

Triennial Torah Study – 5th Year 26/07/2014

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We continue this weekend with our regular Triennial Torah reading which can be found at https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf

Gen 48	2 Sam 24	Ps 94-98	Luke 11
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Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 48)

Before dying, Jacob laid hands upon Joseph's sons to bless them with the birthright, similar to the manner his father had done to him when he was young. At the same time, Jacob adopted the boys as his own sons, and thus they were to actually be considered full sons of Israel and full brothers of the others. Joseph thought that Jacob was making a mistake by placing his right hand on the younger of the two boys. But this was quite deliberate—requiring Jacob to actually cross his arms to bless them as he did.

God was using this situation to indicate that He had special plans for the descendants of the sons of Joseph, and that Ephraim would indeed be greater in wealth and power than his older brother, Manasseh. As the chapter begins, they were mentioned in order of age, "Manasseh and Ephraim" (verse 1). But a point is later made of a switch in name order. Jacob "blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel will bless, saying, "May God make you as [note the order] Ephraim and Manasseh!"' *And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh*" (verses 18-20).

Furthermore, we see clarified here that the national birthright blessing of a nation and company of nations given in Genesis 35:11 did not refer to the tribes of Israel generally. Instead, Manasseh was to become the great single nation and Ephraim the company of nations. Indeed, as incredible as it sounds, Manasseh is today the United States of America—the greatest single nation the world has ever seen. And Ephraim comprises the prophesied "company of nations"—the related Commonwealth nations of Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and a small segment of South Africa and other former British colonies. Prior to America's national greatness, Britain ruled over the largest empire in the history of the world. (To learn the amazing story of how this came to be, [request](#) or [download](#) our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.) We will see more details of the tremendous blessings that were to come upon the family of Joseph in our next reading, Genesis 49.

David Numbers Israel (2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21:1-27)

The parallel accounts of David's census give some seemingly contradictory details which, when properly understood, shed additional light on this regrettable incident in David's life. While 1 Chronicles 21:1 says that it was Satan who moved David to take the census, 2 Samuel 24:1 attributes this to God, as a result of His anger toward Israel for some unstated reason. No doubt God *allowed* Satan to act, as He did with Job, for His own purposes. But why would God be upset at anyone taking a census, when He ordered them several times Himself in the past (e.g., in Numbers 1 and 26)?

Apparently there was an attitude problem here that even Joab was able to see. Perhaps David and the rest of the people were glorying unduly in their own physical might and power, as seems to be implied by 2 Samuel

24:3. In context, the previous chapter, 2 Samuel 23, dealt with the deeds of David's mighty men, while 2 Chronicles 20 discussed wars and great deeds that had been accomplished. As we've seen, by the time of the census, God was clearly already angry with the Israelites for some reason—and the possibility that they had become swollen with pride and were beginning to put their trust in their own greatness (rather than giving glory to and trusting in God) seems to fit. Or maybe David was considering some unauthorized military expansion campaign, since all of those counted by David's chief general were "valiant men who drew the sword" (2 Samuel 24:9). The NIV says Joab and the army commanders went out "to enroll the fighting men of Israel" (verse 4). One of the proposed punishments would have allowed David to go through with any such plans, but he would have spent three months losing his battles.

Joab and the army officers start by crossing the Jordan, counting the eastern tribes as they journey north, then coming back south among the western tribes, and taking nearly 10 months to do it (verses 5-8). The discrepancies in the counts may be attributable to a variety of reasons, including differences in age versus readiness to fight, counting or excluding those already in the standing army, and the fact that 1 Chronicles specifically excludes Levi and Benjamin (perhaps from Judah's total) while 2 Samuel does not.

Following the census, David finally realizes his error, but as is usually the case with our own sins, the consequences were still something he would have to face. In this case, through the prophet Gad, God offers him a choice of consequences, all of which would affect the entire nation. This may seem unfair, but remember the whole incident was prompted because "the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel." Israel as a nation was already guilty of something, and God is dealing here with David and the nation simultaneously according to His own divine purposes in a manner that seems to have been designed to humble all concerned.

One of the differences in the two accounts is in the number of years of the proposed famine. While Chronicles says three, Samuel gives seven. One possibility is that four years of famine had already taken place, and the Chronicles account was offering three more, for a total of seven. In any case, David does not choose that option—or the option of warfare. David's decision is implied by his confidence that God will be far more merciful than man—meaning he evidently chooses the plague. He trusts that God may be willing to not make it overly severe, or that He will perhaps cut the punishment short, which is indeed what seems to happen (2 Samuel 24:16).

As the plague is halted at Jerusalem, David pleads for mercy with God, stating that he should really be the one to suffer from the plague, and not the people. It is interesting to note that David wrote quite eloquently about sickness in some of his psalms, especially in Psalms 41, 38, 39 and 6. While many of these passages could be figurative of sin, most seem to imply a literal, dread disease that David may have had at some time in his life. It is entirely possible that he may have contracted this plague himself and that these psalms constitute prayers for deliverance from the disease, as well as the sin that brought it about.

The angel stops at the threshing floor of Ornan (or Araunah), a Jebusite, located on the top of Mount Moriah (2 Chronicles 3:1), and gives a command through Gad for David to erect an altar there (1 Chronicles 21:18). David asks to purchase the site to build the altar and offer burnt offerings. Ornan offers to give David the site, and the animals for the offerings, but David states that he would not "offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing." It is a valuable principle for all of us that our offerings to God of service or money require a certain amount of sacrifice from us, or they are not really sacrificial offerings.

"The Great King Above All Gods" (Psalms 95-97)

As noted in the Bible Reading Program comments on Psalm 93, **Psalms 95-99** are royal psalms celebrating God as King—perhaps composed for temple worship during the fall festival season. Though these psalms have no attribution in the Hebrew text of the Scriptures, the Greek Septuagint translation titles them "of David." The New Testament confirms this attribution in the case of Psalm 95, quoting from the psalm (compare verses 7-11; Hebrews 3:7-11) and declaring it the work of the Holy Spirit (verse 7) through David (4:7). Psalm 95 moves through three aspects of worship: celebration (verses 1-5); humility and reverence (verses 6-7); and obedience (verses 8-11). Beginning with the celebration aspect, David calls for people to praise God with shouts, thanksgiving and joyful singing (verses 1-2). The reasons for praise? God is great and above all

gods (verse 3)-meaning above all false idols (see 96:4-5)-for He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, including everything that people have set up as objects of worship (95:4-5; compare 96:5). This is also the reason for obedience. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* points out that God's role as Creator establishes His kingship. Since God "has made everything, no one may isolate a single aspect of God's creation to be his god. The Lord rules over the seas (93:3-4) and the great mountains (90:1-2). They belong to the Lord by creative fiat. Creation and dominion are hereby established as corollary to each other" (note on 95:3-5).

In light of God being our Maker and our God, we worship and bow down before Him (verse 6). "The Hebrew word translated *worship* means literally 'to prostrate oneself.' When *bow down*, *kneel*, and *worship* occur together as in this verse, they amplify each other and call for a reflective, humble approach to God" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 6-7).

Verse 7 further explains the basis for honoring and obeying God: "We are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand." This seems a mixed metaphor, with people in a pasture. Note the unmixed metaphor in Psalm 100:3: "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." However, reversing these is justified on the basis of the whole picture of people under a king as the sheep of a shepherd being a rather common metaphor in the ancient world. "Since kings were commonly called the 'shepherds' of their people...their realms could be referred to as their 'pastures' (see Jer 25:36; 49:20; 50:45)" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 95:7). We live in the "pasture" of the earth, which was formed by God. Moreover, like the earth we ourselves are "of His hand"-made by Him and in His care.

Sheep know and follow the voice of their shepherd (John 10:3-4). Yet the nation of Israel had not done so well as the sheep of God's flock. David urges us to hear the Shepherd's voice (Psalm 95:7b, which tells us to not become stubborn, rebellious and wayward, as ancient Israel had become in the wilderness (verses 8-11). The New King James Version sets verses 8-11 inside quotation marks, as in these verses God is speaking within the words of the psalm, referring to Himself with "Me" and "My."

Although the Israelites had seen God's wonderful work (verse 9) in delivering them from Egypt by many miracles, they failed to trust Him for their daily needs of food and water.

In verse 8, the NKJV reads, "Do not harden your hearts, as in the day of *rebellion*, as in the day of *trial* in the wilderness" (italics added), while the NIV leaves the two italicized words here untranslated: "Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert" (verse 8). At their encampment at Rephidim the people complained against God and Moses because they were thirsty. God gave them water there from a rock, but Moses renamed the site *Meribah*, meaning "strife, quarreling, contention." The Greek Septuagint and the New Testament translate this word as "rebellion." *Massah*, meaning "testing," is another name "given to the place where the Israelites murmured for want of water (Ex. 17:7; Deut. 6:16; 9:22; 33:8); called also *Meribah*" (*The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 824, "Massah").

Yet it was not at this particular rebellion that God declared the older generation of Israelites would not enter His rest, as Psalm 95:11 states. Rather, this came a bit later in Numbers 14 (see verses 28-30). Here the people had refused to progress from their encampment at Kadesh to entering the Promised Land because they feared the giants (the Anakim) there and the fortified cities of the Canaanites (see Deuteronomy 1:28). It was at that time that God "took an oath, saying, 'Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give your fathers'" (Deuteronomy 1:35). Entry into the Promised Land equated to finding rest (see Exodus 33:14; Deuteronomy 12:10; 25:19; Joshua 1:13, 15). Thus, *Meribah* and *Massah* in Psalm 95, while likely *alluding* on one level to the specific episode at the water, was evidently meant more as a general description of the attitude of the Israelites in their wanderings. Indeed, as noted above, in translating this passage into Greek, the book of Hebrews translates these words as well-showing that they are not mainly intended as place names.

The psalmist states that although God continued to care and provide for the people, He was angry with them during the wilderness years. They never developed a heart receptive to Him or His ways (verse 10). Near the end of their 40 years of wandering, God and the people had another face-off over water at Kadesh (also renamed *Meribah*). Moses lost patience with the people and struck the rock twice, bringing on himself and Aaron the severe penalty of being excluded from entering the ancient Promised Land (Numbers 20:1-13; see the Bible Reading Program comments on this passage).

"Rest" in Psalm 95 is "a rich concept indicating Israel's possession of a place with God in the earth where they are secure from all external threats and internal calamities (see Dt 3:20; 1Ki 5:4...)" (*Zondervan*, note on Psalm 95:11). The call to not rebel so as to enter God's rest still applies. This is what Hebrews 3-4 explains, warning

believers against falling into faithless disobedience like ancient Israel (see 3:12-13; 4:11). These New Testament chapters point out that the warning and exhortation of Psalm 95 is given not to those who failed to enter God's rest in the time of Moses and Joshua, but rather to those long after-in a time David designated as "Today" when he was inspired to compose the psalm (see Hebrews 4:7). The applicable time called "Today" still continues, we are told (verse 8; see also 3:13). Hebrews 4:9 uses the Greek word *sabbatismos*-meaning Sabbath observance (resting from weekly labor), which the ancient Israelites flagrantly violated-to designate the rest God's people are still to enter today. Moreover, the passage makes clear that this is as a type of the future rest to be experienced in God's Kingdom-the Promised Land still to come.

To better understand how the weekly Sabbath relates to rest-past, present and future-see the free booklet [Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest](#).

We earlier read **Psalm 96** in conjunction with 1 Chronicles 16, which concerns David having the Ark of the Covenant brought to its new tabernacle in Jerusalem. The words of Psalm 96, with some alteration, appear as a significant portion of the latter half of the psalm David composed for that occasion (see 1 Chronicles 16:23-33). Portions of Psalms 105 and 106 may also be found in that psalm in 1 Chronicles 16 (see the Bible Reading Program comments on 1 Chronicles 16:4-36; Psalm 105:1-15; 96; 106:1, 47-48).

It appears that the 1 Chronicles 16 psalm was the original composition-later divided into separate psalms, probably for temple worship. Consider that Psalm 96 seems to have been produced through editing the lyrics of 1 Chronicles 16:23-33. Note for instance the following sets of three-sing, sing, sing (verses 1-3), give, give, give (verses 7-9), and let, let, let (verses 11-13). The parallel arrangement in 1 Chronicles 16 has the words sing just once and the word let four times in a row.

It is interesting in this light to consider the first words of Psalm 96, which do not appear in 1 Chronicles 16: "Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!"-the same as Psalm 98:1 (compare also 33:3; 40:3; 144:9; 149:1). The words of Psalm 96 were probably not new when it was arranged but were being used in a new situation. The music was likely somewhat different, given the word changes. But the main point is probably that all worship songs are to be sung as new-as heartfelt communication rather than rote memorization.

We ought to consider this in singing hymns today. We should always find fresh reasons for praising God. As one commentator suggests: "A new experience of God's blessing, a new truth discovered in the Word, a new beginning after a crisis, a new open door for service-all of these can make an old song new or give us a new song from the Lord" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Exultant-Psalms 90-150: Praising God for His Mighty Works*, note on verses 1-3). The psalm further implies that the new song will be a daily expression of the good news of salvation and God's glorious works (verses 1-3).

Psalm 96 is paired with Psalm 98 in both theme and arrangement. They begin and end quite similarly-and they both demonstrate an expanding throng of praise: 1) the worshipping congregation of Israel proclaiming God among the nations (96:1-5; 98:1-3); 2) all the nations of the earth joining in worship (96:7-10; 98:4-6); and 3) all creation rejoicing (96:11-13; 98:7-9). As we will see, each of these psalms is followed by a hymn celebrating the Lord's reign (compare 97:1; 99:1) and its special benefits for the people of Zion (compare 97:8-12; 99:4-9). "This arrangement suggests that Ps 97 has been linked with 96 and Ps 99 with 98 to form a pair of thematic couplets-introduced by Ps 95" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 96).

Psalm 96:4 tells us that God is to be praised for His greatness and that He is to be feared-held in reverent respect and awe-"above all gods." The other "gods" people worship are mere idols, but the true God is the Creator of the universe (verse 5)-which includes anything people might decide to worship. This same reasoning was employed in the previous psalm (95:3-5). God is surrounded by majestic honor, strength and splendor in His sanctuary-in context seeming to refer to not merely His physical house on earth but to His heavenly abode (96:6).

The three-fold call *give, give, give* in verses 7-8 ("ascribe" in the NIV), which does occur in 1 Chronicles 16, has a parallel in David's words of Psalm 29:1-2. The idea is that of rendering God His due. Examples of what to render are also given here in triplet form: offering, worship and proper fear (96:8b-9). Worshipping "in the beauty of holiness" is also found in the parallel verses above.

Where 1 Chronicles 16 has the directive to "say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns'" (verse 31) as the second of its four "let" verses, it is placed *before* the "let" verses in Psalm 96. The pairing of this phrase with the comment on the firm establishment of the world in Psalm 96:10, demonstrating God's present sovereignty, is

also found in the introduction to the royal psalms of this section (see 93:1). This also introduces the future reign of God through Yeshua Messiah, when “He shall judge the peoples righteously” (96:10).

In verses 11-12, as noted above, the whole creation is personified as rejoicing at the establishment of that future reign (compare Romans 8:18-23). Where 1 Chronicles 16:33 mentions God as coming to judge the earth (administering His righteous rule and justice throughout it), Psalm 96:13 builds more intensity regarding this theme with the repetition of “He is coming” and the addition of the final sentence describing Christ’s coming rule. As already mentioned, a close parallel to the encouraging conclusion in verses 11-13 is found in 98:7-9.

Psalm 97 is another of the royal psalms praising God’s sovereignty. While it follows in theme from Psalm 96, it adds the benefits of God’s rule to the people of Zion (thematically parallel to Psalm 99 following Psalm 98). As with the other psalms of this section, Psalm 97 may have been composed by David, as the Septuagint attributes it.

At the outset, we again encounter the key to the royal psalms in the phrase “the LORD reigns” (verse 1; see 93:1; 96:10; 99:1). The whole earth, even to the farthest isles, can be glad because His omnipotent rule is founded on righteousness and justice (verse 2b; compare 89:14).

The statement “clouds and darkness surround Him” (Psalm 97:2a) pictures the coming judgment of God on rebellious mankind. At that time, Christ will deal with His enemies in a great display of consuming power and global upheaval (verses 3-5), as detailed in many passages (e.g., Joel 2:2; Zephaniah 1:14-15; Isaiah 2:12, 19; Micah 1:3-4). This will demonstrate His sovereignty as “the Lord of the whole earth” (Psalm 97:5).

Verse 6 says, “The heavens declare His righteousness.” In an ongoing sense, the heavens declare God’s power and majesty (19:1-4) as well as His establishment of cosmic order and stability. Moreover, in a future sense, the ominous signs in the heavens accompanying Christ’s return will demonstrate His intention to bring justice to the earth.

The psalm calls for shame on those who serve idols, whether literal false deities or worthless pursuits that claim their time and attention. Anyone or anything that has been idolized will ultimately be placed in submission to the true God (see Psalm 97:7). As in the previous two psalms, we are told that God is “above all gods” (verse 9; see 95:3; 96:4).

Zion (Jerusalem) in 97:8 (see also 99:2) can refer to the physical city and its inhabitants, who are glad at the message of God’s sovereignty and coming Kingdom. Jerusalem will in fact be the capital of the world during the reign of Christ. The “daughters of Judah” in 97:8 are taken to mean “villages of Judah” in the NIV, showing the rejoicing of Jerusalem and its outlying communities. In a prophetic context, “Zion” can also refer to God’s spiritual people, His people. So can the “daughters of Judah,” as the spiritual people of God are Jews in a spiritual sense (see Romans 2:25-29).

Until Christ returns, those who love God must continue to reject evil (verse 10; see also Proverbs 8:13). God’s people benefit from His protection and enlightenment—He is the foundation of their joy (Psalm 97:11-12).

As explained in the Bible Reading Program comments on Psalm 96, that psalm finds a parallel in **Psalm 98**. Both begin with a call for a new song of praise for the Lord (96:1; 98:1). Both progress through widening circles of praise: first the congregation of worship at the temple (96:1-5; 98:1-3); then all people on earth (96:7-10; 98:4-6); and finally all creation (96:11-13; 98:7-9). And the two psalms end with rather similar language (see 96:11-13; 98:7-9).

Another royal psalm of the set spanning 93-99, Psalm 98 also follows this thematic progression: “(1) a call to praise God as the Savior (vv. 1-3); (2) a call to praise God as the King (vv. 4-6); (3) a call to praise God as the coming Judge (vv. 7-9)” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Psalm 98). As with the other psalms of this section, the Septuagint names David as the author, though this attribution is not confirmed (in fact, only two of the seven, Psalms 95 and 96, have confirmed Davidic authorship).

The end of Psalm 98:1 introduces the psalm as what some call a “Divine Warrior victory song” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, introductory note on Psalm 98). The imagery of God’s “right hand”—symbolic of favorable action—gaining victory was earlier used of His powerful deliverance of Israel from Egypt (see Exodus 15:6; compare Deuteronomy 4:34). It was God’s “right hand” that afterward delivered the Promised Land into Israel’s hands

(Psalm 44:3). The reference in Psalm 98 could just as well refer to God leading Israel's armies to victory in David's day or later. It ultimately could also serve as an end-time prophecy of God's future takeover of this world, as explicitly mentioned at the end of the psalm.

Verse 2 explains that "God's saving acts in behalf of his people are also his self-revelation to the nations; in this sense God is his own evangelist (see 77:14...see also Isa 52:10)" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalm 98:2). The end of verse 3 will be ultimately realized at the return of Christ in power and glory at the end of the age (compare Isaiah 40:5; Luke 3:6).

Only then will the psalmist's call for the whole earth to join in a joyous celebration of praise to the Lord, the King, be answered (see verses 4-6). Only then will the whole of creation be liberated from its current bondage to corruption (compare verses 7-8; Romans 8:21).

The psalm ends with the great announcement also made in Psalm 96:13: "He is coming to judge the earth" (98:9)—that is, to rule all nations—and His judgment or rule will be righteous and equitable, meaning fair, reasonable, impartial and just.

Luke 11

Luke chapter 11 opens with Yeshua praying, and as He finishes His disciples make a request that He teach them to pray also. Yeshua teaches them the "LORD's prayer" and then goes on to explain to them about prayer in more detail.

The first explanation He gives them is about persistence in prayer. Don't give up. Keep on asking, keep on knocking, and keep on seeking and all shall be given to that person.

Then also He compared our heavenly Father with earthly parenting. We give to our children and we are wicked. How much more, our Heavenly Father being good will give us the "Set Apart Spirit" if we but ask.

Later, Yeshua casts out a demon that was causing a man to be dumb. Some of the crowd accused Yeshua of casting out demons by Be'elzebul. Yeshua teaches them about unity and division – a house divided against itself cannot stand.

They were also seeking a sign and again Yeshua tells them no sign will be given but the sign of Yonah. He then pronounces how they are compared to historical times: Ninivah, The Queen of the South, how they will judge that generation for their hardness of heart.

Yeshua teaches on how the eye is the lamp of the body and a "good eye" enlightens the body but an "evil eye" darkens the body. These are Hebrew idioms for being generous or being stingy respectively.

For the rest of this portion, Yeshua admonishes the Scribes and Pharisees on many things so much so that they began to fiercely oppose Him and sought to catch Him and accuse Him.