

Triennial Torah Study – 4th Year 02/11/2013

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Gen 8	Josh 19-20	Ps 18	Mat 11 – 12:21
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The Deluge Ends (Genesis 8)

The waters of the Flood remained on the earth unabated for 150 days. At the end of this time we are told that God caused a wind to begin the evaporation process. Also, the fountains of the deep were stopped, indicating that the subterranean aquifers were refilled, perhaps by a reversal of the tectonic forces that originally emptied them. At the end of the 150 days, the waters began to abate. After about 2 1/2 months the waters had substantially declined. After another three months, the water had disappeared from the land, and after another nearly two months the land was suitable for habitation.

The ark, we are told, came to rest upon the mountains of Ararat. Many spectacular claims have been made that a large, box-like, wooden object now rests atop Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey. Several expeditions have been made to the alleged resting place of the ark, and several pieces of worked wood have supposedly been retrieved from the area. Some have claimed to see the ark embedded in ice and snow. For all the curious interest about Mount Ararat, however, Scripture simply does not tell us the precise place where the ark came to rest. It simply says that “the ark rested upon the mountains [plural] of Ararat” (8:4). That leaves a large area of possible locations, for Ararat is simply an ancient name for Armenia, a territory covering much of far eastern Turkey and western Iran. Mount Ararat is only the traditional site. More recently, there has been a great deal of interest in a massive boat-like formation in the hills near Mount Ararat, though some geologists regard it as simply a natural anomaly.

Territory of the Rest of the Tribes (Joshua 19)

Unlike those of Joseph, who protested at not having enough land, the people of Judah had too much (verse 9). So the southern part of their territory was given to Simeon via the second lot. This included Beersheba, an area associated with Abraham and Isaac.

Next came Zebulun, who received a parcel bordering Manasseh to the north. The Bethlehem listed (verse 15) is not Bethlehem-Judah, which was south of Jerusalem in Judah's territory (compare 1 Samuel 17:12). Gath-hepher, the city Jonah came from, was in Zebulun (2 Kings 14:25). And by the time of the New Testament, the city of Nazareth had been established in this area. As was the case with Ephraim and Manasseh, mentioned earlier, this was not all Zebulun had been promised either. Genesis 49:13 had stated, “Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; he shall become a haven for ships.” Yet Zebulun's inheritance in the Promised Land did not border any sea—neither the

Mediterranean nor even the inland Sea of Galilee. The fulfillment of this promise, then, would also come in later centuries with the migrations to Northwest Europe.

The fourth lot went to Issachar, who got land north of Manasseh and east of Zebulun, bordering the Jordan. Asher received a coastal strip north of Manasseh and west of Zebulun. It extended all the way to Tyre in southern Lebanon. East of Asher, and north of Zebulun and Issachar, was Naphtali. It stretched from the entire western shore of the Sea of Galilee north to Lebanon. Along with Zebulun, it was known as Galilee (compare 20:7; Matthew 4:15).

Finally, Dan received a portion of land along the coast west of Benjamin and just north of the Philistine territory. This is where the Danite Samson carried out his exploits. But the tribe of Dan wanted more land, so some of its people conquered an additional area north of Naphtali (verse 47; compare Judges 18).

When all the tribes received their inheritances, Joshua himself, an Ephraimite, chose a location within the land assigned to Ephraim to live out his last days.

Cities of Refuge; Levitical Cities (Joshua 20-21)

As instructed, three cities were chosen as cities of refuge: Kedesh in the northern part of Naphtali, Shechem in the land of Ephraim, and Hebron in the land of Judah.

In addition to the cities of refuge, the Levites were given other cities to live in. They were grouped geographically by sub-tribe. The priests received the cities in the southern tribes of Simeon, Judah and Benjamin. The non-priest Kohathites had cities in the next three tribes moving north: Dan, Ephraim and western Manasseh. Gershon had cities in the far northern tribes. And Merari's cities were split—in the southern part of the eastern tribes, and in Zebulun.

In its note on the end of chapter 21, verses 43-45, The Nelson Study Bible states: "This glorious conclusion to these two chapters and to the entire section (chs. 13-21) celebrates the fact that all came to pass exactly as God promised. [That is, it should be clarified, while there was still more to come, all had so far gone exactly as God had said it would.] What has been visible all along is now said plainly—the God of Israel is a promise-keeping God, who gave Israel the land in accordance with the promises He had made with its ancestors, including Moses and the patriarchs. And in addition to giving them the land, He also granted them rest."

"The Lord Is My Rock and My Fortress and My Deliverer" (Psalms 18)

We previously read Psalm 18 in conjunction with the other passage in Scripture where this lengthy psalm is found, 2 Samuel 22, which contains nearly identical text. Here David expresses thanks to God for delivering him from trials with all his enemies, including Saul.

In the opening three verses, David compares his strength in God to a rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, horn of salvation and stronghold. Confident in this security, David states, "So shall I be saved from my enemies"—even impending death (verses 3-5). In verses 7-15 David poetically describes the power of God in word pictures recalling God's description of Himself to Job (Job 38-39). The Nelson Study Bible states: "Underlying these poetic words is the understanding that the Almighty will turn the universe inside out, if necessary, to deliver His servant.... All of the Lord's fearsome power is used to save the one who worships Him" (notes on Psalm 18:79, 15).

This is not to imply that believers will be spared—"saved from"—every painful trial in life, although God undoubtedly holds up His hand against many things that would otherwise batter us. But we can have every

confidence that He is working toward our ultimate salvation in the spiritual sense, saving us from perishing forever to instead live in eternal spirit existence.

Verse 10 gives us the imagery of God riding a cherub. In one sense, this recalls the imagery of Ezekiel 1 and 10, where the throne-chariot of God is shown being transported by four cherubim. Yet the riding of a single cherub seems more akin to Revelation 19, where Yeshua is shown returning on a white horse. While white horses are symbolic of victory, this may also represent a literal cherub.

When stating that God intervened “according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands” (verses 20, 24), David isn’t boasting about any inherent goodness. His righteousness—meaning his pursuit of the right way, God’s way, and his efforts to please God—he contrasts with the goals and activities of the wicked. They turn from godliness to practice evil.

David observes that God deals with people on the terms they themselves set: with the

merciful, God is merciful; with the blameless, God shows Himself blameless; with the pure, God shows Himself pure; with the devious, God shows Himself shrewd (as God is never devious Himself). The humble He will save, and the haughty He will bring down (verses 25-27).

David sets up the highest praise: “As for God, His way is perfect... For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God?” (verses 28-31). In the remainder of the psalm, David recounts the battle victories that allow him to lead without opposition. He was now king over the most powerful nation of his day (verse 43). Yet, as The Nelson Study Bible notes regarding verses 49-50, “David’s victories are prototypes of the victories of the great King to come. The use of the word anointed is appropriate for David, but it points forward to the Savior who is the Anointed One (2:2). The words to David and his descendants forevermore connect the previous promises to the only Son of David who inherited an eternal kingdom, the Savior Jesus (2 Sam.7).”

As noted in the Bible Reading Program comments on 2 Samuel 22, verse 3 of that chapter (also Psalm 18:2) is quoted in Hebrews 2:13, and 2 Samuel 22:50 (Psalm 18:49) is quoted in Romans 15:9 as applying directly to Yeshua.

Matthew 11 – 12:21

11:3 Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

As John was well aware that Yeshua was Messiah (i.e., John 1:29, Luke 3:22), one may ask,

“Why would he ask such a question at this point?” Note that John is not asking if Yeshua is

Messiah, but if there may be “another one.” Among the various opinions in first-century Judaism concerning the Messiah, was the idea of there being two Messiahs. One of these was considered to be the suffering Messiah (Messiah ben-Joseph) and another, the victorious Messiah that would bring Israel to glory (Messiah ben David). The suffering Messiah would fulfill the duties of priest, and would be killed. The triumphant Messiah would fulfill the role of king and live forever. Some teachings had Messiah ben David “avenging the death” of Messiah ben Joseph, and even being involved with raising the latter from the dead.

John is clearly considering that Yeshua may be “Messiah ben Joseph.” (He would not think of Yeshua as the conquering Messiah, the Lion of Judah, as he knows that Yeshua is the Lamb, come to be slain for the sin of the world (John 1:29). By the time of Yeshua, the Essenes (as shown in the Dead Sea Scrolls) were developing a very accurate picture of Messiah, as king and priest being united in one person.

The figure of Melchizadek plays an important role in many of the Qumran writings, with his name being substituted for YHWH's in certain scrolls:

11Q13 – For this is the time decreed for the year of Melchizadek's favor and by his might he will judge God's holy ones and so establish a righteous kingdom, as it is written about him in the songs of David, "A godlike being has taken his place in the council of God; in the midst of the divine beings he holds judgment. Scripture also says about him, Over [it] take your seat in the highest heaven; A divine being will judge his people.

11:4 Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see ...

Yeshua does not give a straightforward reply. His answer consists of presenting John with certain "evidences" – His miracles. These acts are directly associated with the "Jubilee Release," a concept related to Messiah returning the world to the way it once was.

There is something very curious in Yeshua's reply when compared to Isaiah's prophecy: Matthew 11:5 – The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them

Isaiah 35:5-6 – Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

The key difference between these two Scriptures is the issue of "the dead being raised up." Isaiah does not mention this. Yet, in the scrolls found at Qumran, is one that relates the raising of the dead to the Messiah.

The Qumran Redemption and Resurrection scroll says of the Messiah:

4Q521 – For He will honor the pious upon the throne of His eternal kingdom, setting prisoners free, opening the eyes of the blind, raising up those who are bowed down ...

... and the Lord shall do glorious things which have not been done, just as He said. For He shall heal the critically wounded, He shall revive the dead, He shall send good news to the afflicted ...

This may suggest that Yeshua and John were communicating, using a mutually-recognized teaching not found in the Tenakh, but known to those who spent time "in the wilderness" (as both Yeshua and John did).

11:7 What did you go out into the desert to see?

The subject of the Messiah first appearing in the wilderness was discussed earlier, in the notes on Matthew 3:3.

11:11 ... he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he

The topic is the offer of the kingdom. Is there a better way to extend an invitation than to say that the least in God's kingdom is greater than the greatest in the present world?

11:12 the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

The Greek text has the word "until" (John). However, the Shem Tobe Hebrew book of Matthew has the term "concerning" (John). The Hebrew spelling of the "concerning" is AYIN LAMED.

The term "until" would be spelled AYIN-DALET.

Since Yeshua has just quoted from the prophets about John, it is clear that the prophets prophesied CONCERNING John. It would therefore appear that a translator misread the text.

This is quite possible, as the two letters are very similar. If the top of a LAMED was not clear (i.e., flaked off of the manuscript), it could easily be mistaken for a DALET.

11:14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

The key part to this verse are the first words. If Israel would receive it ... What is the “it” in this statement? The topic has not changed – “it” is the Kingdom. What Yeshua is saying here is that IF they as His people, accepted Him and the Kingdom offer, then John would play the role foretold of Elijah.

This remains a difficult text however. John clearly says that he is not Elijah (John 1:21), yet Yeshua says that he is. On the surface, a contradiction.

The first hint as to the answer is found in Luke’s account where we are told John comes in the “spirit and power” of Elijah:

Luke 1:17: And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

The idea of someone coming “in the spirit” of another is not foreign to Judaism. The prophet Elias asked for a “double helping” of Elijah’s spirit. Neither is the idea of Elijah playing dual roles alien to Jewish writings.

11:19 But wisdom is justified of her children.

This peculiar verse, “wedged in” if it were, in the midst of Yeshua’s argument, is very mystical in its meaning. Our Revelation study will have a discussion on the topic of “Wisdom” later this summer. For the moment, we would suggest that Yeshua is equating Himself with “Wisdom,” and his deeds as “her children.”

11:20 Then began he to upbraid the cities ...

Yeshua’s miracles are the Father’s testimony that Yeshua is the Messiah. The people are not condemning Yeshua’s works. Rather, they reject the authority by which He did them and the witness that His miracles attest to. The result of all this is that they are guilty of blasphemy against God’s Holy Spirit as He later tells them (in the next chapter.)

11:25 thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent ... Why does God hide things from people?

Why did Yeshua Himself speak in parables so that only certain ones would understand? Why did God tell Ezekiel to inform the people that they were to “study the future Temple” that he describes in chapters 40-48 of his book?

Why doesn’t He make things “easier” for everyone?

These are questions that we will deal with as we go forward in all of the studies.

11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;

As mentioned already — Yeshua’s “yoke” and the Father’s “yoke” are not different. Nor is Yeshua telling them to “learn of Him” in any place they didn’t know where to look. The yoke and the place to learn of Him are the same — the Torah. Unfortunately, many people today view the idea of the “yoke of the Law” (yoke of the Torah) as some kind of “bondage.” This is unfortunate, and is the result of almost two thousand years of non-Jewish understanding of the Bible, God, Messiah and what “faith” is.

12:2 thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath ...

The section from 12:1-12:8 has to do with an accusation made by certain Pharisees regarding some of Yeshua’s disciples, picking and eating grain in a field during the Sabbath. The verses shown above are the key ones in this passage. The Torah does prohibit “work” on Shabbat, and the oral Law of the time would support the Pharisees claim.

Yeshua responds to this in a fourfold manner:

He makes comparison to two accounts from scripture

He tells them that He is greater than the Temple

He reminds about what He told them to learn earlier (Matthew 9:13)

He say that He is Lord of the sabbath day

12:3-5 Have ye not read what David did ... have ye not read in the Law

The first Scripture Yeshua quotes is of David eating of the “bread of the Face,” something that was reserved for the priests to eat (from 1 Samuel 21:6), followed by how the Torah allows for priests to do certain type of work on the Sabbath, as part of their Temple service (Leviticus 24:5-9). His point in quoting these, is to establish the principle that within the framework of the Torah is a hierarchy of principles.

The Pharisees recognized this fact, as in the Talmud makes it clear that both the commands of circumcision and Temple sacrificial service, take precedence over the command not to do work on the Sabbath:

12:6 ... in this place is one greater than the temple

Having reminded these Pharisees of the recognized oral Torah, he now announced that He is greater than the Temple (therefore the same hierarchy of principles should apply to Him and His disciples). Yeshua was the Temple of God while on earth.

Once again, John’s Gospel (the one) makes the connection for us:

John 2:19-21 – Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body.

Yeshua is alluding to what the prophet Isaiah spoke about the relationship between God and His Temple:

Isaiah 66:1 – Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

The same passage in Isaiah, also says what the Lord is looking for in man. These words mirror those of Hosea 6:6, which Yeshua quotes in verse 7 below:

Isaiah 66:1 – For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

12:7 but if ye had known what this meaneth, ...

Yeshua repeats his quote from Hosea 6:5, that He said earlier in Matthew 9:13. If these Pharisees had truly been seeking God’s righteousness, and not their own, they would have recognized Him as the Messiah. They made themselves “blind” through their legalistic observance of the commands of God, seeking their own righteousness over His (i.e., Romans 10:3).

If they had recognized His as Messiah, then by both the written and oral Torah, they would have no cause to be critical of any work being done by those serving the one who is greater than the Temple.

12:8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.

Just as the priority was not to fast during Yeshua’s presence on earth (Matthew 9:14-17), so to does this affect other priorities of the Torah (as mentioned above). The Messiah’s presence on earth was not to invalidate any of Torah (Matthew 5:17-21). Any “messiah” that declared an end to Torah would be a false one.

Rather, according to the correct Hebrew understanding of the Scriptures (at that time and now), Messiah is to come and explain the deeper meanings of the Torah. Because of this better understanding He gives, when we study and perform the commands of the Torah (Romans 2:13, James 1:22), we can grow in our relationship with God, enjoying life more abundantly (John 10:10).

The Torah was given to man for a variety of reasons, all of which have to do with the principle of tikkun, (“spiritual repair”). Torah does this by showing us what the meaning of life is, namely:

To be conformed to the image of God

To grow in intimacy in our relationship with Him

Messiah fulfills the same role, as He is the goal of the Torah (Romans 10:4, when properly translated). Isaiah writes that by His suffering and death, Messiah brings spiritual healing (tikkun) between us and God:

Isaiah 53:5-6 – But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The above verse has been misused to by some as having something to do with physical healing. It does not in Isaiah's context, nor when Peter cites the verse and reiterates that this healing has to do with our being made righteous:

1 Peter 2: 24-25 – Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

12:8 And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?

Here is an example of where the true meaning of Sabbath had been lost and the prioritization of God's commandments placed out of order. The Pharisees had developed a teaching that healing on the Sabbath was "work" and therefore not allowed. Yeshua continues to teach that the purpose of the Sabbath is that of tikkun. Refusing to do good (to heal someone in this case) would not be doing anything to advance the Kingdom of God. For instance, circumcision is an important part of tikkun, and is commanded to be done on the eighth day – whether or not this falls on a Sabbath.

12:18 Behold My Servant ...

The verses from 18 to 21 are a quotation from Isaiah. Matthew mentions this in relation to Yeshua's request for the people He healed (in verse 15) not to broadcast to everyone what He was doing. As the people of the day were expecting a powerful vengeful Messiah that would lead Israel to glory (i.e., Messiah ben David) He did not want some violent insurrection to take place with everyone thinking He would be the leader. The quote from Isaiah clearly alludes to a Messiah ben Joseph type — one that would suffer and die for his people.

12:20 ... till He send forth judgment into victory

At that time he will play the role of Messiah ben David, the Lion of Judah, and the High Priest anointed unto war.