

Triennial Torah Study – 3rd Year 11/08/2012



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Num 14		Job 39-42	Romans 3
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“You Shall Know My Rejection” (Numbers 14)

The Israelites, it appears, had come to the point where they could have immediately possessed the Promised Land. But a lack of faith would keep them out of this land that flowed with milk and honey for several more decades—making their time in the wilderness a total of 40 years.

Discouragement set in as a result of the evil report of the 10 faithless spies, and once again the children of Israel speak against Moses and Aaron. They begin by wishing they had already died in Egypt or the wilderness rather than face the “dangers” of the land of Canaan (verse 2). But the complaining doesn't stop there. They accuse God of intentionally putting them and their families in harm's way to kill them (verse 3). And then an even more incredible thing happens. They decide that it would be much better to return to Egypt, so they actually call for the selection of a new leader to lead them back to the land of their enslavement.

At this point Moses and Aaron “hit the deck,” as it were (verse 5), probably to intercede for the people and perhaps to “dodge the bullets” of God's wrath that would surely follow such outrage. Indeed, how out of touch with reality can people be? Of course, we probably consider ourselves impervious to such a frame of mind. Yet discouragement can also cause us to want to give up and go back into the world. Egypt, a type of sin, for us represents those things we believe and do before the Father calls us and grants us repentance and faith. We must, then, never look back.

But again, the people were not merely looking back—they had already determined to actually go back. They were picking a leader for this rebellion when Joshua and Caleb step forward in utter grief. They encourage the people to go forward toward the Promised Land. In 13:16, we see that Moses has changed the name of Hoshea (Hebrew “Salvation” or “May the Eternal Save”) to Joshua (Hebrew “The Eternal Saves”)—thus providing an “answer” to the “request” in the former name. The Latinized Greek form of Joshua is Jesus. Indeed, Joshua was a type of Jesus Christ in many respects. Joshua's encouragement gives us a picture of Jesus, our Savior, our Deliverer, our Captain, cheering us on and helping us into His Kingdom (verse 8). With Caleb,

he exhorts the people, “Don’t rebel, don’t fear our enemies, we’ll eat them alive, they will fall apart” (compare verse 9). Like Joshua, Caleb was appropriately named, as his name carries the sense of being “Bold” or “Wholehearted” in Hebrew.

Clearly, to not follow God’s lead, to refuse His promises, is rebellion. But the Israelites’ rebellion is further magnified when their response to the faithful witnesses is a call to stone them to death. Then the thing that Israel should have truly feared happens—God’s presence is manifested before them in the shekinah glory (verse 10), and He is furious. God again considers wiping Israel out altogether, and starting over with Moses. Notice, however, that Moses doesn’t seek preeminence for himself. Rather, he is primarily concerned with God’s reputation. He reminds the Lord that the nations are watching (verses 13-16). Furthermore, despite the rebellion of the people and their threats against him personally, Moses loves them and seeks their welfare. In coming to their aid, he appeals to God’s patience and mercy (verses 17-19). Moses is very obviously, then, a type of Christ in obtaining pardon for the people.

But for the Israelites it is only a temporary pardon—because they will not repent. And ultimately, the very thing that they wished for, that they had fallen dead in the wilderness (verse 2), will come upon them (verses 28-29, 32, 35). Of the older generation, only Joshua and Caleb will enter the Promised Land (verses 24, 30). And rather than God placing the Israelites’ children in jeopardy as the people had accused, the children would be the only ones spared: “Your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised” (verse 31). Yet for 40 years, the nation will be rejected from entering the Promised Land. Incredibly, as severe as this might sound, it actually displays the tremendous mercy of God that He would still make it possible for a purged Israel to enter the land.

But now we come to an amazing tendency of human nature. When God says, “Do,” the carnal mind wants to not do. And when God says, “Don’t,” the carnal mind wants to do (compare Romans 8:7; 7:8). Now that God says they can’t enter the Promised Land, the people suddenly want to—and attempt to do just that. They do acknowledge their prior sin, but they do not see that by seeking what God has now forbidden by His judgment, they are guilty of the sin of rebellion just the same. Though Moses warns them, they mount a futile invasion attempt of the land. But it is, of course, doomed to failure from the start because God is not with them (verses 42-45).

Consider then: As a result of the fear and lack of faith of 10 cowardly men, and the people’s response to it, the Israelites would have to die in the wilderness. They hardened their hearts, and God made up His mind that they would not enter His rest (Psalm 95:8-11)—that is, the Promised Land. They refused to follow God, though He was visibly with them in the cloud and the fire. We must take warning from all this. God’s Word states that the Israelites falling in the wilderness should serve as a powerful example to us (1 Corinthians 10:1-12). They took their eyes off the goal, a mistake we are repeatedly warned not to make. Let us therefore fear, we who have the promise of entering into God’s future rest, His millennial Kingdom, lest any of us should come short of it. We can miss out just as assuredly as they did, and for the same

reason—a lack of faith. And yet, like the children of Israel, we are so close to entering in (Hebrews 3:8-4:11).

Can Job Do a Better Job of Being God Than God? (Job 40:6-41:34)

As we saw in Job 40:1-5, Job had come to see himself as nothing before the Great God and considered that he dared not say anymore. Yet this was not exactly God's point. God had been illustrating His great care for His creation (Job 38-39)—implying great care for Job as well. It seems that Job, as stunned as he was at God's presence and reply, had not fully grasped this yet.

We should recall that Job had actually anticipated that if God ever confronted him, he would be unable to say anything or that, if he somehow managed to, it would not really matter. Note Job's earlier words from chapter 9: "How then can I answer Him, and choose my words to reason with Him? For though I were righteous, I could not answer Him; I would beg mercy of my Judge. If I called and He answered me, I would not believe that He was listening to my voice. For He crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause.... If it is a matter of strength, indeed He is strong; and if of justice, who will appoint my day in court? Though I were righteous, my own mouth would condemn me; though I were blameless, it would prove me perverse" (verses 14-20).

So it is not enough that Job is silenced in God's presence. That is not the answer God is looking for—especially as Job may still be thinking along the same lines quoted above. God wants him to really think about all this and come to a reasoned conclusion. Job needs to come to some important realizations about God and himself. God therefore repeats His previous introduction from Job 38:3, saying that He is asking Job questions and that Job needs to give an appropriate response (40:6-7).

God then moves to the heart of Job's problem, asking, "Would you indeed annul my judgment? Would you condemn me that you may be justified?" Again, we should observe that though this obviously constitutes a reprimand, God is extremely gentle here with Job, softly chiding him to bring him to his senses. As to substance, Job has certainly maligned God's justice in his agony-induced ranting, imagining that God oppresses innocents, laughs at their suffering and practically smiles on the wicked who harm the innocent (see 9:21-24; 10:3; 24:1-12). We should recognize that due to his intense physical and emotional suffering, Job was in certain respects going out of his mind. Proper perspective and a good attitude are exceedingly hard to maintain in great trials. So God, in perfect empathy and understanding, is here to comfort Job, reason with him and help him to see reality.

In this vein, God issues a challenge to Job. In its note on Job 40:9-14, The Nelson Study Bible states: "The absurdity of Job's defiant criticism of the way the Lord runs the universe (see 29:2-17 for Job's claim to be fair in his judicial duties) is forcefully brought to his attention by God's ironic invitation to become 'king for a day' over the whole universe. If Job had the power, let him

don the royal regalia of God's majestic attributes and humble the proud and wicked forces in the world. Job had criticized God for not doing this well enough (21:30, 31; 24:1-17)."

Basically God is saying to Job, "If you think you can do a better job of being God and Supreme Judge than Me, okay let's see it." And if Job can, then God will admit that Job can save himself (40:14)—that is, that Job wouldn't even need God. Consider that Job has been seeking from God vindication and deliverance for himself and judgment on the wicked. Yet why would he seek this from an unfair and unjust God bent on harming him and rewarding evil? If Job's characterization of God in this regard is right, then Job's only option is to save himself—which is of course not really an option at all.

It seems that Job has had some self-righteousness in this regard. That is, he has in effect been trusting too much in his own character to serve as his vindicator. He had spoken of maintaining his integrity to the very end. He had imagined himself going before God and presenting his righteousness as the basis on which God should overturn His judgment—that is, the judgment Job incorrectly perceived God had brought on him. Recall that God said Job was without knowledge (38:1-2). This wording is interesting in light of the apostle Paul's evaluation of the people of Israel: "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:2-3). The Israelites needed to throw themselves on God's mercy and look to Christ's sacrifice to justify them and His righteous life to save them. Job essentially needed to do the same thing.

Job's character and focus had served him well when affliction first came—indeed, remarkably so. But over time the immensity of his trial began to affect him severely—distorting his perspective of God. Job had probably never imagined that such a thing could happen to his thinking. Perhaps he was like Peter who said to Christ, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble" (Matthew 26:33). Peter was of course wrong. He needed to come to understand that of his own power and strength he would not be able to live up to his good intentions. Similarly, Job needed to see that his own righteousness was not self-perpetuating. He was, as all men are, subject to the dark forces of the world and the downward pull of his own mind. Righteous though he demonstrably was, he nevertheless desperately needed God to not merely declare him righteous, but to make and keep him righteous throughout his life. Job had been thinking just the opposite. He considered that God had only to recognize his righteousness. God in response says that if Job can fill His shoes as God, "...then I will also confess to you that your own right hand can save you" (Job 40:14).

God goes on to provide examples of His sovereignty (and Job's lack) with two powerful creatures—the behemoth (verses 15-24) and Leviathan (41:1-34). God's intent here is not the same as it was in chapters 38-39, where He was illustrating His care over the vast complexities of the natural realm. Rather, we should understand God's present point in light of his challenge to Job to deal with the proud and wicked forces of the world. Only God can take down the

behemoth (40:19). And only He can subdue Leviathan, the king of the proud (see 41:34). We examine the specifics of these creatures in the comments that follow.

Behemoth and Leviathan (Job 40:6-41:34)

In Job 40:15, the untranslated Hebrew word behemoth, intensive in form, seems to have the meaning of “great beast” or “beast of beasts.” It appears, from the description given, to be a literal creature that God has created. God says He made this animal with man (same verse). Its identity is disputed. Some reckon it to be the hippopotamus or the rhinoceros. Since these animals have small tails, those who advocate one of them argue that “tail like a cedar” must be a hyperbolic euphemism for the male member. Others maintain that the word refers to the trunk of an elephant. Of animals currently living, the African bull elephant would best seem to fit the description “first of the ways of God” (verse 19) since it is unquestionably the most powerful animal alive. Yet gulping river water into its open mouth (verse 23) seems to not fit

the elephant, which sucks up water through its trunk and squirts it into its mouth. And there is no mention of tusks. If bringing the sword near in verse 19 is restricted to one-man sword combat, any of these animals full grown would have been rather hard to bring down. But even in Job’s day men could hunt and kill these creatures with spears, especially in teams.

All of this being so, it may well be that a much larger, now-extinct creature is intended. Some have suggested an herbivorous dinosaur. This would better fit a more literal meaning for “tail like a cedar” and make more sense of the creature’s imperviousness to human attack. Such creatures inhabited the world that was destroyed before the creation of Adam. Yet it is possible that God made new varieties to live in man’s world that have died out since the time of Job. Others have suggested the now-extinct giant hornless rhinoceros known as Baluchitherium (named after Baluchistan in Pakistan, where its fossil remains were found). This massive animal, 25 feet long, standing 18 feet or nearly two stories high at the shoulder, with a thick, 8foot-long tail, is thought to be the largest land mammal that ever lived. Paleontologists date the creature to more than 10 million years ago, yet this is based on an evolutionary interpretation of geologic strata. It could be that this animal was contemporary with human beings even as late as Job’s day.

Verse 24 could be translated as a question: “Can one take him by his eyes or pierce his nose with a snare?” Recall that God had just implied that only He could bind the faces of the proud in secret (verses 11-13, KJV). Whatever creature the behemoth actually is, it is apparently used to represent the mighty and powerful of the earth. Here is a great force that Job is ultimately powerless to deal with. But God who made the creature is easily able to overcome it. It is interesting to consider that the great gentile empires of the earth and their leaders are later represented by powerful beasts in Bible prophecy (see Daniel 7; Revelation 13; 17). And God, the One who establishes earthly authority, is the One who is able to abase the world’s powers, no matter how great they are (see Daniel 4).

That brings us next to Leviathan in Job 41. Leviathan is basically a transliteration of a Hebrew word whose root means “twist” or “writhe.” Psalm 104:25-26 shows Leviathan to be a great sea creature. Many think the reference in Job 41 is to a crocodile. They see the fire and smoke going out of its mouth and nose respectively (verses 19-21) as sunlight reflecting off of water vapor the crocodile churns up or breathes out, thereby creating the illusion of fire. But why would God in His description be passing along a false illusion as if it were real? And why would He make the specific statement that the creature’s breath kindles coals? This is not adequately explained by the flashing of reflected sunlight. It seems obvious that the description here is of some kind of fire-breathing sea dragon.

Is a literal creature portrayed here? It would seem so, but it may not be a physical animal. Even if such an animal species does exist, the greater reference here is evidently to something else. Job had mentioned Leviathan in Job 3:8 in conjunction with those who called upon dark powers of cursing. Psalm 74:12-14 presents Leviathan as a beast whose multiple heads were broken when Israel was brought out of Egypt and led through the sea. This parallels the reference to Egypt as “Rahab” in Isaiah 30:7—a name meaning “Fierce” or “Violent” and perhaps identifiable with the Egyptian crocodile god Sobek, whose name meant “Rager.” Job mentioned Rahab in 9:13 and 26:12, referring to him as “the fleeing serpent” that God has pierced (verse 13). Isaiah 26:21-27:1 says that when God comes to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity at the end of the age, He will “punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan that twisted serpent; and He will slay the reptile that is in the sea.”

At the time of future judgment, we know that God will destroy a final human empire described as a seven-headed beast rising up out of the sea (Revelation 13; 17). Yet the seven heads of this beast are also portrayed as emerging from the great, fiery red dragon or serpent of old, Satan the devil (see 12:3, 9). Drawing the scaly monster Leviathan out with a hook in his jaw

(Job 41:1) parallels the description in Ezekiel 29:3-4 of God putting hooks in the jaws of the Egyptian pharaoh, described there as a river monster likened to a crocodile. So a great physical empire or ruler seems intended in part by the references to Leviathan throughout Scripture, but the even greater spiritual power behind the throne of all human kingdoms and false gods, Satan the devil, is surely also in mind. Indeed, this seems to be the primary meaning, especially in Job 41. Consider the words that conclude the description of Leviathan here: “He is king over all the children of pride” (verse 34). Who or what does this phrase describe better than Satan? His “heart as hard as stone” (verse 24) most likely refers to his cruelty and stubborn unwillingness to submit to God.

Now consider verses 3-4. God challenges Job regarding Leviathan: “Will he make many supplications to you? Will he speak softly to you? Will he make a covenant with you?” This makes little sense if a mere animal is intended. The implication here is that Leviathan has made requests of God in a soft-spoken way as part of striking some kind of deal or agreement with God. This is exactly what Satan was described as doing at the beginning of the book of Job—he appealed to God to allow him to try Job and God agreed to let him do so within certain limits.

Yet God was the real master of what was going on. He is the one who provoked Satan into the challenge so that his purpose would be fulfilled. God was using Satan for His own greater design. This helps to make sense of what God says next of Leviathan: “Will you take him as a servant forever?” (verse 4). Not that Satan wants to serve God. He simply has no choice. God allows Satan to rule the world throughout this age as part of a great plan. Yet the ultimate Sovereign—who sets the limits of Satan’s rule—is still God. Then: “Will you play with him as with a bird?” (verse 5). Again, Satan thought he was really getting away with something in the trial of Job. But God was just toying with him to fulfill His own greater purpose. This is ever the case. Consider when Satan succeeded in leading Judas to betray Christ. Whose will was ultimately served in what happened? That’s right. Once again, Satan was unwittingly played— this time to fulfill what God had explicitly foretold and to accomplish the supreme sacrifice to redeem humanity.

Notice also: “Or will you leash him for your maidens?” (verse 5). God puts a leash on Satan, imposing certain restrictions on him, for the sake of His people. And God will later completely imprison Satan (Revelation 20:1-3). The next questions in this series are: “Will your companions make a banquet of him? Will they apportion him among the merchants?” Perhaps the idea here is that the wealth and kingdoms that spring from Satan will be apportioned among survivors at the end of the age, just as Egypt’s wealth was dispersed at the time of the Exodus, when God “broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces and gave him as food to the people inhabiting the wilderness” (Psalm 74:14).

Any human attempt to subdue this being would fail (Job 41:7-10). Only God can stand against him. And God will. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary offers this alternative translation of verses 11-12: “Who can confront me and remain safe? When under all the heavens he dares oppose me, will not I silence his boastings, his powerful word and his dubious arguments?” (see footnotes on verses 11-12).

This is just what God is accomplishing through Job. Consider this analysis from Expositor’s: “By telling of his dominion over Behemoth and Leviathan, the Lord is illustrating what he has said in 40:8-14. He is celebrating his moral triumph over the forces of evil. Satan, the Accuser, has been proved wrong though Job does not know it. The author and the reader see the entire picture that Job and his friends never knew. No rational theory of suffering is substituted for the faulty one the friends proffered. The only answer given is the same as in Genesis. God permitted the Accuser to touch Job as part of his plan to humiliate Satan. But now that the contest is over, God still did not reveal his reason to Job. Job did not find out what the readers know. That is why Job could be restored without destroying the integrity of the account. To understand this is to understand why the forces of moral disorder are veiled underneath mythopoeic language about ferocious, uncontrollable creatures.... We emphasize that if the specific and ultimate reason for his suffering had been revealed to Job even at this point—the value of the account as a comfort to others who must suffer in ignorance would have been diminished if not cancelled” (note on 41:1-34).

Yet without giving away the specifics of what has been going on, God is revealing to Job some important general principles that all of God's people should bear in mind during this age. Job probably understands Leviathan to be Satan. And Job likely knows that Satan is out to harm him. Perhaps he even realizes that Satan is the one afflicting him, though he blames God for this since he knows that God could prevent it. God in response assures Job that He does not step aside and cooperate with evil forces in allowing harm to come to His people. Rather, God bends the forces of evil to serve His will with the intent of working out the ultimate benefit of His people. It may appear on the surface that evil is triumphant. But God in His high and mysterious ways is using these circumstances to accomplish His awesome purposes. Job himself could never achieve the like. No man could. Only God has everything under control. Only God can rule and judge supreme—in omnipotent power and omniscient justice. Job has only to trust Him and submit to whatever He is doing.

Romans Chapter 3

What then is the advantage of the Yehudite, or what is the value of the circumcision?

Much in every way! Because firstly indeed, that they were entrusted with the Words of Elohim. The Jewish people are singled out here by Paul simply because they were the only tribe left at the time in the land and identifiable. The others tribes had been absorbed by Judah or scattered to the four corners of the earth. "Declaring His Word to Jacob, His laws and His right-rulings to Israel" Psalms 147:19

The instructions were given to all Israel as recorded by Moses in the Torah (First Five books of the Bible) so this truly is an advantage to all other peoples and tribes of the earth.

For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief nullify the trustworthiness of Elohim?

Let it not be! But let Elohim be true, and every man a liar, as it has been written, "That You (Yehovah) should be declared right in Your words, and prevail in Your judging."

We are not to judge righteousness on the acts of others, even if they are Jewish or Greek. We are not to judge Yehovah based upon the actions of others. Some proclaim Him with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him. His truth is declared through His Word and through His Spirit.

This is the truth to walk in and to seek.

But if our unrighteousness establishes the righteousness of Elohim, what shall we say? Is Elohim unrighteous who is inflicting wrath? I speak as a man.

Many people proclaim the unfairness, wickedness, and wrathfulness of Yehovah because He does chastise those He loves, and He does discipline for sin. This is love, not wrath. He does not delight in the death of the wicked. It is the reasoning of mankind who comes to this type of conclusion.

Let it not be! Otherwise how shall Elohim judge the world?

For if the truth of Elohim has increased through my lie, to His esteem, why am I also still judged as a sinner?

And [why] not [say], “Let us do evil so that the good might come”? – as we are wrongly accused and as some claim that we say. Their judgment is in the right.

What then? Are we better [than they]? Not at all, for we have previously accused both Yehudim and Greeks that they are all under sin.

As it has been written, “There is none righteous, no, not one!

“There is no one who is understanding, there is none who is seeking Elohim.

They all have turned aside, they have together become worthless. There is none who does good, no, not one.”

Their throat is an open tomb (Psalm 5:9), with their tongues they have deceived (Jeremiah 9:5), “The poison of adders is under their lips (Psalm 140:3),”

“Whose mouth is filled with cursing and bitterness (Psalm 10:7).”

“Their feet are swift to shed blood (Isaiah 59:7, Proverbs 1:16), ruin and wretchedness are in their ways,

and the way of peace they have not known (Isaiah 59).”

“There is no fear of Elohim before their eyes.”

And we know that whatever the Torah says, it says to those who are in the Torah, so that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world come under judgment before Elohim.

Therefore by works of Torah no flesh shall be declared right before Him, for by the Torah is the knowledge of sin.

But now, apart from the Torah, a righteousness of Elohim has been revealed, being witnessed by the Torah and the Prophets,

And the righteousness of Elohim is through belief in Yeshua Messiah to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference,

For all have sinned and fall short of the esteem of Elohim,

Being declared right, without paying, by His favor through the redemption which is in Messiah Yeshua,

Whom Elohim set forth as an atonement, through belief in His blood, to demonstrated His righteousness, because in His tolerance Elohim had passed over the sins that had taken place before,

To demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He is righteous and declared righteous the one who has belief in Yeshua.

Where, then is the boasting? It is shut out. By what Torah? Of works? No, but by the Torah of belief.

This is Letter or Spirit. This is religion or relationship.

For we reckon that a man is declared right by belief without works of Torah.

Or [is He] the Elohim of the Yehudim only, and not also of the gentiles? Yes, of the gentiles also,

Since it is one Elohim who shall declare right the circumcised by belief and the uncircumcised through belief.

Do we then nullify the Torah through the belief? Let it not be! On the contrary, we establish the Torah.