

Triennial Torah Study – 5th Year 08/11/2014



sightedmoon.com /triennial-torah-study-5th-year-04042015 /

By Joseph F. Dumond

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

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

Ex 14	Isaiah 1-3	Ps 120	John 4:1-42
-------	------------	--------	-------------

Pharaoh's Rebellion Brought to an End – Exodus 14

Pharaoh's rebelliousness was finally brought to an end, then, in a miraculous series of events that all were able to witness. Many have claimed that the Israelites simply walked across a marsh or shallow lake when the water level was low. Part of their argument is that the original Hebrew term translated "Red Sea" is *Yam Suf*, meaning "Sea of Reeds"—reeds being plants like cattails, rushes and papyrus. However, the word *suf* can also mean seaweed (Jonah 2:5). In fact, the Gulf of Aqaba, a finger of the Red Sea, is actually called *Yam Suf* in 1 Kings 9:26. Others, accepting this, will argue that the Israelites were walking on a sandbar at low tide— while the Egyptians got swept away when the tide came in. Yet the Bible clearly says that the waters were a "wall" to the Israelites on both sides (Exodus 14:22)—an awesome miracle that cannot be explained by a coincidence of natural phenomena.

To quote biblical historian Eugene Merrill: "The crossing of Israel, which immediately preceded the drowning of the Egyptian chariotry, cannot be explained as a wading through a swamp. It required a mighty act of God, an act so significant in both scope and meaning that forever after in Israel's history it was the paradigm against which all of his redemptive and saving work was measured. If there was no actual miracle of the proportions described, all subsequent references to the exodus as the archetype of the sovereign power and salvific grace of God is hollow and empty" (*Kingdom of Priests*, p. 66).

Through this incredible symbolic baptism (1 Corinthians 10:2), would the Israelites emerge with a renewed attitude?

Introduction to Isaiah (Isaiah 1)

The prophet Isaiah was contemporary with Hosea. They delivered their prophecies during the reigns of the same four kings of Judah (1:1; Hosea 1:1). Hosea also mentions a king of Israel

during Uzziah's reign, perhaps because the primary focus of Hosea is the people of the northern kingdom. Isaiah's message is directed toward Judah and Jerusalem, and those nations that interact with them. Yet sometimes, it should be noted, Jerusalem is a reference to all 12 tribes of Israel, as they were at one time united under it. In any case, although the message was relevant for the people of Isaiah's day, it was also written as a prophecy for the *end-time* nation of Judah, Israel and the other nations of the world.

Isaiah's actual calling appears to be recorded in chapter 6, and occurs in the final year of Uzziah's reign. The first five chapters serve as a long introduction to the book. The name "Isaiah" means "The Eternal Saves" or "The Eternal Helps" and the deliverance of Judah and Israel, as well as the gentile nations, is a central theme of the book. Isaiah is called the messianic prophet for an obvious reason—his many wonderful prophecies of the coming Deliverer, the Messiah, and the Messiah's coming reign over all nations. That Messiah would, as all professing believers understand, be revealed as Yeshua. Speaking of Yeshua, John 12:41 says that Isaiah "saw His glory and spoke of Him." (Isaiah is quoted or referred to 85 times in the New Testament—from 61 separate passages.)

Isaiah is referred to 13 times as the son of Amoz, which may suggest that his father was a man of some prominence. According to Jewish rabbinic tradition in the Babylonian Talmud, this Amoz was a brother of Judah's King Amaziah. If so, this would make Isaiah first cousin to King Uzziah, and a grandson of King Joash—and thus a man of the palace, being of royal blood. Growing up in such an environment, he would have been familiar with international relations and other affairs of state. According to the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud, Isaiah was martyred when King Manasseh, apostate son of Hezekiah, had him fastened between two planks and "sawn asunder" (to which Hebrews 11:37 appears to refer).

"Critical" scholarship—that based in the view that the Bible is not the inspired Word of God nor written when it claims to be—has denied Isaiah's authorship of chapters 40-66. Instead it attributes this section to a later unknown author it calls "Deutero-Isaiah," i.e., "Second Isaiah" though not actually named Isaiah. Others have argued for a third author (Trito-Isaiah) for chapters 55-66. The New Testament, however, quotes from all three sections of the book, attributing each quote to the one biblical prophet Isaiah himself (compare Isaiah 1:9 and Romans 9:29; Isaiah 53:1 and Romans 10:16; Isaiah 65:1 and Romans 10:20).

Why do critics try to post-date Isaiah? *Mainly because Isaiah accurately prophesied future events.* (For example, Isaiah names the Persian ruler Cyrus 200 years before he came to power, Isaiah 44:28; 45:1.) The critics, you see, have a choice: they must either admit that an overseeing supernatural power and intelligence inspired these prophecies or find some other way to explain them. They have gone with the latter solution—redating the prophecies, moving the date of composition forward a few centuries so that the prophecies appear to have been written after all of the prophesied events had already occurred. This has been true of "higher criticism" for most prophetic books.

But with Isaiah, resolution is not achieved by merely pushing the date forward. The critics have had to distort the book—attributing various parts of it to the fraudulent writings of between two and five authors! Why? To understand, we must remember the “fundamental axiom of criticism.” Having decided that a prophet cannot foretell the future, it is essential for the critics that the ‘pseudo-author’ be writing for his own generation. Starting with this assumption, the scholar then looks to history for a historical context into which each prophet can be fit. But that alone doesn’t work with Isaiah, as there is no historical situation into which the book as a whole can be squeezed (i.e., Isaiah appears to have been writing across multiple generations and periods). The answer? Isaiah had to be sawn asunder! Applying literary criticism, a “first Isaiah” is supposedly distinguished from a “second Isaiah”—and a “second” from a “third”—solely on the basis of changes in writing style.

But writing style isn’t the real crux of the matter. Nothing definite can be determined by counting particles, articles, conjunctions or any other “characteristic traits” of a person’s writing. The fact is that an accomplished author’s writing style will change over the years, and with the subject matter—so evidence based on writing style is tenuous. To illustrate the problem, modern computer-based literary analysis has mistakenly claimed that Ian Fleming didn’t write *James Bond*, and that the works of the 20th-century writers Graham Greene and G.K. Chesterton had “more than one author.” So literary variation can’t legitimately be the main reason for the critics’ determination. Clearly, the real criteria for breaking Isaiah down into sections are the fulfilled prophecies it contains. No one, they assume, could have written them as “prophecies.” And anyone who wrote them as “histories” had to have been present in several eras of Israelite history.

“Though Your Sins Are Like Scarlet...” (Isaiah 1)

As the book opens, we see in the first chapter God’s utter exasperation with Judah and Jerusalem. The message here is directed primarily to the southern kingdom of Judah, as only Jewish kings are mentioned (verse 1), the “faithful city” (Jerusalem) is reprimanded (verses 2126) and the sacrificial temple system is discussed. The sacrificial system has ceased to serve its purpose of focusing the people on God and the need for righteousness (compare Micah 6:68). Indeed, the people display a form of religiosity—yet it is form without substance (compare 2 Timothy 3:5).

Those with antinomian—anti-law—mindsets often twist verses 13 and 14 to support their contention that Yeshua came to earth to abrogate God’s laws. They would interpret these verses to mean that the observance of God’s Sabbath and festivals were never worth much in the first place. But such a misinterpretation contradicts much of the rest of the Old Testament and New Testament. The point here is that the character of the people has degenerated to the point that the manner in which they keep the Sabbath and religious festivals has become offensive to God. Their attitudes and approach had so degenerated that the Holy Day observances were hardly recognizable to God as having originated with Him. They were no longer *His* feasts, but the

wayward *people's* feasts. Indeed, besides observing God's true festivals in a wrong manner and attitude, Israel had even instituted its own substitute holidays and participated in pagan observances. And the people of the modern nations of Israel have followed in the same course—both in practice and attitude. Note the combination of “iniquity” (lawlessness and evil) and “the sacred meeting”—what incongruity, hypocrisy and blasphemy!

Because of the people's defiance, we see that God has ceased listening to their prayers. This is a theme echoed through many of the prophets. Neither the leaders nor the general populace are properly executing righteous judgment and relieving those who are oppressed. God will not accept such hypocrisy.

Such conditions exist even today. In the United States, for example, spirituality is widely sought—yet most of those seeking it pursue *everything but* God's actual truth and live in increasing disobedience to Him. Yet God pleads with His people to change—and promises that someday, whatever it takes, they ultimately will.

The word pictures of Isaiah 1, as in much of Isaiah, are powerful and memorable. The metaphors of an owner (verse 3) and of sickness and injuries (verses 5-6), and the similes of total forgiveness (verse 18) are famous passages, although most of the world has not responded to the important lessons.

Swords to Plowshares (Isaiah 2)

One of the other contemporaries of Isaiah and Hosea is Micah, whose prophetic book we will be reading from soon. The well-known passage that begins Isaiah 2 is repeated in Micah 4, although Micah adds another element, as we will later see. The prophecy in both passages concerns the establishment of the “mountain of the Lord's house” (Isaiah 2:2). Though at times literal, mountains in prophecy are often symbolic of kingdoms or governments (compare Daniel 2:35, 44). The mountain of God's house being established above the mountains and hills thus represents the Kingdom of God taking control over the kingdoms and smaller nations of this world, when a voice in heaven will announce, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Revelation 11:15).

Outside the United Nations headquarters in New York stands a famous statue of a man beating his sword into a plowshare. Indeed, “Swords to plowshares” is a popular UN motto. But the international organization has not really even *begun* to recast the world's implements of war into farming tools or other peaceful equipment. In fact, as much as ever, the world is frantically beating plowshares into swords and pruning hooks into spears (Joel 3:10). The efforts of a wayward mankind will not bring about world peace. Rather, as Isaiah later attests to God of Christ's return to this earth, “Lord, *You* will establish peace *for us*” (Isaiah 26:12). But it will not come instantaneously. Rather, as Isaiah 2:4 and other scriptures show (compare Zechariah 14:16-19), it will take some time to break the hardhearted recalcitrance of humanity.

Yet it *will* be accomplished.

From the Messiah's future throne in Jerusalem, which will be the new capital of the world, the Word of God will be proclaimed to all the earth (Isaiah 2:3), including "the law"—*God's* law. Most of modern Christendom holds to the inconsistent and incoherent teaching that God does not require obedience to His laws in this age, in spite of the myriad scriptures showing that Christ confirmed, amplified and emphasized these laws during His earthly ministry and that He will enforce them throughout the entire earth after He returns in power and glory.

There is a constant shifting in Isaiah between the problems of the nation's due to their wickedness and the promises of the glorious future that will occur once God has corrected the problems and mankind as a whole is taught to live by His laws. While chapter 2 begins with the description of peace to come, it soon returns to the chastisement of Israel for letting their wealth, military might and idols fill them with pride—for which God will humble them (verses 522).

Indeed, two major recurring themes in Isaiah are how disgusted God is with the "proud and lofty" and His abhorrence of oppression of the weak through might. The arrogant and tyrannical of this world are in for a rude awakening. They will be brought low and humbled when the omnipotent God "arises to shake the earth mightily" (verses 19, 21). Godly leaders use authority to *serve* those under their charge, just as Yeshua later taught the early leaders.

Punishment and Eventual Restoration (Isaiah 3-4)

These chapters appear to be a continuation of the prophecy started in chapter 2. God will remove the people's food (3:1) and their leadership (verses 2-15). With immature, incompetent and inexperienced rulers ("babes," verse 4) and everyone oppressing or seeking selfish advantage over each other (verse 5), a state approaching anarchy will prevail. The people will turn to those who appear outwardly successful (verse 6). But they either simply don't want to get involved or, perhaps, are themselves overwhelmed by the increasing mess (verses 6-8).

By the look in the eyes of the people, along with their words and deeds, it is clear that they are arrogant and defiant against God and His law—indeed, brazenly and shamelessly as Sodom (verses 8-9)—and they will reap what they sow (verses 10-11; compare Galatians 6:7-8). The immature leaders lead the people astray and exploit the poor (verses 12-15). The "daughters of Zion" are vain, haughty and wanton, obsessed with appearance, fashion and materialism, drawing undue attention to themselves (verse 16). While perhaps a literal reference to the women, this may also be a figurative reference to Israel and Judah in general. Sadly, they will get more attention than they seek—as we see them left stripped and violated in fitting repayment of their anti-God moral revolution (verses 17-26). Verse 17 could imply sexually transmissible diseases.

Plea for deliverance from deceitful enemies (Psalms 120)

As the first song of ascents in the first set of three (of the five sets of three), **Psalm 120** is a lament while in “distress” (verse 1). However, if the latter part of verse 1 is translated as in the NKJV, “and He [God] heard me,” then the distress mentioned in this verse would seem to be a former one-forming the basis for the appeal for help in the present distress. Yet it may be that the latter part of the verse should be rendered, “and He *has* heard me”-in which case the present distress is the one intended, the poet merely expressing his confidence in God to help him or perhaps having received some actual assurance. Still, not knowing exactly how and when matters will be resolved, he continues to pray for deliverance (verse 2).

The deliverance he seeks is from lying deceivers (same verse). And he considers that consequences will eventually befall them-apparently expecting God to judge them accordingly (verse 3). Verse 4 mentions sharp arrows and burning coals from a broom tree, a large desert shrub with roots that can be made into charcoal. It is not clear if this is referring to the lying words of the enemies here and the damage they do (compare 57:4; 64:3; Proverbs 25:18; 16:27; Jeremiah 9:3, 8) or to the just judgment in kind that God will bring on them for it, as the NIV translates it to mean.

Verse 5 of Psalm 120 mentions dwelling among “Meshech” and the “tents of Kedar”-equating this with dwelling too long “with one who hates peace” (verse 6) or “among those who hate peace” (NIV), the plural meaning supported by the “they” in the next verse. Meshech was a gentile nation (Genesis 10:2), which was in Old Testament times located near the Black Sea. The descendants of Meshech later migrated north and may be found today among the people of Russia, the name *Moscow* helping to provide this identification (see the Bible Reading Program comments on Ezekiel 38). Kedar was the second son of Abraham’s son Ishmael (Genesis 25:13), from whom sprang “a great tribe of Arabs settled on the northwest of the [Arabian] peninsula and on the confines of Palestine.... The tribe seems to have been one of the most conspicuous of all the Ishmaelite tribes, and hence the rabbins call the Arabians universally by this name” (*Smith’s Bible Dictionary*, “Kedar”).

As the nomads of Kedar lived southeast of the land of Israel and the people of Meshech were far to the north, we are left to ponder why the psalmist says he dwells among both (Psalm 120:5). It may be that he has gone from living with one to the other. Some see a prophetic association-as a large portion of the Jewish people in recent centuries have lived in Russia and among Arab nations (the state of Israel itself being in the midst of Arab enemies). On the other hand, many believe the psalmist to be speaking metaphorically of other Israelites – that is, in their dishonesty and mistreatment of him they were behaving not as God’s covenant people but like these other far-off foreigners. Alternatively, some have postulated this translation of the verse: “Woe is me, *whether* I dwell in Meshech, *or* I dwell among the tents of Kedar!” In context, the meaning would then seem to be that no matter where he lives in this world, the psalmist remains in hostile territory-facing lying enemies who don’t want peace.

Interestingly, two different words are used for “dwell” in verse 5: *garti* (“sojourn”) and *shakanti* (“tabernacle”). “These verbs,” says *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, “are significantly chosen. Even though the psalmist may have enjoyed a permanent residence, he felt as if he was no more than a sojourner among his contemporaries. He did not feel at home among an ungodly people” (note on verse 5). Indeed, God’s people are to be temporary dwellers in this world-looking for the future homeland of the Kingdom of God (Leviticus 25:23; 1 Chronicles 29:15; 1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11:13-16).

In this light, we should note verse 7. The beginning of the verse, though translated as “I am for peace,” is literally “I peace.” The poet’s whole being is consumed with the desire for peace-to make peace as he is able and desiring the peace that God’s Kingdom will ultimately bring. Yet the antagonists have no interest in peace. They are for war (compare Isaiah 59:8). This psalm, then, is one of crying out to God for relief from the circumstances of dwelling in a hostile world. “This may have set the stage for believers to make their pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In Zion they would be among the people of God. In Jerusalem they would hear the words of truth. In the temple they could pray for the peace of God (122:6; 125:5; 128:6)” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 120:5-7).

Moreover, the annual festivals themselves portray God’s plan for the salvation of mankind. The joyous Feast of Tabernacles provides a small foretaste of the peace and happiness that will at last envelop the world under the reign of the Messiah- when the sojourn of God’s people in this wicked world at last comes to an end.

John 4:1-42

This portion in the writings of Yochanan is greatly prophetic and full of prophetic messages. The portion opens with a situation where Yeshua is knowledgeable of the fact that the Pharisees are aware of His taught ones immersing more people now, than even Yochanan. So what does He do then?

He left Yehudah and went away again to Galil.

Now Galil, the word itself, carries with it a connotation of “revealing or overturning” also “exile” This situation is as the Words our Master spoke to His taught ones about spreading the Good News: Beginning in Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. To get to Galil, Yeshua has to pass through Samaria! Samaria, historically, was the capital of the Northern Tribes of Israel specifically of Ephraim (who is Joseph).

What do we find there? Jacob’s fountain. In Genesis 49 the prophecy over Joseph spoken by Israel is that Joseph is a fruit-bearing tree, a fruit-bearing tree by a fountain. This is where Yeshua stops to rest. There He has an exchange with a woman of Samaria concerning living water which is also greatly prophetic. Yeshua proclaims to her that He is the living water. The woman desires this living water. Yeshua tells us to go and get her husband.

The woman is the House of Israel, and she tells Him she has no husband (she has been divorced by Yehovah). Yes, she has had lovers – five as Yeshua tells her but even the husband she now has is not her husband. Just as Hosea's wife went after other men, so has Israel. The woman now realizes that Yeshua is a prophet and so this prompts her to ask a question.

She is concerned about the “place” of worship, whether it is on Mt Gerizim or in Jerusalem. Yeshua tells her this issue and difference is about to be of no consequence and tells her that she worships something she does not even know (stranger of the Torah), and that at least the Yehudim worship One they know.

“The scepter shall not turn aside from Yehudah, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to Him is the obedience of peoples.” Genesis 49:10. This scepter means deliverance, which is what Yeshua is speaking of now. Deliverance is to come from Judah... who is Messiah.

After Yeshua speaks to her of the true worship *in that hour*, is not based upon a specific place, but in the Spirit, the Father seeks these to worship Him. Amazingly, this woman of Samaria knows what Yeshua is talking about because she immediately begins speaking to Him about The Anointed One, The Messiah!

Next, He plainly tells this woman, this woman of Samaria (The House of Israel) that HE IS THE MESSIAH! His taught ones returned with food and the woman ran back to her countrymen to tell them about the Messiah. Many returned with her and Yeshua speaks of the sower and reaper and how each one receives rewards in the harvest. The Samaritans ask Yeshua to stay with them and He stays with them two days.

Two days!!! A day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day. This is about 2,000 years right? More accurately a day is 980 years as we now know, so this is 1,960 years to be exact.

There, they indeed proclaimed the Messiah, the Savior of the World!