

## Triennial Torah Study – 5<sup>th</sup> Year 07/06/2014



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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](https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf)

Gen 41	2 Sam 11-12	Ps 82-84	Luke 3 – 4:30
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### Historical Evidence of the Famine and Joseph (Genesis 41)

When Joseph is 30, after another two years of imprisonment, God brings about another major step in the plan He is working out. He gives Pharaoh a prophetic dream that no one is able to explain. Finally, the butler remembers the amazing events relating to his prison dream and Joseph's interpretation. Joseph is summoned by Pharaoh and tells him the meaning of his dream: Seven years of plenty were to be followed by seven years of famine.

Historical confirmation of this time of abundance succeeded by a long period of great food shortage is believed to exist. The following is from a book titled *The Signature of God* by Grant Jeffrey, 1996, pages 42-43:

A fascinating inscription confirming the Bible's account of the "seven years of great plenty" followed by the "seven years of famine" (Gen. 41:29, 30) was discovered during the nineteenth century in southern Saudi Arabia. This inscription was found on a marble tablet in a ruined fortress on the seashore of Hadramaut in present-day Democratic Yemen. An examination of the writing suggests that it was written [in the patriarchal age].... This inscription was rendered in Arabic by Professor Schultens and was later translated into English by Rev. Charles Forster. This is his translation of this ancient inscription:

We dwelt at ease in this castle a long tract of time;?nor had we a desire but for the region-lord of the vineyard.?Hundreds of camels returned to us each day at evening,?their eye pleasant to behold in their resting-places.?And twice the number of our camels were our sheep,?in comeliness like white does, and also the slow moving kine.?We dwelt in this castle **seven years of good life?**—how difficult for memory its description! Then came years barren and burnt up: when one evil year had passed away, then came another to succeed it. And we became as though we had never seen a glimpse of good. They died and neither foot nor hoof remained. Thus fares it with him who renders not thanks to God: His footsteps fail not to be blotted out from his dwelling.

While remarkable, this should not surprise us too much. After all, the Bible is the Word of God—and it is true despite the arguments of skeptics. The following is also taken from *The Signature of God*, pages 44-45: As the book of Genesis recorded, the seven-year famine was so severe in Egypt that Joseph, as chief administrator, had to be very careful in selling food from the precious grain reserves to satisfy the hunger of all the inhabitants of the surrounding countries. Joseph could not sell the grain reserves of Egypt for gold and silver

to everyone because of the danger that the grain would run out. When the famine was at its peak, grain was much more valuable than gold or money.

Explorers during the last century discovered a number of other fascinating ancient inscriptions in the Middle East that provided confirmation of facts recorded in the sacred Scriptures.... The greatest treasure of all was a fascinating engraved stone tablet [found in the tomb of a rich Yemenite noblewoman of the patriarchal age] bearing her final inscription which confirmed the biblical account of Joseph's careful management of the remaining food reserves during the seven years of famine in Egypt.

#### *A Yemenite Inscription About a Famine During the Time of Joseph*

In thy name O God, the God of Hamyar, I Tajah, the daughter of Dzu Shefar, **sent my steward to Joseph,** And he delaying to return to me, I sent my hand maid With a measure of silver, to bring me back a measure of flour: And not being able to procure it, I sent her with a measure of gold: And not being able to procure it, I sent her with a measure of pearls: And not being able to procure it, I commanded them to be ground: And finding no profit in them, I am shut up here. Whosoever may hear of it, let him commiserate me; And should any woman adorn herself with an ornament? From my ornaments, may she die with no other than my death. (reported in Niebuhr's *Voyage en Arabie*, PL. LIX. Translation by Rev. Charles Forster).

It should be noted here that the above translation appears quite credible, since Frieslander Carsten Niebuhr was a respected pioneer in archaeological exploration of the Middle East and in translating inscriptions found there, having accurately translated many from ancient Persepolis.

#### **The Matter of Uriah the Hittite (2 Samuel 11)**

Often, it is when we are on top of the world that we are most vulnerable to temptation. As the apostle Paul warns: "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). What an incredible position David now appears to be in. He sits enthroned as one of the most powerful rulers on earth. Under this flush of greatness, with tremendous wealth now pouring in, spiritual danger looms. For riches and power can lead one to deny God and disregard Him (Proverbs 30:8-9; Deuteronomy 8). We enter here into the darkest period of David's personal spiritual life. It is of note that David was around 50 years old at this point, after decades of close association with God and experiencing God's hand in his life.

The story opens with the fight against the Ammonites to finish the matter begun in our previous reading. Reference is made to the spring as the time of year when kings go out to battle. There are three reasons for this. 1) Winter in the region is the rainy season. Its end assures troops dry conditions for battle. 2) The rainy season is the time for planting. By the spring, the barley is ready for harvesting and the wheat harvest is well along—freeing up more men to go out to fight. 3) These harvested grains are needed to feed the troops.

David sends Joab to besiege the Ammonite capital of Rabbah (what is today a part of Amman, the modern capital of Jordan). Though so involved with his past battles, David now decides to stay home at Jerusalem. It would seem that he should be with his men on the scene—particularly when the account says kings normally go out with their armies at this time and even the ark of God was at the scene of the battle (verse 11). But with his newfound greatness, perhaps he has begun to deem himself above that. Perhaps he thinks, *We're so powerful now that I don't need to be there. Besides, why place myself in unnecessary danger. I'm the king. I'm too important.* Whether this assessment is accurate or not, events that follow indicate that some sort of spiritual lethargy has set in with David, weakening his character for the time being—the fruit of which soon becomes evident.

One would think the fight with Ammon would be over almost immediately—with the incredible victory David's army has just accomplished. But, though there are some chronological sequence questions in 2 Samuel 12, it doesn't appear to happen that way—the siege, we will see, seems to take a very long time. If so, why? Besides the fact that ancient sieges could last months or even years depending on the resources of those within the city under siege, the real answer may perhaps be found in the blessings and curses pronounced in the time of Moses. God promised that the Israelites would be blessed with military victory when they were obedient—and would suffer reverses when they were not (see Deuteronomy 28:1-7, 15-25). David's amazing victories over the awesome coalition arrayed against him came from God at a time when David was seeking Him. But now it would appear that, with David's present spiritual letdown, God allows the Israelite military to accomplish very little, making it slow going at Rabbah.

Surprisingly, as we will see in our next reading, the book of Chronicles does not record what happens when David remains at Jerusalem. Chronicles, it seems, has a different focus, primarily emphasizing the strength of David and his dynasty. (As we will see, it does not delve into all the turmoil of David's house during his lifetime, such as the rebellion of Absalom.) But God's Word does not skip over David's great sin—for, though it does not appear in Chronicles, we find it in 2 Samuel 11. David looks out from the rooftop of his palace and sees a beautiful woman bathing herself. Although the account says he inquires about her, the nature of this inquiry is unclear as she is almost certainly someone he already knows. She is "Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite" (verse 3). Eliam and Uriah are two of David's elite mighty men, with whom he has spent untold hours around the campfires over the years (see 2 Samuel 23:34, 39). Indeed, Eliam—also known as Ammiel (see 1 Chronicles 3:5)—is the son of Ahithophel (2 Samuel 23:34), whom we will later learn is one of David's chief advisers, something like a prime minister or chief of staff. Living next to the royal palace, probably by David's own granting, these were very important people who would have been regular guests at the king's table. Perhaps David in his inquiry just wants to make sure she will be alone—that there will be no one to inform Uriah.

Though he now reigns over a powerful kingdom, dominating a sizable part of the Middle East, David is unable to reign over his own passions. Having seen this beautiful woman bathing, he lusts after her—coveting his neighbor's wife in violation of the Tenth Commandment. God admonishes us in enticing situations to flee from the stimulus that is before us (see 1 Corinthians 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:22). If David were to now walk by this rule, considerable suffering would be avoided. But, as it is, he uses his power as king to take advantage of Uriah's wife—he "took her" (verse 4). What part Bathsheba herself played in all this is difficult to ascertain. Did she know David would see her bathing? We don't know. She, of course, has sinned in the matter as well, for adultery is a two-way street. But David, as spiritual leader and premier civil authority in the land, has greater accountability. Furthermore, this sordid situation is made worse by the fact that David fathers a child by her.

What a terrible betrayal this is against Uriah. Many refer to this whole episode as that of "David and Bathsheba." But God does not. He calls it "the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15:5). The name Uriah means "Flame of the Eternal" or "The Eternal Is Light." As he is called a Hittite, it is apparent that he is probably a foreign mercenary who became a worshiper of the God of Israel. For years, he has devoted his life to the service of David. And this is the treacherous payback he receives from the king—but, sadly, adultery is not the end of it.

With Uriah off fighting the Ammonites, Bathsheba's pregnancy would expose her as an adulteress—and it would probably not take long to learn the father's identity. David's attempts to cover up his sin by getting Uriah together with his wife are not successful. Unlike David, while Uriah's comrades are still in the field, the ever-dedicated soldier refuses to enjoy the comforts of home. What can David do? He makes a fateful decision. "Failing to cover up sin, David plotted the loyal soldier's death. Perhaps David could not face the shame of

seeing Uriah after the warrior had learned that David had slept with his wife” (“An Innocent Victim,” *The Nelson Study Bible*, 1997, p. 524). So he despicably sends with Uriah a message to Joab containing orders that essentially constitute Uriah’s death sentence—all the while so trusting of Uriah’s honor that he knows he won’t read it.

Joab does not follow David’s orders exactly. “David had told Joab to have Uriah killed by withdrawing soldiers from around him, leaving him to face the enemy alone. Perhaps Joab thought that this would be an obvious betrayal and would be difficult to explain to the other officers in the army. Instead, he devised a plan to have the soldiers fight near the wall. This maneuver endangered more soldiers and resulted in greater loss of life” (*Nelson*, note on 11:23-24). Joab expects David to explode at him over his foolish military tactic, but he tells his messenger to explain to the king that Uriah was killed in the engagement—knowing that David will then understand why Joab did what he did.

Thus, David has committed two heinous sins against God—adultery and murder. David’s sin began with a thought in his mind—the sin of lust. He then brought that thought to action by actually committing the act of adultery. He then tried deception to cover up his sin. When that did not work, he had Uriah killed. This is the way sin often works—sin begets sin begets sin. In his further drift from God, David’s message to Joab is utterly disgusting. Regarding the loss of a number of his particularly valiant soldiers in the murder of Uriah, he basically says, “Oh, don’t worry about it—these things happen. Now get back to work” (compare verse 25). The fact that such a righteous man as King David could sink to this level of sin should serve as a warning to us all to always remain close to God. For if this happened with David, it could, as easily if not more so, happen with us—if we are not vigilant in staying close to God.

To perpetuate his cover-up, David takes Bathsheba as his wife as soon as possible to make it appear that their child is legitimate. It may even be that he intends the marrying of his friend’s widow to appear an act of beneficence on his part. But the child is born considerably less than nine months later, taking into account the several weeks that lapsed until Bathsheba discovered she was pregnant, the episode of trying to get Uriah to visit his wife, the deployment of the scheme to kill Uriah, and then Bathsheba’s period of mourning, which was customarily a month. But babies are sometimes born prematurely, and David perhaps hopes his sin remains concealed. Yet besides the supposedly short pregnancy, the rushed marriage no doubt makes everyone suspicious. Still, it appears to David that he has gotten away with everything. And he may have for a while. “But,” as the account tells us, “the thing that David had done displeased the Lord” (verse 27). Nothing is hidden from *God*—a fact we must all remember when it comes to our own lives.

## **“You Are the Man!” (2 Samuel 12:1-13; Psalm 51; 2 Samuel 12:13-31; 1 Chronicles 20:1-3) December 2**

Nathan presents his “case” to David as the king was the highest judge in the land—the court of final appeal. In 2 Samuel 8:15, we learned that “David administered *judgment and justice* to all his people.” These words are translated from the Hebrew *mishpat* and *tzedakah*, often translated “judgment and righteousness.” As the second term is sometimes translated “equity,” the entire phrase seems to indicate letter-of-the-law judgment as well as fairness or fair application. Evidently, the judges of Israel used the judgments in the law as a guideline and were able to consider other factors and circumstances when determining appropriate penalties in a given case. While the law called for restitution in cases of theft, David not only calls for restitution but even pronounces the death sentence—because the *circumstances* of the crime in this case make it particularly heinous, i.e., the great importance and value of the poor man’s lamb to him and the callous and unfeeling attitude of the offender in the face of it. David, not recognizing that Nathan is speaking of him, actually judges himself guilty—and essentially calls for his own execution. It is always easier to see and condemn the sins of others—even when our own sins are staring us square in the face. We tend to have a lot more tolerance for ourselves than we do for others. This is something we all need to recognize and work on.

Nathan shows considerable courage and trust in God when he reveals the offender's identity to David. After all, David can have Nathan put to death. Still, the prophet delivers God's message: "*You are the man!*" (verse 7). With all that God had blessed him with, and as enamored with God's commandments as the Psalms show him to be, David, for a period of his life, came to "despise" or, as the word is perhaps better translated, "think light of" God's commandments (verse 9). He broke the tenth, which prohibits coveting. As Nathan's parable makes clear, David also broke the eighth, against stealing. He broke the seventh, against committing adultery. He broke the ninth, against lying and deception. He broke the sixth, against murder. He broke the third, against taking God's name in vain, by claiming to represent God while acting contrary to Him, causing God's name to be "profaned among the nations" (compare verse 14; Ezekiel 36:22-23). And David broke the First Commandment, against having other gods before God, by not putting God first in his life—serving his own desires instead. Indeed, "covetous... is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5; compare Ephesians 5:5).

As a result of these sins, Nathan presents David with four specific punishments from God. The first three are given in 2 Samuel 12:10-12: 1) His family will hereafter experience infighting and bloodshed. 2) Adversity will be raised up against David from among his own family. 3) His wives will be taken from him by another, who will lie with them in public. Whereas David's original sin was committed in secret, this will be done in the open for all to see. As we continue with the story of David's life, we will see all these consequences come to pass.

At this point, David doesn't make excuses or try to rationalize his sin. Instead, he fully confesses to what he's done. A more complete account of his prayer of repentance is found in the sobering words of Psalm 51. For months David has agonized, suffering terrible guilt over his sin: "My sin is always before me" (verse 3). David has hurt a lot of people through what he's done. But above all, he has sinned against God (verse 4). So he begs God to forgive him and cleanse him from his filthy conduct. He asks for a clean heart and a renewed spirit to serve God—that He would remain in God's presence and that God's presence through the Holy Spirit would remain in him. His full confession and earnest desire to walk again in God's way evokes encouraging news from Nathan: "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die" (2 Samuel 12:13).

However, Nathan stresses to David that he must still suffer many of the consequences for what he's done lest others think there is no justice with God or that He is not really concerned with holiness. For the fact is that God is *quite* concerned. Even though He forgives us when we repent of error, many times the consequences of sin continue with us for a long time in this life. Of all people, David, as an exalted leader, must be made an example of so that others will fear to do wrong. Clearly, David's sin has become widely known despite his attempts to conceal it. In this context, there is yet one more listed consequence David must suffer, which will come first in time order: 4) The child born of his adultery with Bathsheba is to die. And his heartfelt prayer and fasting before God for the child will not change God's mind.

Verses 16-23 provide some spiritual insight into fasting and the difference between penance and repentance. David fasted out of repentance and as part of his appeal to God to relent of His sentence regarding the child. Once David received God's answer, there was no reason to continue the fast. Yet his servants are baffled. They cannot understand how David could appear so grieved before and be less so now. But it's not that David is no longer grieved. It is simply that he no longer needs to fast. The fast was never about punishing and abusing himself—to satisfy God with substitute punishment—or to obligate God to fulfill his request. It was about drawing close to God in humility so that God would hear him—realizing that his attitude had to be one that would accept whatever God decided. Still, God affirms that the child must die. Yet David is comforted by his sure faith in the resurrection of the dead. He knows he will eventually join his child in death—but that beyond that he will see him again.

Verse 24 tells us, “Then David comforted Bathsheba.” Often little is said about what Bathsheba had endured—her shame of a pregnancy out of wedlock, the death of her husband, an immediate wedding and adjustment to a new husband—the king of Israel no less—the illness and death of her firstborn, and the torment of terrible feelings of guilt over the adultery that started the tragic chain of events. But David was compassionate. His initial lust for her apparently had been replaced by genuine love.

And *God* comforted David and Bathsheba. Here is an example of God’s perfect grace and forgiveness. God very soon granted a wonderful replacement for the deceased child, reminiscent of Seth replacing Abel (Genesis 4:25). Apparently the first time after the death of their child that David “went in to her and lay with her,” God caused her to conceive the child that He had already chosen to be the next king of Israel. David would later report in 1 Chronicles 22:8-9: “But the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘...Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies all around. His name shall be Solomon, for I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days.’” So when David calls his son’s name Solomon in 2 Samuel 12:24, it is because God had already revealed the name to David. Meaning “Peaceful,” this name is related to the name Jerusalem, and was prophetic of the nature of his future reign as king. God communicates his blessing on the child through Nathan, who gives him another name, Jedidiah (“Beloved of the Eternal”).

Though there are some questions about the chronological sequence of events in 2 Samuel 12, it would appear that, with David’s period of sinfulness finally over, the tide in the siege of the Ammonite capital of Rabbah is at last turned. It seems to have taken a long time—encompassing, if the time flow of the chapter is as presented, both of Bathsheba’s pregnancies. That would make it more than 18 months—as the siege of Rabbah was underway before David first took Bathsheba and there would have been a period of time after the first birth before the second pregnancy. Having seized Rabbah’s water supply, Joab knows it is only a short time until the Ammonites can no longer hold out. So he calls for David to lead the final charge against the city, which David does, and Rabbah finally falls to the Israelites.

The Ammonites are not “cut” with saws and axes as the King James Version translates 1 Chronicles 20:3, but are “put to work” with such implements as the New King James and other modern translations correctly render the verse.

Victorious, David returns to Jerusalem. But other consequences of his sin will soon follow, as God has warned.

### **In Psalm 82,**

Asaph delivers from God “a word of judgment on unjust rulers and judges.... [He shows] God presiding over his heavenly court [verse 1].... As the Great King (see...Ps 47) and the Judge of all the earth (see 94:2; Ge 18:25; 1Sa 2:10) who ‘loves justice’ (99:4) and judges the nations in righteousness (see 9:8; 96:13; 98:9), he is seen calling to account those responsible for defending the weak and oppressed on earth” (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 82).

Observe in verses 1 and 6 the term “gods” (Hebrew *elohim*). This plural word can refer to a plurality of gods (usually false gods) or in a singular sense to the one God (or God family) comprising more than one Being-God the Father and God the Son, Yeshua Messiah. To learn more about this terminology and the nature of God, see our free booklet [Who Is God?](#)

Here the term “gods” refers to human beings—“children of the Most High” (verse 6). Consider that when God created the plants and animals of the earth in Genesis 1, He made them to reproduce each “according to its kind.” But in the same context, God said of humanity, “Let Us [the Father and the preincarnate Christ] make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness” (verse 26)—language denoting producing a child in one’s image

(compare 5:3). So man was made according to the God-kind. Yet this initially is in an incomplete sense of resembling God in appearance on a physical level and having an intelligent and creative mind (though still unimaginably inferior to God's). God ultimately intends for man to be a spiritual creation completely in His likeness.

Yeshua would later use Psalm 82:6 to confound the Jewish religious authorities who were upset because He declared Himself the Son of God. Reminding them that their own law (Scripture) referred to human beings as "gods," he asked them why they were so upset at Him for merely saying He was the *Son* of God (John 10:31-37).

One godlike characteristic human beings were given at man's initial creation was that of having dominion over the earth-representing Him as ruler over creation (Genesis 1:26-28). For many, this dominion would extend over other human beings. Yet for the most part, people have not taken after God's nature in the way they have fulfilled this responsibility. Rather, they have taken advantage of and abused each other. Psalm 82 addresses this failing. It is in fact a message for everyone-but applies all the more to those who are in positions of power, who have the capacity to help others in the ways called for in verses 2-4.

Verse 5 speaks of the colossal failure of human misrule. Commenting on this verse, the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* notes: "They ought to have shared in the wisdom of God (see 1Ki 3:9; Pr 8:14-16; Isa 11:12), but they are utterly devoid of true understanding of moral issues or of the moral order that God's rule sustains (see Isa 44:18; Jer 3:15; 9:24)... When such people are the wardens of justice, the whole world order crumbles (see 11:3; 75:3...)."

Clearly the human beings addressed in Psalm 82 as gods are not truly gods in an ultimate sense-as God says they will die as mere mortal men, falling "like every other ruler" (verse 7, NIV). Yet for those who submit to God's ways, other passages show that men can receive eternal life and divine glory as spirit-born members of the God family.

Thankfully, while the current societal order will fall to pieces, the ultimate world order God has ordained will stand (75:3; 93:1). As the concluding verse of Psalm 82 calls for, He will intervene and set all things right in all nations. For all nations will at last be His, not just as His property but as His true children in His likeness-not only of form, but of character.

### **Psalm 83,**

the last of Asaph's psalms and the concluding psalm of the second cluster of Book III, implores God to rouse Himself against a confederacy of national enemies conspiring to wipe out Israel-these nations here declared to be *God's* enemies (compare 81:14-15).

We earlier read Psalm 83 in the Bible Reading Program along with the account of the chariots of Mesopotamia helping the Ammonites against David's army (see the Bible Reading Program comments on 2 Samuel 10; 1 Chronicles 19; Psalm 60; Psalm 108; Psalm 83). This may be what is meant in Psalm 83:8: "Assyria also has joined with them; they have helped the children of Lot." The nations of Ammon and Moab were both descended from Abraham's nephew Lot. Yet there is a larger coalition mentioned in verses 5-7, containing nations not mentioned in 2 Samuel 10 or 1 Chronicles 19. However, some of these, having been subdued by David in earlier campaigns, could have been in revolt on this later occasion (see the Bible Reading Program comments on Psalm 60). Of course, considering that other prophecies of various nations here describe them rising up together against Israel in the end time, Psalm 83 may well be an end-time prophecy of "Asaph the seer" (see 2

Chronicles 29:30). Perhaps the song is dual in meaning—with an ancient coalition prefiguring a similar confederacy of the last days.

In the list of conspiring enemies, the foremost and perennial enemy of Israel is given first—Edom (Psalm 83:6), the nation descended from Jacob's brother Esau. David subdued the Edomites prior to the fight with Mesopotamian forces (see 2 Samuel 8; 1 Chronicles 18). But since the Syrians were also earlier subdued and rebelled at the time of the later conflict, it is possible that the same thing happened with the Edomites. In an end-time setting, which seems applicable here, the Edomites may be found among the Palestinians in Israel and Jordan, among the Turks, among the Iraqis and other Middle Eastern peoples and, due to immigration, in growing numbers in Europe. (For more on the Edomites and their modern identity, see the Bible Reading Program comments on Obadiah, Isaiah 34 and 63, Jeremiah 49:7-22 and Ezekiel 35.)

The Ishmaelites, listed second (Psalm 83:6), are the Arabs generally—descended from Abraham's first son Ishmael. The Arab nations of today stretch from across North Africa to Iraq.

Third on the list, Moab (same verse), as mentioned above, was, along with Ammon, descended from Lot (see verse 8). As with the Edomites, David subdued the Moabites prior to the fight with Mesopotamia's chariots (see 2 Samuel 8; 1 Chronicles 18). But, as with Edom, it may be that the Moabites rebelled during the later conflict. The Moabites are probably to be found today among the Palestinians in Jordan and Israel and among other Middle Eastern peoples.

Listed fourth are the Hagarites (verse 6). The Israelite tribes of Reuben and Gad fought against the Hagarites in the days of Saul (1 Chronicles 5:10, 18-19). As was noted in the Bible Reading Program comments on 1 Chronicles 5, the name Hagarites perhaps denotes descendants of Ishmael's mother Hagar (and thus Ishmaelite or related tribes). The conflict with the Trans-Jordanian tribes would make these north-ranging Arabs. Assyrian inscriptions mention Hagarites as part of an Aramean (i.e., Syrian) confederacy (*Zondervan*, note on Psalm 83:6). Thus, the Hagarites are perhaps to be identified in modern times with the Arabs of Syria.

Fifth is Gebal (verse 7). As *The Nelson Study Bible* notes on Ezekiel 27:9, Gebal was an important Phoenician port city "between Sidon and Arvad (see Josh. 13:5; 1 Kin. 5:18). It was called Byblos by the Greeks and Romans, and Gubla by the Assyrians and Babylonians." The Phoenician city is today known as Jbail or Jubayl in Lebanon, 25 miles north of Beirut. Yet the name Gebal, related to the Arabic *Jebel*, is simply the word for "mountain," and many believe another location could be meant. "Some interpreters...conclude that the reference here is to a place or region in Edom [southern Jordan], south of the Dead Sea near Petra" (*Zondervan*, note on verse 7).

Sixth on the list is Ammon (same verse). It was the conflict with Ammon that led to the fight against Mesopotamia's forces. The Ammonite capital, Rabbah, is now Amman, the capital city of Jordan. Like the related Moabites, the Ammonites today are probably to be found among the Palestinians in Jordan and Israel and among other Middle Eastern peoples.

Seventh is Amalek (same verse). The Amalekites were a hostile Edomite people of southern Canaan (Numbers 13:29) who ambushed the stragglers in the Israelites' rear ranks when they came out of Egypt. For this ruthlessness God said He would have war with them from generation to generation and eventually cause them to be wiped out (Exodus 17:8-16; Deuteronomy 25:17-19). Though suppressed under Saul and David, the Amalekites remained. They appear to have eventually ranged over a large territory—some migrating all the way



up into Central Asia (see the Bible Reading Program comments on Obadiah and Esther 3). The Amalekites today may be among the Palestinians, Central Asian Turks and other Middle Eastern peoples.

Philistia, land of the Philistines, eighth on the list (Psalm 83:7), was located along the southwest coast of Israel. David had subdued the Philistines prior to the engagement with the Mesopotamian forces (see 2 Samuel 8; 1 Chronicles 18). But, as with Edom and Moab, it could be that the Philistines revolted at the time of the fight against Mesopotamia. A significant portion of the area of ancient Philistia is today the Palestinian Gaza Strip-Gaza being one of the ancient Philistine cities. The Philistines gave their name to Palestine, the name used by the Greeks and Romans for the land of Israel. And there may be some Philistines among the Palestinians of today.

Listed ninth are “the inhabitants of Tyre” (Psalm 83:7). It might seem problematic for this to apply to the time Asaph wrote-as King Hiram of Tyre was closely allied to David and Solomon. The same problem exists for a Phoenician Gebal if that is the city intended, as Gebal was under Tyre’s dominion. Yet it could be that there were rogue elements in Tyre favorable to the Mesopotamians against Israel. Perhaps this is why the wording “*inhabitants of Tyre*” is used instead of just Tyre. On the other hand, it could be that the psalm simply did not concern events of Asaph’s time-that it was instead exclusively a prophecy of the end time. In a modern setting, Lebanon could be indicated. However, modern descendants of the Phoenician Tyrians, along with modern descendants of the Babylonians, may be found in southern Europe (see the Bible Reading Program comments on Isaiah 13:1-14:2). And ancient Tyre prefigured the end-time European-centered Babylonian commercial system of the last days (see Ezekiel 27; Revelation 18).

Listed tenth and last is Assyria (Psalm 83:8). This was probably the principal Mesopotamian power involved in the conflict with David. In a modern setting, the land of Assyria could perhaps indicate northern Iraq. However, it could be that the modern descendants of the ancient Assyrians are intended-apparently, as noted in the Bible Reading Program comments on Isaiah 10:5-34, to be found among the Germanic people of Central Europe. As the same comments note, the early Catholic theologian Jerome applied Psalm 83:8 to the Germanic tribes invading western Europe along the Rhine.

In modern times, all the various Middle Eastern peoples listed here have fiercely opposed the people of Israel (foremost among “Israel” being the United States and Britain) and Judah (the Jewish people, including the modern Israeli state)-constantly plotting and conspiring against them and at times actually fighting them militarily or through terrorism, with many shrieking “Death to Israel!” and “Israel into the sea!” After the Arab states came together in the Arab League at the end of World War II, one of its first major actions was a joint attack on the Israeli state when it was established in 1948. Conflict has erupted numerous times since, with Israel fighting several wars for survival against overwhelming odds.

As for European involvement, Germany fought America and Britain in World Wars I and II and waged the terrible Holocaust against the Jews. The Germans were allied with the Ottoman Turks in World War I and with anti-Semitic Arabs in World War II-the Muslim Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al Husseini, finding common cause with the Nazis. As pointed out in a recent article, “In late March 1933, al-Husseini contacted the German consul general in Jerusalem and requested German help in eliminating Jewish settlements in Palestine-offering, in exchange, a pan-Islamic jihad in alliance with Germany against Jews around the world” (David Dalin, “Hitler’s Mufti,” *Human Events*, Aug. 3, 2005). And since the formation of the state of Israel shortly after World War II, Germany and other European nations have politically and economically supported the Palestinian cause against what they see as Israeli “occupation” and “oppression.”

This decades-long hostility (with its intermittent wars and intifadas) may be what is meant in Psalm 83, though the song could parallel other end-time prophecies in foretelling a more concerted and severe onslaught closer to the end of the age.

Asaph calls on God to deal with the enemy forces as He dealt with seemingly overwhelming enemies before (verses 9-12). “As with Midian” (verse 9) refers to God’s victory accomplished through Gideon in Judges 7. “As with Sisera, as with Jabin at the Brook Kishon” (Psalm 83:9) refers to God’s victory accomplished through Deborah and Barak in Judges 4-5. Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah and Zalmunna (Psalm 83:11) were leaders of the Midianites killed by Gideon and his men (Judges 7:25-8:21).

Asaph then calls for judgment on the enemy nations-remarkably for the cause of redemption. He asks that God would pursue, frighten and shame the enemies so that they would repent and seek a relationship with God (verse 13-16). He further prays that they be dismayed, confounded forever and shamed and that they perish (verse 17). Is there a contradiction here? Some think Asaph seeks for the enemies to repent but, if they still refuse, for them to then be destroyed. That may be, but the passage is not directly worded that way.

We should realize that the word translated “forever” in verse 17 does not necessarily mean for all eternity as in modern English usage (compare Exodus 21:6). Indeed verse 18, which says that the punishment is so that the enemies will know that God is “the Most High over all the earth,” appears to hint at the second resurrection. For how will these enemies know anything if they are dead forever? While the lesson will of course be learned by those left alive, a straightforward reading of these verses would seem to say that the lesson is for those who perish. The desire in verse 18, then, seems to be that the mortal defeat the enemies experience from God in this age will convince them of His sovereignty when they are raised in the future-leading them to the repentance mentioned in verse 16. (Yeshua spoke of this resurrection to repentance in Matthew 11:20-24 and 12:41-42, and the Bible mentions it in several other references. To learn more about God’s plan to offer salvation to all human beings who lived without a proper understand of His ways, see our free booklet [What Happens After Death?](#))

### “Righteousness...Shall Make His Footsteps Our Pathway” (Psalms 84-87)

As in the superscriptions of Psalms 8 and 81, *al gittith* in the superscription of **Psalm 84** denotes either a song of the winepress or, as in the NKJV, one played “on an instrument of Gath”—Gittite being the adjective form of this Philistine city.

Psalm 84, “the first of the six psalms that make up the final group of Book III...expresses yearning for fellowship with God, who dwells in his temple in Zion and from alone come security and blessing. References to God as [‘Lord of hosts’ or] ‘Lord Almighty’ [NIV] and a prayer for ‘our shield,’ the Lord’s ‘anointed,’ form distinctive links with the final psalm of the group (for the former see 84:1, 3, 8, 12 and 89:8; for the latter see 84:9 and 89:18, 38, 51). The five psalms thus introduced [85-89] are four cries out of distress arranged around a central song (Ps 87) that celebrates God’s special love of Zion and the care he has for all its citizens. Of these four, the first (Ps 85) and the last (Ps 89) are communal prayers, and the remaining two (Ps 89; 88) are prayers of individuals. They all make much of God’s [‘mercy and truth’ (NKJV) or] ‘love and faithfulness’ [NIV] (see 85:7, 10-11; 86:5, 13, 15; 88:11; 89:1-2, 5, 8, 14, 24, 28, 33, 49) and his ‘saving’ help (see 85:4, 7, 9; 86:2, 16; 88:1; 89:26). And three of them share another key concept, ‘righteousness’ (see 85:10-11, 13; 88:12; 89:14)” (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalms 84-89).

Of this final cluster of six psalms, four are labeled in the superscriptions as coming from the sons of Korah. Psalm 84, one of these Korahite psalms, is “a prayer of longing for the house of the Lord. In tone and perspective it stands close to Ps 42 [another Korahite psalm] and may reflect similar circumstances. If so, the author (presumably a Levite who normally functioned in the temple service), now barred from access to God’s house [perhaps during a time of national calamity]...gives voice to his longing for the sweet nearness to God in his temple that he had known in the past. References to God and his temple and to the ‘blessedness’ (see vv. 4-5, 12) of those having free access to both dominates the prayer and highlights its central themes” (note on Psalm 84).

In verses 1-2, the psalmist’s unsatisfied longing leaves him faint, his whole being aching to be in God’s presence. While this could be merely figurative, it could just as well be literal. Perhaps through long prayer, fasting and mourning, he really was weak to the point of fainting.

In verse 3, “the psalmist is jealous of the small birds that have such unhindered access to the temple and the altar. They are able even to build their nests there for their young—the place where Israel was to have communion with God” (note on verse 3). These birds have found a home with God, which the psalmist himself desires. What a great blessing it is to have God’s house as your home (verse 4). We should recognize that the house of God in these verses is also representative today of God’s people and, in an ultimate sense, of God’s Kingdom and family for all eternity.

In verse 5, the words translated “whose heart is set on pilgrimage” literally mean “‘in whose hearts are (the) highways,’ i.e. the highways the Israelites took to observe the religious festivals at Jerusalem (Zion, v. 7)” (note on verse 5). The pilgrimage here is also figurative—that of following the pathway of return to God and of pressing onward to His Kingdom. On this journey, as we see in verse 6, even difficult circumstances (represented by the Valley of Baca or Weeping) will be washed over with God’s blessings (symbolized by springs, rain and pools). We should recall here Psalm 23, where God as our Shepherd leads us through the valley of death-darkness (verse 4) on the way to dwelling in His house forever (verse 6).

The journeying pilgrims “go from strength to strength” (84:7). *The Nelson Study Bible* comments: “As one nears the temple, the rigors of the journey become tolerable, for the joy of the approaching arrival strengthens the soul” (note on verses 5-7). Even so, as God’s people today continue through life, they build character and rejoice more and more as the time draws ever closer when God’s Kingdom will be established on the earth. “God’s saints on their hopeful way to Zion experience anew the bountiful hand of God as their ancestors did on their way through the Desert of Sinai to the promised land (see 78:15-16; 105:41; 114:8)—and as their descendants would on their return to Zion from Babylonian exile (see Isa 41:17-20; 43:19-20; 49:10)” (*Zondervan*, note on Psalm 84:6)—the return from Babylonian exile in the end time being the primary focus in these passages. Spiritual Israel, the His people, follows the highway to God today. Physical Israel and the other nations on earth will follow at Christ’s return.

In verses 8-9 the phrases “our shield” and “Your anointed” refer to the king of Israel (see 89:18, 20). Why would this prayer for the king be included here by the psalmist? “Only as God blesses the king in Jerusalem [perhaps in giving him victory against enemies preventing journey to the temple] will the psalmist once more realize his great desire to return to his accustomed service in the temple” (note on verses 8-11). Of course, in an ultimate sense, the figure of the anointed king looked forward to the future Messiah, whom God will send to establish His Kingdom.

The psalmist concludes that the privilege of spending a single day in God’s house is better than a thousand days anywhere else (verse 10). He moreover says that just being a doorkeeper (often considered to be a menial servant) in God’s house is worth more than living (presumably the life of luxury) among the wicked (same

verse). As a point of consistency, helping to validate the psalm's superscription, we should note that it was the Korahites who served as doorkeepers or gatekeepers at the tabernacle and temple (1 Chronicles 9:17-27; 26:1-19). This was in fact a "trusted office" (9:22, 26).

Some reckon from Psalm 84:10 that the post of "doorkeeper" will be a position held by some of God's saints in His coming Kingdom—those on the bottom rung, it is derogatorily inferred. First of all, we should recognize that such a position of responsibility would not be a bad thing, as is commonly implied. Yet, secondly, we are told that *angels* rather than glorified human beings will serve as gatekeepers of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:12). And thirdly, the psalmist appears to have been referring to his own particular service or simply using metaphoric language to draw a contrast—or both. In no way is the passage meant to teach that "some will be only mere doorkeepers in God's Kingdom." Yet we *are* told something here about *whatever* positions God's people occupy in His Kingdom: "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11).

Verse 12 assures us that happiness comes through trusting in God. Be assured that He will deliver on His promises. Whatever circumstances prompted the composition of Psalm 84, this song, given its current placement in the Psalter, "now voices the devotion to and reliance on God that motivate the remaining prayers of the group it introduces" (note on Psalm 84).

### **Luke 3 – 4:30**

Yochanon is out in the wilderness immersing and washing people unto repentance and washing of sins. He is preaching that the Kingdom of Heaven is coming and will be the great equalizer of all things. Scribes, Pharisees, Saducees, tax collectors, and the poor – all are coming out to see him and hear what he is saying to everyone. Many did repent and were immersed.

Yochanon immersed many and he said The Messiah was coming very soon. He immersed Yeshua also. He proclaimed the Good News. Through an offense of being reproved by Yochanon, Herodes had him put into prison.

In verses 23-38 we are given the lineage of Yeshua once again. Chapter four we pick up with what followed after Yeshua's immersion and He was driven into the wilderness and tested by the Adversary. He was tested in lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life. All three of these He defeated through the written Word of Elohim, the Torah. He was ministered to by the messengers of heaven after the testing.

When He entered back into the city, He went to Natsereth and entered into the congregation on the Sabbath day. He was handed the scroll of Isaiah to read and He proclaimed the Sabbath year. He also said a few things to the people there who were asking Yeshua to do miracles and healing, but Yeshua, knowing they had no faith and did not believe – did not. He admonished them and they did not like it. They were filled with wrath and backed Him up to the side of a high place to throw Him off. He managed to escape the crowd through the midst and no harm came to Him.