

Triennial Torah Study – 5th Year 01/11/2014



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

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

Ex 13	1 Kings 21-22	Ps 119:132-176	John 2-3
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In chapter 13, the details of the Days of Unleavened Bread are again recorded. The Bible reveals that not only was unleavened bread eaten for seven days, as a reminder of coming out of Egypt in haste, but leavening represents those things that are contrary to the way of God. Paul told the Corinthians to “keep the feast [of Unleavened Bread], not...with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). During these days, which Paul's instructions show that God's people are still to observe, all leavened bread and leavening agents that can be used to leaven bread—which now includes yeast, baking powder and baking soda (sodium bicarbonate)—are to be removed from the home. (“Bread” is here used to refer to anything made primarily from one or more grains and cooked, including loaf bread, crackers, pancakes, cake, pie crust, cookies, muffins, pasta, etc.) This is a reminder for us to purge our lives of spiritual leavening, the sin that so easily spreads and “puffs up” (1 Corinthians 4:6, 18-19; 5:2, 6; 8:1; 13:4).

The Firstborn Are Sanctified (Exodus 12:1—13:16)

God instructed the Israelites to sanctify (“set apart”—for a specific religious or spiritual purpose) the male firstborn of both man and animals. Why? Exodus 13:15 explains that it was because the firstborn of both man and beast were slain in Egypt—and the ones God spared, those of Israel, then belonged to Him. The firstborn males of clean animals were to be sacrificed to God while the firstborn males of men and unclean animals were to be redeemed (i.e., “bought back” from God). An unclean animal was to be redeemed with the sacrifice of a lamb. For man, an offering was to be given in place of a literal sacrifice. Numbers 18:16 reveals the redemption value. Through this offering the Israelites would always be reminded of the miraculous way God delivered Israel from Egypt.

Miracle at the Red Sea

God brought Israel out of Egypt through great signs and wonders. He had communicated to them through His servant Moses and was now miraculously leading them through the wilderness. Israel was now witnessing another miracle—God leading them by a pillar of cloud during the day, which brought welcome shade during the afternoon heat (Psalm 105:39; compare Isaiah 4:5-6; 25:4-5), and by a pillar of fire during the night, which gave them a warm, glowing light. But He was leading them in a way that did not seem to make sense, since it was not in the direction of Canaan and was, instead, heading toward a dead-end entrapment. Pharaoh had once again changed his mind, and now the Israelites found themselves trapped between his army and the sea.

One might think that, after witnessing the tremendous miracles that had already taken place, the Israelites would begin to show evidence of trust and faith in the One who had delivered them thus far. Instead, we find a continually complaining, murmuring and backsliding group of people who just aren't getting the point! However, God reminds us that these ancient examples have been recorded for our benefit today (1 Corinthians 10:13). The people, places and events may be different, but the attitudes prevail throughout the ages.

Are we that different today? Do we ever find ourselves questioning the existence or whereabouts of our Creator? Do we ever doubt God's miraculous intervention in our lives? Do we ever complain, gripe or murmur when things don't seem to be going our way? When our backs are to the "Red Sea" with no relief in sight, do we trust in the words, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord"? An end-time event is yet to occur that will test the faith of God's elect (Revelation 12:13-16). Will God's people remember His miracles, or will they be like the Israelites of old? If one can read about and believe in the One who was so patient, loving and merciful to a stubborn and stiff-necked people, why would one doubt His patience, love and mercy for today? God does not show partiality (Acts 10:34).

Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kings 21)

Technically, all land in ancient Israel belonged to God, who granted it to be permanently held by each Israelite tribe and family (Leviticus 25:23-28). Thus the property was clearly Naboth's (compare Numbers 36:2-9). Even the king, a constitutional monarch, was required to obey the law (1 Samuel 10:25).

"In reminding Ahab that he was king and could do as he pleased, Jezebel reflected her Canaanite background where kings ruled absolutely (see Deut. 17:14-20; 1 Sam. 8:11-18)" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 21:7). Regarding 1 Kings 21:7, *The Bible Reader's Companion* explains: "The Heb[rew] reads literally, 'You now; you are going to perform majesty over Israel.' The saying seems to indicate that she will show Ahab how to magnify himself by having his way in Israel. Her use of the king's seal indicates that she had his authority for her plot against Naboth. Ahab lent her his full support" (Lawrence Richards, 1991, note on 21:7-14).

Jezebel's murderous plot then unfolds. "Some suggest that the charge made by the two 'scoundrels' was that Naboth went back on a pledge made in God's name to sell his land to the king. Failure to keep an oath made in God's name would be blasphemy. In that case, after Naboth's execution, the king could legally have taken possession of the property in dispute. Second Kings 9:26 adds that Naboth's sons were killed at the same time. With no heir left alive, there seemingly was no one left to dispute Ahab's claim to the land" (same note).

Ahab and Jezebel's behavior regarding Naboth prompts the return of Elijah—this time to pronounce the termination of Ahab's rule and the extermination of his dynasty similar to the warning given earlier to Jeroboam and Baasha. This will be carried out by Jehu son of Nimshi, a military leader, as God had previously told Elijah (1 Kings 19:16-17). Yet Ahab's expression of remorse results in God postponing some of the punishment, illustrating His tremendous mercy.

Micaiah's Warning 1 Kings 22:1-28

Assyrian history records another war involving Ahab, which appears to have taken place during the three-year truce with Syria (1 Kings 22:1). The Assyrians began to rise in power, and made an advance toward the coastal area far north of Israel. Apparently Ahab joined an alliance of nations in repelling their advance, and, according to the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III, he supplied about one half (2,000) of the chariots and perhaps a sixth (10,000) of the infantry.

Jehoshaphat also forms an alliance with Ahab. As part of the alliance, their children, Jehoram and Athaliah, are married (2 Chronicles 18:1; 21:6). Jehoshaphat pays a visit to his ally, and Ahab proposes that Jehoshaphat join him in an attempt to recover Ramoth-Gilead from the Syrians in yet a third war with them. This was a town on the east side of the Jordan that belonged to Gad and had originally been designated as a city of refuge (Deuteronomy 4:41-43).

Jehoshaphat agrees but insists on finding out God's will in the matter first. For some reason, when asked about a prophet of God, Ahab does not mention Elijah or his assistant Elisha. Perhaps they were known to be away and not available. In any case, though many true prophets had been killed earlier in Ahab's reign, there were still a few around. Here we are introduced to the prophet Micaiah, who is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture unless, as some have speculated, he is the same Micaiah sent out by Jehoshaphat to teach in Judah (2 Chronicles 17:7). One of the saddest aspects of this encounter is that Jehoshaphat, too, is persuaded to ignore the message from the prophet of God whom he had specifically asked to hear from.

Remarkably, we get a glimpse in our current reading of how God actually sometimes uses even demons to fulfill His purposes. Notice that God did not command any spirit here to lie. He simply asked who would do it and told the volunteer to go do what he was inclined to do anyway. The fact that Micaiah's true prophecies were always at odds with those of Ahab's prophets (compare 1 Kings 22:8) would seem to imply that a "lying spirit" was *commonly* behind the words of Ahab's prophets.

Notice this from *The Bible Reader's Companion*: "Did God Himself lie to Ahab? Not at all. He did permit Ahab's prophets to lie.... [But] God in fact clearly revealed to Ahab the source of his prophets' predictions, and the truth about what would happen to him in the coming battle. Ahab's death resulted from refusing to believe the truth, not from a failure to know it. Let's be careful not to blame God for the consequences of our own fully conscious choices" (note on 1 Kings 22).

Elijah's Ascension to "Heaven"; Elisha Succeeds Him

The incident in which Elijah was "taken up into heaven by a whirlwind" (verse 1) has many people convinced that we will go to heaven when we die. But John 3:13 clearly says that "*no one has ascended to heaven* but He who came down from heaven," referring to Yeshua. Therefore, Elijah could not have gone to heaven. How do we reconcile this apparent contradiction?

The answer lies in the fact that the Bible speaks of *more than one* heaven—indeed, of three. Scripture refers to the atmosphere of this earth, the sky, as "heaven" (Genesis 27:28). It speaks of the physical universe beyond as "heaven" (Psalm 8:3). And it speaks of God's dwelling place in the spirit realm as "heaven" (Revelation 4:1-3). It is from this "third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2), the heaven of God's throne, that Christ came—and to which no other human being has ascended (John 3:13).

Thus, Elijah did not go to the third heaven. So what happened to him? Where did he go? To help us understand, we need to know of other events that happened in Israel and Judah in the years following. Right at the time of Elijah's ascension, Jehoram became the new king of Israel—in the 18th year of Jehoshaphat of Judah and the second year of Jehoshaphat's son, whose name was also Jehoram (2 Kings 1:17; 3:1)—meaning there was an overlapping father-son reign over Judah at this time. In the fifth year of the reign of Israel's Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram became king over Judah (8:16)—that is, *sole* king following the death of Jehoshaphat. It was following the death of Jehoshaphat and becoming sole ruler that Jehoram of Judah, a wicked ruler, killed all his brothers (2 Chronicles 21:1-4). *Afterward*, Jehoram of Judah received a *letter from Elijah* (verse 12). The letter makes reference to the king's murder of his brothers (verse 13), showing that it was written after that event. And, putting the chronology together, this was more than four years after Elijah's ascension. Thus, Elijah was still alive more than four years after he was taken up by the fiery chariot in the whirlwind, *living somewhere here on earth*. His ascension, then, must have only been into the *first* heaven—the sky. And it should be clear that he did not die when he ascended. Rather, God transported him to another place on the earth where he lived out the rest of his days. The Bible doesn't say why God decided to make such a change at this point.

Elisha became Elijah's successor, symbolized by the passing of the mantle (2 Kings 2:13-14) and confirmed by the "double portion" of the power that God gave him through His Spirit, enabling him to perform mighty miracles, such as healing poisonous waters (verses 19-22.) It should be noted that the concept of a "double portion" in Scripture normally denoted a birthright

inheritance of the firstborn son in a family. In that usage, it did not mean twice as much as the father had but, rather, twice as much as the other sons received from the father. It appears that Elisha's request was similar. If this is the case, then Elisha, understanding that the portion of spiritual power that Elijah had from God would be divided out to the sons of the prophets, was asking for twice as much as what they would receive rather than twice as much as what Elijah had. In any case, this was not a selfish request. Elisha had already been anointed to succeed Elijah—and he knew that he would need more of God's help than anyone if he were to remotely fill Elijah's shoes.

The account ends with Elisha departing and being mocked by a sizable group of young people. The Hebrew here can mean children, teenagers or young adults in their early 20s. Judging by Elisha's response they were certainly old enough to know better and to be held accountable for their actions, implying they likely were teens or young adults. Their taunt, in modern parlance, would essentially be, "Go up in the air, baldy!" Thus, they mocked his report of Elijah's ascension, and they made fun of him for his baldness. Elisha cursed them for their disbelief and flagrant disrespect for God's prophet—actually disrespect for God—and God backed up Elisha by sending the bears. Note that it does not say the youths who suffered attack were killed—just that they were "mauled" by the bears (verse 24), the Hebrew here allowing for a wide range of injury.

Ahab Dies; Jehoshaphat Rebuked 1 Kings 22:29-40, 51-53

Jehoshaphat is nearly killed when it turns out the Syrian strategy is to specifically target the man who has defeated them twice already, and Jehoshaphat is the only one looking the part. Chronicles reveals that it is God who intervenes to save him, while at the same time causing a random arrow to find its target between the joints of Ahab's armor, in the middle of his back.

When Jehoshaphat returns to Jerusalem, he is met by Jehu (son of Hanani), the same prophet God had sent to Israel's king Baasha more than 30 years earlier (1 Kings 16:1-7). It was Jehu's father, Hanani, who had been imprisoned by Jehoshaphat's father Asa for correcting him about not relying on God in his dealings with Syria (2 Chronicles 16:7-10). Now Jehu reprimands Jehoshaphat for forming an alliance with, and helping, Ahab. Unlike his father, Jehoshaphat apparently maintains a good attitude and continues to seek God, although he renews his alliance in treaties with Ahab's sons (2 Chronicles 20:35; 2 Kings 3:7).

Rule of Jehoram of Judah 1 Kings 22:50

As mentioned before, after Jehoshaphat's death, his firstborn son Jehoram, who reigned with him for the last few years of Jehoshaphat's life, became sole king over Judah. Although Jehoshaphat had been, generally speaking, a righteous king, his son Jehoram was extremely wicked—even slaughtering his brother and other princes. This helps to show that the

righteousness of parents is not automatically passed on to their children. Of course, Jehoshaphat did not help matters through the terrible mistake of having Jehoram marry Athaliah, the daughter of wicked King Ahab. In fact, this directly contributed to the corruption of Jehoram's character. Indeed, we are specifically told that she influenced him to walk in the way of the kings of Israel, who lived in idolatrous rebellion against God (2 Chronicles 21:6). Still, Jehoram bore responsibility for his own actions. The letter from Elijah rebuked him for the terrible things he had done (verse 13).

Since Jehoram and the nation of Judah had forsaken God, God forsook *them*, enabling nations like Edom and Libnah to revolt against Judah (verses 8-10; 2 Kings 8:20-22). (Edom designates the descendants of Jacob's twin brother Esau, who sold his birthright for a stew of lentils, Genesis 25:31-43.)

As the apostasy of Jehoram and the people worsened (2 Chronicles 21:11), God Himself stirred up enemy nations to attack Judah (verses 16-17). When Jehoram still refused to repent, God struck him with an incurable disease. As we will soon see in a later reading, he dies from this disease in severe pain (verses 18-19), exactly as Elijah had warned him (verse 15). Listen to this unflattering summary of the life and death of this evil king, which we will read again in sequence when we soon come to this later reading: "He reigned in Jerusalem eight years and, to no one's sorrow, departed" (verse 20).

Since God was faithful regarding the covenant He had made with David, He would not cut off the kingship from the house of David. Rather, He would see to it that there would always be a descendant of David sitting on David's throne (verse 7; 2 Kings 8:19; see 2 Samuel 7:14-16; Jeremiah 33:20-22, 25-26). So Jehoram remains on the throne until his death. And after Jehoram's death, his one remaining son, Ahaziah, will become the next king of Judah, sitting on the throne of David (2 Chronicles 21:17; 2 Kings 8:24). It is this seat of power, the present form of which is the throne of Great Britain, to which Yeshua will return and on which He, as a descendant of David, will sit and from which He will rule the nations (see Luke 1:31-33; "The Throne of Britain: Its Biblical Origin and Future," www.ucg.org/brp/materials).

The author next makes an appeal to God's mercy on the basis of this being God's "custom" toward those who love Him (Psalm 119:132). In fact, the word translated "custom" here is *mishpat*, the term for God's legal judgments throughout the psalm. This is in fact God's law for Himself-part of His personal inviolable code of conduct. Indeed, this is codified in the Ten Commandments, where God promises to show mercy to those who love Him (see Exodus 20:6).

It is interesting to note in the next verses (Psalm 119:133-134) that the psalmist prays to be kept free from sin before then asking to be freed (redeemed, bought back-compare verse 154) from human oppression-and even in the latter case, the request is so that he may continue to live a life of obedience to God. God redeems us today from sin and affliction for this same purpose-that we may live in accordance with His will.

The phrase “Make Your face shine upon Your servant” (verse 135a) is adapted from the priestly blessing that God said was to be used to bless His people (see Numbers 6:25). The symbolism of shining light would seem to tie back to the light of understanding in Psalm 119:130-and indeed we see the plea for this blessing followed by a renewed request to be taught God’s statutes (verse 135b).

The stanza ends with the poet lamenting that he has shed many tears because of people not obeying God’s law (verse 136). It is not clear whether he is referring to his own suffering from those committing lawless deeds in abusing him (compare verses 121-123, 126, 134) or whether he is referring to people in general dishonoring God and hurting *themselves* through their sins-a great tragedy over which to mourn (compare Jeremiah 9:1; Ezekiel 9:4; Luke 19:41-42; Philippians 3:18).

In the **Tsadde** strophe (verses 137-144) the psalmist uses the words “righteous” and “righteousness” five times in connection with God and His Word-these terms in the original Hebrew connoting a straight line, perfect alignment. God’s testimonies are also “very faithful” (verse 138)-“fully trustworthy” (NIV). His Word, in its commands and promises, is “very pure” (verse 140)-in the sense of “thoroughly tested” (NIV; compare 12:6). The author speaks from personally experiencing the benefits of God’s Word (see verses 97-104).

Verse 139, “My zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten Your words,” could mean either that their disobedience has further incited him to take a stand against them (compare verse 53) or that his suffering at their hands has ultimately served to strengthen him in his resolve to follow God. (Compare also Psalm 69:9; John 2:17).

Although the poet feels “small and despised” and “trouble and anguish have overtaken” him (verses 141, 143), he remembers God’s precepts. In contrast to the trouble brought on him through false accusations (verses 118, 86, 69), God’s “law is truth” (verse 142)-genuine, dependable and right (compare verses 151, 160)-and His commandments bring true happiness and joy (verse 143). Like the psalmist’s, all our present troubles are temporary, but God’s righteousness is everlasting-and through God’s Word we will live a life of everlasting righteousness (see verses 142, 144).

In the **Qoph** stanza (verses 145-152) the psalmist cries out desperately to God for help (verse 145-147), similar to his intense prayer in the earlier **Kaph** stanza (see verses 81-88). This intensity continues through the next three stanzas that close the psalm. Commentator Wiersbe remarks: “Have you noticed that the writer became more urgent as he drew near the end of the psalm? The Hebrew alphabet was about to end, but his trials would continue, and he needed the help of the Lord” (note on verses 153-160). The author still expresses his determination to continue in God’s ways, but he knows that he cannot succeed-indeed, he cannot even live to try-without God’s intervention and help.

He gets up early and lies awake late at night-through the night watches (sunset to 10, 10 to 2, and 2 to dawn)-crying to God for help and meditating on God's Word, in which he finds hope (verses 147-148; compare 5:3; 63:1, 6).

He asks again that God *revive* him (verse 149; compare verses 25, 37, 40, 88, 107, as well as 154, 156, 159)-to breathe life into him, to restore his spirits, to reawaken his hope. And this prayer in verse 149 is made according to God's *hesed* (covenant lovingkindness) and *mishpat* (judgment, rule for life)-reiterating his appeals in verses 124 and 132.

He then again presents the issue of his enemies. They draw near to him-that is, they are coming for him, to do him harm-and are thus far from God's law (verse 150). Yet God is near, able to intervene (verse 151; compare Acts 17:27-28). And since God's words are truth-true and faithful forever, as the poet closes this stanza (Psalm 119:152)-then God must intervene as He has promised in his law. Of course, God is not bound as to the manner of His intervention. Ultimately, He will work all things out to the eternal benefit of His servants (see Romans 8:28).

In the **Resh** strophe (verses 153-160) the psalmist three times asks God to "revive" him-to lift his spirits and see to his needs-here, as in other places, according to God's word, His judgments and His loyal lovingkindness (verses 154, 156, 159). In essence, the author is pleading with God to act because God has promised to, because this is what God's own laws demand and because God, in His care for His people, cannot fail to be moved by their plight with love and compassion to help them.

He asks God to plead or defend his cause in the manner of an advocate and mediator in a court of law (verse 154; compare 1 Samuel 24:15; Psalms 35:1; 43:1). And in his adversaries' case against him, they are the ones without a leg to stand on-having no legitimate cause against him, being lawbreakers themselves and having no one to stand for them, help them and save them. Moreover, God could override all of this by taking a further step.

The writer again asks God to *redeem* him (119:154; compare verse 134). To "redeem" means to "buy back," to "deliver by paying a price." God stated that a kinsman could buy back the property a poor relative had sold (Leviticus 25:25-28), as Boaz did on behalf of Naomi and Ruth. The language here is interesting in light of the psalmist's earlier request that God stand as surety for him (verse 122). Yet this goes even further. While the terminology of redemption often takes on in the Old Testament a general sense of deliverance from some overpowering circumstance, there is behind all this the legal foundation. There was a price for God to pay to redeem His people from the consequences of sin-a price paid through the sacrifice of Yeshua. The psalmist was ultimately reliant on this same redemption, which in his day was yet to come. Whether this was in his mind at the time or not, it was no doubt in the mind of the One who inspired the psalm.

Despite the many who oppose him, the psalmist is intent on staying the course of following God (verse 157). He is utterly disgusted by their treachery against God in the way they have rejected God's Word (verse 158). The Israelite nation was founded on Scripture, and yet the people and

their leaders spurned its teachings. How true that is even today! The Israelite nations of today have, to varying degrees, been founded on scriptural principles. U.S. President Andrew Jackson said the Bible is “the rock on which our republic rests.” And our countries have been immeasurably blessed by God. Yet today we see terrible treachery, as even in America displays of His commandments are unceremoniously marched out of courthouses by judicial decree. Even worse, many of God’s laws are rejected by those who still profess to follow Him.

The poet ends the stanza with another declaration that God’s Word is truth (verse 160). The Hebrew word rendered “entirety” here is *rosh*, which typically means “head.” The King James Version translates this as “beginning.” The focus here would be that God’s Word has always been true and, as the rest of the verse maintains, it always will be. But others see *rosh* here as designating the “sum,” in the sense of summit or summation, thus explaining NKJV translation. This is the third declaration of the truth of God’s Word in close proximity-the other two occurring in each of the two previous stanzas (verses 142, 151). Yeshua affirmed this when He prayed to God the Father, “Your word is truth” (John 17:17). And in the certainty of His Word, its righteous judgments apply forever (Psalm 119:160). This should be a cause of concern to those who choose to reject God and His laws-and a cause of great hope to those who strive to follow God in keeping His Word.

In the ***Shin*** stanza (verses 161-168) the psalmist pauses from his crying out for help to again place his affliction in the context of God’s Word: “Princes persecute me without a cause, but my heart stands in awe of Your word” (verse 161). He again rejoices in God’s Word as a great treasure (verse 162; compare verses 14, 72, 127; see also Matthew 13:45-46). And he yet again proclaims, “I love Your law” (Psalm 119:163).

Praising “seven times a day” in verse 164 could be literal, but it more likely is meant in a figurative sense for “throughout the day”-the number seven representing completeness. It exceeded the typical three times per day mentioned elsewhere in Scripture (compare 55:17; Daniel 6:10-11). Most importantly note that these prayer times are times of *hallel* or “praise” for God’s righteous judgments. This is not talking about constantly crying out to God for help in the midst of affliction-which the writer has also been doing. Rather, it describes his constant praise of God even in these hard times. This is a wonderful example for all of God’s people.

The poet points out that all those who love God’s law find a great sense of peace (Psalm 119:165)-of security and well-being-in studying God’s teachings, meditating on them, practicing them. We find evidence of this sense of peace even in the midst of trial throughout the entirety of Psalm 119. In contrast to those who have only a superficial awareness of the law, or those who reject it (verse 126), the psalmist understands that the law will benefit him throughout life. For those who love God’s law, “nothing causes them to stumble” (verse 165). This is a better rendering in modern English than the King James Version’s “nothing shall offend them”-for this older translation might today appear to say that God’s people will never feel insulted or slighted-which is not at all what is intended by the original wording. The word *mikshol* here means a stumbling-block, an obstacle that causes one to fall. As long as God’s people maintain their love and

devotion to living as He commands, they will not be tripped up by circumstances because the law, either directly or in principle, addresses whatever they encounter (compare Proverbs 4:12; 1 John 2:10).

The basis for the peace the writer experiences-just as it is for all God's people-is trust in God's promises about the future, knowing where life is headed beyond any present difficulties. As the next verse in Psalm 119 declares, "LORD, I hope for Your salvation" (verse 166). And the hope here is a *confident* one. Others translate the verse to say, "I *wait* for your salvation" (NIV). As he waits expectantly, the psalmist continues to remain devoted to all of God's laws and follows them, recognizing that God is well aware of all he thinks and does (verses 166-168).

Finally in the **Tau** strophe (verses 169-176), the last stanza, the psalmist urgently summarizes his need and his steadfast devotion. With the alphabet exhausted, the poet fills his concluding strophe with repeated cries for help. In a barrage of petitions, he five times uses the word "let" along with the words "give," "deliver" and "seek." "Let my cry...[and] my supplication come before You," he pleads (verses 169, 170). "Let Your hand...[and] Your judgments help me" (verses 173, 175). "Let my soul live" (verse 175). "Give me understanding" (verse 169). "Deliver me" (verse 170). "Seek your servant" (verse 176).

Verse 172 gives us an important definition of righteousness, stating that all of God's commandments are righteousness-that is, the way of perfect alignment with Him. This is important for believers today to understand in striving for righteousness. It means not only receiving forgiveness for past sin, but striving thereafter to live as God commands-to keep His commandments in their full spiritual intent as illustrated by Yeshua in the Sermon on the Mount. Of course, this is only possible with the help of God Himself-as the author well understood (see verse 35). Today we have the further revelation in the New Testament that this is accomplished through Yeshua living within us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In verse 174 the psalmist again expresses his longing for God's salvation-which could apply to immediate rescue or ultimate deliverance in the future resurrection to eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Perhaps both are intended.

In closing, the writer of this psalm sees himself like a lost sheep having strayed and now in need of rescue (verse 176). This may be an acknowledgment of sin (as his earlier one in verse 67), though he has not strayed in that way during his affliction (verse 110). It could simply be that he is saying that he's in a predicament he can't get out of-just as a lost sheep. This is certainly true when it comes to the human condition in terms of sin-and this simile is used elsewhere in that sense (compare Isaiah 53:6; 1 Peter 2:25; Luke 15:4-7). Whatever his exact meaning, the author desperately needs the intervention of the Good Shepherd to come and rescue His sheep-His follower, His servant.

This request is made on the basis of being a *faithful* servant-one who remembers God's commandments. While he was clearly not sinless, the psalmist counted himself among the righteous. He loved God's law and made it his chief delight (verse 174). His desire was to live

and praise God (verses 171, 175). He integrated God's Word into his life. He walked in conformity to God's will in contrast with the unrighteous who had no desire to live obediently. God does not obligate Himself to aid the wicked. But He offers abundant help to His servants (Psalms 23; 121).

The belief that he was among the righteous whom God rewards gave the writer of Psalm 119 confidence to make his requests. And so it is with us today. For as the New Testament tells us in 1 John 3:22, "Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."

John 2 – 3

John chapter 2 opens with the event of Yeshua and His taught ones at a wedding celebration. This is considered Yeshua's first miracle that He performed by changing water into wine. It is interesting to ponder how this first miracle of our Master mirrors the very firsts of the miracles performed through Moses by changing the Nile and ALL the waters of Egypt into blood. Also great prophetic words are spoken by the master of the feast in verse 10 when he says to the bridegroom, "You have kept the good wine unto now." This phrase reminds one of the cup that Yeshua will drink with us at the wedding feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom – which He did not and will not drink at the supper until we are with Him again in His Kingdom.

After a few days, it was the time of the Passover and Yeshua and His taught ones went to Jerusalem. Our Master entered into the Set apart place and saw all the merchants selling offerings to the people there. He became wroth when He saw it and overturned all their tables of money and coins and He set the animals free. Why? Because our Father's House is not to be a House of merchandise, but of prayer! Note it!

The Yehudim asked Him by what sign (meaning authority, what gave Him permission to do such a thing)... and He answered them in a way they did not understand: "Destroy this Dwelling Place, and in three days I shall raise it." During these days, Yeshua did many miracles and many believed upon His Name.

One of these was a man named Nicodemus. He was of the leadership of the Yehudim, a Pharisee, and so when He went to speak with Yeshua he went by night. Nicodemus acknowledged that Yeshua must have Elohim within him to do the marvelous things He was doing. Yeshua tries to teach him about being born from above, being born of the Spirit and not of flesh in order to see the Reign of Elohim. Nicodemus could not understand and Yeshua was amazed, for Nicodemus was a ruler and teacher in Israel. He should have been secure in these matters.

Yeshua spends some time teaching him of spiritual matters versus earthly matters. He speaks of the second Adam – the Son of Adam, having come from heaven and will also go up to heaven. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness... so also the Son of Adam must be

lifted up. So that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life. For if Yeshua is raised, so can we be. He is the first of the first fruits and we can now follow.

Elohim sends His only brought-forth Son for the salvation and deliverance of children so that whoever believes might be saved. He did not send Him to judge, but to deliver. But people who do not receive the Light that was sent into the world are already judged – they have judged themselves by their unbelief.