


Triennial Torah Study – 4th Year – 16/03/2013

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

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

Deut 9	1 Chron 5-6	Eph 1-2	
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Deuteronomy 9

Review of Israel's Rebellions

Moses continues explaining that Israel is not going to inherit the Promised Land because of their righteousness, but because of the foreign people's wickedness, and because of the unconditional promise God had made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to bring their descendants into the land (verses 4-6). To drive the point home even more, Moses reminds them of the episode with the golden calf, along with some of their other rebellions, and how they, being a stiff-necked people, provoked God so much that He was willing to totally destroy them had it not been for Moses' intervention (verses 14, 18-20). To introduce this section, God inspired Moses in verse 7 to use the strong statement, "Remember! Do not forget..." This double imperative provides emphasis and adds weight to the sober reminders that follow.

We too, if we are blessed today with physical possessions or status, might think that we obtained these because of our own righteousness. But God may have given us blessings for quite a different reason. It is possible to deceive ourselves, thinking that God is adding physical things to us because we are seeking Him first, when, in reality, we are doing nothing of the kind. Perhaps the blessings are even a test to see where our loyalties lie.

Verses 9 and 19 show Moses as a beloved servant of God because of His love for the people of God. He stood in the gap as Jesus did for us all—and reflected the true character of God in his attitude. Verses 25-29 demonstrate that it pleases God when we remind Him of His steadfast character and the promises He has made. Of course, He doesn't need reminding—rather, it shows Him that we remember who He is and what He has done for us and for others.

The Trans-Jordanian Tribes (1 Chronicles 5)

Chapter 5 concerns the tribes who settled east of the Jordan—Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh.

Notice verses 1-2 in the New Revised Standard Version: “The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel. (He was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father’s bed [when he slept with his father’s concubine Bilhah] his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, so that he [Reuben] is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright; though Judah became prominent among his brothers and a ruler [“the chief ruler,” King James Version] came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph).”

This passage is important in explaining two things. First, the transfer of the birthright from Jacob’s firstborn son. And second, the fact that the birthright and kingship were split up. Reuben, though the firstborn of Jacob by his first wife Leah, was not permitted to receive the birthright blessing upon his descendants (or the promise of kingship) because of the defilement he brought on himself. Instead the two elements of birthright and scepter were split out and went to the next two in line. The kingship went to the fourth son of Jacob by Leah, Judah, skipping over Leah’s second and third sons, Simeon and Levi, presumably because they were not entitled to tribal territory and dominion, having disqualified themselves through their cruelty (Genesis 49:5-7; 34:25-30). The birthright went to another firstborn, Joseph—Jacob’s firstborn by his other wife Rachel (skipping over Jacob’s children by his concubines Bilhah and Zilpah).

This chapter further informs us that in the days of Saul, the Reubenites and Gadites fought against the Hagarites (verses 10, 18-19), perhaps meaning descendants of Hagar (and thus Ishmaelite or related Arab tribes). “The Hagarites and their allies were probably desert peoples who felt increasing pressure from the expanding Israelite population. Their efforts at resisting the Israelites took place in the days of Saul (v. 10), though the narratives of Saul do not mention them” (Nelson Study Bible, note on verse 19). We see here in the midst of these genealogies another example of crying out for God’s help and His answering prayer (verses 20-22)—though here God answers collective prayer rather than that of an individual, as in the previous chapter with Jabez.

Finally, we earlier read the end of chapter 5, regarding the trans-Jordanian tribes’ deportation to Assyria, in harmony with Israel’s history in the book of Kings (see Bible Reading Program comments on 2 Kings 16:6-9; 15:29-31; 1 Chronicles 5:23-26; 2 Kings 17:1-2; 16:10-18; 15:38; 2 Chronicles 27:9).

The Family of Levi (1 Chronicles 6)

As The Expositor’s Bible Commentary explains in its introductory notes on the chapter: “Chapter 6 commences with Pentateuchal citations and concludes with territorial lists taken from Joshua, but it consists primarily of materials not found outside Chronicles. It takes up four major subjects: the line of the high priests (vv. 3-15, 49-53), the three clans of Levi (vv. 16-30), the Levitical musicians (vv. 31-48), and the cities that were assigned for the tribe’s use (vv. 54-81). The Levitical organization of David’s day receives further treatment in chapters 23-26”— which we read earlier in the Bible Reading Program.

Note the distribution of the Levites in the land. The priests were mainly given towns south of

Jerusalem, with the remainder of the tribe of Kohath receiving towns just north of Jerusalem. Merari had cities in the Trans-Jordan area east of Jerusalem and in Zebulun in the northwest part of the country. Gershon had cities in the northern part of the country.

Chapter 6 also gives us an interesting detail bearing on biblical chronology: “David’s musician Heman, 1000 B.C., is eighteen generations removed from Moses’ adversary Korah, in 1445. This poses a problem for those advocating a late date for the Exodus, in the 1200’s...let alone those who would place Levi’s grandson Izhar within the same period” (note on verses 33-37).

Ephesians 1 (<http://www.tnnonline.net/tnnpress/commentaries/>)

The Epistle of Ephesians is a letter that contains a very important message for the people of God, who are to be encouraged in accomplishing His mission for the world. Yeshua the Messiah is portrayed as exalted above the cosmos, with His resurrection power being accessible to all Believers. God’s people have been selected by Him to be holy, corporately composing a Temple in which His presence can dwell. By the sacrificial work of the cross, Jewish and non-Jewish followers of the Messiah are to be united together as a “one new humanity”—the mystery of the gospel! All are to serve one another in the Body of Messiah in mutual submission, as Yeshua’s thoughts and mindset nourish the whole ekklesia. People are encouraged to emulate God in their behavior, living distinctively different lives from those around them.

In varying degrees, Ephesians has often been highly valued by today’s Messianic movement because of its emphasis of Jewish and non-Jewish Believers being a part of the

Commonwealth of Israel. It does speak of the unity that we are to all have in the Lord, as a testament to the grander redemption of Creation that will come in the eschaton. But while

Ephesians is a text that we often turn to, Messianics are often not aware of the more detailed issues surrounding this letter present in contemporary scholarship. Were the “Ephesians” the only audience who received the letter, or was this a general epistle written to Believers in Asia Minor? Did the Apostle Paul really write Ephesians, or was it written by a second-generation Believer in his name? What is the specific debate surrounding the dividing wall that has been abolished by the cross—is the wall abolished really the Torah of Moses in its entirety or could it be something else? Are husbands the head/authority of their wives or the head/source of their wives? How interconnected is the composition of Ephesians with the composition of Colossians?

In the commentary Ephesians for the Practical Messianic, TNN Online editor J.K. McKee addresses the known and unknown questions that this important letter asks us as Messianic Believers. A large Jewish and Greco-Roman Mediterranean background is considered of the issues. Careful and detailed attention has been given to the opinions present today surrounding the dividing wall, and complementarian and egalitarian views of the household codes. References to Tanach (Old Testament) concepts in the author’s words are considered,

along with careful consideration for how Ephesians challenges us as a faith community trying to achieve our Father's objectives. Poignant questions as to how we can be molded into a mature people are asked for today's season of Messianic uncertainty.

The letter of Ephesians among the Pauline corpus also addresses First Century issues from which today's Believers can gain much insight. As Christopher J.H. Wright reminds us, "Most of Paul's letters were written in the heat of missionary efforts: wrestling with the theological basis of the inclusion of the Gentiles, affirming the need for Jew and Gentile to accept one another in Christ and in the [assembly], tackling the baffling range of new problems that assailed young [assemblies] as the gospel took root in the world of Greek polytheism, confronting incipient heresies with clear affirmations of the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ, and so on."

Ephesians 2 (http://allanturner.com/eph_2.html)

Salvation By Grace Through Faith—2:1 – 10

(1) And you {He made alive}, who were dead in trespasses and sins, (2) in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, (3) among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, (5) even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), (6) and raised {us} up together, and made {us} sit together in the heavenly {places} in Christ Jesus, (7) that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in {His} kindness toward us in

Christ Jesus. (8) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves;

{it is} the gift of God, (9) not of works, lest anyone should boast. (10) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

1. And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins. With the starting of this new chapter, there is a transition in thought. Paul, who has been praising God and thanking Him for the faith of the Ephesians, and praying for their continued enlightenment, now begins to remind them of what they once were and what they now are in Christ. In the past, these Ephesians, although they knew the mysteries and secrets involved in their paganism, were spiritually dead in their disobedience and sins. They have now been "quickened" or made alive (cf. Colossians 2:13).

2. In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. These Ephesians, both Jews and Gentiles, had once been among the "living dead" (I Timothy 5:6), who are ruled by Satan, "the prince of the power of the air." In other words, when we "walk"

or conduct our lives in a worldly fashion (i.e., with no consideration of what God has to say) we are allowing ourselves to be controlled by the devil. God works in His sons “both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). Satan, too, works in his children (cf. John 8:42-44).

3. Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. Paul makes it clear that the matter of disobedience and sin is a universal problem. None have been immune. We were all in the same condition. We were all part of that group that we now understand is made up of the “living dead.” At one time, “all” Christians, just like everyone else, walked according to the lusts and desires of the “flesh” (which is used here by Paul in its negative sense) and our debased minds. According to Galatians 5:19-21, some of these are: “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like....” In this condition, our natures were corrupted by disobedience and sin and we were doomed to suffer God’s wrath.
4. But, God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us. The picture of the preceding verses is one of ruin and judgment; nevertheless, the but here is quite emphatic, and totally reverses this very bleak picture. God hates sin and disobedience but is abundant in His mercy toward the sinner. And if mercy is His attitude towards us, and it most certainly is, then surely it is His great love for us that serves as His motive for all He does for us in Christ. And, as we have already learned, this great love began with God in eternity and is the reason “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world” (1:4), “having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (1:5).
5. Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. The process of ruin has now been reversed. We are no longer the “living dead.” Instead, we have been “born again” (John 3:7), “raised from the dead...[to] walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4), or “made alive...together with Christ,” “having forgiven [us] all [our] trespasses” (Colossians 2:13). (By grace you have been saved). God acted toward us (the world) in mercy motivated by love when we were in spiritually dead. Consequently, this salvation we now enjoy in Christ is the result of God’s grace or unmerited favor toward us.
6. And raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Just as the omnipotence of God raised up Christ alive, it also raises us up spiritually to “a newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Christ, of course, was not just raised up alive, but He was also exalted “at His [the Father’s] right hand in the heavenly places” (1:20). In 1:3 and 1:20, “the heavenly places” clearly refers to the heaven of God’s glory, the dwelling place of God Himself. Here, in this verse, “the heavenly places in Christ” refer to the church, the kingdom of God on earth. Speaking of this spiritual kingdom when He stood before Pilate, Jesus said: “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews” (John 18:36). Christians have been raised up

to reign together with Christ in His church, the kingdom of God on earth. Quite appropriately Christians are referred to elsewhere as “kings and priests” or, literally, “a kingdom of priests” (Revelation 1:6). In 6:12, Paul uses “the heavenly places” to refer to the super mundane or spiritual domain of demonic forces who array themselves against us. This expression then has at least three different meanings and is best determined by the context in which it is used.

7. That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. The “ages to come” is eternity. In eternity God is going to make such a spectacle of His grace and kindness toward the redeemed in Christ that all the heavenly hosts and saints will glorify Him.

8. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. If they were Jews, these Ephesians had not been saved by their perfect keeping of the

Law of Moses, and if they were Gentiles, they were not saved because of what they had learned through their mystery religions. They were saved by grace (this is God’s part) through faith (this is their part). The “gift” is salvation, not faith. If God, because of His love, kindness, mercy, and grace, had not initiated His eternal scheme of redemption, there is no way man could be saved. Faith, of course, comes by hearing and believing God’s Word (Romans 10:17). Therefore, salvation, a gift of God, is something to be seized rather than achieved. Furthermore, and one must never lose sight of this fact, faith, truth faith, the kind of faith under discussion in this verse, is more than just believing (James 2:19).

9. Not of works, lest anyone should boast. Again, their salvation, which was a gift from God, did not come by the works of the Law, nor by any works of man’s invention or device. Salvation was not bestowed by God as a result of their efforts, therefore there was nothing for them to boast about. It is absolutely unconscionable for anyone to use what Paul is here writing as an excuse for teaching that man cannot and must not do anything in order to be saved, because, if he did, it would not be totally of God’s grace. There are the works of men in which, before God, no man can glory, and there are the works “of God” which all men are obligated to do by faith (John 6:29). In other words, our faith obligates us to obey (cf. James 2:14-26).

10. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. The church of Christ is the workmanship of God, and we were “created in Christ Jesus for good works.” These works “of God” were determined “beforehand” in the mind of God, and it is for the doing of these works that we were created.

As God, through His omnipotence, created Adam, so He creates us spiritually in Christ. Again, “in Christ” tells where this creation takes place. It is in our connection with Christ: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (II Corinthians 5:17). Consequently, we are told to not just be hearers, but doers of the “work” also (James 1:25).

(11) Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh — who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands — (12) that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (13) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ.

11. Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—. “You” and “we” have been used freely up to this point. As has already been said, some of the Ephesians were Jewish, but most were Gentiles. Thus far, Paul has not used these pronouns to distinguish between Jew and Gentile, but here he makes a distinction. He now uses “you” to specifically refer to the Gentile Christians. Nevertheless, there are two groups in the church at Ephesus: the Uncircumcision (the Gentiles) and the Circumcision (the Jews). In their previous condition, neither of these groups were right with God. Notice that the Jews had been circumcised in the flesh not in their hearts.

12. That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. The former condition of these Gentiles was totally reprehensible. They knew nothing about Christ. They had never had the advantage of being citizens of the commonwealth of Israel and were completely ignorant of the promises and covenants God had made with Abraham (Genesis 12:2,3). They were without God and had absolutely no hope of ever getting out of this world alive. The five-fold negative description of this verse has a cumulative effect. The situation grows worse and worse with the last clause, “and without God in the world,” as the climax.

13. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ. But now, in Christ, these who had been so far from being what they ought to be, were now, by their obedience to the gospel, made near by the blood of Christ. This was always God’s intent. Saving the Gentiles was not an afterthought of God. When Jesus came into this world to seek and save that which was lost, He said: “As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:15,16). Christ Our Peace—2:14 – 18

(14) For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division {between us}, (15) having abolished in His flesh the enmity, {that is,} the law of commandments {contained} in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man {from} the two, {thus} making peace, (16) and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. (17) And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. (18) For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

14. For He Himself is our peace. Jesus Christ, as a result of shedding His blood, is not just the peacemaker, but is “our peace,” because in His person, as God-man, the reconciliation took place. Through Him there is peace between God and man and Jew and Gentile. This double meaning runs through this verse and the one following. This latter peace, the one he mentions in this verse, is actually made possible by the first. Who has made both one. Both Jew and Gentile are one in their connection with Christ. If they truly belong to Christ, they are unified. This is the only way Jew and Gentile will ever be one. And has broken down the middle wall of division between us. The wall of division between these two groups was the Law of Moses, with its ordinances and observances (cf. Acts 10:28), which kept the Jews separate from the Gentiles, much like the actual wall of division in the Jerusalem Temple beyond which a Gentile was not permitted to go.

15. Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances. Through His death, Jesus Christ abolished the Law (Colossians 2:14). In other words, we are no longer under a system of perfect law keeping for justification, but under grace (Romans 6:14). So as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace. The long feud between the human family is healed in Christ. There is now one-fold and one shepherd. As Paul said in the Galatian letter: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:28,29).

16. And that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross. This is the reconciliation that Paul wrote about in II Corinthians 5:19, “that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” The word of reconciliation is the gospel, which, when obeyed, reconciles man to God first, and then, as Paul has pointed out in the previous verses, to other men, regardless of their race, sex, or social status (Galatians 3:28). This reconciliation is in the “one body” of 1:22,23 and Colossians 1:18, which could not have existed without the work of the cross. Thereby putting to death the enmity. How? “By His grace through the redemption that is in Christ, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:24-26). Through the cross of Christ, sin has been punished. Therefore, God is just. Through the cross of Christ, the penalty for our sins has been paid vicariously. Therefore, God can be the justifier of those who exercise faith in His Son.

17. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. This preaching was not the preaching that Christ had done personally, but was the preaching done by the apostles and other preachers of the gospel (cf. Hebrews 1:2). Both the Gentile and the Jew heard this preaching.

18. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. In order to see the king, one had to be introduced by one close to him. Paul uses this symbolism to demonstrate that it is only through this “one Mediator, the Man Jesus Christ” (I Timothy 2:5), that any of us, Jew or Gentile, have access to the Father. However, this is not done without the work of the “one Spirit” (I Corinthians 12:13).

Christ Our Cornerstone—2:19 – 22

(19) Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, (20) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief {cornerstone}, (21) in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, (22) in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

19. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. Being formed into one sanctified household (the house of God, family of God, or church of Christ) along with the Jews, the Gentiles were strangers and foreigners no longer.

20. Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The household of God is a “spiritual house” constructed out of “living stones” (I Peter 2:5). The laying of this foundation was accomplished by the preaching of the gospel (cf. 3:5). Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. The two parts of this spiritual house are held together by Jesus Christ Himself, the chief cornerstone.

21. In whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. Jesus Christ does not just hold it together, but He also causes it to grow into a sacred temple (I Corinthians 3:16) by bringing new members (converts) into the church.

22. In whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit. In their connection with Christ, both the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Ephesus were part of the universal body of Christ. In sum-total with all the other churches, they formed the invisible body of Christ, the church which He built (Matthew 16:18) and purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). “A habitation of God in the Spirit” is equivalent to “a holy temple in the Lord” in verse 21. God in the Spirit (i.e., Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) dwells in the church, His sacred temple (I Corinthians 3:16), a spiritual house not built with hands (Acts 7:48 and 17:24).