

# Triennial Torah Study – 3<sup>rd</sup> Year 01/12/2012

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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](https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf)

<b>Num 30</b>	<b>Micah 4-7</b>	<b>Eccl 11-12</b>	<b>1 Corin 11</b>
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## Vows Are to Be Kept (Numbers 30)

Vows and sworn oaths were not to be entered into lightly. They were to be kept. But there were certain circumstances in which they could be overruled. In ancient Israel, an unmarried woman was under the protection and supervision of her father. If she entered into some agreement or vow, this might have put her father, the one responsible for her, under an obligation that he was either unable or unwilling to fulfill. So it was up to him whether or not to overrule her or allow her vow to stand. The same law applied to married women, except that the one who decided whether or not to allow the agreement to stand was, of course, the husband. If the wife was already bound by some prior vow at the time of marriage, her new husband had the opportunity to overrule it as soon as he became aware of it. But if he let it stand beyond that, it would remain in force. In the case of a widow or divorced woman, her vow would automatically stand as it could not obligate a husband or father.

In the New Testament dispensation we make a vow or covenant with Christ. The Father calls and grants us repentance and faith. We agree to bury the old man of sin. God gives us His Spirit and we are no longer our own. Ours is an eternal vow or covenant. And, just as in the Old Testament, it is not to be entered into by the immature. Just the same, marriage is a solemn vow made to God and spouse. But as for swearing oaths in general, Christ has instructed that we not do so (Matthew 5:33-37). Rather, just giving our word should be enough and should serve just as well.

## Micah 4-7

The Reign of the Messiah; Judgment on Israel's Enemies (Micah 4-5)

It is not clear when the rest of the prophecies of Micah were delivered. It is possible that chapters 4-7 were delivered before or during Sennacherib's invasion. However, there is reason to believe they were given later, as we'll see. We do know from Micah 1:1 that they were given prior to Hezekiah's death—but this did not come until 15 years after Sennacherib's invasion. Therefore, we have a fairly broad time span here.

Micah 4 begins with essentially the same words recorded in Isaiah 2:1-4 about Christ's millennial reign to come in the last days. But Micah adds some other important details.

First of all, he adds that "everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid" (Micah 4:4). This shows that everyone will have personal property and be able to enjoy the fruit of their own labor. It also shows that there will be no reason to fear crime or assault. For, as God says in Isaiah 11:9, people will not be permitted to harm each other in the world under Christ's reign. Indeed, as more and more people are converted to God's ways, fewer and fewer will even seek the harm of others—until it becomes a rarity. Indeed, the peace and harmony that will prevail is presented in Zechariah 3:10, where we are told that "everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree." This tells us that while we are to enjoy our property and the fruit of our labors, these blessings are also to be shared with others.

Micah goes on to say that this time of peace and great blessing will begin with a regathering of God's afflicted people and a restoration of Israel's former dominion (Micah 4:6-8).

Verses 9-10, while perhaps referring to Judah's anguish at the time of Sennacherib's invasion in 701 B.C., could well refer to a later time. As already mentioned, the next year following the invasion, in 700, Sennacherib actually managed to regather his strength and put down Merodach-Baladan of Babylon once and for all—with Sennacherib placing his son on Babylon's throne. This could have caused cries of anguish from the Jews. In 695, however, Sennacherib attempted a naval invasion of Elam, which failed. The Elamites attacked Assyrian-controlled Babylon and took Sennacherib's son prisoner. Babylon was thus returned to native Chaldean rule. A major battle between Assyria and the Elamites in 692 ended in a stalemate. But in 689, Sennacherib sacked the city of Babylon, reasserting Assyrian rule over the area. This may have greatly upset the Jews, who perhaps still pinned their hopes on Babylon to overthrow the Assyrians.

Look again at verses 9-10 from this perspective. God basically says to the people of Jerusalem: What are you crying about? You've still got your king and leaders. So why do you act like you're in agony? Well, guess what? You are going to be in agony. You're going to be taken away by the very ones in whom you've hoped—the Babylonians—to Babylon. But God promises to deliver them from there. While this probably referred to the ancient Babylonian captivity of Judah, it seems also to refer to the end time, considering verses 11-13. In these verses, it appears that Judah is used to beat down nations that come against Jerusalem. This could be a reference to the Israelis' military power since the state of Israel was formed. However, it seems more likely to refer to Judah's participation in battle in events surrounding Christ's return (see Zechariah 12:6; 14:14).

Then again, "daughter of Zion" in verse 13 could perhaps be taken spiritually—as a reference to the glorified Church of God at Christ's return. "I will make your horn [i.e., might] iron" and "You shall beat in pieces many peoples" (verse 13) could tie in with Christ's promise to the Church: "And he who overcomes and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'" (Revelation 2:26-27).

Micah 5:1 has been interpreted in various ways. It is not clear if the "daughter of troops" refers to the Jews or the invaders. The "He" who lays siege appears to be the Lord (compare 4:13), though that is not certain. The striking of the judge of Israel has been seen by some as the treatment of Zedekiah at Jerusalem's overthrow by the Babylonians. However, others see it as a reference to the striking of the supreme Judge of Israel, Jesus Christ, by His enemies (compare Mark 15:19). In the end, Christ will triumph.

Verse 2 of Micah 5 refers to Bethlehem Ephrathah. Ephrath was the ancient name of Bethlehem (Genesis 35:19). The verse refers, of course, to the birth of Jesus in that town (see Matthew 2:4-6; John 7:42). Interestingly, Bethlehem means "House of Bread," and Jesus would come as the true bread of life on which we must be sustained to have eternal life (see John 6). It should be pointed out that this verse states that Jesus is "from everlasting"—that is, eternity past, meaning He is without beginning (compare Hebrews 7:3; see our booklet *Who Is God?*).

Verse 3 of Micah 5 says that Jesus will give up the Jews "until the time that she who is in labor has given birth." Together with verses 4 and 5, it seems clear that this is not a reference to Judah giving birth to the Messiah—since Judah was still given up to enemies at that time and even after. Rather, she who is in labor is likely the spiritual Zion, who gives birth to a "nation born at once" (compare Isaiah 66:8)—that is, the glorification of those of God's Church (His spiritual nation) at Christ's return.

Consider, then, the remainder of Micah 5:3: "Then the remnant of His brethren [or, more likely, the remnant of Israel who are His brethren] shall return to the children of Israel." Jesus' brethren—the members of God's Church—are the remnant of Israel, the elect according to grace (see Romans 11:5). The glorified members of the Church will be caught up to meet Jesus in the air. Afterward, Jesus and His brethren "shall return to the children of Israel"—that is, to lead and govern the returning Israelite exiles. Jesus then feeds His flock, not as He came the first time, in the flesh, but in divine power and majesty—bringing truth and peace to the ends of the earth (Micah 5:4-5).

The time designated as "when the Assyrian comes into our land" (verse 5) is not clear. It seems to be an end time prophecy. Perhaps the seven shepherds and eight princes refer to leaders of a Jewish or Israelite

resistance of the last days—who help other forces bring about the destruction of Europe just prior to Christ's return. It is also possible that this is a reference to events that have already occurred in our time—the utter devastation of Germany in World War II—that is, if verses 5-6 correspond to the time of verses 7-9.

Verses 7-9 refer to the great military strength of Jacob (the nations of modern Israel) in the end time. This appears to refer primarily to British and American military strength in its heyday. This period of strength is seen coming before Jacob's military power is at last cut off during the coming Great Tribulation (compare verses 10-14). In that awful tribulation, which is yet to come, Israel's cities will be destroyed (verse 14; compare Ezekiel 6:6). But in the end, God will execute vengeance on the nations (Micah 5:15).

### **God's Complaint Against Israel; Future Pardon (Micah 6-7)**

Chapters 6 and 7 appear to be directed primarily to Israel rather than Judah—although this could have included Judah. It is not clear when this prophecy was delivered. Based on the time span of Micah's ministry (see Micah 1:1), it is possible that it was actually given prior to Israel's first deportation or second deportation—and yet appended to the end of his book. However, it is also possible that it was given late in Hezekiah's reign. If the latter is true, the message would seem almost exclusively for the end time, since Israel would have already gone into captivity (yet with perhaps some application to ancient Judah, as mentioned). Of course, even if the prophecy was given before Israel's captivity, it would still clearly apply to the end time as well, based on the details in the latter half of chapter 7.

Chapter 6 "is in the familiar form of a lawsuit which God brings against Israel" (Lawrence Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, note on chap. 6). God calls the "mountains" and "hills" as witnesses (verses 1-2). While perhaps a literal reference to the land, which existed when the covenant with Israel was first made, it is just as likely that "mountains" and "hills" refers to great nations and smaller nations, as is often the case in biblical prophecy.

Actually, God makes the point that the Israelites act as if they have a case against Him. But He is clearly innocent of all charges. Just the opposite, God has repeatedly worked to save and help Israel. As an example, Balaam caused much grief to the Israelites by leading them into idolatry—but when used by Balak in an attempt to curse Israel, Balaam uttered many blessings and demonstrated God's love and protection for His people (verse 5; Numbers 22:2-24:25).

Micah 6:6-8 offers one of the clearest statements of a theme scattered throughout many other places in the Old Testament, as well as the New, which places the sacrificial system in its proper perspective (see 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 51:16-17; Hosea 6:6). God did not want sacrifices just for the sake of sacrifices. And He certainly did not want the abhorrent sacrifice of children at all—though many societies of that day thought this a legitimate sacrifice, including, at times, the Israelites.

God's real goal for mankind was and is to produce righteous character. God defines true goodness, which is what He says here that He really requires of us. It is, first of all, to "do justly"—that is, to live righteously (according to God's commandments, Psalm 119:172) and to judge and deal fairly. It also includes loving mercy—having a thankful heart for God's mercy and a compassionate heart that shows mercy to others, expressing itself in a willingness to help others in need. And finally, it means to walk humbly with God, trusting Him for guidance and direction. Christ called these things the "weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy and faith" (Matthew 23:23). Justice corresponds to living justly and judging with righteous judgment. And walking humbly with God is synonymous with walking by faith—humble and trusting, as a little child.

Micah 6:16 refers to the wickedness of Omri and especially his son Ahab, who were the first kings of Israel to bring Baal worship into prominence. Of Omri the Bible states, "Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all who were before him" (1 Kings 16:25). He founded the city of Samaria (1 Kings 16:24), which was virtually synonymous with idolatry. Israel is shown to be following Omri and Ahab's evil ways. Again, this could refer to ancient Israel. But it also applies to the nations of modern Israel, as widespread false Christianity is really a modified form of ancient Baal worship. The name Baal means "Lord." Many today worship a "Lord" they believe to be the true God—yet they are sadly deceived.

As Micah 7 opens, Micah is dismayed at the lack of righteous fruit in the society. In verse 3, he mentions a corrupt prince. This seems to be part of an end-time prophecy, and perhaps just means that all of Israel's

leaders in the last days are corrupt. However, if this prophecy were given late in Hezekiah's reign, it could perhaps have applied to Hezekiah's son, Manasseh—who would eventually prove to be Judah's most wicked ruler. Manasseh was coregent with Hezekiah in Judah from around 697-686 B.C.—just over a decade.

Regarding verses 5-6, Christ actually explained the meaning. Jesus often quoted the prophets when preaching—the very ones He originally inspired. And such was the case when He stated that He came not to bring peace, but a sword—referring to the fact that those who chose His way would often be greatly opposed and even betrayed by close friends and family members. He quoted Micah 7:6 in this context (see Matthew 10:34-39; Luke 12:49-53).

Verses 7-9 of Micah 7 should be of great comfort to us. Micah appears to be describing his own predicament and hope—but the same kinds of situations affect every Christian. Moreover, his words express the hope of Israel as well. Often God will allow us to experience consequences because of our sins. But upon our repentance He does forgive us—and He will ultimately save us. “She who is my enemy” (verse 10) is probably a reference to the false Christianity that has prevailed since the second century and is to dominate the world in the end time—referred to in Revelation 17 as “Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth.” She—that is, this evil system—will ultimately be destroyed, God promises. Of course, a forerunner of this system existed in Micah's own day even in Israel and Judah—as Canaanite paganism, rooted in Babylon, was in many aspects nefariously blended with God's true form of worship.

In Micah 7:12, “From Assyria and the fortified cities, from the fortress to the River” could perhaps be translated “From Assyria and the cities of Egypt, from Egypt to the River [Euphrates]” (see NKJV margin). This would parallel other verses that show the Israelites of the end time returning from both Assyria and Egypt in a great second Exodus (e.g., Isaiah 11:11). The territory of the northern kingdom will again be inhabited by the Israelites (Micah 7:14).

The second Exodus will be accompanied by great miracles, as the original Exodus was (verse 15). All nations will see and fear (verses 16-17). But the greatest testimony of the events is the measureless mercy of God—who will pardon Israel's sins upon their repentance despite all the injustice and evil they have committed against Him (verses 18-20).

This evokes the remark of “Who is a God like You...?” in verse 18, similar to the words in Exodus 15:11, “Who is like You, O Eternal...?”—which were part of the song that the Israelites sang to God when He delivered them from Pharaoh at the Red Sea. The statement in Micah provides an interesting play on words because the name Micah means, “Who Is Like the Eternal?” Micah himself stood in awe of the incredible mercy of God.

Interestingly, the Jews have a traditional practice called Tashlich, meaning, “You will cast,” taken from the Hebrew words of Micah 7:19. For most this is done on the Feast of Trumpets, although some do it on the Day of Atonement, which seems more fitting. It involves throwing lint and bread crumbs from one's pocket—or casting a stone—into a body of water. The concept is that in the same way, God will cast their sins away. Amazingly, it is in the ultimate fulfillment of the fall Holy Days that most of the Jewish people will at last find the redemption these customs portray.

But for all those whom God is calling in this age, redemption is available now. Consider the imagery of a stone sinking to the bottom of the ocean—never to be seen or heard from again. This is what God says is done with our sins. How grateful we should all be for His unbounded grace and mercy. What a truly wonderful God we serve.

## **Ecclesiastes 11-12**

Solomon presses the rich to do good to others. Give freely, though it may seem thrown away and lost. Give to many. Excuse not thyself with the good thou hast done, from the good thou hast further to do. It is not lost, but well laid out. We have reason to expect evil, for we are born to trouble; it is wisdom to do good in the day of prosperity. Riches cannot profit us, if we do not benefit others. Every man must labour to be a blessing to that place where the providence of God casts him. Wherever we are, we may find good work to do, if we have but hearts to do it. If we magnify every little difficulty, start objections, and fancy hardships, we shall never go on, much less go through with our work. Winds and clouds of tribulation are, in God's hands, designed to try us.

God's work shall agree with his word, whether we see it or not. And we may well trust God to provide for us, without our anxious, disquieting cares. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season, in God's time, you shall reap, Galatians 6:9.

Life is sweet to bad men, because they have their portion in this life; it is sweet to good men, because it is the time of preparation for a better; it is sweet to all. Here is a caution to think of death, even when life is most sweet. Solomon makes an effecting address to young persons. They would desire opportunity to pursue every pleasure. Then follow your desires, but be assured that God will call you into judgment. How many give loose to every appetite, and rush into every vicious pleasure!

But God registers every one of their sinful thoughts and desires, their idle words and wicked words. If they would avoid remorse and terror, if they would have hope and comfort on a dying bed, if they would escape misery here and hereafter, let them remember the vanity of youthful pleasures. That Solomon means to condemn the pleasures of sin is evident. His object is to draw the young to purer and more lasting joys. This is not the language of one grudging youthful pleasures, because he can no longer partake of them; but of one who has, by a miracle of mercy, been brought back in safety. He would persuade the young from trying a course whence so few return. If the young would live a life of true happiness, if they would secure happiness hereafter, let them remember their Creator in the days of their youth.

We should remember our sins against our Creator, repent, and seek forgiveness. We should remember our duties, and set about them, looking to him for grace and strength. This should be done early, while the body is strong, and the spirits active. When a man has the pain of reviewing a misspent life, his not having given up sin and worldly vanities till he is forced to say, I have no pleasure in them, renders his sincerity very questionable. Then follows a figurative description of old age and its infirmities, which has some difficulties; but the meaning is plain, to show how uncomfortable, generally, the days of old age are. As the four verses, 2-5, are a figurative description of the infirmities that usually accompany old age, verse 6 notices the circumstances which take place in the hour of death. If sin had not entered into the world, these infirmities would not have been known. Surely then the aged should reflect on the evil of sin.

Solomon repeats his text, VANITY OF VANITIES, ALL IS VANITY. These are the words of one that could speak by dear-bought experience of the vanity of the world, which can do nothing to ease men of the burden of sin. As he considered the worth of souls, he gave good heed to what he spake and wrote; words of truth will always be acceptable words. The truths of God are as goads to such as are dull and draw back, and nails to such as are wandering and draw aside; means to establish the heart, that we may never sit loose to our duty, nor be taken from it. The Shepherd of Israel is the Giver of inspired wisdom.

Teachers and guides all receive their communications from him. The title is applied in Scripture to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The prophets sought diligently, what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. To write many books was not suited to the shortness of human life, and would be weariness to the writer, and to the reader; and then was much more so to both than it is now. All things would be vanity and vexation, except they led to this conclusion, That to fear God, and keep his commandments, is the whole of man. The fear of God includes in it all the affections of the soul towards him, which are produced by the Holy Spirit. There may be terror where there is no love, nay, where there is hatred. But this is different from the gracious fear of God, as the feelings of an affectionate child.

The fear of God, is often put for the whole of true religion in the heart, and includes its practical results in the life. Let us attend to the one thing needful, and now come to him as a merciful Saviour, who will soon come as an almighty Judge, when he will bring to light the things of darkness, and manifest the counsels of all hearts. Why does God record in his word, that ALL IS VANITY, but to keep us from deceiving ourselves to our ruin? He makes our duty to be our interest. May it be graven in all our hearts. Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is all that concerns man.

## **1 Corinthians 11**

The apostle, after an exhortation to follow him, (1) corrects some abuses. (2-16) Also contentions, divisions, and disorderly celebrations of the Lord's supper. (17-22) He reminds them of the nature and design of its institution. (23-26) And directs how to attend upon it in a due manner. (27-34)

The first verse of this chapter seems properly to be the close to the last. The apostle not only preached such doctrine as they ought to believe, but led such a life as they ought to live. Yet Christ being our perfect example, the actions and conduct of men, as related in the Scriptures, should be followed only so far as they are like to his.

Here begin particulars respecting the public assemblies, 1 Corinthians 14. In the abundance of spiritual gifts bestowed on the Corinthians, some abuses had crept in; but as Christ did the will, and sought the honour of God, so the Christian should avow his subjection to Christ, doing his will and seeking his glory. We should, even in our dress and habit, avoid every thing that may dishonour Christ. The man and the woman were made for one another. They were to be mutual comforts and blessings, not one a slave, and the other a tyrant. God has so settled matters, both in the kingdom of providence and that of grace, that the authority and subjection of each party should be for mutual help and benefit. It was the common usage of the churches, for women to appear in public assemblies, and join in public worship, veiled; and it was right that they should do so. The Christian religion sanctions national customs wherever these are not against the great principles of truth and holiness; affected singularities receive no countenance from any thing in the Bible.

The apostle rebukes the disorders in their partaking of the Lord's supper. The ordinances of Christ, if they do not make us better, will be apt to make us worse. If the use of them does not mend, it will harden. Upon coming together, they fell into divisions, schisms. Christians may separate from each other's communion, yet be charitable one towards another; they may continue in the same communion, yet be uncharitable. This last is schism, rather than the former. There is a careless and irregular eating of the Lord's supper, which adds to guilt.

Many rich Corinthians seem to have acted very wrong at the Lord's table, or at the love-feasts, which took place at the same time as the supper. The rich despised the poor, and ate and drank up the provisions they brought, before the poor were allowed to partake; thus some wanted, while others had more than enough. What should have been a bond of mutual love and affection, was made an instrument of discord and disunion. We should be careful that nothing in our behaviour at the Lord's table, appears to make light of that sacred institution. The Lord's supper is not now made an occasion for gluttony or revelling, but is it not often made the support of self-righteous pride, or a cloak for hypocrisy? Let us never rest in the outward forms of worship; but look to our hearts.

The apostle describes the sacred ordinance, of which he had the knowledge by revelation from Christ. As to the visible signs, these are the bread and wine. What is eaten is called bread, though at the same time it is said to be the body of the Lord, plainly showing that the apostle did not mean that the bread was changed into flesh. St. Matthew tells us, our Lord bid them all drink of the cup, Matthew 26:27, as if he would, by this expression, provide against any believer being deprived of the cup. The things signified by these outward signs, are Christ's body and blood, his body broken, his blood shed, together with all the benefits which flow from his death and sacrifice. Our Saviour's actions were, taking the bread and cup, giving thanks, breaking the bread, and giving both the one and the other. The actions of the communicants were, to take the bread and eat, to take the cup and drink, and to do both in remembrance of Christ. But the outward acts are not the whole, or the principal part, of what is to be done at this holy ordinance. Those who partake of it, are to take him as their Lord and Life, yield themselves up to him, and live upon him. Here is an account of the ends of this ordinance. It is to be done in remembrance of Christ, to keep fresh in our minds his dying for us, as well as to remember Christ pleading for us, in virtue of his death, at God's right hand. It is not merely in remembrance of Christ, of what he has done and suffered; but to celebrate his grace in our redemption. We declare his death to be our life, the spring of all our comforts and hopes. And we glory in such a declaration; we show forth his death, and plead it as our accepted sacrifice and ransom. The Lord's supper is not an ordinance to be observed merely for a time, but to be continued. The apostle lays before the Corinthians the danger of receiving it with an unsuitable temper of mind; or keeping up the covenant with sin and death, while professing to renew and confirm the covenant with God. No doubt such incur great guilt, and so render themselves liable to spiritual judgements. But fearful believers should not be discouraged from attending at this holy ordinance. The Holy Spirit never caused this scripture to be written to deter serious Christians from their duty, though the devil has often made this use of it.

The apostle was addressing Christians, and warning them to beware of the temporal judgements with which God chastised his offending servants. And in the midst of judgement, God remembers mercy: he many times punishes those whom he loves. It is better to bear trouble in this world, than to be miserable for ever. The apostle points out the duty of those who come to the Lord's table. Self-examination is necessary to right attendance at this holy ordinance. If we would thoroughly search ourselves, to condemn and set right what we find wrong, we should stop Divine judgements. The apostle closes all with a caution against the irregularities of which the Corinthians were guilty at the Lord's table. Let all look to it, that they do not come together to God's worship, so as to provoke him, and bring down vengeance on themselves.