

Triennial Torah Study – 5th Year 24/05/2014 _ _ _ _ .

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

By Joseph F. Dumond

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

<https://sightedmoon.com/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf>

Gen 39	2 Sam 4-7	Ps 79-80	Luke 1:27-80
--------	-----------	----------	--------------

Joseph in Potiphar's House (Genesis 39)

Joseph was sold again by the Arabian traders to an officer of the Egyptian pharaoh. God surely had a hand in Joseph being sold to Potiphar, "in order that in the house of one so closely connected with the court, he might receive that previous training which was necessary for the high office he was destined to fill, and in the school of adversity learn the lessons of practical wisdom that were to be of greatest utility and importance in his future career" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary*, note on verse 1).

Although Joseph prospered in Potiphar's house, this was not God's ultimate purpose for Joseph in his human life—God had a greater design for him. To reach that intent, Joseph had to be thrown into prison, creating the environment where God would later exalt Joseph to the right hand of Pharaoh. This illustrates something very important for us to remember: Sometimes Believers must endure hardship and trial to reach God's final outcome. Keep in mind that God has created us for an awesome purpose. While Joseph would eventually be taken from prison and given a position in Egypt equivalent to what we would call the nation's prime minister, we will eventually be taken from this physical, limiting existence and, along with Joseph, will be made co-rulers with God over the entire vast universe! So if it takes suffering and tribulation to help us attain that purpose, God will allow us to be subjected to it. Yet, although things may look quite bleak at times, God will never leave us nor forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 13:5). So we can be patient in times of trial, trusting God and continuing to serve and obey him, knowing that "all things work together for good to those who love God" (Romans 8:28) and that He will not allow us to be tried beyond what we are able to endure (1 Corinthians 10:13).

We can learn *many* lessons from Joseph's example. Take some time to look up the following scriptures and notice their relation to this trying period of Joseph's life: Proverbs 22:29; 10:4; 12:24; Matthew 25:21; 1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Peter 3:17; Romans 5:3-4; 8:35-39.

One important lesson is that obeying God in all circumstances ultimately works out for the best. Joseph knew that adultery was sin and refused—even though it may have cost him his life—for

He trusted in God to bless those who obey Him. (And even if Joseph had lost his physical life, God would have blessed him in eternity.)

Incidentally, this particular episode brings up something else we should notice. Joseph's response to Potiphar's wife's seduction provides us with important information that has sometimes gone overlooked. Joseph asks, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). Many today believe that the Ten Commandments were not in place before the time of Moses. Yet not only do we see Joseph's virtue in his response, but we also find proof that God's law was known at the time. According to Romans 5:13, "Sin is not imputed when there is no law." Yet Joseph clearly calls adultery sin, thereby showing that God's law was in force prior to its codification around 250 years later at Mount Sinai.

Joab Murders Abner; Murder of Ishbosheth (2 Samuel 3:22-4:12)

Joab seeks revenge for his brother Asahel's death by murdering Abner. Yet it's not a tit for tat. For while Abner killed Joab's brother during the course of battle and in self-defense—after repeatedly warning Asahel to call off his pursuit and even offering him the opportunity to fully arm himself for a fair fight (2:18-23)—Joab kills Abner in a deceitful plot. Under false pretenses, Joab stabs him in the stomach—where Asahel was pierced by Abner's spear. Moreover, this treacherous act occurs at Hebron, a city of refuge, wherein an avenger of blood is not permitted to kill a murderer without a trial (Numbers 35:22-25). However, it may be that the act actually occurs in a suburb just outside the Levitical city itself (compare Joshua 21:11-12; 2 Samuel 2:3).

Wisely, David makes it a point to let the Israelites know that it was not *his* intention to kill Abner. These are already very delicate times, as David and Abner had just begun an important peace process in the unification of all of Israel. So it is no wonder that David speaks so strongly against his nephew Joab, pronouncing a curse on him and his descendants. David declares a fast and personally follows Abner's coffin to the gravesite in an outward show of honor and respect. He refers to Abner as "a prince and a great man." David's skills in statesmanship prove successful in gaining the hearts of the people.

In 2 Samuel 4, we learn of a son of Saul's son Jonathan, Mephibosheth, who was five years old at the time of Israel's defeat by the Philistines. It was characteristic for the victor of a battle to wipe out the entire family of a defeated king, especially the sons, thus preventing any succession to the throne and any eventual revenge. So, after hearing the news of Saul's defeat and death, Mephibosheth's nurse picked him up and fled for their lives. In the course of her escape, she evidently stumbled, dropping the young child and causing a serious enough injury (possibly spinal) that he became paralyzed in the legs and was unable to walk.

Saul's kingdom, under Ishbosheth, continues to grow weaker. So now we find another assassination plot under way. This time it is Ishbosheth who becomes the victim of those of his own Benjamite tribe. For the second time we find David's "reward" for those who feel they are doing him a favor. Once again we see David's valiant intention of allowing God to be the one to

take action. After all of the battles David has fought, he feels it to be thoroughly dishonorable to murder someone in this way. As he lamented concerning Abner: “Should Abner die as a fool dies? Your hands were not bound nor your feet put into fetters; as a man falls before wicked men, so you fell” (3:33-34).

Ishbosheth meets the same fate, but there is no rejoicing from David over this heinous crime. Actually, David fulfills the requirement of the law in this matter as found in Exodus 21:14: “But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar [showing no mercy in such a case], that he may die.” Once again, David makes it publicly known that he did not support this assassination. The executed men are hung in a public place with their hands and feet cut off, for all to see.

One may ask why this same sentence was not carried out upon Joab. He had the excuse that he was acting as a kinsman avenger of blood (2 Samuel 3:27; compare Numbers 35:16-21). Although there evidently were problems with the reason for which, and the manner in which, Joab carried out his vengeance, perhaps it was too difficult to prove that his actions were not justifiable. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that Joab was a member of David’s family. Still, it is interesting that many years later, this matter with Abner is a factor in David ordering his son Solomon to execute Joab once David is dead (1 Kings 2:1-6).

City of David; Mighty Men

(2 Samuel 5:6-10; 1 Chronicles 11:4-19; 2 Samuel 23:8-17)

At the time of David’s siege, Jerusalem is called Jebus, which, interestingly, means “Trodden Underfoot” (*New Open Bible*, Topical Index, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990). Upon Israel’s entrance into the Promised Land, it was allotted to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. But these tribes only briefly defeated the Canaanite inhabitants of Jebus (Judges 1:8), for the Jebusites were soon back in their fortress city (see 19:10-12).

“The city itself was strategically located in the hill country near the border of Judah and Benjamin, making it a foreign wedge between the northern and southern tribes” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 2 Samuel 5:6-9). Jerusalem was originally a fortress built on a high hill between two valleys that converged in a V formation. The steep sides of the hill, combined with the city’s walls, made it seemingly impossible to penetrate. The Jebusites are so confident in the safety of their walls that they mock David, possibly placing the blind and lame in positions that are in full view of the Israelite troops.

But considering what is written concerning the skill, wisdom and bravery of the men who are now united under David’s leadership, it is not so surprising that Jerusalem is conquered. David challenges his men to enter the city “by way of the water shaft” (verse 8). This shaft “extended about 230 feet up from the Gihon spring to the top of the hill where the Jebusite fortress was situated” (2 Chr. 32:30). The tunnel gave the city a secure water supply in the event of a siege”

(note on verse 8). The account in Chronicles reveals that it is Joab who runs with David's challenge and leads the first invasion of the city, earning him the position of captain over all of Israel's army. David then makes this fortress city of such great strategic value his own new capital, calling it the City of David.

David also exercised considerable diplomatic wisdom here. Rather than choosing as his capital a city held by one of the 12 tribes of Israel (or one of the two kingdoms) and thus being perceived as favoring that one, David chose a city that belonged to none of the tribes and was thus viewed as neutral. In similar manner, the government of the United States early on placed its national capital, Washington, in the District of Columbia, a territory bordering two states but that did not belong to any state, so as not to be seen as favoring one state over another.

Continuing, we then read about the "mighty men" of David. An elite group of three of these warriors is listed first with their individual claims to fame. As we will see in our next reading, another elite group of three is also mentioned, which includes Joab. However, this other trio, we are told, does not compare with the "first three" (1 Chronicles 11:20-21)—and neither does another group (verses 22-25). One member of the first group is not mentioned by name in 1 Chronicles 11, but his name is given in 2 Samuel 23 as Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite (verse 11). Another is mentioned in both passages as Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite (1 Chronicles 11:12; 2 Samuel 23:9). The other, mentioned first, is listed in 1 Chronicles 11 as Jashobeam the son of a Hachmonite (verse 11) and in 2 Samuel 23 as Josheb-Basshebeth the Tachmonite (verse 8). This name is probably a play on the words of his real name. For *Tachmonite* denotes "wise" (*New Open Bible*, Topical Index). And *Josheb-Basshebeth*, which sounds similar to Jashobeam, literally means "One Who Sits in the Seat" (*Nelson Study Bible*, margin). This could denote his exalted position as "chief of the captains" (1 Chronicles 11:11)—in exploits, not rank, as Joab was chief over the others in authority (verse 6).

Another apparent discrepancy is that 1 Chronicles 11:11 says Jashobeam killed 300 men at one time while 2 Samuel 23:8 says he killed 800 at one time. Yet, while it is uncertain just how to reconcile these verses, that does not make them irreconcilable. One possibility is that a particular military engagement went on for a few days with 300 killed in one day and 500 others killed on the other days. Another possibility is that these were two separate occasions, and that he was known for both.

We also see here the amazing account of the obtaining of water from the well of Bethlehem. It is not entirely clear whether this was done by the group of three just mentioned or another unnamed group of three. Since individuals are named throughout the account, and since 2 Samuel 23:17 says "these things"—rather than just the one act of getting the drink—were done by "the three mighty men," and since the named individuals in verses 8-39 add up to the total of 37 in verse 39, it is most likely that the three who got the water are the same men first listed, Jashobeam, Eleazar and Shammah. Regardless, these scriptures show us the strength and loyalty of the men who served under David. These three were willing to give their lives just to get David, their commander-in-chief, a drink of water.

But David refuses to drink it, calling it “blood” because it was brought to him at tremendous risk of life, and he pours it out in offering to God (verses 16-17). “Ordinarily, wine was used for a drink offering (Lev. 23:13, 18, 37); here, water more costly than the finest wine was poured in celebration before the Lord” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 16).

This is an outstanding example of godly leadership. Such respect for his men and such personal humility must have inspired even greater loyalty.

The United Kingdom (2 Samuel 5:1-5; 1 Chronicles 11:1-3; 12:23-40)

After years of civil unrest, all of Israel is finally ready to accept David as king. As all of the tribes agree: “We are your bone and your flesh.” This basically means, “We are your relatives.” Centuries earlier, Laban said the same thing to his nephew Jacob (Genesis 29:14) and Gideon’s son Abimelech said it to his mother’s family (Judges 9:1-2). But, if people would really think about it, that goes beyond our immediate next of kin—or, at least, it should.

No matter what color or nationality, we are all human beings, created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). No matter what race we belong to today, our roots all trace back to Noah, and back to our ancestral parents, Adam and Eve (“the mother of all living,” 3:20). Indeed, God “has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). Thus, we are all blood relatives. We are all one family. But men have always found reasons to fight each other, whether geographically, economically or racially motivated. From the beginning, man has always found reasons, however unjustified, to kill his brother (compare Genesis 4:1-15).

Back to the story of David’s kingdom, the Israelites are now ready for unity and peace among each other after years of killing.

From the account in 1 Chronicles 12, we can see the numbers of troops from each tribe who come to Hebron to declare loyalty to David. Commentaries disagree on whether the actual troops assembled or only their commanders. If the troops actually presented themselves, their numbers approached 350,000! Regardless of whether the full battle-hardened army amassed before David, their unanimous support for David’s kingship is dramatically conveyed. After years of strife, troops that were fighting and killing each other are now celebrating this momentous event with food and drink being brought in by the neighboring tribes. For a time, there is truly joy in Israel! David reigned for 7 1/2 years from Hebron as king over Judah. It is now time to reign for the next 33 years from the city of peace, Jerusalem.

Interestingly, it should be remembered that Israel was actually divided into two kingdoms—Israel and Judah—when Ishbosheth was proclaimed king over Israel and David was made king of Judah. But a distinction between Israel and Judah existed even in Saul’s day (compare 1 Samuel 11:8; 17:52; 18:16). Perhaps it goes all the way back to the initial conquest of the land under Joshua, when the south went to Judah and the lands of the northern conquest went to the other tribes. Following Ishbosheth, even when David replaces him as king of Israel, there are still two distinct kingdoms—albeit with both under the same king. David is now king of

Israel *and* king of Judah, a distinction maintained during his reign. Indeed, much later in David's reign, we find a military census reporting, "Then Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to the king. There were in *Israel* eight hundred thousand men who drew the sword, and the men of *Judah* were five hundred thousand men" (2 Samuel 24:9). The creation of this United Monarchy is very similar to what happened in Britain. When King James VI of Scotland became King James I of England, he was still king of Scotland. Indeed, he became King James I of the United Kingdom of Great Britain. Israel's two kingdoms under one ruler will continue through Solomon's reign, with Judah and Israel still being mentioned under him as distinct nations (1 Kings 4:20, 25).

The Divided Monarchy will reemerge when Israel proclaims a non-Davidic ruler after Solomon's death. Judah will continue to be ruled by the line of David. Ironically, though, the tribe of Benjamin, instead of leading the Kingdom of Israel as in the days of Ishbosheth, will, in the later split, become part of the Kingdom of Judah. (We will explore this in more detail when we come to it in our reading.)

Attempt to Move the Ark (1 Chronicles 13; 2 Samuel 6:1-11)

With Jerusalem now the royal city of Israel, it is finally time to bring "church and state" together in this centralized location. So David calls for the Ark of the Covenant to be moved to Jerusalem from KirjathJearim, approximately 10 miles west of Jerusalem. The ark has been situated here since the Philistines relinquished it to the Israelites (1 Samuel 6:21).

Now we come to a very important lesson that David and all Israel had to relearn. Let's review some of the specific instructions that God previously gave for Israel to follow.

The ark of God was an extremely holy object, representing His presence (see Exodus 25:21-22). It had to be handled with the utmost regard to strict regulation in the Law of Moses, which mandated that the care of the most holy things was entrusted to the Levitical sons of Kohath (Numbers 3:29-31). Yet even these caretakers were not to touch the holy articles or so much as look casually upon them "lest they die" (4:15, 20). The Kohathites were instructed to carry the ark on their shoulders by poles passing through rings on the ark's corners to keep them from touching it (4:1-16; Exodus 25:14-15). It was not to be transported by cart or any other vehicle (Numbers 7:6-9). David, however, was using the same transport method the Philistines had used (compare 1 Samuel 6:7-8).

Yet God says, "Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (Deuteronomy 5:32). And: "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (4:2). Also: "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it" (12:32).

We are never to reason against, or attempt to change, God's commands. A king was not to be ignorant of God's instruction: "Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that

he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and *he shall read it all the days of his life*, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and *be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes*, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel” (17:18-20). Thus, God requires *much* of a leader He chooses.

Though Uzzah’s violation is apparently unintentional, God makes a powerful example of him. It is possible, of course, that Uzzah was more involved in what happened than we know. As one given the great honor of walking so closely to the ark, it may be that he was instrumental in the decision to use the cart. Perhaps it was his cart or oxen being employed. And, in any case, he is the one who actually touched the ark. Still, it appears he meant well.

When Uzzah is struck down, then, David becomes angry—and not, it should be pointed out, at his own carelessness. Evidently, David still doesn’t understand important aspects of what has gone wrong. That he has either forgotten or is ignorant of God’s specific instructions regarding the transport of the ark is apparent from 1 Chronicles 13:12: “David was afraid of God that day; saying, ‘How can I bring the ark of God to me?’” (compare 2 Samuel 6:9). He doesn’t know.

So his anger, then, is at God—for what He has done to Uzzah. His death seems so unjust and unnecessarily harsh, as it does, no doubt, to many today. After all, Uzzah was trying to protect the ark, and David, who had made the decision about transporting it, was zealous to restore God’s prescribed tabernacle worship to the nation. But he should have looked more closely at exactly what God had prescribed.

Moreover, there were other Levites who probably knew of God’s instructions and should have made His will known to David. Ignorance and forgetfulness do not negate God’s specific commands. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,” God will later proclaim (Hosea 4:6). In other words, what you don’t know *can* hurt you! Because of such neglect, Uzzah was killed by God. So what began as a joyous time of celebration has turned into a very sad and sobering moment.

God is sending a warning signal here to all people of all times that He is not a God to be trifled with. We must approach Him with the proper awe and respect. And David does receive a dose of healthy fear of God, which undoubtedly sends him to the Scriptures or to the priests to determine what ought to be done—as should have been done in the first place. Let this, then, serve as a lesson for all of us too. From the point of view of leadership, the decisions a leader makes brings consequences—either good or bad—on the lives of those he leads.

As for Uzzah, he will stand in the general resurrection of the dead after Christ’s millennial reign (compare Revelation 20:5, 11-12) with all those of mankind who have not yet been given an opportunity for salvation—and he will then be able to choose whether to truly serve the Lord. God is ultimately fair. Indeed, Uzzah will awake in a world far better than the one he has left behind.

For the next three months, the ark is left at the home of Obed-Edom, a Levite of the line of Korah who will later be one of the doorkeepers for the ark (1 Chronicles 15:18, 24; 26:4-8). He is also called a Gittite (2 Samuel 6:11) because he is from the Levitical city of Gath Rimmon (compare Joshua 21:24).

The Davidic Covenant (1 Chronicles 17; 2 Samuel 7)

These chapters tell of David's desire to build a house for God—a temple, a more permanent structure than the tabernacle. God's answer, through the prophet Nathan, is *No*. David later sheds additional light on this pronouncement. Notice that the material in these chapters is “*according to all*” that Nathan told David (1 Chronicles 17:15; 2 Samuel 7:17)—i.e., they don't contain everything Nathan said. We can find more elsewhere. David explains in 1 Chronicles 22:8 and 28:3 that God told him that he is not permitted to build Him a permanent dwelling because he has been a warrior who has shed blood. Indeed, his entire reign is virtually one battle after another. This would not be fitting symbolism. The transfer of the ark from a tabernacle to the more permanent temple is to represent the Lord moving to this earth as an enduring dwelling—which will commence with the coming reign of Yeshua Messiah over all nations. This future reign of Christ, the Prince of Peace, will be over a peaceful world (see Isaiah 9:6-7). So, instead of David, God will have the temple built by David's son Solomon, his name meaning “Peaceful,” who will, appropriately, reign over a period of peace. This is not to say that Solomon would not fight under certain circumstances. Rather, it will not be necessary because, by the end of David's reign, God will at last give the Israelites rest from their enemies—which, again, is representative of God's coming Kingdom.

God then speaks through Nathan of His plan to establish *David's* house. David's “house,” his royal dynasty, will be established forever. How will God go about this? In 2 Samuel 7, God tells David what will happen after his death: “I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom” (verse 12). This, of course, refers to Solomon. Notice verse 13: “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” We must be careful here, however, as the Hebrew word translated “forever,” *olam*, does not always carry the same meaning as “forever” does in the English language. Occasionally it means *unending as long as certain conditions apply* (compare Exodus 21:6; Jonah 2:6). Recorded elsewhere, there are definite conditions attached to the endurance of Solomon's throne. Looking at 1 Chronicles 28 again, David expresses the condition God gives: “Moreover, I will establish his kingdom forever, *if he is steadfast to observe My commandments and My judgments*, as it is this day” (verse 7). This condition is later reiterated by God to Solomon himself (2 Chronicles 7:17-18, compare verses 19-22). So if Solomon lives in disobedience to God, his dynasty will not go on without end. Sadly, this will come to pass, as Solomon will eventually have his heart turned to following other gods (see 1 Kings 11:4).

So what is meant by 2 Samuel 7:14-15, where God says he will not remove his mercy from Solomon as he did with Saul, who disobeyed? As we've seen, it cannot mean that Solomon's

dynasty would never be cut off. Rather, it must mean that, in the event Solomon disobeys, he will not be killed by God as Saul was. Instead, he will be allowed to live out his life. Furthermore, though the kingdom will be torn from him and given to a neighbor as Saul's was—this will not happen to Solomon himself. As God later tells Solomon: "Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David" (1 Kings 11:12).

Though Solomon's dynasty is not prophesied to continue forever, that of David himself is. God says, "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: 'Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to *all generations*'" (Psalm 89:3-4). In 2 Chronicles 13:5, we are told that "the LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt." Salt is a preservative against corruption and decay. It was required in offerings (Leviticus 2:13), which were often part of covenants. In using the phrase "covenant of salt," then, God is denoting a permanent alliance, an inviolable covenant, established for "all generations."

What this tells us is that this throne must be in existence in *our* generation. Some might suggest that Christ sits upon it now. After all, He is of the line of David—not through Solomon but through David's son Nathan. Furthermore, Yeshua is actually prophesied to sit on David's throne. An angel tells Mary: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Yeshua. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:31-33; compare Isaiah 9:67). But Christ never took over a throne in his human life. And since His death and resurrection, He has been in heaven, sharing His Father's throne (compare Revelation 3:21). Yet He is coming back to rule Israel and all nations, as the book of Revelation goes on to show. It is at that time that He will fulfill the prophecy of at last assuming the throne of David.

So where is that throne, which must exist in "all generations," in our day? Fascinatingly, we can trace the line of David through Solomon beyond ancient Israel and Judah all the way to the British monarchy today. When Christ returns, the rule of the Solomonic line will finally cease, and Christ, of the line of Nathan (another of David's sons), will take over the throne.

"Restore Us, O God" (Psalms 79-80)

Psalm 79, which begins the second cluster of psalms in Book III, is a lament over a devastating attack on Jerusalem and its temple. As with Psalm 74, this setting raises questions over Asaph's authorship noted in the superscription since Asaph would have seen no such invasion unless he lived well over a century to witness Pharaoh Shishak's invasion in the fifth year of Solomon's son Rehoboam (ca. 925 B.C.). Refer back to the Bible Reading Program's comments introducing Psalm 74 to see various suggestions for resolving this matter—the likeliest perhaps being that Asaph, as a seer, was foretelling the future.

Asaph may have been writing in Psalm 79 of Shishak's invasion, but it is likely that even later destruction was also being prophesied, such as that wreaked by the Babylonians (586 B.C.)

and, later still, by the Romans (A.D. 70). The invasion and temple defilement by the Greek Syrians during the time of the Maccabees (ca. 168 B.C.) could also be represented here—as could the destruction and defilement of the end time yet to come.

Note verse 2 in this regard: “The dead bodies of Your servants they [the invaders] have given as food for the birds of the heavens, the flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the earth.” God through Jeremiah later warned of what His people would experience at the hands of the Babylonian invaders in similar terms: “Their dead bodies shall be for meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the earth” (Jeremiah 34:20; compare 7:33; 16:4; 19:7). Of course, Jeremiah’s prophecy, in a dual sense, was foretelling both immediate and end-time devastation.

The word “saints” in Psalm 79:2 means “holy ones.” This could perhaps refer to God’s holy nation generally or more specifically to priests at the temple, yet it may have referred, as it would today, to spiritually converted people. An end-time setting would indicate the latter—and other prophecies do show that even some of God’s end-time saints will be slain in the coming time of tribulation along with the people of Israelite nations generally.

The wording of verse 4, about being a reproach and target of scorn and derision, is very similar to that of Psalm 44:13.

Asaph asks “how long” this terrible situation will continue (verse 5). Will God be angry with His people forever? Will His “jealousy burn like a fire”?—that is, will His anger over His people’s unfaithfulness utterly consume them? Things appeared so bad as to seem like this might be the case. So the psalm asks God for mercy, deliverance, atonement and salvation (verses 89). And it appeals to God to be true to His name as the Savior of His people—to defend His own reputation, as the enemy taunts, “Where is their God?” (verse 10).

The psalm is also a call for just retribution on the enemy and all nations that oppose God and His people: “Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You...for they have devoured Jacob” (verses 6-7). It asks for God to act as His people’s divine Kinsman-Redeemer and Avenger of Blood, avenging the deaths of His slain servants (verse 10) and rescuing those who will likewise die at the hands of the enemy if He doesn’t act (verse 11). Again, God’s reputation is shown to be at stake: “Pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven times the reproach they have hurled at you, O Lord” (verse 12, NIV). “The sevenfold restitution expresses a concern for full justice...the judgment must be equal to the severity of the reproach of God’s name!” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, note on verse 12).

Asaph at last expresses confidence that God, as a caring shepherd over His flock (see Psalms 23; 80), will act in His people’s favor—so that they may praise Him for all time (79:13).

[Luke 1:27-80](#)

In this portion of the Gospel of Luke, we read about the Messenger coming to Miryam to tell her of her election to give birth to The Messiah and the miracle that she will experience. Miryam goes to visit Elisheva who is pregnant with Yochanan and they both talk of the prophetic and rejoice over their blessings.