

# Triennial Torah Study – 6<sup>th</sup> Year 30/05/2015

 sightedmoon.com /triennial-torah-study-6-year-04042015 /

By Joseph F. Dumond

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

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

Lev 5	Jer 26-28	Prov 17	Acts 14
-------	-----------	---------	---------

## Trespass Offerings and Accompanying Regulations (Leviticus 5:1-6:7)

Though the trespass offering is sometimes called a sin offering (compare 5:6-9), there is a general distinction to be made between sin and trespass. Some have argued that sin is against God while trespass is against fellow man. But the Bible makes it clear that it is possible to commit trespass against God (compare verses 15-19). What then, is the difference between sin and trespass? Jukes explains, "With our shortsightedness, our inability to see beyond the surface, we naturally look at *what man does* rather than at *what he is*; and while we are willing to allow that *he does* evil, we perhaps scarcely think that *he is* evil. But God judges *what we are* as well as *what we do*; *our sin*, the sin in us, as much as *our trespasses*. In His sight sin in us, *our evil nature* [compare Romans 7], is as clearly seen as our trespasses, which are but *the fruit* of that nature. He needs not wait to see the fruit put forth. He knows the root is evil, and so will be the buddings.... Thus in the Sin-offering *no particular act* of sin is mentioned, but *a certain person* is seen standing confessedly as a sinner: in the Trespass-offering *certain acts* are enumerated, and *the person* never appears. In the Sin-offering I see a person who needs atonement, offering an oblation *for himself* as a sinner: in the Trespass-offering I see certain acts which need atonement, and the offering offered *for these particular offenses*....

"Of course, in the Sin-offering, though the *man* is seen rather than his acts, proof must needs be brought that he is a sinner. But let it be noticed that this is done, not by the enumeration of certain trespasses, but simply by a reference to the law; which, though no particular transgression is mentioned, is said to have been neglected or broken" (pp. 148-149). Of course, there will be particular acts to show that the person is guilty of sin. Yet the sin offering does not atone for these specifically—it atones for sinful nature in general, which stands in rebellion against God (compare Romans 8:7). "In the Trespass-offering, on the other hand, it is exactly the reverse. We have nothing but one detail after another of particular wrongs and offenses; the first class being of wrongs done against God, the other of wrongs against our neighbor" (pp. 149-150). The trespass offerings, then, are to atone for specific sinful acts. It is these specific acts of trespass that require restitution, as detailed in this section.

## Jeremiah on Trial for His Life (Jeremiah 26)

The incidents described in this chapter take place at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign—thus around 608 B.C. Some commentators believe this chapter is parallel with chapter 7 because in both places God has Jeremiah proclaim at the temple the object lesson of Shiloh. If they are the same incident, then chapters 7 through 10 should fall here in time order. And that may be. However, the wording of chapter 7 could imply that Josiah had not yet destroyed Tophet, the place of child sacrifice, which would lend support to the chronological arrangement followed in the Bible Reading Program. Jeremiah, therefore, may be essentially repeating a proclamation he gave more than 13 years earlier (as he likewise later repeats some of the statements concerning Tophet in chapter 19).

The reference to “all the cities of Judah” coming to worship (26:2) indicates that this was most likely one of the nation's annual festivals. The essence of Jeremiah's address to the people was that Judah needed to repent or Jerusalem would suffer the same fate as Shiloh. As explained in the highlights for Jeremiah 7, even though Shiloh had been the resting place of the tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant, God had allowed it to be destroyed. The people were at this time still placing too much trust in the temple and Jerusalem and their forms of worship. God, they reasoned, would never allow His holy temple and city to be destroyed. But they were wrong.

Verse 3 of chapter 26 highlights an important principle found throughout Scripture. Even though God threatens dire consequences, He is prepared to relent if the people respond and turn from their evil ways (see 18:7-8; 1 Kings 21:29; Joel 2:13; Jonah 3:10). If they don't, the punishment would fall. Jerusalem would be made a “curse to all nations”—that is, destroyed to provide an example to all nations (Jeremiah 26:6).

The religious leaders then stirred up the assembled worshipers against Jeremiah. They basically arrested him, telling him he would receive the death penalty for what they saw as his blasphemy in saying God's temple would be destroyed. Yeshua would later suffer similar reaction from religious leaders over the many proclamations He made that they perceived as a threat to their continuing power, including His declaration that the temple would be destroyed (see Luke 21:5-6; 22:2).

In Jeremiah's case, a hearing was convened before “all the princes and all the people” (Jeremiah 26:11-12), which may have denoted a bicameral national council or high court. The “princes” here didn't necessarily belong to the royal family, even though they came from the king's house. The Hebrew word from which the word “princes” is translated “may denote leaders, chieftains.... [The word] also appears frequently as a word representing royal rulers and officials, no doubt of sundry ranks and titles.... Thus Jeremiah 26:11 speaks of the princes of Judah, and the context (vv. 10-16) depicts them as occupying the ‘king's house,’ to possessing judicial power, ordering Jeremiah to die or to be spared” (Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1980, Vol. 2, p. 884). Verse 17 says that certain “elders of the land” addressed the “assembly of the people.” Perhaps these elders were members of this assembly, serving as clan or town representatives.

“Jeremiah gave a threefold defense on his own behalf. First, he announced that the Lord had sent him to deliver the message they had heard. He was not a false prophet. Second, he announced that his message was conditional. If the people would reform their ways (cf. 3:12; 7:3) God promised not to bring about the disaster. Thus Jeremiah's message did offer some hope for the city. Third, Jeremiah warned that if they put him to death they would bring the guilt of innocent blood on themselves. They would be guilty in God's sight of murdering an innocent man” (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, note on Jeremiah 26:12-17).

While this may have caused some of them a measure of concern, the reaction of the officials in verse 16 is based more on legal technicality than on any belief in what Jeremiah was saying. A prophet could not be put to death unless he spoke in the name of another god or his prophecy turned out to be false. The latter could not as yet be determined. And the former had not been committed, as Jeremiah had spoken in the name of the true God of Israel. So Jeremiah seemed to be off the hook. But what really tipped the scales in his favor was the citing of a

precedent by certain elders in verse 17—that of Micah’s proclamation of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple given more than 90 years earlier, in which King Hezekiah, the supreme judge of the time, did not have Micah executed. “This is really a fine defense, and the argument was perfectly conclusive. Some think that it was Ahikam [mentioned in verse 24] who undertook the prophet’s defense” (*Adam Clarke’s Commentary*, note on verse 17).

The chapter ends with a brief story of another prophet of God named Urijah (or Uriah), mentioned only here in Scripture. Jehoiakim had sought to put him to death, so he fled to Egypt. But being a vassal of Egypt at this time, Judah had extradition rights and Urijah was brought home to his execution. This episode may have been inserted here to show that even though Jeremiah’s case seemed pretty ironclad, the state still posed a danger—as a corrupt king such as Jehoiakim could quite easily see to it that a prophet was executed. In any event, Jeremiah was saved with the help of Ahikam, which may refer to the preceding court defense or perhaps the prophet actually taking refuge with him.

Interestingly, Ahikam was the son of Shaphan, who had served under faithful King Josiah. “The family of Shaphan played an important part in the final years of Judah.... Shaphan was King Josiah’s secretary who reported the finding of the Law to Josiah (2 Kings 22:3-13).

Shaphan had at least four sons—three of whom were mentioned in a positive way by Jeremiah (Ahikam, Gemariah, and Elasah). The fourth son, Jaazaniah, was the ‘black sheep’ of the family; his presence among the idol-worshippers in the temple caught Ezekiel by surprise (Ezek. 8:11). Ahikam’s son, Gedaliah, was appointed governor of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 b.c.” (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*, note on verse 24).

## The Yoke of Babylon (Jeremiah 27-28)

---

Jeremiah 27:1 says, “In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah...” Most commentators take “Jehoiakim” to be an ancient copyist error in the Hebrew Masoretic Text, believing it should actually say “Zedekiah,” as in some other early manuscripts. It is true that chapter 27 is clearly set in the early part of Zedekiah’s reign, his fourth year to be exact, and not Jehoiakim’s (compare verses 3, 12; 28:1).

However, another explanation could be that the chapter break between Jeremiah 26 and 27 occurs in the wrong place. Jeremiah 26 *is* set “in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah” (26:1). Perhaps the last verse of chapter 26 should read, “Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, so that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah.” The first verse of chapter 27 would then read, “This word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying...” While this may seem unlikely to some, we cannot rule it out as a possibility.

Moving into the substance of the chapter, we encounter a hotbed of political plotting during this fourth year of Zedekiah (594-593 B.C.). “Emissaries from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon met in Jerusalem to plan revolution [against Babylon]. In the Jewish court, pro-Egyptian conspirators probably looked to Egypt for help, especially with the accession of the new king, Psammetichus II (594-589 b.c.e.). Jeremiah [according to God’s direction] opposed rebellion, arguing that Judah’s only hope was to remain a vassal to the Babylonians” (*HarperCollins Study Bible*, note on 27:1-28:17).

God here again gives Jeremiah a seemingly strange, but dramatic, task to perform. The prophet is to make and then don “bonds and yokes”—and to give these to the gathered envoys for delivery to their national leaders as part of God’s message to them that they were all to submit to Babylon. “The yoke is that used by two oxen to pull a

heavy load. Normally, yokes consisted of a crossbar with leather or rope nooses or rods of wood that would be placed around the animals' necks. Attached to the crossbar was a wooden shaft for pulling the load (see Deut 21.3; 1 Sam 6.7; 11.5; 1 Kings 19.19). For the yoke as a symbol of servitude [Jeremiah 27:8, 12], see also 1 Kings 12.1-11" (note on Jeremiah 27:2).

"The task assigned to Jeremiah required great faith, as it was sure to provoke alike his own countrymen and the foreign ambassadors and their kings, by a seeming insult, at the very time that all were full of confident hopes grounded on the confederacy" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on verse 3).

God's message through His prophet is intended to make it plain to the leaders of the surrounding nations that they wield power only so long as He allows it. He would promote Nebuchadnezzar and subjugate these leaders and their peoples under him. Yet in this exaltation of the Babylonian emperor, it is clear that God remains ultimately supreme. He even calls Nebuchadnezzar "My Servant" (verse 6). "With all of his military might and conquests, the king of Babylon was still a servant of the God of Israel, carrying out the Lord's purposes— namely the judgment of Judah [and these other nations]" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 6-7).

In verse 8, the yoke symbol is explained to the emissaries: submit to Babylon or else, the alternative being punishment through the dreadful three-fold cycle of sword, famine and pestilence. Jeremiah then delivers to them a serious warning not to listen to prophets or various occult practitioners who were saying the opposite (verses 9-11). He then proclaims the same message to King Zedekiah, the priests and all the people he encounters as he wanders about wearing the yoke (verses 12-16).

Jeremiah then issues a challenge to the false prophets. Nebuchadnezzar had taken much of the temple furnishings in his prior invasions of Jerusalem (see Daniel 1:1-2; 2 Kings 24:11-13). The false prophets were claiming these would soon be brought back. But Jeremiah says "the vessels which are left" in the temple would *also* be taken to Babylon in the coming destruction of the city (Jeremiah 27:16-22). Jeremiah challenges the false prophets to intercede with God to try to stop his words from coming to pass and to bring to pass the things *they* have announced. This would prove who spoke for God.

It may not be quickly noticed but Jeremiah does offer words of hope and encouragement in the midst of this challenge and pronouncement of calamity. In verse 22, he says that Babylon would ultimately be punished and that the temple furnishings would then be brought back as part of Judah's restoration. Surprisingly, these items were apparently well accounted for in Babylon, being returned in specific numbers when the Persians later took over (see Ezra 1:7-11). It is likely that Daniel played a part in the care and cataloging of them.

## Hananiah's Lies (Jeremiah 27-28)

---

Jeremiah 28 introduces the prophet Hananiah, who contradicts Jeremiah, falsely claiming that *he* speaks for God. "Hananiah had the temerity to use the same introductory formula as Jeremiah, implying a claim for inspiration similar to his. The form of the Hebrew verb *sabarti* ('I will break') in v[erse] 2 is the prophetic perfect, which emphasizes the certainty of a future event or promise. The yoke refers to the one Jeremiah had just made. Flatly contradicting Jeremiah's God-given counsel of submission, Hananiah predicted a return of the captives and the temple vessels within two years, emphasizing the time element by putting it first (v. 3)" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on Jeremiah 28:3) This was unbelievably bold—and utterly foolish.

Jeremiah responds to Hananiah's message of Judah's imminent national restoration by essentially saying, "Would that it were true!" (compare verses 5-6). But, he continues, this theme of immediate peace and prosperity runs

contrary to the long tradition of the messages of God's prophets (compare verses 7-8). If a purported prophet of God comes along saying everything's just fine and predicting "smooth sailing," the reaction should be as Jeremiah's: "We'll have to see it to believe it" (compare verse 9; Deuteronomy 18:21-22).

(We experience a similar situation today, with false ministers speaking a different message from that of God's true servants. Only those close to God can determine who His ministers are. Thankfully, most people today have access to His Word and can check what religious teachers say against the Bible—see Acts 17:11.)

Hananiah, angry at the rebuke, breaks Jeremiah's yoke and blasphemously makes his own "sign" out of it, issuing another false prophecy in God's name. His announcement "reversed every statement by Jeremiah and advanced the cause of rebellion against Babylon by Judah and the surrounding nations, something King Zedekiah had desired all along" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 10-11). But Hananiah and those who trust in him soon learn an important lesson about pretending to represent the great Creator God. Hananiah might have broken the wooden yoke on Jeremiah's neck, but those who embraced his message would soon suffer under a figurative yoke of "iron," which is unbreakable (verses 13-15). Hananiah, in fact, learns that he won't even be around long enough to have a yoke on his own neck—except the yoke of death (verse 16).

Remarkably, though Jeremiah said Hananiah would die "this year" (same verse), God doesn't wait the whole year to fulfill the decree. Instead, the false prophet dies just two months later (compare verses 1, 17). "There was no way the people and priests of Judah, who witnessed the confrontation that took place (28:1), could avoid linking Jeremiah's prediction with Hananiah's demise. God shouts out His warnings" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on verse

17). Yet the stubborn leaders and wayward populace refused to face reality—that all of Jeremiah's other prophecies were true—and humbly repent.

The false prophets of Jeremiah's day were powerful and influential, as we can see. Again, even today we need to be wary of false prophets—false preachers—who appear to be true servants of God (Matthew 7:15; 2 Corinthians 11:13; 1 John 4:1). The apostle Peter warns the Assembly of God: "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies...and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways.... By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction will not slumber" (2 Peter 2:1-3). The Bible even foretells the rise of a great false prophet who will deceive the world at the end of the present age (see Revelation 19:20; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12).

## Proverb 17

---

### Second Part of Major Solomonic Collection Cont'd

---

#### 34. Remarks on Behavior (17:2-8)

"TYPE: RANDOM PROVERBS....Although these verses contain the hint of an inclusio [as 'wise' in verse 2 and ' prospers' in verse 8 are both translated from the Hebrew word *skal*, referring to wise perception and dealing leading to success] and repeat certain themes and terms [family matters (verses 2, 6), divine judgment (verses 3, 5), the lips (verses 4, 7)], no specific pattern is apparent" (NAC).

Verse 2 shows that “ability and character can overcome the disadvantages of birth. At the same time, those born to advantage can forfeit their birthright through immorality and incompetence” (note on verse 2). We don’t have to stay where we are in life. Through wisdom we can rise above our circumstances. Conversely, through foolish disgrace, we can lose what we have.

Verse 8 apparently says that a gift given to others is very valuable to the one giving it as it leads him to success. This is not the same as Christ’s general maxim that “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The point in Proverbs 17:8 is not altruistic giving generally but a strategy of using gifts for gain. This could be a mere observation about the power of bribes (compare NIV), but it need not be so. While bribery to pervert justice is condemned (verse 23), other proverbs note that there is a proper social context for giving gifts to promote good relations and open doors (see 18:16; 19:6; Luke 16:9). It was proper in ancient times to come before kings with gifts and perhaps more mundane occasions called for this as well. Also recall Jacob’s giving of gifts to Esau to placate him and reconcile with him (Genesis 32:13-21).

### 35. Four Conjoined Collections (17:9-26)

“The proverbs of vv. 9-16 have many interconnections, but it is difficult to tell if any specific pattern is intended. It appears, however, that these verses divide into four inclusio or chiasmus collections (vv. 9-13, vv. 14-19, vv. 20-22, and vv. 23-26) on the basis of thematic parallels or catchwords. The connections among the proverbs are as follows:

? “THE SOCIAL AND ANTISOCIAL. Type: Chiasmus (17:9-13). This section describes those who are or are not sociable and easy to live with. The implied warning is that one should beware of antisocial, incorrigible, or vindictive behavior in oneself or others” (NAC).

Verse 9 on covering a transgression recalls 10:12.

Verse 11, as The Expositor’s Bible Commentary notes, shows that “those bent on rebellion will surely meet with severe retribution.... That retribution will be sent in the form of a [‘cruel messenger’]...(mal’ak ‘akzari). This expression could refer to a pitiless messenger that the king would send; but it also could refer to storms, pestilence, or any misfortune that was God’s messenger of retribution.”

? “QUICK TO QUARREL. Type: Inclusio (17:14-19). The boundaries of this text are set by the inclusio on quarreling in vv. 14,19? (NAC).

Regarding verse 16, The NIV Application Commentary states: “The point of this satiric proverb is two-sided: It is folly to think one can buy wisdom since it is a gift of God and must be acquired through study (2:1-6), and even if wisdom could be bought, the fool lacks the sense (literally, ‘heart’) to know what to do with it. The sharp juxtaposition of having money and lacking sense makes it clear that heart, both as ‘desire’ and ‘mind’ (NRSV), is the prerequisite for learning wisdom. Some see a dunce showing up at the door of a teacher with fee in hand, but evidence for this in Israel is lacking. Rather, we see a fool who does not know what to do with good things like money, responsibility, or even a proverb (26:6-9)!” (note on 17:16).

Speaking of both quarrelling and money, we may note that money can lie at the root of tension between friends, as verse 18 warns about. The caution about becoming surety for a friend, such as in cosigning a loan, recalls 6:1-5 (and 11:15 warned against becoming surety as well, there in the case of a stranger as well as generally). The proverb does not mean you should never help out a friend in this way if you are well off and the friend defaulting would not hurt you or the friendship. But you had better know what you’re getting into. And odds are that this is generally an unwise course.

Verse 19 speaks of one who “exalts his gate” seeking or inviting destruction. The Soncino Commentary notes on verse 19 that “his gate” is literally “‘his opening’ which the Jewish commentators apply to the mouth (cf. Ps [119:]130), understanding the phrase as ‘talking big, in loud and arrogant language.’ Another explanation is: living in an ostentatious manner which attracts envious attention and can easily be the cause of ruin” (note on Proverbs 17:19).

? “HEART AND FAMILY. Type: Inclusio (17:20-22)” (NAC). The foolish and scoffing son of verse 21 is probably one with a deceitful heart and perverse tongue as in verse 20—a source of great sorrow to parents, in line with verse 25 and the opening proverb of Solomon’s core collection (10:1).

Proverbs 17:22 shows, in contrast, that a happy heart is the key to a full and healthy life. We may observe, too, that this proverb indirectly speaks well of the use of medicine. For consider that it does not say that a merry heart does good like a medicine poisons you. Rather, it implies that a merry heart does good like a medicine does good. This is not to say that everything labeled medicine is good for you, but clearly the use of some medicines promotes the wellness of the body as does staying happy.

? “JUSTICE AND FAMILY. Type: Chiasmus (17:23-26)... Verse 25 would appear to have nothing to do with bribery and the miscarriage of justice [making it an exception to the other proverbs in this short section], but with v. 21 it provides a link to the previous text [see again the chart on the four conjoined collections here]. The ‘foolish son grieves his father’ verses in the contexts of vv. 20-22 and vv. 23-26 thus serve a didactic [teaching] purpose; they urge the reader (the implied ‘son’) not to become the evil man described in these verses [of all four conjoined collections] and thus not to grieve either his real father or the implied father behind the Book of Proverbs” (NAC).

36. Appropriate Use of Words (17:27?18:4)

“TYPE: INCLUSIO AND PARALLEL... Sometimes the Book of Proverbs seems to value nothing so much as appropriate words. This is because it views words as the index to the soul. By paying attention to what a person says (and indeed to how much he or she says), one can determine whether a person is wise or a fool. Words are the fruit that show the quality of the heart. A parallel structure (17:28?18:3) is imbedded in an inclusio (17:27; 18:4).

The value of being reserved in speech (17:27) is bolstered by the fact that “even an imbecile can appear intelligent if he can avoid putting his foot in his mouth, but this is all but impossible for a fool (17:28:18:2 [compare 15:2])” (note on 17:27?18:4).

## Acts 14

---

Sha’ul and Barnabah are now in Ikonion and there the preaching was so great that many of both Yehudim and Gentile believed. But even so, there was a small group of Yehudim that began to stir up trouble and tried to convince their brethren to not believe. The preaching remained strong there but the assemblies were greatly divided into two strong sides. They heard rumor that a move was being made to stone them and so they left there and went to Lustra and Derbe, cities of Lukaonia and the country round about there.

There, Sha’ul was able to heal a crippled man because of his great belief. Because of this, the people there began to proclaim Sha’ul and Barnabah as gods that come down from heaven in the form of men. They even called them Zeus and Hermes. When Sha’ul and Barnabah figured this out, they decried the accusation and spoke the truth about who they were and who Yeshua is. Eventually though, the Yehudim from the nearby places came there too and actually did stone Sha’ul this time and left him for dead.

After he was gathered up and ok, they left there also but continued their travels and teaching, proclaiming the Good News of Messiah Yeshua to all who would listen. They went back through some of the cities they had previously been to encourage the believers and they set up elders over them to help. They then returned to Antioch and they shared all their great successes to get the Word out to the people and that the door to the Gentiles was opened.