

# Triennial Torah Study – 4<sup>th</sup> Year 15/02/2014



sightedmoon.com /triennial-torah-study-4<sup>th</sup>-year-04042015 /

By Joseph F. Dumond

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

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

<b>Gen 25</b>	<b>1 Sam 3-5</b>	<b>Ps 51-54</b>	<b>Mark 1:29 – 2:28</b>
---------------	------------------	-----------------	-------------------------

## From Abraham to Jacob (Genesis 25)

This chapter presents a rapid transition from Abraham to Isaac, whose life will be presented very quickly and with little detail. The narrative of Genesis is dominated by Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, with Isaac's history serving as a brief interlude between the lives of Abraham and Jacob. In fact, the majority of the narrative concerning Isaac serves mainly as a prelude to the life of Jacob. For this reason some have called Isaac a shadowy figure.

The chapter begins with a list of Abraham's sons and descendants by a later wife, Keturah. The descendants of many of these sons have apparently become peoples of Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Then follows the list for the descendants of Ishmael; most of these peoples live in various countries of the Middle East. The list for Isaac begins in verse 19 and moves directly into a narrative about the birth of Isaac's sons, Esau and Jacob. As can be seen, the purpose of the chapter is to distinguish between the sons of Abraham, with the story line being passed along through Isaac to the father of the Israelites, Jacob. Comparing patriarchal ages, it is interesting to note that in spite of the order of verses, Abraham's life overlapped that of Esau and Jacob by about 14 years (compare Hebrews 11:9).

The Genesis 25 narrative is continued by relating the events surrounding the births of Esau and Jacob. The fundamental theme in the narrative of these two sons is that of competition for supremacy. Even in the womb of their mother, Esau and Jacob struggled—and this would be continued throughout their lives and on into the histories of the nations descended from them.

It is interesting to note that Esau is described as a "skillful hunter, a man of the field," while Jacob is called a "mild man, dwelling in tents" (verse 27). These descriptions are intended to draw a maximum contrast between the two brothers. The mention of Jacob dwelling in tents is intended to show him to be a civilized and more refined person than his elder brother. That Jacob dwelt in

tents, whereas his brother was a hunter in the field, also seems to imply that he showed more interest in the family's mercantile and herding business. Moreover, the word translated "mild" (verse 27) is the Hebrew *tam*, which is normally translated "blameless." Jacob was a blameless man—blameless as far as the letter of the law went. But Jacob was also a cunning man, one who would manipulate people and events in order to obtain what he wanted. This character trait would cause him years of grief before it was rooted out of him—before he became truly blameless in letter and spirit.

The purchase of a birthright has been documented in several contracts of the ancient Hurrian people, and thus Jacob's actions can be seen in the light of cultural precedent. That Esau would so lightly esteem his birthright is just another story element showing the great contrast between the two brothers. At least Jacob rightly appreciated its great value—and his dealings with Esau show him to be the more business-savvy of the two brothers. The Scripture tells us that Esau, in connection with the sale of his birthright, was a profane person (Hebrews 12:16), and Paul also makes use of the phrase "whose god is their belly" (Philippians 3:19) when describing those who set their hearts and minds on earthly things—an interesting phrase given Esau's coveting a mere bowl of stew. The intent is to get us to understand that man often forfeits spiritual realities for the temporary pleasures of physical things, and that such disordered priorities and behavior render a person profane and indicates who that person's god truly is. The result in such cases is the loss of the spiritual reality, and the inheritance of a curse rather than a blessing.

### **The Lord Calls Samuel (1 Samuel 3)**

---

While still a child, God speaks directly to Samuel. In his first message, God reiterates His prophecy regarding Eli. And through subsequent messages and their fulfillment, it becomes clear to all Israel that Samuel has been called to be a prophet (verses 19-21), and God is once again making his will known through a servant of His (see verse 1). "The term prophet means 'spokesman' and refers to one who speaks for another (see Ex. 7:1, 2)" (Nelson Study Bible, note on 3:20).

### **The Philistines Capture the Ark (1 Samuel 4)**

---

The Israelites had developed a superstitious approach to God, the tabernacle and the ark. They thought that if they brought the ark into battle, they would automatically have God's help. Instead, God teaches them a lesson about thinking this way. The ark is captured, the Israelites are defeated and the sons of Eli are killed as God had prophesied would happen.

When the bad news reaches Shiloh, it results in the deaths of Eli and Phinehas' wife during her grief-induced labor. Although it is not stated here, apparently in connection with the death of the priests and the removal of the ark, Shiloh was abandoned soon after as the place of worship, as we read in Psalm 78:56-69. Samuel, who takes over all duties as judge, is never mentioned in

connection with Shiloh again, taking up residence instead in the hometown of his family at Ramah (compare 1 Samuel 7:17).

Shiloh's abandonment is further described in Jeremiah 7:12-15 and 26:4-9, where God uses its example to demonstrate that the presence of the temple and the ark was no guarantee of protection from Israel's enemies. The Israelites would receive God's protection only insofar as their ways pleased Him.

### **The Ark in Philistia (1 Samuel 5:1-7:1)**

---

The plague many of the Philistines suffer and die from produces "tumors," the Hebrew word for which "literally means 'swellings' and may refer to any kind of tumor, swelling, or boil" (Nelson, note on 5:6). When the ark is sent back, the people include an "offering" consisting of five golden sculptures of these "tumors." But they also for some unstated reason include five golden rats. It would appear that rats had some sort of involvement with whatever the plague was. It is interesting to note that bubonic plague, the black death of the Middle Ages, is characterized by the formation of buboes, i.e. inflammatory swellings of the lymph glands, especially in the groin area—and that the plague was spread by the fleas of rodents, particularly rats. This, then, may have been what the Philistines were suffering from.

When the Philistines decide the ark is most likely the cause of their problems, and agree to send it back, they devise a test to try to determine for sure whether the God of Israel is behind all of this. They find two cows that have never pulled a cart and that have recently given birth, and they take their calves from them. If the cows are willing to be harnessed to a cart for the first time and cooperate together to pull it without balking, without any guidance, and in the correct direction away from their own calves, then, the Philistines reason, God would have to be involved. The lords of the Philistines follow the cart in astonishment as the cows pull the ark directly back to the land of Israel.

For some reason, the ark is never returned to the tabernacle. It remains in the house of Abinadab for 70 years or more until David brings it to Jerusalem when he pitches a new tent for it (1 Chronicles 15:1; 16:1). Meanwhile, the tabernacle and altar of burnt offering somehow find their way to Gibeon (16:37-40).

### **Godly Repentance; The Destruction of the Godless (Psalms 51-53)**

---

We return now to psalms attributed to David, with Psalm 51 being the first in Book II of the Psalter that bears his name. We read this psalm earlier in conjunction with the event described in the superscription—that of the prophet Nathan confronting David after his sin of adultery and murder (see the Bible Reading Program comments on 2 Samuel 11 as well as 2 Samuel 12:113; Psalm 51; 2 Samuel 12:13-31; 1 Chronicles 20:1-3). David immediately confesses, "I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Samuel 12:9, 13). And here in his psalm of repentance, David

provides a model of repentant prayer for all of God's people when they sin. It may have been placed here in the Psalter as a response to the calling to account and instruction on sacrifices God gives in Psalm 50.

## Psalm 51

---

In Psalm 51, David doesn't justify his actions or try to improve his position. He appeals to God for mercy, *hesed*—God's unfailing, steadfast love (verse 1). David agonizingly faces what he has done and confesses it to God using all the basic Hebrew words for sin. The word "transgressions" (verse 1) is from the Hebrew *pesha*, meaning transgression in the sense of rebellion or revolt. "Iniquity" in verse 2 is from *awon*, meaning perversity, wickedness or fault. The word for "evil" in verse 4 is *ra'*, meaning something bad, wrong or hurtful. And the word for "sin" in these verses, *hata*, means to miss the mark. All essentially imply deviating from a standard—that is, from God's standard.

In verse 4, David says to God, "Against You, You only, have I sinned." This might seem odd, for David appears also to have sinned against Bathsheba, Uriah, other soldiers who were killed in the battle in which Uriah died, and the nation of Israel, over which David had a responsibility to govern righteously. Yeshua later said that one person can sin against another (Matthew 18:15). So what did David mean?

Some take it to be a matter of comparison. That is to say, what he did against these others is nothing compared to what he has done against God. Yet the answer is probably more a matter of nuance in perspective. Sin, we must consider, is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4, KJV). Since God is the one who defines the law's standards, any violation of the law is against Him. Acting against another person is sin because God has set the rules of conduct forbidding this. The standard we have violated, the mark we have missed, is God's. In this sense, sin itself can only be against God, the Lawgiver. It would certainly be proper to say that one has sinned in acting against another person. And it is easy to see that the statement could be shortened to say that one has sinned against another person. But here we should realize that while the affected person is the object of the action that is sin, he is not the object of the sin (or transgressing) itself, as it was not his law that was transgressed but God's.

David's statement in Psalm 51:5 has caused much confusion: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." This does not mean David's mother sinned in conceiving him. Nor does it mean that David was born stained with "original sin," as many maintain. Rather the Hebrew prefixed preposition *b'*, usually translated "in," can also mean "into." As Gesenius' Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament says in one of its definitions of this word, it often occurs "with verbs of motion, when the movement to a place results in rest in it, into." Thus, David is most likely stating that he was brought forth into iniquity and into sin. As with all human beings, sin had characterized his life from a young age.

In verse 6, David says that God desires “truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part...to know wisdom.” It is one thing to know God’s truth in an academic sense. It is quite another to also live by it in our inward thoughts and motivations. This, David knew, is what God really wants. And whenever we repent, we must consider what it is that God wants from us. It comes down to an educated change and a lifelong commitment—and that we follow through.

David asks God to “blot out,” to “wash” and to “cleanse” him (verses 2, 9)—to thoroughly scrub him clean from His spiritual uncleanness (verses 6-7). In its note on verse 7, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* states: “The unclean, such as lepers, used to present themselves before the priest on the occasion of their purification. The priest, being satisfied that the unclean person had met the requirements for purification, would take a bunch of ‘hyssop’ and sprinkle the person with water, symbolic of ritual cleansing. Here the psalmist [David] petitions the Lord to be his priest by taking the hyssop and by declaring him cleansed from all sin.”

In this cleansing, David prays that God would create in him a clean heart and would renew a steadfast, faithful spirit within Him (verse 10). David realized he could not be faithful on His own. He needed God’s constant help. So he pleads to remain in God’s presence and to continue to have God’s Holy Spirit to help him—not himself cast out and that Spirit taken away as he knew he deserved (verse 11).

Guilt over what he had done was always present in David’s mind (verse 3). It took the joy and gladness out of life (verse 8). David figuratively refers to God having broken his bones (same verse), meaning that the overwhelming guilt he had from considering his sin in light of God’s laws made him feel hobbled or crushed and greatly humbled. He prays to be forgiven and relieved of this guilt (verse 14)—and that His joy would return (verse 12).

David declares what he will do when God restores him. He will teach others God’s ways (verse 13), He will sing about God’s righteousness (verse 14)—no doubt in public psalms—and he will openly proclaim God’s praise (verse 15). David was thinking outwardly, not selfishly about only himself. When we ask God for restoration, an important part of our motivation should be so that we can better serve Him and others.

In verses 16-19 we return to a major theme of Psalm 50—the kind of sacrifices God really wants (also touched on in Psalm 40). At the time he wrote, David was required to bring physical sacrifices to the tabernacle. And he no doubt did on this occasion soon after his confession before Nathan. Perhaps Psalm 51 was written as a song to accompany the sacrifice. Verse 16’s statement about God not desiring sacrifice “or else I would give it” should not be understood to imply that David would not bring a sacrifice. The point is that he’ll give God whatever God wants—he’ll do whatever it takes—to be right with Him.

But David knows that God does not desire any physical sacrifices apart from the inner sacrifices of a right heart and mind—“broken,” meaning humble, and “contrite,” meaning repentant and obedient (verse 17). David used these same terms in Psalm 34:18. And the prophet Isaiah would later use them as well (Isaiah 66:2)—again in the context of the kind of sacrifices and service

God is truly looking for. Psalm 51:19 uses the words “sacrifices of righteousness”—showing that it involves living the right way of life.

David concludes by asking God to “do good” to Zion or Jerusalem and to build its walls—meaning to bless and protect the people—including leading them to a right mindset—so that the people and their physical offerings would please Him (verses 18-19). This shows that God is pleased with physical offerings—but only when part of an inward devotion to Him and life of obedience. The holy city is likely here representative of the entire nation—and in a prophetic sense of spiritual Zion as well as God’s Kingdom in the world to come.

It should be noted that Psalm 51 has, thematically, many points of contact with Psalm 25.

## **Psalm 52**

---

Psalm 52 is a maskil (perhaps meaning instructive psalm or, as the NKJV translates it, “contemplation”) of David—the first of four of these in a row. We earlier read this psalm in harmony with the story of the event mentioned in the superscription—when Doeg the Edomite, a servant of King Saul, told Saul of the high priest Ahimelech giving provisions to David and his men (see the Bible Reading Program comments on 1 Samuel 22:6-23; Psalm 52). Recall that Saul then ordered his men to execute Ahimelech and the other priests at Nob—which his men refused to do, whereupon Doeg carried out Saul’s order, slaughtering 85 priests plus additional men, women, children, infants and animals living in the city (verses 18-19). To the one son who escaped, David lamented that he was to blame for having put the priests in jeopardy (verse 22).

In Psalm 52, written on that occasion, David questions the intelligence of any “mighty” man that would boast about doing evil since God’s love and goodness will not be thwarted. Those who use their tongue for evil—such as in lying and passing on information to hurt innocent people — will be destroyed.

Doeg was apparently a wealthy man (verse 7)—perhaps having his pockets lined through spying and other misdeeds. Saul may have rewarded him handsomely after his massacre of the priests. Yet it is foolish to trust in money and evil accomplishments. This verse connects Psalm 52 with Psalm 49, concerning “those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches” (verse 6). Both psalms show that this is the way to destruction.

In contrast to the wicked, who will be uprooted from the land of the living (52:5), David says that he is like an olive tree (verse 8), which lives for hundreds of years. Indeed, planted securely “in the house of God”—ultimately not the ancient tabernacle but the family and Kingdom of God—he and the rest of the saints will flourish under the attentive care of the Master “forever and ever” (verses 8-9). The picture of the righteous as flourishing green trees ties back to the imagery of Psalm 1.

## Psalm 53

---

Psalm 53 is another maskil of David. “To Mahalath” in the superscription, which may be part of a postscript to Psalm 52 (and also found in the superscription of Psalm 88 as part of a longer phrase), could represent the psalm being set to the tune of another song. Yet it might mean something else. The words have been variously interpreted as “On sickness,” “On suffering,” “To pipings” (on wind instruments) or “To dances” (or some sort of choreography).

Psalm 53 repeats much of Psalm 14 with some minor variation (see the Bible Reading Program comments on Psalm 14). The placement of nearly the same psalm here provides a further commentary on the sort of arrogant godless fool described in Psalms 49 and 52—and thus brings the cluster of psalms beginning with 49 to a close. It also helps to demonstrate that originally the various books of the Psalter were probably separate collections or hymnals.

One noticeable difference between the two psalms is that here the word Elohim (“God”) is used throughout rather than Yhwh (the Eternal or “LORD”).

The other significant difference occurs in verse 5. As the Zondervan NIV Study Bible notes on this verse, it “differs considerably from 14:5-6, though the basic thought remains the same: God overwhelms the godless who attack his people. Here the verbs are in the past tense (perhaps to express the certainty of their downfall).” As to God scattering the bones of the enemy, it means “over the battlefield of their defeat, their bodies left unburied like something loathsome (see Isa 14:18-20; Jer 8:2...)” (same note). However, it could also be that so many will be destroyed at the end that they will not be able to be buried for some time, such as when the godless army of Gog is destroyed (see Ezekiel 39:11-16).

The closing verse of Psalm 14 and of 53 are identical in expressing a great yearning for salvation, rejoicing and gladness when God restores His people to their land. This speaks prophetically of the future establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

### **“Be Merciful to Me, O God, for Man Would Swallow Me Up” (Psalms 54-57)**

---

Psalm 54 is the third maskil of David out of four in a row. Neginoth in the superscription, which may be part of the postscript of Psalm 53, is probably correctly rendered in the NKJV as “stringed instruments” (and in the next superscription, which may be part of the postscript of this psalm).

Psalm 54 begins a cluster of seven prayers of David for help against enemies and betrayal at the center of Book II of the Psalter (Psalms 54-60). Note in going through these psalms that the main weapon of the enemy in most of them is the mouth. We earlier read Psalm 54 in conjunction with the account of the event mentioned in the superscription—when the people of Ziph informed Saul that David was hiding in that area (see the Bible Reading Program comments on 1 Samuel 23:15-29; Psalm 54).

These informants put David's life in danger, as Saul was out to kill him. So David prays for God to save him by His "name" (verse 1), meaning everything God's identity implies—who He is and what He stands for. He further asks God to vindicate him (same verse)—the context here meaning either to prove David right for trusting God (by God coming through for him) or to prove David, though a fugitive, in the right (by saving him and judging his enemies).

The "strangers" who have risen against David (verse 3) apparently refers to the Ziphite informants. And the "oppressors" seeking his life (same verse) would seem to refer to Saul and his officers. None of these, David says, are following God.

In verses 4-5, David declares his confidence in God to help him and his supporters and to punish his enemies. He prays, "Cut them off in Your truth." The Expositor's Bible Commentary states: "The resolution of the prayer lies in the conviction that God is just. He will not permit his children to suffer without vindication. The imprecation [or curse] is not vindictive but expressive of trust in divine justice. Evil must be repaid. The people of God believed in the boomerang effect of sin: 'Let evil recoil [i.e., come back on those who perpetrate it]'" (note on verse 5).

Trusting in God's deliverance, David says he will "freely sacrifice" to God (verse 6)—or "sacrifice a freewill offering" (NIV). This refers to a peace offering (see Leviticus 7:11-18; 22:18-30; Numbers 15:1-10), "given only when the worshipper wanted to say an extra-special thanks to God for his gracious, saving love" (George Knight, Psalms, Daily Study Bible Series, comments on Psalm 54).

God's name, hearkening back to verse 1, is good—and worthy of praise (verse 6). Verse 7 may mean that deliverance has come in the midst of the song's composition, though it perhaps more likely means that David has foreseen it clearly. Rather than including the NKJV's interpolated words "its desire," a better sense might simply be "My eye has seen what will come upon my enemies."

## **Mark 1:29-2:28**

---

Mark continues the testimony of Yeshua and His great healing authority of illness, disease, leprosy, and many others. We are told of how Yeshua healed the mother-in-law of Shim'on who was very ill and immediately after being healed by Messiah was able to literally resume her normal duties. She was "completely" restored. His healing was so powerful that it seems that the people became focused on the healing alone and the Gospel was getting pushed aside. One wonders if that was the focus of the many times Yeshua went off alone to pray.

One wonders if this was troubling to Him.

We read of several times that Yeshua rose early, praying early, off by Himself praying and so forth. It is plain this is a good practice for us to follow as well. Yeshua desires to change the focus of His ministry and directs a re-focus of His mission: to "proclaim" the Good News and to call to repentance. The Reign of the Heavens, the Kingdom Heaven, is near.



He continues on proclaiming and casting out demons and heals a leper. Seems no matter where He went during these days, He was bombarded by people needing physical healing and they were unable to understand that what they truly needed was spiritual healing.

In Kepharnahum (Capernaum) He was teaching and He was brought the paralytic and Yeshua spoke words of forgiveness to him. The Scribes accused Him of blasphemy for He was forgiving people of their sins. Yeshua understood the parallel between bondage from sin and bondage from disease. The words He spoke to rise up and walk are the same as "thy sins are forgiven thee." But the Scribes and Pharisees did not understand this.

Yeshua later met Levi the tax collector and had supper at his house, which was unheard of at those times. No Kosher Rabbi would be caught fellowshiping with tax collectors (who were seen to be in submission to the enemy who was Rome) or with sinners.

Scribes and Pharisees confused about Yeshua eating and visiting sinners and tax collectors. Yeshua explains Himself with His own words. It is the sick who need healing, the sinners who need a savior and deliverance. He takes care of those who need. Those who already have are in no need so why go to them? Additionally, Yeshua recognized that those "learned" would be unable to hear His message, just as it is today. He uses the parable of the wineskins to explain.

Yeshua and His disciples are accused of breaking the Sabbath when they went through the grain fields and plucked wheat and ate them (without washing their hands too!!). We need to understand that these rules were manmade and not the Torah of Elohim. The Scribes and Pharisees were the ones who said the Sabbath was being broken, not Elohim. We need to understand this. Yeshua and His disciple never broke the Sabbath according to Torah.