

Triennial Torah Study – 3rd Year 24/11/2012

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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

Num 29	Micah 1-3	Eccl 8-10	1 Corin 10
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Daily, Sabbath, Monthly and Festival Offerings (Numbers 28; Numbers 29)

Chapters 28 and 29 provide a review of laws regarding offerings to be made each day, on the Sabbath, on the new moon (the first day of the month), and during God’s Feasts. Frequent repetition is a tool God uses often to emphasize important features of His laws.

In reading about the various offerings mentioned here, consider that we must demonstrate to God our devotion to Him every single day of our lives. But there are special occasions He has appointed for us to go beyond our normal devotion in spending more time reflecting on His will and more time honoring and serving Him.

Micah 1-3

Introduction to Micah (Micah 1)

During Jotham’s days, God sent yet another prophet in addition to Hosea and Isaiah. Micah, who prophesied during the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, seems to have preached in Judah as well, but his message involves the northern kingdom more directly than Isaiah’s work did (compare Micah 1:1). And unlike Isaiah, who apparently grew up with connections to royalty, Micah grew up far from the court life of Jerusalem—in the rural village of Moresheth Gath (verses 1, 14), also known as Maresha (verse 15), in the Judean lowlands near Philistia.

Nevertheless, many of his themes, actions and examples echo those of Isaiah. Compare, for example, Micah 1:8 with Isaiah 20:2-4—and Micah 1:9 with Isaiah 1:5-6. Micah also gives important details about the coming Messiah, as Isaiah did. And Micah 4:1-5 is nearly identical to Isaiah 2:1-4. Whether Micah borrowed this passage from Isaiah or vice versa, or both of them wrote it independently of the other, one thing is certain: God inspired both of them in any case.

Micah Announces Judgment (Micah 1)

Micah announces that judgment is swiftly bearing down on Samaria, the capital of Israel. Yet this is not addressed to Israel directly. Rather, the prophecy is to all the peoples of the earth (1:2). They are to observe the punishment that is coming on God’s people. This is to serve as a warning that a holy God will not let sin go unpunished. Even believers today must heed this warning. As the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 11:19-22: “You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off [i.e., physical Israelites were rejected from being God’s chosen people] that I might be grafted in.’ Well said. Because of unbelief [and resultant disobedience,

compare Hebrews 3:18-19] they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.”

Of course, God always acts in love, even when He has to use a heavy hand. He enhances the natural negative consequences of sinful action to bring home the realization that people hurt themselves and others by their wrongdoing. His motive is to stir people to repent—that is, to change the way they live, in order that they might receive His full benefits. But let us not allow this realization to minimize the terrible punishment coming on the descendants of Israel—which will indeed be unimaginably severe, as this is what will be required to bring them to repentance. And this is to be an example to all nations.

Certainly, the people of Judah should have awakened to the impending danger, which was also a threat to them (Micah 1:9). As The Nelson Study Bible notes: “With skillfully written wordplays on the names of Judah’s cities, Micah prophesied of the coming destruction of Judah (1:3-16). He turned around the meaning of a number of town names as a way of describing the world being turned upside down. Shapir, meaning ‘Beautiful,’ would be shamed (1:11); and Jerusalem, a name suggesting ‘Peace,’ would be disrupted (1:12). Lachish, a name sounding like the Hebrew word for swift steeds, would flee on its horses. All the agitation was caused by God’s judgment on Judah for worshiping other gods on the high places. In fact, idolatry was so rampant that Micah describes Jerusalem and Samaria, the capital cities of Judah and Israel, as high places themselves (1:5)” (“Geographical Puns in Micah,” 1997, p. 1503).

We will read the rest of Micah in harmony with the Kings and Chronicles accounts of the reign of Jotham’s grandson, King Hezekiah.

Micah Speaks Out (Micah 2)

Micah’s prophecies continued during the days of Ahaz and on into the reign of Hezekiah (Micah 1:1). Sadly, even during Hezekiah’s righteous reign, Judah had devolved into serious corruption.

“Imagine a society that allows powerful citizens to seize property and land whenever they want, especially from those who are too weak or poor to defend themselves. That was happening in Micah’s day. The wealthy and powerful of Judah were grabbing real estate that belonged to others, by force if necessary (Mic 2.2; 3.10). The prophet condemned this practice, which amounted to robbery and murder. But the leaders of the country allowed it to go unchecked. In fact, they not only denied justice to the poor, but as good as skinned them alive in order to enrich themselves (3.1-3; compare Pr 22.16).

“In seizing the lands of their countrymen, the powerful businesspeople of Judah were violating key principles of the Law. They were openly breaking the Ten Commandments (Ex 20.13, 15, 17), the law forbidding permanent sale of land (Lv 25.23-28), and the law against changing landmarks (Dt 19.14). The Lord promised retribution in kind by allowing foreigners to seize the lands of Judah (Mic 2.4, 5)” (“Illegal Search and Seizure,” Word in Life Bible, sidebar on 2:2).

But the people don’t want to hear what Micah has to say. Notice the paraphrase in the Contemporary English Version: “‘Enough of your preaching!’ That’s what you tell me. ‘We won’t be disgraced, so stop preaching!’ ... Get out of here you crooks! You’ll find no rest here. You’re not fit to belong to the LORD’s people, and you will be destroyed.’ The only prophet you want is a liar who will say, ‘Drink and get drunk!’” (verses 6, 10-11).

The wrongdoing and evil attitudes of the people described in this chapter could well apply to people today—and so can the warnings. Indeed, it seems they do, for God addresses all Israel in verse 12. But here

the message takes a positive turn. God says He will eventually assemble all of Israel from all the lands to which they have been scattered—a humbled remnant left after the great destruction that is coming—to at last walk uprightly in His ways. The message of God is ever one of hope. Despite the wrongdoing of man and the punishment he heaps upon himself, God is merciful beyond all imagination. And He will save His people yet.

Ecclesiastes 8-10 (<http://www.christnotes.org/commentary.php?com=mhc&b=21>)

None of the rich, the powerful, the honourable, or the accomplished of the sons of men, are so excellent, useful, or happy, as the wise man. Who else can interpret the words of God, or teach aright from his truths and dispensations? What madness must it be for weak and dependent creatures to rebel against the Almighty! What numbers form wrong judgments, and bring misery on themselves, in this life and that to come!

God has, in wisdom, kept away from us the knowledge of future events, that we may be always ready for changes. We must all die, no flight or hiding-place can save us, nor are there any weapons of effectual resistance. Ninety thousand die every day, upwards of sixty every minute, and one every moment. How solemn the thought! Oh that men were wise, that they understood these things, that they would consider their latter end! The believer alone is prepared to meet the solemn summons. Wickedness, by which men often escape human justice, cannot secure from death.

Solomon observed, that many a time one man rules over another to his hurt, and that prosperity hardens them in their wickedness. Sinners herein deceive themselves. Vengeance comes slowly, but it comes surely. A good man's days have some substance; he lives to a good purpose: a wicked man's days are all as a shadow, empty and worthless. Let us pray that we may view eternal things as near, real, and all-important.

Faith alone can establish the heart in this mixed scene, where the righteous often suffer, and the wicked prosper. Solomon commended joy, and holy security of mind, arising from confidence in God, because a man has no better thing under the sun, though a good man has much better things above the sun, than soberly and thankfully to use the things of this life according to his rank. He would not have us try to give a reason for what God does. But, leaving the Lord to clear up all difficulties in his own time, we may cheerfully enjoy the comforts, and bear up under the trials of life; while peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost will abide in us through all outward changes, and when flesh and heart shall fail.

Chapter 9

We are not to think our searching into the word or works of God useless, because we cannot explain all difficulties. We may learn many things good for ourselves and useful to others. But man cannot always decide who are objects of God's special love, or under his wrath; and God will certainly put a difference between the precious and the vile, in the other world. The difference as to present happiness, arises from the inward supports and consolations the righteous enjoy, and the benefit they derive from varied trials and mercies. As far as the sons of men are left to themselves, their hearts are full of evil; and prosperity in sin, causes them even to set God at defiance by daring wickedness. Though, on this side death, the righteous and the wicked may often seem to fare alike, on the other side there will be a vast difference between them.

The most despicable living man's state, is preferable to that of the most noble who have died impenitent. Solomon exhorts the wise and pious to cheerful confidence in God, whatever their condition in life. The meanest morsel, coming from their Father's love, in answer to prayer, will have a peculiar relish. Not that we may set our hearts upon the delights of sense, but what God has given us we may use with wisdom. The joy here described, is the gladness of heart that springs from a sense of the Divine favour. This is the world of service, that to come is the world of recompence. All in their stations, may find some work to do. And

above all, sinners have the salvation of their souls to seek after, believers have to prove their faith, adorn the gospel, glorify God, and serve their generation.

Men's success seldom equals their expectations. We must use means, but not trust to them: if we succeed, we must give God the praise; if crossed, we must submit to his will. Those who put off the great concerns of their souls, are caught in Satan's net, which he baits with some worldly object, for which they reject or neglect the gospel, and go on in sin till they suddenly fall into destruction.

A man may, by his wisdom, bring to pass that which he could never do by his strength. If God be for us, who can be against us, or stand before us? Solomon observes the power of wisdom, though it may labour under outward disadvantages. How forcible are right words! But wise and good men must often content themselves with the satisfaction of having done good, or, at least, endeavoured to do it, when they cannot do the good they would, nor have the praise they should. How many of the good gifts, both of nature and Providence, does one sinner destroy and make waste! He who destroys his own soul destroys much good. One sinner may draw many into his destroying ways. See who are the friends and enemies of a kingdom or a family, if one saint does much good, and one sinner destroys much good.

Chapter 10

Those especially who make a profession of religion, should keep from all appearances of evil. A wise man has great advantage over a fool, who is always at a loss when he has anything to do. Sin is the reproach of sinners, wherever they go, and shows their folly.

Solomon appears to caution men not to seek redress in a hasty manner, nor to yield to pride and revenge. Do not, in a passion, quit thy post of duty; wait awhile, and thou wilt find that yielding pacifies great offences. Men are not preferred according to their merit. And those are often most forward to offer help, who are least aware of the difficulties, or the consequences. The same remark is applied to the church, or the body of Christ, that all the members should have the same care one for another.

There is a practice in the East, of charming serpents by music. The babbler's tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison; and contradiction only makes it the more violent. We must find the way to keep him gentle. But by rash, unprincipled, or slanderous talk, he brings open or secret vengeance upon himself. Would we duly consider our own ignorance as to future events, it would cut off many idle words which we foolishly multiply. Fools toil a great deal to no purpose. They do not understand the plainest things, such as the entrance into a great city. But it is the excellency of the way to the heavenly city, that it is a high-way, in which the simplest wayfaring men shall not err, Isaiah 25:8. But sinful folly makes men miss that only way to happiness.

The happiness of a land depends on the character of its rulers. The people cannot be happy when their princes are childish, and lovers of pleasure. Slothfulness is of ill consequence both to private and public affairs. Money, of itself, will neither feed nor clothe, though it answers the occasions of this present life, as what is to be had, may generally be had for money. But the soul, as it is not redeemed, so it is not maintained with corruptible things, as silver and gold. God sees what men do, and hears what they say in secret; and, when he pleases, brings it to light by strange and unsuspected ways. If there be hazard in secret thoughts and whispers against earthly rulers, what must be the peril from every deed, word, or thought of rebellion against the King of kings, and Lord of lords! He seeth in secret. His ear is ever open. Sinner! curse not THIS KING in thy inmost thought. Your curses cannot affect Him; but his curse, coming down upon you, will sink you to the lowest hell.

1 Corinthians 10

Chapter Contents

The great privileges, and yet terrible overthrow of the Israelites in the wilderness. (1-5) Cautions against all idolatrous, and other sinful practices. (6-14) The partaking in idolatry cannot exist with having communion with Christ. (15-22) All we do to be to the glory of God, and without offence to the consciences of others. (23-33)

To dissuade the Corinthians from communion with idolaters, and security in any sinful course, the apostle sets before them the example of the Jewish nation of old. They were, by a miracle, led through the Red Sea, where the pursuing Egyptians were drowned. It was to them a typical baptism. The manna on which they fed was a type of Christ crucified, the Bread which came down from heaven, which whoso eateth shall live forever. Christ is the Rock on which the Christian church is built; and of the streams that issue therefrom, all believers drink, and are refreshed. It typified the sacred influences of the Holy Spirit, as given to believers through Christ. But let none presume upon their great privileges, or profession of the truth; these will not secure heavenly happiness.

Carnal desires gain strength by indulgence, therefore should be checked in their first rise. Let us fear the sins of Israel, if we would shun their plagues. And it is but just to fear, that such as tempt Christ, will be left by him in the power of the old serpent. Murmuring against God's disposals and commands, greatly provokes him. Nothing in Scripture is written in vain; and it is our wisdom and duty to learn from it. Others have fallen, and so may we. The Christian's security against sin is distrust of himself. God has not promised to keep us from falling, if we do not look to ourselves. To this word of caution, a word of comfort is added. Others have the like burdens, and the like temptations: what they bear up under, and break through, we may also. God is wise as well as faithful, and will make our burdens according to our strength. He knows what we can bear. He will make a way to escape; he will deliver either from the trial itself, or at least the mischief of it. We have full encouragement to flee from sin, and to be faithful to God. We cannot fall by temptation, if we cleave fast to him. Whether the world smiles or frowns, it is an enemy; but believers shall be strengthened to overcome it, with all its terrors and enticements. The fear of the Lord, put into their hearts, will be the great means of safety.

Did not the joining in the Lord's supper show a profession of faith in Christ crucified, and of adoring gratitude to him for his salvation? Christians, by this ordinance, and the faith therein professed, were united as the grains of wheat in one loaf of bread, or as the members in the human body, seeing they were all united to Christ, and had fellowship with him and one another. This is confirmed from the Jewish worship and customs in sacrifice. The apostle applies this to feasting with idolaters. Eating food as part of a heathen sacrifice, was worshipping the idol to whom it was made, and having fellowship or communion with it; just as he who eats the Lord's supper, is accounted to partake in the Christian sacrifice, or as they who ate the Jewish sacrifices partook of what was offered on their altar. It was denying Christianity; for communion with Christ, and communion with devils, could never be had at once. If Christians venture into places, and join in sacrifices to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, they will provoke God.

There were cases wherein Christians might eat what had been offered to idols, without sin. Such as when the flesh was sold in the market as common food, for the priest to whom it had been given. But a Christian must not merely consider what is lawful, but what is expedient, and to edify others. Christianity by no means forbids the common offices of kindness, or allows uncourteous behaviour to any, however they may differ from us in religious sentiments or practices. But this is not to be understood of religious festivals, partaking in idolatrous worship. According to this advice of the apostle, Christians should take care not to use their liberty to the hurt of others, or to their own reproach. In eating and drinking, and in all we do, we should aim at the glory of God, at pleasing and honouring him. This is the great end of all religion, and directs us where express rules are wanting. A holy, peaceable, and benevolent spirit, will disarm the greatest enemies.