

Dear Fellow Sojourners in Faith,

I hope that you have been well and have been praying and reading the Bible for spiritual nourishment.

As for the study of the Bible, which *can enrich* our faith and devotion, here is the story from the Talmud I mentioned yesterday to illustrate the lively tradition of Jewish interpretative debates, which can provide some insight into what *we (can) do* with what *has been written and tradition-ed* to and for us (scripture):

Babylonian Talmud Baba Mesia 59b:

- A. On that day [in the context of the debate over the susceptibility to uncleanness of a certain type of oven], R. Eliezer brought forward all of the arguments in the world, but they [that is, the other Rabbis] did not accept them from him.
- B. Said he to them, "If the law agrees with me, let this carob-tree prove it!" The carob-tree was torn a hundred cubits out of its place.
- C. They said to him, "No proof can be brought from a carob-tree."
- D. He said to them, "If the law agrees with me, let the stream of water prove it!" The stream of water flowed backward.
- E. Again they said to him, "No proof can be brought from a stream of water."
- F. Again he said to them, "If the law agrees with me, let the walls of this house of study prove it!" The walls tilted, about to fall.
- G. R. Joshua rebuked the walls, saying, "When disciples of sages are engaged in a legal dispute, what role do you walls play?"
- H. Hence, they did not fall, in honor of R. Joshua; but nor did they resume the upright, in honor of R. Eliezer.
- I. Again [Eliezer] said to them, "If the law agrees with me let it be proved from heaven!" An echo came forth [from heaven] and said, "Why do you dispute with R. Eliezer? For in all matters, the law agrees with him!"
- J. But R. Joshua arose and exclaimed [citing Deut. 30.12], "It [the law] is not in heaven!"
- K. [Later] R. Nathan met Elijah [the prophet] and asked him, "What did the holy one, blessed be he, do at that time?"
- L. [Elijah] replied, "He laughed, saying, 'My sons have defeated me! My sons have defeated me!'"

Next time, we will march ahead in the Joseph Cycle (Genesis 37–50) to learn our final lesson in Genesis about God’s providence, knowledge, and human history by looking at:

Genesis 44.18–46.4

Genesis 49–50

I would recommend reading all of Genesis 37–50 again for new observations, questions, and insights. Then on to the main event we go, that is, to Exodus and the Mosaic tradition (exodus + Sinai), after which is:

the Davidic tradition (united monarchy)

the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah

the Assyrian empire’s conquest of Israel

the Babylonian empire’s conquest of Judah (the Babylonian Exile)

the New Testament—very, very optimistically, perhaps in time for Advent and Christmas

By the time we finish, should we stay the course, we will have a better understanding of:

the Bible

God’s (love) story

Israelite and Jewish history

Israelite, Jewish, and Christian theology

world history and politics

our place in the biblical story of God’s love and rescue

At the pleasure of those who attend, we can do other things along the way or instead of the current syllabus, which can always be found online: [Bible study 2021-04](#)); printed copies are available in Kang’s mailbox in front of his office.

Have a wonder-ful, thank-ful day.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kang He".