

DAY THIRTY

“GENERATIONAL GROWTH”

PSALM 78:1-16

For the next five days our Counting the Omer reflections are going to be focused on Psalm 78, which can perhaps be considered a condensed version of the history of Ancient Israel: from their deliverance from Egypt to the establishment of David’s reign in Jerusalem. It will probably be beneficial for some of you to take the time to read the entire text of Psalm 78, preparing your hearts to reflect upon its important message(s). (You may even have a study Bible that will point you to other related passages of interest.) Now that we are less than three weeks away from *Shavuot*, the anticipation of the Spring harvest and the opportunity to give thanks, praise, and glory to our Creator at one of the appointed times, **should surely be building in our hearts.**

Hopefully, as you have been Counting the Omer along with me, and have allowed the living waters of God’s Word from the different Psalms to nurture your souls, you will be the recipient of *multiple blessings* as a result of your commitment to seek Him. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that the Lord has commanded us to Count the Omer, because as we reflect on each of the fifty days steadily bringing us to the Feast of Weeks, we would have to focus on Him and His goodness toward us. But before commenting on today’s selection, take the time to focus on the opening verses of Psalm 78:

PSALM 67:1-7

For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us—Selah. That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

PSALM 78:1-16

A Maskil of Asaph. Listen, O my people, to my instruction; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob

COUNTING THE OMER

and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children, that the generation to come might know, *even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children, that they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments, and not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not prepare its heart and whose spirit was not faithful to God. The sons of Ephraim were archers equipped with bows, yet they turned back in the day of battle. They did not keep the covenant of God and refused to walk in His law; they forgot His deeds and His miracles that He had shown them. He wrought wonders before their fathers in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea and caused them to pass through, and He made the waters stand up like a heap. Then He led them with the cloud by day and all the night with a light of fire. He split the rocks in the wilderness and gave them abundant drink like the ocean depths. He brought forth streams also from the rock and caused waters to run down like rivers.*

We are now over half-way completed with our Omer Count toward *Shavuot*, and the daily discipline of considering different Psalms is helping to build my personal anticipation. *So much more* has been learned about various passages from the Holy Writ, which for years have always been places for me to turn for comfort. Each new day, the expectations for fresh understanding create a sense of urgency to arise and dig into the Scriptures for new instruction from the Lord. This morning, Psalm 78 gave me the opportunity to recollect a vast array of historical accounts seen in the Bible. As a child and follower of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the heritage of Israel is a part of who I am to be in Yeshua (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:1). It is something that all Messiah followers must take seriously if we are to fulfill God's mission and purpose for us today.

Like a large number of evangelical Christians who have been drawn by the Lord into the Messianic movement in the past few decades, I did not grow up in a home where the Torah of Moses was being considered on a consistent basis. Instead, fairly typical to most in America, the Christian values, morals, and relative lifestyle of the 1950s and 1960s molded my generation. I am a part of what many sociologists have labeled the "Baby Boomer" generation, people who were born sometime between 1946-1964. As a result, the influences of post-World War II America, the Cold War, the Vietnam War, beatnik/hippie lifestyles, the explosion of Hollywood, media saturation, and the moral declension tied to removing the Bible from the educational system—have all had their influence on me. **Thankfully, by the grace of God, I was born again in 1978**, but not without tasting my share of the offerings of the world, the flesh, and the Devil (cf. 1 John 2:16).

Radical changes occurred in my life, as the Spirit of God began the process of changing me. But as many of you can testify, such a remodeling process following salvation does not come instantaneously. For twenty-seven years, I had inculcated my mind with the fare that the world was dishing up. Coming to faith in Jesus Christ—I, like countless others—had to diligently begin and persist in a retraining of my mind, my attitudes, and my lifestyle. Much later, the Holy Spirit guided me into an appreciation of the Torah when our family fully entered into the Messianic movement in 1995, He soon confirmed that Torah obedience was not just a mere choice, but was expected of me via His commandments to be supernaturally written on my heart (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27). **This was something in which I would learn to greatly delight.** Submitting myself to the

instruction of Moses' Teaching has become a personal passion, as the benefits and blessings of pleasing my Heavenly Father have come forth.

However, as we can be reminded in reading this morning's section of Psalm 78, the challenges that face every generation of humanity, have by no means just been reserved for the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries. Right from the onset of Ancient Israel's deliverance from Egypt, the "Moses generation" was desperately challenged with the inherent difficulty of obeying God with uncircumcised hearts. Psalm 78:8 admonishes,

"[A]nd that they should not be like their ancestors, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God" (NRSV).

As we know, only Joshua and Caleb were actually able to make it into the Promised Land. Was there too much *of Egypt* still in the people of Israel, so that they were unable to make it? We certainly know that when the bad reports came back from the ten spies (Numbers 13), the Ancient Israelites lacked the required faith to see beyond the various physical impediments. But the encouraging message we should take to heart **is that two did have the faith in the Lord** to enter in and take the Promised Land. For any of us currently in the process of *removing the world* from our hearts, there is definitely hope that we too will be able to enter into the Father's full purpose for our lives.

I would submit that you will know just how well you raised your own children, when you see how your grandchildren are raised. If you instill in the next immediate generation the values they need to pass on a life of godliness, then it should be evidenced in how *your children* raise your grandchildren. In so doing, you will actually be fulfilling some of the basic instructions that Moses gave to Israel as he came to the end of his life:

"Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. Your eyes have seen what the LORD has done in the case of Baal-peor, for all the men who followed Baal-peor, the LORD your God has destroyed them from among you. But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you. See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today? Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons. *Remember* the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children'" (Deuteronomy 4:1-10).

Looking at the instruction of Deuteronomy 4:1-10, three important points seem to jump out at me:

COUNTING THE OMER

- Obeying God’s commandments serves as the “wisdom” that His people are to tangibly demonstrate before others (Deuteronomy 4:6).
- The nations of the world are to be in awe of not only the goodness of the Lord, but also recognize the high value of His Law (Deuteronomy 4:9).
- Not only are God’s people to heed His Instruction, but they are to pass its words on to their progeny (Deuteronomy 4:10).

It is incumbent upon all men and women of faith to not only heed God’s commandments, but **to highly value them**. They truly are to be *l’tov l’kha* (לְטוֹב לְךָ), “for your own good” (Deuteronomy 10:13, NIV). But we can only appreciate the value of the Torah, or any part of the Bible for that matter, if we study it and let it mold our hearts and minds. Concurrent with this, if we can recognize our God-given duty to set before our children and grandchildren an upstanding example, we increase the odds that they will continue in a path of righteousness. Simply consider the magnificent blessing of being able to witness your generation, your children’s’ generation, and your grandchildren’s’ generation **all living lives of faithful obedience to the Lord**. This is a major way of how God’s people can really make a concentrated difference for Him, in our fallen world! *Others will come to us and want to know how they can have what we have.*

What do you need to really take before the Lord today, as you Count the Omer? Are you lacking in your obedience to His Instruction? Have you neglected your responsibilities in investing some time and energy in the next generation—whether they be your children, or young people you can influence? Are you sure that your children and grandchildren, and any others who follow after you, will truly be diligent Messiah followers, committed to Him and in living forth the gospel via good works? *Let us make the right choices and see that we bring forth a blessed posterity!*