

Triennial Torah Study – 2nd Year 14/01/2012



sightedmoon.com /triennial-torah-study-2nd-year-04042015 /

By Joseph F. Dumond

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

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

Lev 11	Jer 44-46	Prov 23	Acts 20
---------------	------------------	----------------	----------------

Leviticus 11

Laws of Clean and Unclean Meat (Leviticus 11-12)

These dietary laws, repeated in Deuteronomy 14, were around long before the institution of the Levitical priesthood—indeed, long before Israel even existed. For even before the Flood of Noah's day, almost 1,000 years earlier, we see the distinction between clean and unclean animals. At that time, God commanded Noah to take two of every unclean animal onto the ark and seven (or seven pairs) of every clean animal (Genesis 7:2-9). Regrettably, many today argue that the dietary laws were done away in the New Testament. However, there are no scriptures that support this view, even though some have misused certain verses to try to make the point. To counter one popular argument, the dietary laws were not done away by the ending of the Old Covenant initiated at Sinai, because, again, they were in force long before that covenant came into being. Nowhere does the New Testament abrogate God's laws regarding clean and unclean animals. Indeed, frogs are still viewed as "unclean" at the very end of the Bible, along with certain birds (compare Revelation 16:13; 18:2).

While the Jewish people have preserved the dietary laws—along with some dietary traditions not enjoined by Scripture—the people of the "lost 10 tribes" of Israel, influenced by their gentile neighbors, gradually stopped observing them. And God remains very displeased about this fact. In Isaiah 65, speaking of the end time, He says: "I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts; a people who provoke Me to anger continually to My face... who eat swine's flesh, and the broth of abominable things is in their vessels" (verses 2-4).

In fact, the next chapter of Isaiah prophesies that Christ, at His return, is going to punish such people for eating unclean meat as part of their willful ignorance of and disobedience to God's instruction, even though they may not view it as such. Notice what God says: "For behold, the Lord will come with fire and with His chariots, like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword the Lord will judge all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many. 'Those who sanctify themselves and purify themselves, to go to the gardens after an idol in the midst, eating swine's flesh and the abomination and the mouse,

shall be consumed together,' says the Lord. For I know their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory" (66:15-18). Ultimately all nations will come to know God's truth—including His laws regarding clean and unclean meats.

We will see more about clean and unclean meats as pertaining to holiness (see Leviticus 11:44-47) in the highlights for Leviticus 20:25-26.

Jeremiah 44-46

Jeremiah's Final Warning (Jeremiah 44)

Jeremiah 44 is the last chapter the prophet wrote in his book. The chapters that follow were written earlier—except for the final chapter, 52, which appears to have been added by someone else in later years.

Jeremiah delivers his final warning to the Jewish remnant that had refused to heed God's warnings. It is evident that some time has passed since the previous chapter—given that many of the Jews have returned to idolatry and have moved throughout the land of Egypt. It should also be mentioned that there were also colonies of Jews living in Egypt that had moved there previously, as mentioned in the Bible Reading Program comments on Jeremiah 24:8-10 (a passage that stated that the Jews in Egypt would be among those delivered to trouble and destruction). Some of the Jews in Egypt may have descended from those who had migrated in the days of Judah's King Manasseh a century earlier.

As Jeremiah 44:1 shows, the Jews were spread out over a vast area in Egypt. Migdol is a Canaanite name meaning "watchtower" or "fortress" and is most likely a city on the northeastern border of Egypt. There are a number of references to Migdol in the Old Testament. The earliest was on the route of the Exodus (Exodus 14:2, Numbers 33:7) just before the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. There is a further reference to Migdol in Ezekiel's prophecy concerning the destruction of Egypt (Ezekiel 29:10). We can't be certain whether these all refer to the place, but Ezekiel's reference as a key location in describing the extent of Egyptian destruction makes it a prominent city in the north.

Tahpanhes was also a prominent northern city and the location of the pharaoh's northern palace. It was to be the place where Nebuchadnezzar would set up his throne when he invaded Egypt. The Egyptians were proud of this city, which Ezekiel also prophesied would be doomed (Ezekiel 30:18). Tahpanhes and Migdol were close to the northern end of what is now the Suez Canal, on the edge of Lake Manzala.

Noph is the city of Memphis, the ancient capital of Lower Egypt (northern Egypt). Memphis sits just outside modern Cairo, about five miles south of the pyramids.

"Pathros is Upper Egypt [southern Egypt], or the Nile Valley between Cairo and Aswan. The name appears in Assyrian inscriptions of the seventh century B.C... The Elephantine Papyri

from the fifth century B.C. tell us that a Jewish colony settled there [in the area of Aswan]" (Expositor's Bible Commentary, note on Jeremiah 44:1).

Historian Walter Kaiser sums up the chapter as "a message prepared for the Jewish diaspora living in Egypt, who had by now adopted the Egyptian lifestyle and syncretistically adopted many features of Egyptian religious life, Jeremiah reminded them that they would be the same ones who would suffer the judgment of God. Pharaoh Hophra... would be handed over to his enemies and the shelter the Judeans had sought would no longer exist" (A History of Israel, 1988, pp. 411).

Syncretism or mixing religious customs—in this case blending the traditions and superstitions of other nations in with the ways God revealed He wanted His people to worship Him—was a historical weakness of Israel. And, it was directly contrary to God's warning in Deuteronomy 12:29-32. Remarkably, Israelites make the same mistake today!

Jeremiah reminds them that the reason for the calamity on Jerusalem and all the other Jewish cities is their rebellion against Him in serving false gods (verses 2-14). The response of the men says a great deal about their spiritual condition. And it was evidently the women who were now leading the push to incorporate pagan customs as part of their own religious practices, worshiping the so-called "queen of heaven" and dragging the whole population down. But while the women may have been the driving force in this apostasy, the men were in full agreement. Then the women reaffirmed their embracing of what was actually spiritual adultery—unfaithfulness to the true God who "was a husband to them" (31:32). They basically "reasoned that when they stopped worshiping the queen of heaven in the days of Josiah's reform, their king was killed and their land was overrun and destroyed" (Nelson Study Bible, note on 44:18). They looked back at the time of pagan worship as a time of blessing and prosperity. Because of their rebellious natures, they chose the simplistic and false reasoning that any rewards or punishments from God would come immediately. Amazingly, then, after all they had seen and experienced, they had learned nothing. Their reasoning seems utterly bizarre. Yet people today still reject biblical religion with similar arguments: "I haven't noticed any problems for not worshiping God; in fact, things have been better for me since I stopped." Or, "I think that trying to follow the Bible and its laws is what hurts people and that being free from all those restrictions is much better."

"The Jews maintained that when they had offered incense to other gods and had poured out libations to the queen of heaven, all went well. When they ceased to do these things, circumstances worked against them. Somehow they refused to realize that it was the doing of these things which had first occasioned the invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. Wicked people will always find excuses to evade guilt and justify illicit actions" (Harper Study Bible, note on verse 18).

Their shallow approach to religion is almost on the level of superstition or of those who follow horoscopes today—who read generically written "prophecies" that are so ambiguous that they

can be interpreted any number of ways. Of course, that's the idea. For then people can still direct their own lives rather than submit to the authority of a Supreme Being.

Walter Kaiser provides some insight into the Queen of Heaven cult that has a lot of significance for today. "Jeremiah, like several of the other prophets (e.g. Ezek 8:14-15) indicted Judah for her adoption and practice of the cultic rituals of the pagans around them. One apostasy that was particularly repugnant was the ancient cult of 'the Queen of Heaven.' In two separate passages, Jeremiah 7:16-18 and 44:15-19, 25, the prophet lamented the fact that the women were 'making cakes' [Hebrew kawwanim] for her, 'like her image' [Hebrew leha'asibah], and 'pouring out drink offerings to her.'

"Now the interesting fact is that the Hebrew word for 'cakes,' which occurs in Hebrew only in these two passages, is a loan-word from Akkadian, an East Semitic Language, spoken in Mesopotamia from 2000 to 500 B.C. Kawwanim were sweetened cakes used in the Mesopotamian cult of the mother goddess Ishtar. Archaeologists discovered in the palace kitchen at the site of Mari, an ancient city located in the Middle Euphrates region, as many as forty-seven clay molds that may have been used for very similar purposes to those opposed by the prophet. Mold number 1044 seems to represent the nude goddess Ishtar, seen seated with her hands supporting her breasts, thus possessing the image of the goddess that Jeremiah had warned against.

"The exact identity of the Queen of Heaven has not been finally solved, with candidates ranging from the West Semitic Astarte [Hebrew Ashtaroth or Ashtoreth], Anat and Asherah to the East Semitic Ishtar. However, the title 'Queen of Heaven' was found at Hermopolis in 1945 (and published in 1966). Since the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar is identified with the planet Venus, and has as her symbol an eight-pointed star, it would seem Ishtar, and perhaps one or more of the West Semitic deities could be associated with her as this so-called Queen of Heaven" (The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?, 2001, pp. 163-164). It may be that the Jews in Egypt worshiped her as the Egyptian mother goddess Isis or perhaps Hathor.

God said that we are not to incorporate pagan worship practices into our worship of Him (Deuteronomy 12:29-32, Jeremiah 10:2-5). Yet popular Christianity continues elements of the worship of Ishtar (from which we get the word "Easter"), such as baking "cakes" (or buns) emblazoned with ancient pagan symbols and using fertility symbols such as rabbits and eggs in its major springtime religious celebration. "God wants us to worship Him 'in spirit and truth' (John 4:23-24)—not in corrupted, vile practices rooted in worship of other gods.

Jeremiah then tells them of their final punishment. It may seem harsh, but they couldn't say they weren't warned. At the end of God's punishment, there will be no Jews left alive in Egypt. A few will escape to act as witnesses to the truth—witnesses to whose word stands, theirs or God's (verse 28)

Jeremiah's final warning ends with a prophecy against Pharaoh Hophra (also known as Apries). Even he wouldn't be able to save the Jewish remnant in Egypt. "In 569 b.c. Pharaoh

Hophra went to aid the Libyans against the Greeks, who had established themselves on the African coast at Cyrene. He was defeated and a rebellion broke out in his army, a part of which elevated Amasis as Pharaoh. In a battle fought between the opposing groups in 569 b.c. Amasis prevailed over Hophra. The latter was able to co-exist with his rival for some time but then was put to death” (Emil Kraeling, Rand McNally Bible Atlas, p. 318). And, of course, Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion followed soon after Hophra’s overthrow.

What, then, of Jeremiah? This is not the end of his story. We leave him and his secretary Baruch in Egypt with more yet to do. Jeremiah still has his commission “to build and to plant” (1:10). Recall that Ezekiel had prophesied the transfer of the throne of David from Judah to Israel (Ezekiel 17:22-24). How interesting, then, that possible heirs to the Davidic throne, King Zedekiah’s daughters, are with Jeremiah in Egypt at this time.

The Battle of Carchemish (Jeremiah 46:1-12)

Jeremiah 46:1 introduces a section of prophecies against other nations (Jeremiah 46-51), starting with Egypt. Though grouped together, these various prophecies were actually delivered at different times, as some of them are clearly dated. Jeremiah 46 contains two prophecies against Egypt, but we are reading only the first one, relating to the battle of Carchemish. (The second prophecy appears to have been given in a later context.)

Recall that in 609 B.C., just after the death of Josiah, Babylonian-led forces under King Nabopolassar “repelled the Assyrians and their Egyptian allies [under Pharaoh Necho] who attempted to recapture Haran, and drove them west across the Euphrates River. For the next three years the Babylonians were preoccupied with the task of dealing with Urartu [Armenia] in order to open trade routes and secure the northern frontiers. [It was during this time that Syria and Judah became Egyptian-controlled territories, Jehoiakim of Judah serving as a vassal king under Necho.] At last Nabopolassar turned to the only remaining Assyrian stronghold, Carchemish, and in 605 defeated Assyria once and for all and forced Egypt to withdraw from north Syria. This major blow at Carchemish was struck not by Nabopolassar personally, but by his young son and commander in chief, Nebuchadnezzar [who would very shortly become king of Babylon]. Not satisfied with the defeat of Neco and his Egyptian hosts, the energetic prince pursued them across the Euphrates and all the way to Hamath” (Merrill, Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel, p. 450).

This is the historical context of the events described in the first prophecy of Jeremiah 46. It appears to have been recorded here after the fact (compare verse 2) but originally spoken or written by Jeremiah at the very time the battle of Carchemish was being engaged (compare verses 3-10). Perhaps God gave the prophet a vision of what was actually occurring far away.

Until 1956, the “battle of Carchemish” rested entirely on biblical evidence, although Greek records indicated a major struggle. Then, in 1956, J.D. Wiseman discovered a Babylonian tablet that gave details of the battle, confirming the Biblical account. “In [Leonard] Woolley’s excavations at Carchemish a large private house was examined and produced finds bearing on

these times. Bronze figurines of Egyptian gods...[and] clay seals...bearing the name of Necho himself came to light, thus giving mute evidence of the presence of the Egyptians there” (Emil Kraeling, Rand McNally Bible Atlas, 1956, p. 312).

Verses 3-4 show the proud, well-armed force of Necho coming forward only to turn and flee in verse 5. In verse 6, God orders pursuit by the Babylonians of the fleeing force. Verses 7-10 then recap the scene. Egypt’s army surges forward like a flooding river (verses 7-8). “The figure is appropriate in addressing Egyptians, as the Nile, their great river, yearly overspreads their lands with a turbid, muddy flood. So their army, swelling with arrogance, shall overspread the region south of Euphrates; but it, like the Nile, shall retreat as fast as it advanced” (Jamieson, Fausset & Brown’s Commentary, note on verse 7). Verse 9 mentions foreign mercenary forces serving in the Egyptian army.

Verse 10 declares that the Egyptian defeat is God’s vengeance—perhaps for the death of Josiah. The “day of the LORD” reference here is also interesting to consider. While it applied to the immediate situation of Necho’s defeat, perhaps it also referred to events far in the future. We know from other prophecies that Egypt, Ethiopia and Libya of the end time will be devastated by an invading force from the north, the final successor of ancient Babylon (see Daniel 11:40-43).

In verses 11-12 of Jeremiah 46, the Egyptian army is told to go to Gilead for its famous healing balm. Perhaps this was telling the Egyptians to retreat south (where Gilead was in relation to Carchemish) and nurse their wounds, as they actually did in a way, fleeing south to Hamath, their Syrian headquarters. But there was no cure for them as God was behind their defeat. The Egyptian forces were unable to hold out at Hamath and again fled south. The reference to the balm of Gilead is similar to the one in Jeremiah 8:22, where God uses it as an illustration to His own people that there is no healing for those who rebel against Him. Certainly God is no respecter of persons, so the Egyptians would suffer the same humiliation that Judah had. And so will the enemies of God’s people in the end time.

Jehoiakim’s Rebellion (Jeremiah 46:13-47:7; 2 Kings 24:1b-7; 2 Chronicles 36:6-8)

A historical context for this section is helpful. Biblical historian Eugene Merrill writes: “As the author of Kings indicates, Jehoiakim remained a loyal subject to the Babylonians for...three years (605-602 [B.C.]). He then rebelled for some unexpressed reason.... Nebuchadnezzar had undertaken several western campaigns against Judah’s neighbors. It may have been his preoccupation with these states...that gave Jehoiakim the courage to break his alliance with Nebuchadnezzar” (Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel, 1987, p. 451).

One source “associates Jehoiakim’s rebellion with the Babylonian conflict with Egypt in the winter of 601/600 B.C., which is attested to by a letter written in Aramaic from the town of Saqqarah” (p. 451, footnote). Another source “points out that the campaign against Jehoiakim is not mentioned in the Babylonian records...because Nebuchadnezzar’s main objective was Egypt and not Judah” (p. 451, footnote). The reference here is to Nebuchadnezzar’s fourth year,

when “he engaged Neco II in a great battle near the border of Egypt, a contest which evidently ended in a draw. Perhaps the Babylonian was not altogether unsuccessful, however, for he may have brought Judah back under his control in the course of this campaign” (p. 451).

This seems likely, especially given what Scripture says right after describing the Babylonian response to Jehoiakim’s rebellion: “And the king of Egypt did not come out of his land anymore...” (2 Kings 24:7). This makes it appear that the king of Egypt coming out of his land had something to do with Jehoiakim’s rebellion. Jeremiah 47, in the current reading, mentions an Egyptian pharaoh of Jeremiah’s time attacking Gaza, the southernmost of the major Philistine cities, right near the border with Egypt. We have no parallel record of this event in secular history, which makes the dating of it difficult. But it would seem to tie into these events, and certainly occurred before 2 Kings 24:7.

Perhaps Necho attacked Gaza sometime in 602 B.C., which would have been an incursion into Babylonian territory—Nebuchadnezzar having subdued the Philistines in 604. This may well have prompted Jehoiakim to rebel against Babylon, declaring Judah’s reaffiliation with Egypt. “Retribution was swift and sure (2 Kings 24:1-2). Nebuchadnezzar sent troops from Babylonia and from some of his western vassal states such as Aram, Moab, and Ammon, and forced Jehoiakim to submit. The chronicler says that Nebuchadnezzar went as far as to bind Jehoiakim with shackles in order to take him as a prisoner of war to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:6). Apparently he relented [as Jehoiakim remained as king for a few more years] but as punishment stripped the temple of many of its sacred articles [as he had before] and took them to his own pagan temples in Babylon. Thereafter until his death in 598 Jehoiakim remained in subservience to the Babylonian overlord” (p. 451). After dealing with Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar apparently continued on to his engagement with Necho, in which the pharaoh was pushed back into Egypt.

While Jehoiakim’s death is recorded, none of the details regarding it are given. We do know from Jeremiah’s prophecies that this wicked ruler was to die without lamentation from the people, being cast out and buried as a donkey (see Jeremiah 22:18-19; 36:30). His lineage would not continue to rule, as his son’s reign would last but a few months.

Prophecies Against Egypt and Philistia (Jeremiah 46:13-47:7; 2 Kings 24:1b-7; 2 Chronicles 36:6-8)

Before the Egyptian attack on Gaza, Jeremiah prophesied against Egypt (Jeremiah 46:13-26). While Babylon is the one coming against Egypt (verse 26), God is the one bringing the punishment (see verses 15, 18, 25). The prophecy concludes with “an effective contrast, a sound of an incredible weakness where the roar as of a lion is necessary: the snake, Egyptian symbol of royalty, creeping back into its hole. The hiss of enmity is ineffective, as the Babylonians come on as an army of woodcutters levelling Egypt as a forest appointed for timber felling” (New Bible Commentary, note on 46:22-24). This prophecy speaks of far more than what Nebuchadnezzar did in his campaign against Egypt of 601. Rather, it looks a number of years forward, beyond even the fall of Judah in 586 B.C., to the time when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt “in 568 and laid waste a great part of the Nile valley” (Merrill,

p. 475). In fact, Egypt was made part of the Babylonian Empire. And Jeremiah foresaw it all, at least 34 years in advance. For more prophecies against Egypt, see Ezekiel 29-32.

Egypt's desolation, we are told, would not last forever (Jeremiah 46:26). Furthermore, hope is then given to Israel (verses 27-28). Even though Israel was being rightly punished, it too would not suffer forever. Speaking to Jacob and Israel rather than Judah, this is a prophecy to all 12 tribes, which will be brought back to the Promised Land after Christ's return. Perhaps this prophecy is placed here because both Israel and Judah had pinned their hopes on Egypt, which provided them no help. Indeed, trusting in such allies rather than God is part of the reason they are being punished. The end-time context of this prophecy's fulfillment may indicate some duality in the prophecy against Egypt—that part of it may be for the end time as well, when Egypt will again fall to a northern invader (see Daniel 11:40-43).

Egypt may seem an insignificant nation to the casual observer of world affairs, but it is a leading nation among the Muslim nations of North Africa and the Middle East. Additionally, radical Muslim terrorist cells thrive there (one of which assassinated Anwar Sadat in 1981). The Bible indicates that Egypt will figure prominently in the international politics of the end time.

In Jeremiah 47, we see God's judgment on Philistia. The Philistines were quite often an enemy of Israel. Their close proximity made them a dangerous thorn in Israel's side, somewhat like the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are to the nation of Israel today.

The Philistines (Jeremiah 47:1) and Caphtorim (verse 4) were closely related (Genesis 10:4) and probably intermingled. Of the original Philistine pentapolis—Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron (see Joshua 13:3, NIV)—only Gaza and Ashkelon are mentioned in Jeremiah 47. Among all the biblical prophecies of the Philistines, mention is made of four of these cities. "It is noteworthy that Gath is not mentioned in these prophecies, from which it may be inferred that Gath ceased to be of any major significance after the time of Uzziah" ("Philistines," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 1986, p. 843).

In verse 2 we read of a flood of waters from the north. Generally, as we have repeatedly seen, invasions from Mesopotamia followed a route that brought them into Canaan and Philistia from the north. "Waters sometimes signify multitudes of people and nations (Rev. 17:15), sometimes great and threatening calamities (Ps. 69:1); here they signify both" (Matthew Henry's Commentary, note on verse 2).

Nebuchadnezzar attacked Ashkelon in 604 B.C., as earlier mentioned. But the prophecy in Jeremiah 47 appears to have been delivered after that time. Indeed, there is a hint of that in the fact that a "remnant" of Ashkelon is here mentioned (verse 5). The Philistines, which have already been attacked, are going to be hit again. Notice the specific reason here: "To cut off from Tyre and Sidon every helper who remains" (verse 4). This provides us with the time of the destruction mentioned. "Within a year of the conquest of Jerusalem [in 586 B.C.]

Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the island portion of Tyre, having already brought Sidon, Arvad, and the mainland portion of Tyre under his control [shortly before]. The siege lasted for thirteen years” (Merrill, p. 475). So this prophecy refers to the overrunning of Philistia by Nebuchadnezzar’s armies around the time of the fall of Judah. As with Egypt, though Babylon is the agent of destruction, God is the one who brings it (verses 6-7).

But the prophecy may have another fulfillment that is yet future. Almost certainly a small percentage of today’s Palestinians, especially those in the Gaza Strip, are descendants of the Philistines. Interestingly, “the Greek name [for the land of Israel], Palestine, was derived from the name Philistia” (“Philistines,” Unger’s Bible Dictionary, 1970, p. 859). The next three nations mentioned in the book of Jeremiah—Moab, Ammon and Edom in chapters 48-49—are also represented in today’s Palestinian population in both Israel and Jordan. So it may be that Jeremiah 47-49 refers, at least in part, to end-time calamity to come upon the Palestinians—again from out of the north.

Other prophecies of the Philistines may be found in Isaiah 14:29-31, Ezekiel 25:15-17, Amos 1:6-8, Zephaniah 2:4-7 and Zechariah 9:5-7.

Proverb 23

The Words of the Wise: Introduction and Sayings About Wealth and Station (Proverbs 22:17 - 23:11)

Proverbs 22:17 marks a clear change in the book. Instead of the one-verse units of the major Solomonic collection, we now have multiple-verse units. With a new section, we would expect a new title or subheading. And verse 17 appears to give us just that in referring to what follows as “the words of the wise”; a general distinction for collected wisdom. This section appears to continue until 24:22, as 24:23 denotes yet another section, possibly an appendix to this section, with the words “These things also belong to the wise.” Furthermore, this section of sayings from the wise (22:17 - 24:22); mainly the first part (22:17 - 23:11); bears some striking similarity to the Egyptian “Instruction of Amenemope.” Amenemope, sometimes spelled Amenem-opet, was a superintendent of agriculture and taxation writing to his youngest son on keys to success in life and in profession as a court official.

As noted in our introduction, it is not clear which writing came first, whether this section of Proverbs or the Egyptian work. In any case, one seems to have influenced the other. We will note some similarities along the way. In doing so, we should realize that the Egyptian wisdom text, mired in pagan references, is not inspired literature, as is the book of Proverbs.

Nevertheless, the Egyptian text helps to demonstrate the ancient provenance of the biblical book as well as the relationship between Israelite wisdom and that of the wider region, just as the Bible describes of Solomon (see 1 Kings 4:29-34).

The introductory call to attention in Proverbs 22:17-21 “is laid out with the exhortation to learn and pass on the teaching (v. 17), followed by three motivations: (1) there will be a pleasing store

of wisdom (v. 18); (2) there will be a deeper trust in the Lord; a distinctively Israelite aspect of wisdom literature (v. 19); and (3) it will build reliability, he will grasp the truth (v. 20) and see himself as a special envoy to keep wisdom in his heart and on his lips (v. 21)” (Expositor’s Bible Commentary, note on verses 17-21).

The latter point here is stated in verse 21 this way: “That I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth, that you may answer words of truth to those who send to you [or ‘to him who sent you,’ NIV].” Likewise the purpose of Amenemope is: “To know how to refute the accusation of [or ‘to return an answer to’] the one who made it, and to send back a reply to the one who wrote [or ‘to the one who sent you’]; to set one straight on the paths of life” (intro., 1:5-7, William Simpson, editor, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, and Poetry*, 1973, p. 242). Within brackets here are alternate translations as footnoted in the cited source. (The complete “Instruction of Amenemope,” same translation but without footnotes, is online at <http://touregypt.net/instructionofamenemope.htm>.)

In verse 20, “excellent things” in the KJV and NKJV is apparently incorrect. The Hebrew word here, difficult because of the uniqueness of form, is shlshwm (consonants only), which some take to be a poetic or plural form of “three” (shlsh) or “third” (shlyshy). Most scholars, though, emend the text or consider the word another form of “thirty” (shlshym or shlshym), compare “thirty sayings” in the NIV. This is mainly because of the affinity of the text with Amenemope, which consists of an introduction followed by 30 short chapters, coupled with the fact that Proverbs 22:17 - 24:22 can reasonably be divided into an introduction followed by 30 sayings. It should be noted, though, that it is also possible to divide the text into three sections; the first, resembling Amenemope in content (22:17 - 23:11), and two other sections marked by the use of “My son.” Some claim that “third” is meant to introduce the third section of the book; following the prologue (Proverbs 1- 9) and Solomon’s major collection (10:1 - 22:16). Still, 30 seems reasonable. Note the following apparent divisions, which should not be considered definitive (others group them slightly differently). Most of the 30 subject titles are from Expositor’s:(View Table of “Thirty Sayings of the Wise”).

Words of the Wise Cont’d: An Obedient Son (Proverbs 23:12 - 24:4)

Saying 11: Attend to Learning (23:12). Some see this verse as a call to attention to hear the instruction in the next verse or in this section, which is cast as parental instruction. Yet this imperative likely applies to instruction generally throughout one’s whole life.

Saying 12: Necessity of Discipline (23:13-14). As with other such verses, this one establishes the need for parental discipline but does not mandate the rod as a first recourse. Yet it does reassure parents that this can be an acceptable means of correction. The point ultimately is to save the child from wrong ways leading to death; the Hebrew word for “hell” in verse 14 being sheol, the grave. The Assyrian “Words of Ahiqar,” written around 700 B.C. (in the time of King Hezekiah of Judah) as noted in our introduction, follows with similar instruction: “Spare not your son from the rod; otherwise, can you save him?” (quoted by Longman, p. 69).

Saying 13: Wise and Joyful Speech (23:15-16). Parents rejoice in their children's right words and conduct (see also verses 24-25). And pleasing parents is a good motivator for the young. The four lines in verses 15-16 are arranged in a chiasmic structure; the outer lines parallel and the inner lines parallel (a-b-b-a), so that a wise heart equates to speaking right things. As Jesus said, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34).

Saying 14: Fear the Lord (23:17-18). A major concern of parents is their instruction being undermined by wayward peers or bad role models. So parents must, as in this verse, instruct their children in the fear of the Lord, which will keep them in the right way "all the day", even when the parents aren't around. If in spite of the obstacles we develop this proper reverence for God, a wonderful future awaits us. Where the KJV has "end," the NKJV specifies "hereafter" implying life in God's Kingdom. Other versions have "future," the translators arguing that Proverbs speaks of blessed life now, not in the hereafter. Perhaps both ideas are included; a great life in this age and on into the age to come.

Saying 15: Poor Associations (23:19-21). Drunkenness and gluttony are both condemned, representing the epitome of a lack of discipline. Wine and other alcoholic beverages in moderation are approved of in Scripture, but drunkenness is a sin; as is gluttony, though the former is certainly worse because of the impact it has on the brain and on others. Drunkards and gluttons are both bad influences and will most likely not cease to bring trouble and grief to associates, even those who disapprove of their behavior. If we are already friends with such people, we should try to help them to overcome their problem. But if they refuse or falsely repent again and again, particularly in the case of drunkards, it would be wiser to sever the friendship.

Saying 16: Learn and Keep Truth (23:22-25). Some take verse 22 as an independent verse on listening to parents, but the context here appears to continue until verse 25. Listening to parents corresponds to, in verse 23, striving for truth (including wisdom, instruction and understanding) and holding on to it. "Buy the truth, and do not sell it" is sometimes seen as a prohibition against selling religious books, even Bibles. But this is not the point of the verse. The meaning is that we are to expend all we must to gain true knowledge and, once gained, never sell it away; for any price. The New Century Version paraphrases this as "Learn the truth and never reject it." The Contemporary English Version renders the whole verse this way: "Invest in truth and wisdom, discipline and good sense, and don't part with them." Those who follow this counsel will bring great joy to parents; again given here as a motivator to do what's right (verses 24-25; compare verses 15-16).

Saying 17: Shunning the Temptress (23:26-28). Parental instruction continues here regarding sexual immorality. Compare similar warnings in the prologue of Proverbs (chapters 1 - 9) and 22:14, where the harlot's mouth is called a "deep pit." Some commentators believe the third and last section of the Words of the Wise begins with this saying or the next one; regarding the last section as miscellaneous in content.

Saying 18: Excessive Drinking (23:29-35). Saying 15 (verses 19-21) warns against associating with drunkards and gluttons. This saying warns against being a drunkard oneself. The New American Commentary says on this unit: "This poem is a small masterpiece; it is surely the most effective combination lampoon and lament over the sorry state of the drunkard....The text describes with profound accuracy and bite the pathetic physical and emotional decline of those addicted to alcohol. Wine [in excess] (and in modern society, illicit drugs) brings physical pain and debilitation, exhausts one's resources, takes away mental acuity, and yet leaves one craving for more of the same. 'Lingering over' alcohol (vv. 30-31) describes those who derive comfort and security in knowing that a glass of wine is at hand, ready to deaden the senses. In the end, however, it only leaves people more confused and in deeper pain than ever before (vv. 32-35a)."

Acts 20

Sha'ul is now travelling to and through Macedonia, then Greece where he spends three months. He was going to go to Syria, but heard of a plot against him by the Pharisees and so he returned to Macedonia. Many were with him to include: Sopater of Beroia, Aristarchos and Sekundos of Thessalonians, Gaios of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychikos and Trophimos of Asia. There was quite a group! These went ahead to Troas as Sha'ul and the author of Acts sailed from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread and then joined the group in Troas after five days.

Sha'ul was teaching and reasoning with an assembly there into the wee hours of the night and lights were on by candle in the upper room where they all were. A man named Eutuchos was sitting there and listening until he became so sleepy, that he fell asleep and fell out of the window he was sitting in. People thought he was dead. But Sha'ul ran to him and fell on him and found him still alive and breathing. They continued in their eating and discussion way into the early morning hours and some sailed from there in the morning to Assos, although we are told Sha'ul walked to Assos. At Assos, they picked up Sha'ul and sailed on to Mitulene and then to Chios, to Samos, and Trogullion and Miletos. They sailed past Ephesus because Sha'ul was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks.

As they sailed and came close to Ephesus, Sha'ul called for the elders of the Assemblies to come to him and he shared with them the warnings he is receiving from the Holy Spirit that chains and pressures are awaiting him in Jerusalem. He told them that he is not fearful for he has done what he was supposed to do in proclaiming the Good News of the Master, and repentance. He told the elders they would see his face no more and that he had no blood upon his hands. He encouraged them to continue in this good work, empowered by the Set apart Spirit and that to be on guard for wolves that will most assuredly come into the flock to seek to destroy them.

He also warned them of men who will come speaking distorted teachings, to draw away the taught ones after themselves. He reminded them to not be obsessed with silver, gold, or garments, to continue to work to supply their own needs but to help others according to the

words of Yeshua Messiah "It is more blessed to give than to receive." They prayed together and much weeping, then they saw him off to the ship.