

Triennial Torah Study – 4th Year 20/07/2013



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

https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf

Deut 27	2 Chron 12-16		Rev 4-6
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Law Inscribed on Massive Stones; Curses From Mount Ebal (Deuteronomy 27)

God commands Israel to set up an altar and write all the words of the Book of the Law on large plastered stones, virtual walls of stone, when they cross over the Jordan River to occupy the land (verses 1-10). Joshua 8:30-35 records that Joshua obeyed this command. Paul later refers to what was written on the massive stones as the “ministry of death, written and engraved on stones” (2 Corinthians 3:7). This “ministry” or, in more current terminology, “administration” of death refers to the civil law code which administered the penalties, including the death penalty, for certain violations, as spelled out in the statutes and judgments. The Church today is not to carry out the death penalty. This is the job of civil authorities (Romans 13:1-4). Rather, the ministry of the Church is to preach reconciliation and eternal life (compare 2 Corinthians 3:1-18; 5:18-21).

God commanded Israel to proclaim the blessings for obedience on Mount Gerizim, and the curses for disobedience on Mount Ebal (verses 11-13). The Nelson Study Bible notes: “Mount Ebal was north of Mount Gerizim (vv. 12, 13). Between the two mountains was the city of Shechem (Gen. 12:6, 7; 33:18-20). Shechem and its two mountains are roughly in the center of the land of Canaan” (note on 27:4). Adding more detail: “Ebal and Gerizim are two important peaks in central Canaan flanking an east-west pass through the north-central hill country. Almost the entire Promised Land is visible from the top of Mount Ebal” (note on Joshua 8:30).

Revealing more: “The Lord used the topography of the land for dramatic, visual effect. Mount Ebal, because of topographical and climatic conditions, is normally a barren peak while Mount Gerizim is usually covered with vegetation. Consequently, Mount Ebal was an ideal place for the curses to be recited, and Mount Gerizim was suitable for the blessings. The association of the place and the word would have been unforgettable. Furthermore, the two mountains are quite close [rising up on opposite sides of Shechem], so they would serve as a natural amphitheater for the recitation of the curses and blessings by the Levites” (note on Deuteronomy 24:11-14).

This is also where the massive engraved stones and accompanying altar would be set up (Joshua 8:30-35). Disobedience would bring “curses” or punishment from God. Twelve curses were proclaimed to which the people were to respond. Disobedient conduct included: idolatry (verse 15); disrespectful conduct towards parents (verse 16; compare verses 20, 22); dishonest, deceitful and violent conduct toward one’s neighbor (verses 17, 24-25); improper conduct towards the handicapped or the poor (verses 18-19); and sexual perversions (verses 20-23). The people were to confirm that these actions were in fact worthy of punishment—not just in responding with “Amen” but, more importantly, by living in accordance with the law that forbade them (verse 26).

Asa, Nadab, Baasha (2 Chronicles 14:1-8; 1 Kings 14:19-20; 15:9-11, 25-34)

The war between Abijam and Jeroboam set up a period of peace for Abijam’s successor, Asa. One of the most righteous and zealous kings of Judah during much of his reign, Asa carried out extensive reforms, which we will see more about in our next reading. For turning to God, Asa was blessed with an entire decade of peace, during which he was able to fortify the kingdom.

But while Asa was enjoying quiet, the kingdom of Israel was suffering great internal turmoil. In Asa’s second year, the independent northern kingdom lost its founding king. Then Jeroboam’s son Nadab lasted less than two years before the first of Israel’s seven changes of dynasty took place. As prophesied by Ahijah (1 Kings 14:10), Baasha was very thorough in getting rid of Jeroboam’s descendants. But he did not prove to be any better at obeying God.

Asa’s Faith and Reforms (2 Chronicles 14:9-15:19; 1 Kings 15:12-15)

After 10 years of peace, Judah was challenged by an enormous Ethiopian army of a million men. Since Egypt was strong at this time—in the wake of Pharaoh Shishak’s reign, during which the Ethiopians fought for the Egyptians (2 Chronicles 12:3)—it is likely that Zerah and his forces were mercenaries of Egypt.

This battle takes place about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem at Mareshah. Thanks to the intervention of God (2 Chronicles 14:12), Asa miraculously defeats the million-man army and pursues the fleeing remnants to Gerar, another 25 miles further to the southwest. Asa’s reliance on God and subsequent victory, his response to the encouragement of the prophet and his revival of temple worship encourage many in the northern kingdom to “defect” to him.

The King James Version refers to Maachah, daughter (granddaughter) of Absalom, as the “mother” of Asa (1 Kings 15:13)—and that is the literal Hebrew. Yet she is also listed as the mother of Asa’s father Abijam. The New King James Version therefore substitutes “grandmother” in verse 13. Apparently something happened to Asa’s real mother, and the fact that his grandmother is referred to as his mother could imply that he was actually reared by his grandmother. It is a tribute to Asa’s character that he recognized her idolatry and deposed her from the honored position of queen mother, which she continued to hold from Abijam’s reign.

Revelation 4

In Chapter four, John is called up to a higher realm to be shown what is to happen. He is in the Spirit to be able to see, hear, and experience what takes place. The voice he hears he describes to be like a trumpet. He saw a throne and the Holy One sitting upon the throne. He describes the Holy One in terms of gemstones and colors: jasper, ruby, and a rainbow like an emerald.

There were also twenty four other thrones around the Throne of the Holy One and twenty four elders sitting upon those thrones wearing white robes and crowns upon their heads.

He also saw seven lamps which are, he says, the seven Spirits of Elohim. Also before the throne was a sea of glass. In the midst of them all were the four creatures: one like a lion, one like a calf, one like a man, and one like a flying eagle. They worshipped and praised Elohim day and night without ceasing.

Revelation 5

The Holy One was holding a scroll in His Right Hand. It was written on front and back. It was sealed with seven seals. A messenger with a loud voice asks a question, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break the seals?" And there was no one found worthy, not in heaven or earth. Then it was made plain, that the One who overcame all is worthy to open the scroll and break the seals. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David is worthy and has overcome.

John then saw the Lamb in their midst. Standing in the midst and He came and took the scroll out of the right Hand of the Holy One sitting upon the Throne. When He held the scroll, the elders and the living creatures fell down before Him and they were holding a harp, golden bowls filled with incense (prayers of the set apart ones).

They sang, "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals, because You were slain and have redeemed us to Elohim by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and made us sovereigns and priests to our Elohim, and we shall reign upon the earth."

Then myriads upon myriads John heard proclaiming along with the living creatures, the elders, and every living creature of all kinds worshipping and praising the Lamb.

Revelation 6

The Lamb now opens one of the seals. This released the white horse rider. He is an archer and he went out to conquer.

The Lamb opens the second seal, releasing the red horse rider that takes peace from the earth. He wields a great sword.

The Lamb opens the third seal, releasing the black horse rider and he has scales in his hand and is measuring money against food, indicating poverty and famine.

The Lamb opens the fourth seal, releasing the pale horse rider and he has a name which is Death. Authority was given him to kill one fourth of the earth by all means: war, hunger, death, and pestilence.

The Lamb opens the fifth seal. John sees the slain righteous under the altar. They were killed because of their testimony and witness. Their blood was crying out for vengeance. They received white robes and were told to rest a little longer until all the others who are to die as they did... were finished.

The Lamb opens the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake, the sun black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon as blood. The stars fell. Heaven departed and every mountain and island moved out of its place. Everyone tried to hide from the wrath of the Lamb.