

Juiced like Moses
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April 24, 2017

Deut 34:7

(BHS)	(Young's)
וּמֹשֶׁה בֶּן־מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה	And Moses [is] a son of a hundred and twenty years
בְּמֹתוֹ	when he dieth;
לֹא־כָהָתָה עֵינָיו	his eye hath not become dim,
וְלֹא־נָס לְהָהָּ:	nor hath his moisture fled.

Moses' name is readily recognized. And I appreciate Young's rendering of the idiom, "son of 120 years." Of course, it actually means, "120 years old," but some of you might have scratched your heads, saying, "I could have sworn that *ben* means "son." So, thank you Young. You should remember that *môt* is "death" (like the verb in line 2). His "eye" had not become dim or faint. That is, he would still have passed his eye exam. E ט פ א

In line 4, *nās* is a middle weak verb "to flee." But the most interesting word to me is the last one, *lēach* (the *ch* is hard as in "chaos," pronounce it like Leah but with *ch*). This word is usually glossed with something like "vigor" (ESV), or "strength" (NIV), or "natural force" (KJV). Check your version. So what is going on with Young's translation, "moisture"?

Deut 34:7 is the only occurrence of *lēach* in the Old Testament. But there are some related words that help to establish its meaning. For example, *lechî* means jaw. And the adjective *lach* means moist or fresh. In Num 6:3, *lach* grapes are succulent. Judg 16:7 – 8 speaks of *lach* bowstrings, probably animal sinew freshly harvested, still wet. The Septuagint translates *lēach* with *chelunia*, "lip, jaw." Latin uses *dentes*, "tooth." So ... at 120 years Moses could

still spit. He was not shriveled up like a raisin. He was like a green (*lach*) tree (Ezek 17:24). He still had the juice.

I find this is be a great picture for the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints. Reformed theology teaches that God will supply us with the juice to continue on in our faith no matter what. We claim verses like John 10:28 – 29; no one can snatch us out of both Jesus' and the Father's hands. Or Phil 1:6, "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

The idea is that, like Moses, we also are called to a task. We each have our own ministry in the kingdom. John 14:2, "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" There is a role for you. And he will supply his Spirit, and spiritual gifts, and a community, to providentially keep you energized until your labors are done. That is a promise.

Now for some free association and totality transfer. As noted above, the Greek translates *lēach* with *chelunia*. Moses' *chelunia* had not left him. This unique form is equivalent to *cheilos* ("lip"), which usually denotes speech (e.g. Gen 11:1). The New Testament also uses *cheilos* like that. Christians should have "*cheileōn* that acknowledge his name" (Heb 13:15), not *cheilē* that speak deceit (1 Pet 3:10).

Your lips are your confession. The promise to you is that you will persevere in the gospel. You will never deny Jesus. Even if you live to be a son or daughter of 120 years, your confession will stand.

I know a woman who suddenly was thrust into an ongoing terrible situation, where much of what she had relied upon in life was taken away. She slid into depression. And the form that the depression took was a deep, dark, oppressive doubt. She asked me more than once how we can actually know if there is anything out there, or if anything in the Bible is true. I would not be surprised if some day we learned that Satan was piling on. But even so, through it all, she kept holding on. She never got so low that she denied Jesus. (Today things are much better for her.)

Hebrews 13 (quoted above) spells out how to keep your *chelunia* with you. We do so in community. Together we see through false teachings (v9). We bear Jesus' reproach with him (v13). We worship together (v15). We share material goods with one another (v16). We respect our church elders and heed their admonition (v17). We pray (v18). And so on.

And one more thing. "We seek the city that is to come" (v14). We continue to confess Christ our life long with unflagging zeal, looking forward to the Day when the journey is over and he brings us to the Promised Land. Amen, Come Lord Jesus, the Juicer of our *chelunia!*