

Triennial Torah Study – 5th Year 31/01/2015



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

Ex 27	Isaiah 43-45	Ps 147	John 16-17
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The Tabernacle: More Detail in Design (Exodus 26-27)

The word tabernacle comes from a Latin word meaning "tent." The Hebrew word translated tabernacle literally means "dwelling place." It may refer to either just the tent-or to the tent with the surrounding courtyard. In any case, the sense of being portable and temporary is obvious. And this sense of God having a temporary dwelling will continue all the way up to Solomon's time, when the tabernacle is replaced by the temple, a more fixed structure. This later event is seen by many as a foreshadowing of the Kingdom of God-when Christ takes up permanent residence on earth. The time of the tabernacle is thus seen as God inhabiting His people in the fleshly tent of our temporary bodies (compare 2 Corinthians 5:1-4).

In Exodus 26 and 27, we again read of the intricate designing of the Master Builder Himself. Only the finest materials available were used in construction of the tabernacle and its contents. Acacia wood was a light, strong and beautiful wood-durable and resistant to insects and disease-that grew in this region. God was very specific in His instructions for the building of the tabernacle. His instruction to be very precise in following the detailed building plan was repeated. He is the same when it comes to His righteous laws. Mankind is not to add to His laws or take away from them (Deuteronomy 4:1-2; Revelation 22:18-19). Whenever God designs and builds anything, He does so according to a careful advance plan. His creation is not the result of some massive random cosmic explosion with colliding planetoids later accidentally forming a globular mass right where the earth needed to be in the solar system to make it advantageous for human life. Could you imagine reading the words, "In the beginning, God said, 'OOPS'"?

When reading these chapters, take time to appreciate the fine detail of our Creator's perfect craftsmanship. And consider the lesson in Luke 16:10 to see how God judges our character: "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much."

Israel's Redeemer (Isaiah 43:1-44:5)

This section of Isaiah beautifully shows how merciful and loving, even warmly affectionate, our great God is.

We left off in chapter 42 with Israel's obstinate refusal to obey God. "But now," says God in Isaiah 43:1, "...Fear not, for I have redeemed you." God emphasizes that He is the One who created and formed Israel (verses 1, 7, 15, 21; 44:2, 21). He will help them and deliver them, even though they have not relied on Him (43:22). While God declared Himself Israel's "Redeemer" in Isaiah 41:14, it is in chapters 43 and 44 that this concept is discussed in detail.

And the theme is revisited frequently throughout the remainder of the book.

God will demand the release of His people, just as He demanded it from Pharaoh in ancient Egypt (43:6). He will sacrifice other peoples for the sake of His people, particularly the Babylonians (verses 4, 14), just as He did with ancient Egypt (verse 3). Of course, God gave the ultimate sacrifice in the person of Yeshua—for not only Israel but for all people.

God's judgment on other nations in the course of redeeming His people applied in small measure to the fall of ancient Babylon, which allowed the return of a small portion of the Jewish captives to the Holy Land soon after. But there were no great and awesome visible miracles accompanying the ancient return of the exiles as those described in this chapter.

Thus, the prophecy is primarily for the last days.

In Isaiah 11, God explained that He would bring His people back from modern Assyria and Egypt (verse 11). This, He said, would necessitate drying up the Euphrates River for the northern captives and drying up the Red Sea (as in Israel's ancient Exodus) for those returning from Egypt (verse 15). And in chapter 43 we again find mention of this deliverance through these waters (verses 2, 16).

Israel is to serve as witness to the fact that God alone is Savior (verses 10-13). Incidentally, it should be mentioned that some use verse 10—"Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me"—in an attempt to disprove Christ's divinity and to show that there will be no other future divine members of the God family. However, it should be recognized that the word "God" in the verse is *Elohim*—a name that itself denotes a plurality in the Godhead.

Furthermore, *of course* no God could be formed before or after God—for there is *no such time* as before or after God, who is eternal.

Continuing on, God's end-time deliverance of Israel in the second Exodus will be so great that the ancient deliverance in the first Exodus from Egypt will be little thought of (verse 18; compare Jeremiah 16:14-15). God will create the miraculous highway of return in the desert, a route provided for with a lush environment from new springs and rivers (Isaiah 43:19-21). This represents a spiritual reality as well. God will direct the footsteps of His people back to Him spiritually. And this will be accomplished through waters in the desert—representative, as explained in 44:3, of the pouring out of God's Spirit. Indeed, Yeshua mentions "rivers of living water" in reference to the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39).

Sadly, in the meantime, Israel is still given over to unfaithfulness and disobedience—failing even to call on the true God in time of trial. In listing the Israelites' problems, it is stated in Isaiah 43:27 that their "first father sinned." This might be a reference to Jacob, as his name is used in this passage (verses 22, 28). However, Jacob is an example of repentance and it therefore seems odd that he would be meant here. Perhaps the phrase denotes the father of all mankind, Adam, or even the reigning monarch or other national leader (compare 1 Samuel 24:11; 2 Chronicles 29:11). "Mediators" and "princes of the sanctuary" in verses 27-28 refer to the religious leaders. Until Israel repents, the entire nation is given over to punishment—indeed, "the curse," which they have brought on themselves (verse 28; compare Deuteronomy 27:11-26; 28:15-68).

But Israel will yet be the model nation God intended it to be—a right example for the other nations to follow. In chapter 44, God again refers to Israel as “My servant” and “chosen” (verses 1-2)—and even “Jeshurun” (verse 2), a poetic name for Israel meaning “Upright One” (see Deuteronomy 32:15), symbolizing a cleansed and purified people. The people are brought back to God through His granting them repentance and then pouring out His Spirit on them (verse 3). Willow trees, in verse 4, need a great deal of water to be sustained. Just so, God will sustain His people spiritually through a great and steady supply of the Holy Spirit.

No longer will the name of Israel and worship of the Eternal be a reproach as it was in captivity. Indeed, the people will proudly bear the names of Israel and of God (verse 5).

Prophecy of Cyrus—Past and Future Fulfillment (Isaiah 44:24-45:13)

Here we see one of the main reasons that skeptics want to divide the book of Isaiah, claiming that this part could not have been written by Isaiah the prophet—the amazingly accurate prophecy of Cyrus. As with the future Jewish king Josiah (1 Kings 13:2; 2 Kings 23:15-20), here is an instance of someone whose name and deeds are recorded by God long before his birth. Cyrus was the first ruler of the Persian Empire. He was destined to bring down Babylon in 539 B.C. and would issue the decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem (Daniel 1:21; Ezra 1:1-4). The temple and Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed, so this prophecy must have seemed strange indeed (compare Isaiah 44:28).

Herodotus, the fifth-century-B.C. Greek historian, recounts a story of Cyrus’ birth and youth— which is here summarized. Asyages, son of Cyaxeres, the king of the Medes, had a daughter named Mandane, whom he gave in marriage to a Persian noble. Astyages had a dream that this daughter would have a child who would rule in his place, taking over not only his kingdom but all of Asia as well. Astyages feared the prospect of being replaced. So when Mandane had her first child, a son, Astyages ordered one of his servants, Harpagus, to have the child killed. Yet Harpagus didn’t want to commit such a vile act himself and therefore entrusted it to a herdsman named Mitradates. But Mitradates, on discovering that his own child had just been stillborn, decided to rear Mandane’s son as his own.

Later, when the boy was around 10, his true identity became known. The boy’s grandfather, Astyages the Median king, was infuriated. He had Harpagus punished by having the man’s own son killed and then revoltingly served to him at a royal dinner—after which Harpagus secretly vowed revenge. But the king made no move against the boy, who was now recognized as a Persian noble. Later, in 558 B.C., this boy, Cyrus, became a king among the Persians, yet still subject to Astyages’ Median rule. Harpagus encouraged Cyrus to overthrow Astyages. Eventually persuaded, Cyrus launched a coup and led his growing forces to victory. By about 548 B.C. he ruled all of Persia and Media. And in 539 he conquered Babylon, so that the Medo-Persian Empire succeeded the Babylonian Empire. And Cyrus then issued his proclamation freeing the Jews to rebuild the temple, just as God foretold. Perhaps the above story of Cyrus’ close brush with death soon after his birth, if true, represents an attempt by Satan to thwart God’s specific prophecy from being fulfilled. Yet Almighty God will not be thwarted.

Indeed, Cyrus himself worshiped pagan gods. Yet God was still able to use him to fulfill His will. This demonstrates God’s power. Proverbs 21:1 states it well: “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.”

In Isaiah 45:1, God explains how Cyrus would be able to conquer by way of the “double doors” (the “two leaved gates” of the King James Version). This is a reference to the surprising way that Cyrus was able to invade the seemingly impregnable city of Babylon. Indeed, when the armies of Cyrus encamped around the gargantuan city, the Babylonians, looking down from towering walls, merely laughed. They were

certain they could hold out against any siege for many years. But Cyrus' men carried out a remarkable action. The Euphrates River flowed into Babylon through massive gates. So Cyrus had his men divert most of the river by removing ancient dykes that kept it in its course (referred to in 44:27). He also managed to get a spy into the city, who had the inner gates along the river unlocked. Then, in the predawn hours, under cover of darkness, Persian forces waded into the city though the mostly drained riverbed.

Before sunrise, the great city of Babylon was conquered—and all according to prophecy.

It is interesting to consider that in the end-time, the Euphrates River will be dried up “so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared” (Revelation 16:12). As mentioned in the highlights for Isaiah 21, it is likely that the Medes and Persians of the end time (along with other eastern forces) will be instrumental in inflicting a measure of terrible defeat on end-time Babylon prior to the return of Yeshua. Furthermore, Christ will smite the Euphrates in leading the exiles of Israel back to the Promised Land (Isaiah 11:15)—to utterly supplant end-time Babylon's leaders, who will previously have been headquartered in Jerusalem.

Finally, we should consider the picture of Cyrus as a type of Israel's ultimate Redeemer—the Messiah. Indeed, Cyrus is called *Mashiach* (Messiah or “Anointed”) in 45:1. The Hebrew for Cyrus here is *Koresh*. The meaning of the name is debated. In Hebrew this would appear to mean something like “Possess the Furnace.” We can certainly see a tie in to the coming of the Lord as a “consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29; compare 2 Thessalonians 2:8). In Persian the name is Koorush or Korrush. (Cyrus is the Greek form.) The name in Persian is said to mean “sun” or “throne”—although this is disputed. Interestingly, Yeshua is called the “Sun of Righteousness” (Malachi 4:2), in the same context where it is mentioned that “the day is coming, burning like an oven”—that is, like a furnace (verse 1). And of course, Yeshua is to inherit the throne of the earth.

As Cyrus conquered and succeeded ancient Babylon, so will Yeshua conquer and succeed end-time Babylon—yet in a much greater way. Some might see Koresh in Isaiah 44 and 45 as exclusively applying to Christ. Others might view it as exclusively applying to Cyrus. Yet clearly, both deliverances—anciently through Cyrus and in the future through Yeshua—are pictured in this section. It is a miraculous witness to Cyrus himself that God calls him by name (45:3), and this is despite the fact that he has not known God (verse 4). Clearly, this does not refer to Christ. (Interestingly, Josephus relates in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 11, chapter 1, how Cyrus read and was motivated by Isaiah's prophecies about him.) On the other hand, the statements about righteousness being rained from the skies and salvation being brought forth from the earth (verse 8)—that is, the spiritual conversion of Israel and then the world through the pouring out of the Holy Spirit as well as apparently the resurrection of the righteous dead from their graves—is certainly not a reference to the deliverance of Cyrus. Rather, it describes the return of the ultimate Savior.

Some use verse 7 as it is rendered in the King James Version—“I make peace, and create evil”—to argue that God is the author of evil. However, the New King James better renders this last word as “calamity.” God certainly brings calamity on the disobedient. Evil, on the other hand, is any violation of His will. He therefore did not create evil. Again, “calamity” makes much more sense here. So should we then think that every single calamity is from God? Not at all. Frankly, Satan is responsible for much of the evil and calamity that exists in the world. And, tragically, people bring evil or calamity on themselves as a result of unwise personal choices and sin. Further, many people suffer as a result of decisions and actions that others make—such as children who suffer abuse from adults. (For more information on this subject, [request or download our free booklet *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*](#))

So what's the point of the verse in question? One of the fundamental rules of Bible study is to read a difficult-to-understand verse in its context. As explained above, in this section of Isaiah, God is confronting Israel about its corruption with idolatry, pointing out repeatedly how hollow its idolatry is in contrast with who and what He is. That's what He's essentially saying in Isaiah 45:7.

Pick up the context in verse 6: "That there is none besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other." Now, continue on into verse 7: "I form the light and create darkness." The same thought continues in the following phrase: "I make peace and create calamity." Notice the contrast in both cases. God is basically saying: "I can make it light or dark. I can give peace and prosperity or I can bring calamity." In other words, "I can do everything in contrast to your idols, which are incapable of anything." Again, remember the context. God repeatedly says, "I am God; there's nobody like Me."

Finally, God shows His dominion over the creation in general and mankind in particular by picturing Himself as a potter working with clay. Unlike worthless idols, He controls the universe and directs the destiny of man. Yet, it should be noted, He still gives us all free will.

Verse 13 was fulfilled in part when Cyrus freed the Jewish captives, allowing them the choice to return to their homeland, and even issued a proclamation that the temple in Jerusalem should be rebuilt (2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). This decree allowed for the city of Jerusalem to be rebuilt as well—but a major effort to rebuild the city was not made until Nehemiah's later initiative, allowed and aided by King Artaxerxes (who was the son of Xerxes and stepson of Esther, Nehemiah 1-2). Of course, a much greater fulfillment of this prophecy will be when Yeshua—of whom Cyrus was only a type—frees the exiles of the last days and rebuilds Jerusalem as the wondrous capital of the world.

Praise to God for His providential care and Word (Psalms 147)

Psalm 147, the second of the final five Hallelujah Psalms, praises the Almighty Creator and Provider for His special devotion to His chosen nation, thanking Him for gathering Israel's exiles to Jerusalem, blessing them with peace and abundance and teaching them His statutes and judgments. The Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible divides the composition into two separate psalms (verses 1-11, 12-20). However, besides the unity maintained in the Hebrew text tradition and the cohesiveness of the subject matter, it has been argued that there is "a good defense for the unity [of the work] by a careful analysis of the structural components, repetition, and parallelism" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, introductory note on Psalm 147).

Thanking God in a psalm for the gathering of Israel's outcasts (verse 2) would seem to suggest some actual experience of this as a present reality when the song was composed. The return of exiles here is paired with the "building up" of Jerusalem (see same verse), which probably refers to increasing population in addition to the restoration of buildings and institutions. Many commentators believe this psalm was composed following the return of the Jewish exiles from captivity in Babylon, which seems a reasonable conclusion. A number try to further pin down the setting, believing that the reference to Jerusalem's gates being strengthened in verse 13 hints at the work of Nehemiah in rebuilding the city walls and gates.

Some even suggest that this psalm was the one sung at the dedication of the rebuilt walls (see Nehemiah 12:27-43). There is, however, no way to know this, especially as God's strengthening of Zion's gates may be a figurative expression of His protection.

Even with a historical context for Psalm 147, the return of Israel's outcasts should not be limited to the small Jewish return from ancient Babylon. Rather verse 2 is evidently meant in an ongoing sense. As time went on, God would further build up Jerusalem and gather the exiles-including those not only of Judah but of all Israel. As we know from other passages, this would happen in stages. Outcasts of Israel would first return to God in a spiritual sense-the forerunners in this return forming spiritual Zion or Jerusalem. Romans 11 explains that the Israelites were broken off from God's covenant nation for disobedience, yet they would be grafted back in, in a spiritual return, through repentance-along with gentiles who would also become part of Israel spiritually. As also explained in that chapter, those returning are the elect according to grace. And this is a forerunner of a greater return of all Israel in the future-that return being both spiritual and geographic-as shown in numerous prophecies. There is no way to know whether the psalmist himself understood all this-but God, who inspired the psalm, certainly did.

The future gathering of all Israel to the Promised Land will occur when Yeshua returns in power and glory: "For the LORD shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory. He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer. This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD" (Psalm 102:16-18). Psalm 147:3 speaks similarly of God healing the brokenhearted and binding up their wounds-God's most important rebuilding work being within the human heart. In an ultimate sense these words apply to the wonderful time of God's intervention to come. Yet there was a vital measure of application for the returned exiles at the time of the song's composition-and so it is with us today. Indeed, this was part of the mission of the Messiah (Isaiah 61:1-2), and Yeshua has already embarked on this mission (Luke 4:16-21) as He establishes His covenant with a covenant people.

The psalm then abruptly turns to the matter of just who is doing this great work. It is the same One who made the vast universe and who also takes care of it (Psalm 147:4-9). Verses 4-6 are evidently taken in part from Isaiah 40, which mentions God counting the stars and calling them all by name (verse 26), as well as His understanding being unsearchable (verse 28) and His giving power to the weak who wait on Him (verses 29-31). As noted in the Bible Reading Program comments on Isaiah 40:26, the concept of God counting and naming all the stars is staggering beyond comprehension. For given that there are at least a hundred billion galaxies of a hundred billion stars each, naming each star at a rate of one per second would take more than 21,000 times the 15-billion-year age that scientists claim for the universe. "Great [*indeed*] is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite" (Psalm 147:5).

Thus He certainly knows how to care for those in need and render judgment on those who defy Him (compare verse 6). This contrast of verse 6-lifting the humble (tying back to verse 3) and casting down the wicked-parallels statements in the previous two psalms (145:14-20; 146:7-9).

Psalm 147:7-9 calls for thanks to God for not only His creation but for causing life to flourish through His care and provision. Giving food to the animals (verse 9a) recalls God providing for all living things in Psalm 145:15-16. The imagery of feeding the crying young ravens (147:9b) is drawn from God's own words in Job 38:41. As the Bible Reading Program commented on that verse, Job was to understand that God's point was about more than animals. Rather, as Yeshua said to human beings about God providing for the birds, "Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26).

The next verse, Psalm 147:10, should not be taken to mean that God doesn't enjoy horses and their powerful strength or that he is unhappy with His creation of human legs. Rather, these things are elements in which people placed undue trust-horses and the strength and endurance of men's legs being military assets. Consider Psalm 33:16-17: "No king is saved by the multitude of an army; a mighty man is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a vain hope for safety; neither shall it deliver any by its great strength." There is only one reliable source of deliverance: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;

but we will remember the name of the LORD our God” (20:7). The point of Psalm 147:10-11 is that God is not looking for powerful people or armies to prop Him up. He doesn't need that at all. Instead, He wants humble people who realize *their* need for *Him* -who properly fear Him and rely on His *hesed*, His mercy or loving devotion.

For the exiles who returned from ancient Babylon this was a sorely needed message. They were weak militarily and beset by neighboring enemies. God says essentially: “Look, you don't need to be some elite fighting force to be My people. You just look to *Me*, and *I'll* take care of whatever needs to be taken care of.” We see this in the next verses, where the people of Jerusalem are told to praise *God* -for *He* has strengthened their gates, *He* has blessed their children, *He* gives them peace on their borders and *He* abundantly provides them with the best crops (147:12-14).

Verses 15-18 illustrate again God's rule over nature, the imagery in this case being one of winter weather. Stress is put on the elements of creation being immediately responsive to God's commands (verses 15, 18)-a pattern that should be followed by God's people, as implied in verses 19-20. There are perhaps other spiritual lessons here as well. It is hard to bear the bitter cold (verse 17). But in God's time, seasonally, warm breezes come, the cold is broken, ice accumulation melts and water flows (verse 18)-again demonstrating God's providence, and this on His time schedule. This is something to consider when times are hard. Know that there's a point to it and that circumstances will ultimately vastly improve, culminating in refreshment and fulfillment.

Finally, far more important than the physical help and sustenance God has given to Israel is the blessing of His instructions-the code of conduct laid out in His Word. The words in verses 19-20 (coupled with the last verse of the next song, 148:14) echo those of Moses in Deuteronomy 4:7-8: “For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD

our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?” God has not blessed any other nation in this way. In fact, for other nations to participate in this exclusive relationship, they must become part of Israel in a spiritual sense.

Of course, just understanding God's laws is not enough. We must, as the natural realm, *obey* the commands God gives if they are to do us any good. Yet in our case He has given us the choice of whether to obey Him or not. Rejection of God's commands excludes a person from God's chosen covenant nation. Thus, for the returning outcasts, true return to God resulting in His healing and help requires embracing God's laws and living by them. The same applies to us.

John 16

Yeshua continues with His taught ones right before His betrayal that night. He is warning them on what they are to expect from others and to be treated by others. He does not want them to stumble or lose faith. Here our Messiah also gives us the promise of the Helper to be sent to us. The Spirit of Elohim who is to prove the world wrong concerning sin and righteousness and also concerning judgment – because the ruler of this world is judged.

The Spirit of Truth will guide us into all truth and He will speak to us whatever He hears from our Messiah and Yehovah has given all to Yeshua. Yeshua goes on to explain to them concerning the grief they are about to endure but promises them eternal joy directly following. This joy no one shall be able to take away.

In the next verses, Yeshua tells them plainly that when He goes away, and returns to the Father (where He came from), that He will no longer refer to Himself in any way. Why? He is telling them that He and the Father are One. He is Yehovah.

John 17

Footnote from the Scriptures on John 17:

In this High Priestly prayer of Yahusha, He repeatedly emphasizes the Name and the Word of YHWH – see also Tehillim 138:2. He also pleads for unity among His taught ones, His flock. Yahusha is the embodiment of the Word, and of the Truth, and the Word is the truth. Elohim sets us apart if we read the Word the Truth, and do it.

Although the religious leaders were avoiding the Father's Name, because of a man-made tradition, Yahusha was making it known. He is again making it known in our day!