

Triennial Torah Study – 6th Year 13/06/2015

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By Joseph F. Dumond

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Lev 7	Jer 32-33	Prov 19	Acts 16
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A Perpetual Fire (Leviticus 6:8-7:38)

This section is basically a review of the various offerings, albeit with many interesting additional bits of information. One fascinating fact we find in this passage is that the fire upon the altar was to be kept burning (6:9, 12-13). *The Nelson Study Bible comments*: "The fire on the altar was never to go out. This was accomplished at night with a burnt offering that was not extinguished. It could have been stoked with wood through the night to keep it burning. After being renewed in the morning [with wood] (see v. 12), the fire was kept going throughout the day for the succession of [various offerings].... Five times in this paragraph the priests are instructed to keep the fire burning. There are at least three reasons for this: (1) The original fire on the altar came from God (9:24). (2) Perpetual fire symbolized the perpetual worship of God. (3) Perpetual fire symbolized the continual need for atonement and reconciliation with God, which was the purpose of the offerings" (notes on 6:9 and verses 12-13).

When the altar was transported, the ashes were removed and a cloth was put on top (Numbers 4:13-14). The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* states in its note on verse 13: "No mention is made of the sacred fire; but as, by divine command, it was to be kept constantly burning, it must have been transferred to some pan or brazier under the covering, and borne by the appropriate carriers." Though we can't be certain about this, it is plausible since sacrifices were offered every morning and evening, which may well imply that they were done even at times of transport. When tabernacle worship was later transferred to the temple at the time of Solomon, God ignited that fire too. However, it is not known whether the same fire was kept burning through periods of apostasy when temple worship was abandoned, although it certainly could have been. However, there is no indication that God ignited the fire of the altar built after Judah's Babylonian captivity.

Jeremiah Buys His Cousin's Field—A Sign of Hope (Jeremiah 32)

The events of this chapter occur during the 10th year of Zedekiah (verse 1), which equates to the 11th year of Ezekiel's captivity—for even though Zedekiah's reign and Ezekiel's captivity began at the same time, Zedekiah's first year seems to have followed an uncounted accession year (see Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 1983, pp. 184, 190).

Zedekiah's 10th year was the second year of the siege of Jerusalem (587 B.C.). As we earlier read, the Egyptian army had approached (Jeremiah 37:5), prompting Nebuchadnezzar to order his Babylonian forces to temporarily depart from Jerusalem to confront them. The Egyptians suffered a terrible defeat (see Ezekiel 30:21-22) and withdrew back into Egypt. Now the Babylonians had returned and their siege of Jerusalem was again underway. On King Zedekiah's orders, Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guard at the palace (32:2). "Zedekiah should have known by this time that Jeremiah's message was not his own. Yet he found fault with the prophet's predictions because they were wholly unfavorable to the country and to Zedekiah himself. In plain, unequivocal terms Jeremiah foretold Zedekiah's fate" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on verses 3-5).

God informs Jeremiah in advance of the visit of his cousin Hanamel. The prophet is to agree to Hanamel's offer to sell him his field in their hometown of Anathoth under the terms of property redemption: "Family property must not pass into the hands of an outsider (v. 7). The purpose of this law was to keep property in the family and preserve the bond between family and their property. For the seller this was duty; for the relative or kinsman-redeemer it was a right... The passage reveals that the ancient laws of land tenure were still followed in Judah in spite of its apostasy. In addition to the general law for all Israel, these land-tenure laws would in Jeremiah's time have special relevance to alienation of property belonging to priestly families —property that should not pass into nonpriestly hands. The situation is all the more dramatic since the field Jeremiah was to buy had already been captured by the invading Babylonians" (*Expositor's*, note on verses 6-7).

Expositor's suggests that Hanamel might have been in financial straits (same note). Biblical historian Eugene Merrill, however, concludes: "Hanamel obviously believed that, whereas he would soon be exiled, Jeremiah would be left behind and, hence, in a position to care for the estate" (*Kingdom of Priests*, p. 465).

With the Chaldeans outside, the request would have seemed preposterous to anyone who found out about it. Yet God directs Jeremiah to go through with the transaction, which the prophet does, committing the deed scrolls to his scribe Baruch. "According to custom, one copy of a deed was sealed for safekeeping; a second copy was left open for future consultation" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 10-11). Jeremiah, at God's command, tells Baruch to put both copies in a clay jar to be kept safe for a long time to come (verse 14). Interestingly, the oldest copies of the Old

Testament, those among the Dead Sea scrolls, were found preserved in just such clay jars in the Judean desert—and they had been preserved more than 2,000 years!

Jeremiah relays the point of what God has told him to do: “Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land” (verse 15). The exiles will one day return. But the prophet then prays to God, seemingly to gain understanding of what was happening, mentioning the presently dire circumstances of the nation (verses 16-25). Some commentators “have seen a need on Jeremiah’s part for confirmation of the transaction. Still others feel that Jeremiah slipped into an attitude of doubt... Given all the circumstances and the tension of the political and military situation, such an attitude would be understandable. Jeremiah may have longed for some reconciliation of the purchase with his prophecies of Jerusalem’s destruction... Although he had explained the meaning of the episode (v. 15), [it is possible that] he was still troubled by its improbabilities; furthermore, he also longed for reassurance for the people” (*Expositor’s*, note on verse 16).

God then gives His reply reassuring Jeremiah (verse 26-44). Even though the situation seemed hopeless, God reminded Jeremiah that nothing is too hard for Him.

Yes, for the time being He would deal severely with Judah, destroying the very rooftops where they burned incense to idols (versed 29). Israel and Judah, in spite of God’s magnificent promises to them, had rebelled from the very beginning when they were a young nation. Amazingly, God says of the “holy city” of Jerusalem: “For this city has been to Me a provocation of My anger and My fury from the day that they built it, even to this day” (verse 31). How ironic that the Jews thought that being in that city would save them! The idolatry and rebellion became so bad in the end that they even set up their idols in God’s temple. Josiah had removed the idols, but the pagan worship was still in their hearts, and it hadn’t taken long for them to revert to their old ways. God knew what human nature was like, but even He hadn’t expected Judah to stoop so low that they would actually murder their children, sacrificing them to the false god Molech (see verse 35, where He uses words He had spoken to Jeremiah many years earlier in 7:31). So again, yes, the nation would now be punished as Jeremiah had announced (32:36).

But, as God explains in the remainder of the chapter, He would, in the future, gather the exiles back from captivity and resettle them in the land. While the Jewish return from Babylonian captivity in the days of Ezra may have been in mind on one level, it is clear that this is not the primary meaning of this section. God repeats His promise from chapter 31 to make a new covenant with the people of a changed inner being. He refers to it as an “everlasting covenant” (verse 40) as in Ezekiel 16:60. And this covenant will be made with all the people, who are described as having a unified heart (Jeremiah 32:39). This is obviously describing not the ancient return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity but the future return of all Israel and Judah at the time of Yeshua Messiah’s second coming, when the Kingdom of God is established on earth. Note the nature of the Kingdom Age. It is not described as transpiring in some “heavenly” place above the clouds. People will buy land, sign and seal deeds, and through business become prosperous (verse 44). Indeed, this comes back to “the main theme of this chapter. [Jeremiah’s] transaction was an example to be

universally followed in the future restoration (v. 43). What he did will be repeated by many others in that coming day” (note on verses 43-44).

Notice that Jeremiah placed this hopeful chapter right after chapter 31, the New Covenant chapter. Indeed, chapters 30-33 are sometimes referred to by commentators as the Book of Consolation, as this section looks forward to the wonderful time when Israel will at last be restored, spiritually converted and richly blessed.

National Restoration and the Righteous Branch (Jeremiah 33)

This chapter concludes what some have called the “Book of Consolation,” the section containing God’s promise of national restoration, before the book of Jeremiah returns to the historical aspects of Judah’s downfall.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem were trying desperately to save their city. As had happened in Hezekiah’s day, the people pulled down houses, including some within the palace complex, to strengthen the walls (verse 4; see Isaiah 22:10). “Houses that were built along the city walls could be torn down and filled with rubble to produce a wider, more solid wall. This was one means of combating the sloping earthen siege ramparts that armies constructed opposite domestic quarters rather than at heavily fortified towers or gates” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Jeremiah 33:4-5). But this effort would prove to be in vain because it was God they were really fighting against (verse 5).

Verse 6 then switches immediately to a message of great hope, when God will bring “health and healing.” The captives of both Judah and Israel will return (verse 7), clearly pointing to the time of Yeshua Messiah’s second coming. Jeremiah was still in prison (verse 1) but God was now going to encourage him and give him an even greater insight into the wonderful world to come, revealing His secrets (verse 3).

God again tells Jeremiah about the coming new world—prosperity, peace, rebuilt cities, forgiveness, fertile pastures, peace for the flocks, safety and an example to the whole world. It would be so good that even God Himself will be made happy by it. The New Living Translation brings out the impact of this: “Then this city will bring me joy, glory and honor before all the nations of the earth! The people of the world will see the good I do for my people and will tremble with awe!” (verse 9). The people will be so happy that they will again sing praises to God and offer Him their thanks. With regard to the “sacrifice of praise” or “thank offerings,” the *Harper Study Bible* comments: “Jeremiah seems to refer to spiritual sacrifices, not animal offerings, i.e., thanksgivings made with the mouth, or what Hosea calls ‘the fruit of our lips’ (Hos 14:2)” (note on Jeremiah 33:11).

In verses 14-16, God repeats the prophecy about the coming “Branch,” given earlier in chapter 23. “The Messiah is here called a *righteous Branch*, a true shoot of the stock of King David. Many of David’s descendants had become kings of injustice; now the people were looking for the coming

of a righteous king who would come as the Lord's anointed or Messiah. The phrase *The LORD is our righteousness* must be understood as, 'Yeshua is our righteousness.' The word 'LORD' here is 'Yahweh' ['He Is Who He Is'; the Eternal]; in this context, it can only mean Yeshua the Messiah. Thus Yeshua is Yahweh, or God. And the N[ew] T[estament] refers to Yeshua our Righteousness (cf. 1 Cor 1.30). His righteousness is imputed to us [through His death atoning for our sins and His life in us helping us to obey God]. We have no righteousness in ourselves, only his righteousness (2 Cor 5.21)" (*Harper Study Bible*, note on Jeremiah 23:5-6). In Jeremiah 33, the name "The Eternal Our Righteousness" is given to Jerusalem (verse 16)—as God's people bear His name and receive His righteousness.

Continuity of the Royal and Priestly Lines (Jeremiah 33)

The latter part of Jeremiah 33 is a remarkable section concerning two important family lineages. God had promised David that his royal line would continue forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16). This is repeated here with the addition of a second part, the promise of continuity for the Levitical priests. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* states: "Monarchy and priesthood were the two bases of the O[ld] T[estament] theocracy. When these appeared to be in most danger of extinction in Jeremiah's day, we find their continuance couched in sure and irrevocable terms. What is affirmed of the monarchy in v. 17 is promised the priesthood in v. 18. The Levitical priesthood is assured a permanent ministry (cf. the promise to Phinehas in Num. 25:13). As legitimate priests, they will serve the Lord" (note on Jeremiah 33:17-18).

Yet these promises have appeared to many to contradict history. Neither the occupation of the Davidic throne nor the Levitical priesthood's offering of burnt and grain offerings has been continuous. *Expositor's* explains in its note on verses 17-18: "If one sees in them a constant presence and succession of Davidic rulers and Levitical priests, then, of course, history does not validate this interpretation. But the passage claims no such thing. It says only that David's dynasty will never cease. Temporary interruption is only apparent, not true cessation."

Yet when would the two offices, brought down with the Babylonian conquest, resume? The physical sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood were reactivated when the Jews returned to the land of Judah in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. But a few centuries later they were again cut off for a short time under Syrian oppression in the second century B.C. After their next restoration, they continued until the Romans destroyed the second temple in A.D. 70. Since then, nearly 2,000 years have gone by and they have never been reestablished. Of course, the priestly descendants have always been there—recognized even. Many Jews today bear the names Cohen, Cohn, Kahane, Kagan, Kahn or some other variant, meaning "priest." No doubt many of priestly descent have continued to serve in a "priestly capacity" as teachers and officiators at religious functions. In fact, some have speculated that the true ministry of Yeshua Messiah has always had descendants of the Levitical priesthood among its numbers, and that may well be. But the prophecy here specifically mentions burnt and grain offerings. Sacrifices are elsewhere prophesied to be

reestablished among the Jews soon before Messiah's return—to be performed once again, no doubt, by the Levitical priesthood. But these too will be cut off. Then, as the last section of Ezekiel informs us, sacrifices will be reinstated under Levitical priests after Yeshua Messiah returns to set up His 1,000-year reign over the earth. Indeed, this ultimate resumption appears to be the main focus of this passage in Jeremiah—or, more accurately, the continuity of the priestly line that will make this millennial resumption possible.

What then of the Davidic throne? Since the prophecy of David's descendants is intertwined with that of the Levites, they are usually viewed as being similarly fulfilled. Based on the gaps in the Levitical service, many have interpreted this section of Jeremiah with the view of a very long gap in the occupation of David's throne—from Jerusalem falling to the Babylonians more than 2,500 years ago until David's descendant, Yeshua Messiah, comes to claim the throne at His yet-future return to then reign forever. But while that is no doubt the ultimate focus of verse 17, parallel with the messianic prophecy of verses 14-16, it does not fully consider the section that immediately follows, which speaks of a vast pool of Davidic descendants (verse 22) from which God will draw "rulers" (*plural*) to set over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (verse 26). Since this multiplicity of rulers of Davidic descent cannot logically apply solely to Messiah's millennial rule, it must mean that David's throne would be reestablished before Messiah's coming to allow multiple occupants of the throne. So we see that we should view the prophecy here about the Davidic line somewhat differently from that of the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices. The prophecies are intertwined not because they are fulfilled in exactly the same way and time frame, but to show that these two bedrocks of Israelite government, both civil and ecclesiastical, would both be reestablished. God says His promises in this regard are more certain than the cycle of day and night (verses 20, 25). Of course, the *ultimate* fulfillment of both prophecies would come in the same time frame—when Messiah comes to rule the earth.

Again, though, it should be clear that David's throne would be reestablished even before the coming of Messiah. In fact, Psalm 89 adds a very important detail in this regard. God there reveals that He promised to David, "Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne *to all generations*" (verse 4). So although there could be vacancies in the occupation of David's throne, a generation could not pass before that vacancy was filled. This means a generation could not have passed from the deposing of Zedekiah at the fall of Jerusalem until the reestablishment of the throne. But that throne was never reestablished in Judah. So what happened?

Notice that Jeremiah 33:17 says that, from the time this prophecy was given, David would not lack a descendant to sit on the throne *not* of the house of Judah, but of the house of *Israel*. This makes sense when we recall from Ezekiel 17:22-24 the prophecy of the transfer of the Davidic throne from Judah to Israel. Jeremiah himself would be instrumental in this transfer, with his curious commission "to root out and to pull down" and then "to build and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10). God would use him to transplant the Davidic dynasty through a daughter of Zedekiah from Judah to the Israelites in ancient Ireland, from where it would later be transferred to Scotland and then to England—eventually becoming the British royal family of today. (For more details documenting this

little-understood history, see our online publication [The Throne of Britain: Its Biblical Origin and Future](http://www.ucg.org/brp/materials/throne/index.html) at <http://www.ucg.org/brp/materials/throne/index.html>.)

Proverb 19 – a Commentary this week from Matthew Henry on chapter 19

A poor man who fears God, is more honourable and happy, than a man without wisdom and grace, however rich or advanced in rank.

What good can the soul do, if without knowledge? And he sins who will not take time to ponder the path of his feet

Men run into troubles by their own folly, and then fret at the appointments of God.

Here we may see how strong is men's love of money.

Those that tell lies in discourse, are in a fair way to be guilty of bearing false-witness. We are without excuse if we do not love God with all our hearts. His gifts to us are past number, and all the gifts of men to us are fruits of his bounty.

Messiah was left by all his disciples; but the Father was with him. It encourages our faith that he had so large an experience of the sorrows of poverty.

Those only love their souls aright that get true wisdom. Lying is a damning, destroying sin. A man that has not wisdom and grace, has no right or title to true joy. It is very unseemly for one who is a servant to sin, to oppress God's free-men.

He attains the most true glory who endeavors most steadily to overcome evil with good. Christ is a King, whose wrath against his enemies will be as the roaring of a lion, and his favour to his people as the refreshing dew.

It shows the vanity of the world, that we are liable to the greatest griefs where we promise ourselves the greatest comfort. A discreet and virtuous wife is more valuable than house and riches. A sluggish, slothful disposition makes men poor; it brings them to want. And this applies both to the present life and that which is to come.

If we keep God's word, God's word will keep us from everything really hurtful. We abuse the doctrine of free grace, if we think that it does away the necessity and advantage of obedience. Those that live at random must die. This truth is clearly taught in words enough to alarm the stoutest sinner.

God has chosen the poor of this world, to be rich in faith, and heirs of his kingdom. When parents keep under foolish tenderness, they do their best to render children a comfort to them, and happy in themselves. The spared and spoiled child is likely to become a man of great wrath.

Those that would be wise in their latter end, must be taught and ruled when young.

What should we desire, but that all our purposes may agree with God's holy will? It is far better to have a heart to do good, and want ability for it, than to have ability for it, and want a heart to it. Those that live in the fear of God, shall get safety, satisfaction, and true and complete happiness.

Indolence, when indulged, so grows upon people, that they have no heart to do the most needful things for themselves. A gentle rebuke goes farthest with a man of understanding.

The young man who wastes his father's substance, or makes his aged mother destitute, is hateful, and will come to disgrace. It is the wisdom of young men to dread hearing such talk as puts loose and evil principles into the mind. Those are the worst of sinners, who are glad of an opportunity to sin.

The unbelief of man shall not make God's threatening's of no effect. Christ himself, when bearing sins not his own, was not spared. Justice and judgment took hold of our blessed Surety; and will God spare obstinate sinners?

Acts 16

Sha'ul meets Timothy in Derbe and Lustra, a taught one whose mother was Yehudite and father a Greek. Because many knew Timothy's father to be a Greek, Sha'ul had him to be circumcised because he wished Timothy to go with him teaching and preaching. They went through the Greek cities delivering to them the regulations set forth for them by the council in Jerusalem and they all rejoiced over it. The Set Apart Spirit continually forbade them to speak the Gospel in Asia.

But a messenger appeared to Sha'ul in a night vision begging him to come to Makedonia to help them. They then sailed from Troas and ran a straight course to Samothrake and then to Neapolis, from there to Philippi which is the principal city of that part of Makedonia – a colony. They went to a place where there used to be prayer and found there women, one of which was Ludia – a seller of purple dye.

She believed and was immersed and all her household and she begged them to stay with her in her house. While on their way there, a young slave girl having the spirit of Puthon in her that enabled her to do fortune-telling was harassing them along the way. Sha'ul turned to her and commanded the spirit in the Name of Yeshua to be gone from her and it left her that same hour. When her masters found out and noting that along with their money-making scheme, they stirred up the leaders and business men of that Roman city to seize Sha'ul and company. They were beaten and thrown into prison and placed under guard.

While there, Sha'ul and Silas began singing songs of praise and praying and the prisoners heard them. A great earthquake took place so that the foundations of the prison shook and immediately all the doors were opened and the chains came loose. The head guard awakened to find what had happened and was going to kill himself knowing that he would be killed by the Roman leaders for having let prisoners escape. But Sha'ul called out to him letting him know that they were still there

and not to do harm to himself. For all of this, the jailer desired to be saved and he was delivered and immersed... he and all his house-hold.

After this, the leaders desired to set them free secretly, but Sha'ul would not allow it. They had been beaten and imprisoned without charge and they were Roman citizens. He requested that the authorities come to them at the jail in person and walk them out publicly before all the people – showing them to be exonerated. And they did so. From there, they went on to Ludia and when the brothers saw them, they rejoiced.