

Triennial Torah Study – 2nd Year 02/07/2011



sightedmoon.com /triennial-torah-study-2nd-year-04042015 /

By Joseph F. Dumond

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

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

Ex 22	Isaiah 28-29	Ps 136-138	John 10
--------------	---------------------	-------------------	----------------

Exodus 22

There are a few things here I would like to comment on.

First I would like all the widows to take note of Exo 22:22 "Do not afflict any widow or fatherless child. 23 "If you do afflict them at all – if they cry out to Me at all, I shall certainly hear their cry, 24 and My wrath shall burn and I shall slay you with the sword, your wives shall be widows and your children fatherless.

Know that you are under Yehovah's direct protection. He hears your prayers if you are being obedient to His Torah. You have direct access to the Creator of all things. I find this most amazing and most terrifying for those who would abuse and take advantage of the widow.

I have read so many emails from the Brethren who have accused each of the Presidents as they are elected, as being the anti-Christ. They pretend to be children of Yehovah and quote a verse or two to show you their righteousness and then go on to curse the leaders of this world.

Exo 22:28 "Do not revile Elohim, nor curse a ruler of your people.

<http://edgeinducedcohesion.wordpress.com/2011/02/23/you-shall-not-revile-god-norcurse-a-ruler-of-your-people-the-continuing-relevance-of-exodus-22-28/>

Though respect for authority has not always or often come easily to me, it is clearly something that the Bible consistently commands, and therefore I struggle to obey it even though it comes with extreme difficulty. Respect for authority in any respect does not come very easily—both because the times are full of rebellion and sedition (which influence me more than I would often wish to be the case) and because authorities are so visibly corrupt, a consequence of the greater knowledge and awareness we have in these times about the lives and behaviors of our leaders. With familiarity comes contempt.

In examining this command I would first like to look at this command and how it is applied and used in the Bible itself. I would then like to examine its purpose and reason for being, and what it relates to in a more broad and general concern. I would then like to examine what makes this

command so hard to obey in this time and what ways this command is applicable in our present times, where our example (mine included) has often fallen short of the biblical command.

The Command And Its Application

Exodus 22:28 reads very plainly: “You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.” It does not leave a whole lot of ambiguity in terms of its requirement that we honor and respect God as well as our leaders. We certainly have an obligation to condemn wicked behavior—but to curse people is unacceptable. We must respect those in authority over us even if they are unworthy of the office—for the sake of the office alone, if nothing else.

That this interpretation is not merely mine but the Bible’s would appear to be indicated by the two passages that cite this scripture, one indirectly and one directly. First, let us take the indirect approach and examine Ecclesiastes 10:20, which says: “Do not curse the king, even in your thought; do not curse the rich, even in your bedroom; for a bird of the air may carry your voice, and a bird in flight may tell the matter.” This wise advice has never been more true in this age where one’s thoughts and words, written on blogs (even anonymously) to curse or revile one’s leaders can easily reach the eyes and ears of other people. Very little is private any longer, and while that can be good, it can be bad if our thoughts erode the respect for authority that ought to exist. After all, God is a God of order and decorum, and that requires a respect for offices, and a desire that they be filled with godly people, a circumstance that can only happen when those offices are respected. It is respect for an office, after all, that will lead honorable people to desire it, and lead us to place honorable people there. To curse leaders is to avoid our responsibility in choosing wisely and in training to become leaders ourselves. The fact that we will suffer sanctions for cursing and reviling leaders is also true—even, at times, after those leaders are dead, and even where there was no intent to revile.

A very direct, and unpleasant, application of this precise law comes in Acts 23:1-5: “Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?” And those who stood by said, “Do you revile God’s high priest?” Then Paul said, “I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’ “

Here we see that despite the fact that the high priest abused authority and acted against the law that Paul was in the wrong for insulting the high priest as a whitewashed wall. Now, Paul was certainly very fierce, but a lot less fierce than many things I have heard or even spoken or written about leaders myself. As Paul was in the wrong in breaking this law, many of us (myself included) have been guilty of breaking this law numerous times, a law that is still in force and that Paul, under the inspiration of God, applied to himself and his own speech. As Paul applied this law to himself, so should we all. We cannot insult and revile those who are our rulers, even

when they are wicked—though once those people leave the offices over us, by their own choice or others, they may be addressed in a more forceful manner, having left the sanctity of those offices in authority over us.

Why Does This Command Exist?

Let us ask ourselves why this command even exists, though. Why does God command respect for both the offices of king and priest in the Bible, covering both civil and religious authorities, though they may be (and often are) corrupt and wicked and power-hungry individuals? There are probably several reasons, but I would like to explore two of them. The first is that respecting flawed human authorities trains us and disciplines us to honor a perfect God whose ways are often mysterious to us. The second is that we are being trained for leadership positions and it is necessary to respect authority before one can be trusted with authority. Let us examine both of these possibilities in turn.

Let us not forget that one of the ten commandments clearly relate to the honor of offices, the fifth commandment, which commands the honoring of one's father and mother. Now, without going into detail, this has been a huge problem for me in my life, and has probably made the respect of authority in general much more difficult than it would otherwise be, but the Bible's commands are unmistakably clear, as in Exodus 20:12: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." God's command to honor one's parents is directly tied to the longevity of life people have. Those who do not respect and care for their own parents will not be respected and cared for by their children—those who sow rebellion to those in power over them will reap rebellion from those who they are in authority over.

And, it should be made clear as well that God sees Himself as the father of all, and worthy of the same honor and respect He commands to be given to physical parents, as he says in Malachi 1:6: "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reference?" Here we see that as God is the Creator of all and the Father of all, he is worthy of respect, honor, and reverence from all human beings, respect He does not often receive. If we fail to respect our earthly leaders, we will not have acquired the self-discipline and habits to respect and honor God. We learn the spiritual through the physical, and honoring physical authorities is necessary to respect the authority of God in heaven.

In addition to this concern, there is an additional element. We respect authority so that we will ourselves be worthy of respect. To attack the dignity of the office is to attack the legitimacy of the power we seek to possess ourselves, though we may often be unaware of our assault on the foundations of our own legitimacy. If we expect to be parents, to attack the authority of parents is to cut off the ground of respect we expect in the future from our own children. If we wish to have a family, we must respect and honor our own, even if (maybe especially if) those families are dysfunctional. To break the cycles requires that we respect and honor even those

who are grossly unworthy of it. After all, if we can respect and honor unworthy authorities we ought to have no difficulty showing honor and respect to worthy ones, or becoming worthy ones ourselves as well.

This is especially true in light of the fact that the Bible consistently proclaims the destiny of physical (in Exodus 19:5-6) and spiritual Israel (in 1 Peter 2:9-10) to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The fact that believers are in training to be civil and religious leaders themselves requires that they learn how to respect and honor civil and religious authorities. Again, those who wish to and seek to inhabit honorable offices and conduct themselves with honor must learn how to respect and honor the offices themselves. Even if (again, especially if) the people who hold those offices are unworthy of honor due to their own conduct, maintaining a respect for the office means the increase of our own fervent desires to fill those offices faithfully and with integrity ourselves, to be worthy of those offices in contrast to our predecessors.

How Does This Matter Today?

The consequences of the command to respect and honor authorities are clear and unmistakable. We are forbidden from cursing and reviling either spiritual authorities (God) or physical authorities (parents, kings, priests). This means we cannot insult and mock presidents, congressmen, mayors, governors, ministers, parents, bosses, or other authorities. Clearly, as there are a lot of people in positions of authority, there are a lot of people who cannot be reviled.

What does it mean to revile anyway? Freedictionary.com gives a few revealing definitions for revile, including: to spread negative information about, malign, abuse, smear, vilify, slander, bad-mouth, libel, denigrate [1]. So, if someone is in authority over you and you speak negatively and falsely about them—you have just broken God's commandment and are an evildoer. If you have insulted someone in authority—you are an evildoer according to this commandment as well. Clearly, as someone who has often been guilty of this, I speak with a fair amount of concern, but whether an authority is civil or religious over you, respect is necessary, respect for the office and respect for the truth.

As many of us have broken this command often—it is broken regularly on anonymous internet forums, talk radio and television, blogs, and even occasionally in sermon messages by people who ought to know better—let us realize that to obey this commandment (which tripped up even the Apostle Paul) requires a repentant and humble heart willing to accept wrong from those in authority while knowing that God will avenge, and that respect for office is necessary for us to be honorable people in those offices ourselves.

Let us therefore seek to be aware of and obedient to this obligation to respect human and divine authorities, even when it is difficult. The fact that leadership has so often been corrupt means all the more that the legitimacy of government is threatened and we need to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. The ability to respect an office even if the person holding that office is ungodly and corrupt means that we will not aid the destruction of proper order and decorum in

a given society, and that we ourselves are fit to preserve the honor of the offices we are given through honorable and decent conduct. Let us therefore strive to obey this command and so become worthy of holding the offices God wishes to give us, for we will not command if we cannot respect.

We read in 1 Samuel how Saul went to the washroom in the very cave that David was hiding in and David could have killed Saul who had been seeking David's life. Yet David did not kill the King out of respect for the office that King Saul held which was given by Yehovah.

1Sa 24:4 And the men of Dawid said to him, "See, the day of which Yehovah said to you, 'See, I am giving your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you!' " And Dawid arose and gently cut off a corner of Sha'ul's robe. 5 And it came to be afterward that the heart of Dawid smote him because he had cut the robe of Sha'ul. 6 So he said to his men, "Far be it from me, by Yehovah, that I should do this matter to my master, anointed of Yehovah, to stretch out my hand against him, for he is the anointed of Yehovah."

David was remorseful for just cutting off the corner of Shaul's robe. David held the office which Saul had in HIGH regard no matter how despicable Saul had become.

Think on this the next time you send or forward evil gossip about your political leadership, no matter how corrupt they may be. Think on this when you revile your parents, or you revile your husband. Think on this. You are reviling the office that Yehovah has made and you are reviling the one Yehovah placed in that office.

In reading God's righteous judgments, we can conclude that these are not old, worn-out, outdated directives that do not pertain to us today. Rather, these are laws that wisely regulate a civil nation, and we should be able to understand the common sense of their application. Some modern nations, to their credit, have followed many of the principles and guidelines of these judgments.

These underlying principles-often referred to as Judeo-Christian ethics or morals-formed the basis of much of British and American common law over the last few centuries. Regrettably, however, most nations today are drifting away from this standard..

We see this in the casual attitude towards and practice of premarital sex, extra-marital sex and homosexuality, as well as other vile sexual practices-so much is "legal" that would have merited a death sentence under the administration God gave. In ancient Israel, witchcraft was also a capital crime. Yet today, Ouija boards, seances and delving into the occult are popular pastimes.

Television is filled with infomercials inviting people to call and find out about their future from psychics, astrologers or Tarot card readers.

Prisons today are overcrowded and, far too often, only teach criminals to be more violent or how to more finely hone their skills. Yet if nations were to follow the laws of restitution, while there might still be a need for temporary incarceration-i.e., jail until trial if the offender might pose a

threat to others-prison overcrowding and violence would not exist since there would be no prisons.

God's people were to be a holy people. They were to represent God in their appearance and dress, in their speech and conduct, and even in the way that they killed, prepared and ate animals. God has not done away with these principles. Read these judgments carefully! Various prophecies we will cover later show that God's holy and righteous laws will once again be in force after Jesus Christ returns and establishes His kingdom on earth. Then, all people will be given the opportunity to know, understand and live by those just and equitable laws

Isaiah 28-29

In the previous two chapters of Isaiah, he had focused on the wonderful future that awaits Israel and Judah. But now he returns to his dire theme of warning. In this chapter we have first a condemnation of Ephraim followed by one addressed to the "scornful men...in Jerusalem" (verse 14).

While this prophecy could have been given earlier, its position in the text would seem to date it to shortly before Sennacherib's invasion of 701 B.C.—two decades after the deportation of Ephraim. So the warning to Ephraim, the chief of the northern ten tribes, was very likely a message intended for Israel of the last days. Indeed, the wording of verses 5-6 and particularly verse 22—"destruction determined even upon the whole earth"—makes that rather clear.

Verses 1-8 show that the people of Israel have become drunk. While this could denote a problem with actual alcoholic drunkenness, it is more likely meant to signify spiritual drunkenness, as in other scriptural passages. The people become practically intoxicated through false ideologies and their own stubbornness. In this state, they are incapable of understanding what God has to say to them—and thus are blind to His truth.

Verses 9-10 explain the way God reveals knowledge—and it is a major key to understanding the Bible. It is not merely as a babe drinking milk (compare Hebrews 5:13). Rather, we must work at studying the Bible. It is somewhat like assembling a jigsaw puzzle, with the message of truth scattered throughout its pages. We must search out all that the Bible has to say about a particular subject—bringing scattered information together—to understand God's truth about that matter: "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little" (Isaiah 28:10).

Some reject this concept by pointing to the context of the people's blindness and drunkenness and the repetition of the above phrase in verse 13, where it is added, "...that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught." But that is actually consistent with interpreting verses 9-10 as relating the proper way to understand. In fact, it should help us to better grasp the point God is making. God has revealed His truth here a little and there a little for this very purpose—so that when those in the world, whose minds are willingly closed to His

truth, attempt to comprehend it, they are unable. To them it seems one great mass of confusion—indeed it seems drunkenness when they themselves are the ones who are spiritually drunk. And they fall backwards over it, tripping and stumbling. But to those God has called to understand His purpose, it all comes together—and it all makes sense. For the same reason Jesus spoke in parables—so the multitudes would not understand but His true followers would (Luke 8:10).

The context, then, is this. God has arranged His Word so that spiritually drunk people are unable to comprehend it. They trip and stumble over it as drunkard's trip and stumble in general. They refuse to hear (Isaiah 28:12)—indeed, they refuse to hear and heed the way to understand given in verses 9-10—so they remain drunk. That was true in Isaiah's time—and, sadly, it remains true today.

The mention of the foundation and cornerstone (verse 16), quoted by the apostles Peter and Paul as referring to Jesus Christ (Romans 9:33; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6), also reveals this prophecy to have a later application. Paul emphasized that “whoever believes” (Isaiah 28:16; Romans 10:11) was not restricted to the Jews—and explained this as opening the way for the gentiles to come to God. Moreover, Isaiah 28:11-12 is quoted by Paul in discussing the subject of speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:21).

Isaiah mentions Jerusalem's leaders making a “covenant with death” or “agreement with Sheol [the grave]” (Isaiah 28:14-15, 18). “The phrase simply means that the people of Israel [or Judah] thought they had an agreement worked out by which they could avoid death. But God will soon annul that and strike His people with judgment (28:28)” (Bible Reader's Companion, note on verse 15). In Isaiah's day, perhaps this applied to the nation's agreement with Egypt or Babylon to defend against Assyria. Yet, because some of this passage apparently refers to the end time as we've seen, the covenant with death may as well. In that context, it could refer to an Israeli pact or treaty with Europe that may initially preserve the Jewish state—an agreement such as that made with Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C. (see Daniel 11:23) and later with the Romans. None of these agreements has preserved the people of the Holy Land—and neither would any made in the end time.

Isaiah 28 contains some powerful imagery from Israel's history in verse 21. The mention of God rising up as at Mount Perazim refers back to a battle David fought with the Philistines when they sought to get rid of him soon after he became king of the combined northern and southern tribes (compare 2 Samuel 5:17-20; 1 Chronicles 14:8-11). The “Valley of Gibeon” refers to the famous “Joshua's long day” battle against the Amorites in defense of Gibeon, when God not only prevented the sun from setting, but also used hailstones to kill even more Amorites than the Israelites killed with the sword (compare Joshua 10:6-14).

What should be disconcerting to the Israelites is that in this prophecy God's wrath is directed against them rather than against their enemies.

Finally, in the last few verses of Isaiah 28, God uses some harvesting analogies that contain both a warning and some encouragement. The farmer uses his judgment on how much the grain needs to be ground. God, the farmer, will continue to “grind” Israel through trials as long as He determines it is necessary. It’s not up to Israel, “the grain” in the analogies, to say when God should bring their trials to an end. But God adds two encouraging thoughts. He reminds Israel that He is aware of the fact that some types of grain need delicate threshing methods, lest the grain be ruined. To be sure, some of the trials He allows His people to endure are truly “gentle” by comparison to what they could be without His oversight. The other point is that, regardless of how much threshing needs to be done, it’s only part of the process. That is, Israel can count on the fact that at some point, “the grinding”—that is, the trials—will cease, and God will move on to the next part of His plan.

As David wrote in Psalm 103, “For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust” and “the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting” (verses 14, 17).

Isaiah 29

It is apparent that in spite of Hezekiah’s faithfulness, the nation as a whole has not made the turnaround God requires.

Jerusalem is referred to as “Ariel.” Some translate this name as “Lion of God”—the lion being the emblem of Judah and its kings. Others view the name as meaning “Altar Hearth”—seeing Jerusalem as the place of sacrifice and that Jerusalem I self will be made a sacrifice in its coming destruction. Yet Jerusalem was not destroyed in Isaiah’s day. The Assyrians laid siege to it, as described in verse 3, but they did not enter and destroy the city.

It is not clear whether verses 5-8 are referring to Jerusalem’s destruction by a great multitude of enemies or to the destruction of the enemies themselves. A seemingly parallel passage in Isaiah 17:12-14 would appear to argue for the latter. In the end time, Jerusalem will be initially invaded and trampled down by foreigners (Revelation 11:2). But, leaving the city at the very end to gather at Megiddo (16:16), these forces will return with others at Christ’s return to be wiped out (19:19-21; Joel 3:2, 12-14).

The first part of Isaiah 29:10 is used by Paul to describe how God has temporarily blinded the Israelites (compare Romans 11:8, Deuteronomy 29:4). Part of this blindness is accomplished, as the last part of Isaiah 29:10 explains, through the removal of righteous teachers. All that is left to the people then is God’s Word. And yet people won’t even seriously look at what the Bible has to say even when they are asked to. Isaiah 29:11-12 profoundly summarizes their two main excuses for not reading it.

The “literate” (educated religious leaders) claim it is no use to try because parts of the Bible are mysteriously sealed from human understanding, and the “illiterate” (the common people) claim it is no use to try because understanding the Bible requires more education than they have.

Jesus quoted verse 13 in chastising the Pharisees for their hypocrisy (Matthew 15:8-9; Mark 7:6-7). People's religion can become hollow—appearing righteous to the outward observer but in reality substituting human tradition and reason for God's actual instructions. They lack heartfelt desire to really listen to what God has to say. And again, Paul chose verse 14 of Isaiah 29 to support his discussion about how the wise of this world do not understand the truth of God (1 Corinthians 1:19). It is thus a prophecy of how God would use His servants to demonstrate this fact.

One lesson we should draw from this passage in Isaiah 29—that is, verses 9-14—is the danger in people looking too much to the instruction they receive from their spiritual leaders and not ultimately to God and His Word. People can add their own ideas to God's Word and His revealed way of worship. Even if a leader is righteous, people must be careful about placing too much trust in him. He is certainly not perfect. And if people are relying too much on human leaders to guide them, then God may see fit to remove that leadership as in verse 10 and leave them with blind guides instead. This is basically the way God worked with His people throughout the time of the judges and the Jewish monarchy. God would provide strong righteous leadership for a time—and then withdraw it—over and over and over again. In so doing, each generation was tested to see who was merely following men and who really followed the true God to the point of continuing to follow Him even when the righteous leadership was withdrawn and wicked influences prevailed.

Thankfully, Israel as a whole will at last come to know God's truth and live by it. Verses 18 and 24 foretell the time when all people will have their spiritual eyes and ears (their minds) opened to read and understand God's Word.

Ps 136-138

Psalm 136, a song of thanksgiving, is known in some traditions as the Great Hallel (or "Praise") on its own, while others reckon the psalm as the last of the Great Hallel collection. Though the psalm is unattributed, its opening words and repeated refrain—"Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy [hesed, loyal love or devotion] endures forever" (verse 1)- are known to have originally come from the song King David composed for the celebration of bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (see 1 Chronicles 16:34). The same words are also found at the beginning of Psalms 106 and 107 and at the beginning and end of Psalm 118.

The refrain—"For His mercy endures forever"-was sung by the Israelite congregation and the Levitical choir at the dedication of Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 7:3, 6) and later by King Jehoshaphat's singers before Judah's army (20:21). It seems likely that the accounts of these occasions are abbreviated, so that Psalm 136 may have been sung in these instances, as it appears to be written in the form of an antiphonal exchange—that is, back-and-forth, responsive singing—either between two choirs or between a choir and the congregation or as a litany

between a worship leader and a choir or the congregation. In the latter case, the choir or congregation would sing the repeated refrain.

Note again the occurrence of the entire formula-both the call to thanks and the refrain-at the opening and closing of Psalm 118. This song, we may recall, concludes the Egyptian Hallel (113-118), so named for the customary use of this collection of psalms in the observance of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, celebrating Israel's deliverance from Egypt. As it was likely seen as an amplification of Psalm 118's opening and closing formula, Psalm 136 eventually also became part of the traditional Passover liturgy, being sung after the Egyptian Hallel. Furthermore, as The Nelson Study Bible says, "This psalm, known as the 'Great Hallel,' was often recited in the temple as the Passover lambs were being slain" (note on Psalm 136).

The link between Psalms 118 and 136 is paralleled by the link between Psalms 113 and 115 (two other Egyptian Hallel songs) and Psalm 135 (reckoned among the Great Hallel in some traditions). Recall, furthermore, that besides the Passover role, the Egyptian Hallel also played a major role in the liturgy of the Feast of Tabernacles-as did the Great Hallel, especially when reckoned as a collection beginning with the songs of ascents.

Psalm 136 opens with three calls to thanksgiving and closes with another (verses 1-3, 26). We should note that though this song is classed as or among the Great Hallel, the word hallel or "praise" is not found within it. Rather, the giving of thanks to God in song, publicly expressing gratitude to Him for His works, is itself an important form of praise. Note the following parallel. Psalm 136:1 begins, "Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good!" Similarly, the previous psalm states: "Praise the LORD [Hallelujah], for the LORD is good" (135:3). To praise is to speak well of, and Psalm 136 has much to say in praise of God-even though the word "praise" is not actually used.

Besides God's goodness, the opening calls to thanks also acknowledge God's supremacy, with the titles "God of gods" and "Lord of lords" (verses 2-3). The meaning of the latter terminology is easy to ascertain-that is, all who are "lords" (or masters, as this term designates) are ruled over by the supreme Sovereign Lord and Master, God. Yet many argue that the first title here is merely a figurative superlative, as a literal interpretation would seem to admit the existence of other gods (compare also 135:5; 138:1). It could, however, be taken literally to mean that God is the God over all who are called gods-including demons posing as pagan deities (compare Deuteronomy 32:17) and pagan rulers falsely claiming divinity. Moreover, God Himself elsewhere refers to human beings made in His image, who are supposed to rule for Him in the created realm, as gods (Psalm 82:1, 6). And in the eternal realm to come, those who are glorified will share in God's divinity-yet He will forever still be their God, and above all.

The three opening calls to thanks are all followed by the powerful refrain, which is repeated in every line of the psalm for a total of 26 times-perhaps because 26 is "the numerical value of the divine name Yahweh (when the Hebrew letters were used as numbers)" (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, note on Psalm 136). As noted above, the word in the refrain translated "mercy" in the KJV

and NKJV is the Hebrew *hesed*, sometimes rendered “loyal love,” “steadfast love,” “covenant faithfulness,” “lovingkindness” or “graciousness.”

Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words has this to say: “The Septuagint [the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible] nearly always renders *hesed* with *eleos* (‘mercy’), and that usage is reflected in the New Testament. Modern translations, in contrast, generally prefer renditions close to the word ‘grace’.... In general, one may identify three basic meanings of the word, which always interact: ‘strength,’ ‘steadfastness,’ and ‘love.’ Any understanding of the word that fails to suggest all three inevitably loses some of its richness. ‘Love’ by itself easily becomes sentimentalized or universalized apart from the covenant. Yet ‘strength’ or ‘steadfastness’ suggests only the fulfillment of a legal or other obligation. The word refers primarily to mutual and reciprocal rights and obligations between the parties of a relationship.... But *hesed* is not only a matter of obligation; it is also of generosity. It is not only a matter of loyalty, but also of mercy. The weaker party seeks the protection and blessing of the patron and protector, but he may not lay absolute claim to it. The stronger party remains committed to his promise, but retains his freedom, especially with regard to the manner in which he will implement those promises.

Hesed implies personal involvement beyond the rule of law. Marital love is often related to *hesed*. Marriage is certainly a legal matter.... Yet the relationship, if sound, far transcends mere legalities.... Hence, ‘devotion’ is sometimes the single English word best capable of capturing the nuance of the original” (“Loving-kindness,” Old Testament Section).

Hesed is “the most significant term used in the Psalms to describe the character of God” (Nelson Study Bible, note on verses 1-2). And since God’s character never changes, this awesome attribute of His character is, like Him, eternal-as the refrain repeatedly affirms.

As the refrain is given in response to every act of God recounted in the psalm, we are to understand that all His acts here-the “great wonders” exclusive to Him (verse 4)-are born out of this sublime character trait. God created the universe and the earth (verses 4-9) as a habitation for mankind-out of loving devotion for those He would yet create and bring into a relationship with Him. Out of His loyal love and mercy came His deliverance of His people Israel from Egypt and from enemies on the way to Canaan -so that they would receive the land He promised them as a heritage or inheritance (verses 10-22). And it is due to God’s unfailing love and grace that He continues to deliver-and that He provides sustenance to all (verses 23-25).

The structure of praising God for His works in creation and then for His works in delivering Israel in the Exodus and on the subsequent journey to the Promised Land is also found in the previous psalm (see 135:5-12). In fact, as was noted in the Bible Reading Program comments on that psalm, the wording of the latter aspect is very similar, providing evidence that one of these psalms influenced the composition of the other. “Slew mighty kings” (135:10) occurs in Psalm 136 as “slew famous kings” (verse 18). In both cases this is followed by mention of “Sihon king of the Amorites” and “Og king of Bashan” (135:11; 136:19-20), who were defeated by Israel (see

Numbers 21:21-35; Deuteronomy 2:26-3:11) and whose land on the east side of the Jordan was taken over by the Israelite tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh (see Numbers 32; Deuteronomy 3:12-22). It is likely that the “famous kings” of Psalm 136:18 is also intended to include the kings of Canaan on the west side of the Jordan (as in 135:11), so that “their lands as a heritage...to Israel” (136:21-22) would include the land of Canaan (compare 135:11-12).

Considering the focus of Psalm 136 on God’s loving acts of salvation, we should recall the psalm’s festival association-for God’s annual festivals outline His plan to redeem and save mankind. God’s deliverance of Israel is a central focus in this plan, for all people must become part of Israel in a spiritual sense to ultimately be saved.

The psalm ends in verse 26 as it began-with another call to thank God and a final resounding affirmation, through the refrain, of His eternal steadfast love.

Psalm 137 is a song of Zion expressing desire for God’s holy city while in exile in the land of Babylon . In that sense, it is reminiscent of the opening of the songs of ascents in Psalm 120, where the desire is to be delivered from a hostile foreign environment to travel to Jerusalem, as expressed in other songs of ascents, to be in fellowship with God. “Here [in Psalm 137] speaks the same deep love of Zion as that found in Ps 42-43; 46; 48; 84; 122; 126 [these latter two being songs of ascents]. The editors of the Psalter attached this song to the Great Hallel as a closing expression of supreme devotion to the city at the center of Israel ‘s worship of the Lord” (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, note on Psalm 137). We earlier read this psalm in conjunction with the biblical narratives of the Babylonian Exile and prophecies delivered at that time. We now read it again in the context of the Psalter’s arrangement. The comments that follow are repeated from the earlier Bible Reading Program comments on this song. Psalm 137, which is not attributed to a particular author, appears to have been composed during the Babylonian exile. Even if it was written afterward, it nonetheless sums up the feelings of many of the Jews in captivity. It is a deeply mournful song, full of longing for their homeland, where they had some semblance of contact with God through His holy city and temple. Now they are far away, adrift, without mooring. They could no longer sing the joyful songs of past days. They “hung up their harps” on the trees-that is, they put away their musical instruments.

The Babylonians, however, asked for some music. While they may have actually wanted to hear some rousing hymns from the famed Jerusalem temple, it is also possible that this was simply a taunt-as in, “Let’s hear some victory songs now...ha, ha.” Whatever the case, in reflecting on the psalms of past days, recalling the former glory of their nation, all the Jews could do was sit by the great rivers of Babylon and weep. “How shall we sing the LORD’s song in a foreign land?” they groaned (verse 4). How could they sing praises to God for His help and deliverance against enemies when their nation and temple lay in ruins and they themselves were captives? Would not this just be more reason for their captors to mock? And were they, unclean sinners banished from God’s land, even worthy to sing His songs?

In any case, the psalmist, speaking for the nation, resolves to keep Jerusalem in the forefront of his mind-to never forget and to never cease hoping for restoration. Were the harps retrieved from where they were hung to sing at least this particular song? There is, of course, no way to know. But the sentiment was surely widespread.

In thinking of what had befallen their homeland, the utter horror and misery of what had occurred, there was no way to avoid recalling those who had carried out the destruction-the Babylonians. Moreover, they were urged on by the longtime foe of God's people, Edom. A special plea is made to God in verse 7 to keep in mind Edom's cruel enmity. And a pronouncement is then made against the Babylonians-that God will bring back on their heads what they have done to the Jews. It may well be that when the Babylonians asked for a song of Zion from the exiles, this very one was composed in response. It would have served as a rather shocking rebuke against any mocking and ridicule.

Today many grimace at the ending of this psalm, wondering how it squares with God's loving character. This is due to a misunderstanding of the wording here and of God's plan in general.

First of all, the "one" who is "happy" at destroying the Babylonians in verses 8-9 is not specifically declared to be God. It may simply mean the national power that would later overthrow Babylon -the Persian Empire . The verses would then seem to constitute a prophetic declaration rather than an appeal. In fact, it seems likely that there is even a dual prophetic application here-to ancient Babylon as well as its end-time counterpart, the phrase "daughter of Babylon " perhaps hinting at this. Edom and Babylon will both play similar roles in the overthrow of Israel and Judah in the last days-and they will both suffer subsequent destruction themselves as repayment.

Of course, it is entirely possible that God is meant as the one repaying Babylon with destruction. If so, His being "happy" at doing so would not mean He sadistically relishes punishing human beings. The terminology in that case would have to be understood as His receiving "satisfaction" in a legal sense-that is, God's righteous justice being satisfied through just recompense.

Babylon's "little ones" or "children," who are to be dashed against the rock, would in this case most likely mean Babylon's citizenry in general (the city or empire being portrayed as a woman, as already noted).

Moreover, being dashed against a rock is likely a figurative, rather than literal, expression denoting destruction. As the book *Hard Sayings of the Bible* notes on these verses: "One thing Babylon was devoid of was rocks or rocky cliffs against which anything could be dashed. In fact there were not any stones available for building, contrary to the rocky terrain of most of Palestine. All building had to depend on the production of sun-dried mud bricks and the use of bituminous pitch for mortar. Therefore when the psalmist speaks of 'dashing...against the rocks,' he is speaking figuratively and metaphorically" (Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch, 1996, pp. 281-282).

Interestingly, “the verb [translated “dashes”] in its Greek form is found only in Psalm 137:9 (in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew text) and in the lament of our Lord over Jerusalem in Luke 19:44” (p. 281). In this verse Christ speaks to Jerusalem as if she is a mother, saying, “They [enemies] will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls.” Again, children appear to denote the citizenry in general.

Of course, infants would die too-in both Babylon and Jerusalem . Yet all, children as well as adults, will be raised in the second resurrection to be taught God’s ways and given the opportunity for lasting repentance, as explained in the Bible Reading Program comments on Ezekiel 37. Indeed, repentance and conformity with His will, resulting in great blessing, is what God desires-what makes Him truly happy. He assures us in other scriptures that He takes no pleasure in punishing people for sin, but that they would turn and live. This passage is no exception.

[Brethren the author here is having trouble with the phrase that the children would be dashed to pieces and that Yehovah would delight in it. We have already covered in Isaiah 13 how The Medes would send the missiles on Rome and the resulting explosions would kill all indiscriminately as they were blown apart or dashed to pieces. This psalm ties right into this same teaching in Isaiah 13.]

Just before the final five praise hymns that close the book of Psalms (146-150), those responsible for its final compilation placed a collection of eight psalms attributed in their titles to King David (138-145). This serves to tie the whole Psalter together, as David composed most of its first two books. The final Davidic collection, as the Zondervan NIV Study Bible comments, “is framed by songs of praise (Ps 138; 145). The first of these extols the greatness of the Lord’s glory as displayed in his answering the prayer (‘call’) of the ‘lowly’ when suffering at the hands of the ‘proud.’ The last, employing a grand and intricately woven alphabetic acrostic design, extols the ‘glorious majesty’ of the Lord as displayed in his benevolent care over all his creatures-especially those who ‘call’ on him (look to him in every need). Within this frame have been placed six prayers-with certain interlocking themes” (note on Psalms 138-145)-the first (139) taking a stand against the wicked and the five others (140-144) seeking deliverance from wicked foes.

In Psalm 138 David wholeheartedly praises God for imbuing him with confidence that God will help him against threatening enemies. Given the prophecy of all kings of the earth coming to praise God (verse 4), the song clearly looks forward to the time of the setting up of God’s Kingdom with the future coming of the Messiah for ultimate fulfillment.

David says in verse 1 that He will sing praises to God “before the gods.” As in Psalm 135:5 and 136:2, the identity of the “gods” here could refer to foreign kings falsely claiming divinity or perhaps to human rulers who, as the offspring of the true God commissioned to represent Him in dominion, can bear this title in a sense (compare 82:1, 6). The reference could also be to demons, the powers behind the thrones of pagan nations who sometimes posed as the false

gods these nations worshipped (compare Deuteronomy 32:17). Then again, as this song looks forward to the time of Christ's reign over all nations, the term "gods" here may designate the resurrected saints of God who will reign with Him and share in His divine glory (see "You Are Gods," The Good News, July-Aug. 2002, pp. 28-29 <http://www.ucg.org/doctrinal-beliefs/youare-gods/>).

In Psalm 138:2 David says that He will worship toward God's holy temple. He said the same thing in Psalm 5:7. While the Jerusalem temple was not built until after David's death, this does not rule out David as the composer of these psalms. Some point out that the word for temple here was a general one that could refer to the tabernacle structure David built for the ark in Jerusalem. Moreover, it is possible that David was referring to God's temple in heaven. We should also consider that David was looking forward to the time of God's Kingdom, when a temple will evidently stand in Jerusalem, as seen in the concluding chapters of the book of Ezekiel. Another thought to bear in mind is that David may have composed these songs to be sung in temple worship after his death. Alternatively, it is possible that others edited them to fit later circumstances, though, as we've seen, there is no need to assume this.

David says He will praise God "for Your lovingkindness and Your truth" (138:2). The word lovingkindness is translated from the important Hebrew term *hesed*, which can also mean "mercy," "grace," "loyal love" or "devotion." The word rendered "truth," *emet*, besides defining reality as opposed to falsehood, is also understood to refer to the quality of being true to one's word-faithfulness. These words for mercy and truth are often paired together. The NIV translates them as "love" and "faithfulness." We also find this terminology in the New Testament as "grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Continuing from this description of God's character, David further states, "For You have magnified Your word above all Your name" (Psalm 138:2, NKJV). Different versions give an alternate rendering, with translators unable to reconcile how God's word could be above His name-signifying His identity and reputation. Following the Hebrew arrangement, the actual word order is "For You have magnified above all Your name Your word" (J.P. Green, The Interlinear Bible). The NIV renders it this way: "For you have exalted above all things your name and your word." However, there is no "and" specified in the Hebrew here, though it could perhaps be interpolated. More importantly, the KJV and NKJV translation does make sense and conveys a wonderful message. The meaning seems to be that God does not put who He is above what He has said. Rather, what He has said comes first. Consider that the Almighty Sovereign God could go back on every promise He has made and no one could do a thing about it. Yet God of His own will has set His word above all the prerogatives associated with His divine supremacy-that is, He has obligated Himself to abide by everything He has declared. This is truly awesome to ponder. It should lead us all to join with David in wholehearted worship and praise.

In verse 3, David recounts his own experience of God's faithfulness in having his prayer answered. It is not clear if the day of David crying out refers to a particular instance or if he is

describing a regular pattern. Whichever is intended, David is thankful for God intervening and strengthening his resolve and confidence.

As noted above, all kings of the earth coming to praise God and sing of His ways in verses 4-5 is a prophecy of the future messianic era. "David, as a king who believed in God, looked forward to a day when all the kings of the earth would share his experience" (Nelson Study Bible, note on verses 4-6). In the meantime, God, despite His high and lofty station, regards the lowly and humble in spirit-as the mighty of the earth today are typically arrogant and cut off from a relationship with Him (verse 6).

The mighty and proud evidently include David's wrathful enemies, mentioned in verse 7. David here trusts in God to deliver him from them in terms reminiscent of the words he wrote in Psalm 23:3-4.

In verse 8, David says, "The LORD will perfect that which concerns me" (the italics here and in the following citations signifying interpolated text not in the original Hebrew). Essentially the same thing is written in Psalm 57:2, where David says that God "performs all things for me"-the word translated "performs" being the same Hebrew verb translated "perfect" in 138:8. It can also mean "complete" or "fulfill," as in the NIV translation: "The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me." David had faith that God would save him from his enemies in order to fulfill God's reason for his existence. God would not let anything cut short the work He had begun in him-a tremendous promise that also applies to us (compare Philippians 1:6).

David ends with a declaration similar to the refrain of Psalm 136 and a closing plea, uttered in great confidence as we've seen, that God will not abandon the work He was doing in him. As a final observation, it may be that the notation at the beginning of the superscription of Psalm 139, "For the Chief Musician," is actually a postscript for Psalm 138.

John 10

This week I would like to look at

Joh 10:22 At that time the Hanukkah came to be in Yerushalayim, and it was winter.

Joh 10:23 And Yehovah was walking in the Set-apart Place, in the porch of Shelomoh.

Throughout the entire bible there is not one commandment to keep Chanukah. Not one. Yet many today are fighting mad when I challenge them on this issue.

In order to justify keeping Chanukah you must ignore or break these other commandments.

Pro 30:6 Do not add to His Words¹, Lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar.

Deu 4:2 "Do not add to the Word which I command you, and do not take away from it¹, so as to guard the commands of Yehovah your Elohim which I am commanding you.

Deu 12:32 “All the words I am commanding you, guard to do it – do not add to it nor take away from it.

Rev 22:18 For I witness to everyone hearing the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to them, Elohim shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, Elohim shall take away his part from the Book of Life, and out of the set-apart city, which are written in this Book.

All of the set apart times that we are to keep are found in Lev 23 and Lev 25. These are the Sabbaths and the Annual Holy times and the Sabbatical years that we are to keep and not others.

John 10 does not say Yehshua kept the Feast of Dedication. It just does not say this no matter how hard you try to make it say so. It does say Yehshua was at the Temple.

It is the same as saying you were at the mall and it was Christmas. It does not mean you kept Christmas. It merely gives a time of the year when you were at the mall.

We have the Holy Times for a reason. Exo 16:4 And Yehovah said to Mosheh, “See, I am raining bread from the heavens for you. And the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, in order to try them, whether they walk in My Torah or not.

Deu 8:2 “And you shall remember that Yehovah your Elohim led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, prove you, to know what is in your heart, whether you guard His commands or not.

Deu 8:16 who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, in order to humble you and to try you, to do you good in the end,

Jdg 2:20 And the displeasure of Yehovah burned against Yisra’el, and He said, “Because this nation has transgressed My covenant that I commanded their fathers, and has not obeyed My voice, 21 I also shall no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Yehoshua left when he died, 22 in order to try¹ Yisra’el by them, whether they would guard the way of Yehovah, to walk in them as their fathers guarded them, or not.” Footnote: ¹See at Deut. 8:2. 23 So Yehovah left those nations, without driving them out at once, and did not give them into the hand of Yehoshua.

In every test you must make a choice. Sometimes you have multiple choices to choose from. But you must choose. If you choose wrongly then you will pay the price.

Here we are given a vague statement that Yehshua was at the Temple and it was during the Feast of Dedication. We get this Feast from;

1 Maccabee 4

52: Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is the month of Chislev, in the one hundred and forty-eighth year,

53: they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offering which they had built.

54: At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals.

55: All the people fell on their faces and worshiped and blessed Heaven, who had prospered them.

56: So they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days, and offered burnt offerings with gladness; they offered a sacrifice of deliverance and praise.

57: They decorated the front of the temple with golden crowns and small shields; they restored the gates and the chambers for the priests, and furnished them with doors.

58: There was very great gladness among the people, and the reproach of the Gentiles was removed.

59: Then Judas and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season the days of dedication of the altar should be observed with gladness and joy for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chislev.

You are being tested here. Did Yehovah command you to keep this day?

No. Judas and his brothers did and then all of Israel. Not Yehovah.

So now let's look at the other sacred festivals of light that are also celebrated at this time.

https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/?page_id=692

Chanukah is Mithraism and Why you Need to be Re-baptized

I strongly urge all of you to go and read this article and learn about the Festival of Lights and how it developed and where it comes from. Especially read Hislop's description of the Festival of Ouranos

You can read past articles on Hanukah at;

https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/?page_id=571

The Truth That Chanukah Hides, The Location of the Temple, The Sabbatical Years, The Identity of 300 Spartans

https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/?page_id=324

Chanukah and Its Pagan Traditions

Yehovah gave us instructions for those who are serious about following this way of life and serving Him:

Deu 6:14 "Do not go after other mighty ones, the mighty ones of the peoples who are all around you,

Deu 12:30 guard yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire about their mighty ones, saying, 'How did these nations serve their mighty ones? And let me do so too.'¹ Footnote: ¹See also 18:9, Lev. 18:3, Jer.10:2, Ezek. 11:12 & 20:32, Eph. 4:17, and 1 Peter 4:3

Deu 12:31 "Do not do so to Yehovah your Elohim, for every abomination which Yehovah hates they have done to their mighty ones, for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their mighty ones.

Jer 10:2 Thus said Yehovah, "Do not learn the way of the gentiles,¹ and do not be awed by the signs of the heavens, for the gentiles are awed by them.² Footnotes: ¹Lev. 18:3, Dt. 12:30 & 18:9, Ezek. 11:12 & 20:32, Eph. 4:17, 1 Peter 4:3. ²Dt. 4:19 & 17:3. ³ "For the prescribed customs of these peoples are worthless, for one cuts a tree from the forest, work for the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool. ⁴ "They adorn it with silver and gold, they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it does not topple.

Jer 25:6 'And do not go after other mighty ones to serve them and to bow down to them. And do not provoke Me with the works of your hands, so that I do you no evil.' Heb 13:8 Yehovah Messiah is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.