

Triennial Torah Study – 5th Year 26/04/2014

 sightedmoon.com /triennial-torah-study-5-year-04042015 /

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

Gen 35	1 Sam 28-30	Ps 71	Mark 14:1-31
--------	-------------	-------	--------------

Aftermath of Shechem's Fall; Reuben Loses His Birthright (Genesis 35:1-26)

Just as God protected Israel (Jacob) from the sword of Esau, He also protected Israel from the revenge of his neighbors in Canaan. By referring back to the deliverance from Esau (verse 1), God reminds Jacob that he does not need to be afraid now, that Israel should travel to Bethel, and that God will provide him protection once again. True to His word, terror is upon the cities of the land and the inhabitants do not pursue Jacob's family.

To show God the proper respect and praise for this promise of protection, Jacob makes sure to command his household to put away the foreign gods among them. These were most likely the idols Rachel had earlier stolen as well as household idols of some value that Simeon and Levi probably took in their plunder of Shechem described in the preceding verses (compare 34:29). Once Jacob reaches Bethel, he also builds an altar in honor of the true God to thank Him for His blessing. God seems pleased with Jacob's faith and obedience, as He reaffirms with Jacob the promises made to Abraham and Isaac. God even repeats His renaming of Jacob with the new name of Israel, having originally done so in chapter 32.

God gives again the promise of a line of kings (given before in Genesis 17:4-6). But in giving the promise of national blessing, God adds something mentioned for the first time in Scripture—the promise of a single nation and a company (or “group” in the Moffatt Translation) of nations. The Ferrar Fenton Translation says, “a Nation and an Assembly of Nations.” The New International Version reads, “a nation and a community of nations.” We will see more about this prophecy when we get to Genesis 48, where the birthright blessing passes on to Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh—Manasseh becoming the great single nation and Ephraim becoming the company or group of nations.

We are also told in chapter 35 of the death of Rachel in giving birth to Benjamin and her burial at Bethlehem. This tragic event is followed by the shameful incident in which Reuben defiles his father's bed by sleeping with Bilhah, the mother of his brothers, Dan and Naphtali. Reuben was Jacob's firstborn by Leah, which bestowed on him the double-portion birthright inheritance. Yet as just mentioned, the birthright would actually pass to the sons of Joseph. According to 1 Chronicles 5:1-2, this sin of Reuben is what caused Israel to give the birthright to Joseph instead. So not only was this a sin of defilement and adultery, it had long-lasting consequences on future events, determining the ultimate recipients of the promises of wealth God made to Abraham.

Death of Isaac; Family of Esau (Genesis 35:27-36:43)

When Jacob returned to Hebron, his father Isaac was still alive and would live another 15 years or so before dying at the age of 180.

When Isaac died, Esau and Jacob came together again to bury him with his father, mother and wife—that is, Abraham, Sarah and Rebekah—at the cave of Machpelah (compare Genesis 49:31). Leah and Jacob would later be buried there also (49:29—50:13).

Saul Consults a Medium and Pays the Price (1 Samuel 28:3-25; 31; 1 Chronicles 10)

The Philistines move from Aphek, where they had dismissed David (1 Samuel 29), to Jezreel (29:11) to confront Saul and the Israelites. They gather at the town of Shunem, a place we will again read about in the days of the prophet Elisha (see 2 Kings 4:8ff), while Saul pitches his camp at Mount Gilboa, about four miles south (1 Samuel 23:4).

David had previously stated regarding Saul, “As the LORD lives, the LORD shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish” (26:10). Saul’s time to die is now at hand. It is a very gloomy and depressing time for him. Samuel has died and any appeal to God goes unanswered. God explains to us, “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2). Saul does not have the confidence he possessed when God’s Spirit was working with him (compare 1 Samuel 11:6; 16:14). The day before the battle (28:19), he becomes fearful and desperate and, instead of true repentance, once again turns away from God—this time by essentially turning to Satan for an answer.

God’s instructions to Israel are quite clear in this matter:

“Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:31).

“And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people” (20:6).

“There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you” (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). The original King James Version renders “medium” as “consulter with familiar spirits.”

Saul in fact, during his reign, did obey God’s instruction in this matter by removing these “abominations” from the land (1 Samuel 28:3). Evidently, though, there is at least one who evaded detection, a woman of the town of En Dor.

Now we come to a two-part question that many, including many biblical scholars, do not know how to answer: Does the woman really conjure up a spirit? And is that spirit actually the prophet Samuel? Let’s look at some facts:

Some would argue that there is no entity really brought up here because Saul does not actually see one himself—he only reasons that Samuel is present from the woman’s description. But whether or not the

woman is a fraud and trickster, what happens surprises even her (verse 12). And even though Saul does not see anyone, the account says that “the woman saw Samuel” (verse 12). Moreover, there is clearly spoken communication from this “Samuel” (verses 15-16). But is this truly Samuel, the deceased prophet of God? It would not have to be from the wording here. For instance, a person on a hallucinogenic drug might say he saw something that was not really there, and we would consider that he did “see” it—seeing in this context being a matter of perception rather than sensory input from light actually entering the eye. Since the Bible says the entity spoke, something was definitely present. But what the woman sees is not actually visible to the naked eye—or Saul would be able to see it too. This means that the image the woman sees must be projected into her mind through supernatural means. So we ask: Is the prophet Samuel the one doing this?

First of all, the Bible very clearly points to a future resurrection of the dead. Many “orthodox” believers, however, maintain that this is simply the rejoining of a conscious, disembodied soul with a new body. Yet the Bible repeatedly describes the current state of the dead as one of “sleep” (Daniel 12:2; 1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15; 2 Peter 3:4). Ecclesiastes makes it even more clear: “For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing... for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going” (9:5, 10). Thus, a dead person is completely unconscious. The resurrection is an awakening—a return to consciousness.

What this means is that there is no such thing as ghosts, as they are commonly defined—the spirits of the dead still wandering the earth. But there certainly are spirit beings who, unable to materialize, can appear as ghostly apparitions (compare Luke 24:39—where Christ shows His disciples that He is not one of these). The Bible elsewhere calls these beings unclean spirits—or demons. They are fallen angels, spirit beings who have rebelled against God under the arch-demon, Satan the Devil.

Now, the woman of En Dor is a medium, consulting with, as already noted, “familiar spirits” (1 Samuel 28:7 KJV). Are these dead people? No. For we have already seen that there is no consciousness in death. Consider also: Why would God impose the death penalty for communicating with dead friends and relatives if that were really possible? One scholar explains: “The reason the death penalty was inflicted for consulting ‘familiar spirits’ is that these were ‘evil spirits,’ or fallen angels impersonating the dead... God hardly could have prescribed the death penalty for communicating with the spirits of deceased loved ones if such spirits existed and if such a communication were possible. There is no moral reason for God to outlaw, on pain of death, the human desire to communicate with deceased loved ones. The problem is that such communication is impossible, because the dead are unconscious and do not communicate with the living. Any communication that occurs is not with the spirit of the dead, but with evil spirits” (Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection?*, 1997, p. 168).

Furthermore, it would be quite odd for God to send a message to Saul through the prophet Samuel when the account very clearly states that God will not answer Saul’s inquiries “either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets” (verse 6). And consider that this is because of Saul’s disobedience (compare Isaiah 59:2). So why would God now go ahead and answer him in the face of even greater disobedience on Saul’s part in the use of a medium? That just does not seem reasonable.

Thus, the being the medium sees ascending out of the earth (1 Samuel 28:13) is nothing more than a demon. Even “the church fathers [early Catholic theologians] believed that a demon impersonated Samuel and appeared to Saul” (Nelson Study Bible, note on 28:12). Saul only perceives that it must be Samuel. He certainly wants it to be Samuel! The apostle Paul is inspired to write: “And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into [or disguises himself as] an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into [or disguise themselves as] ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). So it would not be unusual for a demon to

appear as Samuel. And we know from all other scriptures that pertain to this subject that this is not the prophet Samuel speaking.

Let's look at the conclusion of Saul's deed. He certainly doesn't come away with anything profitable. In fact, he is so disheartened that he can barely eat! These scriptures should once again remind us of God's instructions against consulting with the evil spirit realm.

Continuing on, in 1 Samuel 31 and 1 Chronicles 10, we arrive at the very sad conclusion to Saul's reign as king over Israel. Severely wounded, he commits suicide. Yet not only Saul, but also three of his sons, including David's close friend Jonathan, die in this battle. Afterward, in a particularly heinous incident, the Philistines cut off Saul's head and put it on display in the temple of Dagon while his body and those of his sons are fastened to the wall of Beth Shan, at the junction of the Jezreel and Jordan valleys, to advertise their victory.

In a daring move, the men of Jabesh Gilead swoop in under cover of darkness and recover the bodies of Saul and his sons. In our highlights on 1 Samuel 11, we mentioned that Saul may have had ancestral roots in Jabesh Gilead in relation to Judges 21. Furthermore, this was the city that had been rescued from the Ammonites by Saul in his first act as king, and the Jabesh Gileadites apparently had a very fond remembrance and debt of gratitude to him, which they repaid in their recovery and burial of his and his sons' bones and a week of fasting. The bodies they burned—quite unusual among the ancient Israelites and perhaps done because these bodies had been mutilated by the Philistines. Years later, David will have the bones of Saul and Jonathan exhumed and reburied in Benjamin, in the tomb of Saul's father Kish (2 Samuel 21:11-14).

The account in 1 Chronicles 10 describes the reason for the death of Saul: "So Saul died for his unfaithfulness [or 'transgressions' KJV] which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the LORD; therefore He killed him [by the circumstances He directed], and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse" (verses 13-14).

One may ask, Did not David also commit transgressions before God?

Yes, all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). The difference is in the heart. When David sins, he has a pattern—a habit—of acknowledging his sins before God and repenting. By contrast, Saul took no responsibility for his actions, seeking to deny his sins or reverse their consequences instead of repenting of them. Moreover, Saul's habit was that of continually seeking his own will. Remember that when Saul did not follow God's instruction, Samuel said, "But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart [David], and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you" (1 Samuel 13:14).

As for Jonathan's death, we don't know why God allowed it. Perhaps his presence would not have fit into God's continuing plan for David's life. In the same way, we might wonder why God allowed Herod to put James the brother of John to death early in the New Testament era, while Peter was miraculously delivered from Herod. God has not revealed His reasons, but we can always be confident that His decisions are for the ultimate good of His servants (see Romans 8:28).

David Defeats the Amalekites (1 Samuel 30)

Having left the gathering of Philistine forces at Aphek, David and his troops march the 50 miles back south to Ziklag—about a two-day march, and they arrive the third day (verse 1). Upon returning, they find that the

city has been invaded by the Amalekites. Why God has allowed this to happen is not revealed. Perhaps it is to bring further destruction upon the Amalekites. Perhaps it is to keep David from returning north to aid the Israelites against the Philistines. Whatever the case, God does allow it to happen and once again shows His mercy and power to David. Here's what we do know: 1) Instead of acting out of vengeance and anger, David appeals to God for an answer. 2) God delivers everything back to David—plus enough spoils to share with more than a dozen cities that David has frequented. 3) David's mercy is also evident as the spoils are shared with the men who were willing but not able to continue the journey to fight the Amalekites, to the dismay of others referred to as “wicked men” or, literally, “men of Belial.”

Don't forget, when David was anointed to be the next king of Israel by Samuel, the Spirit of God came on him “from that day forward” (1 Samuel 16:13). As long as David stays close to God and appeals to Him, the fruit of that Spirit is evident. But there are also times, as with all of us, when David uses his own carnal reasoning (compare Romans 8:7). And as is also the case with all of us, he and many others suffer pain and futility due to such reasoning and the wrong actions that flow from it.

Through the ups and downs, good and evil, blessing and curses that we read of David, we can conclude David's ultimate destiny, not by our reasoning alone but through the inspired Word of God. It reveals that after the return of Yeshua Messiah to the earth, the people of Israel will once again be united as one nation, and David will be their king (Ezekiel 37:22-24).

A Plea for Help Against Foes in Old Age; The Blessed Reign of the King's Son (Psalms 71-72)

Psalm 71 is “a prayer for God's help in old age when enemies threaten because they see that the king's strength is waning.... The psalm bears no title, but it may well be that Ps 70 was viewed by the editors of the Psalms as the introduction to Ps 71 (compare vv. 1, 12-13 with 70:1-2, 5), in which case the psalm is ascribed to David (in his old age; see vv. 9, 18). This suggestion gains support from the fact that Ps 72 [which immediately follows and closes Book II of the Psalter] is identified as a prayer by and/or for King Solomon” (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, note on Psalm 71). And Psalm 72 ends by describing the psalms that have come before as prayers of David (see verse 20). The Greek Septuagint translation adds a superscription to the beginning of Psalm 71, labeling it “of David.”

The opening of Psalm 71—the declaration of trust in God, the plea for His righteous deliverance, that He would bend His ear and be a strong refuge, and the identification of Him as the psalmist's rock and fortress (Psalm 71:1-3) is essentially repeated from David's opening to Psalm 31 (verses 1-3). As David's suffering in that psalm foreshadowed the sufferings of the Messiah, it is likely that Psalm 71 is similarly prophetic, though Yeshua's sufferings came when He was a young man, in terms of His human life.

One difference we may note here in verse 3 is the statement, “You have given the commandment to save me.” The psalmist recognizes that God has all the forces of the universe and heavenly realm at His disposal. He has but to command the psalmist's deliverance for it to be effected—and indeed the psalmist knows that God has so commanded it. His words bring to mind the centurion's response when Yeshua offered to come to his home to heal the servant. The centurion said, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed” (Matthew 8:5-8).

Psalm 71 is a welcome comfort for believers enduring a lingering trial that drains their strength, whether physically, emotionally or mentally. God is our Rock, our safe place.

The psalmist, who is likely David, is a man who has trusted God his whole life. His relationship with God began in his youth and has continued ever since (verses 5-6, 17). The statement about God having brought

him forth from his mother's womb (verse 6) is also found in Psalm 22 (verse 9), another messianic psalm of David.

The psalmist in 71:7 says "he has become 'a portent' [NIV] (mopeth 'a wonder' [NKJV]) to his contemporaries, i.e., a sign of trouble, chastisement, and divine retribution" (Expositor's Bible Commentary, note on verses 5-8). Many see his troubles and weakness as evidence of God's punitive judgment on him, as would later be wrongly assumed regarding Yeshua Messiah (see Isaiah 53:4). Enemies deduce that now is a good time to rise up against him because they think "God has forsaken him...[and] there is none to deliver him" (Psalm 71:11).

Verses 12-13 are a restatement of David's urgent plea for deliverance and the confounding of his enemies in Psalm 70:1-2, thus serving to connect Psalms 70 and 71. As noted above, Psalm 70, a reprise of the end of Psalm 40, appears to condense the themes of Psalm 69 and to introduce Psalm 71.

The psalmist will continue to hope and praise God (verses 14-16). He makes a final plea for God to not forsake him so that he may sing of God's power and strength to the present generation and those yet to come (verses 17-18; compare 22:30). And he is confident that God will save him (71:19-24).

In verse 20, when the psalmist says that God will bring him back up "from the depths of the earth," he is speaking metaphorically of being rescued from his life-threatening situation and his despondency (compare 40:2; 69:2, 14-15). Yet, being old, he could also be contemplating the end of his life and looking forward to his future resurrection from the grave. Given the messianic nature of this and related psalms, it also seems logical to view this as Yeshua Messiah looking forward to His own resurrection.

Mark 14:1-31

We begin chapter 14 with a time marker:

The Passover and the Unleavened Bread was after two days. We are told the chief priests and scribes are seeking how to take Yeshua through treachery and put Him to death. What a stark contrast to the first Passover in Egypt both in attitude and conduct!

Yeshua is anointed with oil of genuine nard by a woman. The perfume was very costly and some complained of it being wasted. Can we imagine this? They scolded her for "wasting" the oil on Yeshua when it could have been sold and the money given to the poor.

Yeshua said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and you are able to do good to them, whenever you wish. But you do not always have Me." This deed caused her to be remembered forever among the proclaiming of the Good News.

Judas Iscariot decides to deliver up Yeshua to the chief priests for silver.

Some of the taught ones begin preparation for the Passover service to be spent with Yeshua. He gives them instruction on what to do and where to go, and later that evening they are all together having a meal. This is when Yeshua let it be known that one of them would deliver Him up for slaughter.

Yeshua took bread, blessed Yehovah, and broke it and said, "Take, eat, this is My Body."

Yeshua took the cup, gave thanks. He gave it to the taught ones and said, "This is My blood, that of the RENEWED covenant, which is shed for many."

They sang a song and went out to the Mount of Olives.

Yeshua tells them they will be scattered and stumble in Him. Peter denies it and says he would never deny Yeshua. This is when Yeshua tells Peter he will indeed deny him THREE times before the night is over!