

Triennial Torah Study – 3rd Year 08/09/2012

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

Num 18		Daniel 10-12	Romans 9
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The Levites' Responsibility and Portion (Numbers 18)

The congregation now seems to have a healthy reverence and respect for the holy things of God. The people are to generally keep their distance from the tabernacle. But as we glimpsed in yesterday's reading, they are apparently very concerned that they could be annihilated for some random mistake or oversight when they were required to approach the tabernacle, such as when bringing offerings. And indeed, God reveals that if mistakes happen at the tabernacle, someone will be called to account. But God lets it be known that the responsibility for ensuring the proper care and appropriate service of the tabernacle belongs to the priests and other Levites, and that they will be held individually accountable if anything goes awry.

The thought is expressed this way: "You and your sons and your father's house with you [i.e., all the Levites] shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary, and you and your sons [i.e., just the priests] shall bear the iniquity associated with your priesthood" (verse 1). The word "iniquity" can throw us off a little. The word translated "iniquity" (Hebrew 'avon) means "perverseness" and derives from a root meaning "to be bent or crooked." The English word "wrong," which originally connoted being "wrung out of course," gives us the same word picture (E.W. Bullinger, Companion Bible, appendix 44, sec. 4.) While it can mean deliberate evil, it can also simply mean that something is incorrect or not the way it is supposed to be for whatever reason. And if some aspect is out of kilter in the service of the priesthood or tabernacle due to slackness, incompetence, neglect or any such thing on the part of an individual who is supposed to be keeping watch over this aspect, that individual will be held guilty.

In reading through these passages, we should desire to understand the import they hold for us now. Leadership today, as in ancient Israel, carries great responsibility and accountability. Every consideration must be given to lead in a righteous way, using mature wisdom in following all the laws and principles of God. Those in God's Church are told not to take too much upon themselves. Just as the Levitical priesthood was not for all Israelites, so being ordained as a minister of Jesus Christ or appointed by the ministry to teach is not for all spiritual Israelites, i.e., true Christians. The

apostle James wrote to fellow Christians, “Let not many of you become teachers [which was anciently the responsibility of the priests and Levites], knowing that we [teachers, as James was] shall receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1). Leaders today will “bear the iniquity” if they misuse their offices.

To Aaron and his sons, and their families, belonged all the tabernacle offerings for their sustenance. This required Aaron and his sons to live by faith. Having no worldly jobs or income, they depended entirely on God. Aaron’s family had no inheritance in the land and looked to God to be their inheritance. “I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel,” God said (verse 20). The Levites would only have small lots of land for the purpose of keeping a few animals to provide their daily needs. So, to the Levites went the tithes that were received of all Israel as their inheritance (verse 21). The Levites, in turn, then tithed on their income to Aaron the priest (verses 26-28). And now, as the book of Hebrews explains, God has directed that tithes and offerings go to different recipients—those who represent the Melchizedek priesthood (see Hebrews 7).

Spirit Wars and Geopolitics (Daniel 10:1-11:4)

The events and prophecy of Daniel 10-12 are set in the third year of Cyrus (10:1)—which must mean the third year of his reign as king of Babylon—in the first month (see verses 3-4). So, the date was Nisan of 536 B.C. It is the 70th year since Daniel’s captivity. He is now in his mid-80s. And here at the end of his life he receives an amazing prophecy of the future.

The NKJV translates a latter part of Daniel 10:1 as “The message was true, but the appointed time is long.” Yet an alternative rendering of the second clause here is given in the margin: “... and of great conflict.” In fact, the NIV renders this: “Its message was true and it concerned a great war.” This rendering makes sense considering the long interpretation given in chapter 11. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary states: “We are not given any hint as to what symbols may have appeared in the vision (statues, beasts, trees, or whatever). We are simply told that it related to ‘a great war’ (saba). Since it is referred to simply as a dabar (‘word,’ ‘message,’ ‘saying’), it may not even have come in a pictorial form at all. Its message, however, clearly portended times of testing and crisis for the people of God” (note on verse 1).

Daniel entered three weeks of “mourning,” with this period, Nisan 4-24, overlapping the Passover (Nisan 14) and Feast of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 15-21). Expositor’s states: “Daniel was so deeply impressed by this revelation that he resorted to three weeks of mourning (mitabbel, a word often used in connection with lamenting the death of a loved one). From v. 12 we know that this mourning and the semifast that accompanied it (v. 3) marked a prolonged period of intense supplication and prayer. Daniel abstained altogether from meat, wine and delicacies so that he might give himself over to beseeching and waiting on God. Daniel even neglected the usual niceties of personal grooming, such as fragrant oil on his hair or body. His consuming desire was to intercede for his people and obtain assurance from Yahweh that the nation would survive and

carry out with honor and faithfulness its holy mission as God's witness to the world. He wanted to be certain that the remnant of forty-two thousand that had already gone back to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel and Joshua and had reinstated public worship at the site of the temple would not fail in their trust, and that the commonwealth they had established would carry on till the last days and the coming of Messiah, the Son of Man" (note on verses 2-3).

At the end of the three weeks, Daniel receives a remarkable vision of a glorious being (verses 4-9). There are striking resemblances to Ezekiel's description of the glory of God (see Ezekiel 1:4-28) and to the apostle John's vision of the glorified Jesus (see Revelation 1:9-20). Yet the being of this vision seems to be a powerful angel, like the being of Revelation 10:1, who is also robed in a cloud with a rainbow above his head, his face shining as the sun and his legs like fiery pillars. Indeed, both the being of Revelation 10 and the one in this section of Daniel raise hands to heaven and swear about a length of time (see Daniel 12:7; Revelation 10:5).

Continuing in Expositor's: "Verse 7 tells us that when Daniel received his vision, he was not alone. His companions, however, did not see the vision of the angel but sensed his presence. Overwhelmed with terror, they fled. Similarly, in 2 Kings 6 at first Elisha alone saw the angelic host encircling Dothan [or perhaps by faith simply knew that they were there without actually seeing them]; only after intercessory prayer was his young assistant enabled to [actually] see them.... Also, in Acts 9:7 the companions of Saul [i.e., Paul] saw something of the light but could not behold the vision of the risen Christ, they could only tell that there was a voice from heaven but could not distinguish its words (Acts 22:9).... [Daniel now] found himself emotionally overwhelmed (v. 8), just as he had been at the end of the vision in 8:27. His face paled and his strength left him. After hearing the angel speak to him—presumably some words of greeting—Daniel swooned (v. 9). Yet he was soon aroused, for the angel reached out and actually touched him (v. 10)" (note on verses 7-10).

The angel who now speaks to Daniel and later explains the prophetic message to Daniel appears to be the same glorious being of verses 4-6. The identity of this angel is not revealed here. He is often assumed to be Gabriel, as Gabriel had been dispatched to relate messages to Daniel before. And that may well be. Perhaps Daniel does not say so because, if the angel is Gabriel, he has not come in the familiar human guise in which he has appeared before— appearing now instead as this glorious being so that there is less recognition. In any case, the being who speaks to Daniel does not appear to be the preincarnate Jesus, the One the ancient Israelites knew as God, as demonic forces are able to resist him.

This brings us to what is surely the most remarkable part of this entire exchange. The Bible here reveals that there are unseen spirit wars going on around us. The "prince of the kingdom of Persia" (verse 13; see verse 20) and the "prince of Greece" (verse 20) are evidently spirit rulers over these empires under the chief of demons, Satan the Devil. Jesus made it clear that Satan is the "ruler of this world" (see John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). And within his demonic kingdom are various echelons of power—"forces and authorities and...rulers of darkness and powers in the

spiritual world” (Ephesians 6:12, Contemporary English Version). Mention is even made in Daniel 10:13 of the “kings of Persia” (plural)—evidently demonic sub-kings under the leading prince of Persia, himself subject to Satan. These evil forces were able to impede the divine messenger until he received help from another powerful angel. (Though this was only within the limits that God permitted.)

Expositor’s explains it this way: “The powers of evil apparently have the capacity to bring about hindrances and delays [when God allows it], even of the delivery of the answers to believers whose requests God is minded to answer. God’s response was immediate, so far as his intention was concerned [as the messenger was dispatched when Daniel’s prayerful seeking for help in understanding began]. But ‘the prince of the Persian kingdom’ (v. 13)—apparently the satanic agent assigned to the sponsorship and control of the Persian realm—put up a determined opposition to the actual delivery of the divine answer. While God can, of course, override the united resistance of all the forces of [evil] if he chooses to do so, he accords to demons certain limited powers of obstruction and rebellion somewhat like those he allows humans. In both cases the exercise of free will in opposition to the Lord of heaven is permitted by him when he sees fit. But as Job 1:12 and 2:6 indicate, the malignity of Satan is never allowed to go beyond the due limit set by God, who will not allow the believer to be tested beyond his limit (1 Cor 10:13). Verse 13 [of Daniel 10] shows that the angels of God have power to counteract and thwart the agents of the Devil. Here it was the archangel, Michael (‘one of the chief princes’), who broke the hindrance put up by the demonic ‘king of Persia’ and paved the way for the interpreting angel to deliver God’s answer to Daniel” (note on verses 1213).

Michael is evidently one of the most powerful of God’s angels. He is mentioned three times in the Old Testament, all in the book of Daniel (10:13, 21; 12:1), and twice in the New Testament (Jude 9; Revelation 12:7). The latter citation refers to a future spirit war in heaven. As for how spirit beings fight and what weapons they are able to use against one another we have no idea. But both sides evidently have powerful forces at their disposal. Of course, the omnipotent God will ultimately cause all wickedness to be overthrown. Indeed, He could have eliminated the resistance altogether in the case of delivering the message to Daniel. Yet He did not. He evidently saw some use in permitting it—perhaps for the sake of Daniel, for the messenger and His other angels or even for us reading the account today.

Returning to Daniel 10, observe that “one basic principle of prayer is set forth by this example of delayed response. It is the principle of undiscourageable persistence. Jesus taught his disciples that ‘they should always pray and not give up’ (Luke 18:1). There may be hindering factors of which a praying Christian knows nothing as he wonders why the answers to his requests are delayed. Nevertheless, he is to keep on praying. It may be that he will not receive an answer because he has given up on the twentieth day when he should have persisted to the twenty-first day” (note on Daniel 10:12-13).

The draining of Daniel's strength due to being overwhelmed at the presence of the divine messenger finally ceases. "For the third time in this chapter Daniel is supernaturally strengthened by one who touched him (see also vv. 10, 16). The first touch enabled him to arise from the ground, the second to speak, and the third to carry on a conversation" (Nelson Study Bible, note on verse 18). At last, Daniel is able to hear the interpretation.

The angel begins by telling Daniel that the spirit war was not yet over (verses 20-21). This appears to have relevance to the message he brought. Consider that the angel was battling the spirit forces behind the Persian Empire. Next, he says, "the prince of Greece will come" (verse 20). The Persian Empire would eventually fall to the Hellenistic Greek empire of Alexander the Great. Perhaps the messenger's fight with its demons would not come until then. Interestingly, it may well be that Satan's forces fight against each other. Perhaps the demonic forces behind Persia were dominant at this time and those behind Greece would gain dominance later—all within God's ultimate allowance to fulfill prophecy.

Expositor's offers this interesting suggestion about the context of the spirit fight: "The occasion for the spiritual warfare [at this time of Persian dominance] was the restoration of the believing remnant of Israel to the Holy Land and their survival there as a commonwealth of the faithful, living in obedience to Holy Scripture. Knowing that such a development could lead to the ultimate appearance of the Son of God as the Messiah for God's redeemed, Satan and all his hosts were determined to thwart the renewal of Israel and the deliverance of her people from destruction. The supreme effort to exterminate them altogether was to take place some fifty-five years later, in the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes), when Haman secured his consent to obliterate the entire Jewish race. The conflict between Michael and the 'prince of Persia' (10:13) may have had some bearing on this event, and it may have been Michael's victory over his satanic foes that paved the way for Queen Esther to thwart this genocide. The second effort of Satan was to take place under [the Greek rule of] Antiochus Epiphanes, who sought to obliterate the Jewish faith by forbidding its practice on pain of death. The momentous events of 167-164 B.C. [or 168-165, foretold by the prophecy now explained to Daniel in chapter 11] may well have been profoundly affected by this supernatural warfare between the forces of heaven and [the demons]. Though this is not explicitly stated here, in the light of subsequent events it is reasonable to assume that these were some of the issues over which Michael was locked in combat with Satan's deputies to Persia and Greece" (note on 11:1).

Something else interesting to observe in this exchange is the angel's statement, "I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth" (10:21). This was before Daniel even wrote it down. Evidently, the prophecy now being related to Daniel was, amazingly, already written down in the "Bible of heaven," so to speak. He was merely transcribing it for us.

The angel then begins the specifics of the prophecy. And what specifics they are! As The New

Open Bible, quoted in the Bible Reading Program's introduction to the book of Daniel, says, "Daniel 11 alone contains over one hundred specific prophecies of historical events that literally came true." This chapter is amazing proof of the divine inspiration of Scripture.

The prophecy begins by stating that "three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece" (verse 2). This is not to say that there would be only four more kings in the Persian Empire following Cyrus—for there were in fact 12 more. Rather, only the first four are being documented here before the fact. First came Cyrus' elder son Cambyses (530-522 B.C.). Next an imposter named Gaumata or Bardiya reigned for a short time (522). He is often referred to as Pseudo-Smerdis because he passed himself off as Cyrus's younger son, Smerdis (the real Smerdis having been assassinated by his brother's agents). Next was Darius the Persian (522-486), a cousin of Cyrus, who killed the imposter and took his place as king. The fourth king was Darius' son Xerxes (486-465) who, being the wealthiest of them all, launched an all-out war against Greece. In fact, his assault is reckoned to be one of the greatest in all of ancient history. The Greek historian Herodotus estimated his army at about a million men. Yet Xerxes did not ultimately triumph. After united Greek forces defeated his navy at the Battle of Salamis in 480 B.C., he was forced to beat a hasty retreat.

The period that followed saw the steady rise of Greece and the steady decline of Persia. According to the prophecy, a mighty king would arise (verse 3). It does not say he would come immediately. Nor does it say what nationality he would represent. However, the implication is that this ruler would be greater than Xerxes—and no such person would fit the bill until the conquest by the Greco-Macedonian ruler Alexander the Great. Moreover, when we compare this prophecy of how the mighty king would be broken and his empire divided into four parts (verse 4) with an almost identical prophecy given earlier in Daniel 8, it becomes rather obvious what is meant here. Alexander is the only one who could be meant. The empire ended up divided between Alexander's generals Ptolemy Soter, Seleucus Nicator, Cassander and Lysimachus. Ptolemy ruled Egypt and Palestine. Seleucus ruled Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia. Cassander ruled Greece and Macedonia. And Lysimachus ruled Asia Minor.

As we will see, the kingdoms of Cassander and Lysimachus drop out of the prophecy at this point, as they are no longer relevant to the story being revealed to Daniel. The rest of the prophecy follows the progress of Seleucid Syria to the north and Ptolemaic Egypt to the south and their successors—and how God's people would fare through the infighting between them—all the way to the end time. As the angel had told Daniel in 10:14: "Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come."

Ongoing Wars Between North and South (Daniel 11:5-35)

To help in understanding this section, please refer to the supplemental reading items, which go into considerable detail. One of the items gives the entire New King James Version text of Daniel

11 with explanatory notes provided in bracketed inserts. It also provides a timeline of the ancient rulers mentioned in the chapter as well as a map of the divisions of Alexander's empire. More information on Antiochus Epiphanes and the Abomination of Desolation is available in the supplementary material for our next reading.

End-Time Events (Daniel 11:36-12:13)

Please read the supplementary material listed below for this section first before proceeding to the highlights in the commentary that follows, which gives some additional details not thoroughly covered in the supplementary reading.

Verses 36-39 of Daniel 11 appear to show the Roman emperor, as the next king of the North, proclaiming himself divine and later honoring and expanding the power of a previously unrecognized "god" in a high religious office, the former occurring early in the succession of Roman emperors and the latter commencing with Constantine the Great in the fourth century A.D. The honoring of this false religion would progress through various resurrections of the western part of the Roman Empire until the end time. This "god" seems parallel to the "little horn" of Daniel 7, which appears to be the Roman papacy.

Yet has anyone actually ever looked on the pope as a god? Consider that the pope is called "Holy Father"—the name of God the Father (John 17:11; compare Matthew 23:9)—as well as the "Vicar of Christ," meaning substitute for Christ. According to one Catholic publication, "all the names which are attributed to Christ in Scripture, implying His supremacy over the church, are also attributed to the Pope" (Bellamin, *On the Authority of Councils*, Book 2, chap. 17, quoted by A. Jan Marcussen, *National Sunday Law*, 58th ed., p. 77). He has been called "another God on earth" (Labbe and Cossart, *History of the Councils*, Vol. 14, col. 109) and "our Lord God the Pope" (*Extravagantes of Pope John XXII*, title 14, chap. 4, *Declaramus*, quoted by Marcussen, p. 77). Furthermore, Catholic teaching has in the past claimed that "the Pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ, but he IS Jesus Christ, hidden under a veil of flesh" (*The Catholic National*, July 1895). All of this is a forerunner to the blasphemy of the end time, when, as the apostle Paul foretold, the leader of the false religious system will sit "as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Verses 40-45 detail events of the end time, where the European beast power of the north is ultimately brought to his end at Christ's return.

In Daniel 12:1, the events of the last days are related to the unparalleled "time of trouble," synonymous with "Jacob's trouble" in Jeremiah 30:7 and the "great tribulation" of Matthew 24:21. After this will come the resurrection (Daniel 12:1-3). Some are resurrected to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt (verse 2). It is important to note that this does not say that those raised to life and those raised to contempt are all raised at the same time. From other passages, it is evident that these are different resurrections.

Daniel is then told to seal up the scroll of his book, the understanding of which would not be unlocked until the end time (verse 4). The work of his long life is at last done. But then we are told of two more angels in addition to the first. Apparently they have been listening to this amazing prophecy. One asks how long it would be to the end of “these wonders”—evidently the final trials ending in the resurrection (verses 5-6). Notice the answer: “It shall be for a time, times, and a half. And when they have made an end of scattering the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished” (verse 7, Green’s Literal Translation). This ties directly back to the prophecy of Daniel 7, where it was said that the saints would be given into the hands of the persecuting “little horn” for this exact same period (7:25)—which, as was explained in the comments on that verse, equates to three and a half years, the last three and a half years before Christ’s return (equating also to the 1,260 days or 42 months of other prophecies in Revelation).

Daniel, however, is quite confused. Though he has been told to seal the prophecy, he still has questions. He asks how it’s all going to work out (12:8). The order to seal the prophecy is then reiterated (verse 9). Nevertheless, a few more things are told to him at this point—which Daniel may have found even more confusing. The angel explains that the wise of the end time would understand the time frame being described.

In verse 11, Daniel is specifically told that the time from the taking away of daily sacrifices and the setting up of the end-time abomination of desolation would be 1,290 days. Verse 12 then mentions an enigmatic 1,335 days. The key to understanding appears to be verse 13, where Daniel is told that he will rise to his inheritance “at the end of the days.” This seems to mean the end of the various groupings of days mentioned. That is, the three and a half years (1,260 days), the 1,290 days and the 1,335 days all seem to end at the time Daniel is resurrected at Christ’s return. A possible scenario is that breaking of the power of the saints—the cutting off of their public preaching—will come 1,335 days before Christ’s return. Then, 45 days later, 1,290 days before Christ’s return, the abomination of desolation will be set up. And then, 30 days later, 1,260 days before Christ’s return, the Great Tribulation will commence. Thankfully, Christ will return in just three and a half years from this point to bring deliverance to the people of Israel and Judah (as the commencement of His deliverance of all mankind) and everlasting life to his saints. The dead in Christ will live again.

Daniel, whose time to rest came not long after the sealing of his prophecy, will at that future time be raised—but then, with all of us who remain faithful, to perfect understanding. At last, all of Daniel’s questions will be answered—and, as amazing as it is to contemplate, so will all of ours.

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Romans 9

Paul continues trying to teach the ways of Elohim here in chapter nine of Romans, with some very delicate topics. He touches on the lineage and relationships "by flesh" or in other words simply who is born from whom in a purely genealogical sense; yes, these are all Israel according to the flesh. He is also an Israelite with brothers and sisters, mother and father, cousins, fellow tribesmen... and he could have wished himself to be born of a different birth.

Perhaps he could have been born a Roman, but this was not the plan of Elohim.

Even though many are born after the flesh – born into the lineage of Israel, not all Israel are "of" Israel. He then goes on to explain what he is trying to get across and he uses many powerful examples.

The seed of promise was Isaac according to the Word of Elohim as we also read, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," and "At this time I shall come and Sarah shall have a son." These statements were made by God Himself to Abraham concerning Isaac. Therefore, Isaac was the

seed of promise. Abraham had other sons, who may be his seed through other women such as Hagar and Keturah, but they are not Abraham's seed through which the promise was made. In Isaac, the seed shall be called.

Paul then takes it up a notch to the seed of Isaac: Jacob and Esau. Both Jacob and Esau were according to the flesh, both born of Isaac and Rebekah, but Elohim "chose" Jacob. Elohim chose Jacob even before the children were born, before either of them knew to do evil or good. Why is this important? Because it is only by the choosing of Elohim concerning "the chosen" it cannot be based upon our works. God said, "The greater shall serve the younger," to Rebekah even before they were born. The order was set forth by the Word and Will of Elohim, not according to either of their works!

God favors who He wishes to and hardens who He wishes to according to His Purpose alone.

So why did Israel stumble during the times of the prophets and exile? Because they were attempting to accomplish righteousness through works of Torah (these are the rituals done according to what was mandatory by the Nation and Leaders of Israel). An example would be having to keep your lawn mowed to remain in good standing with the neighborhood club or something. The heart of the instruction of the Torah given at Sinai had been lost... and so Israel stumbled.

There rituals were not based upon belief, but of rituals, there was no heart or spirit or love of the instruction for the life it brought to them. Because of this also, they stumbled on Yeshua when He came as was prophesied, "See, I lay in Tsiyon a Stone of stumbling and a Rock that makes for falling, and everyone who is believing on Him shall not be put to shame."

Providing a way for peoples who were not born Israelites according to the flesh to now become Israelites according to promise and the choosing of Elohim – just as His purpose had been from the very beginning!