

Free - Take One



Shaqah

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

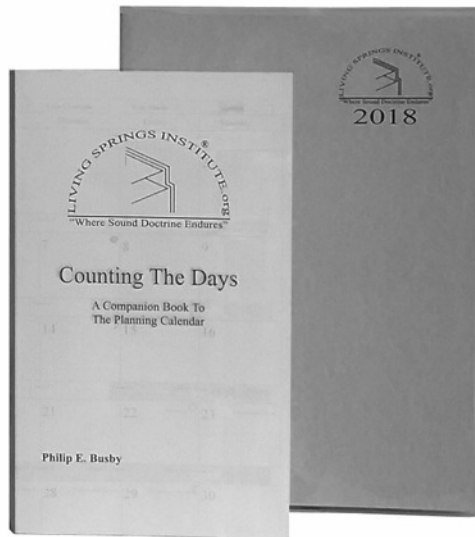
Issue #93 LP

www.livingspringsinstitute.org

November & December 2017

Step Into the Springs!

For the tenth year, Living Springs Institute has published its daily planning calendar that gives you the Biblical calendar alongside the calendar most of us use. However, this year the long awaited companion book is finally set to join it! This new book's title is *Counting The Days*, and it is a far more comprehensive look at the calendar God shows us in His Word than the daily planning calendar could contain all by itself. With the information found in *Counting The Days* alongside the calendar which you can use and refer to every day, one can gain a real understanding of how the calendar God gave to His chosen nation was to be followed and observed in a true day by day way!



calendar is a great Biblical education product, but even if you do not use such a calendar, *Counting The Days* is still a book you're going to want to read. With a full example calendar in the back, this

book is a great way to learn about the Biblical/Jewish calendar all by itself. *Counting The Days* is an overall teaching about the calendar and feasts God gave in the Law, but more specifically, it teaches the how and why God set up a calendar that contains distinct events, all of which prophesy about

God's plan for our existence. It covers what each event prophesies about, why there is a Biblical and Jewish calendar, and much more!

Now, by no means is Living Springs a ministry backed by a lot of money, so it is only by the mighty grace of God we are able to not only offer the

We have always felt the planning



2018 daily planning calendar once again, but you can also receive a copy of *Counting The Days*, and both are FREE! To order your free copy(s) of the 2018 planning calendar and/or *Counting The Days*, you can simply write, e-mail, or visit us online. For online orders, just go to www.livingspringsinstitute.org, click on the “Resource Shop” button, order the 2018 calendar and/or *Counting The Days*, and type your mailing information into the lines provided on that form. To order more copies than the form allows please use the comment box. If you are using e-mail, send your request to: resources@shaqah.com. If you’re using regular mail, write to us at: Living Springs Institute, P.O. Box 271, Loveland, CO 80539. Just tell us you would like the 2018 calendar and/or *Counting The Days*. Be sure to give us your physical mailing address, and your order will be on its way as soon as we can process it!

Of course, if you are a regular mail subscriber to this publication, you should have received one of the calendars with this issue of *Shaqah*, and it was our hope you would also receive the book. However, as of the writing of this issue the book is still in the process of being printed and may not be released in time. If that is the case, your book will be mailed as soon as they become available. On that note, I would like to remind everyone that it does save us on postage to send more than one calendar or the book and calendar in the same

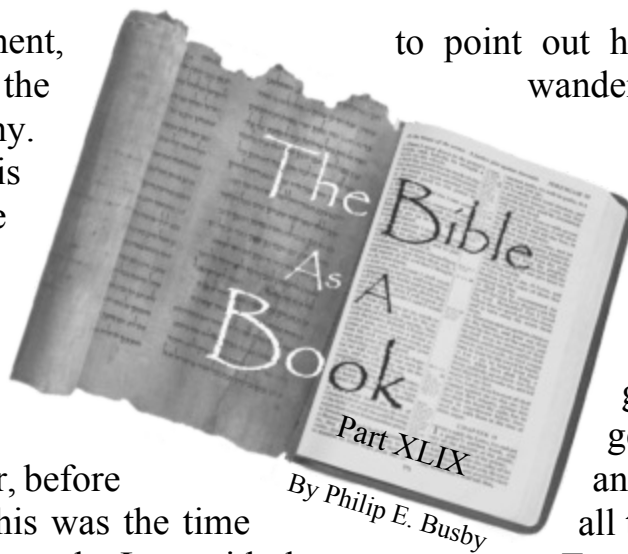
package. If you would like more copies of the calendar or book, please let us know so we can send your order all at once! We would also like to send calendars and books to all of our e-mail subscribers, but we don’t necessarily have your current physical mailing address. Your calendar and book is waiting for you, so be sure to contact us, and put in your order today!

For those of you who may never have ordered anything from Living Springs, know that ordering will not put you on any mailing list! Living Springs is happy to send people only what they request. Thus, we want to remind everyone that we also offer other teaching products, and all for free! If you would like a free subscription to this publication (*Shaqah*), don’t forget to make that request when you write. We also produce a PDF version of the calendar, along with many other materials in PDF, which you can download from our website at anytime.

In closing, I just want to say thank you, and please remember to share Living Springs Institute with others so they too may learn and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! God bless, and we pray you will be blessed by this issue of *Shaqah*!

In our last segment, we began our look at the Book of Deuteronomy. We talked about how this book is truly the chronological end of the Torah, and Israel had made it to that point where they were ready to enter the promised land. However, before Moses left this world this was the time for him to stop and go over the Law with the new generation that would enter the land. He wanted to make sure they understood the Law was for them to keep and observe once in the land just as much as it had been during the time of traveling the wilderness. This was very important due to the fact this new generation had really only known traveling in the wilderness and living in a cohesive camp. This was true especially for the youngest of them who would be the ones to settle on the land and guide its affairs. They had not really known the slavery in Egypt, nor had they known what it was to not be nomadic, but that was about to change!

Verse 1 of chapter 1 gives us some names of places that clearly show us Israel had not moved out of the area on the east side of Jordan to where they had come and stayed during the latter parts of the book of Numbers. It also makes clear the words you are about to read are the words Moses spoke to the entire nation after leading them to this point over these many decades. However, verse 2 quickly points out what a relatively short journey it could be from the mountains where the nation was given the Law to the place where they were at when God wanted the nation to originally enter the land. This is



to point out how much the decades of wandering before they got here was all due to the choices of the nation and not a geographical reality. This is not just more of an impactful point to those who may not have a good grasp on the geography of this region, and might think after reading all that has come before in the Torah it would simply take a very long time to journey from a place like Egypt to where Israel was to go, this is for the children of Israel. In wandering for all those years, it might have seemed to this new generation they now stood in a place very far removed from where their parents had started this journey and been made a true nation by God giving this Law, but they were not. In truth, it would only take a normal traveler far less than a month to transverse this same distance!

The next verse compounds this thought as it points out Moses speaks these words in the fortieth year after Israel left Egypt. We know it was near the end of that year, as we are told it was the first day of the eleventh month. The continuing verses also make clear it is after Israel had seen the success God could give them in defeating their enemies by taking the land they had taken, that Moses goes over all God had given the nation to follow. However, Moses goes on to remind them of the original path God intended the nation to take as it was not the long way around the south end of the Dead Sea to the east of Jordan like they had done. This land on the east of Jordan was not part of what God originally planned the nation to take, at

least not first off. The original path was one that led them right up out of the Sinai Peninsula and northward into the south end of Canaan, taking the land between the Dead Sea and Jordan River and the coastline of the Mediterranean.

In the next set of verses, we see the point made clear about how much this rehearsing of the Law is a condensed version of the events which are recorded in more detail in the previous books of the Torah. We see Moses telling how the nation came not to really be ruled by him but by distribution of responsibility throughout the nation. This is a truth that did not come about all at once, but step by step as decisions were made on the basis of what Moses could bear. The nation would want a king one day, but right here Moses is showing them how much they already know that one man cannot be responsible for such a great number of people. If Moses could not really do it, who could? On top of that, God had blessed Israel in making them an even greater number of people than what they were when they came out of Egypt, and the nation would continue to grow even bigger! This emphasizes how much Israel did not and should never depend on a king, but always keep these Laws of God as individuals. This was the only way for them to be the nation of people God had formed them to be.

Verse 19 is where Moses begins to remind them in more detail how much this should have been a short trip after receiving the Law in the mountains of Sinai, and how they had been given a chance to see what a foreboding wilderness the rest of the peninsula was. This should have been enough for them to, at the very least, not desire to go into that wilderness to live, and make an attempt to obtain a livable land by trusting

God and going up into the promised land. Nevertheless, after Moses sent the twelve spies up into the land to give the nation a firsthand report as to what a good land it truly was, the people only became fearful of the Canaanites and would not trust God could give them the land. They even used the excuse God had brought them up to be killed because He hated them instead. Moses reminds them of how he tried to plead with the nation not to lack in trust, and reminded them of the mighty way God had already demonstrated He could defeat their enemies and lead them forward taking care of their every need. However, none of this changed their minds, and it was this that caused God to send them into the wilderness instead.

Moses had never doubted God, but after coming through this grueling forty year stay in the wilderness, he had borne the burden of the nation far too long. Thus, Moses would wrap even himself in this mix as he tells of how God had determined none of the adult generation that had come out of Egypt would possess the land, due to their doubts. The only exceptions would be Caleb, who had not doubted God, along with Joshua, who would now take Moses' place as the one to lead them forward. By deliberately speaking to them as if all this had been done directly by them and not their parents, Moses goes on to remind the people of how they changed their minds after hearing God's judgment and chose to rebel in the opposite way by going up and attempting to take the land. Upon this, Moses had warned them God would not be with them at this point but they went anyway and were defeated like people being chased by a swarm of bees. Thus, it would be true that the very children they originally believed would end up being slaves to the people of Canaan would take on the responsibility of capturing and possessing the

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment we made it to the point where Lot and his family was headed to Zoar, and after making it there God brought the destruction upon the rest of the cities and valley He told Abraham, and the angels had told Lot God would bring. We also covered how Lot's wife looked back and turned to a pillar of salt, which Lot and his daughters had no choice but to leave behind. In all this discussion we talked a lot about the difference between forgiveness and salvation. Lot had been forgiven for asking to go to Zoar instead of just following God's will that he go to the mountains, but if we are going to continue to walk in faith we must each choose to allow God to mold us no matter what mistakes God may have forgiven us for in the past. All this brought us through Genesis chapter 19 verse 29, and we are ready to pick up at that same verse here.

One point we did not have space to really cover about verse 29 in our last segment is the fact we touched on many times, about how Abraham was the real reason Lot was shown this grace by God. It was Abraham's righteousness that led to Lot being warned, but as we talked about, it was still each individual's decision as to if they would listen. This is shown predominantly in the fact Lot's wife did not make it to Zoar with her husband and two daughters! Lot had attempted to warn other family members who did not even leave with them to begin with, and, of course, were lost.

However, in spite of the fact Lot's wife had gone with him in leaving Sodom, her disobedience to the instructions they were given still resulted in her death. This meant Lot and his daughters would enter Zoar just the three of them. Due to the righteous intervention of others, we may be warned in cases when we would not have been, but only those who obey God's voice will be saved!

Now, verse 30 is where the chronological sequence of Lot's life gets jumbled from the surrounding story line of Abraham. This is due to something we have talked about before but haven't covered for a while now, and that is the fact God's Word was written not so everything is chronological but so all the important facts get covered in a clear manner. This causes us to see places, such as we have here, where verses may reach out and cover quite a bit of time just to finish a story line, the bits and pieces of which would be confusing to insert later in a more chronological way. Thus, what verse 30 tells us is Lot went up or out of Zoar. In other words, he left Zoar, which is important to understand because we need to be clear he and his daughters did make it to Zoar, and in time not to be consumed during the destruction of Sodom, Gomorrah, and the surrounding area. However, how long he stayed is totally unclear. On the other hand, why he left is told to us, and that fact was because he was afraid to continue living there. We can look

at this different ways. We can say that in seeing the destruction God brought to the valley, Lot was shaken because it was greater than he expected. In witnessing this, he might have realized just how serious God was about the corruption in these cities and decided he would be better off living where God told him to go in the first place, which was the mountains.

One could also say that in seeing the power of the destruction, what we talked about last time came into the matter, and Lot realized a life in a city where all the surrounding agriculture and supporting industries had been destroyed was not going to be as comfortable as he thought. The problem with this second thought is the fact we are told Lot was afraid. It was not just comfort or the lack there of that caused Lot to leave. Thus, if we go with the first explanation, the “fear” Lot felt would be fear of God on the basis of the fact he had been told why this would come before the destruction ever came! This would be the best thought in that it would tie into what we talked about concerning salvation. Lot had a change of heart and repented of the sin of even asking to come to this place to live, and attempting to serve God in fear and trembling, Lot chose to turn back to what God told him was right. (Phili. 2:12)

As much as I'd like to accept that and move forward, I have to say there is little in Lot's past character that might imply he would make such a move. This in no way means it's untrue, but it seems a little strange God didn't mention anything in the text about this fear being a fear of God. There is no indication this was done out of a heart of repentance, service, or obedience

to God in anyway. Not only that, but the following words give us a fairly grim picture of Lot's life in the mountains, which would indicate he did not continue to follow God and be blessed once again as he had been before. I'm not saying God would necessarily bless Lot, because the blessings of this life are not a guarantee for those who follow God. However, it would seem Lot had, either during the destruction or before it, lost a great amount which there was not time or a way to save from the destruction. We should remember the fact he and Abraham parted ways and Lot chose to go into the valley because not just Abraham, but both Lot and Abraham had so many cattle, servants, etc. they could not stay in the same location without conflict arising.

The way this conflict ended was by Lot moving not just his family, but more importantly his household operations to the valley. It was not important in any way for Lot to leave Abraham's side and not return and/or commune on a regular basis, only that their herdsmen did not have to strive over the same wells of water, grazing land, and the like. However, Lot did leave Abraham behind in the hills, and this is one of the main factors in the words here jumping over time and wrapping up the details of what became of Lot's life. Lot's more immediate family members would not predominantly interact with Abraham and his immediate family. Due to this, it would not be until much later when Lot's descendants, as well as Abraham's, were better described as nations that we again see important interaction between the two families. All this would indicate Lot's fear was not based on getting his life on track for serving The Lord. If it had been, why did he

and Abraham not seem to cross paths or have anything worth mentioning happen between them again?

Sadly, what the more likely explanation of Lot's fear was that he feared the people in Zoar, and there were some real reasons for this. First off, Lot was not a total stranger in this region. As we covered in talking about the earlier verses, Lot was one of the men who sat at the gate of Sodom. It is highly unlikely Lot was not known by many people in Zoar, especially those who came to do business in Sodom. If Lot continued any time period after leaving for the valley to hold on to the wealth God had blessed him with, Lot would be even better known, because doing business with a man in the area who had such wealth would be widespread. The fact Lot sat at the gate of Sodom also means those in Zoar knew Sodom, not Zoar, was Lot's home. The fact he and his daughters show up just before the destruction of everything else surrounding the city is a fact that could not have gone unnoticed by the people of Zoar! They may or may not have known that Lot was spared specifically or why, as we do not know how much he or his daughters ever told about their experience. However, there they were, the only survivors of the destroyed region!

This fact, no doubt, did not set well with many people in Zoar. They did not have to know he was specifically spared by God to look at him with despise. Many times we see people ask the question of why did this person survive a certain event and not my family member or someone I

cared about? It seems to be just human nature to ask this, and it is another indication we all know there is a God. Why? Because so many have that immediate feeling that there was some kind of higher power who either guided the outcome to be what it was, or it, at the very least, failed to act and make it come out differently! You can say there is no God or that you don't believe The God of the Bible is The True or Only God, but having the feelings that lead to asking such a question shows you want to reach out to some higher power. It does not matter whether you want to reach out due to anger and hate, or for comfort and answers, it's all the same when it comes to the argument we recognize and all know there is, in fact, a God!

Because God does not guide every event in a finite way like some people believe (and don't be fooled, more people than will admit it believe, whether consciously or not) bad things do happen, even to good people. We have talked about this many times. God put the world in motion, and if sin had never entered the world God would be in every step we took to guide and protect us. However, once sin came into the picture, God was pushed away from such an intimate walk, and the only way to experience it now is to do all we can to clean our lives of the sin that keeps Him away. The only way to do this is to constantly seek Him, for there are no magical ceremonies that bring Him; and even if we do all we can, we must still understand we live in a world filled with sin where God, outside of taking on human flesh as Jesus did, cannot walk with us so

closely. Even The Holy Ghost cannot be constantly with us in the way God intended in the beginning, but this is why worrying about death is not something we need to do. God has made a way for all those who seek Him to be gathered to Him in a place where all this will be possible once again. We just have to want to make it to that place, for that reason, and we show we want to go for that reason by our constant seeking of it in the here and now! (Matt. 6:33)

Getting back to Lot's situation, again there is no indication in these or later verses that Lot moved to the mountains for this reason or that he continued to care about the things of God in his life. There is one small reference in the New Testament to the fact Lot was a righteous man, but in the context of that verse this is little more than a way of pointing out an individual, who is a good person, is going to have their good nature vexed on a continual basis by those around them when they live among sinful people. (II Pet. 2:6-22) This is not saying Lot sought God in all he did by any means, and considering Lot did not have to stay in such a place, just the opposite is indicated. Thus, what we are told is that out of fear Lot and both his daughters, who were very clearly still unmarried, went up and lived in a cave, and the most plausible explanation for this is that they feared the people left in the valley!

Living in a cave is remarkable for a man who wanted the comforts of a city; so one small point I will stop to also make here is that when evolutionists point to the idea that men living in caves is proof of an earlier state of human evolution, it's laughable. Lot was a man very accustomed to

the good life, and while this was no doubt a step down in his mind, it shows how even a man like him did not take the time to try and build a house or the like in these mountains. This was true even in light of the fact Lot had two daughters to take care of. Simply put, there were/are plenty of caves in the mountains of this region very suitable for living in. Lot found one he liked or felt would be a convenient place to live and used it as their home.

Because these verses only reach out through the time line to show us those events important to the main story line of the history the Bible is giving us, we are not told how Lot's life ended. As far as we know Lot lived the remainder of his life in that cave. One thing we know for certain is that unlike the prodigal son, he did not return to Abraham. (Luke 15:11-32) This would seem to be a dismal state for Lot, but he simply accepted the circumstances his life choices had led him to. This is further enforced by the fact that in the next verse Lot's daughters agree in the thought the older of the two verbalizes. That, being the idea no man was ever going to marry them. This attitude probably had a lot to do with the facts of why they had left Zoar as well. These two women did not believe their father had any connections left that would arrange for them to be given to any man in the region. This is just another sign they did not commune with Abraham, who could no doubt have helped in this matter; this led the two to believe their father would die without an heir to his name. As we talked about, we do not know how many children Lot might have had, but since none of them followed Lot in leaving the cities that were destroyed, the daughters knew all the rest of

What About God's Chosen People?

Part XXIII

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

“Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people.”

In continuing our look at the chosen nation's history, we ended last time by coming to the point where one of the very last rulers in the Hasmonean Dynasty, Hyrcanus II, had been appointed Ethnarch of Judea by the Roman powers, but how the “founder” of the Herodian Dynasty, Antipater I, was really the one making the decisions having been appointed Roman Procurator and the one Hyrcanus II listened to for almost everything. We also talked about how Antigonus II, who was Hyrcanus II's nephew and last remaining son of the brother Hyrcanus II had long fought with for the Hasmonean throne, was not pleased with this situation. Antigonus II believed the Hasmonean Dynasty should be a far more sovereign authority over Judea in spite of the rising power of Rome, which had by this point all but taken full control over the land!

To understand all this a little better it might help to know what it meant for Hyrcanus II to be appointed Ethnarch over Judea by the Romans. For an example, we covered last time the fact the king of those living to the south of Judea, known as the Nabataeans, lost his sovereignty in becoming a vassal state after the Romans move in to take the territory, but he was allowed to remain the “king,” nonetheless.

This meant he was the one making and executing the laws in his territory as long as he paid the taxes Rome demanded and understood the Romans had overriding authority in any matter they chose to intervene in. On the other hand, Hyrcanus II being appointed as an Ethnarch could be looked at as a step down from even being considered the governing authority over Judea because this term, in truth, refers to the idea such a person is only the ruler over a certain ethnic group. This meant Hyrcanus II was the one who could lead the Jews as a people, but when it came to him being any authority over the land and other groups of people living on it, this title indicated he had no power over such matters.

As Antigonus II was looking for his family's dynasty to have even more sovereign control over the land of Judea than the Nabataean king was left with, the fact his complaint to the Romans about his uncle not holding as much power as Antipater I, only resulted in his uncle's solidification as being the ruler over the Jews as a specific people was a real slap in the face! On top of all this is that it's hard to believe Antigonus II's complaint was intended to help his uncle at all. It would seem to have been only a first step in getting the Romans to verify they still saw the Hasmoneans as rulers of the region. If he could have accomplished that, there can be little doubt Antigonus II's next political move would have been to make his case to the Romans that he would be the better ruler

and make him the king of Judea in his uncle's place. Since none of this fell the way Antigonus II had wanted, his only recourse to gain power was to lead an all-out rebellion, which he would eventually do.

However, before we get to that let's take a moment to appreciate how much Hyrcanus II's appointment as Ethnarch goes very much in line with what we have discussed about God wanting the Jews to not worry so much about secular power and instead focus on living the Laws God had committed to them. We see at this time yet another example of how much there was an opportunity to do just that, in the fact no matter who the Romans might use to be the governor over the area, Hyrcanus II was being given authority by the Romans to determine how Jews conducted their affairs in spite of what such a governor might want. While it's sad the Jews did not have more direct control over their land, it was a truth that no one living in territory within the boundaries of a powerful empire (such as the Romans) considered theirs was going to have complete sovereignty. At the same time, few people were recognized as a special enough group to warrant the appointment of a specific leader that made them an entity within the empire based not on where they lived but on what ethnic group they were a part of. The Jews were being given just such a privilege, and this gave them room to live God's Laws without more local Roman authorities having any power to dictate cultural ways to them.

When one looks back on the history of what led up to the events of Hanukkah, where the Greeks had tried to destroy the Torah and outlaw the following of it, one

should be able to see what a special blessing from God this actually was. It should also clarify some other very important aspects of the New Testament's story, in particular that of the life of Christ! We've talked about how the Sanhedrin was the religious rulership of the days Jesus walked this earth, but it's important to look at it from the more official Roman perspective as well. The Romans saw these religious leaders as the authority over the Jews as a people throughout the empire. While subject to many Roman laws, the autonomy they actually had to do what they wanted when it came to making laws Jews had to follow and appropriate punishment for failing to do so was amazing. This should bring a whole new light to Pilot's attitude when we see these leaders bring Jesus to him for trial! When it came to him dealing directly with Jewish people, the only thing Pilot would expect to have to intervene in was matters of insurrection directed against Rome in some way, which, of course, would include general civil unrest if it was to come about.

At the time of Jesus' trial Pilot had no indication anything rising to such a level was on the horizon anymore than the Romans had come to generally expect from the Jews, which is the only reason Pilot was even in Jerusalem at that moment. Pilot could not have cared less if Jesus was the "King of the Jews" as long as Jesus was not intending to use that title to lead an uprising against Rome. Why would he have such a complacent attitude toward the Jews hailing Jesus as their King? It was in no small part because decades earlier Caesar had recognized the Jews were very passionate about being, well, "Jewish." The Romans were not ignorant of the Greek's attempt to

take what this meant away from the Jews during those lead-up events to Hanukkah. While the Romans had their laws they expected all their subjects to abide by, they did not see an advantage in forcing their culture on the Jews, especially if such a move was going to create unrest. Make no mistake about it, I'm not trying to say the Romans were a peaceful people, but they had seen previous Jewish rebellion against powers like the Greeks as helpful to their cause. Thus, Rome saw no need to stir up the same kind of trouble among the Jews when they practically had the freedom to walk right in and make this area another slice of the ever growing Roman pie!

Jumping back to the time period we are covering right now, this is why when Antigonus II complained about his uncle's lack of authority, Caesar granted protection to what he thought was important to Jews and solidified Hyrcanus II as Ethnarch instead of governor, king, or the like. Rome was not going to give up this territory to a sovereign power, and there was no doubt in Caesar's mind that Antipater I's family was the far more capable and compatible ones to work with when it came to Roman interests in the region. That's why he named Antipater I Procurator. All this being the case, Caesar was granting the greatest gift to the Jews he felt there was room to give. He was making it crystal clear no matter who Rome trusted their interests to in the region, such authorities' control was not to be used to keep Jews from continuing to be Jews! This is simply where we see no meeting of the minds. Antigonus II might have been satisfied in the end if he had been named Rome's authority over the area, but he

would not stand by while Rome not only make Judea a vassal/tributary state putting a non-Jewish bloodline in charge of the secular affairs and leaving his family only over those things Jewish.

One more element we have touched on before but needs to be kept in mind here is that in the Roman mind the Idumaeans were practically Jewish just as any real blood born Jew, and this was because of earlier actions that forced Idumaeans to take on the Jewish culture. In this way, Hyrcanus II being over all things Jewish put him over Antipater I in at least certain aspects, so Caesar saw no problems in this arrangement. The problem was that both the Idumaeans and the Jews knew the difference. What is not clear in all this is whether Hyrcanus II had much understanding of just what an opportunity his appointment was to focus on God's ways in the lives of the chosen nation. History does not give us enough information to know if Hyrcanus II was really acquiescing to Antipater I in religious matters or simply leaving secular affairs to him and not attempting to hide that fact from the Jewish people. In the end, it doesn't matter. Antigonus II would make certain Rome came to an understanding that many Jews simply would not be satisfied with such an arrangement.

In the midst of this, Rome also continued to have its share of internal problems leaving the central government weak, and when Caesar returned to Rome in 45 B.C. he was able to hold power for the most part, but at the same time was not liked by many in Rome, in no small part due to the

events of the civil war. This came to a head as Caesar was assassinated at a meeting of the senate in 44 B.C. Before his death Caesar had written a will proclaiming his grandnephew Gaius Octavius his principal heir. Octavius along with Mark Antony and Marcus Lepidus formed the second Triumvirate, which would defeat Caesar's assassins. From there they would rule as military dictators, each in control of their piece of the Roman territories the boundaries between which were never truly a settled matter. It would be during this time period Antipater I would meet his demise at the hands of a man who despised him, who finally bribed one of Antipater I's cup bearers to poison him. However, all this would do is assure the rise of his sons, Phasael and Herod, which Antipater I had already positioned them to do.

If we can put all this together, the history is basically this, during his lifetime and control over Judea, Caesar had angered the Jewish people with his high taxes and other policies. This anger, generally directed at Rome as a whole, did not go away upon Caesar's death. The time after Caesar's death being, once again, one of uncertainty for Rome, Antigonus II would make his attempt to lead a revolt and take the Judean throne in 42 B.C. This was an unsuccessful attempt which only furthered Herod in the eyes of Rome, as Herod is credited with putting down this revolt. In 41 B.C. Mark Antony solidified Herod and his brother Phasael in the positions their father Antipater I had granted them, by officially naming them Tetrarchs. However, among the Jews Antigonus II had furthered his case as someone to support, especially among the upper classes and top leaders of the

Pharisees. The Parthians would also not let Rome's instability go to waste as they desired to see an anti-Rome leadership in the region of Judea, and this opened the door for Antigonus II to bribe them into helping him take the throne, which they agreed to as they invaded the region in 40 B.C.

With 500 Parthian soldiers put at his disposal, Antigonus II would attack again, and this time he would have success. We are told that he intentionally mutilated his uncle Hyrcanus II's ears in order to disqualify him from ever being the High Priest again. As if this was not enough to solidify Antigonus II as the only remaining qualified heir to the Hasmonian throne, he also exiled his uncle by making him a prisoner of the Parthians who would take him to Babylon. There Hyrcanus II would be given every respect by the Jewish population. Back in Judea, Phasael was so afraid of falling into Antigonus II's hands he committed suicide, but Herod held out and escaped to Petra. When the Nabataeans refused to get involved, Herod went to Rome. This is where we would begin to see just how intertwined the Hasmonean rule was to the true successful rise of the Herodian Dynasty. Herod would not ask that he be restored to power but that Hyrcanus II be returned to power. Rome had been the ones making the decisions as to which Hasmonean should have power, and surely they would not let Antigonus II's forceful takeover go unchallenged. What Herod found was that Rome was not really in the mood to deal with another Judaen dispute in power. Thus, the Roman senate actually named Herod "King of Judea," some say, "King of the Jews."

Herod would be pleased by this, but unlike the Romans, he knew this would not be simply accepted by the Jews. As all this was happening, Roman forces were driving the Parthians back home, and a portion of those troops now stood ready to help Herod as he returned to Judea to win back what he saw as his kingdom. In the spring of 38 B.C. Herod won back control over the northern region of Galilee and began working his way south until he basically had control over everything but Jerusalem itself. Antigonus II did not give up and continued counter striking in all the ways he could. Herod desired to hold Jerusalem under siege, but winter put plans for an all-out assault on hold. As winter cleared, Herod would begin his full assault using Roman troops and tactics. Antigonus II and his Jewish forces would continue to do all they could to hold the city and hinder Herod's efforts. Antigonus II would reinforce his support among the Jews by pointing out that Herod was not Jewish and had no right to the throne. Herod understood this was going to be a problem in his long-term acceptance as king, and that's why he went through with marrying into the Hasmonian Dynasty by taking Hyrcanus II's granddaughter named Mariamne I to be his wife. Herod already had a wife and son, but he would banish both of them in an all-out attempt to convince as many Jews as possible he had a claim.

As the Roman troops began to see success in breaking through into Jerusalem, Herod struggled to keep the mass killing of Jews, and in particular the damage to the city and temple itself to a minimum. When Antigonus II and the Jews of Jerusalem refused to give up, fighting even to the inner court of the temple, this became a difficult

task. The Romans were ready to do whatever it took to get this over with, and in the end, Herod had to turn to bribery in order to stop the Roman advance into the sanctuary of the temple. Herod convinced them that if they continued he would be left as only the, "king of a desert." Eventually, Antigonus II would surrender to the Roman general and be sent to Rome, but Herod fearing he was still a great threat in making a claim to the throne in Judea, bribed Mark Antony to execute him. Antigonus II would be taken to Antioch where he was killed, and it is said this was the first time the Romans had ever executed a subjugated king. To be sure, this was bringing Hasmonean rule to an end, unless one wanted to see Herod as some kind of rightful part of the family. This was further true because Herod also systematically executed all he could find who could be considered a present or future threat out of the family line, of course saving those who already had direct connection to him through his marriage to Mariamne I.

This left only Hyrcanus II, who after spending about four years in Babylon was invited back to Jerusalem in 36 B.C. This was mostly because Herod feared he might raise interest among the Parthians to make another attempt at gaining control over the region. Being an old ally of Herod's father, Hyrcanus II accepted Herod's invitation and was received by the same with every respect. Herod, no doubt continuing in his hope of convincing Jews he was just a part of the family, would even give this last legitimate ruler of the Hasmonian Dynasty the position of presidency of the state council. However, whether it was because he felt Hyrcanus II was really making some attempt to thwart him, or whether it was simply that Herod felt

having him around never, or by then was of no more use in gaining favor with the Jews, Herod accused Hyrcanus II of conspiring with the Nabataeans, and had him put to death in 30 B.C. This made for one last sad saga in the ending of the dynasty that had started out by leading the Jewish people in standing against the Greek's attempt to wipe God's Law from this earth!

Now there is much more details that can be given about all that Herod did, but for the sake of our study it is needful we attempt to be brief here. There are two things Herod is most known for. One, his ambitious building projects, and two, his constant desire to be accepted by the Jews while attempting to appease all those around him. History records that Herod suffered from a great amount of depression, and there can be little doubt much of this was caused by his desire to be liked. While his success as a ruler came somewhat from this, it mostly came because people feared him. This made Herod a very contradictory figure. However, the two things he is known for are actually very connected in that his desire to be liked is what led him to try and build things that impressed others, especially Rome and the Jews. However, building things that garnered favor with Rome rarely did anything but anger the Jews. This is why the most important example of Herod's building projects was his building, or what some say was his refurbishing, of the temple in Jerusalem!

In building this temple Herod greatly hoped to please the Jews, and while it was hard for Jews not to be pleased in seeing the temple "repaired" as well as expanded after

years of suffering damage during war brought right to the temple court, other parts of this was not so pleasing. Why? Because there is that Roman thing again. Herod wanted to please Rome in doing what he did in Jerusalem, and that is why Herod's temple, as it has come to be called, was built using Greco-Roman style. It's not clear if any of this ever impressed Rome, but as I said, the Jews had a hard time being entirely displeased with the project. That being said, Herod did anger both the Pharisees and Sadducees in that the Pharisees were unhappy about the Roman style, and in particular the golden eagle Herod is said to have put near the entrance of the temple. This indicated a very Roman, or at least imperialistic, emphasis to the project, and without a doubt was not something rightfully placed at God's temple. As for the Sadducees, they didn't really care so much about the style and were likely just happy the temple was a much grander place. At the same time, the Sadducees were being displaced by Herod's desire to garner favor with the Jews living outside Judea by bringing in men from the dispersed of Israel to serve as priests. This was something that displaced a certain amount of Sadducees who up till then had held most of those positions.

Now, in my mind the first temple was the one Solomon built, and the second temple is the one Zerubbabel along with those Jews who returned following the Babylonian captivity had built. This would make Herod's temple the third temple, but that's not how it is looked at! This is due to that thought Herod rebuilt the second temple without replacing it, and while it's true there

was no gap in temple service between Zerubbabel's temple and Herod's, Herod's temple was a total redo, and what Zerubbabel had built was taken down. Herod was able to do this without angering the common Jews and religious leadership by building such a large temple structure that he literally built his over the top of Zerubbabel's. In an amazing feat of what had to be a logistical nightmare, Herod had promised the Jews the temple service would go uninterrupted during the process, and that's what we are told happened.

Herod greatly expanded the size of the Temple Mount in almost all directions. In those parts where he was literally coming from so far down the slope of the hill to build up a wall and create the new "top" of the Temple Mount, caverns were built and landfill was brought in to fill between the new wall and existing topography of the hill. On the new Temple Mount, Herod would build many structures to make up an entire temple complex. However, the temple itself is said to have been built over the top of Zerubbabel's temple, and after it was completed, the old structure was dismantled from inside the new. We are also told the priests were the ones who did this work in order to keep the temple from being considered unclean and the temple service could continue throughout the process. In much later times, Herod's grandson is credited with talking a Roman ruler out of his plans to build his own structure inside this complex, and that was a very good thing as the Jews would rightfully been incensed at that happening! In any case, be it the second or third temple, this temple, while being mostly completed by the birth of Jesus, was an ongoing work for many

decades. This is why it meant so much for Jesus to reference the tearing down and rebuilding of the temple using it as an illustration of His work, which no other man could do! (John 2:18-22)

Going back to Roman troubles, the Triumvirate that ruled after their defeat of Caesar's assassins was as doomed to fail as the first. One difference in it was that unlike the first, this Triumvirate was formally accepted by the Roman senate. Its legal span was initially set for five years, but it was not going to end well due to the fact the Triumvirate mostly pushed the senate's authority aside, and this, like the first Triumvirate, threatened the core principle of Rome being a republic. The Triumvirate finished off its war with Caesar's assassins around the same time Antigonus II successfully captured Judea, but there was still trouble in Rome that likely brought about the reason the senate simply put Herod in power and sent him back to take care of the "situation" in Judea. The members of the Triumvirate's loyalty to Caesar is what brought them together, but gaining power for themselves is what would tear them apart. As so often happens, two of the members, Mark Antony and Gaius Octavius were the stronger of the three. They pushed the third member, Marcus Lepidus, out of much of his territory and he managed to stay out of the quarreling between the other two to some degree.

However, war seemed to be around every turn for Rome, and Lepidus was part of subduing a revolt led by a particular Roman general, and found himself in Sicily where he stationed his men after the fighting. This led to a dispute over the

island, and in the end gave Octavius the opportunity to accuse Lepidus of attempting to take power through rebellion. In the fall of 36 B.C. Octavius was able to exile Lepidus to a coastal town in Italy where he would live out the remainder of his life in obscurity, only being permitted to come to Rome on occasion for senate business where he was treated with disrespect by Octavius. On the other side of things, Octavius' fight with Mark Antony would be more of a challenge. Much of Octavius' upper hand would arise from some of the failings Antony would have against the Parthians. The forces Octavius had provided were not enough to reinforce Antony, but those Cleopatra of Egypt could provide would be. Thus, already involved with Cleopatra, Antony chose to use her help instead. Octavius would use this to paint Antony as preferring others over true Roman blood. Octavius would also claim the civil wars were settling down, and offered to step down from his position of power if Antony would do the same.

This, Antony would, of course, not do. Antony would go on to proclaim one of his sons a king of a defeated region, and made the ignorant move of proclaiming Cleopatra, "Queen of Kings." Octavius would use all this to his political advantage, but when many senators were convinced he had went too far in his railings against Antony, they went to Antony's side. Receiving critical information from two men who left Antony for Octavius, Octavius was able to find and expose Antony's will, which showed Antony had intentions to leave a lot of Roman territory to his sons as kingdoms. It also told of how Antony

planned Alexandria Egypt to be the site of his and Cleopatra's tomb. This convinced the senate, and they officially revoked Antony's powers along with declaring war on Cleopatra. War would rage between the Roman forces of Octavius, now looked at as the true protector of Roman interests and Antony and Cleopatra's Egyptian forces. Octavius would win critical battles and pursue the two directly to Alexandria where Antony's will had declared their future tomb together would be. On the first of August in 30 B.C. Octavius would defeat their forces after which Antony and Cleopatra would commit suicide!

Over the next decades Octavius would fight many more wars both literal and political, but he would eventually rise to be Rome's first Emperor. As he went about his political maneuvers, he wished to emphasize his family ties to what had been practical royalty of the past and brought back the name "Caesar"! He was named head of the Roman senate in January of 27 B.C., and also given a title of religious authority which far exceeded any Roman constitutional right to grant a man. In the Roman mind the title basically denoted his authority over all humanity. That name was "Augustus," and it is why in Luke chapter 2 we read that what caused Mary and Joseph to take their journey to Bethlehem was "...a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed."

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute,
answered by Philip E. Busby.***

FBS continued from pg. 8
the family was gone!

Since their mother was gone and Lot himself was not only without connections to gain another wife among the people here, but old as well, Lot had no hope of another child, specifically a son who could go out and make a life for himself, which these two women did not have the freedom to do in the culture of the day. These women believed they and their father were truly on their own out here, and the only thought they could come up with for how not to see their father's name simply die with him was to attempt to be the ones to bear him children. Rightly so, this thought is, or should be, repugnant to us today! However, this serves as an example of how a righteous person may believe they can live among very unrighteous circumstances and survive, but the question is not often asked, what will happen to the rest of my family? Lot's daughters did not seem to think this so wrong that it could not be done no matter what the consequence of them not doing it might be to their father's name. They did not find it so repugnant that they could not bring themselves to do such a thing. All this shows a way of thinking that was not just one which was more common in their time, but specifically due to the fact they had been raised in a place where sexual wrongdoing was part of the "norm," which caused God to destroy the place!

Now, in a related matter, I have been asked where Adam and Eve's sons got their wives from, and the obvious answer is that they took sisters for wives. Not only is this better in that it would be a sister, not a parent, but we must understand that at the

start of things, Adam and Eve contained all the human genetic material that would create the diversity we know today! Not only was there a genetic diversity we can't fathom in these two beginning humans, but there was a purity we can't appreciate. One of the big reasons why you do not want to have children with anyone that is not far removed down your family tree (the basic rule is that you need to be beyond third cousins) is because of the combining of so much of the same faulty genetic material both parents would share. Adam and Eve did not yet have faulty genetics in them. They were not far removed from having access to the Tree of Life, which provided the ability to have no failure in the human structure to a point it would live indefinitely. This was so true that even in looking at the ages people lived prior to the flood, we see people lived hundreds of year in spite of having no access to the Tree of Life. While it's true God was The One Who choked our life span down to no more than 120 years, we are even further removed from the time of that being done than Lot's daughters. It should go without saying that the degrading of the human form in our time is very extensive, and to heighten that problem by marrying too close a family relationship is nothing but ignorant!

All that said, at the time of Lot we should not accept that what these two women did should have been agreeable even in their day. However, we do see the marrying of much closer family members during the days of Abraham than we should today, and there is little to no evidence it created problems, especially not the very evident ones we would experience now. Getting back to the daughters' thoughts on

this point, the truth this would not have been an acceptable plan in their father's eyes is clearly shown in the fact Lot's daughters understood they needed to get their father drunk before they attempted to carry out their plan. This they would do, and the first night the oldest daughter would go into her father. She would go in while he was enough out of his right mind so as not to remember her coming in, and she would leave before he woke up from sleeping off the alcohol. The second night they would do the same thing, but this time the younger of the two would be the one to go in and come out. In the end of it all, the plan would work for not just one, but both daughters would conceive a child.

If we look again at the point of chronology for these events, we have to notice the statement of the older daughter in pointing out their father was old. This obviously did not mean he was too old to have more children or they would not have expected their plan to work. At the same time, they knew Lot was getting to that point in life where he was not going to take another wife, even if there were women they perceived as available for that, and if he had a wife that was anywhere close to his age, she would not likely have been able to bear a child. In thinking about at what point all this might have happened, one needs to consider Lot was Abraham's nephew, not his brother, but this did not mean Lot was significantly younger than Abraham. It all depends on everyone's ages at the time Haran had Lot. What we do know is Abraham's father, who was Lot's grandfather, felt Lot was young enough he

was still responsible for Lot as he left Mesopotamia with Abraham.

Even if Lot was significantly younger than Abraham, he still would have been fairly old because Abraham was going to turn 100 the year after Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. We know this because it was in the same conversation Abraham had with God and the two angels who would go on to warn Lot about all this, that Abraham was told it would be about the same time in the next year Sarah would be able to bear a child once again. Thus, even if Lot was as many as 25 years younger than Abraham, that would make him almost seventy-five as they left Sodom. If Lot was closer to the same age, and indeed many believe he was born about the same year as Abraham, he was truly getting up there, and his daughters knew it. What this says is that it was not likely a long time after entering Zoar that they turned around and left for the mountains. It is also probable it was not long after that before his daughters took this action, we just don't know for sure. All we know is that the Bible records both daughters conceived, and there is little debate among scholars that these two women gave birth to Lot's children about the same time Isaac was born.

One can only imagine what Lot must have thought because it's an obvious truth his daughters could not have hid the fact for long that they were both pregnant. That truth is why they gave themselves the best chance at it working for at least one of them, in taking the two nights in a row

approach. If their father had had time to get any idea of what had happened, he would have been far more on his guard from ever allowing them to pull such a stunt again! In the long run, if they did not eventually admit to what they had done, then who was the father(s) of their children? If there was another man in their lives, why had they not told their father about it? Again, we are given no details, but there seems to be no trouble with Lot and his daughters continuing to live together as a family. Why can we say this with a great amount of certainty? Well, considering that the daughters' concern was to carry on their father's name, if they did not admit these were his children then the only scenario for explaining how their offspring went on to be a people is that Lot simply took them in as his own.

If the daughters had been cast out by Lot for having children out of wedlock, there is little reason to believe these children would have amounted to much of anything, not having a family, in particular a father's name, to go forward with. In the culture they lived in, there would not have been much of a life waiting for any woman who was pregnant without a husband. Due to this, it is reasonable to believe that if Lot accepted them being pregnant under any circumstances, he, at the very least, gave these children his name and what honor that carried. It is that, which explains their ability to go forward in life and have the success of becoming whole nations in later times. The fact they did go forward to become people important to the chosen nation's history is exactly why we are told not just about Lot's life, but specifically that in the end, no matter how messy it came

about, Lot had these children.

Whether directed by God or simply as it turned out, both daughters would give birth to sons. This was also very important to carrying on the family line. Even if the daughters had found husbands, their children would have been considered the house of their husband's not their father's, but even now if they had given birth to only girls there would have been little to nothing accomplished toward their goal. In any case, both had sons, and I for one can't help but think the fact it worked out this way is directly tied to the scripture that tells us, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Romans 11:29 It also speaks to the power of God in general. Many people will make great arguments as to Lot's righteousness, and indeed what ultimately became of Lot is between him and God alone. However, there is no doubting Lot's survival was not due to Lot's righteousness. Lot was blessed in a large part because of an overflowing of blessings that God put on Abraham in general!

God wanted the land to be surrounded by many who came from Abraham's seed or original house before Israel was brought into the promised land in later times. However, God will not force anyone to serve Him or His plan. God uses those who seek Him, and this is clearly seen as God continually speaks to Abraham even when he and Sarah doubted or took wrong turns at times. God was specifically directing Abraham's path because Abraham desired to be used of God, and that is clear. When looking at Lot, there is little indication Lot sought anything more than what there was to gain in this world. At the

same time, we see him experience the blessings of God just by being around and connected to Abraham. This happened because just as it is a truth there is negative results in surrounding yourself with unrighteous people, there is a positive effect in being around those who serve God and seek His righteousness. Aside from all the physical leading by example ways this can be true, there is a deeper spiritual truth to this.

As with many things, what we're talking about here is not mysticism but the truth we are all God's children and He wishes to see all of us follow Him. Thus, what God gives us is opportunities depending upon which ways our lives can best be used for His kingdom, and that is what Lot was being given. Just remember it is not God's will that any should perish but all come to repentance, which emphasizes how much it is not true that being around those who follow God will save you or is necessary. We must seek God for ourselves. What I'm simply trying to point out here is what an advantage even someone who does not take the time to seek God for themselves can have just because they are close to those who do, but we should not let that fool us into believing we are where God wants us to be!

In spite of how it had come about, Lot ended up with two sons to carry on his name. The oldest daughter would give birth to a son and name him Moab, which very appropriately means "from father," and speaks to the debate of whether Lot ever knew the truth or not. This son would go on

to be the father of the Moabites, who lived in the region to the east of the Dead Sea and Jordan River in a land that came to bear the name Moab. The younger daughter would have a son and name him Benammi, which means "son of my kindred." This also speaks to the debate of Lot knowing. This son's name would also be simply known as Ammon, and he would go on to be the father of the Ammonites, who also lived to the east of Jordan. Both these nations would be people the chosen nation of Israel would deal with as they returned from Egypt. In spite of the trouble they caused Israel upon their return, Israel was specifically told they would not be given certain land because it was held by Lot's descendants.

These nations would also figure predominately into the future history of the chosen nation, and though I know I took the space to mention it not to many segments back, I can not help but point it out again here. One of Moab's descendants named Ruth would have a tender heart toward God and His chosen nation. In continuing to hold onto this even after her Israelite husband had died and her sister-in-law had turned back to Moab, Ruth not only married once again into the chosen nation, but became the great grandmother of King David. In doing so, she also became a direct part of the line that leads from Abraham right down to The Messiah - Jesus Christ The King of Israel and all the earth!

Until next time, Shalom!

promised land, while they, instead, lived the remainder of their lives in the wilderness God had never intended for Israel to stay in!

In Chapter 2 Moses covers the forty years by basically describing it as traveling in circles through the wilderness until the days the generation to whom he now primarily spoke were almost the only ones left, at which time God told Moses to turn northward passing through the land of Esau's descendants. God had by this time brought a fear of Israel upon the Edomites so they would not touch Israel, but Israel needed to be careful to understand God would not give them any of the Edomite's land, because He would not! From there, God would lead Israel through the land held by the Moabites who were descendant from Abraham's nephew Lot, and God also would not give Israel their land. After passing through their land it was really true the older generation had passed from the nation, and God would also lead Israel along land held by the descendants of Lot's other son named Benammi, and thus they were known as the children of Ammon. God told Israel He would not give them any of Ammon's land as well. This was not just because all three of these people were nations related to Israel, but they were nations that were where they were because God had specifically driven out the former inhabitants from before them. Many of these former inhabitants Moses relates back to being giants in the same way the people Israel had feared at the south end of the promised land were giants. This was to show, God had driven all these inhabitants out in much the same way He would drive out the Canaanites from the much better land that lay on the west side of Jordan so Israel could possess that land. That was the land Abraham had directly sojourned in.

After they had cleared all the lands held by these people, Israel would go into land north of them (where they now stood to hear these words), and God would use the defeat of the people there as a starting point for building confidence in Israel that God was able to give them the land, and build fear of Israel in the surrounding nations whom God wanted Israel to destroy or, at the very least, gain the respect of! However, God did not do this without first giving Sihon, who was the king of the Amorites, a chance to agree to the same terms as those whom God did not intend their land to be given to Israel. God had demonstrated Israel was able to pass through without disruption to the people of a land, by passing by the other three nations, but these unrelated people would not respect Israel in any way. The king would come out to attack Israel, and this would give Israel no choice but to defend themselves, and they would go on to take this king's entire territory. This land bordered the lands to the south which God had told Israel they would not receive. In accomplishing the destruction of these people, Israel set the template for how to take the promised land in that they left none of the inhabitants in the land and only kept the cattle, with respect to living things, along with the inanimate spoils of war that were common to keep.

Israel would continue to move north on this side of Jordan and come face to face with some of the remaining people considered giants in this region. The king of Bashan came out to attack Israel, and again Israel would destroy them, taking their land in much the same way they had taken Sihon's land. One other specific of this northern area is that there were true walled cities in it, which are much harder to take and served as regional defenses. However, Israel did not fail in taking a one of them. This eliminated

both the major Amorite kingdoms. It also put Israel in possession of land spanning far enough on the north end, that the east side of that end almost fulfilled the promise about God giving the chosen nation land reaching all the way back to adjoin the region of Abraham's nativity, by coming close to the Euphrates river. All this conquered land then became the possession of the the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and part of Manasseh. This was done with the agreement all their men who were able to go to war, would go with the rest of Israel as they crossed the Jordan to take the promised land on the west side.

Moses then tells of how he made it a point to Joshua that this all served as an example of how able God was to give Israel the promised land, and he, along with the people, should continue to trust God in order to accomplish taking the land. Moses makes this point to also clarify again he desired to go over and get the chance to see the promised land, but God told Him not to ask anymore because it was obvious Moses had fought the good fight, ran his course, and finished his race. (II Tim. 4:1-8) While it was sad Moses did not get to spend the end of his life in the comfort of the promised land, as would have been the case if the children of Israel had not rebelled against God in the first place, it was now time for a new generation to take on the responsibilities of leadership. God would allow Moses a look at the land from the top of what was about the highest mountain that overlooked the promised land, in much the same way Abraham was told to look around him many long years before. (Gen. 13:14-15) However, unlike Abraham, Moses would not get a chance to walk on the land and live there himself, as he would not live to move from this place where they now stood.

Chapter 4 is where Moses begins to rehearse the instructions concerning the actual following of the Law God had given them. Moses' starting point here was to make sure Israel understood the Law had to be followed in order for them to continue seeing the success they had seen. It was not by their own might or power that they overcame the kings they had, and if they turned from following God, they would not defeat others. In order to see continued success they were also to be careful to never add to or take anything away from the Law. As God's plan for man's salvation unfolded, they would experience the fulfillment of events they had been representing through the Law over time, but even this would not change the Law, only the perspective of how they looked at some of the things they would continue to do generation after generation. (John 2:18-22, I Cor. 11:23-26) As it concerned the nation more immediately, they were to be crystal clear on the point that entering the land and settling there would not make the Law a flexible and fluid concept. The Law was already at this point, set in stone, to use a very appropriate expression!

To emphasize this point Moses would not direct their minds back to an earlier example of when their parents were the adults, but a very recent incident where some of this generation had fell to the temptation of taking part in rituals meant to worship false gods, which were served by some of those whom God had instructed Israel He would not give them their land. It did not matter if it was just for fun or serious worship of the false god that those who joined in did so, those who did died, and those who did not were the ones left alive, whom Moses was now speaking to! Moses directly warns that

none of them could afford to take such actions of rebellion against God when they got into the promised land, for the same thing would happen to them even then. Moses assures them he had taught them everything God had told him the nation was to observe. If they failed to see the blessings God had promised, it would not be due to not knowing something because Moses had left out instructions for how to serve God. God is not a pagan god. He does not need to be appeased by ritual, but obeyed so that Israel could be seen by the world as a wise and understanding nation far greater than anything man has been able to build on his own!

There truly wasn't, and never will be, another nation to whom God has given wiser, more righteous, more exemplifying of the truth, ordinances to. Times would change and what man sees as wisdom would increase, but nothing will ever change the fact the Laws God gave Israel are the highest example for how to learn righteousness, no matter how much these Laws might or might not make Israel seem to fit into the day and age through which the nation would pass as time moves on. Time changing the circumstances around them is again why Israel was/is only going to accomplish being the nation they were told to be if the nation diligently remembered and sought to remember these instructions from God, which Moses had been the go-between in order to receive. Thus, the nation is instructed once again, to teach each generation to remember these Laws and how to follow them by teaching these opening years of Israel's existence as a nation. In particular, this would go very pointedly to teaching the first words God spoke to Israel as they stood at the mountain and heard God give them the Ten Commandments, and what that was like to experience as they did not see God in a form but His presence was real and

tangible, nonetheless. In that time, Israel stood under a mountain that burned endlessly with fire while God was upon it, and in spite of the lack of any physical form, they heard God's voice in an unmistakably audible way.

They were also to remember and teach the fact Moses was given all the other ordinances at that same time. The rest of the Law was not made up by men as an extension of what the nation had audibly heard with their own ears. Again, it is pointed out these Laws were not given just for the wilderness journey, but even more specifically to be followed once they entered the land. This is why God did not appear to them in any kind of physical form, nor speak to them without making His presence physically apparent in some way. The nation was not to see how other nations worshiped, in that they made images with their own hands to declare as the figure of their god(s), if not their god(s) in reality, and do the same. Israel was not to look to the sky and worship the creation itself instead of The Creator. (Rom. 1:24-25) Any people throughout the world could do those things. Any man or group of men could create a religion based on the thoughts of their own minds and use the physical things around them as their guide in doing so, but only Israel had been chosen, out of the entire world, to be directly instructed in how to exemplify the righteous ways of The One True God to the world!

God had a reason for allowing Israel to end up in bondage in Egypt. He had forged them into something special by putting them through that as well as the way He brought them out. Israel had not been simply allowed to grow on the land as the children of Esau or Lot had. Israel had been given a specific purpose and molded to fit that purpose. Israel was to take heed not to simply turn into a

nation like other nations. They were to understand being peculiar was going to be the case unless a vast amount of the rest of the world became more like them. Even this would not change the truth for the most part, because out of all the nations of the world only Israel had been taken as a specific possession of God. The nation did not belong to Moses, nor were the Laws they heard Moses speak made up by him. It was partly for this cause Moses would not be allowed to go over into the promised land. Moses would never be the one to teach and guide Israel through the establishment of them as a nation on the promised land. Moses would die here on this side of Jordan no matter how much he would have like to go, and yet even these facts would not change the truth the Law was given specifically for the purpose of following these ordinances on the land more so than just in a wilderness camp where Moses had been. If/when the nation suffered at the hands of God, or through lack of His helping them, it would not be because they had failed to appease Him by keeping up with some new thing He demanded of them, but because they had failed to walk with The God to Whom they belonged by living the Laws He gave them from the start.

All this meant, and still means to this day, the land they were going in to possess would never truly belong to them, but God! They were to be established on it to serve God's purposes. If/when they did choose to turn and use the land to live like other nations live, Moses assures them, even calling on the day he spoke these words to be a witness against future generations who fail to live for that purpose, that God would/will remove them from the land. Of that there was to be no generation in Israel, past or present, who

should doubt or think they could change the ways of God and get away with it. Their uniqueness and standing before God on this earth would forever be judged on their willingness to continue in the Laws God had given them from the very start. If they forgot this, they would become a people scattered throughout the other nations of the world, suffering at the hands of others in the world due to the fact they would never fit in or be accepted by most others in this world unless they totally renounced their heritage in the Law and the following of it. In doing so, they would find themselves nothing special but simply people worshipping gods of no value which other people created out of their own minds.

However, even the state of being scattered among the nations would be for the purpose of showing them they had failed to walk in the ways of The Lord, and if they were, in that state, to turn back to God and seek Him with their whole being, God's mercy would be waiting to heal them and begin again to build them as He had done for their fathers! This would be a truth no matter how many decades, centuries, millennia or more there had/has been since the days Moses spoke these words to them. Why? Because of the truth Paul states, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Romans 11:29

Let's stay in God's Word!