

Triennial Torah Study – 3rd Year 09/03/2013

sightedmoon.com /triennial-torah-study-3-year-04042013 /

By Joseph F. Dumond

We continue this weekend with our regular Triennial Torah reading which can be found at https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf

Deut 8		1 Chron 3-4	Gal 5-6
--------	--	-------------	---------

“Beware That You Do Not Forget the Lord Your God” (Deuteronomy 8)

Moses reminds Israel of God’s mighty power with which He kept them alive in the wilderness for 40 years, and He warns them not to forget God when they enter the Promised Land and become prosperous, seeming to have everything they need. It is easier to remember God when we see we are in desperate need for His help than when we think we can make it on our own. In a materialistic society, when many have money in the bank and food in their refrigerators and cupboards, they can easily neglect to sincerely pray “give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). God allowed Israel to hunger in the wilderness to test them and to find out what was in their heart (Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 16). He gave them manna to teach them that man does not live by bread alone. Rather, man lives by carefully observing God’s Word (verse 3). As long as we seek first the Kingdom of God and God’s righteousness, all our physical needs will be provided for (Matthew 6:33). When tempted by the devil, who told Him to make bread out of stone to satisfy His hunger, Jesus Christ quoted this very passage of Deuteronomy 8:3, showing that He understood the importance of truly living by God’s Word at all times (Matthew 4:2-4). After the devil ceased from tempting Him until another opportune time (see Luke 4:13), God’s angels ministered to the hungry Jesus by bringing Him the physical things He had need of (Matthew 4:11). Continuing on, Moses impresses on the new generation of Israelites how vital it is that they remember their total dependence on God. Moses knows human nature. When people are full with blessings and no longer conscious of need, they are susceptible to concluding not only that they can get along without a Provider, but that they themselves had somehow gained their abundance through their own power and strength (Deuteronomy 8:11-17). So Moses admonishes the people, “You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth” (verse 18). Tragically, the ancient Israelites would forget God—and so will their descendants, the nations of the modern-day Israelites.

In the midst of the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation remarking that this very thing had happened among the American people. He eloquently stated: “We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of [God’s] redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness” (April 30, 1863, Proclamation for a National Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer). If only today’s national leaders would see it the same way.

1 Chronicles 3

The Line of David (1 Chronicles 3)

We earlier read the listings of David's wives and children at the beginning of chapter 3 in conjunction with the events of his life (see the earlier Bible Reading Program comments on 1 Chronicles 3:1-5 with 2 Samuel 3:2-31 as well as the comments on 1 Chronicles 3:5-9 with 1 Chronicles 14 and 2 Samuel 5:11-25). And we followed the lineage of the Davidic kings through the history of Judah.

The lineage here is shown progressing from Jeconiah or Jehoiachin, the Jewish king taken into Babylonian exile, to Zerubbabel, the governor of the first return, to his son Hananiah (verse 19) and then Hananiah's sons Pelatiah and Jeshaiiah (verse 21). Also mentioned in this context are the sons of Rephaiah, the sons of Arnan, the sons of Obadiah, and the sons of Shechaniah—followed by descendants of Shechaniah. The Nelson Study Bible notes on verses 21-24: "These names were detached from the Zerubbabel genealogy and may be other Davidic families.... Four generations of Shechaniah, ending in Anani, are listed. Hence the genealogy of vv. 17-24 presupposes about seven generations. Since Jeconiah reigned around 598 B.C. (v. 17), a date of approximately 425 B.C. for Anani is reasonable. Anani is the latest generation recorded in Chronicles, and any dating of the book should take this into account."

1 Chronicles 4

The Prayer of Jabez (1 Chronicles 4)

Chapter 4 gives more details about the family of Judah. "Sons" in verse 1 refers to descendants, for of those listed here only Perez was Judah's actual son (2:3-4). The outline of the genealogies of Judah is as follows: Shelah, son of Judah (2:3; 4:21-23); Perez, son of Judah (2:4-8; 4:1-20); and Hezron, son of Perez and ancestor of David (2:9-3:24).

But there is more in 1 Chronicles 4 than just genealogy. In the midst of the nine-chapter-long list of names, a very short but remarkable story appears out of the blue about a man named Jabez (verses 9-10). It's as if a camera were scanning a crowd of faces and all of a sudden stopped and focused on a single individual.

We know almost nothing about Jabez, but you may well have heard of a popular book about his prayer published in 2000 by author Bruce Wilkinson titled *The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking Through to the Blessed Life*. A number of other books and articles on the subject have followed so that the prayer has become a phenomenon among a number of people—with some unfortunately treating it as some sort of magic formula to get blessings from God. Some of late are focusing on this passage more than any other part of the Bible, and some perhaps almost to the exclusion of the rest of the Bible! That is of course not at all what God wants. For one thing, Christians are to approach God through the name of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we know from Christ's teachings on prayer that God doesn't want or hear rote prayers (Matthew 6:7), but rather He wants believers to talk to Him in prayer the way a son or daughter would talk to a father. So merely memorizing and reciting the prayer of Jabez is not a key to divine blessing. That being said, despite the wrong approach some have taken we can in any event draw some valuable and helpful lessons from this brief but fascinating story.

The name Jabez means "pain" or "sorrow"—his mother having named him this because she bore him "in pain," that is, "in Jabez." What would have motivated a mother to give her newborn child such a name? It must have been something more than the common physical pain of childbirth. More likely, her life must have been such that she perceived the addition of this child would bring great hardship or difficulty. Perhaps she was in financial straits. As the account says that Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, it may be that she already had sons who had caused problems and feared Jabez would do the same.

Whatever the case, Jabez probably did not have an easy life. Can you imagine growing up with a name like Pain or Sorrow? The teasing from peers would have been relentless. Worse, in Middle Eastern society of that day a name was thought to be a meaningful determiner of destiny. His life was "marked out," so to speak, by his name. He would have been expected to be a perpetual source of pain. And this is not to mention the difficult family situation of growing up with a mother who would give such a name to her child and the dreary circumstances that would have provoked it.

All that being said, Jabez responded to his situation with more honor than the rest of his family. There is only one way out of a nowhere life—and Jabez realized it. So what did he do? Let's notice the prayer of Jabez.

1. He called on the God of Israel. Before we can even begin to deal with whatever difficult situation we find ourselves in, it is vital that we recognize that there is only One who can ultimately help us—the God of Israel. Jabez was part of the covenant nation of Israel and called on the nation's God—the only true God. Perhaps he knew the story of Jacob wrestling with God, not letting go until God blessed him and thereby receiving the name Israel, "Prevailer With God." We should recognize that Jabez probably did not just call on God on one afternoon. His prayer was likely a regular one to God—pleading with Him to deliver him from his life's circumstances. And it was probably uttered in various sincere ways, not recited as some kind of mantra.

2. He prayed earnestly for God to truly bless him. He said, "Oh, that You would..." expressing a great desire. And he did not just ask to be blessed, but to be blessed indeed—that is, really and truly blessed. While this might have included physical substance, this is not stated. It probably included spiritual wellbeing. Most likely, he was asking God to bless Him in every way possible, trusting that God would do it. Some would perceive this as selfish, but we shouldn't jump to that conclusion. As God says that Jabez was honorable it is likely that he was a service-oriented person, seeking the means and opportunity to better serve God and others. Moreover, God says we are to pray to Him for those things we need and desire. The point is that, in praying to Him, we recognize God as the One who is able to fill our wants and needs—and we trust Him to do so.

3. He prayed for God to increase his boundaries. His plea to God to "enlarge my territory" makes it look like Jabez's desire was for land and wealth. But the word can be translated territory, boundary, border or coast. It was more likely a request for God to increase the boundaries of his life—to extend his limits beyond those in which he had been confined. Of course, it may have concerned his physical means. Perhaps it involved the recovery of a squandered family inheritance. We can all ask God to increase our affluence, grow our business or extend our influence—if our goal is to serve Him and others. We should all want to be more and do more for God and to have the physical means to do more for others. Only He can give us the means to accomplish this.

4. He prayed for God's help and direction. In asking for God's hand to be with him, Jabez recognized that he could not go it alone. He had asked for great blessings and an extension of boundaries. Humanly, he would not even be able to handle this. That's why he needed God's guidance and power to enable him to meet the demands of the blessings and boundaries for which he was asking. He realized his total dependence on God.

5. He prayed to be kept from evil. The Hebrew word translated "evil" has a broader meaning than malicious acts we commit or that are committed against us. A more appropriate translation in this context would be "afflictions" or "adversities"—any bad circumstances in life that adversely affect us and our loved ones. We should always be mindful of the need for God's protection and not take it for granted. This is quite like Jesus' instruction that we pray, "Deliver us from evil." We are asking God to protect us from those evil forces and circumstances that would harm us—especially the evil one, Satan the devil, this society over which he reigns, and our own corrupt natures which he has influenced.

6. He prayed to not be a source of harm to others. This man who had grown up with a reputation for having caused pain to his mother and a name from her seemingly destining him to be a source of pain wanted no more of it. He wanted to escape. More importantly, he simply did not want to hurt others. This was an attitude of loving one's neighbor. As Romans 13:10 says, "Love does no harm to a neighbor..." Indeed, the verse goes on to say that fulfilling God's law is love—as His law forbids harming others. We see here that Jabez had an attitude of living by God's law and covenant. It was this more than His nationality that gave him the right to call on the covenant God of his nation.

So we see it isn't a matter of saying certain words in prayer, but rather of having the right heart or character. When we seek the right heart, living the way we understand God wants us to live, the "right" words will come when we talk with Him in prayer. God blesses the person with the right heart, not the one who utters a "magic prayer."

Jabez prayed his heartfelt, desperate prayer for great blessing and a changed, hope-filled life...and something remarkable happened: "So God granted him what he requested" (1 Chronicles 4:10). This should fill us all with hope and faith. As the late U.S. President Ronald Reagan once stated, "There is nothing impossible for man, if he will only join himself in prayer to God!"

Interestingly, the name Jabez appears in only one other place in Scripture—two chapters earlier in 2:55 as the name of a place where the scribes dwelt. It could be that the Jabez of chapter 4 acquired this land as part of the answer to his prayer and then used it in God's service.

Verse 11 of chapter 4 recommences with the genealogies so matter-of-factly that many do not even notice the remarkable two verses prior.

As for the end of chapter 4 concerning the family of Simeon, we earlier read these verses (24-43) in conjunction with King Hezekiah's preparation to rebel against Assyrian rule (see Bible Reading Program comments on 2 Kings 18:7-8; 1 Chronicles 4:24-43 and 2 Kings 20:20). The Simeonites who dwelt in the south of Judah were able and likely encouraged at this time to expel neighboring peoples and take over their land. Note that they pursued the perennial enemy of Israel, the Edomite Amalekites, into Mount Seir—that is, the land of Edom in what is today southern Jordan.

Galatians 5 (<http://jesusisajew.org/Short/GAL5V1-4.php>)

To our modern ears, unfamiliar with the religious culture of Sha'ul's time, this can sound like a warning against all Torah observance, and circumcision in particular. If we become circumcised, we will suddenly take on a debt that cannot be paid off. If anyone actually wants to do anything the Torah says, it is a sure sign they have come under bondage, fallen from grace, and become a stranger to the One who loves us.

But once we know that the Perushim (Pharisees) used circumcision as the final act when converting a Gentile to their form of Judaism, and that it was a public commitment to keep the whole Torah, things begin to get clearer. And when we understand that what the Perushim meant by "Torah" included not only the books of Moses, but also what Yeshua (Jesus) called "the tradition of men" (what later became the Talmud), things become clearer still. Sha'ul wasn't warning against the Biblical instruction of circumcision, or anything else written through Moses. Rather, he was saying don't exchange the gift of a saving, life-changing, relationship with Messiah for our "works of Law": mere rule-keeping (especially rule-keeping by compulsion — our own or others').

Look at the word "again" in verse 1. The Galatians were primarily non-Jews. They didn't observe Torah before being given faith in Yeshua. So the Torah couldn't be the yoke of bondage they were again being entangled in (and similarly, the "days and months and seasons and years" disparaged in Gal. 4:9-10 are not the Biblical festivals, either). So what was that bondage? Perhaps they were again giving away responsibility for their own spirituality. Perhaps they were in danger of exchanging the Traditions of the Pagans for the Traditions of the Perushim. Or of trading one worship-by-appeasement for another, rather than finding rest in YHWH's love.

Lastly, verse 4 doesn't say that wanting to do what is written in the Bible is the problem, but seeking to be justified by doing those things. As they are written on our hearts, we do the things instructed in Torah, not in order to be saved, but because we delight in them.

In Galatians 5:18 Paul (Saul, Sha'ul) wrote,
"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law."

Does that mean if I am led by the Holy Spirit, I won't keep the Law?

No, in fact it means the exact opposite. The Torah (Law, instruction) is a gift from God. It describes how to be a blessing to God and to one another. Take an example from our modern system: If I am allowing myself to be led by the Holy Spirit, I won't drive recklessly and as a result I won't be subject to the penalty of the traffic law.

It's the same with the Torah Law. If I'm not breaking the Law, I'm not under threat of the penalty of the Law.

The Ruach Hakodesh (Holy Spirit) will never lead me to break Torah. Verses 22-23 list the character traits and actions that are the Fruit of the Spirit. Verse 23 says, "Against such there is no Law." So by definition, if I'm being led by the Spirit, I am not breaking the Torah.

Galatians 5:18 can best be understood as saying, But if you are being led by the Spirit, you are not under the penalty of the Law.

How can you be led by the Ruach Hakodesh? First ask to be given faith in Messiah Yeshua. When you have received that, ask for the Holy Spirit. Then you will begin to learn and to listen.

Galatians 6

Paul uses chapter 6 to continue to teach and uplift with instruction.

Set one another straight in meekness, looking at ourselves first.

Bear on another's burdens. No one is better than the other.

Share teaching with one another.

Reminder that we shall sow what we reap and be careful not to stray from the path of Elohim.

Sow in the flesh... reap corruption in the flesh (eternal concepts here)

Sow to the Spirit and reap everlasting life.

Do good to one another, especially those in the house of belief and stay firm in this goodness.

The men of formal Judaism desire more and more and more people become circumcised so that they can boast to one another concerning members, converts, and rule. This is sowing to the flesh.