

Triennial Torah Study – 5th Year 20/12/2014



sightedmoon.com /triennial-torah-study-5th-year-04042015 /

By Joseph F. Dumond

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

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

Ex 21	Isaiah 24-27	Ps 135	John 9
-------	--------------	--------	--------

The Judgments (Exodus 21)

When God gave the Ten Commandments, "He added no more" (Deuteronomy 5:22). It was a complete spiritual law. Still, God knew that for a physical nation, there would have to be a civil administration with much more detail about what constituted crime and what judgments to execute against specific violations. He had already given capital punishment in Noah's day. It is not known if He had related any other judgments at that time, although it seems likely that He would have. Frankly, judgments were needed because God knew people would not remain chaste and law abiding (see Exodus 22:16). He knew that they would take advantage of others wrongly (22:25)-and He provided for these eventualities. The judgments exist because of human failings. Penalties would not be needed if people always obeyed. But they don't-and this could wreak havoc in a national setting. So besides the tablets of the Ten Commandments, God here gives Moses the judgments. These judgments were based on God's law of love and pertained to relationships between the people.

God allowed slavery, but in a much different way than one may perceive today. An Israelite may have become a slave due to poverty, debt or crime. After six years of servitude, God commanded that he be given freedom and help to reestablish himself so as to better avoid getting in the same situation again (Deuteronomy 15:12-15). Israelite slavery was similar to a state of indentured servitude. The purpose was not intended to be heavily punitive. The intention was to enable a person to make a new start and help him succeed in life. God also gave laws regulating the treatment of slaves. In fact, it was expected that some would be treated so well that they would want to stay with their masters even after the time came for them to be set free (verses 16-18).

It was a capital crime to curse or hit one's parents. This judgment was based on the Fifth Commandment, "Honor your father and mother." While the punishment may seem cruel and unusual to our 21st-century minds, its intent was that Israel not raise a nation of rebellious children, as we see so frequently today in our supposedly enlightened societies. This law, like many others, acted as a safeguard for society as a whole. If a rebellious child showed so little

respect for authority that he would lash out and strike his own mother or father, there would be little to prevent him from striking out and injuring or killing others. Thus this law helped remove those who scorned authority and lacked the will or desire for self-control before they became too great a threat to innocent people around them. When this law was enforced, society as a whole was kept safe from young, out-of-control thugs who had chosen to live in a way that made them a danger to everyone else.

The words “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” were not intended to encourage vengeful feelings. Nor were they to be taken literally (although “life for life” and “stripe for stripe” *could* be literal). The principle was that the punishment should fit the crime and not go *beyond* it. On occasion, capital punishment had to be imposed. But in other cases, we read that there were various ways the guilty party could be redeemed.

God’s laws are not given as a burden to His people. On the contrary, they are imposed to *prevent* problems from occurring. All people shared a responsibility in both preventing and solving problems. We will be reading much more about God’s laws, comprising commandments, statutes, judgments and ordinances. God revealed them to define what He means by love. Love is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:10).

“The Curse Has Devoured the Earth” (Isaiah 24)

Isaiah 24-27 is often referred to as the “little Apocalypse” or the “Isaiah Apocalypse.” That’s because it describes, in broad, general terms, the great cosmic events that will mark the end of the age—as described in the book of Revelation.

Verse 5 of chapter 24 mentions the breaking of the “everlasting covenant.” And the implication is that all the earth’s inhabitants are part of this covenant arrangement. Yet when did God make a covenant with all humanity? Says *The Bible Reader’s Companion*: “Many see this as a reference to God’s covenant with Noah, never again to destroy the Earth by a flood (cf. Gen. 9:11-17). That covenant also implies human moral responsibility, for it makes man responsible to God to account for shed blood (9:4-6). Thus the laws and statutes here are not those of the O[ld] T[estament] law [that is, the totality of specific obligations given to Israel under the Sinai Covenant]. They are natural moral laws, expressed in human conscience, which God has imbedded in human nature, to which Paul refers in Rom. 2:12-16)” (note on verse 5).

The Nelson Study Bible comments: “The usual language concerning a breach of the covenant is applied more generally to the wicked nations. Perhaps these words speak of that innate sense of right and wrong—the conscience—that God has given to all humankind, but which everyone violates (Rom. 1:18-32; compare Acts 24:16)” (verse 5).

Actually, God did give laws at the time of Adam, but man rejected them—and, as a consequence, God destroyed mankind except for Noah and his family. Noah understood God’s laws and passed them on. But man has transgressed them and changed them to suit himself.

And, as mentioned, man as a whole has violated the wonderful gift of conscience that God has given to every person. The earth is defiled by all of this—especially, as stated, by the innocent blood shed on it. So it lies under a curse. And God will bring great havoc on the world.

Some, we should note, misquote this section of the Bible, using it to “prove” that the returning Christ totally destroys the earth and all life on it—and that His thousand-year reign that follows is then over a desolate, uninhabited earth. In support of this wrong teaching, they cite the first half of verse 6, which speaks of the scorching of the earth’s inhabitants. But they leave out the end of the verse—”and few men are left.” Here is a classic illustration of using the Bible to prove an already preconceived idea instead of allowing Scripture to interpret itself. For reading all of verse 6 shows that mankind, though greatly diminished by end-time plague and war, isn’t totally destroyed. Clearly, there will still be people left alive.

Verse 16 gives the impression of people rejoicing in song, while the prophet is bemoaning the “treacherous dealers,” perhaps referring to false messiahs or the False Prophet (see Matthew 24:24; Revelation 16:13).

Then a mighty earthquake is described. Cataclysmic events befall the planet, and the “windows from on high are open” (Isaiah 24:18-20)—apparently picturing the great upheaval and hail to come at the end (compare Revelation 8:8-11; 11:19; 16:18-21). Then there is mention of the “host of exalted ones,” in addition to the kings of the earth, being punished and imprisoned for many days, which could include the human armies that assail Christ at His return as well as Satan and His demons (verses 21-22; compare Revelation 19:20-20:3).

The chapter concludes with the reign of the Lord in Zion (verse 23; compare Revelation 21:22-25).

“For You Have Done Wonderful Things” (Isaiah 25)

In Isaiah 25, following the destruction of His enemies, God provides a marvelous feast for the whole earth—a wonderful world of plenty for those who are ruled by Yeshua. This is what is pictured each year by God’s great fall festival, the Feast of Tabernacles (see Leviticus 23:33-43; Deuteronomy 16:13-15). As was mentioned in our highlights on Isaiah 4, the reign of Christ over all nations will be like one long, expanding Feast of Tabernacles—during which more and more people will submit their lives to God until the actual Feast of Tabernacles is observed by all peoples (see Zechariah 14:16).

God will remove the veil of spiritual blindness that now lies over all nations (verse 7). The apostle Paul mentions it in 2 Corinthians 4: “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this world [Satan the devil] has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (verses 3-4). In the wonderful world that is coming, Satan, who “deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9), will be bound in prison (20:1-3)—and all nations will finally see. Not

immediately of course. While some people will recognize right away that Christ has liberated them, for others it will take longer. But eventually, through a program of education directed by Christ and the resurrected saints, the true knowledge of God will come to fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9).

Yet for the present age, the veil remains. Even now, though, God lifts the veil for each person whom He calls to be part of the firstfruits of salvation. Rending and opening the spiritual veil, allowing access to God and His spiritual knowledge, has been made possible through the rending of Christ's body and His resultant death, all of which was symbolized by God's tearing of the veil in the temple at the very moment He died (Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 10:20).

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul discusses the subject of the resurrection and concludes that when we have received immortality, "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory'" (verse 54). That saying is found here—in Isaiah 25:8.

Song of Trust; Deliverance of Israel (Isaiah 26-27)

Chapter 26 is a song about the end time. "In that day" (verse 1) means the Day of the Lord—but the bright part of it beyond the gloom. Salvation is at last coming to God's people, which will lead to the salvation of *all* people.

Several themes are addressed. The chapter begins by emphasizing righteousness and trust in God. Look again at verse 3. What a wonderful promise this is. If we trust in God, come what may, we will have perfect peace—inner peace of mind or, as Paul puts it, "the peace of God that surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

The chapter goes on to address the punishment and reform of the wicked.

Verse 19 describes the resurrection. "Some argue that this is a figurative application of the idea of resurrection. But there could have been no figure of speech if no belief that 'their bodies will rise' existed in ancient Israel. And what a wonder this is. Storms of judgment may sweep over our earth. Wars may devastate, and disease may ravage. Famines may decimate the land, while starvation stalks our families. There are indeed dread fates that are to be feared. But these are not history's last words! At the end of history—both the history of nations, and the personal history of each individual—the shout of God's promise echoes. 'Your dead will live; their bodies will rise!' What a truth to hold fast in troubled times" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on verse 19).

Verses 20-21 mention God directing His people to take refuge "until the indignation is past." This ties in with other verses related to a place of protection for some of God's saints during the final days before Christ's return (see Zephaniah 2:1-3; Revelation 12:14). God will also preserve alive a remnant of the physical descendants of Israel.

Leviathan (Isaiah 27:1) is mentioned in several places in Scripture (compare Job 41; Psalm 74:14; 104:26). It may be a literal sea creature, but here, as in other places, it is apparently a reference to Satan, the serpent and dragon of Revelation 12, and the “beast from the sea” (Revelation 13), the resurgent gentile empire of the last days, the heads of which are portrayed as emerging from Satan (12:3; 13:1-2).

Finally, God turns to the wonderful restoration of national Israel that’s coming. His vineyard was forsaken (Isaiah 5:1-5). But now He will tend it again (27:2-4). The great trumpet will call the exiles of Israel to return to the land of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Their emaciated and war-ravaged population, dwindled down to a small fraction of their former numbers, will again begin to blossom and grow (verse 6)—in the very best environment possible.

Praise God for His great works in nature and for His people (Psalms 135)

Psalms 135-137 form the concluding section of what some Jewish traditions label the Great Hallel (or “Praise”)—following the beginning section, the songs of ascents (120-134). As noted in the Bible Reading Program’s introduction to the Great Hallel and songs of ascents, some traditions list the Great Hallel as Psalms 120-136, while others confine it to only Psalm 136.

Psalm 135, an unattributed psalm of praise for the one true Creator God in contrast to worthless idols, is well placed after Psalm 134, the concluding song of ascents. Recall its closing statement about “the LORD who made heaven and earth” (verse 3), repeating wording used in other songs of ascents (see 121:2; 124:8). Indeed, Psalm 134 introduces Psalm 135 in other ways too, as we will see. And we should also note that Psalm 135 repeats themes and language from another Hallel collection, the Egyptian Hallel (113-118). An apparent quotation of Jeremiah 10:13 (and 51:16) in Psalm 135:7, combined with clear indications that this song was intended for temple worship, has led many to conclude that the psalm was written after the Jewish exile in Babylon. However, it is possible that the repeated verse in Jeremiah was quoted from Psalm 135.

The psalm opens with five calls to praise the Lord (verses 1-3) and closes with five calls to bless the Lord (verses 19-21)—continuing from Psalm 134’s repeated call to bless the Lord (verses 1-2).

Verse 1 of Psalm 135 is basically identical to the opening verse of the Egyptian Hallel, 113:1, except that the second and third lines are transposed. The next verse (135:2), wherein the call to praise God is given to those who “stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God,” continues thematically from, again, the first two verses of 134. Here it is evident that festival worship is still in mind, as in the songs of ascents. Moreover, God’s “house” also signified His holy nation of Israel (compare verse 4). And of course, we today should further understand God’s “house” to represent His people, His spiritual nation, as well as His eternal Kingdom and family. The description of Israel as a “special treasure” (verse 4; compare Exodus

19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2) applies in a higher sense to God's spiritually elect people (compare Malachi 3:16-17).

Note in Psalm 135:3 the use of the terms "good" and "pleasant," as in Psalm 133:1, where these terms describe the unity of God's people. Here in Psalm 135, the word *good* applies to God as a cause for praise. Yet it is not entirely clear what the word *pleasant* refers to, whether to God (in which case the translation should be "for He is pleasant") or to singing praises or to God's name (in line with the NKJV translation of "for it is pleasant"). If God is intended, the idea would be that God is pleasing to experience (compare the use of both words in 147:1). The praising of God's name is also paralleled in the opening of Psalm 113 (verse 2).

Verses 5-7 of Psalm 135 constitute a stanza about God as Sovereign Creator. God doing as He pleases in verse 6 is reminiscent of Psalm 115:3 in the Egyptian Hallel-especially as a section of Psalm 115 is worded much the same as a later section of this song. Psalm 135:7, as already mentioned, may have been taken from Jeremiah 10:13, part of a passage wherein God is shown by His power in creation to be superior to futile idols (see verses 11-16). Yet as also mentioned, it could be the other way around-that these words, found in Jeremiah 51:13 as well, were quoted from Psalm 135.

The next stanza, verses 8-12, presents God as Israel's Deliverer. It is interesting to note that praise for God as Creator followed by praise for Him as Deliverer is also found in the next psalm, Psalm 136. Indeed, the language about destroying the firstborn of Egypt, the slaying of Kings Sihon and Og, and Israel receiving its land as a heritage is essentially found there also (compare 135:8-12; 136:10-22).

Through God's mighty acts and intervention, His "name" and "fame" (*zeker*, "remembrance") endure for all time (verse 13). Indeed, even though people often forget to consider God and His directives, most people understand on some level that He exists. Moreover, God's name will live forever as generations pass on the story of His saving acts, as those who love Him continue to praise Him, and as He completes His great plan of salvation-bringing all mankind into a relationship with Him (and ultimately removing those who reject Him). God's judgment and mercy in dealing with His people is the subject of verse 14.

The words of verses 15-18 are very close to those found in Psalm 115:4-8. The common assumption is that the passage in Psalm 135 is taken from Psalm 115, though the reverse could be true. Regarding the wording here, see the Bible Reading Program comments on Psalm 115.

Interestingly, Psalm 115 addressed Israel, the house of Aaron (the priesthood), and all those who fear the Lord (verses 9-11) and noted that God would bless each of these three groups (verses 12-13). Psalm 118, another psalm of the Egyptian Hallel, called on each of these three groups to declare that God's mercy or unfailing love endures forever (verses 2-4). And now in Psalm 135, we see each of these groups called on to, in turn, bless the Lord-with the addition of addressing a fourth group, the house of Levi, thus distinguishing all those involved in the temple service or perhaps the non-priestly Levitical choir, as it may be that different choirs sang

different stanzas of this song. In all likelihood the final declaration of blessing in verse 21 and the concluding *Hallelujah* (“Praise the LORD”) were sung by all.

Note also here that as God blessed His people from Zion (134:3), so His people are to bless Him from Zion (135:21). Again, the focus here is on worship at Jerusalem, where God dwells, making this a song of Zion. Besides the obvious meaning, again tying this song to temple festival worship and the songs of ascents, we should also understand Zion in the broader sense of representing God’s nation, His People, His millennial capital, His Kingdom, and His heavenly city. These are all to resound with praise for the Eternal God.

John 9

Just finishing the encounter with the Pharisees and scribes and nearly being stoned, Yeshua moves out of the crowd and passes by a blind man... blind from birth. His disciples asked Him who sinned – the man or his parents. They asked this because of the belief that sin brings upon us affliction, which it does. But this is not always the case and we should be careful not to attribute all suffering as a result of sin and make judgments upon others. Holding our tongues and holding our judgments are wise for many times things are allowed so that our Father’s great Mercy and Love may be demonstrated among men.

This is the case here as Yeshua makes plain. Yeshua healed this man of his blindness from birth, prophecy about Him fulfilled, and the people who knew this man marveled. They took him to the Pharisees who questioned him on what had happened. It was the Sabbath day, and the man told them what happened and that Yeshua healed him. When the Pharisees said that Yeshua does not guard the Sabbath take note! There is no law against healing on the Sabbath day, nor is there any law against using saliva on the Sabbath day. But the Pharisees had made a law themselves – a manmade law and by this, they are judging and accusing Him.

A great ordeal was made in the counsel of the Pharisees. They questioned the blind man who now sees, they questioned his parents, and they questioned the man again. The man was amazing in his testimony to them as well. He literally quotes Scripture to the Pharisees concerning sin, prayers that are heard or not heard and he testified that had Yeshua not been sent from Elohim... He could not have given sight to a blind man born blind.

At this, the Pharisees threw him out from their presence. Yeshua heard they had cast him out and met up with the man again. He wanted to know if the man believed. He did. And once again Yeshua literally says, “You have both seen Him and He who speaks with you is He.” Why do others continue to say that He never claimed to be The Messiah?