

Triennial Torah Study – 4th Year 16/11/2013

By Joseph F. Dumond

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

<https://sightedmoon.com/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf>

Gen 10	Josh 23-24	Ps 20-22	Mat 13:24 – 14:21
---------------	-------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

The Genealogy of Noah (Genesis 10)

Genesis 10 contains what is commonly called the Table of Nations. This genealogical record lists 70 nations descended from the sons of Noah. The Israelites, and the descendants of Abraham generally, are not mentioned, although their common ancestor, Heber, is included in the list.

The genealogical record here is in the form of a clan list, which typically follows the father-son grandson format—although exceptions to the rule and extended lists (such as we will later encounter with Israel's clan lists) are not uncommon. The purpose of clan lists is to show affinities between related peoples. At the head of the list stands the common ancestor, in this case Noah. Under the common ancestor are listed the tribes, and under the tribes are listed the smaller clans. The further down the clan list one moves, the greater the cultural and political affiliations between the members of the smaller family units. Thus, Japheth fathered Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras. All of those peoples were related and shared certain general cultural and political affiliations. But Ashkenaz, Riphath and Togarmah, who were fathered by Gomer, are further down the list and therefore shared greater cultural and political affiliations.

Are these ancient historical lists of any importance to us today? While many of the nations recorded in the genealogy disappear from the scriptural record, some of them will reappear in the prophetic books—with a surprising number mentioned in connection with end-time events. God appears to refer to the nations of the world by these family names, and it is interesting to note that the end-time configuration of nations provided by the prophetic books shows the nations allied by their clan affiliations. Surprisingly, these prophecies show that the passage of around 4,000 years of history has done little to alter the basic pattern of international relations.

Joshua's Charge to the People (Joshua 23)

Near the end of his life, Joshua summons Israel, especially the leaders, and admonishes them to remain faithful to God. In verse 8, he specifically exhorts them to "hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day." And in verses 12-13, he warns them of the consequences of "clinging" to the remnant of the Canaanites. The Nelson Study Bible notes on verse 12: "The word translated cling is the same word translated hold fast in v. 8, bringing the different instances of clinging into sharp contrast. God wanted His people to cling to Him, not to the Canaanites they were driving out. This required, among other things, that they not make marriages with unbelieving foreigners under any circumstances (Ex. 34:11-16; Deut. 7:1-4). Years later Solomon ignored this command and proved how destructive the sin of intermarriage could be (1 Kin. 3:1; 11:1-8; 2 Cor. 6:14)."

Joshua concludes by telling the elders that rejection of God will exact a dire penalty: “You shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you” (verse 16). This, of course, happened in later years, when Israel was taken into captivity and deported by Assyria and Judah was carried away by Babylon. Yet rebellion was not long away, as it would dominate the period of the judges immediately following. Still, Joshua’s warning may have done some good, as the elders seem to have remained faithful (24:31).

Joshua’s Farewell Address (Joshua 24)

One last time, Joshua summons the elders, this time at Shechem, about 10-15 miles north of Shiloh. This was the place the blessings and curses had been pronounced more than two decades earlier (Joshua 8:30-35)—and perhaps Joshua chose it now for that reason. He rehearses Israel’s history, much of which occurred within the last two generations. The Exodus had occurred less than 70 years earlier, and Moses had died less than 30 years earlier. God had said He would send the hornet to drive out the inhabitants (Deuteronomy 7:20-23), and here it is related that this did indeed happen. The Israelites were able to take over the cities and orchards without having to start over.

We should notice here Joshua’s words in verse 14: “Now, therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River [Euphrates, i.e., in Mesopotamia] and in Egypt.” This closely parallels the apostle Paul’s admonition in 1 Corinthians 5: “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (verse 8)—that is, the same “sincerity and truth” mentioned by Joshua. The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures the putting out of sin and coming out of the sinful ways of this world—coming out of Babylon and Egypt, as Joshua essentially put it, forsaking the following of all affections rivaling the true God—and replacing that with godly purity. And this is, of course, something we should always do throughout our Christian lives.

Then comes Joshua’s declaration of his own direction despite what the people’s might be: “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (verse 15). “With his famous words, Joshua clearly and unambiguously took his stand on the side of the living God. Joshua modeled a perfect leader’s actions. A leader must be willing to move ahead and commit himself to the truth regardless of the people’s inclinations. Joshua’s bold example undoubtedly encouraged many to follow with the affirmations of vv. 16-18” (Nelson Study Bible, note on verses 14-15).

Indeed, even after telling the people that they could not fulfill God’s requirements on their own and the seriousness of the obligation they were entering into, Joshua still manages to extract from them strong assurances that they would never forsake God, after which he follows the common practice of setting up a “large stone” as a witness (verse 26; compare Genesis 31:44-52; Joshua 4). He also records these words in “the Book of the Law of God” at the tabernacle.

The book of Joshua concludes with the deaths and burials of Joshua and Eleazar the high priest, both in the land of Ephraim. While God could have inspired Joshua to write this, it is likely that He inspired someone else to add this ending. This last section also records the final burial of Joseph, also in the land of Ephraim, whose bones had been carried out of Egypt at his request (compare Genesis 50:24-25; Exodus 13:19).

The book of Joshua began with the words: “After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant” (1:1). Now notice how the book ends: “Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord died” (verse 29). “This first reference to Joshua as the servant of the Lord shows clearly how Joshua had ‘grown into the job’ that Moses had vacated. Now the book comes full circle, recalling the references in 1:1 to Moses as the servant of the Lord and to Joshua as merely Moses’ assistant” (Nelson, note on verse 29). Joshua was more than just Moses’ successor. He was himself a type of Christ, a hero of faith leading the people to conquer the Promised Land and thereby give them a home.

Psalm 20 appears to be a prayer for God to bless an upcoming military battle, yet “day of trouble” can have a wide application throughout the lives of God’s people, as we engage in spiritual battles.

David states that those who “trust in chariots, and some in horses,” have fallen on the battlefield, but his forces will triumph in the name of the Lord (verses 7-8). David cites the custom of soldiers presenting offerings and sacrifices before going into battle. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary note on verse 3 states, “The Israelite practice of presenting sacrifices and offerings before a military campaign was an act of devotion and submission to the Lord (1 Sam.7:9-10; 13:9-12).”

The word “salvation” (verse 5) is also translated “deliverance.” On this occasion the psalmist speaks of being delivered from a physical enemy. He is not referring to ultimate spiritual salvation. The New International Version translates this verse, “We will shout for joy when you are victorious.” For us today, this can mean God giving us daily victories over sin and difficult circumstances.

The phrase “lift up our banners” (same verse, NIV) conveys a sense of confidence that those who trust in God will experience His blessings. The word banner comes from the root word “to flaunt,” “to be conspicuous.” David’s armies will fly their victory flags so all will know that “the Lord saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand” (verse 6). David himself was God’s anointed. Yeshua is of course the ultimate anointed—and all believers are part of His spiritual army. Yet all of God’s spiritual children are also His anointed individually—anointed with the Holy Spirit.

David concludes with, “May the King answer us when we call.” The Nelson Study Bible notes on verses 7-9 that “above King David was God the Great King; moreover, one day King Yeshua would rule from sea to sea.”

Psalm 21, as The Nelson Study Bible notes, “is another of the royal psalms of David. Psalm 20 is a prayer of the king for God’s blessing on his army. Psalm 21 is an assurance of God’s blessing on the king [himself]. Both psalms, as is the case with all the royal psalms, speak ultimately of the great King to come, the Messiah Yeshua.” Some see this psalm as one of thanksgiving after the victory in the battle referred to in the previous psalm.

David praises God for the blessings given to him as king. The king depended on God’s strength: “How great is his joy in the victories You give!” (verse 1b, NIV). Here the NKJV has, “And in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!” “One meaning of the Hebrew word salvation is ‘room to breathe.’ God had given King David a release from the pressures and constraints that bound him” (note on verse 1). Besides the joy of temporary deliverance from physical conditions, the verse also looks forward to ultimate spiritual salvation.

David enumerates the good acts of God on his behalf: kingship (a crown of pure gold), victory, desire of his heart, long life (forever and ever through salvation), deliverance, honor and majesty, blessings, God’s presence and unfailing love (verses 2-7).

David asserts that his enemies are also God’s enemies because “they intended evil against You,” (verse 11) and they “hate You” (verse 8). David trusts God to deal with them (verse 9) “in the time of Your anger.” Looking beyond David’s own lifetime, God’s anger will be evidenced to all during the Day of the Lord, a time of punishment prophesied throughout the Scriptures.

The Suffering Servant, Good Shepherd and Triumphant King (Psalms 22-24) In Psalm 22, David laments his life-threatening circumstances—danger from enemies (see verses 20-21), perhaps in the midst of severe illness (see verse 17) wherein his enemies are jostling around him in anticipation of his death, possibly to be equated with other psalms where David languishes in bodily affliction. Yet here he uses words that directly foreshadow the suffering and crucifixion of Yeshua Messiah. “The language David uses to describe his own predicament is prompted by the Holy

Spirit. Thus it could span a thousand years to describe precisely the experiences of Yeshua—both His excruciating death and victorious resurrection” (Nelson Study Bible, introductory note on Psalm 22).

During His crucifixion ordeal, Yeshua cried out with the words that begin this psalm, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” (verse 1; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34)—as at this point, Yeshua bore the sins of all humanity and God sternly rejects sin. It does not seem that Yeshua just said these words only to fulfill prophecy. No doubt He really felt them for the moment. And remarkably, He and the Father foresaw a thousand years beforehand that He would feel this way—and inspired David to record these words and thoughts accordingly.

David suffers intensely through his dire circumstances, but he still trusts in God to deliver him (verses 3-5). At present, he is humiliated: “I am a worm, and no man” (verse 6). The phrase “they shoot out the lip” (verse 7) is also translated “they hurl insults” (NIV) and “they make mouths at me” (NRSV). Yeshua’s tormentors mocked and taunted just as David’s words portend, even in the specific manner of verse 8 (Matthew 27:27-31, 39-44).

David describes his encroaching enemies as “strong bulls of Bashan” (Psalm 22:12)—Bashan being the northeastern region of Israel “noted for its fine breed of cattle” (Deut. 32:14; Ezek. 39:18)” (Unger’s Bible Dictionary, “Ba’shan”). Yet they are not only strong and powerful, but are fierce and raging like lions (Psalm 22:13). Yeshua faced the hatred of the Jewish religious leadership and the brutality of the Romans.

Where David says, “My tongue clings to My jaws” (verse 15), we should recall Yeshua’s anguished words on the cross, “I thirst” (John 19:28).

In a surprising statement in the next verse, “They pierced My hands and My feet,” David “explicitly predicts the crucifixion of the Yeshua. The words are merely a figure of speech for the terrifying experiences of David; but as a prophet (Acts 2:30), David spoke accurately of the sufferings of Yeshua” (Nelson Study Bible note on verse 16). It should be noted, however, that instead of “They pierced,” the Masoretic vowel pointing gives this as “Like a lion,” which is the preferred Jewish translation. Yet this rendering leaves out a verb. The Jewish Publication Society Tanakh fills in with the word *maul*: “like lions {they maul} my hands and feet.” The Expositor’s Bible Commentary says: “ka’ari (...lit[erally], ‘like the lion’) has occasioned much discussion. The [Greek Septuagint translation] reads a verb—‘they pierced,’ as does the NIV, from *karah*...or from... *k-w-r* ‘pierce’.... Some suggest a homonym of the root *k-r-h* (‘bind’) and read ‘they have bound my hands and my feet’.... The text remains an exegetical problem” (footnote on verse 16).

Yet even apart from knowingly or unknowingly prophesying Yeshua’s form of execution, it should not be hard to imagine David thinking of his own body being figuratively nailed up in a shaming display. For penal suspension was known to that era. As an example, the Philistines literally fastened the dead bodies of Saul and his sons to the wall of Beth Shan as a public disgrace (1 Samuel 31:8-10).

“I can count all my bones” in verse 17 would seem to refer to David being able to see his bones through his skin, being gaunt from lack of nourishment because of illness or being on the run. Yet in Yeshua’s case it may refer to the actual exposure of His bones from the severe, flaying scourging He endures.

David’s statement at the end of verse 17, “They look and stare at Me,” finds its New Testament counterpart in Luke 23:35, “And the people stood looking on.” Indeed, this follows right after the end of Luke 23:34, “And they divided His garments and cast lots.” This was specifically prophesied in the next verse of Psalm 22, verse 18. Matthew 27:35 actually quotes from this verse and notes its fulfillment.

Of course, we should recognize that all of Yeshua’s followers become partakers of His sufferings (Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 1:5; 2 Corinthians 1:7; Philippians 1:29; 3:10; 1 Peter 4:3). Therefore, just as David prayed this prayer for himself, so can all of us pray in the words of this prayer when we are faced with severe circumstances.

We should note that the psalm does not end with a focus on suffering. Rather, verses 19-21 call on God to intervene and the end of verse 21 assures us that He has (for David and for Messiah), just as He will for us. The verses to follow speak of the ultimate deliverance and triumph that is found in God.

In response to his deliverance, David speaks of declaring the name of God in the congregation of the faithful—publicly to his “brethren...in the midst of the assembly” (verse 22), “in the great assembly” at the temple (verse 25). The book of Hebrews notes this as the confession of Yeshua, who is not ashamed to call us His followers His “brethren” (2:12). And the great assembly would seem to denote what we find in Hebrews 12:22: “Mount Zion...the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...an innumerable company of angels...the general assembly of the firstborn.”

Verses 27-28 of Psalm 22 picture the worship of God in the Kingdom. “All the families of the nations shall worship before You. For the Kingdom is the Lord’s, and He rules over the nations.” Then, everyone will declare the wonderful works of God and teach the good news from one generation to the next. As Expositor’s notes on verses 30-31, “The praise of God will extend from generation to generation. The story of redemption will not only include the nations but also generations yet unborn...each generation will join in with the telling of the story of redemption and of His kingship (cf. vv.3-5) and will, in the process of transmitting it, add what God has done for them.”

Mat 13:24 – 14:21

THE SECOND PARABLE (v. 24-30)

The second parable is also another that Yeshua gives some explanation to (in verses 37-43). These verses are really a synopsis of what is seen in the book of Revelation, which is in turn based on prophecies from the Tenakh (Old Testament) showing God’s vengeance being carried out by His angels of judgment. Here, the concept of belonging to one of two Kingdoms is seen with the reference to Children of the Kingdom and Children of the wicked one. Note that the latter, though part of “Satan’s kingdom” are also said to be in the Kingdom of God, until it is time for them to be cast out.

Interestingly, even those in Satan’s kingdom are serving the will of God:

Revelation 17:17 – For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

THE THIRD AND FOURTH PARABLES (v. 31-32 & 33)

These short parables are the most peculiar. The first, involving the mustard seed, would indicate that the Kingdom of God would grow enormously despite its humble beginnings. However, the reference to the birds coming to land in the branches may be an indication of evil in the Kingdom. The latter parable involves leaven, which is also normally a metaphor for sin or evil. In this case as well, it may seem that Yeshua is saying that evil spreads throughout the Kingdom.

THE FIFTH AND SIXTH PARABLES (v. 44 & 45-46)

These two short parables are less difficult to interpret. As mentioned above, Yeshua makes it clear that the most important thing in this life is to make certain you make it into the Kingdom of God – it is worth more than anything this world can offer:

Matthew 16:26 – For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Yeshua’s reference to a “pearl” is based in Jewish mystical teachings:

Bahir 72 – Another explanation of “Bring to life Your works in the midst of Years”: What is this like? A king had a beautiful pearl, and it was the treasure of his kingdom. When he is happy, he embraces it, kisses it, places it on his head, and loves it.

THE SEVENTH PARABLE (v. 47-50)

This parable resembles the second, showing that both good and evil will co-exist in the Kingdom until the end of the age.

THE EIGHTH PARABLE (v. 52)

This last parable is a different type than the previous seven, in that it is directed to those who will understand enough of the Kingdom in order to teach its truths to others. The reference to, “things new and old,” may have to do with having greater spiritual insight into the Scriptures that they already knew, based on the insights revealed to them through Yeshua.

Note that this parable comes on the heels of Yeshua asking His disciples if they understood everything to that point: Matthew 13: 51-52 – Yeshua saith to them, ‘Did ye understand all these?’ They say to him, ‘Yes, sir.’ And he said to them, ‘Because of this every scribe having been discipled in regard to the reign of the heavens, is like to a man, a householder, who doth bring forth out of his treasure things new and old.’

We will examine other parables and aspects of the Kingdom in the next section of this study.

Section VI – Teachings and Miracles

Matthew 14:1-17:27

NOTE: The King James version will be the primary text used in this study for no other reason than it is popular and well recognized. If another version is used, it will be cited. The text of each chapter will be shown in full, followed by commentary on selected verses. In some cases there may be multiple verses that are not discussed. In others, a single verse (or even a single word) may merit a great deal of study.

1 Herod

For more information on Herod and the Roman politics at the time, refer to our background article, First Century Religious and Political Background.

5 they counted him as a prophet.

What is a prophet? To many people, the word is associated with someone who predicts the future. Although this can be a part of a prophet’s life, this is not represent what a Biblical prophet is all about. Nor should Biblical prophets be defined solely as bringers of messages of impending doom or calls for repentance, although they may have done that at times as well.

Interestingly, the first person in the Bible to be called a “prophet,” is not one that people usually associate much with that title. That person is Abraham.

God told King Abimelech:

Genesis 20:7 – Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

As Scripture shows us, Abraham was best known for his intimacy with God and carrying out of God’s will wherever he went.

The Hebrew word for prophet, is Navie, which may come from the root Nava, meaning “to flow,” or “gush forth.” This would imply that a prophet is also a “channel” for bringing spiritual power from God to bear on a certain situation.

Thus, we have God saying this to Moses about his brother:

Exodus 7:1 – And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.

Many people associate Aaron (the prophet) being God’s spokesman to Pharaoh. However, examining the account of the meetings with Pharaoh, we see that it was Moses that did the talking directly. Scripture does show us however,

that it was Aaron that brought about the first miracles. Aaron acted as a prophet for Moses, being the “channel” for bringing down God’s spiritual power.

All of the above should not blur the distinction between the “office” of prophet, which has a time and place in history, and the gift of prophecy, which we are told to seek after:

1 Corinthians 14:1 – Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.

The “flow,” or “gushing forth,” of the will of God through a person, was promised by Yeshua: John 7:38 – He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

13 by ship into a desert place apart

The Shem-Tob Hebrew Matthew has, “... into the wilderness of Judea.” This would make sense as the origins of both John and Yeshua’s ministries are in this area.

17 We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

Yeshua “replicates” a miracle by the great prophet Elisha, only to a far greater magnitude: 2 Kings 4:42-44 – And there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat. And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof. So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD.

19 he blessed, and brake

One of the common misconceptions is that Yeshua “blessed the food” (here, and at the “Last Supper,” where it is said He “blessed the bread and the wine”). This is an incorrect understanding of what was being done, and has led to many unscriptural traditions (such as blessing of pets, cars, etc.) Some even teach that by “blessing” unkosher food, this makes it permissible to eat. What Yeshua did, and what Jews did and do today, is to bless God. The prayer over the food, is actually a prayer thanking God for his sustenance.

A typical prayer Yeshua would have said (which is still said today), is:

Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-Olam, haMotzi lechem min ha’arets.

Which may be translated (note who is being blessed):

Blessed are you, Lord God, King of the Universe, who brings bread from the earth.