

Triennial Torah Study – 5th Year 27/09/2014

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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

Ex 7	1 Kings 13-14	Ps 112-114	Luke 22:1-38
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Moses was now in his 80th year. He was beginning the final 40 years of his life in leading the nation of Israel to the Promised Land. Moses and Aaron had been prepared by God to understand that Pharaoh would be very stubborn, regardless of the miracles that were to be performed. Pharaoh also had some “tricks” that could be performed through his magicians—perhaps even with demonic help. Pharaoh’s magicians somehow imitated the first three miracles that Moses displayed (those with the snakes and the first two plagues—the water to blood and the frogs). After that, the magicians could no longer duplicate or simulate miraculous plagues. The ability to work magic with snakes was a skill in which the Egyptian magicians apparently prided themselves: “The power to control and direct the movements of such venomous reptiles was one of the things of which the Egyptian was most proud, and in which he was most skilfull, already in the time when the pyramids were being built” (E.A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Magic*, 1971, p. 5). This could have been akin to snake charming, a fleshly skill, or something supernatural—originating from Satan, the chief serpent. The New Testament tells us the names of the chief magicians were Jannes and Jambres (2 Timothy 3:8). Their magic, though powerful, was not equal to the power by which God worked through Moses. Nevertheless, even after the power of God prevailed, Pharaoh did not listen. In the future, the Bible reveals, an awesome geopolitical power known as “the beast” will arise on the world scene. Its leader will be a dictator like Pharaoh and, as Pharaoh was with the priests of Egypt, he will be in league with a false religious power that will perform many wonders and miracles. Will we be able to discern the power of God as opposed to the power of this false system? There are those who will be deceived (Revelation 13:13-14). Through His written Word, God promises that if we stay close to Him, we will not be deceived.

Returning now to the chapters of today’s reading, let us examine the first three plagues on Egypt—plagues that even the Israelites experienced.

1. **Waters made blood:** Each of the plagues of Egypt was an assault on multiple Egyptian gods. For instance, the plague on the waters was a slap at Khnum, the giver of the Nile; at Hapy, the spirit of the Nile; at Sopedet, the god of Nile floodwaters; at Osiris, whose bloodstream was the Nile; at Edjo, the goddess of the Delta; at Hatmehyt, guardian goddess of fish and fishermen; and at various other deities that should have been looking out for the Egyptians. Whether the waters were turned into actual blood is unclear. It is possible that the waters simply appeared this way. *The Nelson Study Bible* points out, “The Hebrew word translated *blood* can refer to a red color, as in Joel 2:31.... [It] might be that God caused torrential rains to flood and pollute the sources of the Nile to create this plague.... Red soil and algae would make the waters of the Nile red, unfit for drinking and deficient in oxygen for the fish” (1997). Indeed, volcanic or meteoric activity could cause a similar pollution of blood-red

coloring, as appears to be the case in a prophesied future event in Revelation 8:8. And the Bible does seem to indicate that there was geologic upheaval at the time of the Exodus (compare Psalm 114:1-6). In any case, no matter what the actual change in Egypt's waters was, and no matter how God brought it about, the important thing to realize is that *Hebrought* it about. It was clearly a divine miracle.

2. **Frogs:** One of the gods worshiped by the Egyptians was Heket, whose image was a frog or a woman with the *head* of a frog. Heket was the goddess of birth, midwives and safe deliveries (frogs, in moderate numbers, being seen as signs of life, renewal and happiness). After the overabundance of them, and then the stench of huge piles of dead frogs, it would seem that the goddess Heket would have lost credibility. Furthermore, the court of Hapy, mentioned above, included crocodile gods and frog goddesses. And the primordial gods Nun, Kek and Heh were each depicted as a man with a frog's head. This plague, though imitated by the magicians, causes Pharaoh to yield. But his stubbornness then prevails and he changes his mind.
3. **Lice:** Though the Egyptians revered no specific god of lice, so far as we know, they did worship an insect God—Kheper, who was represented as a scarab beetle. Furthermore, we should see how this plague was a slap at the Egyptian gods in general—who were unable to protect their subjects from the infestation. Indeed, Har-pakhered (Horus in child form) was invoked to ward off dangerous creatures, while Imhotep was besought as a god of medicinal healing. But beseech as they might, there was no relief. Even Pharaoh himself was considered a god—the divine incarnation of the sky and sun god Horus—yet he personally suffered from this plague. The lice infestation could not be imitated by the magicians. They, therefore, yield—but Pharaoh does not.
- 4.

The Man of God (1 Kings 13)

To rebuke Jeroboam for his abominable actions, God sent a prophet from Judah, unnamed in the scriptural account, with strict instructions to deliver God's message, perform a certain sign and depart home to Judah without partaking of any food or drink. The unnamed prophet gave the warning, performed the sign and departed as instructed. Despite the personal effect of the sign upon Jeroboam, the king would not repent. How tragic and foolish! Jeroboam's stubbornness would yield decades of strife and, ultimately, the destruction of his dynasty and kingdom. We will later read of how Josiah, king of Judah around 300 years later (though prophesied here by name long before his birth), fulfilled this prophecy (2 Kings 23:15-18).

The Judean prophet departed according to the instruction of God, but he was soon pursued by an "old prophet" who dwelt in Bethel. We are not told who this old prophet was, nor if he was indeed a true prophet of God. His conduct does not betray him necessarily as a false prophet—since this one occasion is the only time we know that he lied. The old prophet's deception of the Judean prophet underscores the vital need to follow God's instructions precisely. The Judean prophet should have declined the old prophet's invitation, saying that if the old prophet's claim were true then he would wait until God revoked his original command in just as sure a manner as He had given it. But, foolishly, he allowed another to dissuade him from strictly following God's commands.

The story of the Judean prophet contains the same theme as the story of Jeroboam's new form of worship—namely, that any compromise with God's instruction has consequences.

Ahijah's Second Prophecy to Jeroboam; Rehoboam Fortifies His Kingdom (1 Kings 14:1-18; 2 Chronicles 11:5-12, 18-23)

When Jeroboam's son became ill, he sought out Ahijah, the prophet of God who had foretold Jeroboam's rise to power. This shows that Jeroboam still knew which religious system was true even as he continued to

maintain a false one. By an intended ruse Jeroboam sought to discover what would become of the child. But Ahijah was told by God what was happening and what he should say. Ahijah made it plain that Jeroboam had behaved wickedly and foolishly, and that not only would the child die but also the whole household of Jeroboam would be destroyed and, ultimately, the whole nation of Israel would be cast out of the land—demonstrating, as so many other examples do, that the consequences of sin are often far-reaching.

When Rehoboam returned to Jerusalem he did so as a petty monarch of a much smaller and largely powerless kingdom. He was immediately aware of his vulnerability. There was an unfriendly Israel on the north, a powerful former ally to the south (Egypt) who was now closely allied to Israel's king, a number of hostile former vassal states to the south and east, and the resurgent Philistines on the west. And Rehoboam no longer had a worldwide trading empire. The future looked rather bleak.

Immediately he began to fortify his kingdom. He established a line of fortified towns along borders, securing water supplies and travel routes. The kingdom of Judah was basically transformed into a small fortress, though its king no doubt still trembled at the thought of attack. Had Egypt attacked, Judah could have been easily defeated. Had Israel attacked, the ferocious fight would have likely ended in Rehoboam's defeat. Had the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites or Edomites attacked, there could have been years of instability and constant dangers.

Rehoboam did have the foresight to deal wisely with his sons. Like his father Solomon before him, Rehoboam had acquired many wives and concubines. Whatever enjoyment he may have found in this situation was short-lived, though, when a crop of 28 sons matured. With such a large pool of potential heirs, nominating one was sure to antagonize the rest. To reduce the potential for intrigue and infighting, some of his sons were appointed to positions of authority in the fortified cities, while others remained in Jerusalem. In this way, Rehoboam could put some of the danger farther from the capital while keeping a close eye on those who remained nearby. To further control his sons, he sought many wives for them, thereby keeping them occupied with domestic concerns, distracted by sexual pursuits and enamored with the life of a mini-sheik (many wives being a sign of prosperity and social standing). When one stops to consider what Rehoboam was forced to do in trying to control the consequences of his own unrestrained desires, it is really quite sad.

“He Has Sent Redemption to His People”

Psalm 112 is another wisdom psalm with, as noted above, the same acrostic structure as that of Psalm 111. The two psalms form a matched pair. Like Psalm 111, Psalm 112 also begins with “Praise the LORD” or *Hallelujah*-and follows from the final words of Psalm 111, “His praise endures forever.” Psalm 112 then picks up where 111 leaves off with the benefit of fearing God and keeping His commandments-finding happiness in them (compare 111:5, 10; 112:1).

Comparing the two psalms, we see in Psalm 112 that the righteous, who are like God in the way they live, will be greatly blessed with honor and glory and the perpetuity that God Himself has. Notice that both God and those who follow Him are “gracious and full of compassion” (111:4; 112:4). And of both we are told, “His righteousness endures forever” (111:3; 112:3, 9).

Observe that the wonderful blessings God's people receive are not for selfishly hoarding-but for sharing with others in need. A godly person will have wisdom to manage his affairs and help others (verses 4-6), and he will not live in fear (verses 7-8). He will remain confident that God will turn things around so that “he will look in triumph on his foes” (verse 8, NIV).

Of course, we should not view Psalm 112 as a promise of material riches and an absence of hardship and harm throughout this life. God often does bless those who follow His ways with material well-being in the here and now, but we should understand the blessings mentioned throughout Psalm 112 as coming over the course of life, through generations as God's way of life is passed down, and, most importantly, as part of the ultimate inheritance of the righteous in eternity to come.

This is in stark contrast, as the last verse shows, to the wicked, who will ultimately "melt away."

"He Has Sent Redemption to His People"

As earlier noted, **Psalm 113** is the first in a collection of six psalms (113-118) called the "Egyptian Hallel." These *hallel*, or "praise," psalms "came to be used in the Jewish liturgy at the great religious festivals (Passover, Weeks, Tabernacles, Dedication, New Moon; see Lev 23; Nu 10:10; Jn 10:22...)" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Psalms 113-118). The moniker "Egyptian" is derived from their special use in the celebration of Passover, commemorating the Israelites' deliverance in Egypt. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* states, "The Egyptian Hallel psalms received a special place in the Passover liturgy, as 113-114 were recited or sung before and 115-118 after the festive meal (cf. Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26)" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, introductory note on Psalm 113).

Regarding the customary singing of Psalms 113-114 prior to the traditional Passover meal of Jewish people today, *The Nelson Study Bible* states: "Both psalms remarkably capture in poetry and song the major ideas of the prose liturgy that is also recited before the Passover meal. That is, they speak of God's saving works at the time of the Exodus. The first psalm [113] focuses the worshipers on the condescending grace of God. He is the merciful Redeemer who bends from heaven to meet the needs of His people. Then with the singing of Ps. 114, the Jews recall Israel's deliverance from Egypt-the reason for the Passover celebration and the central act of God's saving grace" ("INDepth: The Psalms of the Passover," sidebar on Psalms 113-118).

Psalm 113 opens and closes with *Hallelujah*-*"Praise the LORD."* Indeed, in the opening three verses the psalmist five times calls for the servants of the Lord to praise His name. "In biblical thought a name is not a mere label of identification; it is an expression of the essential nature of its bearer. A man's name reveals his character.... This was a concept shared by the peoples of the ancient world. Hence to know that name of God is to know God as he has revealed himself (Ps. 9:10)" ("Name," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*). So God's name includes who He is, all He has done and everything He instructs and stands for. In verse 3, the phrase "from the rising of the sun to its going down" designates not daytime, from dawn to dusk, but rather means from the distant east to the distant west-i.e., in all places God's name is to be praised.

Though God dwells in unimaginable glory and splendor beyond the creation, He nonetheless humbles Himself to be mindful of it (verses 4-6; compare 8:4). The Mighty God has compassion on His people. He lifts the poor and needy out of dust and ashes-referring to both the physically impoverished and spiritually humble and repentant-to seat them with princes (verses 7-8). He relieves the stigma and desperation of a barren woman by giving her a happy home (verse 9). In these verses we have a picture of God's salvation and reward of His humble people-raising them in stature to rulers and giving them joy in His family forever.

"He Has Sent Redemption to His People"

Psalm 114, still sung with Psalm 113 prior to the Jewish Passover meal as noted above, is a song about the power of God in delivering the Israelites from Egypt, bringing them into the Promised Land and preserving them in the wilderness in between.

Stating that the Israelites “went out...from a people of strange language” (verse 1) is meant to stress the foreignness of the Egyptians and their ways (compare Psalm 81:5)-particularly their foreignness from *God's* ways. This would also seem to indicate that the Israelites retained their own language while in Egypt. Recall that they were not scattered throughout Egypt but had been settled in the land of Goshen in the Nile Delta region. Sadly, the Israelites were nevertheless corrupted from living in Egypt. Thus, coming out of Egypt was representative of coming out of Egypt's ways. “In terms of ‘biblical geography,’ Egypt represents the world and the bondage of the sinner to its evil forces (Eph.2:1-3)” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Exultant-Psalms 90-150: Praising God for His Mighty Works*, 2004, note on Psalm 114:1).

When God led Israel out of Egypt, the nation became His *sanctuary* and *dominion* (verse 2)-that is, His temple and sovereign domain or kingdom. God told Moses, “Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8). And in dwelling among them, the people would in an extended sense become His holy dwelling place-His sanctuary. God further said: “I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them” (29:45-46). Today God dwells *within* His people, true believers, who constitute spiritual Israel-the spiritual temple of God.

Verses 3-6 concern the miraculous parting of the waters of the Red Sea and the Jordan River for Israel to cross-at the beginning and end of their wilderness wanderings. The Red Sea is figuratively portrayed as “seeing” the dominion of God among His people and “fleeing” from His manifest power. The Jordan is personified as intentionally turning back from its normal flow. In concert with these events, we also see mountains and hills “skipping” like frightened lambs. This would seem to indicate major earthquake activity on one or both of these occasions.

Continuing the earthquake imagery, verse 7 directs the earth to tremble at God's presence. This probably also is instruction to all the earth's people to likewise tremble with appropriate fear and respect before God. Ironically, those with proper fear need not be terror-stricken-for God uses His great power to benefit His people. It was the awesome presence of God that gave the Israelites water in the desert to preserve them from the time they left Egypt to the time they entered the Promised Land (verse 8).

Even so, God's presence within His people today will preserve them following their personal “Exodus” from the sin of Egypt and “Red Sea baptism,” giving them spiritual drink from the divine Rock (compare 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 11). And by His mighty power He will see us through to the future “Jordan crossing” into the spiritual “Promised Land”-the Kingdom of God.

Luke 22:1-38

It is now the Passover and the priests are seeking how to kill Yeshua. The Adversary enters Judas and he goes to make a deal with the chief priests, scribes, and elders to turn Yeshua in for silver in return. This makes them very happy for they could not find a way to lay hands upon Him. Meanwhile Yeshua is making plans to spend the Festival with His taught ones and He instructs them to prepare for their meal together.

Yeshua instructed them to go and speak with a certain man and obtain the upper room where they would have the meal. They did so, just as He instructed them. At the meal, He took a cup and had them all drink from it and then He broke bread giving each of them a piece saying, “This is My body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of Me.

Also with another cup He gave them saying, “This cup is the renewed covenant in My blood which is shed for you.”

The taught ones began to dispute amongst themselves as to which of them was greater, and Yeshua restated the importance in the Kingdom is the one who serves not the one who is served. He then tells Shim'on what

is to happen with him in the coming hours and how he should deny Yeshua three times. But that He has prayed for him and after the ordeal he should turn and strengthen his brothers.