

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*

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## Step Into the Springs!

For the eleventh year, Living Springs Institute has published its daily planning calendar that gives you the Biblical calendar alongside the calendar most of us use. Since early 2018 the companion book, titled *Counting The Days*, has also been available. We have always felt the planning calendar is a great Biblical education product, but remember, 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!

Of course, many of you have already received a copy of the book, but if you do not have one you will want to receive a copy when you order your 2019 calendar. If you are a regular mail subscriber

to this publication, you should have received one of the calendars with this issue of *Shaqah*. 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 together in the same package. This means if you would like more copies of the calendar or book, please let us

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know so we can send your order all at once! If you already have a 2019 calendar, it should have come with a pink card inside that you can simply fill in with your name and address, and for only the price of a stamp you can order your copy of *Counting The Days*! 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 2019 calendar is waiting for you, so be sure to contact us, and put in your order today!

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 2019 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 2019 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](http://www.livingspringsinstitute.org), click on the "Resource Shop" button, order the 2019 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](mailto:resources@shaqah.com). If you're

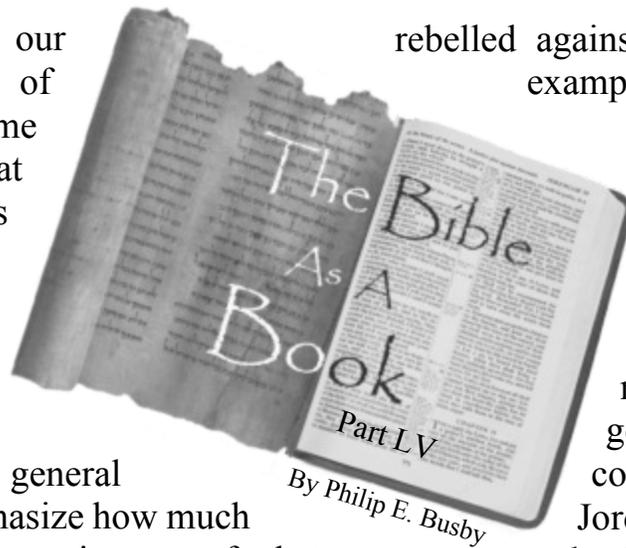
using regular mail, write to us at: Living Springs Institute, P.O. Box 271, Loveland, CO 80539. Just tell us you would like the 2019 calendar and/or *Counting The Days*. Be sure to give us your physical mailing address, and your order will be on its way as soon as we can process it!

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*!

*As* we continue our overview of the book of Deuteronomy, last time we covered such a great deal many subjects it is hard to even mention them all as a list. However, as we get closer to the end of the book, we see Moses going over a lot of general stipulations which emphasize how much a life lived in righteousness is more of what God is looking for than He is the following of specific ceremonies and rituals. This is not to say those ceremonies and rituals are not important elements of what God was asking of the nation, but those things can not be performed by a nation who does not seek to live in righteousness on a personal level every day. That is why the end of our last segment was all about Moses telling the nation the great overall blessings they would find in life if they followed the Law, but how much the reverse would be true if they did not. Covering all this brought us through the end of Deuteronomy chapter 28, and we will begin with verse 1 of chapter 29 this time.

Chapter 29 starts by telling us the words we are reading in this book are the covenant God made with the nation, which was a more detailed and extensive addition to the covenant God made with them at Mount Sinai. Moses goes back to remind the people how much they had seen all the curses and temptations of this world by living in Egypt and seeing that nation's rebellion against God's ways. However, it was not until the giving of the Law that the understanding of all that could become so clear. Their own experience in the wilderness when they



rebelled against God also served as an example. However, for forty years Moses had led them through the hardship of getting to the place they now stood, and God had blessed them with miraculous provisions to get here. The nation had come to this east side of Jordan only to have kings of the land come out to destroy them without being provoked, but the nation saw God deliver Israel with ease. These are the ways God desires to care for the nation if they would only obey His voice.

It was a long history from Abraham to the day Moses spoke to the people here in Deuteronomy, but all of that was the emphasis of how much God had been bringing the nation to this moment where they would truly enter into the covenant which would make them the chosen nation of God. Thus, Moses tells them it was not just with those who stood within the sound of his voice that day that God made this covenant, but it was with all the generations that would come! Israel had passed by and through many nations who did not serve God, and seen how the world had come to worship idols made by the very hands that worshiped them. They had seen how traditions which men built out of their own minds were followed, but this was not to be Israel. Israel was to be a nation that stayed with God's Law generation, after generation, after generation forever. At any time or moment the nation believed it could turn and follow their own understanding, thoughts, or temptations they would become more cursed than the nations God had not

entrusted His oracles to. If such punishment was necessary, God would turn upon the nation and the land in the same way He judged Sodom and Gomorrah. The land would cease to be one of great vegetation, and instead be a barren wasteland seemingly good for nothing. As people looked at what God had done to the land and asked why God seemed to hate and destroy this land so specifically, the answer would be clear to all that it was due to the nation of God following their own imaginations instead of God's Law.

Then Moses goes into a part we should relate to very well today, because it is the description of the process the nation would go through in starting over. What the nation would experience was a great understanding of how much they had given up in not following God, and as they begin to call upon the name of The Lord for deliverance from the suffering they found in being cursed of God, God would hear. As the nation repented and began to seek the heritage given to them by God, God would begin to bring them back to the land. This would not be a land that would give to them as it was ready to do at the time they heard these words, but the nation would have to be so desirous to have their heritage back, they would be willing to work the land to make it bloom once again. When they did this, God would greatly bless their families and the nation would not just be brought back from the far reaches of the world to do this work, but God would bring an increase to the nation and it would grow. While the nation might be despised for struggling to do all this, God would bring a curse upon the enemies of the nation, and they would find their lives miserable due to the simple fact they chose to be enemies of God's nation.

Moses goes on to explain that the Law which showed them what they needed to do was not something they waited for any longer. No more could the nation or men in general have the excuse they needed someone to go into heaven and find the truth because man did not know how to serve God or what He expected of them! In giving the nation of Israel a written Law, God had put among men a tangible set of instructions as to what it meant to be righteous. In these, were at the very least, the first steps needed in finding and following God. It was before the nation's eyes, and all they needed to do was read it in order to know what they needed to do. All men outside the nation needed to do was observe the nation and find that reading the Law for themselves would bring what they needed. By putting the Law before their eyes and in the mouths of men, the opportunity to receive the true blessings of life, to know the good, and how to follow it, were set before us all. On the other hand, this brings the truth of what brought death and what true evil was/is. Ignorance is no longer an excuse man can legitimately claim to have! We choose to find and follow or we choose to ignore what is before us.

In knowing what life and death really were, Moses tells the people to choose life so that in what we call this life they could prolong their days upon the earth, as well as the lives of the many children this would give them the ability to have. For the chosen nation this idea was not just about earthly blessings as much as it was a blessing to the work of God going forward among men. For this cause Moses tells them their lives are actually God's, and that is why He would give them the length of days upon the earth. This is directly related to what Paul told us in Philippians 1:21 about how to live is Christ

# Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

Last time, we began talking about how Abraham would handle Sarah's request that Hagar and Ishmael be sent out of the household. In talking about this we covered the fact that Abraham not only talked to God about it, but how much that was almost an immediate thing which Abraham was already in a place of faith to have God simply come to him and answer what was on Abraham's mind. God's answer also showed us a lot about the issue of how much it was in God's will that Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael out with nothing more than a jug of water. This because God wanted a complete and clean break between Abraham's house and Ishmael. However, God also made it clear to Abraham that Ishmael would be taken care of, to the point even he would become the father of a nation. This brought us to Genesis chapter 21 verse 14, but we did not cover all of verse 14 so we will begin near the end of that verse this time.

Verse 14 not only tells us Abraham called Hagar and sent her out with a bottle of water, but it uses language that groups Ishmael himself with the water as if to say he was also an item Abraham was sending with Hagar. Maybe it doesn't lose something in the translation exactly, but it may sound a little funny. In truth, it has some interesting aspects to it. While it is true of the society we are talking about that males had complete domination over females, Abraham was not going by that idea. As we talked about before, Ishmael was not a child when this event took place, but at the same

time, he would have still been a teen. By the standards of the society they lived in at the time, Ishmael was a man, but by our standards we would see him as a young adult at best. In any circumstance, there was still wisdom from the past he could gain by listening to his elders. This never really changes in one's life, but on top of this, Hagar was Ishmael's mother!

What we see here are the words showing us another way in which Abraham lived by God's standards more than he did the world that surrounded him, and by far! To Abraham it did not matter Ishmael was practically a man. What mattered is that Hagar was his mother and he was still young. It would, in many ways be up to Ishmael to make a way for the two of them in this world, but Ishmael needed to listen to his mother and respect her for who she was. Abraham must have respected Hagar's judgment to continue training Ishmael in the ways of life, and no doubt wanted Ishmael to be clear on the fact he was to continue listening to what his mother had to say. This would be important for two reasons. One, it was going to be hard for them to survive if they did not stick together, at least at first. It was in both their best interests to stick together. By doing this Hagar was not just a woman out on her own without a male family member, which without she would likely be destined to become a slave of some kind, and probably far worse off than she had ever been with Abraham's house.

Two, we see in the words of the next verses how much Hagar still took the lead role as Ishmael's mother. One of the points that makes many people think of Ishmael as so young when this happens is the way the words would indicate Hagar treated Ishmael, along with the fact it is she, not Ishmael, we hear pleading with God about their circumstances. People ask, why did she throw him under a bush as if talking about a baby? Why did she talk to God when Ishmael could have taken the lead in doing so? This second one is not necessarily one many people ask specifically at first, but they will ask it after finding out Ishmael was as old as he was. In light of the fact God talks so much about Ishmael becoming something, why wouldn't he? His father Abraham certainly knew God, and the fact Hagar calls out to God shows she did as well. With both parents as believers, there is no reason to doubt Ishmael knew how to talk to God! However, even at his age he looks to his mother in the caretaker role and in ways I hope to get to. This very much is why it was her who cried to God. Thus, if Ishmael was to leave her behind and go his own way, not only would this be bad for Hagar, but Ishmael would lose her wisdom, guidance, and the care of a mother, especially one who knows how to cry out to God for help!

It was important Ishmael not get lost in this world to whatever he felt he needed to join in with in order to become something in life or even just survive. If you had parents who seemed to take no interest in you and your future, you likely can look around and see how your life did not go the way it should have due to mistakes you made without their guidance. At the very

least, I'm sure you can look back and see how much you wished you had of had that support along with how much easier it could have been to become what you are today or become something better if you had. If you did have parents who took an interest in you, maybe you did not go the right way but can look back and see how you should have listened to them. Even if you feel as though you're glad you didn't listen to them or did and things did not go right, you can probably see how their intentions in what they tried to direct you in were good. While I know intentions are not always the good thing people make them out to be, in the case of parents who care about you, one should consider it. If nothing else, you learned from mistakes they may have made and you probably gained a healthier idea from it as to how to be there in the right way for your children, should you have any.

The end result all studies about families have shown is that the odds of a child being successful, whether early on or just eventually in life, are just so much better with parents who care! This is what Ishmael had, a caring mother who no matter her flaws wanted only what she thought best for Ishmael. After leaving Abraham's house, Hagar went on to eventually put her entire life's focus on making sure Ishmael got to where he needed to go. If you doubt that or wonder why we should think such a thing, again look at the words of the verses here in light of the fact Ishmael is not a baby or small child. We see in these words a mother who cared not for her life but for the life of a son, who was probably to an age where he was more able to endure the conditions they were faced with than Hagar was. We will talk more about that in a bit, but before we

leave verse 14 completely, let's look at the end of the verse where we are told what Hagar chose to do after Abraham sent them away.

Last time, we spent a great deal of time talking about how little Abraham sent them away with, and how this was led of God in that God told Abraham certain things while not telling him to do much of anything but send them away. This led to Abraham sending them out with not much more than a bottle of water. The rest of what they had was whatever they chose to take with them. In talking about what Abraham gave them, I mentioned the fact they had time to pack what was theirs, but with that we must understand Abraham was not a selfish man by any stretch of the imagination. If Hagar had wanted a lot of supplies, I'm sure Abraham would not have told her no. In truth, it is completely unclear how much Hagar would have had to ask for before Abraham might have said no. With that you can think what you choose, but I have a hard time believing if Hagar had asked for much of anything and Abraham had to tell her no, whether because he did not want to give it or because he felt God telling him it was wrong – that fact would have been recorded for us!

Since nothing of the kind is here about that, we can only assume Hagar chose to leave this situation without asking for much, but that did not mean the bottle of water is all they had to eat and drink. That being said, it would seem that if it was not all, it was a major part of what they had, and this brings us solidly to the choices of

Hagar. If she did not ask for much of Abraham, maybe it was because she was so upset about being sent away, she did not want to. She may have also been in such a state of shock at Abraham being willing to send them out, she was simply not thinking straight. This no doubt had to be a surprise! It just was not in the loving nature of Abraham to do such a thing, and Hagar was not unaware of this fact. We should think about such things in reading such a story and not just assume Hagar was a servant accustomed to being ordered around and doing only what she was told. For getting close to two decades now, Hagar was not just a servant but the mother of Abraham's first-born. While this was to be Sarah's son and not Hagar taking Sarah's place, God had made it clear Sarah would have a son of her own. Sarah did not need Ishmael if she had come to believe in God's promises. Thus, for the pregnancy and whatever time after Isaac's birth there was before Hagar left the house, Ishmael was purely Hagar and Abraham's son. This fact is why it was so distressing to Sarah that Ishmael was mocking at Isaac's party. That is not the reaction of a mother concerning her son, but of Isaac's mother who did not have the say over Ishmael, to speak of.

Thus, what we see in Abraham sending Hagar and Ishmael out, giving them nothing more than a bottle of water, is not just Abraham's choices, but Hagar's as well. Then, at the end of verse 14 what we clearly see is Hagar's choice alone concerning where they went! Just as Abraham had not given them much, he also had not told them where to go. As was mentioned last time, he

did not take them to a far or near place and drop them off. Abraham simply opens the door and sends them away. In truth, the only real part of even putting the words in about Abraham sending them out has to do with - one, Abraham was following what God said and two, he was truly releasing Hagar and giving her Ishmael to take with her. She was free from her bond as a servant and, along with Ishmael, no longer a member of the household. Where she went and what she did after that was up to her. So where did she go? Verse 14 says she chose to go out into the wilderness of Beersheba. This means they generally went out and wandered somewhat aimlessly. The last place the verses tell us Abraham had gone to was northwest of Beersheba in the land of the Philistines. That did not go so well due to Abraham calling Sarah his sister as he had done in Egypt. Thus, the last words of the king were that the vastness of the land was before Abraham and he should just go out and do what he wanted without bothering them anymore.

From this, we can assume Abraham likely moved back into the area he was most familiar with, but that was not far away. Was he back in Hebron at this point? Well, even when we talk about such places we are not talking so much about a city most of the time as much as we are a general area. Where one area ends and another begins can be kind of subjective. Also keep in mind that after them being among the Philistines, there was the nine months of Sarah being pregnant with Isaac, and then the weaning period before Abraham held this feast. In studying ancient cultures and even comparing modern traditions of those cultures in the region now, some believe the

weaning period for Isaac might have been as long as three years. Whether that long or short there is at least some time involved, so it is safe to say this feast did not take place until a year or more after the incident with the Philistines. This is enough time to believe Abraham had returned to more of his normal area of Hebron and the like. What we need to remember in talking about what Hagar did is that she was originally from Egypt. This did not mean she wanted to go back there, but it's possible she thought about it. If she had thought that and made it, her and Ishmael would surely have become servants or slaves to someone there and/or got sold off to another land, even separated.

One way or another we should see the fact they did not end up there was a good thing. Hagar had become a servant in the first place, and this meant she did not have anyone who was going to take her in and care for her and her son in Egypt. Egypt was at the time a hotbed of commerce, and there is no way to believe going back there would have been a good thing for two people with nothing but their labor to offer. In the end, what matters is that they did not end up there, and this may very well have been due to the fact they did not have the supplies to get that far. Maybe Hagar knew that. As she chose to go out in the wilderness of Beersheba, Abraham might have been even closer than what we would call Hebron. If Beersheba was south of him at all it was still in the general direction of Egypt, but that does not mean they were headed there. Verse 14 tells us she "wandered" in that wilderness, and this indicates she did not have a determined path. As we go into verse 15 we see the important point that they did

# *What About God's Chosen People?*

## *Part XXIX*

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 our last segment, we went a little far away from our history study in talking about the early church and Christianity in general. While I did not really intend to do such a thing, in the end, all I can say is that I attempt to allow The Holy Ghost to guide what I say in all my teaching, and on that alone I can feel confident that what we talked about last time was/is important to this discussion. If nothing else, we covered much in the way of talking about how what the church went on to become in our modern time, shows us what calls itself the church is no replacement for the purity in following God that the chosen nation was diminished due to lack there of.

This in and of itself is important for us to see and understand because as we have talked about many times, the chosen nation could not be replaced by anything man comes up with. This is because the chosen nation was God showing us how much man fails even when God Himself comes down and does everything, aside from violating man's free will, to create a group of people who can represent Him and His will. The church was built on the simple good news that The Messiah had come. This message was to go out into all the world so it would be available to all people everywhere to

accept or reject as they chose. In no way was the Gospel intended to create any kind of cohesive group that could replace the chosen nation. No matter how many or how few people in any given area of the world accepted this message and lived by it, the church would always live in and among the general population of the world. This was never suppose to be the case for the chosen nation.

They were to be a people mostly composed of blood related individuals. This is why we look at Jews as being an ethnic group today. The nation was intended to live in a specific spot on the planet and grow out from there as room was required. There was to be a place in that land where God would place His name, and even before Jerusalem was chosen as that place and before the nation was even on their land, God had them build a tabernacle to place at the center of their camp. In this place God's presence was to dwell in a very tangible way. As we have discussed, the ceremonies God gave the nation to perform could only be carried out at times when this tabernacle stood and was administered correctly. Later this was restricted further by the fact God permanently placed His name in Jerusalem. This meant the ceremonies could only be performed if the Jews held that city and were able to have and maintain the temple!

None of these more permanent structural elements and requirements were

necessary for the building of what we call the church! We can get caught up on the idea we need a permanent building, even something of great beauty, but it's not necessary. We can push for an organizational structure where men ordain other men as qualified or rejected from the ministry on the basis of their education, experience, or any factor man might think is important, but only God can call true ministers to do the work. We can think it's important to fit into a certain man-defined mold or shape in order to be a "good Christian," but other than the ways God's shaping us in righteousness brings similarity, being a true believer is not about an ethnic identity such as the Jews were given. We could go on and on but that is the point. For all the ways the church was to be the same as the nation when it comes to serving God, being a believer outside the nation of Israel is and always has been a very different thing from what the Jews were called to do. Their ministry as a cohesive nation is something God has brought about and maintained. Since God established the nation, unto this very day, the nation has been available for God to use as a tool to do a specific kind of work in this world. However, the struggle it has been to see a cohesive nation of individuals serving God in the kind of spirit necessary to maintain such a system, alongside God's insistence the nation continue to exist, shows us how much this tool is something special and needed in God's plan to ensure the world has the best chance to find and follow Him.

To argue there is no need for the chosen nation is to ignore the facts God's Word tells us about how the nation will be reassembled in the last days, which we see before our eyes. The fact these words have

been there for all believers to read should be evidence enough that nothing could replace the nation. If the church could do so, the Word would not talk about it; and we are not talking about just "Old Testament" words, we are talking about New Testament words, which Christians claim to hold most dear! It is my hope that in this study we have come to realize, whether for the first time or just in a deeper way, how much we are all members of one body in Christ. (Rom. 12:3-8) The chosen nation is not the same member as those of us who serve in what is termed the church, but they are a necessary member, and for this cause they exist to this day. What the work of Jesus did was help those of us who would live in a solid time of the temple not existing and the sacrifices not being performed have a chance to see the truth without those things.

Time and circumstances of our world and lives has changed. Knowledge has increased just as God told Daniel it would, and this has moved many people in the world from an agricultural system to a mechanized lifestyle. In this world most of our food is grown in bulk by farmers, far and wide, then shipped to stores where people buy what they need with money they have made doing jobs largely unrelated to how a person feeds themselves. Many people, in what we arguably call the "developed world," live so deep in such a system they don't even know where food comes from or how it is grown! They have no idea how much their very survival is in the hands of a mechanized system, which if it ever collapsed would leave billions without daily needs and no way to fend for themselves! All this I say to point out how much the sacrificing of animals would not have the same meaning to most people today. Before the nation of

Israel, before the pagan practices of man's false religions, before any corruption in the fact God created us and is the only God, came into the human mind, the two sons of Adam and Eve just brought of the work of their hands to give to God an offering. Cain brought food he had grown, and Abel brought sheep he had raised. These were, as much as anything can be for man, the work of their hands, the true increase of their labor. These items meant something very personal to both Cain and Abel. The one's item(s) did not necessarily mean so much to the other, but their own items meant a great deal. They were the next best thing Cain and Abel could bring to offering their very lives, because by the sweat of their brows had these items came to be the products they were as apposed to just being collected from the wild.

If we can grasp that in some way by relating it to something we have or do work hard to produce, something that makes us feel like we've accomplished something with our lives, we can understand how much this meant to Cain and Abel to bring these items. We can begin to see why Cain was so jealous, not that God had rejected his items because that was not the case, but the fact God seemed to treat Abel's offering with more attention than Cain's. In any case, the story should show us the passion of what it meant to men so recently fallen from the life God had created us to live, to bring the best of what they had accomplished in order to worship The God of their creation! This feeling is what caused men to continue bringing offerings to God, and to build specific places considered special, just as the Garden of Eden had once been, in order to

offer such things. We should see how God told Cain that if he wanted the kind of attention a blood sacrifice got then he should bring a blood sacrifice, and that is exactly what future men went on to do. It would not be until God laid down the Law that we would once again see plant-based offering as a constant part of what man was to bring before God!

To people throughout the centuries it meant a great deal to bring animals from their herds, which they labored to produce, and give to God. It meant something to take something living, breathing, with eyes to look into yours as you brought the knife to its throat to spill the blood that ran through its veins in the same way it does yours and mine. It was the closest man could ever get to giving one's own life, to offer the life of an animal one had raised. This point is what made the story of Abraham taking Isaac to offer him on Mount Moriah so meaningful. Abraham had told Isaac that “....God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering:...” Genesis 22:8 Not only was this true in the prophecy that God would one day demonstrate the ultimate of what all this meant by sacrificing Himself literally on the cross, but that day as God stopped Abraham from taking the life of his son, Abraham would look over to find a ram caught in the brush nearby. This was not an animal Abraham had raised. It was not one he had brought with him. It was not one he bought from someone on the way or at the time. This was an animal Abraham had never seen. A wild ram caught innocently in what would seem for him the wrong place at the wrong time. Coincidence? Of course not! God was providing Abraham with a sacrifice

that very day. One that had not come of even the labor it would take to go out and buy or hunt one down. Now compare this to the point of Jesus driving out those who bought and sold in the temple. (Mark 11:15-17) What were they selling? Animals for sacrifice there at the temple. In giving the Law and restricting the actual killing of animals to the temple as well as putting it under the auspices of the priesthood, God had already taken some of the burden of offering a sacrifice out of the hands of everyday men. However, in not even being willing to bring animals they had raised themselves or taken the time to purchase and bring to the temple, people were casting off of themselves even more of that burden.

The sacrifices were already at that time, losing much of the meaning they once held for men such as Cain, Abel, Noah, Abraham, and the like. It had become a mechanized modern convenience store kind of one stop shop at the temple. All this shows us not that the sacrifices had or have no meaning, but that people were refusing to seek and see that meaning. What God would do in the work of Jesus Christ is show us how much it has always meant something to Him! God wasn't joking the day the fire fell and consumed the animal offered by Abel, which made Cain so jealous. God wasn't just showing off the day the fire was lit by His presence on the altar of sacrifice, which the chosen nation had built by His instructions. God wasn't ignoring our need for a complete turnaround in our hearts and minds the day He laid Himself down on a crude wooden cross and spread His arms out to have nails driven through His hands in order to shed His own precious blood! God had said by the mouth of His prophet He could not be pleased with the blood of thousands of rams,

or even tens of thousands of rivers full of oil. (Micah 6:6-9) He has always wanted nothing less than our lives, and in showing us how much He asks no more of us than He is willing to give to this relationship, He gave His for us! Now it is what it's always been, which is that God waits to see what we will do. Through time He has given us chance after chance to see the truth of what He is offering and decide if that is what we want more than what this life and world alone can offer us. It might not mean as much to us or even the same thing in any way as it did to Cain and Abel to offer an animal on the altar of sacrifice, but do we care that God gave Himself? If we don't care about that enough to know and want to join in a relationship with God, then what else can be done? Our hearts have become so cold that nothing will satisfy us. Thus, no further demonstration is needed, right? Wrong!

As true believers who really understand what I just explained we should be able to see how much the continual reminder of what is true is needed in this life of ever turning events. We change, or at least think we have, but God is the same. He is the same God who created us and wanted to walk in the garden with us. He is the same God who talked with Cain and Abel. The same desire is in His heart now as was the case when He told Abraham He would make of him a great nation. We serve the same God as He Who gave Moses the Law on Mt. Sinai, and sending His Son did not change anything about what God wanted. No, it was because God still wants the very same thing that Jesus came and did what He did. However, the reason we are told in Hebrews chapter 9 that Jesus offered Himself once is not to point out the sacrifices at the temple

were suppose to end. It was to point out that while there are multiple reminders in the representation of the sacrifices and the Law in general, the true sacrifice can only be demonstrated once! This means we need to know Jesus came, and that is the first thing most Christians have been coached to focus on. However, it is not the end. One of the main reasons Christians can believe so easily that the Jews and the Law's representation can be replaced, ended, and/or ignored is because we are so focused on the beginning of things we can't seem to look to the day by day continuance of what we've begun. As we did in our last segment, we can look to the words we read right at the beginnings of the church, and see the apostles and ministers of the Gospel in general warning about how much people needed to stick to what they had been taught at the first! (Heb. 3:14-19, I Jn. 2:18-29) Why? Because the problem the chosen nation had is the same problem people who call themselves Christians have. We want something new or to make what we have more convenient. Instead of focusing on how to apply what we know to how we must live as life keeps swirling around us, we want to have new things that we feel fit in better with how we now want to live.

At times people can even claim to be reaching back to the wisdom of "older" religions to gain new knowledge, but there is nothing truly new under the sun! (Eccl. 1:9) The truth is, we just want to allow our emotions to sway how we think and feel at any given moment, and we want the lifestyle our religion tells us we should live to go along with those feelings. Each generation has trouble not kicking against what their parents did, if for no other reason than, it's what our parents did! However, none of this is what living for God is about. A

relationship with God is what it is about and that is a continual thing that only changes because we need to grow! A big reason God gave Israel the Law with all its statutes is to show how much this relationship needs constant consideration. For Israel following the law creates a life where not only are there feasts and events that need to be observed throughout the year, but sacrifices to be mindful to bring for all sorts of personal events and reasons in one's life. The Law goes so deep into reminding the individuals of the nation about their walk with God that even everyday things necessary for survival do not escape this truth. If, for health or other reasons, you have ever tried to keep yourself on a specific diet, you know how hard it can be to adjust your life to such a thing. There are all kinds of things all through the day that may make it difficult to stay on. Most would think of temptation to eat more than what you should or have foods you really enjoy but shouldn't have. However, it is also the simple inconvenience of not fitting in at times. If coworkers are going out for lunch and want you to come, it has to be a place where you can get what your diet requires. If that is not automatically the case, you have to suggest a different place, tell them you can't go, or go and eat little to nothing if you do. If your diet is for a reason others do not understand or agree with, they may not like this.

These problems and more are what make one stop or "cheat" when on a diet of some kind. However, as a Jew who has God telling them what they are to eat it is not just a matter of cheating, it's a matter of disobedience to God to break kosher law. This brings an even bigger factor in one's everyday life as to what it might mean to sacrifice everything in order to follow God

than bringing animal sacrifices to the temple would. Even without the temple the Jews still have this to follow. In living among a world, not just on their own land, which does not follow these rules, that is harder than God intended it to be by far! That being said, this just stands to illustrate the way every true believer must live on a number of levels. What God has asked of us can be very general to what is righteous but still uncommon among the world's lifestyle. Then there are those things that because of our personality, circumstance, maybe ministry work, we must avoid in spite of it not being required of anyone else we know, believer or non. Abraham certainly faced that when asked to take his son and sacrifice him! Out of those who knew God, how many would believe God would ask such a thing? Of those who do not listen to God you have anything from those who would simply not accept it was justified by the excuse God asked it of you, all the way to those who did it on a regular basis to appease their gods. The latter of those two extremes is why many who knew The One True God might have said Abraham was crazy for thinking God would ask this of him. If you're thinking he did not have to face such people living in the isolation of Canaan, there is the fact his own servants might have found it quite odd indeed! The point is, we just never know who will judge us, tempt us, make it hard for us, etc. to follow what God has asked, but that is never an excuse for not doing all we can to make it as God asks.

These are the precepts of the Law and what it's trying to teach us. Not just the big picture of how Jesus would one day come and sacrifice Himself. For those who already

know God, the Gospel is just the confirmation that God would do what we should have known God would do. For those who do not know God, the message of Jesus' work is only the beginning of their knowledge in God, but beginnings are just that - beginnings. We like to talk about how it will all end and the reward we shall receive, but how do we get that reward? By living through whatever the day by day middle part of this whole walk brings! That point is far more the emphasis of the Law than any other. Another reason people want to believe the Law has ended with Jesus is because they simply do not want to have to argue about if they need to follow all its daily eating and such principles. Well, relax because if you're outside the Jewish nation, you were not asked to. However, what it demonstrates is asked of you, and that can be far more difficult than attempting to eat just the right things!

This is where Israel had come by the time of Jesus and the beginnings of the early church. It's pretty clear the nation was not at the beginnings of what they had been asked to be, but they also were not at the end of their usefulness as a nation, and neither was/is the Law. How many or how official it might or might not be that the chosen nation accepted Jesus as The Messiah only changed in what capacity they would work post Jesus' first appearing. As we talked about before, one of the biggest things would be that they would not have the support of those who followed Jesus all across the world in maintaining the temple, Jerusalem, and the nation as a whole. Because it has been looked at through such judgmental eyes, especially by those who claim to follow

Jesus, that the Jews did not choose to accept Jesus as a whole, we see not only lack of support but conflict. In some ways this conflict of believers in Jesus versus Jews who felt it had to be stamped out, might have been part of the reason the nation became so vulnerable to what came next.

At the point in history we are talking about, the Jews had a lot of reasons to feel both secure and insecure. One might ask if that was not always the case, but not really. There were certainly times the Jews felt insecure due to being in all-out turmoil with empires or other nations, but the relationship between the Jews and Romans, no matter how derided it was by the Jews, was fairly safe. The nation had many times when they were subjects of another empire, but that empire never really protected them either. It was like the worst of all the worlds. This is shown in probably no greater way than the time we covered that led up to Hanukkah. The Greeks were attempting to push their cultural ways on everyone, and outlawing the ways of God was their way of attempting to do this among the Jews. However, one of the main reasons the Greeks were doing this had to do with attempting to solidify their own power over what they thought of as the world, in an attempt to settle conflict of opposing cultures and enemies of all kinds.

Almost the entire time the Jews were under what history considers Greek rule, they were on the frontier of conflict between competing rulers. The Jews also had the internal conflict of those who wanted to go the Greek way and those who wanted to stay with tradition. It was nothing but bad, and while the retaking of the temple was a great event, it by no means settled the conflict as a whole. Israel gaining a certain amount of

freedom from Greek rule was both good and bad. It is one thing to gain ground, it is another to hold it! Which one is the better life to live under can only be judged by those living under the circumstances at the moment. Now, when it comes to what was going on with the nation by the time of Jesus, there was little conflict other than what the Jews brought for themselves on many levels. Don't get me wrong, I'm not suggesting their situation was what one would want, but forces outside the Roman Empire could not really threaten the Jews. Israel set safely inside the boundaries of the Roman Empire, and while Rome had its share of internal conflict, those conflicts were different from the Greeks by far. Political conflicts that led to war in different places, which in the end settled who went on to be in power, were very different from the constant conflict such as the Greeks had where competing parties were always tugging back and forth. Due to the nature of how the Jews had become a part of the Roman Empire, there was also, at the very least, a mask of friendship between Jerusalem and Rome. Even when the conflict between them became so great that the temple was destroyed by the Roman army, that particular thing was a violation of orders from Rome. The temple was not to be touched, but circumstances did not make that the reality.

Stepping back, we have already covered most of the information that tells us how Judea became part of the Roman Empire, but other small facts should help us understand how this was looked at from the Roman point of view, which is important. On many occasions it's easy to simply think of the Romans as just another invading power that took over Israel, but if we go

back in our study, we remember that as the Maccabees did their thing they reached out to the Romans on more than one occasion for their intervention. Now, the Romans were always good at only doing what was in their best interests, but one big difference between the Greeks and the Romans is that the Romans thought it in their best interests to appease the Jews if they could. Remember what you read about Jesus' trial before Pilate. How in not wanting to kill Jesus, Pilate turned to the people at large for help. This is because as the Roman leader it was his job to keep the peace. This was not to be done by sacrificing Roman supremacy, but in a matter such as Jesus, Pilate had a perfect case on his hands that seemed not to effect anything but the peace going forward from that day! Thus, Pilate wanted to turn to the people because he believed the people would give him the excuse he needed before the religious rulers to tell them he would do nothing to Jesus and they had better not as well. If the Sanhedrin was truly the friends of Rome, as they came to Pilate with Jesus claiming to be, then not executing Jesus in light of the will of the people would be something they should agree with! However, what really brought this clever idea to Pilate's mind was the fact it was custom to garner good will among the Jews at the time of the Passover, by Rome granting them one prisoner of their choosing to be set free from Rome's custody.

This was a clear way of saying, we don't care if the person even turns out to be some one we think will cause rebellion, if that's what the people want we are gracious enough to allow it. Rome was an empire masquerading as a Republic you know!

However, this way of thinking on the part of the Romans not only caused them to not do what the Greeks did, in attempting to outlaw God's Law, but Julius Caesar had actually recognized Judaism as an official religion of the empire. Augustus would also recognize this same policy in the empire, and so it was very well known that persecuting Jews for the sake of being Jewish was not ordained by Rome, at least not officially, and this long before Jesus arrived on the scene. The conflict between Rome and the Jews did not arise because Rome failed to be strong enough to protect Judea or because the Romans attempted to outlaw God's Law. The conflict came over completely political arguments and incidents of what Jews saw as mistreatment.

Again, none of this is to say that the Jews were treated quite well under the Romans, but considering the circumstances and turmoil of the preceding centuries, it was not that bad. After, what the religious leadership saw as disposing of Christ, the work to attempt to destroy the growing church became a priority for them. However, in my opinion this unchecked power also caused the leaders to think of themselves more highly than they ought to have thought. The religion of the Jews was freely practiced in the empire, even in Rome itself, but the Jewish leadership never really did stop to think about how persecuting what seemed to be nothing more than an offshoot of Judaism might come back to bite them!

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

this until the water was spent, and this is interesting. Why? Because the bottle part was more the important item than the water in it. One might find this strange, but anyone who knows what it's like to travel on foot for any distance knows how fast water goes. When you are told to take plenty of water with you as you go out on a hike or the like, one is not being told to take just what you think you'd drink over the average time period you expect to be out. This instruction is specifically about how you need to have more than that in order to survive the unexpected!

Since Abraham had no idea where Hagar would go, the only thing that could have been expected of her journey is that they would follow a path first and foremost which would bring them to water. This is especially true considering the climate they were going out into, and this was not unfamiliar ground to Hagar. She had traveled with Abraham as he sojourned this land, and she herself was from Egypt. Surely she knew where a source of water was and understood they needed to get to it before the water in the bottle ran out! Thus, if they were wandering aimlessly as the words indicate they did, it does not mean Hagar had no plan; it means Hagar's plan was to lay down and die! This might seem to conflict with what I just said about her caring for Ishmael. What kind of mother takes her son out to die just because she is ready to give up? However, we should consider how much this shows that Ishmael was willing, if not insistent, on staying with her. We are told specifically that Hagar chose to go out and wander, that did not have to be the case for Ishmael. He may

have been young still but not an idiot!

Ishmael himself had been in the place of Abraham's first-born son for many years, and with the vastness of Abraham's wealth and possessions, you don't think Ishmael knew the land? What son of a king does not know his father's business? This brings new light to the idea Hagar "cast" Ishmael under a shrub. Instead of the innocent baby/child many people think of being cast under a shrub to spend his last few moments of life dying of dehydration, which his mother could not bear to watch, we have a different picture. That picture is one of an almost adult son who would not leave his mother to die in the wilderness where she insisted on wandering around in spite of knowing where she needed to go to get water. Hagar, thinking it best her son leave a washed-up old bondswoman who had lost her position in a great house, was determined to allow the elements to take her life. However, her son would not leave her to do so. Thus, they had both wandered around until there was no water left and it would seem too far from any source to get to it. They were both tired and dehydrated. Ishmael had likely insisted his mother drink most of the water they had, as being more in the prime of his life, he knew she needed it more than he.

Finally, in her frustration, Hagar forces her son to sit down in the shade of what little vegetation there was in this area, as she goes away just far enough not to be out of his sight but out of his ability to hear her. Verse 16 tells us she went a "bowshot" away, which in reference to the day would not have been too far. I've heard people preach these verses as if Hagar didn't want to see her child die but was unwilling to go

far enough to not know what came of him completely. This they do in an attempt to explain how a mother who didn't want to see her child's death wouldn't just leave and keep on walking. Another way I've heard it looked at is that she too was so near death that she could go no further. We love to make this so dramatic! However, it's not all that. The two were no doubt getting dehydrated by this point, but Hagar knew if she went far enough away from Ishmael that she was out of his sight or getting close to it, he would just do what he could to get up and follow her. Thus, she stays in sight but out of ear shot because she wanted time to speak with God more candidly than she would have in front of Ishmael!

Oh, now there's a sermon! This I could spend many pages teaching on! Jesus told us that when we pray we should go into our prayer closet and The God Who hears us in secret will reward us openly. (Matt. 6:5-6) When Jesus talked about this He did so from the perspective that many people want to pray out in the open so they can use their time of "worshiping" God to proclaim how blessed they are, the insinuation of which is, "See what a good follower of God I am?" They also want to proclaim all the ways in which they have done good works; of course, all in the light they did them for God and should be thought highly of for it. Jesus told us to put away even the temptation to do such a thing, much less intentionally pray in order to do so, by just keeping our prayers between us and God. Does this mean we should not pray when others are around or in public in general? Absolutely not, but we should never do what Jesus is teaching us not to do by

keeping our main prayer life personal. This means what we pray in the open should only be a minor fraction of what we do in private, no matter how much we feel we pray before other people!

While that is what Jesus was mainly speaking to there is another aspect as to why this is a good thing. None of us are perfect, but God wants us to work in that direction. This is shown even in the life of Abraham at times. Why do we know Abraham was not perfect? Because his life is laid out for us in the Word of God. As much as I want to be a servant of God in every way I possibly can, I would hate to have the details of my life laid out for all to see! It would seem the basics of our mistakes will be laid bear before all when we stand before The Lord, and that should be enough to make us all stop and think twice before we take actions we know we should not. (Rev. 20:11-15) However, even when we stand before God we will not be talking about our deeds being written in a book which generation after generation will read over and over! The point is we all have things we need to talk to God about, and if others have to hear every word we say, especially if we are praying in the open for the sake of making ourselves look good, we are not going to be completely honest in confessing our sins. Confessing our sins is what we need to do in order for God to forgive us our sins and for us to show we understand we have sinned so we can avoid it in the future. (I Jn. 1:8-10)

At times this has to do with just expressing how we feel with the respect of knowing it is only us and God who are

listening. This was the process Hagar was going through. A caring mother would not leave her dying child by going far off to pray. Maybe one who has not served God would, out of the desperation of her heart, and then only because calling out to God, Whom she does not necessarily completely believe in the existence of, is a last resort. However, that is not who Hagar was! Hagar knew God and she wants to go off to talk to God by herself because of two main factors. First, whether she is completely aware of it or not, she was likely feeling conviction over the choice she had made. Because her son would not leave her, the best she could hope for was that she would collapse and he would end up using the remainder of his strength to get her help, whether by carrying her or trying to go and get back to her. Worse case scenario is that he gives out first. He was likely too large for her to carry, and unless she was simply willing to let him die she would have to go and try to get back to him in time! This just wasn't working out for her, and she knew this had all come about because she had chose to do the wrong thing to begin with!

The second reason Hagar needed the privacy is what I was saying; she was not sure exactly what she would say to God or how she would say it. She was struggling with the conviction of making a mistake and the constant human emotion that may prove more than anything how much we all know God exists! Humans seem to never fail, no matter how much they insist there is no God, to get mad at God when things don't go their way. We don't let God make choices for our lives, in that we don't allow Him the freedom to lead us as we go or even listen when He steps in more “uninvited,” so to

speak. Thus, if we do not want God telling us what to do, what right do we have to tell others they must? The answer is we do not. This is a contradiction in our head, which is brought on by selfishness. We can get ourselves into things because we don't want God to tell us anything, and at the same time be mad He didn't make others do something different that would have given us what we want. So what do we show we really want? For God to be just for us and make everything we want the reality no matter how much that forces others to do things they don't want to do!

This is why we must love God first and more than ourselves. The second commandment is like unto this in that we must love others as ourselves. (Mark 12:28-31) In light of what I just covered we should see how much that makes sense. We should follow God in our own lives no matter what others choose to do, and we should not expect God to force others, nor should we attempt to force others, to do what benefits us, especially if it is not something we don't expect of ourselves. In spite of these truths, people still get mad at God all the time. I'm sure some would argue Hagar had every right to be mad because if it had not been God's will she be kicked out of Abraham's house, they would not be in this mess. However, if Abraham and Sarah had believed God they never would have used Hagar as a surrogate, meaning she would not have had Ishmael, meaning she would never have been kicked out for that reason. Thus, should she be mad at Abraham and Sarah? Maybe at God for telling them something so unbelievable that they chose to use her in this way? The skies the limit because we all make mistakes, and the

bottom line is that mistakes cost us, and many times others around us.

No, Hagar had made a mistake of her own. She could blame anyone she wanted to, even God, but it would not change the fact she had led herself into the direct problem at hand. No matter how much Hagar might have wanted or feared she would simply end up being angry with God, she knew enough to keep it between her and God. She did not want to make it an issue that involved her son or affected his faith. In the end, she did quite well in that she did not show anger toward God for putting her into this situation. We should also note she did not ask for her life to be spared. This is extra confirmation she was very caring for her son in only focusing on him. Other than that she simply could not have cared about her life to begin with. Either way, what she asks is for her not to see her son die. If we think of Ishmael as a child, we think of this as being that he would die soon, but if we understand how old he was, we see it differently. She was going to be the reason her son died if they could not get out of this mess she had gotten them into, either because they both died together or because he died trying to save her. This no doubt was in her mind and she wanted God to do something about it for Ishmael's sake.

What was it she was asking for her sake? Well, if he did get out of this wilderness to go on with his life, she did not want to see it. The pain and grief she felt at this point was so great she could not see a way forward that would be the life she wanted and no doubt had imagined for him. It is typical for parents, when their child is

hurt or not doing well in some way, to feel it is their fault, and Hagar was no doubt feeling this. She was feeling that Ishmael would do better off without her, and she did not want her being with him or the choices she might make to be the reason his life did turn out bad. She simply wanted to die, and if Ishmael didn't turn out so great she would not have to see it. If it turned out good after she was gone, her thought was that it likely had to do with her not being there. These are the typical feelings of regret, remorse, grief, etc., and Hagar was a human just as you and I. This was Hagar's cry, and after getting that out all she could do was cry.

So what did God have to say? Did He grant her request? No, verse 17 tells us God heard Ishmael's cry! If Ishmael is not a baby crying for his mother, then what does this mean? It means Hagar was not the only one who was crying out to God! Now, we are not told what Ishmael said, but think about it. What are the facts? Hagar wanted to die, did Ishmael? I doubt it, but even if he did and that's what he prayed for, God had told Abraham Ishmael would be a nation. This he could not become if he died in the wilderness at this point. So if that is what Ishmael wanted, I don't think God's response is the answer to it. No, Ishmael asked God that he be allowed to go on with his life, but with one major thing included. Ishmael prayed that his mother survive and be there for him. That at that time when he had just lost his father in almost the same way as death, maybe in a worse way by many accounts, he would still have the love and care of his mother!

Until next time, Shalom!

and to die is gain! With that, Moses begins to wrap up his life as the one who has been leading them. He tells the people he is at this point 120 years old. This is the exact length that God told Noah before the flood man's life would be capped at. (Gen. 6:3) Even by the time of Moses people were not living that long, but God had prolonged Moses' days for the purpose of serving Him. Now was the time for that service to be passed on to another as Moses had been told he would not cross over Jordan. However, Moses emphasizes how much that does not matter because what was important is that God go over with them. Joshua would lead them on, but no matter what man they might have leading them, it has been and always would be God Who would bring the victory for Israel. Because of this, Israel was not to be afraid of the people in the land. God would give them the victory over those people just as Moses had told them He would, and as had been demonstrated when overcoming the kings who fought Israel on this east side of Jordan. Then Moses calls for Joshua to come up before the people as Moses instructs him with much the same words he had used to speak to the people on many occasions; telling Joshua to be strong and of good courage for God would go before him.

Then it is here we see the specific information that Moses had written this Law of God out and he physically gives it to the priests to care for and eventually copy. This is the Bible confirming to us what some say can not be, which is that the Law was written from that day. Many contend it was nothing more than oral traditions passed down from one generation to the next, but that is to miss the point. If it had not become necessary for the Laws to be written down and just as

Moses said, be before the physical eyes of men, God would not have brought all this about when He did. Thus, no matter what some may say about writing not being available at the time and/or other excuses, the Law was written on more than just stone. The other fact we are given is that the Law was to be rehearsed over and over by the people and the priests. However, aside from how much or how little that might get done among the nation, Moses instructs that every seven years the priests were to bring out the entire copy of the Law, in its written form, and read it before the people. This would not be done before just the men, but also the women, children, and even those who were not of the nation who lived and/or worked among them. All, both Jew and non-Jew, were to hear the Law read so that any part they had not remembered could be a reminder, and any part they had been thinking or quoting incorrectly could be corrected. This would help each generation remain in the purity of the Law and fear The Lord!

Next, God instructs Moses that his time was about up, and he was to bring Joshua to the tabernacle so God could specifically give Joshua the burden Moses had been carrying all these long years. As Moses and Joshua came and presented themselves before the tabernacle, we are told God appears to all within sight as the familiar pillar of cloud over the place. As Moses and Joshua commune with God, He tells them how the people will do exactly what Moses had been telling them they could not do if they wanted to live on the land and be blessed. God says the people would forget Him and go after false gods just as other people do. It was only a matter of time before this would happen, but God said it was even now in the hearts of the people before they

crossed over to take the promised land. Thus, Moses was to compose a song to give to Israel that very day, concerning how the nation would do this and suffer the very consequences Moses had warned them about over and over. The people would forget the Law because they would stop reading It and forget It even existed. However, a national song would go deep into even human culture and persist in the minds of the people. One day they would find themselves singing this song, which by then I'm sure would be something they had known since children, and the wise would look up to see the very things in the song were what was happening to the nation.

God goes on to give Joshua the charge of leading the people into the promised land, and in this we see how much Moses was speaking the words of God, for God Himself uses almost the same words about being strong and of good courage that Moses had used before the people. When Moses had finished writing the Torah, which is all five of the first books of the Bible, save the finishing pieces of Deuteronomy which chronicles Moses' death, he instructs the Levites to put a copy next to the Ark of the Covenant. This, of course, would need to be done by the priests who were given the charge to carry the Ark and put it back in place as Israel moved. While it is not described for us here, it is only reasonable to assume this copy would be kept in a box of its own in order to protect it. This very well may have been the copy (or a later version of it) that was found by the priests and brought to Josiah the king. (II Kin. 22) This was a time when the very thing Moses warns about here had happened. It was long after Moses' death and the people had forgot the Law even existed, at least in its pure form. It

is also possible this is where the tradition came from of keeping a copy of the Torah in what is called a "Torah Ark." These can be found in every synagogue and other places of worship where God's Word is kept among the Jews.

Next, Moses instructs that this threat of the people turning from God after his death was so immediate, he wants all the elders and officers of the nation to be called unto him so he may read the Torah to them and be sure they have heard it for themselves. This would be far more than the recitation Moses had just gone through with the people at large. Deuteronomy records how Moses went through all the laws in the form of reminding the people of each stipulation. This reading in the ears of the elders would be more like just reading through Genesis to Deuteronomy as we might today. The reason Moses gives for doing this are the very words God had told him about how the nation would eventually forget God's Laws. Thus, Moses wants this day to be how these words are a witness against the day they do wrong and begin to complain about God not taking care of them and/or blessing them. God is a never changing rock Who would remain solid in what He promised. Thus, when the nation did wrong in turning out of the way, they need not think God had changed or that He would not keep His promise to punish them for their wrong.

Moses also goes into that song he was instructed to write for the nation; telling the nation of how God had chosen them above all others to do His work. It starts by calling to mind the words of Genesis and how man started as Adam but eventually became many nations after man populated. This set the

basic structure for how man would live his life until the end of this world. However, out of those nations God chose Abraham, and specifically his son Isaac, and Isaac's son Jacob to become the chosen nation. It was due to God's blessings and care over this family group that they had become a people at all. No other god was part of making this happen. Only The One True God had raised them to what they were. It is of interest how much God is referred to here as The Rock, in that we find the basis of the Greek's religion clearly states their original gods were earth and sky. To these the Greeks give credit for creating the original beings who would become gods only to create others who would overcome them in becoming gods, until one day humans were formed and struggle to become gods of their own. Here God is called The Rock of our Salvation and The Rock who created us. He is also talked about from the aspect of being The Rock Who specifically formed Israel! In this Moses' words were striking at the core of man's false religion and telling Israel no matter what others thought, Israel, as humans and as a nation, owed their existence only to The One True God, Who in truth created everything and never would be overcome!

The psalm goes on to explain how Israel of all the people on the earth would cause God's anger to burn very hot if/when they chose to go after false gods. This would cause God to abhor the nation and be against it in the opposite way He had been for them. God asks them to consider how such great things could be done against other people Israel had defeated unless God had been on their side. They should consider also that the people they defeated were crushed because they did not serve the same God Israel had on its side. Thus, the gods of other people were not gods at all, if in no other way than in

comparison to The God of Israel. It is that truth which will cause Israel's victories to be a witness in the world so others will be left to ask where the gods of all these nations Israel destroyed were in not protecting them against Israel? In doing this they too will know The God of Israel is the only True God for He cannot be stopped. This song Moses told to all the people including Joshua himself. It was important the people know this song came from Moses. While it came from God Himself, the fact the nation would never stop revering Moses meant they would hold onto this song. After telling them the words of this song, Moses goes again into one last warning about how the people must follow God in order to see the blessings promised to them.

When the moment came for Moses to go, God would call him up to the high mountain of the area to see from afar the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Upon that land Moses' feet would never go, but in this last moment of life on this earth Moses' life itself would serve to show the nation an example of what he had told them over and over. For even as great as Moses had served The Lord and led this nation, this judgment would come upon Moses for one specific example of a time he failed, not just to do as God asked in detail, but in demonstrating the power and greatness of God! Even Moses himself was not deserving enough to escape this truth. On a personal level Moses understood God's reasoning for taking him home and allowing a new and younger leader to take the charge, but outwardly it would be emphasized how much this came on Moses as punishment for that one event. Moses would die on a mountain at the exact moment God took him, in much the same way his brother and first High Priest had died. (Num. 20:22-29) Aaron had failed to sanctify God before the people,

and for that God took him very early on in this journey to the promised land.

Then we are given the words with which Moses blessed the people. He begins by praising God and telling of the majestic way God brought the nation out of Egypt and gave them the Law at Mount Sinai. In this Moses calls the Law the “inheritance” of the nation, and talks about how the people of the world would come to learn from them. Moses goes on to mention each tribe specifically and speak to the blessing each would want and/or needed. Of Reuben, Moses speaks of them living and never being few in number. Of Judah, Moses prophesies of the tribe's leadership role through the house of David and speaking of the people being brought to this tribe. Also Judah was to be strong in standing on its own, only depending on God for what they could not do in facing down their enemies. Of Levi, Moses talks about them being blessed of God in always seeing the wisdom and knowledge only God can give. He speaks of their willingness to stand with him in driving out those who were sinful in the nation as they worshiped the golden calf, even refusing to spare those of their family. (Ex. 32:25-29) To them would fall the job of teaching the rest of the nation the Words of God so they could teach the world. To this Moses adds the curse that those who come against this tribe should fail to have children.

Of Benjamin, he prophesies of their blessing to be the tribe so near the temple, as even the Temple Mount itself fell within their borders originally. They also would be the only tribe to stay with Judah when the nation divided, and Judea (as it is later known) would go on to be the heart of the Jewish

nation. Moses speaks of the half tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh as coming from Joseph, and while their part in Israel would be large, Moses speaks mainly of their ability to have peace through the blessings of The Lord upon their land. Of Zebulun and Issachar, Moses speaks to their future in commerce. Zebulun would use their seaport as a major port for trade with others around the Mediterranean, and Issachar would stay on their coastline pulling in the richness of the sea to sell. Of Gad, he speaks to the fact they already had a great deal of land due to the conquest on the east of Jordan. They would also go on to keep their promise to go with the nation in defeating those on the other side of Jordan and play a major role in those battles.

The tribe of Dan would start out near the south end of the land along the coast, but in later times become a major land holder to the extreme north end of the land, even being referenced by name as a way to describe the north end of the nation. Naphtali would settle on their land and live in the peace and prosperity it would bring. They would never be a big tribe, but a very satisfied tribe living safely nestled in-between other tribes of the nation with almost no border touching an outer edge. Asher would go on to enjoy blessings in many ways, and specifically the production of oil which olives were tread out by foot to produce. They would also be strong soldiers with great endurance and ability who would be blessed with longevity. Life would go on after Moses for all the tribes and nation as a whole, but the ways of God were never to change. This was the message Moses wished to leave the nation with in as prominent a way as he could.

Let's stay in God's Word!