

DAY THIRTY-THREE

“FORGETFULNESS”

PSALM 78:40-55

This morning my continuation of seeking the face of the Holy One, in Counting the Omer, was greeted with a reminder of how human beings have a common tendency to forget what happened yesterday, and measure others by what they have done in the immediate past. The self-serving egocentric comment, often used by comedians to generate a laugh that sardonically makes the point, is sometimes phrased this way: “What have you done for *me*, lately?” The reality of man’s inclination to primarily be concerned about his current status—without much gratitude for past performance—is a sad observation indeed. Thankfully, for our edification and instruction, the Lord has given us His Holy Word, so that our conscience and our attitudes might be molded to operate *ever more* like Him. However, before we examine some of these predispositions, let us take the time to read and reflect upon the selected verses from Psalms for today:

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 78:40-55

How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness and grieved Him in the desert! Again and again they tempted God, and pained the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power, the day when He redeemed them from the adversary, when He performed His signs in Egypt and His marvels in the field of Zoan, and turned their rivers to blood, and their streams, they could not drink. He sent among them swarms of flies which devoured them, and frogs which destroyed them. He gave also their crops to the grasshopper and the product of their labor to the locust. He destroyed their vines with hailstones and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave over their cattle also to the hailstones and their herds to bolts of lightning. He sent upon them His burning anger, fury and indignation and

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trouble, a band of destroying angels. He leveled a path for His anger; he did not spare their soul from death, but gave over their life to the plague, and smote all the firstborn in Egypt, the first *issue* of their virility in the tents of Ham. But He led forth His own people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock; He led them safely, so that they did not fear; but the sea engulfed their enemies. So He brought them to His holy land, to this hill country which His right hand had gained. He also drove out the nations before them and apportioned them for an inheritance by measurement, and made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents.

The study of history has always been fascinating to me. As long as I can remember, I have always been curious about the past and how I relate to it. For years, my insatiable thirst for knowledge about world history, American history, ancient history, or just about any cultural history—certainly made history the logical choice when it came to choosing a college major. However, driving my thoughts throughout the past, when I took a little time to perform some self-analysis, was the paramount desire I had to know of my own *personal history*.

For years, as a search for truth dominated my heart, questions like: *Who am I? Why am I here? Where did I come from? Who are my ancestors?* and *What am I here for?* permeated my being. Quite naturally, since I always considered myself fairly “normal,” I thought similar questions must be pretty typical for many others as well. For any of you who have followed a similar line of questioning, you will probably concede that the answers are not necessarily the same for each one of us. And, answers to the questions of human existence do not often come instantaneously, either.

In God’s mercy to me, He had someone in 1978 hand me a book, written by Francis Schaeffer, entitled *How Should We Then Live?* For the first time in my life, as I read this book about world history as seen through the grid of Christianity, my mind was illumined with the reality that all of history revolves around the person of Jesus Christ. This Christ-centered perspective was apparently what the Holy Spirit used to move me, at 27 years of age, to finally begin reading “the book I always wanted to read, but never had the time to read”: **the Holy Scriptures**. Within several months, my search for truth culminated in discovering that I was a bankrupt sinner in desperate need of a Savior, and that His work at Golgotha (Calvary) was available to cleanse me and make me a new person. By my personal confession, repentance, and crying out for the mercy offered, I faithfully received forgiveness. *Hallelujah! To Him be the glory!*

Now being born from above, I began to focus my life on getting to know my God. With the Holy Spirit’s indwelling power and comforting instruction, God began to let the Holy Scriptures become my primary historical reference manual. As I and countless others have discovered, the answers to the most profound questions of life are inextricably weaved into the text of Holy Writ. But as I searched the Scriptures for answers, it became apparent that from the beginning of time, that my ancestor Adam and his progeny were humans who had some similar problems with life that I had already encountered. Although their specific details, environments, and timeframes were obviously different, there were enough similarities so that I could certainly identify with their struggles. As I searched and studied and desired to walk in a manner pleasing to my Heavenly Father, I found that the history of Ancient Israel just continued to repeat itself over and over throughout the ages. I concluded that there were not really that many differences between the ways that the sons of

Jacob/Israel and their descendants conducted their lives, and the way many modern men and women operate.

God's desire for His people is to see each of us transformed by His love, and thus empowered to fulfill the greatest commandments within the Torah:

“One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And He said to him, **“YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.”** This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, **“YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”** On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:35-40; cf. Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18).

A lack of love, for God and neighbor, will surely lead to obstinance and disobedience. If we claim to be of the Lord's own, then if we purposefully disobey and ignore His instructions—then do we truly love Him and *know Him*?

It was not until I matured further in my faith that I could understand the full ramifications of Yeshua's words: “All of the *Torah* and the Prophets are dependent on these two *mitzvot*” (CJB). When I finally realized that I was not only born from above, but also a living part of the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), and that the heritage and history of Israel *directly affected* my relationship with God, **things began to substantially change.** I concluded that the Torah and the Prophets were not just records of Biblical history from the ancient past—but were *definitely* for me to take instruction from today. I learned how I would be better able to represent my God in the life I had been given, if I took the study of this Biblical history more seriously.

The progression from a Torah reader to a Torah doer has been interesting to witness. And ironically, I am not doing anything other than what Yeshua the Messiah told His listeners to do, when He was teaching to them in His Sermon on the Mount:

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19).

Amazingly, I had read these verses innumerable times like countless others, and for whatever reasons, I never fully took hold of what He declared. This was not some verse buried deep in the recesses of a somewhat obscure Biblical text like Philemon or Habakkuk, but instead was very close to the front of the Apostolic Scriptures. Even the tired businessman, reaching for his strategically placed Gideon New Testament in his hotel room, might even get this far in his reading of the Gospel of Matthew before falling to sleep. Of course, why it took me so long to finally understand the profundity of these verses and embrace it—or why others have read this and gone on without any serious consideration—is a “mystery” I am still trying to fully consider!¹

In today's selection (Psalm 78:40-55), we are reminded that the Ancient Israelites did not largely seem to “get it,” and to this very day, the same tendency prevails among too many of God's people. We are repeating history, and much of it is due to the fact that we do not understand it. Perhaps this is why God is guiding many Believers back to a consistent

¹ For further consideration, consult the exegesis paper on Matthew 5:17-19, “Has the Law Been Fulfilled?” by J.K. McKee.

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study of the Torah of Moses—that includes not just the reading—**but most importantly the doing.**

We are reminded today of how Ancient Israel's widespread tendency was to rebel and forget what God had done, to test Him, and to not remember His power. Only by a diligent and persistent rehearsal of the truths embodied in the Holy Scriptures, can the dull of hearing be reminded about past sordid history, and break the cycle of disobedience and/or rebellion against the Holy One. In time, as evidenced by the recent resurgence in Torah study and application, I believe He will be faithful to perform His Word and fully restore His people. Furthermore, each of us has to be faithful and committed to truly letting Moses' Teaching inform us as to the worldview of Yeshua and His Apostles, and not let Torah study become an end to itself. We have to be ever-reminded of how “Christ is the culmination² of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Romans 10:4, TNIV).

² Grk. *telos* (τέλος); “**the goal toward which a movement is being directed**” (BDAG, 998) or “*the end to which all things relate, the aim, purpose*” (Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003], 620).