

Triennial Torah Study – 4th Year 05/10/2013

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By Joseph F. Dumond

We continue this weekend with our regular Triennial Torah reading which can be found at https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf

Gen 4	Josh 10-11	Ps 7-8	Mat 6 – 7:12
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Two Brothers (Genesis 4)

The sin of Adam and Eve would have tragic consequences that would become evident in their very own family. Indeed, the larger human family has repeatedly duplicated the dysfunctional dynamics that sin produced in the first human family. A thoughtful consideration of the story of Cain and Abel yields some interesting lessons.

Adam and Eve had two sons-Cain, the firstborn, and Abel. (They would also have other sons and daughters, too, as mentioned in Genesis 5:4. Yet they apparently had no other sons until the death of Abel, as Seth seems to be the next male child in line, compare v. 25). Cain, we are told, became a tiller of the ground, a farmer. Abel became a shepherd. As to the acceptance of Abel's offering and the rejection of Cain's, some have suggested that there was something wrong in Cain bringing a grain offering. Yet we later see grain offerings as perfectly acceptable to God. Indeed, God said the grain offering was to be burnt "on the altar for a sweet aroma, as a memorial to the Lord. It is most holy, like the sin offering and the trespass offering" (Leviticus 6:15, 17). So what was the problem? Genesis 4:4 tells us that Abel brought from the "firstlings" of his flock, but no such indication of giving God the first or best is attached to Cain's offering in the previous verse. Perhaps this was due to Cain's overall attitude. Verse 5 states, "But [God] did not respect Cain and his offering." Notice that it was not just the offering that God did not respect, but Cain himself! Indeed, that may be the very reason that God did not accept his offering. We are often told in Scripture that God loathes the sacrifices, festivals and even prayers of those who are guilty of great wrong and yet are unrepentant (see Isaiah 1:10-15). When such a person "offers a grain offering, [it is] as if he offers swine's blood" (Isaiah 66:3). God recognized that Cain was on the verge of allowing sin to control him (verse 7)-to manifest itself in real action.

We are told that Abel, on the other hand, offered a better sacrifice because it was offered by faith, through which he was considered righteous (Hebrews 11:4; Matthew 23:35). Faith comes by hearing God's instruction (Romans 10:17). God's commandments must have been transmitted through Adam and Eve. And God must have even prescribed rules for worship at some point, or else how would Cain and Abel have known to bring sacrifices? Abel was obedient-through faith.

Cain's rejection roused him to anger and jealousy-though he may have already had these emotions to some degree. In any event, he did not master his urges, as God told him to (verse 7). Instead, he murdered his brother. Later, God confronted Cain: "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground"

(verse 10). When someone is said to cry out to God, the cries are usually for relief, protection or vengeance. Abel's blood, figuratively speaking, cried out for vengeance. This is confirmed by Cain's fear that vengeance would be taken out upon him by anyone who found him, and by God's remarks in verse 15, which explicitly connect vengeance with the context. This is interesting because the book of Hebrews states that the blood of Jesus "speaks better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24). Why? Because Abel's blood sought vengeance, which was well and just, but Christ's blood offers mercy and forgiveness to those who will accept it, which is better.

Cain departed and headed east to the land of Nod, meaning "vagabond" or "wandering"—thus perhaps not indicating an actual geographic name. And then we see mention of Cain's wife, who must have been one of his sisters. "The problems associated with incest, addressed in Lev. 18, would not have occurred when the genetic pool was pure and unpolluted" (Nelson Study Bible, note on Genesis 5:4). Today, as defined by God in Leviticus 18, incest is a sin.

Joshua's Long Day (Joshua 10)

Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem, is not happy with the treaty the Gibeonites made with the Israelites. His name (meaning "Lord of Righteousness") is probably a title (like Pharaoh), perhaps passed down from the days of the Priest-King Melchizedek ("King of Righteousness," Hebrews 7:1-4), who appears to have been king of the same city in the days of Abraham (Genesis 14:18-20). The similarity ends there, as Melchizedek was actually the preincarnate Jesus Christ while Adonizedek, Israel's enemy, was certainly not a true servant of God. If the Jebusites did have Christ among them in the days of Abraham, they had long since rejected Him and His ways (compare Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 8:20; 12:29-31).

Adonizedek gets four neighboring kings to join him in an attack against Gibeon. The Gibeonites send messengers to the Israelite encampment at Gilgal, asking them to return to Gibeon and honor the covenant of peace they had made (compare 9:15-17) by helping them against the Amorite kings. God lets Joshua know that He will give them the victory, and uses a hailstorm to kill more than the Israelites did during this first battle (Joshua 10:11).

Desperate for more time to deal with Israel's enemies, Joshua makes his request of God that the sun and moon stop moving. Some try to use this as proof that the Bible is not inspired, since the author, they argue, implies that the sun and moon actually travel across the sky each day, while we know today that this is only apparent because of the earth's rotation. But it is clear from the context that the author is speaking from the reference point of one standing on the earth. Even if Joshua himself falsely believed in a geocentric universe with a fixed earth, that does not negate the inspiration of the verses here. For the language used is quite valid. Indeed, if the same phenomenon occurred today, many would still use the same terminology to describe it—describing what they perceive even though they understand the truth of the earth's rotation.

It is amazing to consider the enormity of this miracle. Its complexities, which Joshua himself may not have been able to contemplate, are staggering. The rotation of the earth, with a surface velocity of more than 1,000 miles per hour at the equator, had to somehow come to a screeching halt, and start up again later, without inertial forces then creating tremendous geologic and tidal upheaval, destroying the earth's inhabitants. It is difficult to imagine the multiple cataclysmic consequences that would have occurred if God had not performed many other miracles to accompany the halting of the rotation. As it was, everyone in the world must have been in utter confusion over what was happening. While half the world wondered why the sun wasn't setting, the other half was wondering if they would ever see it again! And indeed, there are obscure myths from several ancient cultures that seem to reflect this very confusion.

As amazing as this event was, the account focuses not so much on the magnitude of the miracle, but on the fact that God listened to the voice of one man and fought so grandly for His people (verse 14). Here is proof that “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:17). Much indeed.

Following the initial victory, the Israelites move from one city to another in the southern part of Canaan, destroying the inhabitants and conquering the land—which will eventually be given to Judah, Simeon and Benjamin—before returning to the encampment at Gilgal.

Northern Conquest (Joshua 11)

Following the Israelite victory in the south, Jabin, the king of Hazor, north of the Sea of Galilee, forms an even larger alliance and attempts to take on Israel.

It is easy to assume that since God had commanded that Jericho be burned, and Ai too had been burned, that this was to be done to all of the cities of the land. But the instructions in Deuteronomy 20 did not include a command to burn down all of the cities. In fact, God promised to give the Israelites “large and beautiful cities which you did not build, [and] houses full of all good things, which you did not fill . . .” (Deuteronomy 6:10-11). As the inhabitants were driven out, in many cases the Israelites simply moved into their cities and houses.

In this campaign, only Hazor was burned. And as usual (Jericho excepted), the Israelites kept the spoil as God turned over the wealth of the Canaanites to Israel (verses 13-15). As we saw in Deuteronomy 20:16-18, Joshua “left none breathing” (Joshua 11:11, 14) of the inhabitants of these cities that were near to them. But it is also clear from these passages that letting “nothing that breathes remain alive” (Deuteronomy 20:16), which was done to avoid being taught “their abominations which they have done for their gods” (verse 18), applied only to human beings, not to the livestock, which Israel was permitted to keep as part of the spoils (Joshua 11:14-15).

During the process of conquering the land, the giants that had been such a terror to the Israelites 40 years earlier were killed or driven off (verses 21-22; 15:14). A few remained in the area occupied by the Philistines, the descendants of whom David and his men encountered several hundred years later (1 Samuel 17; 2 Samuel 21:15-22).

“That You May Silence the Enemy” (Psalms 7-10)

The superscription of Psalm 7 in the New King James Version calls it a “meditation” of David. The Hebrew for meditation is *higgaion*, as in Psalm 9:16, but the word at the beginning of Psalm 7, as the KJV superscription shows, is actually *shiggaion*, which occurs only here in the Bible. Its plural form, however, is used in the psalm of Habakkuk 3. Repeating from the Bible Reading Program comments on that passage, “The word *shiggayon* comes from *shagah*, ‘to wander,’ a wandering song” (Adam Clarke’s Commentary, note on Psalm 7; see note on Habakkuk 3:1). “It may derive from a verbal root meaning ‘to reel’ or ‘to err,’ and if so points to some irregular rhythmic mode” (New Bible Commentary, note on Habakkuk 3:1). David names Cush the Benjamite in Psalm 7’s superscription. This man, mentioned nowhere else in Scripture, has apparently spoken on behalf of a group of persecutors who accused David of wrongdoing and were bent on his destruction. Whether they actually believed him guilty of wrong or were just making this up to justify action against him is not clear. Some today speculate that the distinct reference to Cush being a Benjamite may indicate his being a supporter or agent of King Saul. In any case, Cush and his comrades must have been dangerous opponents because David cries out that, if God does not deliver him, his persecutors would “tear me like a lion, and rip me in pieces” (verses 1-2).

In his appeal to God, David takes an oath of innocence in which he invites God to give him into the hands of the enemies who seek to take his life if he is guilty of any of the charges they bring against him (verses 3-5). David is so confident of his innocence that he asks God to judge his righteousness, his integrity (verse 8), his heart and mind (verse 9). “In the Hebrew, hearts and minds is literally ‘hearts and kidneys’—an ancient way of describing the innermost person” (Nelson Study Bible, note on verses 9-10). We should note that in praying to God the words “Judge me according to my righteousness,” David does not mean for God to judge every aspect of his life by this standard. (As with any of us, God would in such an inventory find sins worthy of condemnation. Indeed, other prayers of David show him praying for forgiveness where he has fallen short.) Rather, David in his prayer here is asking for God’s judgment in the matter at hand—to judge him according to his deeds and even inward motivations with respect to the accusations that have been made against him. In these, he knows that the righteous and just God will see his complete innocence and fully absolve him.

Against the wicked, however, David describes God as a just Judge and an angry Warrior who will “sharpen His sword,” prepare “deadly weapons” and make ready “flaming arrows” to satisfy justice (verses 11-13). Yet David recognizes that the wicked create their own problems for themselves, reaping what they sow (compare Galatians 6:7-8). They conceive trouble, which then returns on their own heads (verses 14, 16). “The wicked become ‘mothers’ to trouble. They will give birth to their own destruction” (note on verses 14-16). They fall into the pits they themselves have dug to trap their prey (verse 15). David therefore knows that those who have plotted his destruction have set up the circumstances for their own demise. Perhaps it was in the midst of his prayer that God inspired David with this reminder—moving him to sing God’s praises (see verse 17).

Psalm 8. “At this juncture in the Psalter,” says the Zondervan NIV Study Bible in its note on Psalm 8, “this psalm surprises. After five psalms [3-7] (and 64 Hebrew poetic lines—following the introduction to the Psalter...Ps 1-2) in which the psalmists have called on Yahweh to deal with human perversity, this psalm’s praise of Yahweh for his astounding endowment of the human race with royal ‘glory and honor’ (v. 5) serves as a striking and unexpected counterpoint. Its placement here highlights the glory (God’s gift) and disgrace (humanity’s own doing) that characterize human beings and the corresponding range of difference in God’s dealings with them. And after five more psalms [9-13] (and 64 poetic lines), this psalm in turn receives a counterpoint...[in Psalm 14, as we will later see].”

Where the NKJV superscription of Psalm 8 has “On the instrument of Gath,” the KJV has “upon Gittith” and the NIV has “According to gittith.” “The Hebrew word perhaps refers to either a winepress (‘song of the winepress’) or the Philistine city of Gath (‘Gittite lyre or music’; see 2Sa 15:18)” (note on Psalm 8).

David opens and closes the psalm praising the excellence of God’s name (verses 1, 9) — representing God’s power, His character and His purpose. The name here is the Hebrew YHWH—the Tetragrammaton (i.e., four letters)—often transliterated into English as Yahweh, as above. The name means “He Is Who He Is” (the Eternal One). David declares God’s name excellent “in all the earth.” Wherever one looks on earth—and up from earth to the heavens above—the glory of God is revealed. God introduced Himself to Moses by the first person form of the Tetragrammaton, saying, “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14). “The One who spoke to Moses declared Himself to be the Eternal One—uncaused and independent. Only the Creator of all things can call Himself the I AM in the absolute sense; all other creatures are in debt to Him for their existence” (Nelson Study Bible, note on Exodus 3:14).

David observes that “from the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies” (verse 2, NIV). While the word for “praise” could also be rendered “strength,” as in the KJV and NKJV, “praise” seems the better translation since Jesus quoted the verse this way when the common people (figuratively children) praised Him while the “mature” religious leaders who opposed Him wanted to

squelch them but could not (Matthew 21:16). Perhaps David simply meant that despite the scorn of the wicked, there were always new generations of children to gaze in wonder at God's creation and express awe. Yet God who inspired the psalm also had the more specific prophetic fulfillment in mind.

David's reflections on the grandeur of the heavens (verse 3) gives rise to the question, "What is man?" (verse 4). "The Hebrew word here [for man] is 'enos, which emphasizes man's mortality and weakness. David is stunned that the all-powerful Creator should exalt in such puny beings by caring for us and by giving us dominion over His earth" (Bible Reader's Companion, note on Psalm 8). Who are we in comparison to the Creator? Why would He even think of us? Why would He care for us or have anything to do with us? (verse 4). The word for "visit" here in the NKJV has the sense of "see to" or "deal with," which can have either a positive or negative sense. Here the meaning is positive.

In verses 5-8, David muses further about man's place in the scheme of things—that he is the pinnacle of God's earthly creation.

In verse 5, the word translated "angels" is *elohim*, the word used throughout the Old Testament for God. The Moffatt Translation says, "Thou hast made him little less than divine." Yet it does not seem reasonable to say that man is only a little lower than God. After all, David himself was thinking about how man was basically nothing next to God's majesty as revealed in the sky above. And God Himself tells human beings, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9). Perhaps it was because of this that the Targums (ancient Jewish paraphrases of Scripture) and the Septuagint (the Jewish rendering of the Old Testament in Greek) translated the word *elohim* here as meaning "angels." Yet human beings seem rather far below the amazing power and abilities of angels too.

It should be noted that the words "little less" or "little lower" could also be rendered "for a little while lower." The literal meaning would then be that man has been created for a little while lower than God, implying that man after that little while will ultimately share God's plane of existence. This is in fact man's destiny—to be part of *Elohim*, the family of God (see also Psalm 82:6 and our free booklet, *Who Is God?*). Yet such a rendering would no doubt have made early Jewish translators even more uncomfortable. So we can see why they would prefer the word "angels" over "God" in Psalm 8:5 in any case. Of course, it is certainly true that for the time being man has been made lower than the angels as well as God, so the writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews (probably the apostle Paul) had no problem using the translation the Jews were familiar with, giving the Greek word for angels rather than God (see Hebrews 2:7).

Psalm 8:6 speaks of God giving man dominion over His creation. This is quoted in Hebrews 2:8. Yet where David goes on in Psalm 8:7-8 to focus on man's dominion over the animals of the earth, recalling Genesis 1-2, the book of Hebrews ends its quotation with Psalm 8:6, emphasizing the "all things" committed to man's rule in this verse—meaning, in its fullest sense, the entire universe and spirit realm. Man, Hebrews 2 explains, has not yet received this ultimate dominion with God—except for Christ, who is our forerunner. We will see more about this in our later reading of Hebrews 2.

Matthew 6 (<http://www.yashanet.com/studies/matstudy/mat6d.htm>)

NOTE: In this chapter, Yeshua continues to clarify and expound on the Torah. We will focus on how His teachings supported those of the Pharisees as seen in the Talmud. In many of these verses, Yeshua reiterates a fundamental principle for the life of a Godly man — we are but visitors here, and we need to understand that our real life and our rewards, are in heaven.

6:1-4 ... do not your alms before men, to be seen of them ...

The Pharisees were often guilty of not following their own teachings. Yeshua uses the examples of the

Pharisees and the “religious” leaders to teach the people of how not to act.

6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions

Repeating something over and over does not make it more likely to be heard. Our Father hears the prayers of the righteous and we do not need to go on and on. It seems to be somewhat of a characteristic of non-believers.

6:9-13 “The Lord’s Prayer”

The verses commonly known as, “Lord’s Prayer,” can be paralleled to concepts found in other Jewish sources. It is a combination of ideas already familiar to His audience:

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

6:14-15 For if ye forgive men their trespasses ...

Lack of forgiveness to others is not a reflection of our Elohim, and when we do not forgive others we are in effect blocking our own forgiveness.

6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth ...

True treasures are those which are spiritual and everlasting. All earthly treasures are temporary and will fail us.

6:23 But if thine eye be evil ...

Here we have a verse that is consistently misinterpreted. What is this “evil eye?” Note the context of the verses before and after the term. In both cases Yeshua is talking about serving God and not money. Why would He interrupt this discussion about “God and money” to interject something about an “evil eye?” The answer is that the term “evil eye,” in this context, is a Hebrew figure of speech for being stingy with your material wealth. This verse alone offers evidence that the book of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew as whoever translated it into the Greek, was not aware of what the term “evil eye” meant. They simply copied the phrase, which loses its meaning in the Greek and English.

6:25-31 Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat ...

The key is balance. Yeshua does not desire we overly concern ourselves with material things, for this will lead to trespass whether it be idolatry or lust.

6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow ...

This truly goes against the worldly concepts we are faced with day in and day out. Just as nearly all the Words of Yeshua. In the world we plan and plan and plan when truly we are not even guaranteed the next hour.

Matthew 7:1-12

NOTE: At this level of Torah fundamentals, we find great unity between the teaching of the Pharisees (as exemplified by Paul’s letters and the Talmud) and those of the Essenes (as exemplified by James’s letter).(1)

7:1 Do not judge, or you too will be judged ...

7:2 ... with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again

The Torah is the “perfect law of liberty” that we are to judge by:

James 1:23-25 – For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

7:3-5 Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye ...

Paul and James had similar messages about double standards:

Romans 2:21-23 – Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

James 2:1-4 – My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

7:6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs

What is it that is “Holy” that we can misuse? The topic has not changed — it is the Torah.

7:7 Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find ...

Ask for what? Money, fame or happiness? No, the spiritual man seeks spiritual things in the form of the truth and blessings of the Torah:

James 1:17-21 – Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

The prime example of what we are to pray for was given to us by Yeshua. He prayed for us to become one (a unity – Hebrew: echad) with the Father, as He is echad with the Father:

John 17:20-26: Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

7:12 Do to others what you would have them do to you ...

7:12 ... for this is the law and the prophets.

Yeshua does not say, “for this replaces the Law and the Prophets.” He clearly said that He did not come to do that (Matthew 5:17-21). He is summarizing His teachings that the whole of Torah is given for the good of man – to establish and improve His relationship with God and with his fellow man. It is by learning and following God's Torah that we “do what is right unto others.”

James had a similar way of summarizing what true faith is:

James 1:27 – Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

James brings together several of these points in one section of his letter. He reiterates the idea of “do unto others,” but says that if you show favoritism you sin. He then states that you cannot pick and choose what parts of the Torah (the “royal law”) you feel like keeping, as it is a unity:

James 2:8-12 – If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

Paul and James agree that knowing the Torah is not enough – we are to DO the Torah:

Romans 2:13 – For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

James 1:22 – But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Paul and James also state that willfully violating the Torah is tantamount to blaspheming God:

Romans 2:23-24 – Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

James 2:7-10 – Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?