



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

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Num 13		Job 36-38	Romans 2
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Num 13

While we see God here telling Moses to send men to spy out the land (13:1-2), Deuteronomy 1:21-23 shows that this idea was initially brought to Moses by the people. The idea pleased Moses, who evidently took it to God for approval—which God gave with more details here in Numbers 13. (It is, of course, likely that God intended this plan all along—perhaps inspiring the people to come up with it.) Twelve men, one from each tribe, were chosen to spy out the land.

They were to check out the soil, trees, people, cities, everything, and then report back. These 12 men are different leaders of Israel than those we saw in chapters 1 and 7. Only two of these men brought a favorable report, Caleb and Joshua. Caleb said, evidently because of his faith in God, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it” (verse 30).

No doubt God inspired the decision to send these two who He already knew to be faithful—ensuring that there would be at least two faithful witnesses among this generally faithless group to fulfill His requirement that we are to accept something on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Interestingly, in the end time, after the organized work of God is publicly silenced, there will still be two witnesses (Revelation 11:3) who will give a faithful report on the nature of the future promised land, the Kingdom of God. Yet, as before, the vast majority of those reporting on God's Kingdom will be false witnesses—as is the case even now.

Another important factor to consider is that even if everything the evil witnesses said were actually true, the omnipotent God was easily able to defeat obstacles like giants and massive fortresses—a fact that should already have been evident from the plagues upon Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea. God had, after all, brought low the most powerful kingdom on earth—the Egyptian empire—right before their eyes, and the city-states of Canaan were much weaker in comparison.

Besides not expanding fears about the dangers of the land beyond all proportion, Joshua and Caleb knew—had the faith—that God would deliver on His promise. They were the ones the Israelites should have listened to. Sadly, however, this was not to be.

“Remember to Magnify His Work” (Job 36-37)

Chapters 36 and 37 record Elihu’s last address. He begins by further defending God’s justice and ends by proclaiming God’s majesty. In his defense of God (compare 36:2), Elihu says he obtains his knowledge from afar (verse 3)—that is, apparently, from God Himself and, as the latter part of the discourse illustrates, from the majesty of God’s creation (compare verses 24-25).

The end of verse 4 may sound like the height of conceit on the part of Elihu—that he is claiming to be perfect in knowledge. While some interpret this as meaning eloquent of speech, that seems a needless point to make here—and it is not a literal rendering. Far more likely is that the statement “One who is perfect in knowledge is with you” refers to God. After all, Elihu later in the same speech clearly describes God as “Him who is perfect in knowledge” (37:16). Moreover, the statement at the end of 36:4 parallels the next verse, which says that God is mighty in strength of understanding.

In verses 6-7, Elihu turns again to the idea of retribution and reward. But he is here speaking in an ultimate sense. In contrast to the NKJV translation of verse 6, God does indeed preserve the life of even the wicked for the time being. The word translated “does not preserve” should in context be understood as “does not (or will not) grant,” in contrast to God’s granting justice later in the verse. The tense in verses 6-7 and 9-10 is open, meaning that it can be either present or future (see Expositor’s Bible Commentary, footnote on verse 6). Since the reign of the all the righteous in verse 7 is yet future, a better translation of verses 6-7 would seem to be: “He will not [ultimately] grant life to the wicked, but will give justice to the oppressed. He will not withdraw His eyes from the righteous; but they will be kings on the throne, for He will cause them to sit forever, and they will be exalted.”

Job certainly knows this but it has diminished as his focus. His mind has been consumed with why it is wrong for him to suffer as he now does. Elihu then explains that if people are afflicted, God will reveal why, making known to them their sins (if that is the cause) and what they need to do to get right with Him. If they submit to Him, their lives will be blessed. But if not, they will perish. Again, Elihu seems to be viewing this in an ultimate sense—or at least as a general principle for life. Those who will humble themselves before God in their affliction will be delivered (Job 36:15).

Verse 16-17 in the NKJV seem to contain a very harsh judgment from Elihu—that God would have delivered Job but he is being judged for his wickedness. This would appear to make Elihu have the same basic perspective as Job’s three friends. But verse 16 is better in the New International Version. Elihu tells Job: “He [God] is wooing you [present tense] from the jaws of distress to a spacious place free from restriction, to the comfort of your table laden with choice food.” That is, Elihu seems to think that his words are God’s way of communicating to Job. And this does appear to be the case, at least to some degree.

Verses 17-20 may appear to make Elihu even more off base, thinking Job wicked and that he has been reliant on wealth and power. But these particular verses, as The Expositor’s Bible Commentary

explains, are some of the hardest to translate in the entire Old Testament (note on verses 15-21). The same commentary offers the following variant translation, wherein Elihu seems to be preparing Job for the outlook he should have when the trial is over: “Since you have had your fill of judgment due the wicked, since judgment and justice have taken hold (of you), beware that no one entice you to want riches again. Do not let the great price you are paying mislead you. Of what value was your wealth apart from affliction? And of what value are all your mighty efforts? Do not long for the night, when peoples will vanish from their place [i.e., the time of God’s judgment]. Beware of turning to evil, for that is why you are tested by affliction.” These are some of the lessons Job needs to walk away with. As Elihu says of God in the next verse, “Who teaches like Him?” (verse 22).

Of course, Elihu doesn’t claim to know all the reasons Job is being tried. But he next turns to what is vital in all trials. Rather than accuse God of wrong (see verse 23), Elihu tells Job: “Remember to magnify His work” (verse 24). And Elihu then proceeds to do just that through the remainder of his speech, extolling God’s mighty works in creation. This is the right approach, for it is even what God Himself will present to Job in His speeches (chapters 38-41).

Note that the NKJV translation of Job 36:26 says that we do not know God. Yet the word “Him” is in italics, meaning it has been added to the text. A more appropriate insertion here might be the “it” from the previous verse, referring to God’s work. So verse 26 could be rendered, “Behold, God is great, and we do not know His work.” That is, we can’t know all that He is doing—it is beyond us. Elihu reaffirms this in 37:5: “He does great things which we cannot comprehend.” Job himself actually touched on this theme before, but his point was to show his friends that they were foolish for thinking that they had God all figured out. What Job needed to do was reflect on God’s creation as proof that God is infinitely wise—that He knows exactly what He is doing in all circumstances even when we don’t.

As his first illustration of God’s unfathomable wisdom in creation, Elihu presents the hydrological cycle of evaporation, cloud formation and rain. Expositor’s comments: “Rain in the O[ld] T[estament] world was considered one of the most needed and obvious blessings of God. The phenomenon of condensation (v. 27b) and precipitation (v. 28), while not technically understood, was certainly observable. But evaporation (v. 27) is not. [One commentator] therefore considered this proof that the Elihu speeches came a few centuries later than the divine speeches since such meteorological knowledge would have been obtained from the Greeks.... Elihu did not need a knowledge of physics since God is the one who does this (an idea even we who know the physics can still affirm), but he may have known more about the phenomenon [in his ancient context] than [some commentators are] willing to admit” (note on verses 27-33). Perhaps God inspired him.

In verse 29 Elihu mentions the spreading of clouds and thunder from God’s canopy, paralleling the mention of God’s canopy of dark clouds in Psalm 18:11 in describing the coming of God. Note also the next verse in Job 36: “Look, He scatters His light upon it...” (verse 30). It seems from what follows

that Elihu is mostly describing presently observable phenomena. We see here the thunder and lightning of a coming storm (36:29-37:5), the thunder causing Elihu's heart to pound (37:1). A whirlwind, perhaps a massive tornado, is coming (verse 9). Ice forms, possibly describing hail (verse 10). The clouds are swirling yet there is brightness within them (verses 11, 15, 22). As the next chapter will show, Almighty God will at last answer Job out of this whirlwind.

We can envision the scene. As Elihu points toward the menacing clouds, the thunder is getting louder. The howling wind is growing stronger. Elihu must raise his voice to be heard. He argues that God is in command of the clouds (verse 12). He says that God sends such storms for various reasons—whether to correct people, to nourish the land, or to mercifully provide for people (verse 13). In this he seems to also be making a metaphor out of the storm—referring to the storms of life, which God directs and that are ultimately for people's own good. Job had used a similar metaphor when he accused God of crushing him with a tempest (9:17). But he was mistaken. He could not fully understand God's motivations in his trial just as he could not understand the present actual thunderstorm—or any storm for that matter. As the gusts build, sweeping up debris and causing people and structures to sway, thunder booms and the oncoming tornado rages louder still. "Listen to this, O Job!" Elihu cries out. "Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God!" (see verse 14). He then challenges Job to explain how God is doing all this (verses 15-16). The Almighty acts beyond human comprehension. Who are we to instruct Him? Job's concept of contending with God in court is thereby shown to be absurd (verses 19-20).

Elihu's conclusion? God is awesome, beyond understanding, omnipotent and perfectly just and righteous (verses 22-23). He is not an oppressor, as Job has implied (verse 23). Rather, the trials He brings are, in His omniscience, intended for good. Therefore men should show God the reverence due Him—and that includes Job. This is appropriate instruction in any trial and throughout life. It is why Jesus instructed us to begin our prayers extolling God's name and to finish them praising His immortal power and glory (Matthew 6:9, 13). If this remains our focus, we will have greater confidence in the fact that God is working out what is best for us and that, come what may, He will see us through.

"Who Provides Food for the Raven...?" (Job 38:39-40:5)

God next turns to the animal kingdom to illustrate His sovereignty and wisdom as Creator as well as His great care and concern for His creation.

God hunting prey for the lion and providing food for the raven (38:39-41) could signal that God specifically intervenes in the natural realm to make sure animals are nourished. Or it could simply mean that God has set up the world's ecosystem in such a way to ensure that its creatures are regularly fed—that he has established an important balance in nature between predators and prey. Perhaps it means both—that God has established a self-perpetuating natural order but sometimes

directly intervenes to make necessary adjustments due to the impact of other natural or unnatural circumstances. The portrayal of the young ravens crying out to God does not mean that they are consciously calling to Him—simply that they are crying out for relief and He is the One who hears them and can answer them.

Surely we can see that God is not only talking about ravens here. God's care for His creatures implies something else: that He must also have great care for His highest physical creatures— human beings. Job might as well have been hearing the words of Jesus Christ uttered more than 1,500 years later: "Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than birds?" (Luke 12:24).

Romans Chapter 2

Therefore, O man, you are without excuse, everyone who judges, for in which you judge another you condemn yourself, since you who judge practice the same [wrongs]. If we are aware enough, and know enough of right and wrong so much so that we can judge the actions of others, that in and of itself is testimony to our "knowledge" of the truth. Therefore we are judging ourselves.

And we know that the judgment of Elohim is according to truth against those who practice such [wrongs]. Elohim is without wrong and is the author and finisher of not only the Torah, but our entire Faith.

And do you think, O man, you who judge those practicing such [wrongs], and doing the same, that you shall escape the judgment of Elohim?

Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, and tolerance, and patience, not knowing that the kindness of Elohim leads you to repentance?

God's kindness towards us is not to be used as a "pass" to continue in sin as many do. It is to convict us and love us back to Himself. We should never ever abuse the love of God.

But according to your hardness and your unrepentant heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of Elohim, who "shall render to each one according to his works:"

Everlasting life to those who by persistence in good work seek for esteem, and respect, and incorruptibility; but wrath and displeasure to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; affliction and distress on every human being working what is evil, of the Yehudite first, and also of the Greek;

It does not matter what you know or what you teach. It is what you DO that is in question here.

But esteem, respect, and peace to everyone working what is good, to the Yehudite first and also to the Greek.

For there is no partiality with Elohim. For as many as sinned without Torah shall also perish without Torah, and as many as sinned in the Torah shall be judged by the Torah.

A person, or nation, who has not known the Torah, will not be held accountable to the Torah... this is what Paul is saying! But if you know the Torah and sin against it, you will be judged by it.

For not the hearers of the Torah are righteous in the sight of Elohim, but the doers of the law shall be declared right.

The doers of the commandments will be declared right. Does not matter how much to teach others, or read the commands. It is – how do you live your life.

For when gentiles, who do not have the Torah, by nature do what is in the Torah, although not having the Torah, they are a Torah to themselves, who show the work of the Torah written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or even excusing, in the day when Elohim shall judge the secrets of men through Yeshua Messiah, according to my Good News.

Paul is speaking of doing what is right by conscience for those who may not even have knowledge of the Torah is equally justified as doing what is right because it is defined in the Torah. The act is the same and the conscience is the same. Would a righteous act be called unrighteous simply because the one doing the righteous act did not know the letter of the Torah?

See, you are called a Yehudite, and rest on the Torah, and make your boast in Elohim, and know the desire [of Elohim], and approve what is superior, being instructed out of the Torah, and are trusting that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, An instructor of foolish ones, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and of the truth in the Torah.

These things are all good and commendable. To instruct those who need instruction to help them do right according to the sight of Elohim. The Yehudite was given this above all nations.

This is the esteem of Yehovah.

You, then, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who proclaim that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abominate idols, do you rob temples?

You who make your boast in the Torah, through the transgression of the Torah do you disrespect Elohim?

For "The Name of Elohim is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you," as it has been written.

It was written of Israel, how she profaned the Name of Yehovah among the Gentiles. Yehovah proclaimed this through His prophets unto them. Why now boast of having the Torah while all along disrespecting Elohim by not doing as He instructed by lying, stealing, committing adultery, and idol worship.

For circumcision indeed profits if you practice the Torah, but if you are a transgressor of the Torah, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

So, if an uncircumcised one watches over the righteousness's of the Torah, shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned as circumcision?

If a gentile, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, lives righteousness according the instructions of Elohim in the Torah, this is the definition of circumcision of the heart.

And the uncircumcised by nature, who perfects the Torah, shall judge you who notwithstanding letter and circumcision are a transgressor of the Torah!

For he is not a Yehudite who is so outwardly, neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

But a Yehudite is he who is so inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in Spirit, not literally, whose praise is not from men but from Elohim.