

# Triennial Torah Study – 6<sup>th</sup> Year 23/05/2015

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<b>Lev 4</b>	<b>Jer 24-25</b>	<b>Prov 16</b>	<b>Acts 13</b>
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## Sin Offerings (Leviticus 4)

As we've already seen, "in the Burnt-offering and other sweet-savour offerings, the offeror came as a worshipper, to give in his offering, which represented himself, something sweet and pleasant to [the Eternal]. In the Sin and Trespass-offerings, which were *not* of a sweet savour, the offeror came as a convicted sinner, to receive in his offering, which represented himself, the judgment due to his sin or trespass.... In the one case the offering was accepted to shew that the offeror was accepted of the Lord; and the total consumption of the offering on the altar shewed God's acceptance of, and satisfaction in, the offeror. In the other case the offering was cast out, and burnt, not on God's table, the altar, but in the wilderness without the camp; to shew that the offeror in his offering endures the judgment of God, and is cast out of His presence as accursed.... And yet the Sin-offering needed to be 'without blemish,' as much as the Burnt-offering.... A part indeed, 'the fat,' was burnt on the altar, to shew that the offering, though made a sin-bearer, was in itself perfect.... 'The fat,' as we have already seen in the other offerings, represents the general health and energy of the whole body. It's being burnt to God was the appointed proof that the victim offered for sin was yet in itself acceptable" (Jukes, pp. 142-143, 146, 165).

There were different regulations for the sin offering depending on who the offeror was. If the sin being atoned for was that of the entire congregation or the priesthood, the blood of a sacrificial bull was to be brought inside the Holy Place and sprinkled on the altar of incense. This was not necessary in the case of a civil ruler or common person. One guilty individual would not necessarily upset the entire spiritual life of the nation. But sin among all the people or the priests would. And, thus, the incense altar, which represented the prayers of God's people ascending up to His throne and therefore their contact with Him, had to itself be purified of the taint of sin. It should also be recognized that when the sacrifice was not for themselves, the priests were to eat part of it. They were, thus, satisfied when the demands of divine judgment were met and the spiritual life of the nation preserved. But when a priest was atoning for his own sin, the whole animal was to be burnt outside the camp—for no one was allowed to profit from his own sin.

Special sin offerings for priest and congregation were sacrificed on the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus 16:11-19, 27). The only differences were that on Atonement the animal for the whole congregation was specified as a goat (goats being used as a sin offering for the congregation in other special circumstances as well) and, on that one day only, the blood was taken beyond the altar of incense into the Most Holy Place.

Clearly Yeshua Messiah fulfilled the sin offering by dying in our place. But there is a sense in which this offering is also fulfilled in us—in a secondary way. Jukes explains: “God forbid I should be mistaken upon this point, as though I thought that the saint could atone for himself or others.... Still, there is a sense and measure in which the Sin-offering has its counterpart in us, as bearing on our self-sacrifice: there is a sense in which the Messiahian may bear sin, and suffer its judgment in his mortal flesh.... Messiah’s death in the flesh for sin is made our example: we too must also, yea therefore, die with Him.... The saint, as having been judged in the person of Messiah, and knowing that for him Messiah has borne the cross, follows on by that cross to judge and mortify all that he finds in himself still contrary to his Lord. The flesh in him is contrary to that Holy One [compare Romans 7:18, 23]: the flesh in him therefore must die.... God’s truth is, that so far from ‘the flesh’ or ‘old man’ being saved from death by the cross, it is by it devoted to death and to be crucified [Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20]; and that Messiah’s death, instead of being a kind of indulgence for sin, or a reprieve of the life of the flesh, the life of the old man, is to His members the seal that their flesh must die, and that sin with its lusts and affections must be mortified [Colossians 3:5]” (pp. 204-206).

## Seventy Years; Judgment on the Nations (Jeremiah 25)

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This chapter of Jeremiah was written either just before or just after Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah—following the battle of Carchemish—and made Jehoiakim swear allegiance to him. Since mention is made of the “first year of Nebuchadnezzar,” it seems most likely to refer to the period following his accession to the throne of Babylon in September of 605 B.C.—which occurred just after the invasion of Judah. If so, then Nebuchadnezzar basically came and went. It does not appear that he wrought any real damage on Judah at this time. Most likely, with Egypt in retreat, Jehoiakim switched allegiances rather quickly—giving up the temple treasures and prisoners mentioned in Daniel 1 without any resistance.

Yet Jeremiah views what has transpired as a turning point—the beginning of the fulfillment of what he has proclaimed at God’s behest for 23 years, in conjunction with other prophets, since the beginning of his ministry (see Jeremiah 25:3). At that earlier time, he had proclaimed that destruction would come on Judah from “the north...all the families of the north” (1:14-15). Now, he makes it clear that this refers to the Babylonian forces under Nebuchadnezzar (25:8-9).

Verses 11-14, relating to the “seventy years,” have been a source of confusion to many. It seems to say that Babylon would fall in 70 years, and that this would be the same period as Judah’s desolation. Jeremiah later writes to captives, telling them that God would cause them to return to the Promised Land “after seventy years are completed at Babylon” (29:10). According to 2 Chronicles 36:20-23, the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. began the 70 years of desolation in fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy. Daniel and Zechariah apparently understood it this way too (Daniel 9:2; Zechariah 1:12).

So where is the difficulty? Jeremiah gave his prophecy around the time that the initial deportation of Jews (such as Daniel) occurred, in 605 B.C. But ancient Babylon fell to Cyrus of Persia in 539 B.C., just 66 years later. And in that first year of Cyrus, he issues a decree allowing the Jews to return to the Promised Land—again in fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy (Ezra 1:1). Nothing significant appears to have happened in 535 B.C., 70 years after Jeremiah gave this prophecy. Furthermore, it seems strange that punishment was supposedly to come on Babylon in 535 B.C. when the Babylonian Empire ended four years earlier, in 539 B.C.

How, then, do we resolve this? We must realize that Jeremiah was foretelling two distinct things, each lasting 70 years *but not necessarily the same 70 years*. They are linked together because the accomplishment of the one is

necessary for the fulfillment of the other. Jeremiah 25:11 mentions: 1) the desolation of Judah; and 2) the duration of the Babylonian Empire. Verses 8-10 describe the first element. Verse 11 is the transitional verse, which includes both elements. And verses 12-14 amplify the second element, explaining that Babylon will be destroyed at the end of its imperial reign.

How long did the Babylonian Empire last? While the last pockets of Assyrian resistance were eliminated in the 605 Battle of Carchemish, the Assyrian Empire really came to an end with the fall of Haran to Babylonian-led forces in 609 (this was the defeat of the army that had fled Nineveh at its fall three years earlier in 612). Starting in 609, Babylon turned from battling the Assyrians themselves to subduing all the former Assyrian territories, beginning with the land of Armenia. Thus, the Babylonian Empire began in 609 B.C. It then lasted 70 years, until the conquest of Cyrus in 539 B.C. So this 70-year period had already begun when Jeremiah prophesied. Notice that he didn't say otherwise.

The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, including the temple of God, and took the bulk of the population captive in 586 B.C. This accomplished its desolation, which Jeremiah foretold. As mentioned, the fall of Babylon to Cyrus in 539 enabled the return of the Jews to the Promised Land. But the repopulation of the land took place over time. It is significant to note that 70 years from 586 B.C. brings us to 516 B.C., the time the temple reconstruction begun under Zerubbabel was completed. The mirth and gladness of verse 10—repeated from 7:34 and 16:9—found greatest expression during the annual festivals, which were observed in the presence of the temple. Thus, the restoration of the temple brought an end to the 70-year desolation Jeremiah prophesied. (See also Jeremiah 33:10-11, where the return of the voice of joy and gladness, and of bride and bridegroom, is associated with bringing “the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD.”)

Moving on in chapter 25, notice the reference in verse 13 to prophecies against the nations recorded in the book of Jeremiah. It may simply refer to what follows beginning in verse 15. But it could also refer to chapters 46-51. *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary* notes regarding 25:13: “It follows from this, that the prophecies against foreign nations (chs. 46-51) must have been already written. Hence LXX [the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures] inserts here those prophecies. But if they had followed immediately (vs. 13), there would have been no propriety in the observation in the verse. The very wording of the reference shows that they existed in some other part of the book, and not in the immediate context. It was in this very year, the fourth year of Jehoiakim (ch. 36:1, 2), that Jeremiah was directed to write in a regular *book* for the first time all that he had prophesied against Judah and *foreign 'nations'* from the beginning of his ministry. Probably, at a subsequent time, when he completed the whole work, including chs. 46-51, Jeremiah himself inserted the clause, ‘all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.’ The prophecies in question may have been repeated, as others in Jeremiah, more than once; so in the original smaller collection they may have stood in an earlier position; and in the fuller subsequent collection, in their later and present position.”

Starting in Jeremiah 25:15 and continuing to the end of the chapter, God pronounces judgment on the nations. Notice that He begins with Jerusalem and Judah—“put first: for ‘judgment begins at the house of God’; they being most guilty whose religious privileges are greatest (1 Pet. 4:17 [compare Ezekiel 9:6])” (*JFB Commentary*, note on Jeremiah 25:18). Yet in fairness, judgment is brought on all nations (see especially verse 29).

In verse 26, the name *Sheshach* refers to Babylon (see Jeremiah 51:41). Various explanations have been given for it. One is that it was written according to a code wherein the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is expressed by the last, etc., so that the word Sheshach would exactly correspond to Babel. However, it seems unnecessary to conceal the word Babel here since the word Babylon is given in close context in both places. Others translate the word as

meaning “Bronze-Gated” or “House of a Prince.” And there are still other explanations (see *JFB*, note on 25:26; Alfred Jones, “Sheshach,” *Jones’ Dictionary of Old Testament Proper Names*, 1997). Perhaps the most likely meaning is “thy fine linen” (*The KJV Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*, Strong No. 8347, on-line at bible.crosswalk.com/Lexicons/ Hebrew). This would seem to tie in with the description of end-time Babylon in Revelation 18:16: “that great city that was *clothed in fine linen*, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls.”

The prophecy of judgment on the nations in Jeremiah 25 applied in part to what happened in ancient times. All of those mentioned in verses 17-25 fell to Babylon. Then, as in verse 26, Babylon fell after them. But this scenario will be repeated in the last days. Indeed, it is clear from verses 31-33 that a final fulfillment of this prophecy will come in the end time, when a large percentage of mankind will be destroyed during the Day of the Lord (compare Isaiah 66:16).

## First Part of Major Solomonic Collection Cont’d (Proverbs 14)

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### 23. *Self-Protective and Self-Destructive Behavior (14:1-3)*

“TYPE: INCLUSIO” (*The New American Commentary*). “Verses 1 and 3 go together as signaled by the repetition of ‘wise’ and ‘fool/foolish’; the difference between the two [types of people] is explained in verse 2” (*The NIV Application Commentary*, note on verses 1-7). Verses 1 and 3 show that the wise will ultimately benefit from their right choices but the foolish ultimately hurt themselves and those close to them. Verse 2 shows that what makes the difference is one’s attitude toward God. It also makes clear that how one lives shows whether one properly reveres God or not.

Verse 1 is paraphrased in the New Century Version (NCV) as: “A wise woman strengthens her family, but a foolish woman destroys hers by what she does.”

In the NIV, verse 3 opens with the words, “A fool’s talk brings a rod to his back....” The NCV has “Fools will be punished for their proud words....” However, the Jewish *Soncino Commentary* points out: “The word [translated ‘rod’] is found again only in Isa. [11:]1, where it signifies a new branch growing from the trunk of a tree. If rod was intended, as a symbol of punishment, another Hebrew word, *shebet*, would have been more appropriate. It is better, therefore, to translate: ‘a branch (producing) pride.’ From the fool’s mouth issues haughty speech which has the effect of getting him into trouble” (note on verse 3). In either case, the implication is that the emergence of pride is ultimately self-destructive—especially given the contrast in the verse in which the wise are preserved by their own carefully chosen words.

### 24. *A Worthwhile Investment (14:4)*

“TYPE: SINGLE BICOLON PROVERB” (*NAC*). Where the KJV has “crib,” the NIV has “manger” and the NKJV has “trough”—the object here being the feed-trough for oxen. *Soncino* comments: “This animal was employed for ploughing and threshing the corn [i.e., grain] (Deut. [22:]20, [25:]4). The point of the verse is neither the importance of agricultural work...nor the value of work as opposed to slothfulness.... As sometimes happens with a proverb, the abstract thought is presented by means of a concrete example. So here, the ox is used as an illustration. Having no ox is, from one point of view, an advantage because a man is then freed from attending to its care; but as against that there is the great advantage of having an ox for the provision of essential food. Consequently, the disadvantage of having to look after the animal is far outweighed by the benefits which accrue from its employment in the field” (note on verse 4).

*The New American Commentary* takes it a step further: “The point is that one must make an investment (obtain and feed the oxen) to get a large return” (note on verse 4).

25. *Look Who’s Talking (14:5-7)*

“TYPE: THEMATIC....One should evaluate what a person says on the basis of his or her overall credibility (v. 5). Similarly, one should not expect to get sound advice from a person who shows no respect for the precepts of wisdom (vv. 6-7). In short, the character of the speaker serves as a warning about whether his words are true or wise” (NAC).

Verse 5 is similar to verse 25.

The counsel in verse 7 does not mean we must immediately leave a room if a foolish person is in it. The point is that we should not associate with foolish people as much as is reasonable— and certainly not look to them for guidance. “Once again, the proverbs recognize that the company one keeps will have its influence. Taken together [with related proverbs], one can learn better alone than with the help of a fool” (*NIV Application Commentary*, note on verse 7; compare 13:20).

26. *Appearance and Reality (14:8-15)*

“TYPE: CHIASMUS....Life is often deceptive, and the text here implicitly exhorts readers not to be taken in by appearances [or how things might seem]...This series of proverbs is a carefully balanced chiasmus [or concentric arrangement]:

“The meaning of ‘the folly of fools is deception’ (v. 8 [NIV]) is not immediately evident, but the parallel in v. 15 implies that the naiveté of fools is in view” (NAC). Verse 15 shows that the simple are gullible while the wise proceed cautiously—to borrow from a modern proverb, they look before they leap. On the word in verse 8 translated “deceit” or “deception” (NIV), *Soncino* notes: “The verb from which this noun is derived, means ‘to mislead’” (note on verse 8). The NRSV renders the verse this way: “It is the wisdom of the clever to understand where they go, but the folly of fools misleads.” The wise know that things are not always as they seem. “Verses 10, 13 likewise observe that no one knows the inner life of another’s heart and that the appearance of happiness can be deceptive” (NAC).

Verse 9 is somewhat difficult to translate and the King James and New King James are probably incorrect here. The NIV has a likelier rendering: “Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright.” Thus, “verse 9 states that the wicked believe they can avoid making restitution, but v. 14 [in concentric parallel] gives assurance of divine retribution. In other words, the appearance of getting away with a crime is belied by a justice that is not obvious or quick but is certain.

“In vv. 11-12, at the heart of the chiasmus, the apparent success of the wicked is short-lived....

The message of the whole is to avoid a superficial analysis of the lessons of life” (NAC).

Verse 12, repeated in 16:25, is crucial to always keep in mind. People the world over often act according to what they personally think is right—but not according to the way of life God reveals in His Word. Thus they all march headlong down the broad road to destruction (compare Matthew 7:13)—in dire need of true education and God’s salvation. We must be sure to always look at things through the godly lens of Scripture and not mere human reason, living by faith and not by sight (compare Proverbs 3:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:7).

27. *A Patient Spirit (14:16-17)*

“TYPE:…THEMATIC” (NAC). As pointed out in verse 15, a wise man thinks before he acts. Contributing to his reasoned patience is, as verse 16 notes, a healthy fear of the consequences of evil. This contrasts with the foolish self-confidence behind rashness and impulsive anger.

28. *A Crown of Wisdom, An Inheritance of Folly (14:18-24)*

TYPE: INCLUSIO, CHIASMUS, PARALLEL PROVERBS. “This text promises that the righteous will be crowned with wisdom and see fools bow before them. The passage also gives a few specific guidelines for right behavior, including compassion and personal diligence” (NAC).

Verses 18 and 24 are tied together through the wise receiving a crown or reward and the foolish inheriting only folly. The NIV captures the sense of verse 24: “The wealth of the wise is their crown, but the folly of fools yields folly.” This is not a promise of wealth for the godly in this age. It merely expresses the principle that wealth is gained and sustained through wisdom and prudence, while the foolishness of fools leads to an outcome of more foolishness. Of course, the godly will be richly rewarded in the ages to come.

“Verses 20-23 fall between these verses and are themselves bound together in a complex manner. Verses 20 and 23 both deal with wealth and poverty, and vv. 21-22 both contrast those who are kind with those who plot evil. Viewed in this manner, vv. 20-23 are in a chiasmic pattern. On the other hand, vv. 20-21 both concern the different ways a ‘neighbor’ is treated, and vv. 22-23 both concern the respective gain or loss that comes to the good/diligent as opposed to the evil/lazy. Viewed in this manner, vv. 20-23 are two sets of parallel proverbs.

Both the chiasmus and the parallel pattern may be viewed as follows:

“The full text deals with the recompense that accompanies wisdom or folly. Ethical issues here [that impact the outcome] include concern for the poor, diligence in work, and integrity in dealing with others” (NAC, note on verses 18-24).

Treatment of the poor (verses 20-21) is revisited in verse 31. In verse 20 the many friends of the rich are not true friends that can be counted on. Thus the New Living Translation rendering: “...the rich have many ‘friends.’” These are mostly parasitical, seeking handouts, personal advancement or notoriety through association.

29. *An Honest Witness (14:25)*

“TYPE: SINGLE BICOLON PROVERB” (NAC). As earlier noted, this verse is similar to verse 5.

30. *The Fear of the Lord (14:26-27)*

“TYPE: THEMATIC” (NAC). These proverbs focus on the fear of the Lord—the proper reverence and awe of God in His holiness and power through which the whole book of Proverbs is to be viewed and comprehended (compare 1:7). This perspective will protect us and our loved ones we influence, preserving us through various trials and keeping us from falling away to ultimate destruction. We will note more about this when we come to Proverbs 19:23.

31. *National Security (14:28-35)*

“TYPE: INCLUSIO [POSSIBLE CHIASM]...The health and well-being of a nation depends upon both the ruler and the governed. A ruler must be fair and above all must respect the rights of his people. The people, on the other hand, must have virtue in their lives or they will bring society into chaos. No government can succeed without the people, and no people can thrive if corruption and evil abound. The inclusio here is formed by v. 28, which describes a king’s need for a sizable populace, and v. 35, which obliquely asserts a king’s need for capable servants” (NAC).

In its note on verses 28-35, *The NIV Application Commentary* sees a possible chiasm here, based on the terms used:

Verse 29, which contrasts impulsiveness with patience, is followed by verse 30, which contrasts a sound heart or “a heart at peace” (NIV) with envy. Both verses show reasoned calm to be superior to uncontrolled emotion. In the latter verse, this calm is healthful while negative emotion is actually destructive to the body—facts borne out in modern medical science.

Verse 31, similar to verse 21, warns the powerful, such as national rulers, from oppressing the poor. To oppress the poor is to reproach God, since He has commanded that the poor be treated well. Those who honor God will obey Him in proper treatment of those in need. There may even be a hint here of Yeshua’ later teaching that as we treat people, so we treat Him (compare Matthew 25:31-46)—a principle more evident in Proverbs 19:17. See also 17:5.

Proverbs 14:32 says that the righteous has a refuge in death. Note again the refuge in the fear of the Lord in verse 26. While the wicked are swept away when calamity comes, the righteous ever have the refuge of God—even in death, showing hope beyond the grave (compare Isaiah 57:1-2). This is true in both an individual and collective sense.

The first colon of Proverbs 14:34 is inscribed above the entrance to a prominent American building—Los Angeles City Hall. That great city, and the nation at large—indeed all the world— would do well to heed this saying on the importance of the citizenry living according to God’s standard of righteousness and not descending into sin. Verses 34 and 35 are both linked by the theme of shame among those governed. “A people may wish for good character qualities in their leaders, but they ought to hold themselves to the same high standards. This may be a jab at the common assumption that honest and forthright character is always a good idea for someone else” (*NIV Application Commentary*, note on verse 35). Indeed, every person’s character contributes to the character of the whole community, so we should each take this as a personal responsibility.

## Acts 13

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At the Assembly at Antioch, many were gathered and they were fasting and prayer. During this time the Set apart Spirit gave them instruction to separate Sha’ul and Barnabah for a special work and to send them out. So they did.

They went out to Seleukeia and then sailed to Cyprus. Having come to Salamis, the proclaimed the Word of Elohim in the congregations of the Yehudim. They passed through all the islands of Paphos and came across a magician name Bar-Yehoshua who was with the pro-consul Sergius Paulus who called for Sha’ul and Barnabah for he wanted to hear the Word of Elohim. The magician came against them and tried to turn them away. Sha’ul was able to blind this man in his rebuke of him and his ‘wiles of the wicked one’

The proconsul thus believed.

After this and some travel, they came to a Sabbath assembly in Antioch to Pisidia. After hearing the reading of the Torah and Prophets, the people were invited to speak to offer any encouragement they may have for the people. At this Sha’ul stood up and spoke. He spoke of the history of the People of Israel, followers of Elohim, the seed of Abraham and told them that their promised Seed had come in Messiah Yeshua. He gave testimony of the Psalms and the death, burial, and resurrection of the Moshiach.

After the meeting, the Yehudim left but the gentiles begged for Sha'ul to stay and come and speak to them the next Sabbath day. The next Sabbath brought enormous crowds to hear what Sha'ul had to say. The Yehudim became jealous and begin to persecute and speak against them. After stirring up many people against them, they chased them out of their city. Sha'ul and Barnabah left there and continued on their way, teaching and bringing many 'into the Light' of salvation and faith.