

Triennial Torah Study – 5th Year 30/08/2014



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

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

Ex 3	1 Kings 7	Ps 107	Luke 18
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God Speaks to Moses From the Burning Bush (Exodus 3)

The time has come for God to deliver the Israelites in accordance with the prophecy given to Abraham in Genesis 15. The Almighty calls Moses from tending the flock, confronting him in a miraculous sight—a bush that, while burning with fire, was not consumed. God stated the fact that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom the covenant promises were given. And it was now time to fulfill part of that covenant by bringing the Israelites out of captivity and into the land He had promised to their descendants.

Sometimes we must be patient with the trials that beset us. God's promises are always certain. At times, however, it feels like an eternity when we are beset with trials. Yet when God does step in, His intervention is quick! "And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:7-8).

Just as God prepared Moses for what was going to be taking place, including the very outcome, He prepares His people today for events that will take place in the future.

Solomon Builds His Palace (1 Kings 7:1-22; 2 Chronicles 3:15-17)

Solomon also built the main administrative centers of Israel's government. The massive *House of the Forest of Lebanon* probably served as Solomon's armory. Measuring about 150 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet tall, it obtained its name from the white fragrant cedar wood with which it was paneled—no doubt taken from Lebanon's famous Mount Lebanon—and from its 45 pillars, which must have looked like the trees of a forest. Around the building ran a three-course row of windows, beveled on the inside to maximize the dispersion of daylight. The doors were similarly beveled on the exterior, for aesthetics, and arranged in groups of three, providing quick access to the interior. Before the building was also a colonnade of pillars supporting an exterior roof.

Solomon's court was seated in the *Hall of Judgment*. Here Solomon sat as the Supreme Justice of Israel under God. Under Israel's system of justice, a citizen could appeal directly to the king in matters of law or equity and, if the king agreed to hear the case, the proceedings were held in the Hall of Judgment. Once again, the hall was paneled with Lebanon cedar. Here also was perhaps the main chamber for what some have described as Israel's national Assembly of Elders, a sort of House of Lords or Senate for Israel, which, in the opinion of some modern examiners, assisted the king in the government over which he presided. We'll see further mention of this in a few days.

Solomon's personal residence was modeled on the Hall of Judgment, although little information is given about its own features. If Solomon followed the typical pattern of Middle Eastern monarchs, his personal residence was at one extreme of the complex, the House of the Forest of Lebanon and the Hall of Judgment in the center, and the residence of the daughter of Pharaoh was at the opposite extreme (along with the residence of Solomon's harem).

A Foolish Strategy for Peace and Security (1 Kings 7:1-22; 2 Chronicles 3:15-17)

In mentioning Solomon's personal residence, Scripture adds that Solomon built a similar residence for his wife, the daughter of Pharaoh. It was not the practice of sovereigns to dwell with their spouses, and thus a second residence was provided for the daughter of Pharaoh. But this note also raises some questions we have not yet looked at. When had Solomon taken the daughter of Pharaoh? Was it before or after his father's death? And why was such a pairing permitted, especially given the prohibitions against marrying a non-Israelite (Exodus 23:31-33; 34:12-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-4)? It would appear that she was his first wife, given her mention here and in 1 Kings 11 (even though Solomon's heir, Rehoboam, was not her son but the son of an Ammonite, 14:21).

First of all, it should be noted that the prohibitions just cited were against marrying Canaanites, not Egyptians. And in 1 Kings 3, the fact that Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh (verse 1) was immediately followed by the fact that he at that time generally walked in obedience to God (verse 3)—that is, his marriage was not referred as something wrong. Still, we can see in it the seeds of what later became a huge problem.

Generally speaking, as mentioned in our earlier highlights on 1 Kings 3 and 2 Chronicles 1, the marriages of Middle Eastern sovereigns often were the seals of political alliances made with foreign potentates. Solomon's marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh was most likely the sealing of an alliance with Egypt. Josephus, the Jewish historian, states that Solomon took the daughter of Pharaoh after David's death (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 8, chap. 2, sec. 1). And it does follow that way in 1 Kings. Did Solomon undertake the alliance with Egypt on the death of David in an effort to forestall a possible war with Israel's powerful southern neighbor—who might seek to take advantage of a new king suspected of lacking the military acumen of his father? It would appear that one of Solomon's strategies for maintaining peace and the stability of his kingdom was to enter into marriage and trading alliances with the major nations and many trading sheiks

of the eastern deserts surrounding Israel. Thus Solomon's 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3) were not so much wives as tokens of international covenants, most of them probably never being seen more than once by Solomon—though there were a number that he clearly did love (verse 2).

Whatever the reason for Solomon's marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh, it began a trend that obviously got out of hand. Indeed, this multiplying of pagan wives was *clearly* in disobedience to God (Deuteronomy 17:17)—as was marrying women from nations that God had certainly forbidden (see 1 Kings 11:2). And it eventually proved to be the undoing of his kingdom for, as recorded in 1 Kings 11, his foreign wives eventually led him into idolatry. The result was the rebellion of the northern 10 tribes after his death, and the voiding of the conditional covenant God made with him concerning the perpetuity of his seed upon the throne of Israel. Solomon had failed to learn the lesson of Psalm 75:6-7: "For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another." While alliances with other kingdoms did serve to strengthen Israel for a while, the true exaltation of Israel would not come from these alliances with temporary rulers of this earth but from God. And so would abasement for disobedience. It is never prudent or wise to contravene the commands of God. War, instability and schism—whether personal or national—are the result.

Hiram's Work (1 Kings 7:23-51; 2 Chronicles 4:1-5:1)

To construct the temple, Solomon employed the skills of a master craftsman, Hiram (or Hiram), fetched from Hiram king of Tyre. As explained in previous readings, he was the son of a Tyrian man who himself was a metalworker, but there's some minor confusion regarding his mother. According to 2 Chronicles 2:14, his mother was "of the daughters of Dan," yet 1 Kings 7:14 informs us that she was "of the tribe of Naphtali." One explanation may be that Hiram's mother was a Danite woman who had formerly married a Naphtalite man and thereby became a Naphtalite by marriage. In that case, we could assume that her first husband died and she then married a Tyrian man, Hiram's father.

Hiram worked in bronze, an alloy of copper (about 80%) and tin (about 20%); brass is an alloy of copper (about 60%) and zinc (about 40%). While scholars still debate somewhat whether the Hebrew *nechosheth* should be translated *brass* or *bronze*, the weight of evidence seems to prefer bronze. Copper was readily available in many places, and the Phoenicians—actually a Tyrian-Sidonian-Israelite alliance—controlled a brisk trade in tin mined in southwest England. Zinc was a relatively unknown metal in Solomon's day.

Hiram's works, no doubt guided by God as with the construction of the original tabernacle furnishings, were truly remarkable. He oversaw the design and construction of the great cherubim whose wings overshadowed the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place; the altar of incense, the table of showbread, and the great candlestick and its instruments, all of which were in the Holy Place; the two pillars which stood in the porch of the temple, as well as their adornments; the great altar, on which all sacrifices were offered; the laver (ceremonial

washbasin) called *the Sea*, in which the priests washed; the 10 mobile lavers, in which the burnt offerings were washed; the shovels, which were used to remove the ashes of the altar; the basins, which were used to catch the blood of the sacrifices; the pots, which were used to remove the innards of the sacrifices; the 10 tables, on which the sacrifices were prepared; and the doors of the temple.

“Oh, That Men Would Give Thanks to the LORD” (Psalm 107)

The repeated refrain of Psalm 107, which begins Book V of the Psalter, expresses a desire for people to thank God for His repeated mercy and deliverance in rescuing them from their troubles. With this psalm, Book V in fact opens on much the same note as the previous book closes. Indeed, the first words of Psalm 107 are the same as the first words of Psalm 106—taken from David’s psalm in 1 Chronicles 16 (wording further emphasized in Psalm 136).

As the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* comments in its introductory note on Psalm 107: “In its recitational style the psalm is closely related to Ps 104-106, and in its language to Ps 105-106. For that reason it has been seriously proposed that with these last two psalms it forms a trilogy from the same author. Whether or not this is so, its affinity with the preceding psalms strongly suggests that it was associated with them before the insertion of a Book division between Ps 106 and 107 and that it was intended to conclude the little series, Ps 104-107 [or perhaps 103-107 since 103 introduces the theme of God’s benefits, including the satisfaction of His people with good (103:5; 107:9)]. Its recital of God’s ‘wonderful deeds for men’ (v. 8)—which climaxes Ps 105-106—balances the recital of his many wise works in creation (see 104:226) and his benevolent care over the animal world (see 104:27-30). The editors may have inserted a Book division between Ps 106 and 107 with a view to a fivefold division of the Psalter”—that is, to parallel the Pentateuch in the scriptural reading cycle.

Verses 2-3 mentions the redeemed of God gathered from enemy captivity in foreign lands. A hint as to what captivity is intended is perhaps found in verse 16, which says that God “has broken the gates of bronze, and cut the bars of iron in two.” Very similar language is found in Isaiah 45:1-2, which describes the fall of Babylon to the Persian emperor Cyrus: “Thus says the LORD says to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut: I will go before you... *I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron*” (Isaiah 45:1-2). Thus Psalm 107:16 points to a fulfillment of this passage. God in fact used Cyrus to issue the first decree allowing the Jewish captives in Babylon to return to Judea.

Verses 4-7 describe the Israelite exiles as having wandered in desolation without enough to eat and drink, with God at last giving them a city to dwell in. This probably refers not to resettlement in Jerusalem (which was not a rescue from severe circumstances) but rather to the Jews eventually settling down in Babylonian communities following their initial deportation. Thus the wording of “go to” rather than “come to” a city (verse 7).

It should be observed that there is also a greater spiritual reality here too—as John the Baptist was later commissioned with words taken from this psalm to show God’s people the way out of spiritual imprisonment (compare verse 10; Luke 1:79), evidently through his message of God’s Kingdom and call for repentance.

Among other trials the psalmist alludes to are dangers at sea while conducting maritime commerce (Psalm 107:23-30)— demonstrating that the psalm does not exclusively concern returning exiles. “No problem is too great for God. This psalm imagines the worse calamities a Jew could think of: homelessness and starvation (verses 4-5), imprisonment (10-12), self-inflicted disease (17-18), and—the ultimate—imminent shipwreck (23-27). Since Israel was landlocked, few Jews had experienced turbulent seas, and thus dreaded them. In all these cases, God was able to rescue those who called for his help” (*Zondervan New Student Bible*, note on verse 27). When tempest-tossed sailors are at their wits’ end, they cry out to God and He delivers them, bringing them to safe havens (verses 27-30). As Psalm 89:9 states: “He calms the storm, so that its waves are still.”

God is sovereign. In response to wickedness, He can turn fruitful land into barren land (verses 33-34). In showing mercy to the poor and their families, He can turn wilderness into desirable acreage for vineyards, cattle and harvests (verses 35-38). Those who are righteous understand that God punishes wickedness through oppression, affliction and sorrow (verses 33, 39-40) and “sets the poor on high” (verse 41). Wonderfully, as part of God’s great benefits, His involvement in man’s affairs is ultimately for a great purpose—that “they will understand the lovingkindness [*hesed*, faithful love] of the LORD” (verse 43). That is certainly cause for thanksgiving.

Luke 18

“Always pray and don’t lose heart,” are the opening Words of Yeshua in Luke 18. He tells a parable about the importance of not only persistence but continual hope. If a non-believer can do right by another person, how much more is our Father who loves us going to do right unto us and give us what we ask for.

Yeshua shares the parable of the Pharisee exalting himself in prayer and the tax collector who declared himself a sinner. The tax collector was the man who went home from the Set Apart place declared right.

As Yeshua’s taught ones rebuked those bringing children near to Him to bless them, Yeshua says, “no, for such is the Reign of Elohim and that all must come as a little child to enter.” Another man asked Yeshua what he must do to inherit everlasting life. After discussing the commandments the man says he has kept them. Then Yeshua tells him to sell all he has and follow Him. The rich man goes away sad and Yeshua teaches about the hold that riches and wealth has over people and how it can be a stumbling block to them.