

Triennial Torah Study – 2nd Year 07/05/2011

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By Joseph F. Dumond

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

Ex 13	1 Kings 21-22	Ps 119:132-176	John 2-3
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Ex 13

Yehovah instructed the Israelites to sanctify ("set apart"—for a specific religious or spiritual purpose) the male firstborn of both man and animals. Why? Exodus 13:15 explains that it was because the firstborn of both man and beast were slain in Egypt—and the ones Yehovah spared, those of Israel, then belonged to Him. The firstborn males of clean animals were to be sacrificed to YHVH while the firstborn males of men and unclean animals were to be redeemed (i.e., "bought back" from Yehovah). An unclean animal was to be redeemed with the sacrifice of a lamb. For man, an offering was to be given in place of a literal sacrifice.

Numbers 18:16 reveals the redemption value. Through this offering the Israelites would always be reminded of the miraculous way Yehovah delivered Israel from Egypt.

Exo 13:9 "And it shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a reminder between your eyes, that the Torah of ??? is to be in your mouth, for with a strong hand ??? has brought you out of Mitsrayim.

Exo 13:16 "And it shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand ??? brought us out of Mitsrayim."

Right here you are told twice that this day of the Exodus was to be a sign on your hand and between your eyes. This day was the first day of Unleavened Bread and it was a sign. This is so important that you really must read The Mark of the Beast at https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/?page_id=17 where you will be shown how the mark of Yehovah distinguishes between the Mark of Satan and YHVH's so clearly that you will never doubt again what Satan's mark is.

1 Kings 21-22

I once again find this amazing. We had a huge discussion about Naboth this week due to the things we were seeing in Israel on this trip.

Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kings 21)

Technically, all land in ancient Israel belonged to God, who granted it to be permanently held by each Israelite tribe and family (Leviticus 25:23-28). Thus the property was clearly Naboth's (compare Numbers 36:2-9). Even the king, a constitutional monarch, was required to obey the law (1 Samuel 10:25).

"In reminding Ahab that he was king and could do as he pleased, Jezebel reflected her Canaanite background where kings ruled absolutely (see Deut. 17:14-20; 1 Sam. 8:11-18)" (Nelson Study Bible, note on 21:7). Regarding 1 Kings 21:7, The Bible Reader's Companion explains: "The Heb[rew] reads literally, 'You now; you are going to perform majesty over Israel.' The saying seems to indicate that she will show Ahab how to magnify himself by having his way in Israel. Her use of the king's seal indicates that she had his authority for her plot against Naboth. Ahab lent her his full support" (Lawrence Richards, 1991, note on 21:7-14).

Jezebel's murderous plot then unfolds. "Some suggest that the charge made by the two 'scoundrels' was that Naboth went back on a pledge made in God's name to sell his land to the king. Failure to keep an oath made in God's name would be blasphemy. In that case, after Naboth's execution, the king could legally have taken possession of the property in dispute. Second Kings 9:26 adds that Naboth's sons were killed at the same time. With no heir left alive, there seemingly was no one left to dispute Ahab's claim to the land" (same note).

Ahab and Jezebel's behavior regarding Naboth prompts the return of Elijah—this time to pronounce the termination of Ahab's rule and the extermination of his dynasty similar to the warning given earlier to Jeroboam and Baasha. This will be carried out by Jehu son of Nimshi, a military leader, as God had previously told Elijah (1 Kings 19:16-17). Yet Ahab's expression of remorse results in God postponing some of the punishment, illustrating His tremendous mercy.

The Following is from Dina Mordechai

We are coming into perilous times. It seems that wherever we turn, there are brothers and sisters fighting against each other, hating each other and ostracizing each other over disagreements of every sort. Which calendar to use, whether to read rabbinic writings or not; how to pronounce the Holy Name, or even whether it should be pronounced at all, and many other things. This spirit of wicked judgment and corruption is typified in the Brit haChadasha as the woman Jezebel, as it is written in the book of Revelation—

18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

The Son of Elohim, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

19 'I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds

of late are greater than at first. 20 'But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 'And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality. 22 'Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 23 'And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. 24 'But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. 25 'Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. 26 'And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; 27 AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Revelation 2:19-28

Notice that in this passage, it is said that the woman Jezebel claims to be a prophetess (true messenger of Yehovah), but she really leads Yehovah's servants astray, causing them to commit immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. The above passage is from the book of Revelation, which was obviously written some 1700 or so years after the historical Jezebel actually lived. So, the rebuke to the church of Thyatira is not so much speaking of the historical Jezebel, but rather of one who prophesies in the spirit of Jezebel. In order to understand this notion more completely of the spirit of Jezebel and what it means for us in our lives today, let us take a look at the events in the life of the historical Jezebel.

Jezebel was not of Israel, but rather, was the daughter of Eth-baal, the king of Sidon (1 Kings 16:31). She married Ahab, son of Omri, king of the northern tribes of Israel, and she caused her husband Ahab and all of Israel to go astray after the Ba'alim. She slew all of the prophets of Yehovah, except Eliyahu and the hundred that Obadiah managed to hide in a cave (1 Kings 18:3). Even after Eliyahu confronted the 450 prophets of Ba'al and the 400 prophets of Asherah at Mount Carmel, and proved in front of the eyes of all Israel that Yehovah is the true Elohim, and not Baal, Jezebel still hardened her heart and swore in the name of her gods that she would destroy Eliyahu, just as he had slain the prophets of Ba'al (1 Kings 19:2). So, Jezebel was a true idolator, a servant of Ba'al, and she sought to destroy the true prophets of Yehovah. But, there is something else about Jezebel that we learn in 1 Kings 21. Ahab desired the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, and asked to purchase it from him. Naboth the Jezreelite had the option to sell his property, if he wished to, but was under no obligation to do so according to the laws of the Torah. He made it clear to Ahab that he would neither take neither money, nor another piece of land in trade for his property. Ahab went home sulking because he coveted the property and could not get it. This is where Jezebel steps in, and we read in 1 Kings 21—

7 And Jezebel his wife said to him, "Do you now reign over Israel? Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be joyful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." 8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and sent letters to the elders and to the nobles who were living with Naboth in his city. 9 Now she wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth at the head of the people; 10 and seat two worthless men before him, and let them testify against him, saying, 'You cursed God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to death."

What was Naboth's crime? When given the chance to sell his ancestral inheritance to Ahab, he refused. The Torah gave him the option to sell his property, or not sell it, according to his personal needs and desires. This is surely not the same thing as "cursing God and the king." Nevertheless, the wicked Jezebel, an idolator, redefined the word "cursing God and the king" as meaning something other than its true Torah definition. To see the true Torah definition, we need to go to the original incident where the son of an Israelite woman and an Egyptian man is caught blaspheming the Name—

10 Now the son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the sons of Israel; and the Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel struggled with each other in the camp. 11 And the son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name and cursed. So they brought him to Moses. (Now his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.) 12 And they put him in custody so that the command of YEHOVAH might be made clear to them. 13 Then YEHOVAH spoke to Moses, saying, 14 "Bring the one who has cursed outside the camp, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head; then let all the congregation stone him. 15 "And you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If anyone curses his God, then he shall bear his sin. 16 'Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of YEHOVAH shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.

Leviticus 24:10-16

So we see that the man caught blaspheming the Name was actually an Egyptian who was fighting with an Israelite man. In the course of the fight, this Egyptian man cursed the Name of Yehovah. We see no evidence of this in the case of Naboth. Rather, he simply exercised his right, under the Torah, to choose not to sell his property to the king, and the Torah does not grant so much authority to an Israelite king that he can force a person to sell his land to the king. This surely was an annoyance to Ahab, but it is hardly grounds to accuse him of blasphemy. Jezebel, then, having convinced herself that refusal to sell property to the king is the same thing as blasphemy, nevertheless knows that she cannot convince other Israelites that her definition of blasphemy is the correct one, and so she asks for two scoundrels to falsify their testimony and accuse Naboth of actual blasphemy. This is really the essence of idolatry and the very essence of the Jezebel spirit: eating from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Jezebel decides what is good and what is evil based upon what is right in her eyes, based upon her carnal, sensual nature, and

in complete contradiction to the truth of good and evil as Yehovah sees it. Jezebel, thus, lifts herself up above the Most High and declares herself to be a prophetess that is far more wise and far more righteous than Yehovah Himself, who gave the Torah.

If we closely examine the names of the characters in this story, we will get an even deeper notion of the story's meaning. First of all, is Naboth (Navot), who is a citizen of the town called Jezreel. The name Jezreel in Hebrew is:

This name is comprised of two parts: Yizra, which means "he will sow seed," and El, which means "El(ohim)." So, the name "Yizre'el" means "El will sow seed." This is seen in the book of Hosea, where we read:

Yet the number of the sons of Israel
Will be like the sand of the sea,
Which cannot be measured or numbered;
And it will come about that, in the place
Where it is said to them, "You are not My people,"
It will be said to them, "You are the sons of the living God."
And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together,
11 And they will appoint for themselves one leader,
And they will go up from the land,
For great will be the day of Jezreel. Hosea 1:10

Therefore, the town of Jezreel has great significance in the exile and subsequent ingathering of the tribes of Israel, and since Naboth is a citizen of Jezreel, Naboth stands for any aspiring Israelite today.

The name Ahab in Hebrew is the following:

It is comprised of two parts: Ach, which means brother, and Av, which means father. So, put together, the name Ach-av means "brother is father." In other words, Ahab represents that spiritual force that would encourage you to take any human being, who is really just your brother, and set him over you as father (a spiritual authority figure). Conversely, it also represents that spiritual force which causes people to imagine that they have some kind of right to judge or condemn their brothers and sisters because they don't see or do things the same way as the one who stands in judgment. This is significant because it is precisely what Yeshua commanded us NOT to do:

8 "But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. 9 "And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 "And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Mashiach. Matthew 23:8-10

Thus, our only source of spiritual authority is Yehovah Himself. We are not to stand in a position of authority or judgment over others, nor should we seek others to stand in authority over us. It matters not whether we call them by the name rabbi, teacher, pastor, priest, guru, or leader—human beings, no matter who they are, are NOT to be our authority! Remember that Ahab wanted to exercise authority over Naboth, but when Naboth refused to go along with the program, Ahab went home sulking and crying because he couldn't have his way. Therefore, we see that Ahab by himself is not really powerful enough to force his decisions over his fellow brothers, since no human being by himself really has any power over another human being. The one who had the power to get things done the way Ahab wanted it was Jezebel. This name is also revealing:

The name Jezebel is I-zevel in Hebrew. This is comprised of two words: I (alef-yud, pronounced ee) and zevel. Let us examine these. First of all, the prefix "I," which means "no, not." This is also found in 1 Samuel 4:21, where the wife of Pinehas gives birth to a son after learning that her husband and brother-in-law were killed in a battle with the Philistines, in which the Ark of the Covenant had been captured by the Philistines. Just before dying, she names the boy "I-chavod."

And she called the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God was taken and because of her father-in-law and her husband. 1 Samuel 4:21

I- means "no or not", and chavod means "glory or honor," so I-chavod means "no glory/no honor." So we see that the first part of the name Jezebel means "no or not." Now, let's take a look at the second part. To find out the meaning of "Zevel," we need to go back to Genesis 30:20, where we read:

Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good gift; now my husband will dwell (yizbeleni) with me, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun. Genesis 30:20

The root zayin bet lamed appears twice in this sentence, once where Leah says "my husband will dwell with me," and again in the name Zebulun. This root, therefore, means to dwell with, so as to acknowledge a woman as the rightful wife. Getting back to the name Jezebel, we see that the name means "not dwelling," as in "not a rightful wife." This applies to Jezebel in every aspect: she is a foreigner, a pagan, and she comes in and destroys Yehovah's true prophets and teaches the brethren to commit immorality.

Getting back to the story of Ahab, Naboth and Jezebel, we see that Ahab did not himself have the power to force his will on Naboth. Jezebel is the one who got the job done. And how did she do it? By changing the definition of what it means to "curse God and the king." This is where it gets really interesting. Let us again take a look at the text:

...she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and sent letters to the elders and to the nobles who were living with Naboth in his city. 9 Now she wrote in the letters, saying,

“Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth at the head of the people; 10 and seat two worthless men before him, and let them testify against him, saying, ‘You cursed God and the king.’ Then take him out and stone him to death.” 1 Kings 21:8-10

Your English translation reads “you cursed God and the king,” since no other translation would make sense in English. However, in Hebrew, Jezebel is actually quoted using a euphemism, that is to say, instead of the word *lekalel*, which is the usual word used meaning to curse, which literally means to make light of, or have a low opinion of someone. It is related to the word *kal*, which means light, easy. However, this is not the word that Jezebel uses here. Instead, she says “*berachta Elohim vamelech*,” which quite literally means “you blessed God and the king.” So, first of all, she changes the definition of what it means to curse God and the king, in order to include in that definition something as innocuous as refusing to submit to the king’s authority and comply with his whim to buy a piece of property. Secondly, she uses a euphemism to express herself; in other words, she meant the exact opposite of what her words mean.

So let’s summarize the story. Ahab wanted a piece of land owned by Naboth and offered him money or another piece of land in exchange for his ancestral inheritance. Naboth refused, perhaps because he knew it was likely that Ahab would build an altar for Ba’al on his property, like the one he built in Samaria (1 Kings 16:32), or maybe because he didn’t trust that Ahab would give the property back to his family in the Jubilee year, as prescribed by Torah, or maybe just because he didn’t want to sell it. But no man-made authority would have power over any other human if it were not for the redefinition of all the terms. So, we see that Jezebel in this story represents the spiritual force that redefines all the terms, in order to keep people locked into bondage to human institutions, and following the whims of other men.

This is where the connection to our modern day dilemma fits in. There are, today, thousands of people who identify themselves as Ephraimites—lost sheep of the house of Israel—who dearly want to return to their ancestral inheritance, the Torah and the Land of Israel. Many of these people want it so badly that they can taste it, and they are willing to do anything it takes to get recognition from the only people that have the temporal power to make such a thing happen today—the rabbis. This doesn’t mean that it is wrong to dialog with rabbis or even to learn from their writings, but to put them in a position of spiritual authority is dangerous, and it is contrary to Yeshua’s clear teaching. To these people, I would like to issue you a warning: be careful that you do not submit to any human authority, for you may find that in so doing, you have surrendered your share in your ancestral inheritance, and just as Ahab offered Naboth a different piece of land in exchange for his inheritance, you may find that the rabbis will give you something else, something other than your real inheritance.

There is another group of so-called Ephraimites who commit the opposite error. There are those who pick anti-rabbinic teachers and make them their authority. We have even heard that Avi’s books have been used as justification to hate rabbinic Jews, or deal harshly with the brethren who

are drawing close to their rabbinic brethren. It has been said that there are those in the movement who harshly judge each other for doing something like lighting candles on Shabbat, or for reading the Talmud, or for saying rabbinic prayers "because Avi ben Mordechai says so..." If you are among those who have done such a thing—stop it! Avi (and Dina) ben Mordechai is not your authority! Nehemia Gordon is not your authority! The rabbis of Judaism are not your authority! Neither is anyone else that you may have learned from. Start looking at all these people as fellow brothers and sisters, for that is what they are!

The problem is, quite simply, that though there is but one Truth, that Truth is so far above the capacity of human imagination that no one human being could contain it. This is seen clearly in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.

10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;

11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

Isaiah 55:9-11

Have enough faith in Yehovah to trust that He knows what He is doing! The reunification of the two houses of Israel will happen in due time. Meanwhile, each person and each part of the whole has its own role to play. You must seek truth directly from the Source, and not look to any human authority figure to tell you what you must do, say, think, believe, and so on. Since Yehovah clearly states through the prophet Isaiah that His thoughts are higher than ours, in the same way that the heavens are higher than the earth, this means that we must learn to think outside of the box and stop letting our petty doctrinal differences divide us.

Each part of the whole is partially right and partially wrong. Rabbinic Judaism, for instance, says that God gave an Oral Law and a Written Law at Mount Sinai, and that the Oral Law is superior to the Written, and they are correct in what they state. However, rabbinic Judaism does not have the true Oral Law. Christianity, for its part, says that God gave an Old Covenant and a New Covenant, and that the New Covenant is superior to the Old, and they are also right. However, Christianity does not have the true New Covenant. The true Oral Law and the true New Covenant are one and the same thing, but none of us have yet attained to the fullness of it. We can see this quite plainly in Jeremiah 31:

31 "Behold, days are coming," declares Yehovah, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to

bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares Yehovah.

33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares Yehovah, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know Yehovah,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares Yehovah, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

So we see that the very essence of the New Covenant is that everyone will know Yehovah, and His law will be written directly on their hearts, so there will be no need for missionizing, doctrinal squabbling, or any other such abomination that is currently practiced among the believers. This is the same thing as the true Oral Law that was given to Israel at Mount Sinai. For instance, it is written:

19 "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, 20 by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them." Deuteronomy 30:19-20

The Torah was never meant to be a dead document, just a shell written on paper. It is supposed to be the live interaction that happens when every single one of the people listen to the voice of Yehovah, and that is the true definition of Oral Law. When Yehovah descended onto Mount Sinai, He spoke the Ten Commandments in the ears of all the people. If they had been able to bear it, every single one of them would have received the New Covenant Oral Law right then and there, and we could have said of them "that they all know Yehovah from the least of them to the greatest." But the truth is, they were not able to bear it, and were afraid and could not receive the voice of Yehovah. Therefore, prophets had to be sent:

15 " Yehovah your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.

16 "This is according to all that you asked of Yehovah your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of Yehovah my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.'

17 " Yehovah said to me, 'They have spoken well.

18 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

19 'It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.

20 'But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'

Just as the Torah was not intended to be just a dead document, a shell written on parchment, it was also not intended to perpetually require an intermediary, such as Moses, or any other prophet, to speak to the people. The ultimate goal, as stated in Jeremiah 31 is that each and every Israelite would hear the voice of Yehovah and have the Torah written on his heart. The trouble is that when you set up a system whereby one set of people dictate to the rest of the people what to do, think, and say, then the possibility for corruption enters, because the false teachers and false prophets perceive that they can manipulate and enslave the people by speaking their perverted commands in the name of Yehovah, just like Ahab and Jezebel did in the story we read in 1 Kings 21. Moreover, these false prophets and teachers have all the more sway over the people because they are just telling them what the people's carnal minds want to hear.

So in conclusion, we should be very forgiving and flexible with all our brethren. Let us not fight over what divides us, but look to common ground. I think that we can first of all start by looking at ourselves, each one of us, and see how our own actions conform to the words spoken by Jeremiah the prophet:

13 "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water. Jeremiah 2:8

Shabbat shalom

Micaiah's Warning (1 Kings 22:1-28; 2 Chronicles 18:1-27)

Assyrian history records another war involving Ahab, which appears to have taken place during the three-year truce with Syria (1 Kings 22:1). The Assyrians began to rise in power, and made an advance toward the coastal area far north of Israel. Apparently Ahab joined an alliance of nations in repelling their advance, and, according to the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III, he supplied about one half (2,000) of the chariots and perhaps a sixth (10,000) of the infantry.

Jehoshaphat also forms an alliance with Ahab. As part of the alliance, their children, Jehoram and Athaliah, are married (2 Chronicles 18:1; 21:6). Jehoshaphat pays a visit to his ally, and Ahab proposes that Jehoshaphat join him in an attempt to recover Ramoth-Gilead from the Syrians in yet a third war with them. This was a town on the east side of the Jordan that belonged to Gad and had originally been designated as a city of refuge (Deuteronomy 4:41-43).

Jehoshaphat agrees but insists on finding out God's will in the matter first. For some reason, when asked about a prophet of God, Ahab does not mention Elijah or his assistant Elisha. Perhaps they were known to be away and not available. In any case, though many true prophets had been killed earlier in Ahab's reign, there were still a few around. Here we are introduced to the prophet Micaiah, who is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture unless, as some have speculated, he is the

same Micaiah sent out by Jehoshaphat to teach in Judah (2 Chronicles 17:7). One of the saddest aspects of this encounter is that Jehoshaphat, too, is persuaded to ignore the message from the prophet of God whom he had specifically asked to hear from.

Remarkably, we get a glimpse in our current reading of how God actually sometimes uses even demons to fulfill His purposes. Notice that God did not command any spirit here to lie. He simply asked who would do it and told the volunteer to go do what he was inclined to do anyway. The fact that Micaiah's true prophecies were always at odds with those of Ahab's prophets (compare 1 Kings 22:8) would seem to imply that a "lying spirit" was commonly behind the words of Ahab's prophets.

Notice this from The Bible Reader's Companion: "Did God Himself lie to Ahab? Not at all. He did permit Ahab's prophets to lie.... [But] God in fact clearly revealed to Ahab the source of his prophets' predictions, and the truth about what would happen to him in the coming battle. Ahab's death resulted from refusing to believe the truth, not from a failure to know it. Let's be careful not to blame God for the consequences of our own fully conscious choices" (note on 1 Kings 22).

Ahab Dies; Jehoshaphat Rebuked (1 Kings 22:29-40, 51-53; 2 Chronicles 18:28-19:11)

Jehoshaphat is nearly killed when it turns out the Syrian strategy is to specifically target the man who has defeated them twice already, and Jehoshaphat is the only one looking the part. Chronicles reveals that it is God who intervenes to save him, while at the same time causing a random arrow to find its target between the joints of Ahab's armor, in the middle of his back.

When Jehoshaphat returns to Jerusalem, he is met by Jehu (son of Hanani), the same prophet God had sent to Israel's king Baasha more than 30 years earlier (1 Kings 16:1-7). It was Jehu's father, Hanani, who had been imprisoned by Jehoshaphat's father Asa for correcting him about not relying on God in his dealings with Syria (2 Chronicles 16:7-10). Now Jehu reprimands Jehoshaphat for forming an alliance with, and helping, Ahab. Unlike his father, Jehoshaphat apparently maintains a good attitude and continues to seek God, although he renews his alliance in treaties with Ahab's sons (2 Chronicles 20:35; 2 Kings 3:7).

Rule of Jehoram of Judah (1 Kings 22:50; 2 Chronicles 21:1-18; 2 Kings 8:16-22)

As mentioned before, after Jehoshaphat's death, his firstborn son Jehoram, who reigned with him for the last few years of Jehoshaphat's life, became sole king over Judah. Although Jehoshaphat had been, generally speaking, a righteous king, his son Jehoram was extremely wicked—even slaughtering his brother and other princes. This helps to show that the righteousness of parents is not automatically passed on to their children. Of course, Jehoshaphat did not help matters through the terrible mistake of having Jehoram marry Athaliah, the daughter of wicked King Ahab. In fact, this directly contributed to the corruption of Jehoram's character. Indeed, we are specifically told that she influenced him to walk in the way of the kings of Israel, who lived in

idolatrous rebellion against God (2 Chronicles 21:6). Still, Jehoram bore responsibility for his own actions. The letter from Elijah rebuked him for the terrible things he had done (verse 13).

Since Jehoram and the nation of Judah had forsaken God, God forsook them, enabling nations like Edom and Libnah to revolt against Judah (verses 8-10; 2 Kings 8:20-22). (Edom designates the descendants of Jacob's twin brother Esau, who sold his birthright for a stew of lentils, Genesis 25:31-43.)

As the apostasy of Jehoram and the people worsened (2 Chronicles 21:11), God Himself stirred up enemy nations to attack Judah (verses 16-17). When Jehoram still refused to repent, God struck him with an incurable disease. As we will soon see in a later reading, he dies from this disease in severe pain (verses 18-19), exactly as Elijah had warned him (verse 15). Listen to this unflattering summary of the life and death of this evil king, which we will read again in sequence when we soon come to this later reading: "He reigned in Jerusalem eight years and, to no one's sorrow, departed" (verse 20).

Since God was faithful regarding the covenant He had made with David, He would not cut off the kingship from the house of David. Rather, He would see to it that there would always be a descendant of David sitting on David's throne (verse 7; 2 Kings 8:19; see 2 Samuel 7:14-16; Jeremiah 33:20-22, 25-26). So Jehoram remains on the throne until his death. And after Jehoram's death, his one remaining son, Ahaziah, will become the next king of Judah, sitting on the throne of David (2 Chronicles 21:17; 2 Kings 8:24). It is this seat of power, the present form of which is the throne of Great Britain, to which Jesus will return and on which He, as a descendant of David, will sit and from which He will rule the nations (see Luke 1:31-33; "The Throne of Britain: Its Biblical Origin and Future," www.ucg.org/brp/materials).

At this point it is necessary to share the teaching about the missing 76 years between this year of 5847 according to the Jubilee calendar and this year of 5771 of the rabbinic calendar and it has to do with the kings we have just read

above. https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon-2015/?page_id=150

Ps 119:132-176

"Great Peace Have Those Who Love Your Law, and Nothing Causes Them to Stumble" (Psalm 119:129-176)

In the Pe stanza (verses 129-136) the psalmist begins with the wonder of God's Word and ends with anguish over people not obeying it.

Verse 130 in the NKJV says, "The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple." The word translated "entrance" literally means "opening." Some versions render it as "unfolding" (NIV, NASB, NRSV). The parallelism here shows "light" to signify understanding, as in verse 105. The idea in verse 130 might merely be that of unrolling a scroll of Scripture, or opening

up a Bible today, so as to read it and gain understanding. Yet it could more figuratively signify God opening up the meaning of Scripture to a person's mind. After Jesus explained the Old Testament Scriptures to His companions on the road to Emmaus, they remarked, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32).

"Simple" in Psalm 119:130 may have the same sense as its occurrence in 16:6-meaning uncomplicated through guile, and thus straightforward and innocent. Yet it might also indicate those looked on as uneducated-here receiving a far superior education through God's Word and inspiration (compare John 7:14-16; Luke 10:21; Acts 4:13; 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16).

The poet likens his desire for God's commandments to panting with thirst (Psalm 119:131), recalling imagery used in other psalms (42:1-2; 63:1). Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

The author next makes an appeal to God's mercy on the basis of this being God's "custom" toward those who love Him (Psalm 119:132). In fact, the word translated "custom" here is *mishpat*, the term for God's legal judgments throughout the psalm. This is in fact God's law for Himself-part of His personal inviolable code of conduct. Indeed, this is codified in the Ten Commandments, where God promises to show mercy to those who love Him (see Exodus 20:6).

It is interesting to note in the next verses (Psalm 119:133-134) that the psalmist prays to be kept free from sin before then asking to be freed (redeemed, bought back-compare verse 154) from human oppression-and even in the latter case, the request is so that he may continue to live a life of obedience to God. God redeems us today from sin and affliction for this same purpose-that we may live in accordance with His will.

The phrase "Make Your face shine upon Your servant" (verse 135a) is adapted from the priestly blessing that God said was to be used to bless His people (see Numbers 6:25). The symbolism of shining light would seem to tie back to the light of understanding in Psalm 119:130-and indeed we see the plea for this blessing followed by a renewed request to be taught God's statutes (verse 135b).

The stanza ends with the poet lamenting that he has shed many tears because of people not obeying God's law (verse 136). It is not clear whether he is referring to his own suffering from those committing lawless deeds in abusing him (compare verses 121-123, 126, 134) or whether he is referring to people in general dishonoring God and hurting themselves through their sins-a great tragedy over which to mourn (compare Jeremiah 9:1; Ezekiel 9:4; Luke 19:41-42; Philippians 3:18).

In the *Tsadde* strophe (verses 137-144) the psalmist uses the words "righteous" and "righteousness" five times in connection with God and His Word-these terms in the original

Hebrew connoting a straight line, perfect alignment. God's testimonies are also "very faithful" (verse 138)-"fully trustworthy" (NIV). His Word, in its commands and promises, is "very pure" (verse 140)-in the sense of "thoroughly tested" (NIV; compare 12:6). The author speaks from personally experiencing the benefits of God's Word (see verses 97-104).

Verse 139, "My zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten Your words," could mean either that their disobedience has further incited him to take a stand against them (compare verse 53) or that his suffering at their hands has ultimately served to strengthen him in his resolve to follow God. (Compare also Psalm 69:9; John 2:17).

Although the poet feels "small and despised" and "trouble and anguish have overtaken" him (verses 141, 143), he remembers God's precepts. In contrast to the trouble brought on him through false accusations (verses 118, 86, 69), God's "law is truth" (verse 142)-genuine, dependable and right (compare verses 151, 160)-and His commandments bring true happiness and joy (verse 143). Like the psalmist's, all our present troubles are temporary, but God's righteousness is everlasting-and through God's Word we will live a life of everlasting righteousness (see verses 142, 144).

In the Qoph stanza (verses 145-152) the psalmist cries out desperately to God for help (verse 145-147), similar to his intense prayer in the earlier Kaph stanza (see verses 81-88). This intensity continues through the next three stanzas that close the psalm. Commentator Wiersbe remarks: "Have you noticed that the writer became more urgent as he drew near the end of the psalm? The Hebrew alphabet was about to end, but his trials would continue, and he needed the help of the Lord" (note on verses 153-160). The author still expresses his determination to continue in God's ways, but he knows that he cannot succeed-indeed, he cannot even live to try-without God's intervention and help.

He gets up early and lies awake late at night-through the night watches (sunset to 10, 10 to 2, and 2 to dawn)-crying to God for help and meditating on God's Word, in which he finds hope (verses 147-148; compare 5:3; 63:1, 6).

He asks again that God revive him (verse 149; compare verses 25, 37, 40, 88, 107, as well as 154, 156, 159)-to breathe life into him, to restore his spirits, to reawaken his hope. And this prayer in verse 149 is made according to God's hesed (covenant lovingkindness) and mishpat (judgment, rule for life)-reiterating his appeals in verses 124 and 132.

He then again presents the issue of his enemies. They draw near to him-that is, they are coming for him, to do him harm-and are thus far from God's law (verse 150). Yet God is near, able to intervene (verse 151; compare Acts 17:27-28). And since God's words are truth-true and faithful forever, as the poet closes this stanza (Psalm 119:152)-then God must intervene as He has promised in his law. Of course, God is not bound as to the manner of His intervention. Ultimately, He will work all things out to the eternal benefit of His servants (see Romans 8:28).

In the Resh strophe (verses 153-160) the psalmist three times asks God to "revive" him-to lift his spirits and see to his needs-here, as in other places, according to God's word, His judgments and His loyal lovingkindness (verses 154, 156, 159). In essence, the author is pleading with God to act because God has promised to, because this is what God's own laws demand and because God, in His care for His people, cannot fail to be moved by their plight with love and compassion to help them.

He asks God to plead or defend his cause in the manner of an advocate and mediator in a court of law (verse 154; compare 1 Samuel 24:15; Psalms 35:1; 43:1). And in his adversaries' case against him, they are the ones without a leg to stand on-having no legitimate cause against him, being lawbreakers themselves and having no one to stand for them, help them and save them. Moreover, God could override all of this by taking a further step.

The writer again asks God to redeem him (119:154; compare verse 134). To "redeem" means to "buy back," to "deliver by paying a price." God stated that a kinsman could buy back the property a poor relative had sold (Leviticus 25:25-28), as Boaz did on behalf of Naomi and Ruth. The language here is interesting in light of the psalmist's earlier request that God stand as surety for him (verse 122). Yet this goes even further. While the terminology of redemption often takes on in the Old Testament a general sense of deliverance from some overpowering circumstance, there is behind all this the legal foundation. There was a price for God to pay to redeem His people from the consequences of sin-a price paid through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The psalmist was ultimately reliant on this same redemption, which in his day was yet to come. Whether this was in his mind at the time or not, it was no doubt in the mind of the One who inspired the psalm.

Despite the many who oppose him, the psalmist is intent on staying the course of following God (verse 157). He is utterly disgusted by their treachery against God in the way they have rejected God's Word (verse 158). The Israelite nation was founded on Scripture, and yet the people and their leaders spurned its teachings. How true that is even today! The Israelite nations of today have, to varying degrees, been founded on scriptural principles. U.S. President Andrew Jackson said the Bible is "the rock on which our republic rests." And our countries have been immeasurably blessed by God. Yet today we see terrible treachery, as even in America displays of His commandments are unceremoniously marched out of courthouses by judicial decree. Even worse, many of God's laws are rejected by those who still profess to follow Him.

The poet ends the stanza with another declaration that God's Word is truth (verse 160). The Hebrew word rendered "entirety" here is rosh, which typically means "head." The King James Version translates this as "beginning." The focus here would be that God's Word has always been true and, as the rest of the verse maintains, it always will be. But others see rosh here as designating the "sum," in the sense of summit or summation, thus explaining NKJV translation. This is the third declaration of the truth of God's Word in close proximity-the other two occurring in each of the two previous stanzas (verses 142, 151). Jesus Christ affirmed this when He prayed to

God the Father, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). And in the certainty of His Word, its righteous judgments apply forever (Psalm 119:160). This should be a cause of concern to those who choose to reject God and His laws-and a cause of great hope to those who strive to follow God in keeping His Word.

In the Shin stanza (verses 161-168) the psalmist pauses from his crying out for help to again place his affliction in the context of God's Word: "Princes persecute me without a cause, but my heart stands in awe of Your word" (verse 161). He again rejoices in God's Word as a great treasure (verse 162; compare verses 14, 72, 127; see also Matthew 13:45-46). And he yet again proclaims, "I love Your law" (Psalm 119:163).

Praising "seven times a day" in verse 164 could be literal, but it more likely is meant in a figurative sense for "throughout the day"-the number seven representing completeness. It exceeded the typical three times per day mentioned elsewhere in Scripture (compare 55:17; Daniel 6:10-11). Most importantly note that these prayer times are times of hallel or "praise" for God's righteous judgments. This is not talking about constantly crying out to God for help in the midst of affliction-which the writer has also been doing. Rather, it describes his constant praise of God even in these hard times. This is a wonderful example for all of God's people.

The poet points out that all those who love God's law find a great sense of peace (Psalm 119:165)-of security and well-being-in studying God's teachings, meditating on them, practicing them. We find evidence of this sense of peace even in the midst of trial throughout the entirety of Psalm 119. In contrast to those who have only a superficial awareness of the law, or those who reject it (verse 126), the psalmist understands that the law will benefit him throughout life. For those who love God's law, "nothing causes them to stumble" (verse 165). This is a better rendering in modern English than the King James Version's "nothing shall offend them"-for this older translation might today appear to say that God's people will never feel insulted or slighted-which is not at all what is intended by the original wording. The word *mikshol* here means a stumbling-block, an obstacle that causes one to fall. As long as God's people maintain their love and devotion to living as He commands, they will not be tripped up by circumstances because the law, either directly or in principle, addresses whatever they encounter (compare Proverbs 4:12; 1 John 2:10).

The basis for the peace the writer experiences-just as it is for all God's people-is trust in God's promises about the future, knowing where life is headed beyond any present difficulties. As the next verse in Psalm 119 declares, "LORD, I hope for Your salvation" (verse 166). And the hope here is a confident one. Others translate the verse to say, "I wait for your salvation" (NIV). As he waits expectantly, the psalmist continues to remain devoted to all of God's laws and follows them, recognizing that God is well aware of all he thinks and does (verses 166-168).

Finally in the Tau strophe (verses 169-176), the last stanza, the psalmist urgently summarizes his need and his steadfast devotion. With the alphabet exhausted, the poet fills his concluding strophe with repeated cries for help. In a barrage of petitions, he five times uses the word "let"

along with the words "give," "deliver" and "seek." "Let my cry...[and] my supplication come before You," he pleads (verses 169, 170). "Let Your hand...[and] Your judgments help me" (verses 173, 175). "Let my soul live" (verse 175). "Give me understanding" (verse 169). "Deliver me" (verse 170). "Seek your servant" (verse 176).

Verse 172 gives us an important definition of righteousness, stating that all of God's commandments are righteousness-that is, the way of perfect alignment with Him. This is important for Christians today to understand in striving for righteousness. It means not only receiving forgiveness for past sin, but striving thereafter to live as God commands-to keep His commandments in their full spiritual intent as illustrated by Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. Of course, this is only possible with the help of God Himself-as the author well understood (see verse 35). Today we have the further revelation in the New Testament that this is accomplished through Jesus Christ living within us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In verse 174 the psalmist again expresses his longing for God's salvation-which could apply to immediate rescue or ultimate deliverance in the future resurrection to eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Perhaps both are intended.

In closing, the writer of this psalm sees himself like a lost sheep having strayed and now in need of rescue (verse 176). This may be an acknowledgment of sin (as his earlier one in verse 67), though he has not strayed in that way during his affliction (verse 110). It could simply be that he is saying that he's in a predicament he can't get out of-just as a lost sheep. This is certainly true when it comes to the human condition in terms of sin-and this simile is used elsewhere in that sense (compare Isaiah 53:6; 1 Peter 2:25; Luke 15:4-7). Whatever his exact meaning, the author desperately needs the intervention of the Good Shepherd to come and rescue His sheep-His follower, His servant.

This request is made on the basis of being a faithful servant-one who remembers God's commandments. While he was clearly not sinless, the psalmist counted himself among the righteous. He loved God's law and made it his chief delight (verse 174). His desire was to live and praise God (verses 171, 175). He integrated God's Word into his life. He walked in conformity to God's will in contrast with the unrighteous who had no desire to live obediently. God does not obligate Himself to aid the wicked. But He offers abundant help to His servants (Psalms 23; 121).

The belief that he was among the righteous whom God rewards gave the writer of Psalm 119 confidence to make his requests. And so it is with us today. For as the New Testament tells us in 1 John 3:22, "Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."

John 2-3

Joh 3:1 And there was a man of the Pharisees, Nak?dimon was his name, a ruler of the Yehud?im. 2 This one came to ????? by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from Elohim, for no one is able to do these signs You do if Elohim is not with him." 3 ????? answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born from above, he is unable to see¹ the reign of Elohim." Footnote: 1Or perceive. 4 Nak?dimon said to Him, "How is a man able to be born when he is old? Is he able to enter into his mother's womb a second time and be born?" 5 ????? answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he is unable to enter into the reign of Elohim. 6 "That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You have to be born from above.' 8 "The Spirit¹ breathes where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who has been born of the Spirit." Footnote: 1Or wind. 9 Nak?dimon answered and said to Him, "How is it possible for this to take place?" 10 ????? answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Yisra'?l, and do not know this? 11 "Truly, truly, I say to you, We speak what We know and witness what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.12 "If you do not believe when I spoke to you about earthly matters, how are you going to believe when I speak to you about the heavenly matters?

Just what had Yehshua said that Nicodemus, as a ruler of Israel ought to have known? The answer is this. In his discourse about water and the Spirit, Yehshua was quoting Ezekiel 36:25-27. In which Ezekiel prophesies a time in the life of Israel when God will cleanse the heart, take away their filthiness and idolatry, and give them a new heart and a new spirit, and cause them to walk and keep his statutes and judgements. The metaphors used by Yehshua are the same as those used by the prophet Ezekiel, talking about water, the Spirit and the ability to walk in the Spirit of Yehovah. This should have been realised by Nicodemus as a teacher of the people.

Eze 36:1 "And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Yisra'?l, and you shall say, 'O mountains of Yisra'?l, hear the word of ?????!

Eze 36:25 "And I shall sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean – from all your filthiness and from all your idols I cleanse you. 26 "And I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. And I shall take the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I shall give you a heart of flesh, 27 and put My Spirit within you¹. And I shall cause you to walk in My laws and guard My right-rulings and shall do them. Footnote: 1See 11:19-20, 37:6-14, 39:29.

Tevilah is the Biblical act of immersing oneself in a natural water source. In ancient times a stream or river was used, but in modern times a specially constructed pool called a mikveh is normally used.

All through the TaNaKH (Old Testament), the children of Israel, whenever they would have to come before God, would cleanse themselves. The priests had to cleanse themselves, and what they went through was the mikveh, or a cleansing. A woman went through a mikveh once a

month. There are many reasons for a mikveh in Scripture. It was not uncommon for the people of Isra'el to be immersed in water.

Maimonides (an ancient rabbinical teacher) finds a symbolical significance in tevilah:

"The person who directs his heart to purify his soul from spiritual impurities, such as iniquitous thoughts and evil notions, becomes clean as soon as he determines in his heart to keep apart from these courses, and bathes his soul in the water of pure knowledge."

Before you go into the water or mikveh, you should know why you go into the water. You don't go into the mikveh to join a church. You're not sprinkled to join a church. You go into the water as an outward manifestation of an inward work that's happened in your life, a change in your life. That day it was to be for repentance.

<http://www.familybible.org/BeitMidrash/FAQ/Baptism2.htm>

Peter is referring to Believer's Mikvah, the immersion of a new Believer in Messiah in water, again as a symbol of what has already transpired in the Believer's life. Not that the actual water, or even the act of immersion, has any efficacious power at all, but that it is the outward symbol of the completed work of Messiah as applied to the Believer by Ruach HaKodesh (the Holy Spirit).

I particularly like Dr. David Stern's translation in the Complete Jewish Bible: "This also prefigures what delivers us now, the water of immersion, which is not the removal of dirt from the body, but one's pledge to keep a good conscience toward G-d, through the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah."

The act of water baptism, I believe, is very closely related to the ancient Jewish practice of betrothal.* [This is in itself a lengthy study I hope to address some day on the web site — but for now, the "Reader's Digest" version will have to suffice.] The Scriptures are full of this marriage symbolism. G-d repeatedly calls Israel His "bride," and "the ecclesia" (erroneously translated as "church") is called "the Bride of Messiah." [Question to ponder: if Yeshua is G-d, is He a polygamist? Does He have two brides? Or does "the Church" become "grafted in" to "Israel His bride"??]

In the betrothal process, a young man would take a fancy to a young woman, and would ask his father to go "buy" her for him. The boy's father would meet with the girl's father, and the "bride price" would be negotiated. Then the boy and his father would write out the ketubah, or marriage contract [the Torah is in many respects G-d's ketubah with Israel]. The boy would go to the girl's home and present her with the ketubah and a cup of wine. After reading the ketubah, if the girl accepted its terms and conditions, she would drink the cup of wine, indicating her acceptance [her "pledge to keep a good conscience" toward him, and to keep herself pure until he returned for her].

The boy would then pay the bride price ["You have been bought with a price."] and recite to the girl the ritual phrase, "I'm going to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2,3). [And he would not drink wine with her again until after the marriage was consummated, usually about a year later.]

He would then leave and begin construction on the new rooms that would form an addition to his father's house, which would become the couple's "apartment." The son would never know when his father would consider the construction complete, but when the father was satisfied with the new apartment, he would tell the son to go claim his bride.

The son would then immediately gather his part of the wedding party and set out to the girl's home, usually in the evening. A "forerunner" [the "best man"] would be sent ahead of the groom, and as he approached the girl's home, he would blow the shofar. The bride would hear the sound of the shofar and don her bridal clothes, and go out to meet her bridegroom. The bridesmaids, who hopefully had their lamps filled, would light them and go out to join the wedding party. The wedding ceremony would be immediately performed, followed by the 7-day wedding feast.

The symbolism here is striking, and serves to interpret several of the Lord's parables, as well as to explain many of His actions at the Passover Seder he shared on the night He was arrested.

By accepting and drinking the cup, the talmidim [disciples], on behalf of all Believers who would come later, accepted Yeshua's ketubah and became "betrothed" to Him. [According to John's gospel, Judas left before the ketubah was offered and accepted.]

And I feel that what Peter was trying to say in 1 Pet. 3:21 is that water baptism is the Believer's initial pledge to accept Yeshua's ketubah and became "betrothed" to Him. This pledge is re-affirmed each time the Believer partakes of the Lord's Supper.

Although I haven't yet taken the time to address the subject on our website, I take very literally the concept of the "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17; Gal. 6:15 — same word, translated differently). Again, as David Stern renders them: "Therefore, if anyone is united with the Messiah, he is a new creation — the old has passed; look, what has come is fresh and new." "For neither being circumcised nor being uncircumcised matters; what matters is being a new creation."

I believe that through the process of regeneration Ruach HaKodesh takes one form of creation, a sinner, and places that sinner positionally "into Messiah" where the sinner literally becomes a new form of creation (a new "species" if you will), called in Scripture a "Saint" ... one who has been literally transformed and sanctified (set apart for G-d's special use). I also believe that this concept figures heavily into the concept of "eternal security" — how can a butterfly ever return to being a caterpillar? — the transition is permanent.

As alluded to in my Baptism study, though not spelled out in any particular detail, I believe this transformation process is part and parcel of the process of salvation. The caterpillar enters the cocoon, "dies", and re-emerges as a butterfly. Yeshua died, entered the tomb, and emerged in His resurrected and glorified body which He will wear for all eternity. Just so, the new believer performs a reenactment of this process [which has already occurred on the spiritual plane] when he or she is placed beneath the waters of the mikvah and emerges to walk as a "new creation in Messiah."

I hope these additional comments prove helpful to you.

Shalom in Messiah!!

Dr. Ari Levitt-Sawyer

Messianic Pastor

Congregation Bnei HaMelech

* The Rabbinical process of converting to Judaism (a tradition not supported by Scripture) which has been practiced since well before Yeshua's time consists of taking a Hebrew name, circumcision (for men), offering a sacrifice in the Temple (one obviously can't do that part without a Temple), and immersion in a mikvah. The proselyte enters the mikvah as a goy (Gentile), and emerges as a Jew. Since the inception of this practice, the Jews have called this process being "born again" (as a Jew). Is no wonder that Nakdimon (Nicodemus) was confused when Yeshua told him that he must be "born again." He was already a Jew, a member of the Jewish supreme court! How was it possible for him to be "converted" to Judaism?

We now continue to study the 613 laws of Torah which we can read

at <http://www.jewfaq.org/613.htm>

We are doing 7 laws each week. We shall study laws 416-422 We also have commentary, with editing from me, again

from [http://theownersmanual.net/The Owners Manual 02 The Law of Love.Torah](http://theownersmanual.net/The_Owners_Manual_02_The_Law_of_Love.Torah)

(416)Do not forsake the Levites. What is due them should be given to them, so that they might rejoice therewith on each and every festival. "Take heed to yourself that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land." (Deuteronomy 12:19) This verse is the bottom-line conclusion to the whole discussion about taking the offerings to Jerusalem. God says, "Don't forget about the Levites, for they are working for Me. I have blessed you in order that you may bless them in turn. If you forsake them, there's not much point in Me letting you live in My Land any more, is there?" Or words to that effect.

(417)Set apart the second tithe in the first, second, fourth and fifth years of the sabbatical cycle to be eaten by its owner in Jerusalem. "At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are

within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that Yahweh your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do." (Deuteronomy 14:28-29) In Mitzvah #413, we learned that the tithes were supposed to be brought to Jerusalem (or wherever the tabernacle was at the time) in order to keep Israelite worship focused on Yahweh alone. But the Levites lived all over the place—48 cities within Israelite territory had been set aside for their use (see Mitzvah #398). Further complicating matters, here we see that the tithe was collected only rarely—at the end of every third year—and it apparently didn't all go to Shiloh or Jerusalem, but was stored locally, "in your gates," near to where it would be used by the Levites and the poor.

We see the same apparent contradiction in a parallel passage: "When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year—the year of tithing—and have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled, then you shall say before Yahweh your God: 'I have removed the holy tithe from my house, and also have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.'" (Deuteronomy 26:12-13) Here the Israelite is seen storing up his tithe, and at the end of the third year (specifically called the "year of tithing") taking it out of his own house and distributing it to whom it belongs—right in his own community. So where does "You must eat them before Yahweh your God in the place which Yahweh your God chooses" (Deuteronomy 12:18) come in? The answer is in Deuteronomy 26:13: "Then you shall say before Yahweh your God..." Where was Yahweh? Okay, He's omnipresent, but for the purpose of the mitzvah, He was "in the place which Yahweh your God chooses," that is, Shiloh, or Jerusalem—wherever the tabernacle/temple was. The tither, having stored the bulk of the produce locally, was to take a token of his tithe to Jerusalem and present it to Yahweh there, apparently partaking in a symbolic meal there, where he shared in his own tithe.

When was the "end of the year?" The Jewish year began in the spring, on the first day of Nisan, so it could have been just before this. But it makes more sense that the "end of the year" is meant to signify the last in the series of annual feasts of Yahweh, the Feast of Tabernacles, in the autumn, falling on the fifteenth day of Tishri. Every male in Israel was to come to "the place where Yahweh your God chooses" for this holiday anyway—it was a celebration that went on for an entire week (see Mitzvah #112). As far as God's ritual-prophetic calendar is concerned, it is the end of the year. And what better time to thankfully present your tithes to Yahweh than at harvest time—when you know how big the harvest was?

You'll notice that the rabbis tie the "every third year" requirement to the sabbatical cycle, making the third and sixth years of each cycle "years of tithing."

(418)Set apart the second tithe in the third and sixth year of the sabbatical cycle for the poor. "At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the

stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that Yahweh your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.” (Deuteronomy 14:28-29) In a sad but telling commentary, Judaism 101 notes: “Today, it must be separated out but need not be given to the poor.” I think Yahweh may beg to differ on that point. At any rate, this mitzvah points out that the Levites weren’t the only beneficiaries of the tithe. It was also used (under their supervision) to care for the widows, orphans, and exiles living in Israel. Yahweh is constantly seen reminding the Israelites that they were once strangers living in the land of Egypt, and to remember that fact through generosity to the poor and unfortunate among them. It’s remarkable that He chose to care for the disadvantaged through the disenfranchised, not the rich. The Levites had no inheritance of their own—by God’s own design. It’s a recipe for empathy. The challenges that come into our lives are there to help us help others.

And note once again that the “second tithe” is a man-made construct—it doesn’t exist in the Torah.

(419) Give the kohein the due portions of the carcass of cattle. “This shall be the priest’s due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, whether it is bull or sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach.”

(Deuteronomy 18:3) Oblivious to the real problem here, Judaism 101 notes, “According to the Talmud, this is not mandatory in the present outside of Israel, but it is permissible, and some observant people do so.” This precept concerns sacrifices that were shared by the priests and the people—they could only be made at the tabernacle or temple. The problem today is that because Israel has turned its back on Yahweh, there are no priests. There is no temple. Sacrifices can’t be made, and atonement can’t be made for their sins as the Torah prescribes. “Observant” Jews are just going through the motions, not comprehending why. But most Jews see this sort of thing as completely pointless, so they drop any pretense of Torah observance.

But it’s not pointless—at least, not if you understand the symbols. First, the priesthood is a metaphor for the Messiah—the One who stands as intercessor between God and man—and His people. Second, when the sacrificial animal was portioned out, what parts were allocated to the priests? The shoulder is indicative of the fact that the work of salvation was done by our High Priest, Yahshua. The cheeks (Hebrew *lachiy*: cheek, jaw, or jowl) seem to be symbolic of speech—the Word of God is an oft-repeated image of Christ. And the stomach reminds us that Yahweh provides our sustenance—without His blessings, we don’t eat. Of course, if you’ve replaced God’s law with your own, replaced His priests with self-appointed rabbis, and replaced the temple with the synagogue, you shouldn’t be too surprised to find that you’ve also replaced a beautiful picture of God’s grace and provision with utter pointlessness.

(420) Give the first of the fleece to the Kohein. “The firstfruits of your grain and your new wine and your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him [i.e., the priest]. For Yahweh

your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand to minister in the name of Yahweh, him and his sons forever.” (Deuteronomy 18:4-5) Again, Maimonides’ mitzvah is impossible to keep because there is no priesthood in Israel. And substituting rabbis for priests doesn’t help his cause. It is only when you realize that the High Priest is ultimately Yahshua the Messiah that any of this makes a lick of sense. He is the One who “ministers in the name of Yahweh,” and we, his children, get to share in that privilege by virtue of our relationship with Him. Forever.

The firstfruits offering represents our faith in the future provision of Yahweh. It is given when the first harbingers of His bounty present themselves—in this case, the first fleece from the flocks of sheep. Whether acknowledging Yahweh’s provision before the harvest (as here) or afterward, note that we’re never asked to give something He hasn’t already provided. The timing is merely a question of whether we’re exercising faith or expressing thankfulness—neither of which makes any sense if your God isn’t real. As usual, the offering is made to Yahweh (as symbolized by the waving of the tithe toward the heavens—see Mitzvah #412), but it is utilized by the priests or Levites.

(421)Set apart t’rumah g’dolah (the great heave-offering, that is, a small portion of the grain, wine and oil) for the Kohein. “The firstfruits of your grain and your new wine and your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him [i.e., the priest]. For Yahweh your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand to minister in the name of Yahweh, him and his sons forever.” (Deuteronomy 18:4-5) Supported by the same passage as the previous mitzvah, this one focuses on the grain, wine, and oil produced in Israel. The principles involved, though, are identical. (See Mitzvot #112 and #420 for the significance of Firstfruits.) The t’rumah is not associated with Firstfruits. Rather, it is the tenth of the tithe passed from the Levites to the priests, making the Talmud’s “t’rumah g’dolah” a bogus concept. The “heave-offering” associated with the t’rumah isn’t mentioned in this passage, though it is in the Leviticus 23:11 description of the Feast of Firstfruits. The point is that this passage is talking about Firstfruits offerings, not tithes. I may seem to be nitpicking, but there’s a good reason. If you don’t have a good foundation, you can’t build a proper house. The rabbis’ reconstruction of the Torah is nothing but a house of cards because it doesn’t rest on anything solid. Like the Word of Yahweh.

(422)Do not expend the proceeds of the second tithe on anything but food and drink. “I have not eaten any of it when in mourning, nor have I removed any of it for an unclean use, nor given any of it for the dead. I have obeyed the voice of Yahweh my God, and have done according to all that You have commanded me. Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us, just as You swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.” (Deuteronomy 26:14-15) In Mitzvah #417, we discussed how the Israelite was to distribute his tithes to (and through) the Levites in his own community at the end of every third year, and then go to Jerusalem (or wherever the sanctuary was at the time) with a sample of the tithe and “say before Yahweh your God” that you have done as the Torah instructed. This passage enumerates what they were to “say.” We’ll discuss “mourning” and

“unclean use” in subsequent mitzvot. Maimonides’ injunction here stems from the view that anything not necessary for human sustenance falls within the phrase “given for the dead.” I believe it goes much deeper than that.

“Given” is the Hebrew nathan, meaning to bestow, grant, permit, give, ascribe, employ, devote, consecrate, dedicate, commit, or entrust, among other things. And “dead” is mut, a verb meaning to die, kill, perish, or be put to death. The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament says of mut, “This is a universally used Semitic root for dying and death.... The physical corruption of the human body and the consequent suffering and pain brought about by the Fall were only the obvious symptoms of death. Death is the consequence and the punishment of sin. It originated with sin. A grand theme of the OT is God’s holiness, which separates Him from all that is not in harmony with His character. Death, then, in the OT means ultimate separation from God due to sin.” Therefore, I’d say that the enigmatic phrase, “I have not...given any of it for the dead” really means “I haven’t devoted or employed any of what this tithe is a part of to a life leading to death—a life devoid of holiness to Yahweh.” How many of us could say that today? God’s point is clear: He’s not concerned with revenues—only relationships. He’s not interested in your money—He wants your life.

Notice that the Israelites were to conclude their “tithe statement” with a prayer. The tither was instructed to ask for Yahweh’s blessing in light of his obedience in this matter. One gets the feeling that if they had been able to honestly say what was required, God would have delighted in blessing them within the Promised Land through all their generations.