

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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Rachel Weeping for her Children

“Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramoth, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not” (Jeremiah 31:15).

“The moral is that self-sacrifice ensures life, a paradox which is exemplified by Jewish history” (Soncino Jewish Commentary notes on Ezekiel 16:16).

Some of the richest promises for Israel's restoration are recorded in Jeremiah 31. Here we are assured that the Lord's blessings will come upon the descendants of all twelve sons of Jacob: “At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people ... Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee” (Jeremiah 31:1, 3).

All seems light and goodness as the promises in Jeremiah 31 continue, and then we are confronted with the uncontrollable crying of Rachel weeping. We become gripped with pathos.

While this text, quoted in Matthew 2:18, is linked to Herod's slaughter of the innocents, it seems clear that “Rachel” has done much weeping both prior to this horrific crime by Herod and later during the Jewish diaspora.

RAMOTH

What is Ramoth? “Ramoth” means “an elevation.” This designation appears in many names throughout Israel. It might equate to our English use of “Heights” in geographic locations. Specifically, Ramoth Gilead has a rich history. This is the locale in which Rachel died in childbirth, bearing Benjamin. In Jeremiah 31, the prophet Jeremiah was reflecting on the political and military catastrophes which occurred in Ramoth in his own day. That tragedy occurred when Nebuchadnezzar captured the city of Jerusalem using Ramoth, about 5 miles north of Jerusalem, as his headquarters.

Ramoth then served as the staging area for Judah's long march into captivity. The journey home for the victorious Babylonian army would doubtless be more than four

months long.¹ The Babylonians would take the best of the captives deemed worthy of bringing home as booty. Hence, there was immediacy to the prophetic words for Jeremiah. Jeremiah himself was held at Ramoth, although the Babylonians showed the prophet deference and gave him a special pardon and protection (Jeremiah 40:1-3).

“Ramoth” was near the border between the tribes of Benjamin and Judah. “There is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border” (Jeremiah 31:16-17). Here was a clear promise that after the dreadful desolation there would be a return, perhaps not of the captives themselves, but of their children.

RACHEL WEEPING

There is another element in this prophetic image — Rachel weeping. Let us consider Rachel, whose name means “a ewe of the sheep.” Genesis 29:17 records that Rachel was both “beautiful” and “well-favored.” Jacob was smitten by her beauty. He worked fourteen years for Rachel's hand, and then six more to secure his own flocks. Working for twenty years in total was the price for this beauty. This posed no problem for Jacob.

The divine arrangement is one man and one woman becoming one flesh (Genesis 2:24). That is what Jacob had planned, but Divine providence permitted Laban's deception to provide for twelve sons of Israel — far more than what a healthy woman might be expected to bear in sons and daughters. The marriages of Jacob and Rachel and Leah seem not to have gone along smoothly. Leah, the less favored sister with weak eyes, was fertile,

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while the beautiful Rachel could not conceive. The Lord's providence was in this as well. We need to develop faith in the Lord's watch care over all our circumstances.

Let us turn to the account in Genesis 30; we always find the Bible paints humanity in vivid and true to life color. The narrative does not reveal a relaxed evening's welcome a man hopes for when he returns to his tent and to his beautiful wife after a long hard day of tending the flocks. Rachel says to Jacob — "Give me children, or else I die" (Genesis 30:1). This is quite a conversation opener. Not surprisingly, Jacob replies in kind — the account reads, "Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel." He asks, "Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?" (Genesis 30:6). As the story continues, we find the irritated exchange leads to a poor decision.

Bilhah, the maiden serving Rachel, became a surrogate mother. Her name, "Bilhah" means "Timid," an acceptable servant girl name. Marriage contracts from archeological digs at Nuzi, a little Southwest of modern Kirkuk in Iraq, specify that if the wife should prove childless she must provide her husband with a slave wife.² That is relevant to our considerations, because these contracts would be near to where Laban lived during that time.

The tribe of Dan came through Bilhah. Sadly, we find that Dan is so ill-favored that his very name is dropped from the 12 tribes listed in Revelation 7:5-8. Dan may picture the second death class.

Eventually, Rachel did indeed bear Joseph (Genesis 30:25-28), who became the most-favored of Jacob's sons. So here we have an interesting lesson that ties in with our theme. What is done when driven by the human passions is least favored, and what is done by waiting upon divine providence is most-favored.

We can see that eleven of the twelve sons of Jacob were born outside the borders of the land promised to father Abraham. Jacob, his wives, his children, his house, and his flocks, fled Laban to go back to Isaac. As they traveled, they were intercepted by Laban who — remarkably — was warned by God in a dream to moderate his vengeance. After one final meeting between Laban and Jacob they parted in peace, but on less than friendly terms.

Unfortunately, Rachel precipitated a crisis and unwisely endangered her life by stealing some cult idols that may possibly have served as the equivalent of title-deeds to Laban's property (Genesis 31:32). Again, from archeology, we learn that when a married daughter possesses these cult objects, her husband has a claim to her father's property.³ When Laban frantically searched the caravan for the idols, Rachel showed herself to be her father's daughter and lied to him. Laban's search proved fruitless.

Jacob then returned to the land of promise, crossing into it after he wrestled all night

with an angel. That trial established his relationship with God and the angel displaced Jacob's hip to memorialize Jacob's new walk of faith replacing his fleshly walk. At this juncture he also received the name "Israel" (Genesis 32:28), or "One who has power with God." After a few years, Jacob's name change to "Israel" was reconfirmed in Genesis 35:10, when Jacob returned to Bethel (the site where 21 years earlier he had the vision of angels ascending to and descending from heaven). It was on his travel from this site that we pick up the narrative in Genesis 35:16-20:

"They journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed ... And ... when she was in hard labour ... the midwife said unto her, 'Fear not; thou shalt have this son also.' And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing ... that she called his name **Benoni**: but his father called him **Benjamin**. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to **Ephrath**, which is **Bethlehem**. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave **unto this day**."

"Benoni" means "son of my sorrow." Jacob wisely amended the name to "Benjamin" which means "son of my right hand." Names matter. They are a source of inspiration, and having a child bear a lifetime of this burden of grief is not something that a parent should do. Nevertheless, Benoni was the dying sentiment of Rachel.

Jacob marked the site of Rachel's death in Ramoth near a great oak tree, which was known and respected by all. However, she was transported another 11 miles south to Ephrath (Bethlehem) for burial. This site was marked with a stone pillar.

Notice the sequence of events. Jacob had just received the blessing reconfirmed to him at Bethel. Then, while travelling from Bethel, his beloved Rachel began traveling in childbirth — and she died. This is not what one might expect right after receiving a blessing, but Rachel had a role to play. When trials come upon the flesh, the flesh cries out "Benoni" — the "son of my sorrow." The Spirit says, "No, this is 'Benjamin,' the 'son of my right hand.'" This grief will return as favor; this grief will accomplish something. This is what the "right hand" pictures.

BABYLONIAN EXILES

We can now see how well the expression from Jeremiah 31:15 spoke to the experiences of Israel in Jeremiah's day. Jerusalem had become the capital of the two-tribe kingdom of Judah — Leah's fourth child — and of Rachel's own beloved Benjamin. The city of Jerusalem sat on the border between the two tribes and was jointly shared by them.⁴ Mt. Zion, located in the south of Jerusalem within the boundaries of Judah, was the political and administrative capital. However, most of the city, including the temple on Mt. Moriah, fell



within the boundaries of Benjamin. Rachel was indeed weeping for her children. And her children would go to the land of the enemy — Babylon. The Lord is gracious and they were promised a return after the fall of Babylon. To confirm the restoration, Jeremiah 32 records Jeremiah buying a field from his cousin and then burying the sales contract in an earthen vessel so that it might continue “many days” until the land was restored.

THY WORK SHALL BE REWARDED

The labor or work of parents endeavoring to properly raise their children will not be lost.⁵ Rachel labored to bring Jacob an heir. She made some unwise decisions. Finally, as she was waiting upon God, Joseph was born. This was a labor, and now she was giving her life so that Benjamin could come into the world. And where does the prophet next take our narrative? We see in Jeremiah 31:18-20 that there is a special promise to Ephraim (Rachel’s grandson through Joseph), a grandson she would never meet.

Ephraim had been taken captive by the Assyrians more than a century earlier, when Sennacherib had invaded (see Isaiah 36, 37). At that time, God miraculously preserved Jerusalem and Judah through the deliverance granted to King Hezekiah. Jeremiah 31:18-20 speaks of Ephraim:

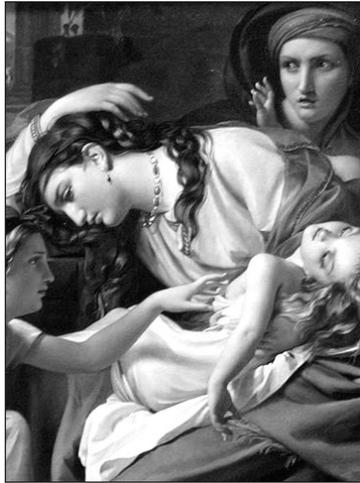
“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.”

A WOMAN SHALL COMPASS A MAN

“How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? For the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man” (Jeremiah 31:22).

Rachel could not deliver her children from grief. This very desire of her mother’s heart, the deliverance and blessing through a seed given to Jacob, was beyond her strength. However, it would be accomplished by God.

The verb “compass” has a meaning that is not completely clear in the Hebrew — that is important. In the custom of a Jewish wedding, the bride “compasses” or walks around the groom seven times. Since this is the custom at every Jewish wedding it hardly seems a “new thing.” But the marriage between Jehovah and Israel was hardly an ordinary marriage.



Weeping for the Innocents

HEROD AND THE SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS

Notice one additional thing about Rachel’s grave — the site is identified. “Rachel died, and was buried in the way to **Ephrath**, which is **Bethlehem**. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave ... the pillar of Rachel’s grave **unto this day**.”

This becomes critical later when we pick up the account in Matthew 2:16-18. “Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he

had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.”

Yes, again it was clear that a terrible and bitter disaster had fallen upon the Lord’s people. These infant children were horribly murdered and their blood was spilled in the presence of their grief-stricken mothers and fathers, and brothers and sisters. How thankful we are, brethren, for the promise of a resurrection.

Now we are begotten of a spirit nature, we are new creatures. But what about those who are used by Satan?

There is not quite an equivalency, thank God. They are not begotten to the nature of Satan, even though many willing go down the path of amoral and immoral conduct. They may feel themselves above the law, hence the Greek term “lawless.” These become mired in sin.

King Herod was one of those sociopaths who are the scourge of history. Satan stirred him up to perform this act. But Satan was not unaware that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus had slipped safely away? Satan knew.

However, the Roman government had constraints upon governors and Herod had to abide by Roman regulations. The Romans liked law and due process; the slaughter in Bethlehem had to be hushed up. Herod was satisfied that his purpose of thwarting a plan laid out in the stars had been accomplished, and now he needed to keep Rome from asking what was going on with such a depraved act unworthy of sensible Roman civil order.

But the question is, “Is the Slaughter of the Innocents the only fulfillment we should link to the weeping of Rachel?” The Matthew account says that the Slaughter of Innocents fulfilled the words of Jeremiah. But what does history reveal? There is a much more current fulfillment.

Consider the 1st World War and the Balfour declaration. The Jewish Community recognizes that World War 1 broke out on the 9th of Av. This is a day of national mourning for disasters such as the forty years of wandering in

the wilderness, the destructions of both the first and second temples, the failed Bar Kochba rebellion, and the expulsion of all Jews from Spain by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1492. Prophetic expectation was that World War 1 marked the end of Gentile dominion. The British capture of Palestine from the Turks provided not only the further opening of Israel to Jews, but the Balfour declaration favoring a Jewish state.

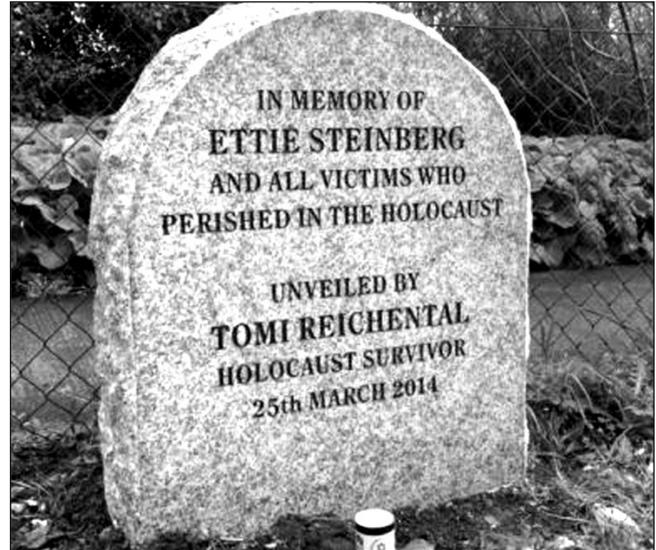
Then came the Holocaust. The horrors of the holocaust were orchestrated by one of the most evil sociopaths of the 20th century. Hitler accomplished the slaughter of over six million Jews. This scale was far larger than Herod's murder of Jewish babies. Could not this be an even greater fulfillment of Rachel weeping for her children?

Every good heart recoils at memories of the Holocaust. Seemingly, evil triumphed. Within the Jewish community itself, "Never Again" has become the watchword. For some Jews, the magnitude of the evil has shaken their faith. They say, "If there is a God, how could such evil have taken place?" To comfort these wounded hearts, Rabbi Benjamin Blech writes:⁶

"How far are we from the long-awaited conclusion of Gods revelation to mankind ... ? Unfortunately, we do not know when the Messiah will come. But the rabbis have prophetically left us one clue to alert us to his imminent arrival. It is recorded in the Midrash by way of a fascinating parable (Midrash Tehillim (Buber), mizmor 68):

"A student once asked his rabbi, 'We have been waiting so long for the Messiah to come, yet he still has not made his appearance. How will we, the Jewish people, know when he will at last reveal himself? What is the sign we can look for that will announce his imminent arrival?' The rabbi responded, 'I will answer you by way of a story. A father and son journeyed together on a long trek through a desert. Their destination was a faraway city. Weary from the trip, the young boy pleaded with his father to give him some kind of sign so that he might know when they were close to the final destination. In response, the father told the boy, 'This will be a sure indication before you. Remember this sign. When you will see a cemetery, you will know that the city is near.' 'This parable,' the rabbi continued to his student who had asked about a sign heralding the imminent arrival of the Messiah, 'is the answer to your question. When you will see a cemetery, you will know that redemption is near. So too did God reveal to His children that in the aftermath of being beset by horrible tragedy, death, and destruction, the Almighty will have mercy and answer the prayers of the Jews, as it is written, And the Almighty will respond to you in the day of great hardship.'

"Messianic footsteps will become heard from a distance when we see a great cemetery. The midrash did not make clear how many people had to be buried in the cemetery to qualify for the horrific event necessary to evoke God's compassion, nor did it give any reason for this disturbing



One of many memorials to the Holocaust

linkage. It simply made clear that the prelude to the final Redemption would be a Jewish graveyard unlike in magnitude any that came before it.

"Surely we are the first generation in history to grasp the full meaning of this prophecy. The Holocaust exceeded the Jewish tragedies that preceded it, in scope and in number. When it came to a close in 1945, six million Jews had perished, victims of a genocidal plan that sought to destroy the entire Jewish people from the face of the earth. It was a cemetery beyond comparison. And just three years later, in 1948, we witnessed the miraculous establishment of the State of Israel. The sign of mass destruction was soon followed by the first steps of final Redemption."

The acts of Satan against the Lord's people, Israel, after the flesh, have been and will continue to be a source of weeping. Rachel will continue to cry out for her children to exclaim with her dying breath — *Ben-oni*, "Son of my sorrows."

Jacob, as He who has power with God, will change this to *Ben-jamin* "the son of the right hand" — the circumstance which works for the greater accomplishment of our Heavenly Father's plans and purposes.

— Br. Richard Doctor

(1) This time estimate is based on the record of Ezra, who was accompanied by a much smaller force eager to reach Jerusalem. Their trip to Jerusalem took four months; "For upon the **first day of the first month** began he to go up from Babylon, and on the **first day of the fifth month** came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him" (Ezra 7:9).

(2) Gordon, C.H., *Revue Biblique*, xliv, 1935, page 35.

(3) Gordon, *op. cit.*

(4) Skein, David, "Miracle at Shiloh," *Beauties of the Truth* (August 2005).

(5) Russell, C.T, *Overland Monthly Reprint*, page 517.

(6) Blech, Benjamin, *Redemption, Then and Now*, Menorah Books, Jerusalem (2017), page 73.

Making Peace

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

What is a peacemaker? There is difference between peacemaker, and a peacekeeper. A peacekeeper wants to keep things quiet — a peacemaker is not as much concerned about quiet, as about ultimate peace. Blessed are the peacemakers.

Jesus was a peacemaker. In Romans 5:1 Paul said that we are justified by faith, and now “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus was, is, and will be, the greatest peacemaker this universe has ever seen. So when he says to us, Blessed are the peacemakers, he is saying, I want you to be like me.

If we look at the list of Beatitudes from Matthew 5:3 forward, we might see a random list of commendable qualities that we should develop and reflect. However, we suggest looking at this list in a slightly different way. We suggest that there are seven beatitudes, and seventh being “blessed are the peacemakers” — that the first six intend to lead us up to what is required to be a peacemaker — and the three statements following that, express what we might experience, in the effort.

In this case, being a peacemaker is the central theme of what our life in Christ is about. Jesus made peace. “He is our peace, who ... hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us ... so making peace” (Ephesians 2:14, 15).

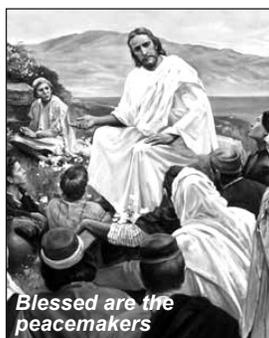
THE FIRST SIX BEATITUDES

“Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The first rung of successful peace making is humility. One cannot make peace without stepping outside of oneself, and this requires humility. As a peacemaker, the issue at hand is not you, not what you would like to be, not what you wish, not what you want to see. The issue is the unrest.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Mourning indicates a willingness to feel hurt. Those who mourn will feel comfort. Jesus wept; Jesus mourned. To be a successful peacemaker, we have to enter into the hurt, harm, and turmoil, of ourselves and others.

“Blessed are the gentle: for they shall inherit the earth.” Here Jesus tells us to use a gentle and meek spirit. Peacemakers approach life with gentleness, because they are looking for ways to solve the issues of life.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” We should have an insatiable appetite for godliness and for righteousness. Real, true, bottom-line lasting peace, cannot happen without godliness. Any other basis will eventually fail.



“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” You can see Jesus’ life in each of these beatitudes. Be like me, Jesus says. Let us emulate the mercy that Jesus showed to those around him. Mercy is a necessary feature of peace making.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Purity of conduct and mind, purity of intent and purpose, should attend our every effort. We should have Godly intentions behind our actions. “Not my will, but thy will, be done.” For a true peacemaker to be successful, their objective must be utterly selfless, in order for the peace they seek to actually work.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” Jesus is saying that he wants us to be like him. Jesus was a son of God. If we become peacemakers, we can become like him, a son of God.

CONSEQUENCES

See clearly, think righteously, and begin to act appropriately. This is not a common place to be. And to be a peacemaker, it is the power and Spirit of God that brings us to that level of ability.

Now, we see what happens. “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” You are not trying to pacify people, but problem solve. This effort is likely to bring persecution.

There is a world of difference between pacifying, and peacemaking. Jesus was the ultimate peacemaker because he solved the problem of sin in the world. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation, and will work with men in the future, to help finish solving that problem. But meantime, brethren, what do we have? We have us. And the application of being a peacemaker, absolutely, must apply here and now, among us. Not peacekeepers, but peacemakers.

“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Being persecuted for righteousness sake — that is what Jesus lived with. He was persecuted for doing good, and being righteous.

In the latter part of his ministry, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. It was then that persecution came to him with stronger, more evil, and dark intentions. These were the final experiences — now his enemies determined to kill him. They had had enough. Why? Because he was a peacemaker. “That’s it, we have got to get rid of him.” The raising of Lazarus from the dead brought the forces of darkness together. They could not stop the power of the Gospel.

Jesus completes this portion of his lesson with one final comment, in Matthew 5:12.

“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

A peacekeeper wants to reduce conflict. A peacemaker wants to refocus the consciences of those involved. It is difficult work, it is often thankless work, but it is the core of the work that Jesus came to do. The scripture said, he was our peace between us and God (Ephesians 2:14). If we walk in his footsteps, we need to make peace also. In this world, peace making may not achieve great results.

Most of us, naturally, would rather not get involved. Just ignore it, and it will go away.

If we look at those who disagree with us on this, that, or the other thing, are we **peacekeepers** with them? If so, is that what we should really be doing? **Peacemaking** is more difficult, and it is riskier. But, we submit, being a peacemaker is what Jesus wants us to do.

Blessed are the peacemakers.

— Br. Rick Suraci

Enoch

“And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (Genesis 5:23, 24).

Though Enoch lived for the remarkable length of 365 years, by the standards of his day his lifespan was relatively brief. His father Jared would live for 962 years, and Enoch’s son Methuselah would live for 969 years. Enoch was taken in a special way, as a testimony to his faith and devotion to God.

The text above says that “Enoch walked with God,” as an explanation for his being taken. This expression is used twice of Enoch, in verses 22 and 24, and otherwise appears one time only: Noah was “a just man and ... Noah walked with God” (Genesis 6:9).

It is a common view that Enoch represents the saints who also “walk with God” in a life endeavoring to express godliness. Enoch’s lifespan of 365 years connects him to the symbol of the sun, for a solar year is 365 days, apparently then as it is now. Several times in the Scriptures the symbol of the Sun is linked to the Church.

- Revelation 12:1 — the woman was clothed with the sun
- Matthew 13:43 — the Church will shine as the sun in the Kingdom
- Daniel 12:1-3 — the Church will shine as the brightness of the firmament
- Revelation 19:17 — an angel standing in the sun represents the Church complete.

The distinction between Enoch and Elijah (one taken quietly, secretly, unannounced, and the other taken with great anticipation amid commotion and spectacle) perhaps

is the difference between the saints raised quietly at the return of Christ (Enoch), and those raised at the end of the harvest, taken amid the great commotion of the final judgments impending on the old world before the Kingdom is established.

METHUSELAH

The next patriarch was Methuselah, who lived 969 years. A little computation shows that Methuselah’s last year was the same as the year in which the flood came. Methuselah was 187 when Lamech was born, Lamech was 182 when Noah was born, and the flood came in year number 600 of Noah’s life. The sum of these — 187, 182, 600 — is 969 years, which means year number 969 was the year during which the Flood began. But the same number also measures the years of Methuselah. Thus Methuselah’s final year was also the year of the Flood.

The name Methuselah probably expresses this point. It is made of two parts, Math, from Mathay, which Strong’s Concordance says means “to extend ... time,” and shelach, from shalach, which Strong’s says is “a primitive root; to send ... in a great variety of applications.” In other words, God would “send” something after an extension of time. Probably what Enoch had in mind with this name, is that God’s judgment would be sent after the time of Enoch’s young boy, Methuselah.

In any case, that is what occurred. God’s judgment of the Flood came in the year of Methuselah’s passing. We presume that Methuselah died early in that year, before the Flood came about midway in the second month. Otherwise Noah might have been expected to beckon his grandfather Methuselah to come into the ark with them.

Apparently Enoch knew that a judgment against his world was impending, because this is reflected by the Apostle Jude, in Jude 14, 15. “Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied ... Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

This prophecy is not recorded in the Old Testament. However, it is recorded in a Jewish writing extant in Jude’s day, called *The Book of Enoch*. Evidently the prophecy that Jude refers to was something circulating in Jewish culture, perhaps passed down from long ago, even though the writing itself is “estimated to date from about 300 BC” in its earliest parts (Wikipedia).

Commentaries also note that Jude 9 refers to something that another Jewish book of his time contains. The book was called *The Assumption of Moses*, and refers to an incident after the death of Moses when “Michael the archangel [was] contending with the devil ... about the body of Moses.” It is interesting to observe that as Moses represents Jesus, and Enoch represents the Church, in

both cases there was a special taking away of the body, something God arranged specially due to the faith of each.

Recall also that the body of Jesus was absent from the tomb, missing, never located, just as with the body of Moses. The taking of Enoch so that his body was not found parallels what happened with Elijah, another picture of the saints, whose body also was not found. Perhaps the lesson in each case is that God has arranged for a heavenly reward in each case, as indicated by the absence of any fleshly remains, because their future hopes (represented by bones) are heavenly, rather than earthly.

Methuselah, like Elijah, we think represents the saints taken at the end of the harvest. Today in the Christian world there is an expectation that we are in the period of history when the Church class will be taken. Among brethren, who are better informed concerning prophecy and events, there is also such an expectation. Most all brethren recognize that being in the latter stage of the Harvest, or closing period of the Gospel Age, we may have a generation or so remaining before the taking to glory of the last remaining saints.

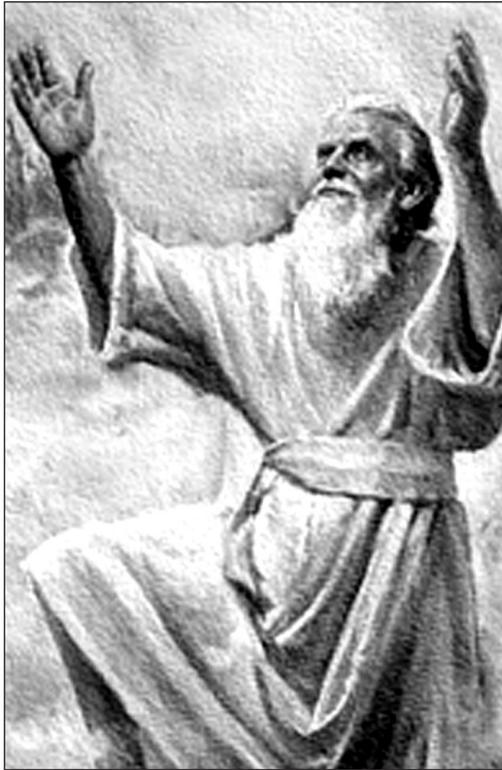
LAMECH

If Enoch represents the saints taken quietly after the return of Christ, and Methuselah represents those living to the end of the harvest, then what of those who live into the parousia, but not to its end? That includes a large number of brethren, inasmuch as the harvest has extended now for 144 years so far, with more years expected.

Perhaps these are represented by Lamech, the son of Methuselah. Lamech lived for 777 years. This number, like the 365 of Enoch, is a striking one. It reminds us of the famous 666 number in Revelation 13:18, which represents the false church. By comparison, 777, a purer and better number in symbolism, represents the true Church. Lamech was born when Methuselah was 187 years old. This means that Lamech passed away 5 years before the Flood (969 minus 187 minus 777 = 5 years).

The number five represents the New Creation, as for example in the five wise virgins of Matthew 25:1, the five posts at the entrance of the holy, and the 5000 at the first feeding of the multitudes. So it is a fitting number to associate with Lamech, if Lamech pictures the Church.

If we take both of these numbers into consideration, using the product of 777×5 , we get a large but meaningful



Enoch, the seventh from Adam, represents the saints.

number. It is 3885. That probably does not trigger a recollection from the scriptures at first. However, it is the sum of three well known prophetic periods that appear in Daniel chapter 12, as leading toward the return of Christ, and the raising of the saints. Namely, the 1260, 1290, and 1335 days of Daniel. The sum of these three numbers is — 3885. We think this is a numerical connector to the “Lamech” class, those of the Church who live into the time marked by these three time prophecies. Lamech represents those who live into, or within, the Harvest, but not to its close.

Thus the three patriarchs before the Flood represent all of the saints — those who died before the return of Christ, those who complete their course during the harvest, and those who are “taken” at the close of the harvest.

EVERLASTING JUDGMENT

The Flood was intended to check the downward progress of mankind. It also was a means of alerting mankind, then and always, to the fact that ultimately there will be a final judgment for every individual, a lasting judgment, that will be final, either for eternal life, or everlasting death. It is vital for mankind to recognize the importance of final judgment. The devastating loss at the time of the Flood serves to underscore the issue of divine judgment in an intense way, helping to seal in the mind of every attentive soul, the vital necessity for personal reformation and godliness.

Peter refers to “the longsuffering of God [who] waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing” (1 Peter 3:20). That was indeed long suffering. As shown above, the judgment of the Flood was impending for at least the lifespan of Methuselah, 969 years, which was only 31 years shy of a full 1000 years.

THE NEPHILIM

During those years before the Flood, Genesis 6:2 says that “the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they choose ... There were giants [nephilim] in those days; and also after that [later in this period, but still before the Flood], when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old.”

These “sons of God” evidently were fallen angels (compare Job 1:6). That is the construction that seems

to be put upon this experience both by Peter and Jude (1 Peter 3:19, 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6). The Hebrew term nephilim (Strong's 5303) means "a feller, i.e. a bully or tyrant," indicating the character of these progeny of the hybrid children that were an unauthorized mixture from materialized angels, and women from Adam's race whom the fallen angels cohabited with. Though Genesis 6:2 speaks of things as from a human point of view, it is unlikely that the motivation for the fallen angels was physical attraction, as much as perhaps stimulating vigor into a population that they could exercise control over, and thus have something of a dominion. Being unauthorized of God, their progeny, who would have died in the flood, evidently will not be raised. The fallen angels themselves could simply dematerialize, but were prevented from any further such conduct by the metaphorical "chains of darkness" put upon them thereafter.

The word nephilim appears twice after the Flood referring to large and formidable foes of the Israelites (Numbers 13:33). Apparently these also were men of strength and ill will. But these were sons of Anak, a local resident, and would not have been the sons of fallen angels.

Evidently the judgment against the earlier nephilim, who were from fallen angels,¹ was in view when God told Enoch of the coming judgment. This indicates that these nephilim were extant in early in Enoch's days. For Enoch was 65 years of age when his son Methuselah was born, and his name reflects the judgment impending. The Book of Enoch says that some of these "descended [in the days] of Jared," the father of Enoch (chapter six, verse six). We do not credit various things in this apocryphal writing,² but this testimony would be at least consistent with what we deduce from Genesis.

THE SEVENTH FROM ADAM

Jude refers to Enoch as the "seventh from Adam," and counting the generations listed in Genesis chapter five also shows that Enoch was the seventh, beginning with Adam as the first. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:45-47 tells us that Adam, our first life-giver, was a picture of Jesus as our second life-giver. "The second man is the Lord from heaven" (1 Corinthians 15:47).

If Enoch represents those risen after the return of Christ, at the beginning of the seventh stage of the Gospel Age, which began with Jesus, then Enoch being the "seventh" from Adam connects with the saints who were taken when the "seventh" stage from our heavenly Adam, arrived.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE FLOOD

Other than those who boarded the ark, the entire world, all humans and also all nephilim, were carried away by the Flood. When Peter and Jude referred to impending judgment, they wrote at a time not long from the end of

the Jewish system. For 40 years, more or less, God had withheld judgment, but it would fall. Jesus said of that judgment, that "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matthew 24:34).

These passages have a deeper fulfillment in our day, of a final judgment of this world, introducing the Kingdom of Christ. It has proved to be longer than a single literal generation. Perhaps the "generation" in this case intended to take us to the beginning of the time of trouble in 1914. Or perhaps "this generation" refers to the entire Church class, the "children which God hath given" Jesus (Hebrews 2:13).³ Or perhaps that part of Jesus' words applied to the immediate judgment waiting in his days, but does not carry forward to our day.

In any case, every evidence is that the judgments of God are in progress, and it seems clear from the advance of events that once more we can say, the present generation will not pass before the final judgments introduce the Kingdom of Christ. God has been "longsuffering" in each case. But God is "not slack concerning his promise," as we might count it concerning men. The reason for any seeming delay [for there is no actual delay in God's plans] is that God "is longsuffering to usward" (2 Peter 3:9). Every one of God's people living today, and walking the Narrow Way of sacrifice, can give thanks for the extended time. It gives us further opportunity for living a God-fearing life, and following the path of Jesus as our example of virtue, before the closing of our heavenly calling.

However — the time approaches. Armageddon is at hand. Our best judgment is that five of Revelation's "seven last plagues" have come and gone, and the sixth is impending, perhaps within a decade or so. This will take some time to unfold. Judging by Exodus 12:29, the firstborn class will be "passed over" from death to life, just before, or about the time, that the last plague is released.

In the Elijah picture, we have seen since 1914 and the outbreak of the "time of trouble," the winds of war through 1945, the "earthquake" breaking up the former colonial powers through 1989 with the release of several Soviet satellite nations, and the "fire" of Islamic insurgency that evidently will continue to stir the scene until the final conflict.

Brethren have long believed the Kingdom would be established "soon." The time has been extended. But the extension of time also gives us more milestones to observe in the further unfolding of prophecy. The time is indeed nearing.

— *Br. David Rice*

(1) An editor's suggestion: "or maybe the nephilim are fallen ones of Adamic stock, while the sons of angels are the "men of renown."

(2) An editor's comment: "especially after chapter 11."

(3) An editor's comment: "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation" (Psalms 22:30) suggests that the 144,000 are all sons of the same Father and are therefore one generation.