

THE SPEECH OF LAMECH

Genesis 4:16-24

From the two thousand years before the call of the nation of Israel. The best piece of literature that is preserved for us in the Bible is the speech of Lamech. Study this speech below:

A. Lamech's Early Life: Read Genesis 4:16-22

1. From whom was the man Lamech descended? Genesis 4:16-18

2. What is the first event of his life which is recorded? Genesis 4:19

B. Lamech's Speech: Read Genesis 4:23-24

1. The American Standard Version of the Bible prints Lamech's speech this way:

“Adah and Zillah, her my voice;
Ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech:
For I have slain a man for wounding me,
And a young man for bruising me:
If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
Truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.”

2. Of what terrible sin was Lamech guilty?

3. What reason does the above translation give for Lamech's evil deed?

4. What did Lamech reveal that in his innermost thoughts he believed would happen to him because of this deed? Genesis 4:24

5. What basis did he have for believing this? Genesis 4:24a (also see Genesis 4:13-15)

6. Do you see in this piece of literature any reflection of the life of the age in which it was written?

7. What do you notice about lines 1 and 2 of Lamech's speech, and lines 3 and 4? This is a characteristic of ancient poetry which will be observed in all our future studies.

INTRODUCTION TO HEBREW POETRY

A. Characteristics of English and Hebrew Poetry:

We who speak the English language are accustomed to thinking of poetry as having two chief characteristics: *Rhyme*, or repetition of sound, and *metre*, or repetition of rhythmical stress pattern. The poetry of the Hebrew language, however, has neither of these characteristics. Instead, its chief characteristic is *parallelism*, or the repetition of similar or contrasting thoughts. Sometimes a parallelism will have only two thoughts - but often there are three, four, or more. A series of parallelisms with the same general thought may be likened to the *stanzas* of our poetry. Sometimes one parallelism with several lines is a stanza in itself. Just as in English poetry, there are often *refrains* - two or more lines which recur within or at the end of each stanza, to give added musical beauty to the poem.

B. The Speech of Lamech as Poetry:

With this description of Hebrew poetry in mind, read again the speech of Lamech noting the parallelism of each thought.

QUESTIONS FOR ME TO THINK ABOUT:

1. Can you tell from the writings of Lamech what kind of man he was?

2. What picture of *me* would people get from a study of *my* writings?
