

DAY THIRTY-FOUR

“CONFESSING INIQUITIES”

PSALM 78:56-72

Reflecting upon Psalm 78 for the past four days in our Counting of the Omer, I personally find that its final section now has more meaning. The consistent attempt to gain contextual significance, for the events described, has had a tendency to require a complete reading, before focusing in on the various sections. As I review my thoughts throughout this process, I am reminded that this Psalm in a summary fashion has intentionally, whether subliminally or overtly, required me to consider the history of Ancient Israel. This morning is no different.

Once again the reader is reminded of Israel’s predilection to test and rebel against the Most High. Mention is also made of His reaction to His disobedient—and how He slowly, but surely—lifted His hand of protection over the faithless. However, the instillation of King David culminates Psalm 78 with great hope for the reader to embrace. But before commenting on God’s mercy toward us, please take the time to lift up your voices in praise, and read our verses 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 78:56-72

Yet they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God and did not keep His testimonies, but turned back and acted treacherously like their fathers; they turned aside like a treacherous bow. For they provoked Him with their high places and aroused His jealousy with their graven images. When God heard, He was filled with wrath and greatly abhorred Israel; so that He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh, the tent which He had pitched among men, and gave up His strength to captivity and His glory into the hand of the adversary. He also delivered His people to the sword, and was filled with wrath at His inheritance. Fire devoured His young men, and His

COUNTING THE OMER

virgins had no wedding songs. His priests fell by the sword, and His widows could not weep. Then the Lord awoke as *if from sleep*, like a warrior overcome by wine. He drove His adversaries backward; He put on them an everlasting reproach. He also rejected the tent of Joseph, and did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved. And He built His sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which He has founded forever. He also chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands.

When I initially considered this final section of Psalm 78 during the week, my mind resonated with two contrasting elements of the Almighty and His relationship to His people. The concepts of judgment and grace were evidenced, as further historical data was recalled about the history of Israel. However, as I have also been looking at this week's Torah portions (2004: *B'har-B'chuqotai*, Leviticus 25:1-27:34) with great expectation, my meditations on these *parashot* had a striking influence on me considering today's Psalm reflection (Psalm 78:56-72).

Most important, as I have been devoting the time to Count the Omer for the past thirty-four days, I have not forgotten my commitment to write my weekly TorahScope commentaries as well. Conducting these disciplines together, while a bit demanding on my time, has nonetheless been a delight. For the past few weeks I have noticed many times that things being contemplated, in my Omer Count reflections, were to some degree being thematically considered in the weekly Torah portion. This week we have been instructed about the requirements to give the Land of Israel its Sabbath rest, and instructions about observing the jubilee year (Leviticus 25). Considering these things, I personally saw some parallels between the annual instruction to Count the Omer and the cycles to let the Land of Israel have its rest. This morning as I once again read through our Psalm, a word in the text leapt out at me. I had some angst in my heart when I read that God actually began to "abhor" the people of Israel:

"When God heard, He was filled with wrath and greatly **abhorred** [utterly rejected, RSV] Israel" (Psalm 78:59).

The Hebrew verb *ma'as* (מַאֲסָה) has a variety of meanings; it is "A verb meaning to reject, to despise, to abhor, to refuse. The primary meaning of this word is to reject or treat as loathsome...A secondary and more rare meaning of the word is to run or flow" (AMG).¹ These are not at all actions that anyone would want the Lord to direct toward them. In Leviticus 26 the verb *ma'as* is used in the context of Israel rejecting the Lord:

"[I]f, instead, you **reject** [*ma'as*; spurn, RSV; loathe, CJB] My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, *and* so break My covenant" (Leviticus 26:15).

Here in the Torah, the Lord describes many of the judgments that will be meted out to Israel, as a consequence of its potential disobedience and rejection of His commandments. If you look through Leviticus 26:16-39, you will encounter some rather sobering and severe descriptions of the judgment imposed upon Israel. However, there is still hope for a solution, as God promises restoration for those who will turn to Him in repentance:

¹ Baker and Carpenter, 562.

DAY THIRTY-FOUR

“If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me—I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies—or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land. For the land will be abandoned by them, and will make up for its sabbaths while it is made desolate without them. They, meanwhile, will be making amends for their iniquity, because they **rejected** [*ma’as*] My ordinances and their soul abhorred My statutes. Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not **reject** [*ma’as*] them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD” (Leviticus 26:40-45).

Years ago, when I first spent some considerable time in this passage, I was very excited about the prospect of possibly fulfilling what it says to do. Yet, experience has taught me that it will probably be a while longer before we fully see it accomplished, as it will doubtlessly involve the further growth and maturation of today’s steadily-expanding Messianic movement. Most critical, to be sure, is that each one of God’s people must have a humbled heart (Leviticus 26:41b), and desire to make amends for any sin or iniquity present in their lives.

Is it possible that the circumcised heart of flesh that is promised by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as a part of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27), is even better than a humbled uncircumcised heart when it comes to asking for forgiveness? The unfortunate predicament is that many of today’s Believers, who really do possess new hearts which have been circumcised and filled with the Holy Spirit—are ignorant of the words of God’s Torah. Can you imagine what would happen if those hearts—who are already confessing their own *personal* sins on a regular basis—began to realize that further repentance is needed? How much is required to see His Kingdom restored?

As we meditate and reflect upon who we are in the Lord, **we have much to be thankful for**. Exciting things await the people of God in the future via the growth and expansion of our Messianic faith community, as we prepare ourselves to be used by Him to accomplish great deeds, and witness the restoration of all Israel come forth!

In about two short weeks, our Omer Count will be completed and we will all celebrate the Feast of Weeks. I do not know about you, but I am getting excited. ***I want all of Him!***