

By Joseph F. Dumond

This week's Triennial Torah reading can be found at:
<https://sightedmoon.com/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf>

Gen 15-16	Judges 9	Ps 33-34	Mat 20:17 – 21:22
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Gen 15-16

There is so much information in these two chapters again.

This Chapter 15 is the one when Yahovah makes the covenant with Abraham. This was done when Abraham was 80 years old and not when he was 75 as some assume. Abraham was 75 when he was told to leave and Yahovah told him what he would do for him, now with the meat offering and the sacrifice as it is done in chapter 15, this is a binding contract and notice it is Yahovah who is bound to keep His word. Our ancestors did not bind themselves to it until they were at Mount Sinai.

This day was the 1st day of Unleavened Bread in the year 2028 After Creation or 1809 BC. It is also the 4th year of the third Sabbatical cycle. And just as we are now in the first year of the third Sabbatical cycle, I do expect something significant to take place in the 4th year or in 2013 CE on the first day of unleavened bread.

We are given a couple of prophetic clues in chapter 15.

Once again we are told in verse 7 And He said to him, "I am ?????, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." Notice it is Ur of the Chaldeans and not Ur of the Sumerians; Big difference. Ur of the Chaldeans is now known as Urfa in Southern Turkey.

In verse 13 And He said to Abram, "Know for certain that your seed are to be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years.

This seed is Isaac and when Isaac was being weaned, that is when he was ten year old, is when this affliction began to happen to him. Isaac was born in 2048 After Creation and he was ten in 2058. 400 year later is 2458 which is the year of the Exodus.

Now Abraham was 80 when the Covenant was made and we are told that it was 430 years after the covenant Exodus 12: 40 And the sojourn of the children of Yisra'el who lived in Mitsrayim was four hundred and thirty years.

So Abraham was 80 in 2028 when the covenant was made and then 430 years later is 2458 After Creation. And this also matches the 400 year prophecy which began with Isaac at age ten.

I forget whether it was Jasher or the Koran which says that Ishmael was threatening Isaac and had a knife in his hand. Isaac was having a large celebration at age 10, the first bar mitzvah. Ishmael never got one and was jealous. This is what Sarah saw and this is why Sarah ran him and Hagar out of the community of Abraham.

In verse 16 we are told another prophecy. 16 "Then, in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the crookedness of the Amorites is not yet complete."

Isaac is the first generation, Jacob the second, and Levi the third and then 1 Chronicles 6:1 The sons of Levi: Gershon, Qehath, and Merari. 2 And the sons of Qehath: Amram, Yitshar, and Hebron, and Uzziel. 3 And the children of Amram: Aharon, and Mosheh, and Miryam

But of those who went into Egypt we have Jacob, Levi, Qehath and Amram and then Aaron and Moses. But also note that Amram married his father's sister who bore Aaron and Moses.

Although we can make this work for four generations, this is not what this prophecy is teaching us. The word generations is Strong's # 1755 and is the word dowr-a revolution of time.

Using this word this way shows us that the fourth millennial day from this time of Abraham brings us to our time now at the end of this the sixth millennial day. Abraham received this prophecy at the beginning of the third millennial day. Four millennial days later is the end of this the sixth day.

Chapter 16 I have explained in the Prophecies of Abraham which you can read at https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/?page_id=492 titled War and the Birth of Ishmael. Please go and read this. It is so very relevant to what is taking place on the world scene right now. The birth of Ishmael is a prophetic end time event.

Judges 9

<http://rworden.markworden.com/Docs/Devotions/2006/08%20-%20August/August%202012,%202006.htm>

Abimelech Attempts to Establish a Monarchy

9:1 Now Abimelech son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem to his mother's kinsfolk and said to them and to the whole clan of his mother's family, 2 "Say in the hearing of all the lords of Shechem, 'Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal rule over you, or that one rule over you?' Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh." 3 So his mother's kinsfolk spoke all these words on his behalf in the hearing of all the lords of Shechem; and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He is our brother." 4 They gave him seventy pieces of silver out of the temple of Baal-berith with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless fellows, who followed him. 5 He went to his father's house at Ophrah, and killed his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men, on one stone; but Jotham, the youngest son of Jerubbaal, survived, for he hid himself. 6 Then all the lords of Shechem and all Beth-millo came together, and they went and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar at Shechem.

The Parable of the Trees

7 When it was told to Jotham, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim, and cried aloud and said to them, "Listen to me, you lords of Shechem, so that God may listen to you.

8 The trees once went out to anoint a king over themselves.

So they said to the olive tree,
'Reign over us.'

9 The olive tree answered them, 'Shall I stop producing my rich oil by which gods and mortals are honored, and go to sway over the trees?' 10 Then the trees said to the fig tree,

'You come and reign over us.'

11 But the fig tree answered them, 'Shall I stop producing my sweetness and my delicious fruit, and go to sway over the trees?'

12 Then the trees said to the vine,

'You come and reign over us.'

13 But the vine said to them, 'Shall I stop producing my wine that cheers gods and mortals, and go to sway over the trees?'

14 So all the trees said to the bramble,

'You come and reign over us.'

15 And the bramble said to the trees,

'If in good faith you are anointing me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'

16 "Now therefore, if you acted in good faith and honor when you made Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him as his actions deserved—

[Verses omitted from the reading: 17 for my father fought for you, and risked his life, and rescued you from the hand of Midian; 18 but you have risen up against my father's house this day, and have killed his sons, seventy men on one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his slave woman, king over the lords of Shechem, because he is your kinsman—]

19 if, I say, you have acted in good faith and honor with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you; 20 but if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the lords of Shechem, and Beth-millo; and let fire come out from the lords of Shechem, and from Beth-millo, and devour Abimelech." 21 Then Jotham ran away and fled, going to Beer, where he remained for fear of his brother Abimelech. (Judges 9:1-16, 1921, NRSV)

As we look ahead, we see two lessons on Abimelech (today and tomorrow, from Judg. 9), two on Jephthah (from Judg. 11, 12, cf. 10:17-12:7), and five on Samson (Judg., 13-16), a section which Ailish Ferguson Eves calls "The Spiral of Decay (Judg. 10:1-16:31)" (The IVP Women's Bible Commentary, p. 138 on Judg. 10:1-16:31). She is, of course, aware that Abimelech, at least, if not Gideon as well (cf. comments yesterday from Yairah Amit) have given that spiral a strong initial spin, for she contrasts "two judges . . . that have ministries over two decades and are buried in honor," namely, Tola and Jair (Judg. 10:1-5, passed over in the daily readings), with Abimelech and Jephthah.

So the story of Abimelech begins with his becoming king of Shechem, “ironically where the Israelite covenant assembly took place (Josh. 24:1-27)” (K. Lawson Younger, NOAB, 3rd ed. on Judg. 9:1-6). Eves calls him “the Pseudo-King” (subtitle for Judg. 8:29-9:57). He went to Shechem, “to his mother’s kinsfolk” (Judg. 9:1) and laid down the challenge, but at second hand, for he told them to “say in the hearing of all the lords of Shechem: ‘Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal [Gideon] rule over you, or that one rule over you?’ Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh” (v. 2). We have already been told that Abimelech is the son of Gideon’s concubine (8:31), whereas the seventy are sons of Gideon’s “many wives” (8:30)—a distinct disadvantage from the narrator’s point of view. But now he appeals to his own family on his own behalf against the more “legitimate” sons of Jerubbaal (Gideon). So “his mother’s kinsfolk” spoke to “the lords of Shechem,” whose “hearts inclined to follow Abimelech,” whom they considered a “brother” (Judg. 9:3). With their support—“seventy pieces of silver out of the temple of Baal-berith” (v. 4a), “corresponding to Gideon’s seventy sons” (Younger, on 9:4)—he hired “worthless and reckless fellows” (v. 4b), and he went and “killed his brothers . . . seventy men, on one stone” (v. 5a). That must have needed his hired gang of thugs! apparently one for each brother (at a piece of silver apiece). But ominously for Abimelech, Jotham, the youngest brother escaped by hiding himself (v. 5b). So Abimelech was made king “by the oak of the pillar at Shechem (v. 6).

But before hiding out in Beer (v. 21), apparently for the three-year duration of Abimelech’s “reign” (v. 22), Jotham dared to address the lords of Shechem, who had just made Abimelech king (v. 6), from “the top of Mount Gerizim” (v. 7, ‘just south of Shechem,’ Younger on v. 7). According to Yairah Amit, “It would have been impossible for the Shechemites to hear things uttered at the top of Mount Gerizim; this is a literary model of uttering from a high place (cf. E.g. 1 Sam. 26:13-14; Num. 23:14)” (Yairah Amit, *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 531 on Judg. 9:7). The “parable” (Amit on vv. 7-21), or “fable or parable of the trees,” an “ironic story” (Eves on Judg. 9:8-15), is a thinly disguised allegory in which the good trees, the olive tree (vv. 8-9), the fig tree (vv. 10-11), and the vine (vv. 12-13), each in turn refuse the invitation to reign over the trees. “Shall I stop producing my rich oil,” says the olive tree, “by which gods and mortals are honored, / and go to sway over the trees? (v. 9). In the same manner, the fig tree prefers to produce “my sweetness/and my delicious fruit” (v. 11), and the vine prefers to produce wine (v. 13). But the bramble, “a useless bush” (Younger on 9:14), has nothing better to do, and agrees to “rule” the trees. Amit observes,

The connection between the parable and what it represents is not exact . . . Abimelech, for example, unlike the trees in the parable, was not offered the monarchy, and he and his supporters, unlike the explanation, were not burned by the citizens of Shechem. It seems, therefore, that the parable was an independent anti-monarchic work, but was integrated here to criticize Abimelech and to inform the reader that when all the trees are interested in having a king, they must beware of the thornbush [‘bramble’ NRSV] and look carefully for a suitable tree. (Amit, pp. 530-531 on Judg. 9:7-21).

“The parable,” adds Amit, “is based upon a pattern of three and four, where the fourth element is different and climactic: three refusals by the useful trees . . . opposed to the agreement of the fourth, the thornbush. This structure emphasizes that the refusal of the useful trees cleared the way for an aggressive figure, and that Abimelech is totally useless” (Amit, p. 531 on 9:721). The parable closes with a threat: “if not [in good faith], let fire come out of the bramble/and devour the cedars of Lebanon” (v. 15d, e). In his interpretation, Jotham applies the threat to “the lords of Shechem, and Beth-millo” (v. 20), anticipating Abimelech’s slaughter of the Shechemites (vv. 42-45).

Shechem

[http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society & Culture/geo/Shechem.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society%20&%20Culture/geo/Shechem.html) The Hebrew name is probably derived from the word for “back” or “shoulder” – an apt description of Shechem’s location in the narrow valley between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal approximately 65 km North of Jerusalem. It was strategically located controlling major North-South and East-West roads, but lacked natural defenses and for that reason required heavy fortification. In addition to Jacob’s Well (400m to the South East) it is thought that the city derived its water supply via a conduit from a cave in Mt. Gerizim (Wright, 1965: 214-228), while the fertile plain of ‘Askar provided the city with food (Toombs, 1992: 1174-1175).

Shechem’s strategic location and plentiful supplies of both food and water explain why it was occupied for thousands of years. The city is referred to many times both in biblical and extrabiblical records. These together with the extensive archaeological work that has been carried out enable us to trace with a fair degree of certainty the history of the city.

3.1 Before the Patriarchs. It is likely that Shechem was one of the oldest settlements in Canaan. The earliest written record comes from an inscription on the Stele of Khu-Sebek who was a noble in the court of Sesotris III (c. 1880-1840 BC). It reads: “his majesty reached a foreign country of which the name was skmm [Shechem]. Then skmm fell, together with the wretched Retunu [an Egyptian name for the inhabitants of Syro-Palestine].” An Egyptian execration text (a clay tablet on which curses are inscribed and then ceremonially broken) dating from the mid nineteenth century refers to one Ibish-hadad of Shechem, indicating that Shechem was an important centre of resistance against Egyptian rule (Toombs, 1992: 1179).

3.2 The days of the Patriarchs.

3.2.1 Abraham. The first reference to Shechem in Scripture occurs in Genesis 12:6-8. This passage records how Abram travelled southwards through Canaan until he reached the great tree of Moreh at Shechem in the centre of the land. There the Lord appeared to him and in response he build an altar and offered sacrifices to the Lord. The oak or terebinth of Moreh was to feature significantly later in the Old Testament, but it is important to note that although the location may well have been a place of Canaanite worship Abram did not associate himself with that worship (Hamilton, 1990: 377).

3.2.2 Jacob. On his return from Paddam Aram Jacob settled for a time within sight of the city of Shechem and bought the second plot of land in Canaan (33:18-20; cf. 23:1-20). There Jacob set up an altar to God, the God of Israel (El Elohe Israel). While he and his family were encamped near the city, the son of one its leading citizens, Shechem son of Hamor, took Jacob’s daughter Dinah and raped her. Having found her to his liking he then persuaded his father to obtain Jacob’s consent to marry Dinah. Jacob’s son’s tricked Hamor into disabling all the men of the city by persuading them to be circumcised themselves on the pretence of removing a ceremonial obstacle to intermarriage. Simeon and Levi pressed home the advantage they had gained by putting the city to the sword and rescued Dinah, who was apparently being held in Shechem’s house (34:1-31).

Jacob was troubled by the slaughter and feared for the lives of his family when the Canaanites heard about what had taken place. Having been commanded by the Lord to move to Bethel he purified his camp of all the foreign gods and buried them under the terebinth (35:1-5).

3.3 Conquest to Monarchy

3.2.1 Tribal allotment. Shechem was part of the tribal territory of Manasseh (Josh. 17:7). It was also both a city of refuge (20:7) and a Levite city, set aside for the Kohathite clan (21:20-21).

3.3.2 Covenant Renewals at Shechem. The book of Joshua records two covenant renewals carried out by Joshua (8:30-35; 24:1-27; cf. Deut. 27:11-13). Although the first does not mention Shechem by name, it is clearly implied by its location between the mountains of Gerizim and Ebal. There is no evidence either from scripture or archaeology that the Israelites conquered the city by force (Toombs, 1992; 1183-1184). This fact has served to fuel a number of the recent theories of Israel's origins, but does not mean that the original Canaanite inhabitants remained there during the conquest. It seems far more likely that the city was captured without a fight and that it was inhabited by Israelites. At the conclusion of the ceremony Joshua "...took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the Lord" (Josh. 24:26 NIV), almost certainly outside the city were both Abraham and Jacob had sacrificed (3.2.1, 3.2.2).

3.3.3 Joseph's Place of Burial. While he was in Egypt Joseph gave specific instructions regarding the arrangements for his burial (Gen. 50:24-26). Joseph's bones were removed from Egypt at the Exodus (Exod. 13:19) and buried in the tract of land that Jacob had bought (Josh. 24:32).

3.3.4 Abimelech & the Kingship. Following the death of Gideon Abimelech, the son of his Shechemite concubine (Judges 8:31) claimed the kingship that his father had refused (9:1-3; cf. 8:22-23). Having persuaded the citizens of Shechem to follow him he set about murdering all but one of his brothers (9:3-7). Jotham, the only surviving son of Gideon addressed the citizens of Shechem by way of a prophetic parable which foretold their destruction by fire (9:7-21). After three years the people of Shechem decided that they had had enough of Abimelech's rule and attempted to make Gaal son of Ebed their leader (9:22-30). Abimelech learnt of Gaal's rebellion and attacked the city from the plain to the east as the people were going out to work in the fields (9:31-45). Once the city had fallen Abimelech turned his attention to the stronghold of the temple of Ba'al berith, where about a thousand of the city's inhabitants had taken refuge. Rather than lay siege he set fire to the tower, killing the remaining citizens of the city (9:46-49). Abimelech himself was slain shortly afterwards attempting to repeat this procedure in the nearby city of Thebez (9:50-55).

3.4 Monarch to Exile

3.4.1 David's Laments. Shechem is mentioned by David in two national laments attributed to him (Psalm 60:6-8=108:7-9). The verses cited remind the audience that it is the Lord who has measured and given the land; the people are only his tenants. He is also sovereign over the nations.

3.4.2 Jereboam's Capital. Following the death of Solomon all Israel was summoned to Shechem to make Rehoboam his son king, probably because of its historic associations. Rehoboam's foolishness resulted in the division of the kingdom with Jereboam son of Nebat ruling the ten northern tribes (2 Kings 12:1-17; 2 Chron. 10:1-17). Jeroboam initially chose Shechem as his new capital and fortified it against attacks from the South (1 Kings 12:25). The archaeological evidence for these fortifications is confused, but they appear to have taken the form of casemate walls (Toombs, 1992: 1184). The city lost much of its prestige when Jereboam moved his capital first to Peniel in the Transjordan (12:25) and then to Tirzah about seven miles to the North of Shechem (14:17).

Hosea refers to the depths the Northern Kingdom had descended to in graphic language when he speaks of bands of priests who murder those on the road to Shechem (6:9). Such activity was not unknown in the days before the monarchy (cf. Judges 9:25) and was facilitated by the narrow ravines through which the city was approached (Toombs, 1992: 1175). Shechem was a city of refuge and as such was supposed to be a place of safety. Ironically the situation in the land had degenerated so far that those fleeing the avenger of blood were in danger from the very people who were meant to protect them.

3.4.3 Destruction. Archaeological evidence suggests a destruction of the city during the reign of Menahem (2 Kings 15:13-16). In 724 the city fell again to the Assyrians and was reduced to a heap of ruins along with all the other cities of the Northern Kingdom (Toombs, 1992: 1185).

3.5 After the Exile. Shechem was all but abandoned after its fall to the Assyrians. That there were still some Israelites living there is evidenced by Jeremiah's account of the ill-fated delegation from that city (41:4-7). After this time the city shows no sign of occupation for about 150 years.

3.5.1 A Samaritan City. The Assyrians settled exiled peoples from other nations in the Northern Kingdom. According to 2 Kings these peoples were taught how to worship the Lord in order to prevent attacks by lions, seen as divine judgement. However, the people simply added the worship of Yahweh to their own beliefs and worshipped both (2 Kings 17:24-34). During the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem the Samaritans sent messengers offering their help so that they might take part in the temple worship. The sharp rebuff they received led them to fiercely oppose the reconstruction and a long lasting hostility between the two peoples (Ezra 4:1-3; cf. Luke 9:52-53; John 4:9).

When Alexander the Great defeated the Persians he was initially supported by the Samaritans, who put 8 000 troops at his disposal in his campaign against Egypt. When Alexander left they attempted to free themselves from his rule:

While Alexander was in Egypt, the Samaritans in Samaria revolted and killed the newly appointed governor, Andromachus. In retaliation Alexander destroyed the city of Samaria and established a garrison of 600 troops there. Many of the Samaritans fled to the foot of Mt.

Gerizim and, with Alexander's permission, built a temple to rival the Jewish temple in Jerusalem (Anderson, 1988:303-304).

In 128 BC the Jewish leader John Hyrcanus (134-104 BC) levelled the temple on Mount Gerizim, adding to the long hatred between the two peoples. In 107 BC he captured Samaria and it is thought that the final destruction of Shechem also took place at this time. The defensive walls were buried so that they could no longer be used. The surviving population relocated to the nearby towns of Sychar and Neapolis (Anderson, 1988: 304; Wright, 1965: 183-184).

3.6 Shechem in the New Testament. The city of Shechem no longer existed in the time of Yahshua, but it was referred to as a historic location.

3.6.1 Stephen's Speech. Stephen's speech as recorded by Luke in Acts 7:2-53 provides a review of the history of Israel from the time of Abraham. Verse 16 and its reference to Shechem has proved particularly difficult to explain. The problem arises because it apparently contradicts the text of Genesis by stating that Abraham, rather than Jacob bought the plot of land at Shechem from the sons of Hamor (Gen. 33:18-19; cf. 23:3-20). Commentators have suggested a number of explanations for this: a) Abraham was the original purchaser of the field and Jacob merely renewed the transaction as he did with the well Abraham's servants had dug (Gen. 21:27-30; 26:28-31) (Archer, 1982: 379-380). This solution relies on an argument from silence as Genesis makes no mention of any land purchase at Shechem by Abraham. More importantly there is no reference to a tomb on the plot that Jacob bought. b)

Jacob bought the site in Abraham's name, so in effect Abraham bought the land (Stott, 1990: 134). c) Luke records Stephen's speech accurately, a speech that contains a number of generalizations and conflation after the manner of popular Judaism of the period. Four similar difficulties of the same sort occur in verses 2-8 of the same chapter, indicating that Stephen was not intending to be absolutely accurate in the details he presented (Longenecker, 1981: 340-341). This seems to be the best explanation of the passage.

Ps 33-34 <http://www.christianpost.com/blogs/hebrew/2010/06/psalm-33-the-power-of-god-07/index.html>

Psalm 33- the power of God

By Eli Dahan, Biblical teacher at ClassicalHebrew.com

When there are righteous people in the world, when they are praising The Lord, It seems to be that the power of God can be seen more clearly to us, as written in psalm 33:1-
“????????? ??????????, ??????????; ?????????????, ?????? ??????????” “Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous, praise is comely for the upright”

This psalm start with the saying that the power of God is not hidden to us, we can see it, we can feel it, we can understand a part of it- we just have to look at the nature to see the miracles of The Almighty as written in next verses, but first of all let us play with the harp, let us sing loud and clear, let us compose to him a new song, cause he is the one who does the justice, he is the one the grace and kindness, the one who can commend this actions:
“????????? ??????, ?????????? ??????????; ?????????? ??????, ???-?????????
?????? ?????????, ?? ?????????; ?????? ?????????????? ??????????????
????????? ??????????, ???-????????; ?????????? ??????????, ???-????????? ??????
????? ?????? ?????? ?????????; ???-????????, ?????????????”

“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathered the waters of the sea together as a heap; He layeth up the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him for He spoke and it was; He commanded, and it stood.”

The power of God consists, among others, the submission of the nature to him, from above, upward, from the heavens downward, to the ocean and the sea. Furthermore the power is on the human beings, all the people of the world. Pay attention, my friends to the last two sentences that exhibit to us the parallelism!

11 Come, you children, listen to me; Let me teach you the fear of ????. 12 Who is the man who desires life, Who loves many days, in order to see good? 13 Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking deceit. 14 Turn away from evil and do good; Seek peace, and pursue it.

<http://www.jtsa.edu/PreBuilt/ParashahArchives/5758/yomkippur.shtml>

Chancellor’s Parashah Commentary
Community Development
Chancellor’s Parashah Commentary
Yom Kippur 5758

Ismar Schorsch is the chancellor of The Jewish Theological Seminary.

A Palestinian preacher, Rabbi Alexandri, was wont to speak in the language of an evangelist: “Who desires life?” he would declaim, “Who desires life?” And quickly the crowds gathered, demanding, “Give us life!” At last, Rabbi Alexandri would begin by quoting two verses from Psalm 34: “Who is the person who is eager for life, who desires years of good fortune? Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking guile (34:13-14).”

That is the extent of the Talmud’s tale. No hint of how those who assembled reacted. I suspect many suffered a letdown. What brought them in such large numbers (the Talmud says the whole world came to listen) were expectations of a different message. Their presence indicated the pervasive hunger for personal salvation. The average life expectancy of a Roman citizen of the second century was less than twenty-five years. Without the hope

of an afterlife, in which virtue would be valued and rewarded, the untold suffering of this world could no longer be endured. Christianity had already launched its remarkable conquest of the Roman empire on the wings of its gospel of individual salvation.

Yet Rabbi Alexandri refused to dilute or surrender Judaism's age-old stress on this-worldly salvation. The story borders on parody. Though bearing the telltale signs of a Christian missionary, Rabbi Alexandri holds out neither a doctrine of faith nor a glimpse of heaven, only a moral principle. For him, the task remains to better the society in which we are fated to live out our years. What a vast improvement we could effect if human speech ceased to be an instrument of assault or deceit!

The message of Rabbi Alexandri also captures the spirit of Yom Kippur. On this holiest day of the Jewish year, we do not take flight from this world. We do not fast, pray and seek forgiveness in order to gain life eternal. The liturgy is singularly free of allusions to what might await us after death. The terror we dare to face is that of our own mortality, not that of hell or damnation. The modesty of our request of God boggles the mind. We ask for but one more year to serve as God's partner in the completion of creation. The request is out of all proportion to the spiritual intensity of our effort.

Showing up at synagogue is surely not enough. Yom Kippur is not a sacrament. It does not possess the power to automatically cleanse an indifferent, passive or defiant participant. Soberly, the Mishna warns us: "One who repeatedly says to himself, 'I can sin and repent,' will never have the ability to repent genuinely. Or one who thinks that, 'I can sin and Yom Kippur will effect atonement for me,' is sadly wrong. Yom Kippur will not atone for him. Indeed, only the sins we commit against God are atoned for by Yom Kippur. Those we commit against another human being are not atoned for by Yom Kippur until the person we have offended forgives us."

This is a demanding prescription. Going through the motions of the Yom Kippur ritual changes very little. We need to work on ourselves; we need to rectify our ways in relating to others before we can approach God with heartfelt professions of contrition and failure. And the catalyst that prompts us to make the effort is the "shock therapy" that another year has passed. Yom Kippur helps us live our lives backwards. Will we be able to take our leave at death content that we have done our utmost to improve ever so slightly the human condition?

It is for this reason that al het, the public and collective confession that we recite throughout Yom Kippur, focuses exclusively on those commandments which govern our interaction with fellow humans. A list of 44 sins, double the number of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and not a single one of a ritual nature! What a striking affirmation that ethics lie at the heart of Judaism and that what ultimately expresses its deepest purpose is not its ample and distinctive ritual but its moral nobility. Ritual is the garb for the ethical quest.

Hence the dispensing of charity must accompany our inner resolve to change direction and our profusion of prayers. Carlyle may be right that "the greatest of faults is to be conscious of none;" for Judaism, however, self-awareness is but the first step in a process of repentance that must culminate in positive and effective action. Significantly, we conclude Yom Kippur by turning to the construction of the Sukkah. After a period of withdrawal, we reenter the world to choose life.

May you have an easy fast and a good finish.

Gemar tov,

Ismar Schorsch

Mat 20:17 – 21:22

This week Mathew 20:17-29 strikes me. Especially after last week's teaching about tithing.

Tithing is used to bring the people into submission to those exacting that tithe. Now this week we read what Yahshua says about those who would seek to be in power over you.

25 But ????? called them near and said, "You know that the rulers of the gentiles are masters over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. 26 "But it shall not be so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 "And whoever wishes to be first among you, let him be your servant, 28 even as the Son of Ad?am did not come to be served, but to serve,¹ and to give His life as a ransom for many."

We read in Isaiah 49: 1 Listen to Me, O coastlands, and hear, you peoples from afar! ???? has called Me from the womb, from My mother's belly He has caused My Name to be remembered. 2 And He made My mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of His hand He hid Me, and made

Me a polished shaft. In His quiver He hid Me." 3 And He said to Me, 'You are My servant, O Yisra'?! in whom I am adorned.' 4 And I said, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for emptiness, and in vain. But my right-ruling is with ?????, and my work with my Elohim.' " 5 And now said ???? – who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Ya?aQob? back to Him, though Yisra'?! is not gathered to Him, yet I am esteemed in the eyes of ?????, and My Elohim has been My strength – 6 and He says, "Shall it be a small matter for You to be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Ya?aQob?, and to bring back the preserved ones of Yisra'?!? And I shall give You as a light to the gentiles, to be My deliverance to the ends of the earth!" 7 Thus said ?????, the Redeemer of Yisra'?! their Set-apart One, to the despised, to the loathed One of the nation, to the Servant of rulers, "Sovereigns shall see and arise, rulers also shall bow themselves, because of ????? who is steadfast, the Set-apart One of Yisra'?!. And He has chosen You!"

We Israel are His servants. We who are taught these great truths must humble ourselves and reach out and teach and correct those who do not yet know. We must do so as a slave and expect nothing in return. Just as last week we were shown about the labourers in the vineyard who complained about receiving the exact same wage as those who were hired just before the job was done, so it is to be with us who are called first to teach, but also with Israel as a whole who has been the ones to preserve this message and to share it to the world.

It was preserved by Judah all these years and through the missionary efforts spread around the world in many forms. It has been done and is not done right. Even Israel who is now first will be last and the gentiles will then be first. Can we grasp that thought? It should be on our minds as we complain about our reward when we stand up to receive it.

If you have forgotten, we wrote to you a few weeks ago about you being a bond servant. You can review this at https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/?page_id=633 The Torah of the Bondservant.

Now as we read the rest of this week's Torah portion two things jump out at me. First is in Mathew 22: 22 "And whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." This goes back to what we showed you in last week's teachings

Proverb 15: 8 The slaughtering of the wrong ones is an abomination to ?????, But the prayer of the straight is His delight.

Proverb 28: 9 He who turns away his ear from hearing the Torah, Even his prayer is an abomination

James 5: 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, so that you are healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous one accomplishes much.

1 John 3: 22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we guard His commands and do what is pleasing in His sight.

John 9: 31 "And we know that Elohim does not hear sinners. But if anyone fears Elohim and does His desire, He hears him.

Isaiah 59: 1 Look, the hand of ???? has not become too short to save, nor His ear too heavy to hear. 2 But your crookednesses have separated you from your Elohim. And your sins have hidden His face from you, from hearing.

Proverb 15:29 ???? is far from the wrong ones, But He hears the prayer of the righteous

The other section that jumps out at me is the cursing of the fig tree. Why did Yahshua do this?

First of all Yahshua rode in to Jerusalem on a colt. This in chronological terms was the 10 day of month of Nisan. We are commanded to take a lamb of the flock on the tenth day of Nisan.

Exodus 12: 3 "Speak to all the congregation of Yisra'el, saying, 'On the tenth day of this month each one of them is to take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household

Yahshua is the lamb of Yahovah and He is now going to be examined for impurities for the next 4 days until Passover.

On the second day on His way back into Jerusalem as He came from Bethany, Yahshua curses a fig tree and immediately the fig tree withered away. Why did He do this? Did Yahshua have a hissy fit because there was no fruit?

The answer takes us right back to the Garden of Eden.

In Genesis 2:15 And ???? Elohim took the man and put him in the garden of ?d?en to work it and to guard it. 16 And ???? Elohim commanded the man, saying, "Eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that you eat of it you shall certainly die."

Adam was told not to touch the tree or else he would die. Then in chapter three we read of how Satan does not go and tempt Adam but instead goes to the weaker vessel Eve. Satan does not go and tempt Yahovah, but is now tempting Israel, His bride.

1 And the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which ???? Elohim had made, and he said to the woman, "Is it true that Elohim has said, 'Do not eat of every tree of the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We are to eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, Elohim has said, 'Do not eat of it, nor touch it, lest you die.' " 4 And the serpent said to the woman, "You shall certainly not die. 5 "For Elohim knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be like Elohim, knowing good and evil." 6 And the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, and she took of its fruit and ate. And she also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made loin coverings for themselves.

Note the word crafty- it means to be adept in the use of subtlety and cunning b : marked by subtlety and guile This is what many of the false teachings out there do. They use subtle manoeuvres to sway you away from the truth. Anything to get you away from the truth is all that matters to Satan.

As soon as they ate they knew they had sinned and sought to cover it up using a fig leaf from the very tree they had just sinned under. Adam and Eve sought to use a fig leaf to cover their sin. Notice this. On the day of

Atonement your sins are covered, not by a fig leaf, but by the blood of the lamb which is shed at Passover. That Lambs blood is sprinkled on the mercy seat;

Leviticus 16: 14 He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. 15 "Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. 16 So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

Now the tree of knowledge of good and evil is represented by the fig tree and this is why Yahshua cursed it. Yahshua also knew that He was about to be hung on a tree near the place where He is arrested.

Now just an aside here; what penalty required you to hang a man on a tree? There is none. Yet in Deuteronomy 21 you are told 22 "And when a man has committed a sin worthy of death, then he shall be put to death and you shall hang him on a tree. 23 "Let his body not remain overnight on the tree, for you shall certainly bury him the same day – for he who is hanged is accursed of Elohim – so that you do not defile the land which your Elohim is giving you as an inheritance.

The Menorah is made after the shape of the tree of life. What is that tree of life? It is an almond tree, Exodus 25. Yahshua was hung on an almond tree. This tree would also be very close to the actual red Heifer sacrificial pit which was on the Mount of Olives. Once again we are coming close to the secret place.

I have been to Israel at Passover now a couple of times and both times I have looked at the fig trees to see if there are figs on them. It is spring time and the figs are not yet out. So the reason Yahshua cursed the tree was not because there were no figs on it; the reason was because the fig tree was growing near the location where He would be hung on a tree and stoned to death. The tree represented a way of life. Satan's way of life is the tree of knowledge of good and evil and is represented by the fig tree. Yahovah's way of life is represented by the Almond tree and Yahshua did not want to be hung on a tree that represents good and evil.