

# Triennial Torah Study – 5<sup>th</sup> Year 15/03/2014

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

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

<b>Gen 29</b>	<b>1 Sam 14-15</b>	<b>Ps 63</b>	<b>Mark 6:33 – 7:23</b>
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## Laban's Deception (Genesis 29:1-30:24)

Jacob's arrival in Padan Aram gives us a revealing look at him. From his conversation with the shepherds gathered at the well, we may observe that Jacob was polite, sociable and knowledgeable of the business of herding. Jacob's life "in tents" was not cloistered—he was, as previously stated, civilized and refined, and most likely skilled in the family business. Moreover, Jacob was no pampered weakling. For when he saw Rachel, he went and rolled the stone off of the mouth of the well—and well stones were massive circular stones of considerable weight. Also, notice verse 10's triple reference to "Laban, his mother's brother." Some commentators have taken this pointed emphasis to indicate that Jacob's mind at this point may have been more on attempting to ingratiate himself into the favor of Laban through a favorable report from Rachel, and less on the woman herself. Of course, the tenderness of verse 11 should demonstrate a genuineness of feeling regarding his meeting up with close relatives. That is only natural. Still, putting all the evidence together, it would appear that Jacob is a cultured, sociable, business-savvy and physically imposing man who, though at least sometimes genuine in feeling, is not always genuine in his dealings with others—that he is often looking for a way to further his own ends.

God is about to embark on a long course of knocking Jacob down to a more humble self-appraisal—using Laban as a significant tool in the process. Jacob may have been a smooth operator in Canaan, able to run the family business and outwit his elder brother, but he can in no way compare to the devious Laban. Jacob has unknowingly met his match. When Rachel brought her father the news of Jacob's arrival, Laban ran to meet him—perhaps naturally happy to see a visiting relative (verses 13-14) but also, knowing the type of person Laban is, surely thinking back on the gifts that were given for his sister Rebekah (24:30). Jacob stayed with Laban for a month, and during that month two things happened: Jacob fell in love with the beautiful Rachel, and Laban observed it. Now Laban had a way to get Jacob into his service; he may have even begun planning something when Jacob "told Laban all these things" (verse 13), which no doubt included the reason for his journey to Haran.

Sensing his opportunity, Laban asked an apparently magnanimous question: "Shall you serve me for nothing because you are family? Name your wages" (compare verse 15). Jacob asked for Rachel, as Laban had no doubt anticipated. Laban set Rachel's price at seven years' service, which Jacob happily rendered. But on the wedding night, Laban substituted Leah for Rachel. Jacob's senses and wits may have been dulled by festive drinking (perhaps urged on all

the more by Laban). Jacob was further blinded by the darkness of the nuptial tent— darkness probably arranged as part of Laban’s conspiracy, which appears to have involved Zilpah (verse 24). Leah herself must have kept silent, probably on orders from her father. In any event it is clear that Jacob did not realize he had slept with the wrong woman until the morning (verse 25). Laban’s reply when an angry Jacob confronted him: “It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.” Firstborn—the word must have been like a dagger in Jacob’s ears, for in his own family, as we earlier read, Jacob had contrived to gain for himself the birthright and blessings that normally would have gone to his own fraternal twin brother, Esau, the firstborn. Jacob’s deviousness was now coming back to haunt him. For committing to another seven years’ service Jacob obtained Rachel the following week, but the die was now cast for a divided, unhappy household. Jacob was reaping what he had sown.

## Jacob’s Dysfunctional Family (Genesis 29:1-30:24)

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Jacob’s competition with Esau had brought near-open warfare to Isaac’s household. Now Jacob would live the remainder of his life eating the bitter fruits of his ways. Leah and Rachel vied with each other for the affection of Jacob. Jacob loved Rachel deeply but he lacked love for Leah. Where the New King James Version says Leah was “unloved” (29:31), the old King James Version has “hated.” The Nelson Study Bible says that “hated” is the literal translation. According to New Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies, the Hebrew word here “sometimes means only a less degree of love and regard; to be cold and indifferent to, to show less favor to” (p. 209). In any case Leah was second-rate in Jacob’s eyes, a very difficult position for any woman. Because Jacob treated Leah this way, God blessed her with children (which would seem to indicate that, in God’s eyes, Leah was not principally at fault in the whole mess—her father having forced her into it). In the meantime Rachel was barren and very frustrated in general. She felt betrayed by her father and resentful of her sister, whom she no doubt viewed as an unwelcome interloper in her marriage. Between these two squabbling women, and their maids, Jacob would father 12 sons and a daughter. The sons of the various wives and concubines would likewise squabble and fight. Jacob’s house was in constant turmoil—a classic picture of the dysfunctional family.

Part of the dysfunction in Jacob’s family may have had its roots a generation earlier in Isaac and Rebekah, who fell into a devastating pitfall in parenting—favoritism within the family. Isaac greatly favored Esau; Rebekah favored Jacob. This divided affection produced an unhealthy atmosphere of competition, mistrust, double-dealing, disrespect and lingering resentment. The two sons of Isaac and Rebekah were the unwitting victims, and Jacob likewise repeated the error in his own family: Rachel was favored over Leah, Joseph over his brethren, then later Benjamin over his brethren. Of course this is a lot more understandable in Jacob’s case, since he had not wanted to marry Leah in the first place. Still, she was his wife and they had children together—so he should have done his best to show them all love and affection.

God later gave the following law to Israel: “Nor shall you take a woman as a rival to her sister, to uncover her nakedness while the other is alive” (Leviticus 18:18). It does not appear that God had revealed this to be sin to those of Jacob’s day. But Jacob’s life demonstrated the great need for the revelation of this law.

## Jonathan’s Bold Attack (1 Samuel 14:1-23)

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Saul’s son Jonathan recruits his armor-bearer for a courageous attack on a group of Philistines. He has faith that God can back them up, and asks God to reveal through specifically requested circumstances whether He will, in fact, do so. The two men kill 20 Philistines, sending panic throughout the Philistine ranks, which is aggravated by an earthquake.

The rest of Saul's army discovers that Jonathan is missing, and that the Philistines are in disarray and retreat, and begins to pursue them. They are joined by Hebrews who were already in the Philistine camp, probably as mercenaries or volunteers trying to get in good with the occupational forces (not unlike what David pretended to do in 1 Samuel 27), and by others who were hiding in the caves and rocks nearby (verses 21-22; 13:6).

Eli's great-grandson Ahijah is mentioned here wearing the priestly ephod (verse 3). It is not clear from this passage whether Ahijah himself was a priest in Shiloh at the time, indicating the city was still functioning in some religious capacity, or whether, as seems more likely, this is just referring back to Eli as having been the priest in Shiloh. Ahijah was probably serving as priest elsewhere.

In verse 18, Saul tells Ahijah to bring to him the ark of God, which is still in the house of Abinadab in Kirjath Jearim. However, the account here does not state that it was actually brought at this time. In fact, Saul's request is interrupted and the fighting soon ends with Israel victorious, the request for the ark now apparently moot. (This appears to be another example of Saul's impatience—not waiting to receive the instructions he sought from God before heading off to battle, verse 19.) Furthermore, when David later has the ark brought to Jerusalem, it is brought from Abinadab's house—there being no mention anywhere in Scripture that it had ever been moved from there.

Before leaving this account, it will no doubt come as news to many that Jonathan's strategy was actually employed within the last century. Werner Keller writes in *The Bible As History*: "One example, unique in its way, shows how accurate the Bible can be even in the smallest details and how reliable its dates and information. We owe to Major Vivian Gilbert, a British army officer, this description of a truly remarkable occurrence. Writing in his reminiscences he says, 'In the First World War a brigade major in Allenby's army in Palestine was on one occasion searching his Bible with the light of a candle, looking for a certain name. His brigade had received orders to take a village that stood on a rocky prominence on the other side of a deep valley. It was called Michmash and the name seemed somehow familiar.

"Eventually he found it in I Sam. 13 and read there: 'And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.' It then went on to tell how Jonathan and his armour-bearer crossed over during the night 'to the Philistines' garrison' on the other side, and how they passed two sharp rocks: 'there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez and the name of the other Seneh' (I Sam. 14<sup>4</sup>). They clambered up the cliff and overpowered the garrison, 'within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plough.' The main body of the enemy awakened by the mêlée thought they were surrounded by Saul's troops and 'melted away and they went on beating down one another' (I Sam. 14<sup>14-16</sup>). Thereupon Saul attacked with his whole force and beat the enemy. 'So the Lord saved Israel that day.'

"The brigade major reflected that there must still be this narrow passage through the rocks, between the two spurs, and at the end of it the 'half acre of land.' He woke the commander and they read the passage through together once more. Patrols were sent out. They found the pass, which was thinly held by the Turks, and which led past two jagged rocks—obviously Bozez and Seneh. Up on top, beside Michmash, they could see by the light of the moon a small flat field. The brigadier altered his plan of attack. Instead of deploying the whole brigade he sent one company through the pass under cover of darkness. The few Turks whom they met were overpowered without a sound, the cliffs were scaled, and shortly before daybreak the company had taken up a position on 'the half acre of land.' The Turks woke up and took to their heels in disorder since they thought that they were being surrounded by Allenby's army. They were all killed or taken prisoner.

“‘And so,’ concludes Major Gilbert, ‘after thousands of years British troops successfully copied the tactics of Saul and Jonathan’” (1981, pp. 182-183). What a surprising confirmation of Scripture! In the face of this and other proofs of the Bible, let us not doubt the reliability of God’s Word.

## The War With Amalek (1 Samuel 15)

God had given instructions through Moses that the attack on Israel by Amalek during the first weeks of their journey from Egypt (see Exodus 17:8-16) should be avenged (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). Israel has finally grown strong enough to do this, and Samuel instructs Saul to carry out the mission. The destruction is to be complete, including the animals.

The Kenites had a generally peaceful relationship with Israel. Moses’ father-in-law is called a Kenite (Judges 1:16). Jael, who killed Sisera in the days of Deborah the judge (Judges 4:11, 17-22), was married to a Kenite. And apparently there had been other favorable encounters with Israel, prompting Saul to encourage them to escape before the fighting starts (1 Samuel 15:6).

Saul carries out a successful attack on the Amalekites. But he is “unwilling to utterly destroy them,” leaving alive their king and the best of the livestock (verse 9). Interestingly, Saul maintains that he has obeyed God (verse 20). He does blame the people for keeping the livestock. Yet this was in his power. He could have ordered the livestock destroyed. But it evidently made sense to him to preserve the livestock for sacrificing to God. And the statement that this was Saul’s reason was apparently not a lie—as lying is not what Samuel criticizes him for (though Saul’s apparent self-deception that he had obeyed God in the matter would fall under the category of lying).

Samuel’s answer in verses 22-23 is an important one for us today. Obedience supersedes any attempt to honor God. And He cannot be honored with disobedience. If God has forbidden something, we cannot honor Him with that thing. Yet people try to do this all the time in the world around us. For instance, God says not to use pagan worship methods in an attempt to honor Him (see Deuteronomy 12:29-32). But people use holidays that originated in paganism, like Christmas and Easter, in an attempt to do just that. Some people even think this is obedience to God. But it isn’t. No matter how sincere, this is actually dishonoring God because it is disobeying Him. When people knowingly do this, it is rebellion and, as Samuel told Saul, is on par with witchcraft and idolatry. If you want to truly honor God, then do what He says—obey Him. (To learn more about the pagan origins of Christmas and Easter, [request](#) or [download](#) our free booklet [Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?](#))

Although God had already stated that Saul’s dynasty would not continue (1 Samuel 13:13-14), this latest act of rebellion causes Saul himself to be rejected as king. God will anoint someone else instead. Samuel refuses to have anything more to do with Saul, but Saul persuades Samuel to honor him one more time before the elders. Samuel finishes the execution God had ordered Saul to fulfill. And then he returns home, never to go to see Saul again—although Saul will later come to see him one last time in pursuing David (see 19:18-24).

In its introductory note on Psalm 63, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary says, “In spirit it is close to Psalm 42:1-2 [given the reference to thirsting for God and longing to be in His presence] and fits well with Psalms 61 and 62 as a collection of psalms bound by a common concern for closeness and fellowship with the Lord.”

According to its superscription, Psalm 63 was written when David “was in the wilderness of Judah”—and verse 6 tells us that people were then seeking to kill him. The setting is likely when he was living in the Judean wilderness while on the run from Saul, and we earlier read this psalm in that context (see the Bible Reading Program comments on 1 Samuel 23:1-14; Psalm 63). It is possible, however, that it was written much later, when David fled during Absalom’s rebellion and stayed for a brief period in the wilderness (see 2 Samuel 25:23-28; 16:2, 14;

17:16, 29). Advocates of this view cite David's reference to himself in Psalm 63:11 as king. Yet, as was pointed out in the earlier Bible Reading Program comments, even as Saul pursued him, David knew he was the rightful king, having already been anointed so by Samuel.

Moreover, he was looking to the future in this verse.

At the opening of the song, David expresses his faith in God and how earnestly he desires to be in His presence. The NKJV translation of the second line of verse 1 reads, "Early will I seek You," while the NIV reads, "Earnestly I seek you" (as does Green's Literal Translation). The Jewish Tanakh just has "I search for you." Expositor's explains that the phrase "earnestly I seek" (NIV) is derived from a root word related to the word for "dawn." This relatedness "gave rise to the tradition of treating Psalm 63 as a morning psalm with the translation 'early will I seek You' [but] The NIV correctly emphasizes the eagerness rather than the time of the 'seeking,' as the verb [elsewhere] denotes a diligent search for godly wisdom as most important to life (cf. Prov. 2:1-4; 8:17-21)" (footnote on Psalm 63:1, emphasis added).

It is also interesting in verse 1 to note the parallelism of "soul thirsts" and "flesh longs" or "body longs" (NIV). Expositor's states: "The longing for God consumes the whole being. The NIV rendering 'soul...body' reflects the M[asoretic] T[ext], but it should be remembered that the Hebrew for 'soul' (nepesh) signifies one's whole being, as does 'body' (lit[erally], 'flesh'; cf. 84:2)" (same footnote). Note that the word "soul" or nepesh here does not refer to some inner immortal spirit personage, as many today imagine, but the whole living being. While other verses do refer to a spiritual component within human beings-which together with the workings of the physical brain forms the human mind-that spirit is not conscious apart from the body.

This is why a future resurrection is required for an awakening of consciousness.

David compares his longing to enter the sanctuary of God with his continuing thirst for water in the desert, again recalling Psalm 42. God's lovingkindness (hesed, also meaning loyal love, covenant faithfulness or mercy) is "better than life" (verse 3), so David finds great satisfaction in praising and blessing Him (verse 5).

David refers to his meditations during the "night watches." Among the ancient Israelites, the night was divided into three watches of four hours each, and at times David focused his thoughts on God to pass sleepless hours (verse 6). Because God had helped him in the past (verse 7), David trusts that he will continue to remain sheltered under God's wings (as in 61:4) and even rejoice there (63:7). And he will go forward with God as a little child whose parent holds his hand while walking to keep him from falling (verse 8).

David declares that his enemies will not succeed in killing him because they will die instead (verses 9-10). Everyone who "swears by" God (verse 11)-in this broad context meaning that they live by promissory commitment to God and follow through (see Deuteronomy 6:13)-will receive honor. But those who live by deceit-including those who are hypocritical in their faith-will be silenced.

## Mark 6:33 – 7:23

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Yeshua is longing to have some alone time, but is so moved by the masses of people who are in such great need of a shepherd to care for them, teach them, lead them, and heal them that He continues in giving them His time and care.

When the hour was late, His disciples suggested sending the people away so that they could get something to eat. Yeshua's response to them surprised them. He said, "you feed them." Astonished... they did not understand what He was saying to them.

They feed the five thousand men with their families on five loaves of bread and two fish. Yeshua sends His disciples out on the water in the boat while He dismissed the crowd and then He goes away by Himself to pray on the mountain. During the night, the disciples encountered strong winds and difficulty rowing the boat. Yeshua is seen by His disciples walking on the water but they thought He was a phantom and were afraid. When He spoke to them, He calmed them but they marveled at Him because of His ability to walk on the water.

As they reached the opposite shore early the next morning, the crowd recognized Him right away and brought all their sick and He healed them all.

The Pharisees and some scribes noticed that Yeshua's disciples were not holding to the "traditions" by washing. These were rules made by the elders, not Elohim and they questioned Yeshua and were giving Him a hard time. Yeshua reprimands them for their vain worship in that they hold and teach their own traditions and abandon the teachings of YHWH. He specifically notes what they teach concerning what is righteous in dealing with parental respect and how they steal from the parents to obtain gifts from people.

He taught the crowd that what comes out of us is what defiles us, not what goes in. For it is what goes out that comes from the heart and can determine the condition of the heart whether it be good or evil.