

Drash on Sukkot Day 1 Readings (Leviticus 22:26-23:44)

Ahavat Yeshua DC Service

October 3, 2020

David L. Craig

Today is doubly a *yom tov*—literally “good day” in English, but effectively any day during which The LORD has prohibited customary work. In addition to being the weekly Shabbat, today is also the first day of this year’s Feast of Sukkot (Tabernacles or Booths in English). Therefore today’s Torah reading is not tied to a weekly Shabbat and is outside the normal annual cycle of readings. It was also addressed back in May within Parashat *Emor*, and its main component is the complete overview of The LORD’s *moadim* (literally “appointed times” in English)—all the days in a year, good or not, that He has set apart as especially His and are to be observed by at least the Jewish people, if not in fact by all human beings.

Yah-a-mod, Ariana bat Cameron.

Ariana will bless us with the Hebrew and English of Leviticus chapter 23 verses 1 and 2 (TLV):

¹ Then *ADONAI* spoke to Moses saying: ² “Speak to *Bnei-Yisrael*, and tell them: These are the appointed *moadim* of *ADONAI*, which you are to proclaim to be holy convocations—My *moadim*.

For this drash, The LORD led me into a study I had not anticipated. He began with a look at the concept of *day* in Genesis 1 verses 2-5 then jumping to verse 14 (I will read all Scriptures from here on out in the interest of redeeming time):

² Now the earth was chaos and waste, darkness was on the surface of the deep, and the *Ruach Elohim* was hovering upon the surface of the water.

³ Then God said, “Let there be light!” and there was light.

⁴ God saw that the light was good. So God distinguished the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light “day,” and the darkness He called “night.” So there was evening and there was morning—one day.

¹⁴ Then God said, “Let lights in the expanse of the sky be for separating the day from the night. They will be for signs and for seasons and for days and years.”

We see here how fundamental the daily cycle of darkness and light is to Creation and that the order is first the darkness, then the light. After the first few cycles, an enhancement was ordained and established with a statement of rationale for the modification. We infer that days are the foundational unit of time and are grouped contiguously into seasons and years (as well as months and weeks). In essence The LORD provided Creation with a celestial clock. Along with the rotation of the Earth, the

basis for measuring days with their hours, minutes, and seconds, the ever changing apparent positions within the celestial sphere of the sun, moon, and planets among the apparently non-wandering stars display the time of day and month and year to those who know how to read them just as most people have learned to read a clock with hour and minute hands.

This cosmic clock is dependable for two reasons: its workings cannot be influenced by mankind, and The LORD hardly ever interferes with these workings. We know not how He implemented the only known cases of anomalous clock behavior: the sun standing still for a day for Joshua and it going back less than an hour for Hezekiah and Isaiah. These phenomena could have been effected solely by disrupting the customary rotation of the Earth's gravity well. However, even if The LORD did so act, we don't know what the moon and other planets were doing in the meantime.

It did not take long for Adam, Eve, and their children to learn most changes in the firmament above the clouds are cyclical. Only in recent centuries, though, was it discovered that these movements are congruent with some elegantly simple physical laws of gravity and motion—laws The LORD established in Creation, knowing where the celestial objects would be ever after once He had started the lights on their paths. These days mankind can approach such knowledge, too, as we now possess the mathematics and computational tools needed to determine with astonishing precision the positions, at any moment past, present, or future, of not just the sun, moon, and planets, but also the comets, meteors, moons of other planets, asteroids, stars, and even galaxies in our vicinity. Of course, we can only calculate such for objects we are aware of and can track. But observed deviations from the calculated movements of the objects we *are* aware of signal the involvement of one or more *unknown* objects which can then be searched for (this is how the planets Neptune and Pluto were discovered). Thus far, however, we have yet to significantly *affect* the movement of a natural celestial object.

Next The LORD led me to examine more closely the second reason for these lights: signs. It is the plural form of the Hebrew word תִּיָּא (oth), spelled aleph-vav-tav, and assigned Strong's Hebrew Dictionary number 226. For this verse, the BDB Hebrew Lexicon ascribes definition number 8, generally meaning "signs, tokens of changes of weather & times" and adds this verse refers to "heavenly luminaries" specifically. Definition 8 is also cited for Jeremiah chapter 10 verse 2 and notes "changes of the heavens as omens to frighten the nations". My family personally experienced this during our trip to Israel in 1999. A solar eclipse was predicted to occur while we were visiting Jerusalem and we encountered an Arab who earnestly implored us to not go out on that "evil day", even though totality was not predicted to appear anywhere in Israel, nor did it.

So the dance of all these lights signals *other* information besides what time of day and year it is, primarily through attention-getting phenomena such as eclipses, as well as through the symbolic attachments made to these different lights, mostly very early in the history of mankind—symbolism which was surely anticipated, if not inspired, by The LORD. Thus, the firmament signals information throughout history, both directly as God built into its design at The Beginning, indirectly through well-known symbolism historically applied to the celestial objects, and even more indirectly via the observance of The LORD's *moadim* as demarcated by the celestial clock, which are signs to those who

do *not* observe them. By listening to this drash as I present it this day, *you* are being a sign to anyone aware of what we are doing.

Allow me to emphasize that almost all celestial signs that intersect with noteworthy events in human history were apparently planned for during Creation and occur according to the predetermined, dependable behavior of the cosmic clock. I think this is more amazing than every sign having an independent and unpredictable supernatural origination.

But these celestial signals are not just transmitted to the Earth. The Scriptures assert they are read loud and clear by all humanity! In Psalm 19, David states:

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. ² Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. ³ There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

which Paul quotes in Romans chapter 10 verse 18 to make the point his Jewish contemporaries *had* heard Yeshua is the Mashiach via these signals:

¹⁸ But I say, have they never heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

Here is an allusion that heavenly phenomena, probably during Yeshua's lifetime, confirmed Yeshua is The Messiah. There was not even a need to specify what was alluded to, indicating his contemporary readers must have immediately known to what he was referring.

Paul may not be alone in this point of view, either. In Acts 2 as Peter preached to the spectators of the great Ruach HaKodesh outpouring on Shavuot, he quoted Joel while explaining the supernatural signs afoot (starting here at verse 19 in the middle of the quotation):

19 And I will give wonders in the sky above
and signs on the earth beneath—
blood, and fire, and smoky vapor.
20 The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the great and glorious Day of *ADONAI* comes.
21 And it shall be that everyone who calls
on the name of *ADONAI* shall be saved.'

22 "Men of Israel, hear these words! *Yeshua ha-Natzrati*—a Man authenticated to you by God with mighty deeds and wonders and signs God performed through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know...

While the clear meaning is Peter was referring to signs performed *through* Yeshua, it has been argued there is likely a *double-entendre* or rhyme here referring as well to the celestial signs to which Paul alluded and thus were prophesied by Joel, giving us more information regarding their nature.

Remember these Shavuot pilgrims, as well as those who lived in Jerusalem, were undoubtedly also in town for Pesach seven weeks prior. The signs would not need to be spelled out to them, they themselves *knew*, and were likely to never forget.

So what were these signs? We will ignore things like a convenient earthquake since this drash is focusing on signs in the heavens and time for this drash is short. At minimum, the sun turned to darkness during the last three hours of Yeshua's life as mentioned in all the Gospels save John's with, again, sparse information since most contemporary readers were familiar with this phenomenon. Early Luke manuscripts tell us the sun was hidden, language that is used regarding solar eclipses, but later manuscripts only indicate darkness, apparently a correction since an eclipse was thought impossible, both because three hour solar eclipses are unheard of (three *minutes* is a long period of totality), and solar eclipses only happen during a new moon like on Yom Teruah, not during a full moon like on Pesach. The Greek historian Phlegon recorded the stars were visible during the darkness, which only happens when all sunlight is completely blocked and the starlight is *not* blocked; i.e., no clouds (if you want people to see signs in the heavens, you'd better be able to make the weather cooperate). Thus we have no scientific explanation for this darkness, just as for the three-day plague in Egypt as recorded in Exodus 10:22-23. It is uncertain just how widespread was the darkness when Yeshua died but the event was certainly noticed and discussed by a lot of people.

In addition to the darkness, there is evidence *that* Pesach full moon was blood red as it rose above the eastern horizon at sunset in Israel—a typical lunar eclipse but one with impeccable timing. Such a manifestation within a matter of hours of the inexplicable darkness would likely cause it to be included in any discussion of the darkness.

You should be Bereans and do your due diligence—independently confirm what I am telling you. I suggest starting with *bethlehemstar.com* and reading, in order, all the articles within the link named “The Study”. Remember there are no perfect web sites, so validate everything presented as you research this subject and, with the help of The Helper, arrive at your own conclusions.

Now, note well what Paul said in Romans 1:18-20:

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. In unrighteousness they suppress the truth, ¹⁹ because what can be known about God is plain to them—for God has shown it to them. ²⁰ His invisible attributes—His eternal power and His divine nature—have been clearly seen ever since the creation of the world, being understood through the things that have been made. So people are without excuse...

In regards to the celestial component of Creation, maybe there are mitigating circumstances in defense of *our* generations alone, since we are the first to drown out most of the celestial lights with electric light pollution, making it very hard where most people live to perceive the cosmos with our unaided senses as our ancestors could. On the other hand, we're also the first with software programs like *Celestia* and *Stellarium* that provide us with personal planetariums on our computer displays. Being

free software, they are cheaper than getting to locations well over the horizon from the nearest streetlight, especially if you desire to track the changes night after night. But the wilderness provides the real thing as God intended for us to perceive His cosmos and its signs.

Remember Yeshua said in Luke 21:25:

There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars.

Why would he state this if we're supposed to pay them no attention? Surely Paul would not have told us what I read to you if we are permitted to be ignorant of that which *everyone* is supposed to hear from the heavens and understand. If any of you Believers think you're not hearing, something is *wrong* and you need to do something about that before an unbeliever asks you to explain these words I have read or even something like Revelations 12:1-2:

¹ A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ² She is pregnant—crying out in birth pains, in agony to give birth.

Has this sign already happened? Can you explain its meaning? Some Believers believe they can because they are persuaded this passage must refer to a nine-month period of the celestial clock ending on September 23, 2017. Well, this contention is contestable. I recommend starting with the Wikipedia article entitled "Revelation_12_sign_prophecy" before reading what Believers have said about it.

Looking for signs probably not yet fulfilled will turn up many false positives. Often this only becomes apparent when you look back at the sign and the event it highlights using the floodlight of history. Signs in the heavens must coincide with one or more significant events on the Earth to qualify as Biblical. The signs around Yeshua's birth and death surely qualify. Contemporary signs are usually not as clear-cut, especially when there is no certainty what events the signs will be attached to.

Now pay attention. As ambassadors of the Kingdom of Yeshua, we dare not dispense flaky opinion as hard fact without absolute certainty *that* is what our LORD wants us to do. If possible, we should first seek confirmation from those who shepherd us. Because if we are deceived about The LORD's Will and it becomes publicly proven that our hard fact was just flaky opinion, it is His Name that gets tarnished and ridiculed by unbelievers who may resolve to never again entertain any notion regarding a need for His Salvation, all due to our sin. Our King is unlikely to be pleased by that; indeed, He *just* might lump that in with false prophecy.

So, with that warning comprehended, go forth, study the heavens, and have a good day!

The reading next Shabbat, which this year is also Sukkot Day 8 as well as Simcha Torah, runs from Deuteronomy chapter 33 verse 12 to the end of the scroll.