued the occupation of its territory halfheartedly, and the Jebusites would remain until David's day.

The story was much the same with the other tribes. Ephraim and Manasseh left many Canaanites dwelling in their land. Asher did likewise. Naphtali followed suit, and Dan allowed itself to be driven away by the Canaanites who held its allotted territory. Thus the stage was set for a continual train of miseries. The halfhearted conquest would result in repeated wars, intertribal disputes, inefficient national government, frequent apostasies in which Canaanite religious practices were embraced, and, as a result, eventual expulsion from the land.

God never gives a command that cannot be followed, at least in the letter. Though the doing of the command might be difficult and may require considerable time and effort, the latter end always proves to be immeasurably better than the results of neglecting to obey the command.

As believers we have been given the command to fight the good fight of faith, pressing onward to receive our reward in the spiritual "Promised Land" of God's Kingdom. It requires consistent and energetic effort, and there are always spiritual Canaanites who oppose us and attempt to drive us from our inheritance. How have you pursued your inheritance? Have you slacked off? Have you warded with half a heart? Are you willing to fellowship or run with spiritual Canaanites, not recognizing that to do so only means eventual expulsion from your inheritance? If so, now is the time to repent, redouble your efforts and make a good warfare.

And while warring, do not forget to aid your brother as he strives for his inheritance also.

When Restraint Is Taken Away (Judges 2)

The halfhearted efforts of the Israelite tribes in dealing with the inhabitants of Canaan as God had instructed resulted in God's refusal to drive out the remaining Canaanites. Instead, those Canaanites would be a continual source of misery and frustration for Israel. Yet when God told Israel that He would not drive out what Israel was only too willing to live with, all Israel could do was weep and sacrifice. They were unable to bring themselves to repentance. They were unable to rise up with one voice, confess their sin, and rededicate themselves to the prompt fulfilling of God's command if He would grant them forgiveness.

This lamentable condition was the result of missing components in Israel's character and government—components that are vital to any enterprise. The first component is strong, fearless, visionary leadership. Without leaders who are willing to lead, willing to set forth a vision and fearless in its pursuit, the people involved in the enterprise will limp along, wandering from pillar to post, never accomplishing any great thing. For Israel, the generation that went in to the Land of Promise under Joshua was a generation that had such leaders. Men like Joshua and Caleb, and the elders of Israel, though making occasional mistakes, were not afraid to lead. The vision was clearly laid out for them and they pursued it fearlessly, despite occasional errors.

But after Joshua and his generation died, the leaders who filled their offices were not cut from the same cloth. These men, and the people they led, “did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10). Now certainly they did know about God. They had been keeping His feasts, observing His Sabbaths, sacrificing at His tabernacle, and certainly they had heard the stories of the Exodus under Moses and the conquest begun under Joshua. These men, however, did not “know” the Lord nor His works in the sense of having personally experienced them.

These are the second and third necessary components to right character—a personal knowing of God and a sharp remembrance of His works. The second generation knew of God, but they did not personally know God; they had become lax in their spiritual condition. They knew of the Exodus, but they did not lay to heart the lessons of it. They knew of the conquest, but they had largely grown up during one of those tranquil periods in which God intended that Israel dwell in the land already conquered and build their strength for the next period of conquest.

A personal knowing of God, a remembrance of His works and strong, visionary and fearless leadership act as internal and external restraints on the carnal nature’s desire to let down, compromise and just make do. When any one of those three elements is missing, the people are loosed of restraint and end up living comfortably with sin. Israel’s second generation lacked those qualities, and as a result they did not pursue their God-given inheritance with vigor, but preferred to make do with what they had, to compromise and live with a certain amount of sin.

By not studying the Old Testament, people can slip into the same errors without realizing their predicament. Indeed, ancient Israel is supposed to be an example for us (see 1 Corinthians 10:1-9). As believers we cannot afford to make the same mistakes. Each of us must come to personally know God, to have real and daily experience of Him. Each of us must develop a sharp memory for what God has done for Israel and for us in our private lives. Leaders must lead. Do not be timid or fearful. A light yoke is laid upon each of us, therefore let us all work the harder that we may partake of a very bountiful harvest.

Psalm 23 is the “Shepherd Psalm”—the most famous, beloved, quoted and memorized psalm of all. It is short and simple but packed with great meaning. “One of the most common descriptions of kingship in the ancient world was that of shepherd” (Nelson Study Bible, note on Psalm 23)—wherein the king metaphorically serves as the shepherd of his “flock,” that is, of his people. Consider, for example, the crook or shepherd staff as one of the symbols of the Egyptian pharaoh. The rod was another important symbol of ancient kingship. Yet unlike the other national rulers of his day, David came to the job of king from the background of first actually having served as a literal shepherd of sheep. (It is interesting to recall that Moses too, though having previously been trained in the pharaonic court, tended flocks for 40 years before God used him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and through the wilderness.)

Besides political leaders, the “shepherd” metaphor in the Bible is also used for religious leaders, with some ministers in the New Testament being referred to as shepherds. (The word “pastor”

means shepherd.) Yet we should recognize that all of God's people are called to be humble, dedicated servants—leading by example today and preparing to rule with Christ in His Kingdom tomorrow.

The ultimate Leader, King and therefore Shepherd is, of course, God (see also Psalm 80:1; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 34:11-31; Micah 5:4). God in the person of Yeshua is later referred to as the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-30). In Psalm 23, David considers God in His role of Shepherd from the perspective of one who had taken care of his own literal flock. Yet the perspective within the psalm is not of a human shepherd but of a sheep within the flock of God, at least in the first four verses. From his own shepherding work, David well understood the needs, wants and concerns of sheep and drew parallels with his personal needs, wants and concerns. Likewise, a leader should always be trying to understand everything from the point of view of those being led, and try to do what is best for them, not what is beneficial for himself.

With God as his shepherd, David said his life would never be characterized by lack (verse 1). He trusted that all his needs would be met. He would not be left alone to struggle for the necessities of physical and spiritual life because God would provide them—He knows what and where is best for us (verse 2). God would always refresh and revive him, leading Him down the right paths (verse 3)—the literal concept here meaning the right paths for sheep to travel (e.g., so that they don't fall off cliff edges and kill themselves or wander into other danger) but, metaphorically, denoting the proper paths of life (that is, people walking in God's moral laws of righteousness).

Under the care of a competent shepherd, sheep proceed to good pastures without fear. "The valley of the shadow of death" in verse 4 is literally "the valley of death-darkness." It gets very dark in the Judean ravines in late afternoon when the sun sinks below the hilltops. For us, the presence of the Shepherd's rod and staff through any dark valley in life, when it is hard to see where we are going and can be rather frightening, is a reminder that "God's comfort and strength are 'with' us in all kinds of darkness, in times of depression, serious illness, rejection by one's friends, horror at discovering the disloyalty of one's own heart, and so on, as well as the experience of death itself" (Knight, Psalms, comments on Psalm 23:1-6).

Why would the shepherd's rod and staff provide comfort? A rod or club was used to defend against wild predators—just as God defends His people against natural or spiritual forces that seek their harm. It was also used as a disciplinary tool, perhaps even thrown at or near sheep to startle them away from danger (which was ultimately for its welfare and, thus, long-term comfort). A shepherd's staff was used to guide the sheep and to rescue them, lifting them up out of dangerous situations when necessary. Even so does God lead and deliver His people.

With the rod and staff imagery, the metaphor appears to shift in focus from that of a shepherd of sheep to that of a Middle Eastern king or sheik—as ancient rulers of that region used both emblems. The next verse speaks of preparing a table in the presence of enemies (verse 5), as in the tent of a great patriarch or sheik in the midst of roving bands of pursuers. Sheep being protected from animal predators has become people being protected from human aggressors.

And this security is found through the hospitality of a gracious host—accompanied by a banquet meal, perfumed oil and an overflowing cup of drink or blessings (same verse). Hospitality was and remains a major focus for such patriarchs and sheiks—as it is even more so for God.

It should be noted, however, that some view the imagery of verse 5 as still consistent with caring for sheep. The “table” is viewed as the highland plateaus, where pasturage is good in the summer. And anointment with oil is seen as a remedy against flies, insects and parasitic infection.

David describes his manifold blessings as goodness and mercy (hesed, “unfailing love”) following him—or, as he seems to mean, pursuing him (verse 6). That is, in God’s tent or God’s green pastures he is safe from enemies and totally secure in every way. The only thing pursuing him is goodness and mercy all the days of his life. The fact that blessings follow obedient people rather than precede them is significant. We must step out on faith and obey God even when we don’t see any rewards for a long time. They will come eventually. “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you,” we are told (James 4:8). Once God calls us, He wants to see us take initiative.

David anticipates eternal life as he speaks of “dwelling in the house of the Lord forever” (verse 6). The Nelson’s Study Bible comments on verse 6, “God’s promise for the Israelites was not just for the enjoyment of life in the land of promise...it was also for the full enjoyment of the life to come in His blessed presence (16:9-11; 17:15; 49:15).”What an awesome privilege it is to be a sheep in God’s fold—to have the lavish invitation to dwell forever in the house of the omnipotent Shepherd-King.

To learn more about being a “good shepherd, read John 10:1-30.

David asks who is worthy to worship such a great Creator God (verse 3). Who could ascend to the tabernacle—or later temple—in Jerusalem? This recalls the theme of Psalm 15. “Together with Ps 15 it frames the intervening collection of psalms and with that psalm sharply delineates those who may approach God in prayer and ‘dwell in the house of the Lord’ (23:6...)” (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, note on Psalm 24).

“It may be that the instructions on moral purity were originally part of a ceremony before completing the last leg of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem [for the annual festivals].... However....the hymn instructs God’s people wherever they may be to live in the presence of the Creator King in order to receive His blessing” (Expositor’s Bible Commentary, note on verse 3).

Some commentators believe this psalm was composed by David to be sung by a procession of Israelites when the Ark of the Covenant was at last brought to Jerusalem (see 2 Samuel 6). The mercy seat atop the ark was a physical representation of the throne of God on earth—so that the King of glory in verses 7-10 was represented by the ark. The King of glory here, the one the Israelites knew as God in the Old Testament who descended to the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, was the preincarnate Yeshua (see 1 Corinthians 10:4 and our booklet Who Is God?).

This would mean that the first part of the psalm concerns the preparation of those permitted to accompany the King of glory up His holy hill.

Continuing with a processional interpretation, many propose two choirs singing verses 7-10 as the ark reaches the gates of Jerusalem or the tabernacle. The first choir accompanying the ark says, "Lift up your heads, O you gates!" (verse 7). This addresses either the gates themselves in a personified sense or the gatekeepers—commanding the gates to be roused and at attention, to rejoice (being no more downcast apart from God's presence), or to be lifted out of their locked position and opened. In any case, the gates opening up to receive the King of glory is implicit.

The second choir, stationed at the gates, intones, "Who is this King of Glory?" (verse 8)—to which choir one responds, "The Lord strong and...mighty in battle" (same verse). The sequence is then repeated (verses 9-10). Yet regarding the closing words of Psalm 24:10, George Knight in his Psalms commentary suggests: "Probably the whole concourse of priests and people now joyously shout these last two lines in one voice. 'The Lord of hosts' (meaning the armies both of Israel and of the heavenly beings) 'that God is the King of glory!'"

"Let No One Who Waits on You Be Ashamed" (Psalms 25-27)

Psalm 25 begins "a group of nine psalms [ending with Psalm 33] containing an unusual (even for the Psalter) concentration of pleas for 'mercy' (25:16; 26:11; 27:7; 28:2; 30:8, 10; 31:9) accompanied by professions of 'trust' (25:2; 26:1; 27:3; 28:7; 31:6, 14; 32:10; 33:21) and appeals to or celebrations of Yahweh's '(unfailing) love' (25:6-7, 10; 26:3; 31:7, 16, 21; 32:10; 33:5, 18, 22). The series begins with an alphabetic acrostic prayer for God's saving help (Ps 25) and culminates in a 22-verse (the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet) hymn of praise for Yahweh's sovereign rule and saving help (Ps 33)" (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, note on Psalms 25-33).

Structurally, Psalm 25 itself "is an alphabetic acrostic (somewhat irregular, with an additional, concluding verse that extends the lines beyond the alphabet). It is composed of four unequal stanzas (of three, four, eight and six verses). The first and fourth stanzas are thematically related, as are the second and third (an a-b/b-a pattern)" (note on Psalm 25).

"David prays for God's covenant mercies when suffering affliction for sins [verses 11, 18] and when enemies seize the occasion to attack [verses 2, 19], perhaps by trying to discredit the king through false accusations" (same note). This is a theme we have seen before. The prospect of experiencing shame from an enemy triumph concerns David greatly—he mentions "shame" four times in the psalm. Shame should not befall those who hope and trust in God but should fall instead on people who decide to "deal treacherously without a cause" (verse 3). "Shame is the intended end of the enemies of God (35:26)...not of the faithful" (Nelson Study Bible, note on verses 1-2).

David declares that because God is good and upright, He teaches sinners in His way (verse 8). But this is not so they can continue to live in sinful defiance of Him. Rather, He works with those

who are humble and obedient (verses 9, 12). He will teach them a way of life characterized by justice, mercy, truth and prosperity (verses 8-10, 13). As Ezra 8:22 tells us, “The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him.”

In summarizing his afflictions and troubles, David reminds God that his foes are cruel and he needs deliverance (verses 17-20). He concludes the psalm with a respectful declaration of hope, the same hope with which he began: “I wait for you” (verse 21; compare verse 3).

Even in this prayer for mercy and help for himself personally, David is not forgetful of others. In verse 22, which is outside the acrostic pattern of the psalm, he concludes with an intercessory prayer for his people. “David petitions the Lord to be compassionate with the nation Israel just as he has been with David. The Lord was not only the personal Savior of David, but also the Savior of all the Israelites” (Nelson, note on verse 22). Here, as in other references to Israel in the Psalms, we may look beyond the physical nation to the chosen people of God—ultimately all those who constitute spiritual Israel even if physically from other nations (see Romans 9:6; Galatians 6:16).

Matthew

26 the disciples saw him walking on the sea

Evidently, Yeshua was in a state where He could be seen at night across the waters. This may be compared to his appearance when seen with Moses and Elijah, in Matthew chapter 17.

His return is described as being in such radiance as well:

2 Thessalonians 2:8 – And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

30 he was afraid; and beginning to sink,

Peter was no doubt an expert swimmer, being a fisherman by trade. Why was he so fearful when he went under water only a few feet from the boat? Evidently, the plain meaning (p’shat) of the text may not tell the full story.

There is spiritual connotation to the water, especially “the sea.” In mystical Jewish literature, the “sea” is the spiritual realm. Sinking into the sea, as such, can be seen as a rapid deterioration of one’s spiritual condition. (Something that occurred in Peter’s life more than once, such as in Matthew 16:23 and Matthew chapter 26). Peter’s cry as he was sinking was not for a lifeguard.

32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

Not only was Peter’s condition calmed (verse 30) but so were the physical elements.

Psalm 65:8 – Who stillest the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples

36 as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

The same was said about Paul's clothing. In fact even his garments had some kind of miraculous power about them (Acts 19:12). Unfortunately, due to a lack of grounding in God's Torah, many superstitions have emanated from these specific miracles. Instead of focusing on learning and doing the Torah (which conforms us to the image of God), people have resorted to creating and using everything from medals to "prayer cloths," in vain efforts to bring themselves "closer to God."

2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

The story in this chapter one that has consistently been misused to teach that the Messiah did away with the Levitical food commandments (kosher laws). The text plainly shows that this is not the subject at hand, yet many ignore this in order to teach against Torah. (See comments on verse 14 below).

The context of the discussion, is stated clearly in this verse (and at the end of the topic, in verse 20). The subject is not the kosher laws, but that of "washing of hands." There is more to this tradition than what the scripture tells however. (Hence the advantage of knowing the Hebrew background to the discussion.)

There were varying mystical beliefs among some Jews of Yeshua's day, not all firmly grounded in Torah. Some of these ideas had to do with how a person could become spiritually "clean" or "unclean." (A concept, that is of course, quite biblical.) One such teaching was that during the night, evil spirits could come into a man's body. These spirits would exit the body through the hands (more precisely, the fingertips). The body would become spiritually "clean" again, in the morning, with the exception of the fingertips/hands. It was taught that the hands had to be washed in order to remove any defilement that would cause anything touched (i.e., food) to become unclean.

Yeshua is showing that this hand-washing tradition that was not based in Torah, was in fact nullifying Torah, as they were calling unclean, foods that God Himself had declared clean, simply by eating with unwashed hands. He also chastises the teachers for breaking true Torah commandments (while laying these unnecessary burdens on the people) by citing their own lack of properly following the commandment of honoring father and mother. This is the lesson of verses 2-20.

Another scripture cited in the same incorrect fashion is Peter's vision of the unclean animals in Acts chapter 10. Here too, the context and explanation are ignored in order to support false doctrine. Dreams in scripture commonly use specific items and themes to represent certain

people, places, things and teachings. In the case of Peter's dream in Acts 10, he clearly explains this vision several times throughout the book of Acts. Not once does Peter say that God showed him that the laws of kashrut are done away with. Rather, in every case, he explains the meaning of the dream as being that gentiles were not to be considered as "unclean," and could directly come to faith through Yeshua — something that God had not provided for before Yeshua's death. (See comments to verse 24 below.)

3 Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

Here is a second statement about the problem at hand — Yeshua is not telling them the kosher laws (given by God) are suspended (in violation of His own words in Matthew 5:17-18), but clearly says they are breaking God's Torah by this particular man-made (not God-given) tradition.

It should be noted that Yeshua is not against tradition, including many of the traditions of the Pharisaic Judaism. Such tradition is the way in which we "walk out" our faith (called halakha). As we will see in the next chapter, Yeshua even gave the power to set such "tradition" to His disciples.

What Yeshua is opposed to is any tradition not founded in Torah that places itself above Torah.

9 teaching for doctrines the commandments of men

He repeats His criticism. They are elevating the doctrines of men over the commandments of the Torah. The kosher laws are from God, they are not traditions of men. In fact, teaching that the kosher laws (or any part of Torah) is done away with, would be what God would consider "commandments of men" and goes against His Word (Matthew 5:17-18).

11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth

This is the verse that is commonly pulled out of its context to support the idea that the kosher laws have been done away with. Yeshua is teaching that we don't make clean foods unclean by failing to ceremonially wash our hands before we eat. Non-kosher food is not part of this discussion as the surrounding verses show.

13 Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

With allusions to the sower parables in [Matthew chapter 13](#).

14 blind leaders of the blind

Despite "popular opinion," the situation is the same today. The vast majority of people who say they believe in the God of the Bible, follow teachers who tell them that they are "free" from what they call "the Law," (an inaccurate translation of "Torah," which is God's revelation/instruction on how to live, for all who claim to be His people.) The examples given above (Matthew 5:17-21; 15:2-20, Acts 10, etc.), show how people ignore what is explained in

the text of the Bible, in favor of following man's anti-Torah doctrines. This is not dissimilar to what many of the religious leaders of Yeshua's day did. Then, as now, men reject the truth of God's Torah.

This is NOT to say that we must first learn and follow the Torah to be saved. That has never been the case, as men and women have always been saved by trusting God (faith) which is a free gift from Him. No one can merit entry into heaven based on works. What is being said, is that once anyone "comes to know of God," and His salvation in Yeshua, His Son, there is a path for them to "walk," and this is to learn of, and begin doing God's Torah (Romans 2:13; James 1:22-25).

The only other path is the "false torah" of the flesh and of the world (i.e., Romans 7:23). Picking and choosing commandment from the Torah is not an acceptable position with God (James 2:10), nor is "straddling the fence," (i.e., Revelation 3:15-16).

Those commandments that we are able to keep are the ones we should strive to learn of and follow, in order to be conformed to the image of God — which is a main purpose of the Torah. We cannot keep all of God's commandments perfectly, because there is no Temple or priesthood (and also because most of us are living outside the land of Israel).

Because the Torah has been rejected by followers of the Messiah for such a long time, we need to diligently re-learn the Torah precept by precept. The Holy Spirit is our guide, but this does not alleviate us of our responsibility of diligently studying God's word:

2 Timothy 2:15 – Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Acts 17:11 – These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

The Holy Spirit will never contradict Torah, as it is God's word. If someone believes the "spirit" is telling them that it is permissible to go against any Torah command (correctly understood in context), then that person is being led by some other spirit.

One question to ask is, "If someone tells a person they are a sinner and need to repent (i.e., as in most "salvation messages" given today), how does that person know what 'sin' is?" Scripture tells us that sin is violation of God's Torah (including all the teachings of the Tenakh/"Old Testament").

Torah was the ONLY standard used by Yeshua and his disciples. Paul and the others only taught Yeshua and salvation out of the Tenakh as there was no "New Testament" around at the time. Neither Yeshua (Matthew 5:17-21), or Paul (Romans 3:31), or any of the other disciples, did away with any part of the faith of Israel. The original believers continued in this faith, only now with knowledge of the promised Messiah.

The “New Testament” is of course, inspired of God, but it was never meant to be read outside of the context of the Torah. Unfortunately, this is exactly what is done today, with churches giving their own meaning to the teachings of the “New Testament.” They then use this to explain the “Old Testament.” This is “putting the cart in front of the horse.” (i.e., the common practice of handing out “New Testaments” to people, rather than complete Bibles.)

Gentiles who came to faith in Yeshua, did not become “Christians,” as there was no such separation from Judaism (“the faith of Israel”) until much later. Gentiles who came to faith, came into the faith of Israel with its Torah (Ephesians 2:10-13) and began to learn more of the Torah as they were taught within the faith of Israel (Acts 15:21).

20 but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

Yeshua wraps up the discussion by making it clear what the subject has been since verse 2 — eating with unwashed hands — not doing away with the Torah commandment of eating only clean foods.

24 I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

As Paul also stated the following:

Romans 1:16 – For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

It should be noted that the Gospel was not sent out to the gentiles until after Yeshua’s death and resurrection. Up to that time, both Yeshua and His disciples went only to the Jews. Something very mysterious happened with His death — gentiles could now come to the God of Israel in a more direct fashion — by placing their faith in the Messiah of Israel.

Why is this? The basic explanation is that Yeshua was/is the Torah (“Word”) in the flesh (i.e., John chapter 1). Just as the Torah is the revelation of the invisible God – Yeshua is also the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). Coming to trust in Yeshua, is coming to trust in God (as much as we mere mortals can know Him, which is revealed in His Torah). Yeshua is the door to this relationship. Torah is the path beyond this door – for all who wish to put their trust in Him. Sadly, most will not end up on the right path, even after learning of Him (Matthew 7:12-21).

Most people who come to know of the God of the Bible are soon taught that He changed His mind about His Torah two thousand years ago, that it was somehow done away with by Yeshua. This is taught despite the fact that Yeshua is the Torah in the flesh, (the “goal” of the Torah – Romans 10:4), who said Himself in no uncertain terms that none of the Torah was done away with by His arrival (Matthew 5:17-21).

After Yeshua’s death, the practice (evangelistic method) of the disciples was to go to the Jew first. For instance, in every town Paul went to, he first visited the local synagogue. (Paul skipped

over some very large cities in his travels that lacked a significant Jewish presence.) In each case, the Gospel was preached to the Jews first. In every location, there would be some Jews that accepted his message and others that rejected it. Once "Israel" had made its "decision" (in each town), then, and only then, would the message be given to the local gentile population.