

The Hebrew Corner

One of the concepts that the Tanach emphasizes is the importance of cycles. Daily cycles, weekly cycles, monthly cycles, and yearly cycles are all presented in the pages of scripture. From the story of creation, in the first few verses of Genesis 1, we see the daily cycle being founded (Genesis 1:3-5):

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw that the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.”

The word day in Hebrew is yom (יום, YOHM), and the word night is laila (לילה, LAI-lah). Here the cycles of light and darkness were established as daytime and nighttime, comprising one day. A second cyclical pattern established in creation was the weekly cycle. Genesis 1 describes God as having created the earth and all the animals and plants in six cycles of light and darkness or six days. The seventh day was set apart from the other days, as described in Genesis 2:1-3:

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the

seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all the work which God created and made.”

The Hebrew word translated in this passage as “he had rested” is shavat (שָׁבַת, shah-VAHT) from the same root as shabbat, or the sabbath day. So here we see the weekly cycle established, six days designated for work, and a seventh day, set apart from the others, which is for rest.

The biblical feasts are yearly cycles that God proscribed first for the people of Israel to observe, as presented in Leviticus 23:4:

“These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.”

In the passage, the words feasts and seasons are translations from the Hebrew word moed (מוֹעֵד, moh-AJD), which means an appointed time or place. These were to be annual events, sanctified by God to be convened according to his instructions.

Scripture also indicates that perseverance in completion of God's cycles yield important results, for example in the following passage (Joshua 6:2-4):

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven

trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.”

The Hebrew word translated “go round” is haqeph, which is a form of the verb naqaph (נָקַף, nah-KAHF) meaning go around, make the round. After the Israelites circled the city according to the instructions of God, the walls of Jericho fell down and they were able to take the city.

In Psalm 23 we have this familiar verse (Psalm 23:3):

“He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.”

The paths being referred to here are evidently cyclical paths, since the Hebrew word translated as paths is magal (מַעַגַל, mah-GAHL), which means track, course of action, from the Hebrew verb agal (עָגַל, ah-GAHL) meaning be rounded, roll.

May the cycles of your life be according to God's plan and purpose. Blessings and shalom!