

# Triennial Torah Study – 2<sup>nd</sup> Year 07/01/2012



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By Joseph F. Dumond

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Lev 9-10	Jer 40-43	Proverbs 22	Acts 19
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## Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 9-10)

In chapter 9 Moses instructs Aaron to proceed and offer the first offerings as God's high priest. In verse 15, the offering for the people is a goat. While the animal specified as a sin offering for the congregation in Leviticus 4:14 was a bull, a goat was used for this purpose on some occasions (16:9, 5; Numbers 28-29; 15:22-26; 2 Chronicles 29:20-24; Ezra 6:17; 8:35).

At this inauguration of sacrifices, Aaron pronounces a blessing on Israel (verse 22). The specific wording of the priestly blessing that God commanded to be bestowed upon Israel is given in Numbers 6:23-26. This may be the blessing to which Leviticus 9:22 refers.

In verses 23-24 we see a spectacular event. "The sacrifices were consumed, not by fire ignited by Aaron, but by fire from before the Lord. This is the first of only five times that the Old Testament records fire from God as a sign that a sacrifice was accepted (Judg. 6:21; 1 Kin. 18:38; 1 Chr. 21:26; 2 Chr. 7:1). Since the fire on this altar was never to go out [see Leviticus 6:9, 12-13], all Israel's sacrifices from this time forward would be consumed by fire that originated from God" (Nelson Study Bible, note on 9:24). However, while certainly plausible, it is not absolutely clear that this was the case.

After Aaron's sons are later killed for bringing profane fire before the Lord, Moses explains to Aaron why God has done this and then instructs Aaron's cousins to remove the dead men from the sanctuary. God then commands Aaron and his sons to not drink alcohol before going into the tabernacle of meeting. But the account had only spoken of Nadab and Abihu bringing profane fire and incense before God—so why is this particular instruction regarding intoxicating drink given to Aaron in the midst of what had just happened? Although it is possible that God was simply relating another way that one could show disregard for him during these rituals, the text here may be indicating that the inappropriate use of alcohol had played a role in the two brothers' poor judgment and behavior.

The punishment God inflicted on the two was very severe. We know there are certainly many times where people have "worshiped" God in a way that He does not recognize or appreciate,

yet for which He does not strike them down immediately. However, at the time of this account, God was playing a very visible role in the nation of Israel and was actually teaching the people the magnitude of reverence they needed to have for Him: “By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified” (Leviticus 10:3)—it was critical for them to understand.

What Aaron’s sons did was not in ignorance, for God had already given clear instructions through Moses on how He was to be regarded. In this situation, Nadab and Abihu’s disregard and carelessness could not go uncorrected—it was not only offensive to God, but would have fostered a careless attitude about God’s instructions among the people. When God says to regard Him as holy, He means it. The instructive nature of this event was so important that Aaron and his remaining sons were not allowed to show any outward sign of grievance—they were required to maintain their composure and to continue their priestly duties to illustrate the justice and righteousness of God’s wrath.

The NIV Study Bible notes regarding the death of Nadab and Abihu: “They are regularly remembered as having died before the Lord and as having had no sons. Their death was tragic and at first seems harsh, but no more so than that of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:111). In both cases a new era was being inaugurated.... The new community had to be made aware that it existed for God, not vice versa.”

## **Jeremiah 40-41**

Chapter 40 covers the chief guard of the Chaldean army, Nebuzaradan, freeing Jeremiah from his chains in Ramah and giving him the choice of going to Babel, remaining in Ramah, or to go and stay with Gedalyah in Mitspah. Gedalyah was put in control and head over the remaining poor remnant left in the land of Judah who were not being exiled to Babel. It is interesting to note that even the Chaldean Nebuzaradan recognized why all this curse had come upon the people of Yehovah. He states in v 2-3, “YHWH your Elohim has spoken this evil on this place. And YHWH has brought it on, and has done, as He has said. Because you have sinned against YHWH, and did not obey His voice, therefore this matter has come upon you.”

Jeremiah decides to go to Mitspah to stay with Gedalyah and when the people who had scattered to Moab and Edom heard that Gedalyah was left to rule over the land – they returned. They were allowed to continue to farm the land and bring in their summer fruits.

We are told that a rumor begins concerning a murder plot against the life of Gedalyah. The man named Yohanan son of Qareah tells Gedalyah that Yishma’el the son of Nethanyahu has been sent by Ba’alis the sovereign of the Ammonites to kill him. Gedalyah refuses to believe him or the rumor.

In chapter 41 we are informed that the rumor was in fact true. In the seventh month there was a dinner party at the office of Gedalyah. Yishma’el was there with ten of his men to eat bread with the ruler who Babel has set over the people of Judah. At the dinner, Yishma’el and his ten men

rose up and slew Gedalyah with the sword along with all the men there including the Chaldean fighting men of battle. He continued this rampage of killing throughout the next coming days. Yishma'el and his group ran into some 80 men coming from Shekem, Shiloh, and Samaria (their dress indicates they were priests of some sort) and trapped them after they came into the city by acting as though "someone" had slain the head Gedalyah. Yishma'el and his men slew them, many of them although some begged for their lives and were saved due to the wheat, barley, honey, and oil they had. The dead were thrown into a pit.

When Yohanan son of Qareah got word of the killing rampage carried out by Yishma'el and his men, he gathered a small army of fighting men and set out to stop the killing and terror. When the captives of Yishma'el saw them coming, they were happy and joined them in fighting against the terrorist. Yishma'el's group was defeated but Yishma'el escaped back to Ammon along with eight of his men who escaped with him.

### **Fleeing to Egypt (Jeremiah 42-43)**

Fearing a new Babylonian rampage through the land, the Jewish remnant deems it important to have God on their side. So, they ask Jeremiah to pray for God's will to be revealed (verses 12). Yet it becomes apparent that what they really want is confirmation of what they have already made up their minds to do—flee to Egypt (see 43:2). "It is an insult to God to ask for his will, when a decision has already been made before his answer comes. Whoever prays with a closed mind might just as well not pray at all" (Harper Study Bible, note on 42:10). The people hadn't fooled God or Jeremiah. God knew they were hypocritical and essentially deceitful when they asked Jeremiah to pray for them (verse 20).

The response from God didn't come immediately. God doesn't always answer us when we want answers, but when He chooses. They didn't get the response they wanted. Even today, many pray for God to bless something that they want, rather than seek His will and accept what He gives. Some go to God's ministers as if seeking counsel, yet having already made up their minds, expecting the minister to support their stand and vindicate their planned actions. When the advice doesn't agree, they sometimes then become angry with the minister, perhaps even disparaging him. So, it was with the Jews and Jeremiah at this time. They did not recognize that their stubbornness was the problem, not an "uncooperative" or "insensitive" servant of God.

Jeremiah 42:10 recalls the prophet's original commission: "to root out and pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant" (1:10). If the Jewish remnant would obey God, He would relent of the judgment of bringing the group down but would rebuild them as a people in the Promised Land. This was always God's will—to bless and give an inheritance. Human rebellion impeded that.

Verse 11 of chapter 42 recalls another statement God made at the beginning of Jeremiah's call. There God told him not to fear any who would seek to harm him for God would be with him to deliver him (1:8). Now God through Jeremiah says the same will be true for the Jewish remnant if the people will do what He says and remain in the Promised Land. Mastering the Old

Testament says: “Think of the memories that would have rushed into Jeremiah’s thoughts as he delivered these words, the same words delivered to him at the time of his call (1:8). Truly he had experienced deliverance: from Pashhur’s stocks, from Hananiah’s accusations, from prison, from the mire of the cistern, and from Babylonian anger, but most of all he had been delivered from the temptation to compromise. No wonder there was such a resonance of faith in the words themselves as they flow on” (Vol. 17: Jeremiah, Lamentations by John Guest, 1993, note on verse 11).

Sadly, Jeremiah’s obedient and steadfast character was not shared by the Jewish leaders who were left. Faith in God cannot be given to others; all must learn and chose it over time and in their own life experiences. In rebellion they left Judah and went to Egypt, taking with them Jeremiah and Baruch—presumably against their will as God had forbidden going there. Once again, the “king’s daughters” are listed in the company. The group travels to Tahpanhes in Egypt. “The location of Tahpahnes is known, for the later Hellenized form of the name, Daphne, survives to this day in Tell Deffeneh, west of el Kantara. A prominent mound among the ruins was called by the natives ‘Palace of the daughter of the Jew.’ Some excavations were conducted there by Sir Flinders Petrie, which showed this ‘palace’ to have been a strong fort. However, there must also have been a palace of the Pharaoh here, for Jeremiah performed a symbolic action at its entrance...Ezekiel speaks of the pride of Tahpanhes (Ezek. 30:18), but like Jeremiah (Jer. 43:9 f.) foresees the disaster for the city” (Emil Kraeling, Rand McNally Bible Atlas, 1956, p. 318).

Biblical historian Walter Kaiser gives further information on the location and what happened there: “The migrants came to Tahpanhes (Tell Dafanneh) in the northeastern delta of Egypt (Jer. 43:1-7). There Jeremiah took stones, at Yahweh’s instruction, and hid them at the entry of the royal palace, predicting that God would one day bring Nebuchadnezzar to conquer this place and set his pavilion on that very spot (Jer. 43:8-13)... This site is twenty-seven miles southwest of Port Said. Sir Flinders Petrie excavated this site in 1883-94 and discovered the foundations of the castle there—perhaps the one mentioned in Jeremiah’s symbolic action” (A History of Israel, 1988, pp. 411).

After burying the rocks, Jeremiah gives the Jews another warning from God. In referring to Nebuchadnezzar as “My servant” (verse 10; see also 25:9; 27:6), God is not, as noted in regard to the earlier references, stating that the Babylonian king is a godly king or that he gets his orders by direct revelation from God. All rulers, whether good or evil, have their power through God’s ultimate oversight and direction of human affairs (Romans 13:1-6). God uses such rulers to deal with His people and to teach them lessons just as He used the Babylonians and Assyrians in dealing with Judah and Israel.

God will eventually deal with all nations who refuse to follow Him, and Egypt was no exception. Nebuchadnezzar would invade and lay waste to that country, too—incorporating it then into the Babylonian Empire. (Recall other prophecies of Egypt’s destruction in Jeremiah 46 and Ezekiel 29-32). “A fragmentary [Babylonian] text in the British Museum indicates that

Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Egypt occurred in the thirty-seventh year of his reign (568-567 B.C.)" (Expositor's, note on 43:10-11).

Verse 13 of chapter 43 refers to the sacred pillars of Beth Shemesh ("House [or temple] of the Sun"). There were a number of pre-Israelite settlements in Canaan known by this name, the most well-known being on the northern border of Judah. But the one referred to here is in Egypt, known as Heliopolis in Greek and called On by the Egyptians.

"Heliopolis was perhaps most splendid in the Middle and New Kingdoms...when many pharaohs adorned its temples with obelisks. These were tall shafts, capped with miniature pyramids that caught the first and last rays of the sun" ("Heliopolis," *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, 1983, p. 233).

Many nations have their symbols of pride—their monuments, palaces and grand edifices that they perceive as symbols of strength—and Egypt was no exception. The sacred pillars or obelisks were symbols of Egypt's pride, and God would hit the nation right at its heart. "Jeremiah likens the ease with which Nebuchadnezzar would do these things to the casual way in which a shepherd wraps himself in his garment... The king of Egypt at this time was

Pharaoh Hophra (cf. 44:30) [who is also known by the Greek form of his name, Apries]. The Babylonian historian Berossus confirms the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar" (Expositor's, note on 43:12).

"Since Heliopolis was indeed the city of obelisks ('sacred pillars'), it is clear why Jeremiah predicts their demolition. Some obelisks originally at On have been carried off to Alexandria, Rome, Istanbul, London and New York. Only one has been left at On" (footnote on verse 13).

Rather than be a place of refuge for the fleeing Judeans, Egypt will prove eventually to be a place for them of judgment and death—just as Jeremiah warned in chapter 42. As the book of Proverbs says, "Sometimes there is a way that seems to be right, but in the end, it is the way to death" (16:25, NRSV).

In the next chapter we'll see more of what Jeremiah had to say to these immigrants.

## **Proverbs 22**

End of Major Solomonic Collection (Proverbs 22:1-16)

51. A Good Name (22:1)

"TYPE: INDIVIDUAL PROVERB" (NAC).

52. Wealth, Poverty and a Prudent Life (22:2-5)

"TYPE: PARALLEL. The structure of this text is as follows:

"On the surface vv. 3,5 both simply state that the wise see and avoid trouble but the ignorant or headstrong plunge into it. In the context of vv. 2,4, however, this text asserts that the failure to spot danger arises precisely from the arrogance of refusal to submit to God" (NAC).

The point of verse 2 is expressed similarly in 29:13. And 22:3 is repeated in 27:12.

Proverbs 22:4 says that the path to the good life here expressed as “riches and honor and life” (compare “life, righteousness and honor” in 21:21) is through the fear of God. True riches, of course, does not primarily mean material wealth in the here and now. For some it may include that, and in any case, God does provide for the physical comforts of His servants. Ultimately all of God’s people will be blessed with co-ownership of the entire universe.

53. Various Proverbs (22:6-16)

“TYPE: INCLUSIO....Verse 6 and 15 (on disciplining children) in parallel with vv. 7 and 16 (on wealth and poverty) form an inclusio for this text of various proverbs.

? “Discipline for Children (22:6, 15)” (NAC).

“One verse we should consider in dealing with our children is Proverbs 22:6. It appears in the New King James Version as: ‘Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.’ We can draw an obvious, direct conclusion from this translation that proper training will pay off in the long run. This is certainly valid.

“It is normal for most children to grow up with, and ultimately adopt, values and standards similar to their parents’ that is, if the parents do a reasonable job of bringing them up. Sometimes, especially when their children are teenagers, parents feel as if they’re not getting through. They may wonder whether all their efforts are wasted. But experience shows that if they stick with a good game plan, they will eventually realize the desired results.

“Some Bible scholars offer an alternate explanation for the intent of this verse; that ‘the way he should go’ refers to each child’s ability and potential. The root word for ‘way,’ they note, also has to do with the inclination of a tree, which can break if one tries to rebend it. They also note that the original Hebrew wording refers to ‘his way’, the child’s way, rather than ‘the way [he should go].’

“With this in mind some would translate the verse, ‘Train up a child according to his bent, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.’ In other words, wise parents should recognize the aptitudes and interests of each child and train him to best use his abilities to reach his potential.

“Whether this is the intended meaning, it represents another valid approach. Parents should enable their children to develop their natural talents and abilities. Too often a father or mother will attempt to force children to do the same things they do or to be what they are.

“Sometimes parents want to live vicariously through their children as they push them to achieve what they wanted to do but couldn’t. We need to recognize our children’s distinct God-given abilities, then work to help them fulfill their potential

“Still others understand the latter translation to mean that if we train up a child in his own way? that is, through continually allowing him to do whatever he wants and to always get his own way; that he will be stuck in that wrong way of thinking and living for the rest of his life. The verse

would then be a warning to parents against coddling and failing to discipline. This concept, too, is certainly valid” (p. 25).

The latter idea corresponds well to verse 15 (compare 29:15). Yet as explained in our introduction, verses sanctioning the rod of correction do not mean to say that a parent should employ corporal punishment as a primary means of discipline.

. “Reaping What You Sow (22:8-9)” (NAC). This important principle, the negative side of which is given in verse 8, is expressed similarly elsewhere in Scripture (Hosea 8:7; Galatians 6:7-8; compare Job 4:8, where this true principle was misapplied to Job). On the positive side, Proverbs 22:9 in this context corresponds to 2 Corinthians 9:6-11.

. “Words and What Comes of Them (22:10-14)...Five-character types here represent five ways speech can be used. The mocker engenders quarrels (v. 10), the pure impresses even a king (v. 11), the liar [or faithless person speaking contrary to true knowledge] is undone by God (v. 12), the shiftless produces only a stream of improbable excuses (v. 13), and the prostitute [or immoral woman] uses language for seduction and entrapment (v. 14)” (NAC)?the latter harkening back to warnings in the prologue of Proverbs, where an immoral woman also represents folly in a more general sense (compare 2:16; 9:13-18; see also 23:27-28).

The mocker or scoffer (22:10) creates an uncomfortable environment for everyone around him and is also a bad influence on others. If he will not reform, expulsion from the community; a congregation, club or workplace in a modern context, is the recommended course. This will bring peace to the rest of the group, serve as a warning to others against such behavior, and possibly help the offender himself to realize the magnitude of his problem resulting in repentance.

Verse 11 implies that deception and flattery get one only so far in achieving a position of trust. Eventually such a person will be revealed for what he is. A decent, honest person will be trusted for his record of integrity. Haman and Mordecai in the book of Esther exemplify this well.

Verse 13, similarly expressed in 26:13, gives some comic relief, illustrating, as noted above, how lazy people invent excuses to avoid doing whatever needs to be done.

? “Creditor and Debtor (22:7, 16)” (NAC). Verse 7 observes that debt can be a form of slavery. In fact, failure to repay debt in ancient Israel could obligate a person to suffer indentured servitude. This is part of the reason other verses caution against becoming surety for others. Verse 7 may bear on the meaning of verse 16. This last proverb in Solomon’s major collection concerns social justice (as does the first proverb in the next section, verses 22-23), but the exact wording of verse 16 is disputed. Some versions, including the New King James, show an oppressor of the poor for self-enrichment and one who gives to the rich both coming to poverty. Oppressors will indeed come to poverty in the end (compare verses 22-23). Yet other translations take coming to poverty in verse 16 as referring to only the one giving to the rich.

In the latter vein, some see in verse 16 an abusive creditor-debtor relationship in this paraphrased sense: The rich oppress the poor [through such means as entangling them in high-interest loans] to make themselves even richer, / while the poor who are stuck making loan payments to the rich are made even poorer. This interpretation offers a sensible explanation of “giving” to the rich, the reason for which otherwise seems unclear. Some have suggested a futile attempt to buy the favor of the rich, but who would do this to the point of impoverishment? “Giving” here makes more sense as a matter of obligation and this fits debt repayment. Such wisdom is not meant to totally rule out loans. There is an appropriate context for lending and borrowing if the lending is fair and the borrower is well able to repay, given reasonable consideration of the future. Yet no such arrangement should be entered into lightly.

## **Acts 19**

Sha’ul is now in Ephesos and he has found some taught ones who previously heard the Good News and believed. He asked them about receiving the Set-apart Spirit. They did not know of what he was speaking so he told them “Yohanan the Immerser immersed you in an immersion of repentance and that afterward they are to immerse in the belief in Messiah Yahshua.” And so they were immersed and when Sha’ul laid his hands upon them, twelve of their men began speaking in tongues and prophesying. He spoke boldly before them for three months until some of them began hardening their hearts against The Way. Sha’ul separated from them himself and those taught ones and he continued with them teaching them for two years and all those who lived in Asia heard the word of Messiah both Jews and Greeks.

We are told Elohim worked great and unusual miracles through Sha’ul and he was greatly empowered with authority over healing and disease. Some of the Jewish exorcists began to use the name of Sha’ul and The Name in which Sha’ul had his power – that being Messiah Yahshua – and were exorcising people. A Jewish Chief Priest by the name of Skeua along with his seven sons were doing this. We are told that the wicked spirit actually said to these men “Yahshua I know, and Sha’ul I know, but who are you?” And at that the wicked spirit left a certain man and attacked them to which they ran out overpowered, naked, and wounded. The people heard of this and were filled with awe and fear and the Name of Messiah was very great.

People began repenting and burning their books of magic and the Word was very successful at this time. After this, Sha’ul planned to go through Macedonia and Achaia, on to Jerusalem and then to Rome. He sent Timothy and Erastos to Macedonia for a while and there came to be a great commotion concerning the Way that was being proclaimed. The reason was that the teaching began to effect business and that mostly of the business of the making and selling of idols. Most of those in that land were worshippers of Artemis and worshipped with idols and in that temple and the religion began to suffer damage because of the Truth. The businessmen were outraged and began a terror throughout that city and took hold of Gaios, Aristarchos, Macedonians and Sha’ul’s fellow travellers. The riot was eventually calmed by Alexander and the people dispersed.