

Triennial Torah Study – 4th Year 18/01/2014



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Gen 20	Judges 16-17	Ps 41-44	Mat 25
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Abraham's Dealing with Abimelech (Genesis 20)

In this chapter we find the second incident in which Abraham identifies Sarah as his sister. The first time was the incident with the Egyptian pharaoh in Genesis 12. Now, in Genesis 20, he does the same thing with another ruler, Abimelech. While in neither case was this a complete lie, as Sarah was his half-sister, the intent was nevertheless one of outright deception. Interestingly, the strategy backfires in both circumstances. Repeating the same mistake is not unusual for any of us. Sometimes it takes multiple times before we learn our lesson. And like everyone else, Abraham and Sarah had to grow in faith. Sometimes we think that our own "prudence" is compatible with faith when, in fact, it is not. Perhaps this is what was behind the action of Abraham and Sarah. In any event, these incidents affirm to us that God will protect His people in spite of our weaknesses or the unforeseen twists of circumstance. We all make mistakes or wrong choices. In some cases, there may be consequences. But ultimately, God will work things out for our good (Romans 8:28).

Samson: God's Flawed Tool (Judges 16)

God had been seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines (Judges 14:4). In itself, that is an interesting turn of phrase, for it implies that God works out His plans within the willing activities of men. God could have directly caused a thing to come to pass, but the Scripture says he sought an occasion. God often works in human events in this manner, interweaving His plans with those of men, bringing His will to pass by using the circumstances and individuals at hand. Thus, God works within the flow of history to accomplish certain ends without violating man's free will and often without producing an obvious trail of "miraculous" happenings. This does not, of course, mean that there is no evidence of miracles in history. The incredible strength of Samson alone would have been clearly miraculous to the people of his day—he carried massive city gates uphill for 40 miles! (16:3)

The free will God allowed the Philistines is extended to all men—even those God specially uses. To break the Philistine tyranny over Israel, God would use a man, Samson, who had remarkable strengths coupled with regrettable weaknesses. God would accomplish His purpose and Samson would be the tool, whether he acted according to his better attributes or allowed his weaknesses to triumph. Regrettably, Samson would allow his weaknesses to get the better of him.

Contrary to scriptural principles, Samson had married a Philistine woman who was eventually given to another man. He could have chosen any Israelite woman, but Samson allowed his impulsive desire rather than his faith-guided intellect to control his behavior. He was lustful and arrogant. A little leaven leavens the whole lump, and so Samson descended even further into sin because he was unwilling to control his desire and submit to God—he went in to a Philistine harlot. Samson was now fully set to follow his lust, and this God would use to finally free Israel.

When Samson fell for another Philistine woman, Delilah, the Philistine lords persuaded her to discover the secret of his strength. After several failed attempts to capture him—attempts that Samson knew involved Delilah—he was finally captured. It is remarkable that in spite of knowing what Delilah was up to, Samson actually told her the truth. Maybe he did not really believe the truth himself, which might be hinted at in verse 20. Perhaps he had grown a bit cocky as to the source of his strength. If so, that was about to end. Overpowered and blinded by the Philistines, he was afterward forced to grind wheat. Some commentators suggest that he ground wheat as the women did, using a grinding stone and plate. Others suggest that he was harnessed to a grinding stone as a beast of burden, although this was apparently not typical until centuries later. In either case, the point was the same: to humiliate Israel's strongman.

When Samson was brought before the Philistine lords in their temple of Dagon sometime later, his call to God was sincere. However, his stated motive—revenge for the blindness inflicted upon him (16:28)—was surely not the only motivation he had for seeking God. There is evidence to support Samson's repentance in that the New Testament lists him as a hero of faith who, out of weakness, was made strong (Hebrews 11:32-34). Indeed, is it not directly stated that he, along with the others mentioned, died assured of the promises of God's Kingdom and will be "made perfect" with believers of this age? (compare verses 39-40)

Moreover, Judges 16:22 is quite telling in relating what happened during Samson's servitude. It states, "However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven." Just what significance does this have? After all, we know that Samson's hair was not "magical." It was God who gave him his miraculous strength—the hair simply representing the Nazirite vow of consecration to God, which, in Samson's case, was supposed to be lifelong. Perhaps verse 22, then, is telling us that while blind and humiliated in servitude to pagans, Samson finally "saw the light" and reconsecrated himself to God. Viewed this way, the final scene in his life is but the culmination of that rededication.

This final scene is well known—Samson brings down the temple by toppling two pillars, which killed him and all the Philistine lords within. Until recently critics had thought this unlikely, a dramatic myth. How could a whole temple be destroyed by toppling two huge stone pillars? Just this past decade, however, a Philistine temple was fully excavated, revealing that the structure of the temple rested entirely upon two central pillars barely six feet apart. Given the weight distribution on those pillars, it would have been entirely possible for the biblical story to have ended precisely as recorded.

Why is not more made of Samson's repentance if it happened at this time? Because that is not the point of the narrative. The entire book of Judges concerns God's repeated deliverance of His people, regardless of the inclinations of those to whom He gave the task. The Nelson Study Bible notes: "Samson's life is ultimately a story about God's faithfulness in spite of human weakness. God's hand can be seen throughout the story—in Samson's empowerment by God's Spirit and in God's professed desire to subdue the Philistines (14:4). It also can be seen in this last contest between the true God and the Philistine god Dagon. When the Philistines captured Samson, they attributed this to their god and celebrated his victory (16:23, 24). We know, however, that it was God who had allowed it (v. 20), and that it was God who gained the ultimate triumph against Dagon and the Philistine rulers (vv. 27, 30)" (note on 16:23-31).

History Out of Sequence (Judges 17)

The last five chapters of Judges are interesting as a group for, in addition to making no mention of particular judges, they appear to be incidental notices of Israelite history that do not follow the general theme or time line of the rest of the book of Judges. Indeed, The Nelson Study Bible notes: “The book of Judges closes with two appendixes, the first in chs. 17-18 and the second in chs. 19-21. They seem to be unrelated to the material preceding them and to each other. For instance, these chapters do not describe the cyclical pattern of sin, servitude, [supplication] and salvation seen in the earlier chapters of Judges. While chs. 2-16 describe foreign threats to Israel, these last chapters show an internal breakdown of Israel’s worship and unity. Furthermore, the events in these chapters appear to have taken place early in the period of the judges” (note on 17:1-21:25). That these chapters are out of chronological sequence with the rest of the book is attested to by several facts.

First, 18:1-3 inform us that the Danites had not received their inheritance in the land—“the tribe of the Danites was seeking for itself an inheritance to dwell in; for until that day their inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen to them.” This could be interpreted in two ways: either it had not “fallen to them” by lot, or it had not “fallen to them” by conquest. Joshua 19:47 informs us that when Dan received its territorial allotment the Danites found the land too small for their numbers, and hence they undertook the conquest of Laish. The settlement of Dan’s territory must have taken some time, and so the conquest of Laish must be put either late in Joshua’s time or very early in the period of Judges.

Second, 18:30 identifies the priest who officiated at the shrine in Dan (formerly, Laish) as “Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh.” The Hebrew text of this phrase is remarkable for the fact that the name Manasseh is spelled with a small superscripted nun (letter N), as MNSH. The Masoretes—scribes who compiled the Hebrew text into its present form—were scrupulous not to disturb the position of the individual letters of the text, even to the point of developing a vowel system of “points” which fitted above and below the letters, but never between the letters. Thus, this small superscripted nun is a clue that it was not part of the original text. If the nun is removed the name becomes MSH or Moshe, i.e., Moses. Now we know that Moses had a son named Gershom (Exodus 2:22). Therefore, many scholars believe that the nun was a scribal insert into the text to direct the reader of the text to read “Manasseh” rather than “Moses,” thereby sparing Moses the dishonor of having Israel’s first apostate and idolatrous priest in his lineage. Jonathan would be the grandson of Moses. If this is correct, then the transactions mentioned in connection with Micah and the Danite conquest of Laish must have occurred late in the period of Joshua, or early in the period of Judges, the likely lifespan of Jonathan.

Third, Joshua 20:1 and verses 27-28 inform us that when Israel was roused to action against the Benjamites they assembled before the Lord where Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, was still serving. Phinehas was thus the grandson of Aaron, and hence of the same generation of Jonathan, who seems to have been the grandson of Aaron’s brother Moses. Phinehas was old enough to slay the fornicating Israelite (Numbers 25) and would have survived into the period of Joshua and perhaps the early part of the period of Judges, and hence would put the war against the Benjamites in the period of Joshua or early in the period of Judges.

Fourth, the war against the Benjamites was so devastating to Benjamin that it was feared the tribe would vanish in Israel (21:1-3). Only 600 Benjamite men are said to have survived (20:47), all the other Benjamites—men and women—being put to death (20:48) so that these 600 men could find no Benjamite wives. Yet at the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam, the Benjamites were considered a full tribe (although the smallest, see 1 Samuel 9:21) and contributed in some significant way to the fighting force of 180,000 men at Rehoboam’s command. If the story of the war against Benjamin is correctly placed in the chronology of the book of Judges, that would mean that in a

period of 120 years (the time from Saul to Rehoboam) the Benjamites recovered their numbers. This is extremely unlikely. It is far more reasonable to believe that these events happened late in the period of Joshua or, more reasonable still, early in the period of Judges, in conjunction with the evidence above, and that Benjamin therefore had about 400 years to recover their position and numbers.

The same is true for the story of the Danite conquest of Laish, as it probably happened within a short time of the war against Benjamin. That would mean that the history of these transactions has not been placed in chronological sequence within the book of Judges.

This, however, should not be viewed as a mistake. Much of the Bible is not in chronological sequence. Likewise, these accounts were appended to Judges intentionally and purposefully, and it is instructive to search out why. As the study Bible note quoted earlier goes on to state: "There is a certain logic to placing them at the end of the book. For one, the structure highlights the theme of the disintegration of Israel. The last chapters emphasize that 'every one did what was right in his own eyes' (17:6; 21:25). The general tone of these last chapters is satirical and understated. The many violations of Mosaic law receive only minimal comments. However, a muted note of disdain for Israel's wanton behavior is evident in places."

Micah's Household Shrine (Judges 17)

Micah was an Ephraimite. This man built what appears to have been a personal shrine to God in his house. The context leads us to believe that neither Micah nor his mother intended open rebellion against God. Micah's mother invoked the name of God in blessing her son ("May you be blessed by the Lord, my son," verse 2) and she had originally dedicated the silver to God (verse 3). Also, the name Micah itself meant "Who Is Like the Eternal?"

As for Micah, notice the "shrine" he had in his house. The Hebrew phrase that the New King James Version renders as "shrine" (verse 5) is *beth Elohim*. While the original King James translates this "house of gods," it should perhaps more properly be rendered "house of God." Thus, it may have been some kind of miniature representation of God's tabernacle. Micah also had, as is mentioned in verse 5, an ephod, a garment worn during worship and probably in imitation of the ephods of the tabernacle priests. And then, mentioned in the same verse, were his teraphim (translated "household idols"), small figures either representing gods or some devices associated with a god—in this case perhaps even a miniature Ark of the Covenant. He was pleased to hire the Levite as his priest, at least showing he had some sort of respect for the God who had appointed the Levites to certain religious service. Furthermore, he sought instruction from the priest ("father" being a term for one who teaches and provides counsel). And Micah believed that the Lord (the same Lord invoked by his mother) would bless him for these measures (verse 13).

While certainly not wholly in line with God's instructions, neither was this meant to be wholesale apostasy. It was the worship of God united to idolatry—the sin of syncretism, blending pagan practices into their own religion, which the Almighty had expressly forbidden (see Deuteronomy 12:29-32) but which the Israelites often fell into. Moreover, it was doing what seemed right rather than following God's explicit commands—a recipe for disaster as this is the path that leads to death (see Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). Though not intended to be apostasy and rebellion against God, it was apostasy and rebellion nevertheless. Sincerely attempting to please God is no excuse for breaking His direct commands. We must all remember this in our own worship of God.

Like Psalms 38 and 39 (and perhaps 40), David composed Psalm 41 when he was severely ill. And like Psalm 40, this song contains a prophetic foreshadowing of events in the life of the Messiah.

Before asking God to heal him in verse 4, David first lays a foundation for that request: “Blessed is he who considers the poor” (verse 1)—or “weak” (NIV). God will deliver, preserve, bless, protect, strengthen and—directly pertinent to David’s situation—“sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness” (verse 3, NIV). David is a compassionate man. It is his practice to pray, fast and mourn for others when they are sick (Psalm 35:13-14). He trusts that God will intervene for him now in his own need (41:3).

Indeed, note that the final verse of the previous psalm reflected on God thinking on David himself in his poor and needy state (40:17). Such concern for others in need is the heart of godly character, which God’s people must emulate. David well understood this, being a “man after [God’s] own heart” (Acts 13:22). The qualities of mercy and compassion figure prominently in the New Testament. The apostle James declares that showing concern for others is an essential element in true religion: “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit the orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). Yeshua taught, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Matthew 5:7). He gave His disciples a sobering parable on the subject of compassion (Matthew 18:21-35) and stated that mercy (the word here denoting compassion or pity) is one of the weightier matters of God’s law (Matthew 23:23).

Yet as important as it is for all to have concern for the weak—for the lowly and downtrodden— it is especially so of a king such as David, whose duty is to emulate God’s righteous rule in defending the powerless (compare Psalm 72:2, 4, 12-14; 82:3-4; Proverbs 29:14; 31:8-9; Isaiah 11:4; Jeremiah 22:16). Again, David well knew this—and lived accordingly (as did and does Yeshua Messiah, who is prefigured in this psalm).

David then prays for mercy and healing, confessing his sin. When we consider parallels with Yeshua in this psalm, we realize that He did not sin. Yet the great suffering and anguish that came upon Him at the end of His physical life was the result of bearing the penalty of sin—not His own but that of the rest of mankind (David’s included).

David speaks of enemies relishing the thought of his imminent death (verses 5-8), which Christ also endured.

We then arrive at verse 9, which ties directly to the life of Yeshua. David speaks of betrayal by a “familiar friend,” a close companion, who dined with him. Some have suggested that the reference here and in Psalm 55:12-14 is to David’s friend and counselor Ahithophel, who joined Absalom’s rebellion against David. This seems a rather likely explanation—although the Bible does not mention David being severely ill at that time (though it would not be surprising for deep anguish and depression on that occasion to have made him physically sick). Since the companion is not named, and since the Bible does not record every detail of David’s life, it’s of course possible that this was a different friend on a different occasion—the illness, as previously mentioned, perhaps being the plague that struck after the numbering of Israel.

Whatever the case, the most significant meaning here is not actually David’s personal situation at all—but the fact that this was a prophecy of what would happen in the life of Christ. The Nelson Study Bible notes on Psalm 41:9: “The outrage of betrayal by one so close is nearly unbearable (Matt. 26:14-16). The fulfillment of this verse in the experience of Yeshua and Judas is remarkable. Not only did the two eat a meal together (Matt. 26:21-25; Mark 14:18-21; Luke 22:21), but Yeshua also called Judas a ‘friend’ at the moment of betrayal (Matt. 26:50). Moreover Yeshua quoted this verse, noting its fulfillment in Judas (John 13:18).”

In Psalm 41:10, “Raise me up” was again David’s prayer for healing—to be brought up from his sickbed. Yet “in another sense [given the clear messianic context of this psalm], these words look forward to Yeshua’s resurrection (16:10, 11; 118:17, 18)” (note on Psalm 41:10-12). David expresses his belief in eternal life when He says confidently of God’s salvation:

“You...set me before Your face forever” (verse 12).

The psalm closes in verse 13 with the doxology (word of praise) that was most likely appended to the end of the psalm sometime later in compiling Book I of the Psalter or in even later arrangement.

Downcast but Hoping in God; A Royal Wedding (Psalms 42-45)

Like Book I, Book II of Psalms is primarily a collection of Davidic prayers (compare 72:20). However, the book begins with psalms possibly composed by others—Psalms 42-49 by the sons of Korah (i.e., descendants of the Levite leader Korah who rebelled against Moses in Numbers 16) and Psalm 50 by Asaph (one of the musical leaders David appointed). However, it could be that the Hebrew *le-* before these names means “for” and not “of”—so that perhaps David wrote them for these others to perform (or perhaps David composed the music and these others wrote the lyrics or vice versa).

“‘Sons of Korah’ refers to the Levitical choir made up of the descendants of Korah appointed by David to serve in the temple liturgy [i.e., rites of public worship]. The Korahites represented the Levitical family of Kohath son of Levi. Their leader in the days of David was Heman...just as Asaph led the choir of the Gershonites and Jeduthun (Ethan) the choir of the Merarites (see 1Ch 6:31-47...). This is the first of a collection of seven psalms ascribed to the ‘Sons of Korah’ (Ps 42-49); four more occur in Book III (Ps 84-85; 87-88)” (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, note on Psalm 42 title).

It is interesting to observe that “Book II of the Psalter begins with three prayers [Psalms 42-44] ...and an attached royal psalm [45] in perfect balance with the ending of Book II [Psalms 69-71 and 72]” (note on Psalms 42-45). In composition, however, it should be observed, as is widely acknowledged, that Psalms 42 and 43 seem to have originally constituted a single psalm. Note the same basic lengthy refrain throughout (see 42:5, 11; 43:5) at the end of three stanzas of comparable length (five, six and five verses), the repetition of “Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” (42:9; 43:2), the running theme of longing to appear before God at His tabernacle (42:2, 4; 43:3-4) and, given all this, the absence of a superscription at the beginning of 43. The full psalm was likely divided to fit a particular worship schedule at the tabernacle or temple—and perhaps to achieve the parallel book arrangement mentioned above.

The superscriptions of Psalm 42 (with 43), 44 and 45 all contain the obscure Hebrew designation *maskil*. As noted on Psalm 32, this term may be derived from a word meaning “wisdom” or “instruction,” yet in all psalm title occurrences the NKJV translates this word as “Contemplation.” Psalm 42 (with 43) is written from the perspective of a single composer— though “sons of Korah” may denote a group effort in either writing or performing (though it could just mean the psalm came from among them as one out of a collection of their psalms, with different psalms in the collection having been composed by different individuals). For the purposes of commentary, we will assume a single author for each psalm.

The psalmist here, then, who is also a harpist (43:4), is unhappy and troubled. With constant tears (42:3), he expresses an intense yearning for God: “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (verse 2). Just as a deer in times of drought searches desperately for water, the psalmist longs to be in the presence of God (verse 1).

It appears that he is prevented from going to God’s tabernacle for festival worship as he used to (42:2, 4; 43:3-4). This may be because of enemy oppression, perhaps even capture in war (42:9; 43:2), which would parallel the experience of those in the related psalm that follows, Psalm 44. It could be in 42-43, however, that enemies are not the reason the psalmist can’t go to the tabernacle—that they are merely taunting him for whatever it is that is preventing him, such as sickness or disability. He could even have been on the run from someone who wanted to

kill him over something he didn't do (compare 43:1). Perhaps he was a fugitive at one of the far northern cities of refuge.

Verses 6-7 of Psalm 42 may indicate that the psalmist is located in northern Israel near the cascading waters of the upper Jordan, where they rush down from Mount Hermon. "Some have suggested that 'Mount Mizar' [otherwise unknown] is an additional reference to 'the heights of Hermon,' calling that high peak the 'little mountain' (literal translation) in comparison with Mount Zion [the spiritual height where the psalmist wishes to be]" (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, note on verse 6). Others, however, believe that "the land of the Jordan" in context here means the whole land of Israel and that the psalmist is writing "from" or "far away from" it.

It seems likely that the "ungodly nation" in 43:1 refers to a people hostile to Israel among whom the psalmist is exiled—perhaps the Syrians to the north before David subdued them. (The later Assyrian and Babylonian captivities would seem to be too late for placement in Book II though that is not impossible—especially as there could have been later rearrangement. In any case, this was probably a popular song during the Babylonian Exile.) Again, foreign captivity would parallel the situation of Psalm 44. On the other hand, "ungodly nation" could at times refer to Israel itself (compare Isaiah 10:6; Amos 9:8), which, if so, in this case would mean the psalmist's own people were persecuting him, as so often happened to God's faithful servants.

Whoever the psalmist's enemies are, they taunt him incessantly about his faith, asking, "Where is your God?" (Psalm 42:3, 10). He feels depressed, saying to himself, "My soul is downcast within me" (verse 6), over God's apparent silence and delay in helping him—praying to God, "Why do you cast me off?" (43:2) and "Why have you forgotten me?" (verse 9).

"The psalms have always proved to be a great source of solace and encouragement to God's people throughout the centuries [as] we are able to watch noble souls struggling with themselves. They talk to themselves and to their souls, baring their hearts, analyzing their problems, chiding and encouraging themselves. Sometimes they are elated, at other times depressed, but they are always honest with themselves" (David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure*, 1965, p. 9).

In verse 7, deep calling to deep at the noise of God's waterfalls could refer to the cascading Jordan. Yet it might refer to a thunderstorm of rain pouring down from the deep of the heavens above to flow to the deep of the oceans below, the latter hinted at in the waves at the end of the verse. The imagery of a torrent of water from above, with God's waves crashing over the psalmist, is meant figuratively to signify being overwhelmed by circumstances God has brought or allowed.

Yet the psalmist continues to talk himself through each wave of discouragement: "The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me—a prayer to the God of my life" (verse 8).

Rather than giving in to his fears, the psalmist asks himself in the psalm's refrain why he is so downcast when God is his God, strength and help (compare verses 5, 11; 43:5). He stirs himself to continue to trust in and wait on God: "Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance" (42:5)—that is, he knows God will smile on him and encourage him. In the final clause in the other two occurrences of the refrain, the psalmist refers to God as "the help of my countenance and my God" (verse 11; 43:5). A worried, depressed person has a hard time hiding his feelings. When he is unduly introverted, negative emotions show on his face. When he turns away from himself and focuses on God, his face begins to look better. He loses "that drawn, haggard, vexed, troubled, perplexed, introspective appearance, and [he begins] to look composed and calm, balanced and bright" (Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, p. 13).

In the final stanza, Psalm 43, the psalmist addresses God as both Attorney and Judge. To God as Attorney, he says, “Plead my cause against an ungodly nation” (verse 1). To the Judge he says, “Vindicate me, O God” (same verse)—which could here mean either to declare him innocent of false accusations or to prove him right for trusting in God to save him. He prays that God will intervene to enable him to return to Jerusalem and is confident that God will—considering God to be his “exceeding joy” (verses 3-4).

This song can be of great encouragement when difficult circumstances prevent us from attending worship services in fellowship with other believers. We can of course still come before God in the spirit. We should also remember that even if circumstances such as health were to bar us from Sabbath and festival services for the rest of our physical lives, all who remain faithful to God will one day join together in worshiping Him at Jerusalem for all eternity.

Psalm 44, another maskil of the sons of Korah, is written as a community lament and plea.

The perspective throughout is normally first-person plural (i.e., we, our, us), yet verses 4, 6 and 15 use first-person singular (I, my and me). It could be that the singular usage is intended to denote the nation collectively—or just to have each person singing the prayerful song identify with it personally. It is also conceivable that these verses were intended to be solo parts. Or they may simply indicate a single author praying collectively throughout the psalm using “we” but sometimes speaking personally using “I”—just as each of us does in our own prayers today. For instance, you as an individual might pray collectively, “Our Father...give us...our daily bread,” and yet also ask personally in the same prayer, “Help me to do your will.”

The occasion of this psalm is a time of military defeat wherein people have been captured by the enemy (see verses 9-12). It may be one of those taken captive who wrote the song in Psalms 42-43.

Psalm 44 begins with the people rehearsing a portion of Israel’s history that their parents taught them (verse 1)—that their ancestors didn’t gain the Promised Land because of their own military strength and actions, but because God drove out the nations who lived there and planted the Israelite ancestors there instead (verses 2-3). The psalm further eschews trust in military might and expresses faith that God, as Israel’s King and commander, is the One through whom the nation will gain victory against its enemies now and in the future—just as in the past (verses 4-8).

Yet for the moment things look terribly bleak—in the face of military defeat, scattering, shame and enemy taunts (verses 9-16, 19). The song bemoans God having sold His people away for almost nothing (verse 12). Despite this, the people have remained faithful to God and His covenant, mindful that He would know of any idolatry on their part (verses 17-18, 20-21).

Indeed, the song maintains that it is because of the people’s refusal to compromise with God’s way that they are suffering and in danger among their enemies (verse 22). The statement here about being sheep for the slaughter applied in the greatest sense to the Messiah, who would come as the Lamb of God to be sacrificed, as the prophet Isaiah foretold in similar wording (see Isaiah 53:7). Yet this metaphoric description would also characterize all Christ’s followers,

His flock, who would be persecuted for their faith. And in fact the apostle Paul quotes Psalm 44:22 in this very regard (see Romans 8:36)—speaking of the fact that we endure this for the sake of the wonderful outcome God has in mind for us.

The people beseech God to awake out of sleep and rise up to help them (verses 23, 26). Since they know He does not actually sleep (see Psalm 121:4), their words here have a sense of pleading with God to focus His awareness on

their need and to rouse Himself into action. And where the song spoke before of God having sold His people away (44:12), it ends with a plea for Him to redeem them (verse 26)—to buy them back.

Matthew 25

1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

The Kingdom parables were discussed in detail [in the chapter 13 notes](#).

3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

The oil in the lamp could equally represent the Ruach haKodesh or the Torah, as the two cannot be separated (i.e., [Romans, chapter 8](#)) See also note to verse 12 below.

Psalm 119:105-107 – Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

The parable of the virgins is meant to teach preparedness, a common theme in Judaism with regard to the coming of God's Kingdom:

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

The marriage banquet is for Messiah, the bridegroom, and His bride, the faith community of Israel, made up of both Jews and gentiles who trust in Yeshua and His Torah. The end-times book of Revelation shows the necessity of Torah, as part of one's faith in Yeshua, in order to enter the Kingdom of God:

Revelation 12:17 – And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, [Torah] and have the testimony of Yeshua Messiah.

Revelation 14:12 – Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the? commandments of God, [Torah] and the faith of Yeshua.

Revelation 22:14 – Blessed are they that do his commandments, [Torah] that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

This is the same reply Yeshua gave in chapter 7, which was directed to those who thought they could follow Him apart from the will of the Father and His sayings, both of which refer to Torah:

Matthew 7:21-24 – Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father [Torah] which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

The above would lend credibility to the idea that the oil in the lamps of the virgins represents Torah.

14-15 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

There is a principle that God gives to each one of his servants as much spiritual enlightenment as they are capable of handling. The human being that had the greatest enlightenment was Moses, who spoke directly with God, and not in dreams or visions. Everyone else since Moses sees things less clearly:

1 Corinthians 13:12 – For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

29-30 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Yeshua's stern message here is that even those who are given a small amount from God will be held accountable to Him for what they did with it. (i.e., All believers are called to obedience.)

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

The Messiah's sacrifice also goes back to this time (Hebrews 9:26; Revelation 13:8).

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Yeshua's brethren are the children of Israel and those gentiles adopted into the faith of Israel. They are those who trust in Him and keep His Torah (1 John 2:3-4; 3:22-24; 5:2-3; 2 John 1:6; Revelation 12:17; 14:12; 22:14).

“Works” are an integral part of “faith”:

James 2:24 – Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

It can thus be said that those persecuting Torah-observant followers of Yeshua, are in fact persecuting Him.