

The following Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships.

Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of August 13, 2016

The person conducting the Sabbath service should open services with two or three hymns, or psalms, followed by an opening prayer acknowledging that two or three (or more) are gathered together in Christ Jesus' name, and inviting the Lord to be with them.

YHWH spoke to Moses, saying, "Avenge the people of Israel on the Midianites. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people." So Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian to execute the Lord's vengeance on Midian. You shall send a thousand from each of the tribes of Israel to the war." So there were provided, out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand from each tribe, together with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the vessels of the sanctuary and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand. ...

Then they brought the captives and the plunder and the spoil to Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the people of Israel, at the camp on the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho. Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the chiefs of the congregation went to meet them outside the camp. And Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, who had come from service in the war. Moses said to them, "Have you let all the women live? Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the Lord. Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man by lying with him. But all the young girls who have not known man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves. (Num 31:1–6, 12–18)

On the plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho—where the people of Jericho would know what happened to the people of Midian—Moses' last command was sending men against Midian, sacking their cities and wiping out the people. But in the Lord's command to Moses (as endtime disciples receive this redacted narrative), the Lord says nothing to Moses about sending the vessels of the sanctuary with the 12,000 men of arms, not one of whom was missing in this wiping out of a people (Num 31:49). So why did Moses place at risk the vessels of the sanctuary? Or was there any risk in the undertaking?

Let us jump forward approximately four centuries to Eli and his sons as judges of Israel:

Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines. They encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek. The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of battle. And when the troops came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies." So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. As soon as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, "What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" And when they learned that the ark of the Lord had come to the camp, the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "A god has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness. *Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; be men and fight.*" So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died. (1 Sam 4:1–11 emphasis added)

Taking the ark of God unto the battlefield did not benefit Israel, who had been slaves to the Philistines although this little detail is usually overlooked by Christian pastors who are more interested in cherry-picking verses about materially prospering from the Old Testament rather than learning from it ... concerning the Exodus, the last act of which was war against the Midianites, Paul wrote,

I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. (1 Cor 10:1–11)

What Paul wrote concerning the Exodus pertains to all of the recorded history of Israel; for much more of Israel's history has been left out than included. So what has been included is probably for a reason, this reason being what Paul stated: *these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.*

The Midianites, like Esau, were related to Israel ... Midian was a son of Abraham by Keturah; he would have been circumcised on the eighth day. He would have known the God of Abraham, and Abraham would have settled Midian on his own lands, giving him gifts when sending him away. So Midian and Midianites—like Ishmael and Ishmaelites—were of Abraham but without having received the inheritance that was to come from Abraham through the *Promised Seed*, Isaac, to all of humanity, thereby causing Abraham to be a blessing and “the father of a multitude of nations” (Gen 17:4).

The Apostle Paul takes the concept of the *Promised Seed* to a spiritual level:

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. ... For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise. Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. (Gal 3:16, 18–20)

Who was this “intermediary” who brought the Law to Israel at Sinai?

And God [*Elohim*] spoke all these words, saying, "I am *YHWH* your *Elohim*, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods [*Elohim*] before me. (Ex 20:1–3)

Is *YHWH*, Israel’s *Elohim*, an intermediary? Is *YHWH* angels? Is *YHWH* an angel of the Lord, the intermediary that Balaam’s ass saw? Is He the angel of *YHWH* (Ex 3:2) that appeared to Moses “in a flame of fire out of the midst of [the burning] bush”? And a disciple can easily find him or herself in a theological quagmire; for with the redaction of Moses undertaken after the lost Book of the Covenant was found in the dilapidated temple in the days of King Josiah (2 Kings chaps 22–23), Imperial Hebrew scribes—not knowing how to handle linguistic determinatives—edited Scripture to reinforce Israel’s monotheism that governed even the Apostle Paul’s thinking, who would come to know better than to again write *that the Law was put in place through angels by an intermediary*. For Paul will write,

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though *He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped*, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:5–8 emphasis added)

Does an intermediary have the *form of God* and *equality with God*? Does an intermediary have the form of God and equality with God without Himself being God? And we have arrived at the beginning of John’s Gospel: “In *arche* [no definite article so linguistically, *arche* cannot be “the beginning” but would be “primacy” as in *firstness*, such as Caesar was the “first citizen” of Rome] was the Word [*ó Logos*], and the Word was *pros* [of or with] *ton Theon* [the God, objective case with definite article], and *Theos* [God, nominative case with no article] was the Word [*ó Logos*” (John 1:1).

So in the third clause, *kai Theos* ^{he}*n* [was] *ó Logos*, “*Theos*” borrows the definite article for *ó Logos*, linguistically establishing that they are the same entity: the Word of God was God in form and in equality with the God. Two were one in function and in unity, but not numerically. They were two, the God of living ones and the God of dead ones.

And an endtime disciple can see how Judaism's monotheism—the idol that Judaism did and still does worship—effected the Apostle Paul, who went on in the same epistle to write his tour-de-force allegorical reading of Hagar:

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband." *Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.* But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the spirit, so also it is now. But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman. (Gal 4:22–31 emphasis added)

While it isn't "safe" to read *an angel of YHWH* as "code" for Paul's intermediary, the Logos, the God of Abraham, everywhere the phrase appears, this can be a legitimate reading of the phrase so the possibility needs to be considered, and this is especially true concerning Balaam having communication with the Lord.

But what Paul does in his allegory is again expose the essence of Scripture, chirality; for the essence of Scripture is the awareness that those things that happened to Israel in the wilderness, that those things that happened to Israel on the plains of Moab, that those things that happened to Israel in the Promised Land form the left hand—the natural hand (as in the hand with which a person wipes him or herself)—enantiomer of the spiritual right hand (the hand with which a person eats, if the person knows to discern between left and right hands). Therefore, while it would be pleasant to say that a second nation of Israel [the right hand enantiomer to ancient Israel] will learn from the mistakes and sinful ways of ancient Israel, that would not be being honest with Scripture; for what will be seen is that ancient Israel forms the shadow and copy of an endtime second nation of Israel, with this second nation of Israel doing spiritually what ancient Israel did physically.

Judaism is still an idolatrous theology although it would vigorously deny holding any form of idolatry: again, its monotheism is the idol it worships, the idol to which ceremony has been added to ceremony and superstition to superstition until this people is far from God even though still loved because of their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, the Lord (as He told Moses) has made from Moses a great nation that has superseded natural Israel, its left hand enantiomer. But accompanying this great nation to have come from Moses is another people, analogous to Israel in Egypt, a people who pray to God for *relief* and who then vote a socially conservative agenda.

Now, the great nation to have come from Moses isn't "great" in numbers, but great through having been glorified as fruit borne out of season; the fruit of God still dwelling in fleshly bodies; still living physically as Sabbatarian Christians.

Dwelling in spiritual Babylon but occupying space around the world, greater Christendom is analogous to Israel in Egypt—and the Second Passover liberation of a

second nation of Israel (liberation from indwelling Sin & Death through being filled-with and empowered by the spirit of God) will cause greater Christianity to ideologically begin a journey that will not end well for most Christians.

The chirality of Israel's rebellion against the Lord at Sinai, when under Aaron the people *broke free* from the constraints of Moses and the Law and apparently engaged in an orgy, plus Israel's rebellion against Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb in the wilderness of Paran—two of the ten rebellions of Israel—will together have as their right hand enantiomer the Apostasy of day 220 of the Affliction, when rebellious Christians at a wholesale level commits blasphemy against the spirit of God by returning to the historic transgressions of Christianity ... the forty years Israel followed Moses in the wilderness will be condensed into seven years, with the two witnesses in the first 1260 days of these seven years serving greater Christendom as Moses and Aaron served Israel, and with the Lamb of God and the Elect serving a replacement nation [spiritual Seth] as Moses and Aaron served the children of Israel in the wilderness. So the compression of time from forty years to seven will cause a compression of events: there isn't time in 1260 days for greater Christianity to twice rebel against God after being filled with the spirit of God. One rebellion, one apostasy is sufficient; for there should be no rebellion against God.

As one rebellion against God in heaven was sufficient to condemn a third of the angels to death (being cast down from heaven), one rebellion by greater Christendom, once filled with spirit, is sufficient to condemn rebelling Christians to the lake of fire. A second rebellion isn't needed; for against whom will a rebelling Christian rebel a second time? Against the Adversary after having already committed blasphemy against the spirit that filled the Christian? Can a rebelling Christian even rebel against the Adversary once the Christian rebels against God? For to rebel against the Adversary would be to keep the Commandments of God. And if a Christian when filled with spirit and having the Law written on the Christian's heart and placed inside the Christian so that he or she knows *YHWH*, the conjoined deities of the God of living ones and the God of dead ones, chooses to return to sin [the transgression of the Law due to unbelief of God] where will this Christian find *belief of God*; for what is it that Paul writes,

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thess 2:9–12)

A person upon whom God sends a strong delusion cannot return to believing what is true, but can only replace one delusion for an even stronger delusion. This person cannot repent. And we have returned to Eli, Hophni and Phinehas.

Israel in the Promised Land before the kings will symbolically represent greater Christendom during the 220 days preceding the Apostasy—and to understand just how heinous ancient Israel was, we need to see Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas:

Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know *YHWH*. The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, and he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot. All that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is what they did at Shiloh

to all the Israelites who came there. Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give meat for the priest to roast, for he will not accept boiled meat from you but only raw." And if the man said to him, "Let them burn the fat first, and then take as much as you wish," he would say, "No, you must give it now, and if not, I will take it by force." Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of *YHWH*, for the men treated the offering of *YHWH* with contempt. (1 Sam 2:12–17)

Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. And he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the people of the Lord spreading abroad. *If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?*" But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of *YHWH* to put them to death. ... And there came a man of God to Eli and said to him, "Thus the Lord has said, 'Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh? Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? I gave to the house of your father all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel. Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?' Therefore *the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever,' but now the Lord declares: 'Far be it from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.* Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. Then in distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out to grieve his heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men. And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you: both of them shall die on the same day. And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever. And everyone who is left in your house shall come to implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and shall say, "Please put me in one of the priests' places, that I may eat a morsel of bread.'" (1 Sam 2:22–25, 27–36 emphasis added)

A long citation, most of chapter two, an important chapter for there are Christians who believe that a promise made by the Lord will never be broken regardless of what humanity does—and this is not true; for was any promise made to Ephraim about serving as the priest of Israel? Was not the priesthood of Israel promised to the sons of Levi? Was Eli not a son of Levi. Were Hophni and Phinehas not sons of Levi? Was Samuel not the son of Elkanah from the hill country of Ephraim? And did not Samuel become the judge and priest of Israel? Indeed, he did. So with the Lord, an unconditional promise is never truly unconditional, but is always subject to the person

believing the Lord and pursuing holiness through the person's belief/faith [in Greek, *pisteos* — from Rom 14:23].

Samuel's sons did not follow in Samuel's footsteps, but were corrupt:

When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." (1 Sam 8:1–5)

Back up a moment to Hophni and Phinehas: *they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of YHWH to put them to death* (1 Sam 2:25).

Could Hophni and Phinehas have repented? No, not by the time it became the will of God to put them to death.

Could Samuel's sons have repented? Probably not. For consider what the author of Hebrews writes,

Therefore, while the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. For we who have believed enter that rest, as He has said, "As I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest." Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again He appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." (Heb 4:1–7)

Therefore, while the promise of repentance still stands—and this paraphrase is valid—let us fear lest any of us fail to repent; for the gospel came to Hophni and Phinehas in what their father Eli told them ("If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?" — 1 Sam 2:25) just as it did to Israel in the wilderness.

But the hearts of Israel were hardened by their unbelief:

And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. *Only do not rebel against the Lord.* And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them." Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel. And the Lord said to Moses, "*How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me,* in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?"

I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they." (Num 14:6–12 emphasis added)

The hearts of Hophni and Phinehas were hardened by their unbelief ...

The hearts of greater Christendom have been hardened by Christendom's historic unbelief, and today, while entering into the Sabbath remains possible, Christians need to examine themselves to see if there remains any tenderness in their hearts; for when the Second Passover occurs, and all of greater Christendom is liberated from indwelling sin and death, it will be too late for Christians to repent. Yes, it will be. For whatever is in their hearts will be revealed by what they do when they are no longer under grace, Christ Jesus' righteousness.

The Second Passover liberation of a second nation of Israel through filling this nation of Israel with the holy spirit of God, thereby removing any need for the garment of Christ (from Gal 3:27) to cloak Christians, will effectively make the flesh of the Christian invisible—not that you won't be able to see fleshly bodies, but the flesh will not conceal what is in the hearts of Christians. What the Christian truly wants to do, the Christian will do. If that is to keep the Commandments, the Christian will keep the Commandments; will be able to keep the Commandments as Jesus did. However, if unbelief is concealed within the heart of a Christian, this unbelief will become known to all. And the question, *How long will this people despise me, how long will they not believe me*, will be answered by the majority of Christians rebelling against God in the Apostasy of day 220, a Sunday in December ... the Apostasy will incorporate a rejection of Sabbath observance and a return to Sunday services, said with absolute assurance.

How long is the memory of God? Was Midian prepared for war when 12,000 Israelites descended upon them and wiped them out as a people? Or had Midian sort of forgotten about Israel after Israel passed them by?

Seeing what Israel had done to the Amorites, Balak the son of Zippor and the king of Moab and all the people of Moab greatly feared the people of Israel—and Moab said to the elders of Midian that they must do something. So Balak sent for Balaam the son of Beor, a man with whom the Lord interacted but also a man who would take fees for divination. A corrupt man who nevertheless feared the Lord.

Israel's relationship with Midian is complicated; for Moses' father-in-law was the priest of Midian. Remember, after Sarah died, "Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, *Midian*, Ishbak, and Shuah" (Gen 25:1–2 emphasis added); so Midian was a half-brother to Isaac as was Ishmael. And Midian would have been circumcised on the eighth day as Isaac had been.

There is textual confusion between Ishmael and Midian, as evidenced by the sale of Joseph into slavery:

Then they [Joseph's brothers] sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him. *Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver.* They took Joseph to Egypt. When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes and returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is gone, and I, where shall

I go?" Then they took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, "This we have found; please identify whether it is your son's robe or not." And he identified it and said, "It is my son's robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces." Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." Thus his father wept for him. Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard. (Gen 37:35–36 emphasis added)

There needs to be a discussion of Balaam, what Balaam said when he blessed Israel, and what Balaam did that caused the Lord to order Moses to send an army against Balaam and the Midianites. But this discussion will have to await next Sabbath's Reading.

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The person conducting the Sabbath service should close services with two hymns, or psalms, followed by a prayer asking God's dismissal.

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