

## Series 5: Being a Hebrew: Audience Relevance in the Old Covenant

When reading the Old Covenant (OC) dealings in the Bible – Audience Relevance – His people were Hebrew. The closer we are better able to understand their mind-set...the language, and their understanding of their relationship to God, and the nations around them – then the better this is going to help us understand the context and full meaning within any given text we are studying.

Always remember the things you need to keep in mind in regards to Audience Relevance:

- **Who?** *Who was writing? What kind of person was he? Who was he writing to? Who/what was he writing about?*
- **What?** *What does the writer say? What are the hearers experiencing? What kind of people were they? What worldview and cultural characteristics, language, mindset, would they be living under and believing?*
- **When?** *When was he writing and when does he apply his writings (past/present/future)?*
- **Where?** *Where are the events taking place, or where were/are they to take place? Where was that part of the Bible written? What do we know about those places where it was written from and of where it was written to?*
- **How?** *How does the author describe the events he describes, how will they be fulfilled (literal, apocalyptic, figurative, typological, poetic, hyperbole, symbolic, parabolic, etc.)?*
- **Why?** *Why does the author write? What do we know about the circumstances which called forth this writing? Why does he say what he says? Why will the events he describes occur?*

Background of Deuteronomy: Chapter 1:1 (**read**) Moses was speaking to Israel before they crossed over the Jordan to possess all the land that God had sworn to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (**read** vs. 8). Moses then recounts in Chpts 2-3 some of the history from when they first came to the border of the Promised Land and then how they rebelled and were afraid to go into the Promised Land, and how they wandered in the wilderness until that generation had passed away.

Chapter 4 thru 9 Moses brings to their memory the statutes and commandments of the Lord (**read**: Deut. 4:1, 7-8, 12-14, 44-45, 5:1-5, 15, 22, 6:3, 20-23, 8:1-2, 9:9-11 (**Orange sections**))

Chapters 10 thru 27 Describes many things that were required of Israel in how they were to be in their relationship to God; how to live among each other with a vast array of information on how to govern things (justice, including cities of refuge, warfare, unsolved murders, sexual morality, divorce, and marriage duties), where to worship God (devotion, tithing, feasts), warnings about turning to false gods, and even to the setting up of memorials and alters once crossing into the land (**read** Chpt. 27:1-3)

Then we come to the summation section starting with Chpt 28:1-2 (**read**) “if obey...blessings.” (Then **read**) Chpt. 28:14-15 “if disobey...curses.”

We can be quick to miss some things if we do not slow down and let some things sink in that we could otherwise just pass over and not realize the significance of their meaning: **read** Chpt 31:16-20 (The **Lord prophesies** to Moses that when he dies Israel will play the harlot, and they will break His covenant. (God knows all of this will be true because He told us He tested their hearts for 40 years in the wilderness – Deut. 8:1-2)); then 31:24-29 (Moses proclaims that Israel is a stiff neck and rebellious people, and how they have rebelled with him alive and how much more they will do once he dies); then Moses reads a song **against them** given to him from God (**read** 31:19 again); then **read** Chpt 32:1-43 (**green sections**: 32:1, 5, 9-12, 13, 15-16, 20-21, 23, 25, 26, 29, 32, 35-36, 43)

\*\*Notice how the time of the rejoicing for the Gentiles comes at the end/judgement of Israel (32:43)

Let’s flip back to (**read**) Deut 28:49-63. The periods of captivity Israel experienced in her past were times of great sorrow and suffering, but this type of devastation described of here was never completed with this magnitude of utter horror and distress until the devastation and destruction in the 3 ½ year siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in AD 70 (if you read the accounts of the historians Josephus and Tacitus it is alarmingly eerie of virtually word for word)

\*\*Also, flip back to Deut 32:26, “...I will dash them to pieces, I will make the memory of them to cease from among men.” None of the captivities Israel experienced made the “memory of Israel cease among men,” so this is clearly referring to a final destroying. The time when their covenant would end, and the new covenant begin – the time described in Isa 65:1-15 (**read green sections**) (**read**) and Paul says in Rom 10:19-21 was the 1<sup>st</sup> century Israel of his day.)

Let's flip back to Deut 32:21, the last part of this verse is Rom 10:19 that we just read, "...I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation..."

\*\*Look when this time also says that it was to happen, vs. 26 (**read**), it is when God said He "...will dash them to pieces, I will make the memory of them to cease from among men." In AD 70 the Romans did destroy Israel and left Jerusalem, its walls and her temple so utterly desolate to the minutest detail of not one stone of the temple being left upon another. The physical representation of the power of Israel was gone, but more importantly: the power and memory of what the people had always had "the Torah (law), sacrificial system and priesthood, and the only claim on this earth to be the only people of God and in a covenantal relationship, was now completely destroyed, and unlike any other time in the Jewish history, all of their sacred genealogies and documentations were burned and completely destroyed, which eliminates them from ever re-establishing their heritage and land claims according to the tribe they were from as God had previously portioned for them, as it can never be known who is from what line again, as they were able to do every other time they came back from captivity.

No, this time, God said their "power" and claim to the exclusive rights was gone – the New Covenant (NC) through Jesus Christ described as we saw in our last study in Hebrews Chpt 7 - 9 was now opening for all people, and not requiring people to come under the old Jewish covenant. Jesus was speaking of the imminence of this to the woman at the well in John 4:19-24 (**read**) "...but the hour is coming, and now is..." He was saying that the transition was in process right there in His time.

Look what the Holy Spirit tells us through Paul in Acts 13:40-48 (**read**) the Jews were driven to jealousy, just as God said in Deut 32:21 that we read earlier. Verse 46 Paul says, "...it was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you (Jews) first, but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles..."

Jesus Christ had to first come to the Jews, as much prophecy was to be fulfilled and completed, which included the prophesied hatred by Israel, persecution of Jesus and His followers by them, and finally the rejection of their Messiah, the changing of the Old Covenant (OC) over to the New Covenant (NC) – then their judgement. (**Read**) John 1:11, here John is recounting to us the life and ministry of Jesus, His life/death and resurrection, and notice the importance of what he says in vs. 11 - that Jesus came to Israel, but they rejected Him. In John 1:30-31 (**read**) John the Baptist confirms that Jesus was being revealed to Israel. (We must always keep the importance of audience relevance in mind each step as we study through the Bible).

Jesus Christ Himself says His ministry was first for the Jews: (**read**) Matt. 10:5-7 Jesus instructs His disciples to only go preaching to the people of Israel "...the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

\*\* Look at the importance of these words spoken by Jesus in (**read**) Luke 9:22, "...must suffer many things, **and be rejected** by the elders and chief priests and scribes,..."

Also, Jesus gives one of the most unusual (when not understood) statements in His ministry to the Canaanite woman asking Him to heal her daughter of demon possession (**read**) Matt. 15:21-28, "...I was not sent **except** to the lost sheep of the house of Israel..." He even called her a dog. (We must not disregard, or lighten the importance of anything the Holy Spirit reveals in the scripture. We must slow down and think about why something was written, and what He is wanting us to understand, and not brush something off lightly, or answering it with our presuppositions that may not fit the context, or with what the rest of scriptures are also teaching on the subject)

Matt. 13:10-14a; Mark 4:10-12 → then go back to Isaiah and read the passage from where it comes from: (**read**) Isa. 6:8-11, "...go tell this people...make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and their eyes shut...Then I said, 'Lord, how long?' And He answered: 'Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate.'" This is God's promised judgements we read in Deut., and here prophesied with Isaiah, and here in Matthew chapter 13 were now said to be imminent – with that generation of Jesus' time.

Remember again what the Holy Spirit confirms of the same purpose of Christ, and the gospel necessity to be preached first to the Jews, then rejected by them, and then the turning to the Gentiles in (**read** one more time) Acts 13:45-48, "...it was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves...behold, we turn to the Gentiles..." Notice how also in vs. 45 it states how the **Jews** were "**filled with envy**" when they saw the multitudes of **Gentiles** being told the gospel and how they now could turn to God and be saved apart from Judaism. Isn't this exactly what we were told by God in Deut. 32:21 and Rom. 10:19 and 11:11 that we previously looked at (all 3 verses: provoke Israel to jealousy by those who are not a nation)?

**(Read)** Acts 28:17-29 The Holy Spirit, through Paul, brings both of the above passages Acts 13 and Matt. 13 together in reference to the Jews rejecting the gospel, and Paul saying the gospel has now gone over to the Gentiles – and they will receive it.

**To understand this more thoroughly we have to again go back into the life and mind of the Hebrew in the Old Covenant.**

\*\*Remember, before the nation of Israel left Moses and entered the Promised Land they were well aware of the blessings and curses put before them (Again, let us remember the importance of **audience relevance**: we must remember we are trying to be in their time, and view all of this through the understanding of the **Israelite** – we would be well aware of all of our history, and The Law, and the “**promise of curses and destruction**” that God said He would bring if we played the harlot with the gods of other nations and broke our covenant. All through their history they would have constantly been taught to observe and obey all that the Lord had told them (**read** Deut. 11:16-21). We also know that prophet after prophet was sent to **them** to warn **them** to turn back to God. These warnings and “**promises**” of cursing and judgement God spoke to **them** in Deut. would be all too familiar to the people of Israel all through their history.

It is important for us to also understand how God viewed the OC relationship He had with Israel. This was not like a business contract, or a distant unfeeling relationship of God/Servant. This was a **marriage**, and the OT is full of the beautiful and intimate language of this marriage relationship:

**(Read)** Jer. 2:2, "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD, 'I remember the devotion of your youth, **your love as a bride**, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.'"

**(Read)** Ezek. 16:8, "When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; **I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you**, declares the Lord GOD, and you became mine.

**(Read)** Isa. 54:5, "For your Maker is your **husband**, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth He is called."

- **Also read:** Jer. 3:14, 31:31-33; Isa. 62:4-5

But unfortunately, we know the history of Israel in this marriage relationship: rebellion (committing adultery with foreign gods), exile, follow for a while, more adultery/rebellion, punishment, and it goes on.

\*\* Then we come to Hosea. Hosea was written within the generation just before the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel by Assyria in 722 BC. God has finally had enough of the harlotry and adultery Israel did with other nation's gods, and here in Hosea He prophecies to them the fulfillment of His promised Deut curses for their turning away to other gods, and the end of the OC/Marriage, and the beginning of the NC/Marriage. To lay the context, let's read again the prophecy of God of Israel's "harlotry and breaking of the covenant" and then promised judgement in Deut. 32:16f (**read**: 16, 20-21, 23, 25, 26, 29, 32, 35-36, 43 (green sections))

Now let's turn to Hos 1:2, God tells Hosea to marry a harlot to show Israel what they have done, as they were in a covenant/marriage with God, and have been the harlot and committed adultery with foreign gods (explain this view or harlotry they understood, which differs from our modern view).

**(Read)** Hos. 1:2, then Hos 4:11-13; then Jer. 3:1-3

**(Read)** Hos. 2:2 God then declares that Israel is no longer His wife, nor He her husband, "...she is not my wife, nor am I her husband..."

**(Read)** Hos. 2:6-11 God describes the promised coming judgement. Look what He says Israel will do in vs. 7, she says "...I will go and return to my first husband..." But we saw back in vs. 2 how God had already declared that he is no longer her husband, and that she is to be put away for her harlotries – OC law commanded the penalty for committing adultery was death.

Jeremiah was written around 630 – 585 BC, about 100 years after the kingdom of Israel was already judged and destroyed. Jeremiah is reminding Israel of that same earlier decree from God about the promised divorce in Hosea, but now he is speaking to them in past tense of the divorce which had already happened. Go back to (**read again**) Jer. 3:1-3 AND let's look at what He further says in (**read**) Jer. 3:6-9, "Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce..." (Also **read** Isa. 50:1 – written just after the 722 BC judgement.)

God also declares Judah's harlotry to their marriage/covenant, and their promised judgement: (**read**) Ezekiel 16:32, 35-38, ""Therefore, O prostitute, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says

the Lord GOD, Because your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in **your whorings with your lovers**, and with all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them, therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved and all those you hated. I will gather them against you from every side and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness. And **I will judge you as women who commit adultery** and shed blood are judged, and **bring upon you the blood of wrath and jealousy.**” (See full context: **read Ezek. 16: 1-3, 15, 17, 20, 26, 28-29**)

Remember, the Bible tell us that the punishment for committing adultery – death.

Ezekiel chapter 23 is just one other powerful glimpse into a description of the continual harlotry of both the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. All throughout the OT we see the same story of the OC people, in-spite of numerous promised judgements, then great destruction/punishments, and even exiles, the people return and repeat the same things again once their hearts grow cold, and the past suffering fade out of memory.

**\*\* (Read) Ezekiel 23:1-10 (green sections)** This passage speaks of the great harlotry and adultery against God by Israel (**referring to the 10 northern tribes**), and why and how God executed His divorce of Jer. 3:8 in the 722 BC final destroying forever of the **10 northern tribes of Israel** by Assyria.

**(Read) 2 Kings 17:7-23 (vs. 7 and 23 synopsis)** Here we see the summarized history of the final execution of the Jer. 3:8 divorce and forever destruction of the earthly **10 northern tribes kingdom of Israel** by Assyria.

**\*\* (Read) Ezekiel 23:11-35 (green sections: 11, 18, 22, 24-25, 28-35)** Here it is critical to see the **same promised coming judgement on the 2 southern tribes** (Judah/Benjamin). While the 10 northern tribes (Israel) were divorced and destroyed forever as promised by God in 722 BC by Assyria, the 2 southern tribes, however, were not divorced or destroyed at that time.

Later, in 586 BC, the 2 southern tribes were devastated and taken into captivity by Babylon, however, they had not yet been divorced by God, and were not completely destroyed at that time. The earthly Kingdom of Israel (the 10 northern tribes) was gone forever, but the promised divorce of the Kingdom of Judah (Judah/Benjamin), and **her** final judgement, had to wait until all the promised prophecies of the “Seed” to come through **her** lineage were fulfilled.

However, once the Seed of David had come, her promised Messiah, and the kingdom of Judah rejected and crucified their Messiah, they sealed their final doom as Jesus Christ proclaimed to them through Matthew chapters 21 through 24. Jesus emphatically promises those OC Hebrews in Matt. 23:35-36 “that on **you** may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah...assuredly, I say to **you**, all these things will come upon **this generation.**”

After Christ’s crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and then the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Paul and the other Apostles then begin to spread the word of the gospel to the Jews throughout the entire Roman Empire. They were continually warning the Jews that Jesus was the messiah, and that they needed to repent, however most of the OC Jews still rejected Jesus Christ and the gospel and continually persecuted the messengers. Then through inspiration by the Spirit, Paul declares the final warning and turning from the Jews in Acts 13:45-46, “...It was necessary that the word of the God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and **judge yourselves** unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.”

In Jesus’ final days, as He approached Jerusalem, “...He saw the holy city and wept over it, saying...for days will come upon **you** when your enemies will build an embankment around you...and level **you**...to the ground; and they will not leave in **you** one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.” (Luke 19:41-44)

On the way being led to the cross Jesus tried to warn them one more time in Luke 23:27-31, “...Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for **yourselves and your children.** For indeed the days are **about to come** (Greek: mello)...they will begin ‘to say to the mountains, “fall on us!” and to the hills, “cover us!”’ (Directly quoting from Isa. 2 – 4, which is a passage predicting the promised end days of Judah and Jerusalem, which He was now saying was about to come upon them – **that generation** He was speaking to)

Jesus had clearly promised to His 1<sup>st</sup> Century audience that all of the promised judgements and destruction of Matt. 21 thru 24 would come upon “**this generation**” – the people currently living before Him to which He spoke to, and being true to His never changing, never wrong promises – in AD 70 the Roman armies were used by God to carry out The Kingdom of Judah’s promised final end and complete destruction, and the fulfilling of the many promised curses and judgements throughout the Old testament against her – all the way as far back to Deut. chapters 28 thru 32. Judah/Benjamin truly would **drink and drain dry the cup of wrath** and annihilation that her sister (Israel – 10 northern tribes) had to drink. (Ezek. 23:11, 18, 28-35)



Let's go back to Hosea. The Lord has told us He has divorced Israel for her harlotry and adultery, and now look at the beautiful promise of the NC/Marriage – (**read**) Hos 2:18-23 God says He will betroth/marry in this new covenant forever. It is very important, as always, to understand the audience and context of any passage. God had just said in Hos. 2:1, “that she (Israel – the 10 northern tribes) was not my wife, not am I her husband!,” and we already saw from Jer. 3:8 that a future divorce was going to come.

Now, we have in Hos. 2:16 God speaking of “in that day,” referencing to a future day when He was going to make a covenant and **re-marry forever** (vs. 18-19). What is critical to understand is that the prophet Hosea had come from God to speak to only Israel – **the Kingdom of the 10 northern tribes**. God's promise of divorce and re-marriage is being spoken of to her. However, in order to understand **all** that is being spoken of in this passage, we must understand that the OT was written using types and shadows and metaphors that the Bible tells us that the **OC writers did not know** what the full meanings were about (**read**: 1 Pet. 1:10-12, 20; 1 Cor. 10:11).

In order to understand many things in the OT/OC we need to allow the further light and explanation provided by the Holy Spirit through the NT inspired writers, where the Spirit explains through them the substance and “fulfillment” begin spoken about by those shadows and mysteries in the OT/OC.

- Let us look at the example in this passage: **read** at Hos. 2:23 – God has just spoken about a re-marriage to the 10 northern tribes from vs. 18-20. He was prophesying about this NC and re-marriage to them before they were even destroyed and scattered (Diaspora) by the Assyrian armies in 722 BC. Could they understand the full meaning of what they were being told? Many Christians can have a hard time of understanding this even with the NT writings. However, I believe if we remember the proper audience relevance and interpretation rules of study, we can allow the clear NT writings to shed light on the OT types and shadows.
- (**Read**) Peter in 1 Pet. 1:1 is writing to this same **Diaspora**, but he was now writing long after their promised destruction in Hosea had happened by the Assyrian armies in 722 BC. It was then, in approx. 64 AD, Peter is writing to these same scattered OC Hebrew Christians (the scattered faithful remnant) reminding **them** and quoting directly from Hos. 1:9-10, 2:23, and he writes to them in 1 Pet. 2:9-11 how this re-gathering and re-marriage was being fulfilled right there and then in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and in 1 Pet. 2:5 he

tells them that this was about the building up of a “**spiritual house**,” of which they were **living stones** (and how they were being (present tense of that 1<sup>st</sup> century) fitted into a **spiritual temple**, which was **growing**: Eph. 2:19-22; and how now only those who “believe in faith” in Christ would represent “**true spiritual Israel**.” See Gal. 3:7, 28-29, 6:15-16; and how this would fulfill the **mystery** that had perplexed OC Hebrews of how God could take both Jew/Gentile and make them equal and both in “one body” of believers in Christ: Eph. 2:15, 3:3-6).

In Hosea, we have seen God saying to Israel He was a husband and married to her in their covenant, but then He declared that He no longer was their husband due to their harlotry/adultery with foreign gods, and He was divorcing her and judgement was coming upon her. Then, God declares that in a “future day from the time Hosea was written,” after their kingdom was destroyed and their remnant dispersed among the nations, that His re-marriage would include the faithful believing remnant from the 10 northern tribes in a NC.

To get a better understanding of this, and of the timing of this prophesied future day, let’s look at both of these covenants/marriages placed together in Jer. 31:31-33 (**read**) “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, **my covenant that they broke**, though I was their **husband**, declares the LORD.”

\* We need to understand the importance of all of this. Is not the church called the “Bride of Christ” throughout the NT? Let’s look at (**read**) 2 Cor. 11:2, “For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one **husband**, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.” (See also **Eph. 5:24-27**. Christ tells husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church (see the symbolism in vs. 27 of the chaste purity as in 2 Cor. 11:2)

John the Baptist was the first to make reference to marriage imagery in the NT in (**read**) John 3:29, “The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.”

Jesus calls Himself the bridegroom in (read) Matt. 9:15, "And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

(Read) Matt. 22:1-9 Jesus in very clear and descriptive language shows us about the marriage changeover typology, illustrating both the rejection and subsequent judgement of the original guests (OC Israel), and then the NC wedding opened to the whole world.

The legal termination of the Old Covenant marriage, and then subsequent espousal of Christ to the bride is fully confirmed over and over again by Paul, but nowhere more clearly than in (read) Romans 7: 1-4:

- "Or do you not know, brothers – for I am speaking to those who know the law – that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God."

This passage teaches us that the law of the first husband (Old Covenant) ended at the death of Christ. Jesus was national Israel's husband, the God of the Old Covenant clothed upon with humanity. When He died on Calvary, national Israel was widowed and husbandless, and the Old Covenant marriage was annulled.

Israel was "loosed from the law," made "free from the law," and "dead to the law," so they could enter a new covenant and new marriage under the gospel of the resurrected Christ. Those who respond to the gospel call were espoused to Christ and become the church and bride. Thus, national, ethnic Israel and the law of Moses were left behind at Calvary, and true spiritual Israel [believing Jews and Gentiles] and the gospel of Christ began.

- The OC and the Law was annulled/obsolete of its power and control at the cross according to Col. 2:14-15. Heb. 8:13 explains this further in the original language which could be described as an empty shell. A shell which no longer had anything in it – it had been gutted and been declared obsolete and powerless. Yes, the shell was still there at the time of the writing in AD 62-63 [the OC temple was still standing and the OC priests still offering empty animal sacrifices], but just as an old shed snakeskin, it had nothing in it. And even that very shell was about to be destroyed and “vanish” forever in AD 70 by the Roman armies.

We also need to recall in Rev. 19:7 that there is “...the **marriage** of the Lamb has come, and His **wife** has made herself ready.” And Rev. 21:2 say John saw, “...the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a **bride** adorned for her **husband**.”

Let’s turn to look and see who the Bible says is the true Israel – who the NC is with:

- **Read** Galatians chapters 3 and 4 again (**green sections**: 3:7-8, 13-14, 16-19, 24-25, 28-29, 4:22-26, 28-30).
- Go again thru green sections Isaiah 65:1-15 (**green sections**: 1-3, 6-7, 11-15)
- Then Heb. 7:11-9:11 (**green sections**: 7:11-12, 18-19, 22, 8:1-2, 5-10, 13, 9:6-11)

\*\*Have we noticed how all these curses and punishments were promised to **only** Israel! We find God not talking about and dealing with Spain, or England, or Australia, or Mexico, or India, or anywhere else, but only with His “covenant” people Israel.

Does God ever mention in the Bible a time where He pronounced judgement on the people of Korea or China for “their” wickedness and breaking of His laws, or constant idolatry? These peoples were in existence for thousands of years, as well as many other people groups across the world, & yet God never mentions the deserved or any pending judgement of any of them.

No, what we do see in the Bible is that **the nations that had dealings** with His covenant people Israel are the only ones God dealt with. These nations are the only people groups we see where God at times brings judgement upon them, or He even at times uses them to bring judgement on His own covenant people – and why?, because the Old Covenant was with the **Hebrew people, Israel**, and He was their God, and the surrounding nations knew that (they had heard of all of the old stories), so any attack, threat or slander upon Israel, was one upon Him. And at times we see judgement come from God, but certainly not all of them as they deserved. No, by far, the Bible is **overwhelmed** with the events and His dealings with His covenant people – **Israel**.

**\*\*** Now, in order for us to try and gain a better understanding of the **Hebrew metaphoric hyperbole and apocalyptic language**, and the mindset and world view of these OC people, we need to turn to and read some of this exaggerative expressive language and examine it to see what it is actually saying to us. Not in our Webster's dictionary 21<sup>st</sup> century worldview, but in the OC cultural Hebraic world, both from the people of old, and continuing right through this **same people group** whom existed in the first century when the entire NT was written and preached (We do not all of a sudden have a different people once we flip from Malachi to Matthew – these are still the same OC Hebrew people from since the start of their nation) (Please also refer to Study Series 5b “Hebraic Language Symbolism” in the back of this study).

(**Read**) Isa. 13:6-13 “Wail, for the day of the Lord is at hand; as destruction **from the Almighty** it will come!... and **every human heart will melt**...They will look aghast at one another; **their faces will be aflame**. Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, **to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it**. For the stars of the heavens and their constellations **will not give their light**; the **sun will be dark** at its rising, and the **moon will not shed its light**. I will **punish the world for its evil**, and the wicked for their iniquity... Therefore I will **make the heavens tremble**, and **the earth will be shaken out of its place**,...”

**\*\*** In our normal modern understanding of language this would be cataclysmic universe ending talk. You cannot have the sun, moon and stars stop giving their light, and men's hearts melt and faces be on fire, or the Lord shake the entire literal heavens and move the earth out of its place and have anything be alive afterwards if this is literal language as we understand it. And **vs. 11** God even says, (He will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their sin.” Is that not the same talk as in Revelation , or as in Matthew chapter 24?)

Yes, if we think in our modern understanding, then we will totally misunderstand the meaning being spoken of here. This has been a major purpose of this Bible study series: trying to better approach the OC and OT passages from the mindset, culture and understanding of a Hebrew, as this metaphoric hyperbole apocalyptic language style is the Hebrew language. They thought and talked in these word pictures. They understood this symbolism and typology. So the better we can understand their language and mindset – the better we are going to be able to understand these writings, and what God is truly saying and meaning.

Let's now **read** Isa. 13:1, "The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw." **Then vs. 17 and 19**, Behold, I am stirring up the Medes against them... And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them."

- Was this cataclysmic universe ending stuff, well, it was for the Babylonian world – and that is what God was saying. We were never supposed to interpret this through our modern interpretations, as it was never written to us. This was written in Hebrew, to the Hebrews, and they knew this word picture was God emphatically telling them the prophecy of the end of the Babylonian known world/universe/kingdom, and **only** theirs.

**(Read)** 2 Sam. 22:8-16, "When the pangs of death surrounded me, the floods of ungodliness made me afraid. The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me...then the **earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken**, because He was angry. "Smoke went up from His nostrils, Fire from His mouth; coals were kindled by it. "He bowed the heavens also, and came down with thick darkness under His feet...He was seen upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness canopies **around Him**, dark waters and thick clouds of the skies...before Him coals of fire were kindled. The Lord thundered from the heaven...He sent out arrows and scattered them; lightning bolts and He vanquished them...the foundations of the world were uncovered, at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of His nostrils...He took me, He drew me out of the many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy..."

If the above passage is not a perfect example of the hyperbole, apocalyptic Hebrew language – describing in exaggerated metaphors the emphatic destructive finality of something – then I do not know what is. If we were to take this in our strict **Grecian though of literalness** – then we would have to say that this had to have been the end of the known world and universe!

However, in order to correctly understand this passage it is **critical that we understand and think and interpret through the "Hebrew" thought and understanding** – as that is to **whom** it was written, and by a God speaking so **they** could understand His meaning and interpretation.

- We need to understand how very different the **Hebrew metaphoric hyperbole language** is in comparison to how we would speak. We know that the foundations of the **literal** heavens were not **physically** shaken, nor were they **physically** bowed down. **Literal** smoke was not seen coming from God’s nostrils, nor fire coming from His mouth, nor hailstones and cosmic destruction and spectacular displays were “**visible.**” David also knew this, (**read vs. 1**), “Then David spoke to the Lord the words of this song, on **the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.**” However, David is not writing in our western literalistic Grecian mindset and worldview, he is writing this entire passage in **his own Hebrew language’s** nuances and **metamorphic descriptions** describing how God defended him from His enemies and Saul, and if we are going to hope to correctly interpret Bible passages like this (and the massive amount of other similar OT passages), then it becomes imperative that we learn to read and think and understand as an OC Hebrew would.
- Did you also notice how in vs. 22 it said that God “**came down,**” and also flew on the wind, and with thick **clouds**? God was never **literally** seen on the wings of the wind, and **God never literally, visibly, bodily, physically came down.** What God is trying to explain to us in this metaphoric, hyperbole, apocalyptic Hebrew language is that when David was seen **defeating his enemies in a battle,** or was **escaping from Saul** – that it was **God who did it** – and David describes it as “**God coming.**”

(**Read**) Judges 5:3-5, 13 says **the Lord went out,** and **the Lord marched,** and the **earth trembled.** Then in vs. 13 Deborah says that **the Lord came down** to fight the mighty (Canaanites) for her.

- What were Deborah and Barak referring to? The passage said **God “came down,”** however, let’s look at the event being described: (**Read**) Jud. 4:13-15, 23.
- Chapter 5 **sounds like apocalyptic events throughout the earth and heavens,** but the events in Chapter 4 say that **God used Barak and his army,** and it is **referred to God “coming down”** and fighting.

Next, turn to Isa. 34:1-4 (**read**), “...Let the earth hear, and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it. For the Lord is enraged against all the nations...the mountains shall flow with their blood. All the **host of heaven shall rot away**, and the **skies roll up like a scroll**. **All their host shall fall**, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.”

This speaks in **vs. 1 and 2** of “let the **earth** hear...and the **world**...for God’s indignation is against **all nations**.” If we do not stop and think here, we can easily interpret this again through our modern mindset and think this is universal, as the words earth and world mean to us. However, ask yourself: “Did Korea hear about this?” “Was Peru apart of the **all nations** God’s indignation was against?” When we slow down and stop to think realistically we have to acknowledge “**no**” to both of these questions, and then we need to question and adjust **our understanding** of their language and metaphoric speech, as this is where we go wrong.

Look how God clarifies this in vs. 5 and 6 (**read**), “For **my sword** has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon **Edom**...The **Lord has a sword**; it is sated with blood;... a great slaughter in the land of Edom.” (**Important point to reminder**: how the Lord repeatedly speaks in the first person in so many of these OT passages, as if **He** is the one doing the attacking, or it is **His sword**, etc, and yet it was never the Lord who actually came down out of heaven to do these things as He speaks, but it was this metaphoric language in which He painted clear word pictures to the Hebrews of what He was meaning, and His sending another nation in judgement was referred to His “**coming**.”)

And further in **vs. 8-15**, “For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion...Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever...” Then after this metaphoric language seeming to be a forever ending, seemingly of all life, or even earth ending, **verses 11-15** show that this is not speaking of any ending of the planet, but the **world/universe/kingdom of Edom** being completely destroyed and laid waste – and this was the prediction of the devastation that did come in 583 BC to Edom by Babylon.

\*\* Look at the various other prophecies predicting this Ezek. 34 **past** event: Jer. 25:1-11, 15-33 (v. 21 includes Edom); Ezek. 25:8-14, 30:3-4, 10-12, 24-26 (v. 25 the Lord will put “His sword” in the hand of the king of Babylon), 35:1-4, 15 (v. 3 the Lord will stretch out “His hand”); Obadiah 1:1-4, 8-10, 15, 18 (v. 10 says they were cut off “forever”); Mal. 1:1-4 looks back after Edom was laid waste forever – Ezek. 34 and the other prophecies were all **fulfilled in the past**.



(**Read**) Ezek. 32:7-8, “When I blot you out...(ESV and NLT)” (NIV says, “...snuff you out..”)

(**Read**) **Vs. 2** clearly shows this to be metaphoric talk about judgement on Egypt, and the removal of only her power/rulers/glory.

(**Read**) Isa. 19:1, “...the Lord rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt...” When was the Lord ever seen coming riding on a cloud? The answer is never. This is the expressive symbolic language the Lord uses when He is sending judgement. The Lord never visibly or bodily came on a cloud and went in and destroyed Egypt, but when the Assyrian army came in vengeance – this is said to be the “Lord coming on a cloud.” (See study on “clouds” in Series 5b at the end of this Study Series)

(**Read**) vs. 19:16 then 22a then 33 then 20:3-4 (**green sections**), “In that day **Egypt**...will be afraid and fear because of the waving of the hand of the Lord...vs. 22 ...the Lord will strike Egypt...vs. 23 ...the Assyrian will come into the Egypt...Chpt 20:3-4 ...so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as prisoners...”

(**Read**) Isa. 30:25-33, “...the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold...the name of the Lord comes from afar, burning with His anger...His lips are full of indignation, and His tongue like a devouring fire. His breath is like an overflowing stream...to sift the nations with the sieve of futility...” If this was literal, as our understanding and speech, then this is universe ending calamity. Notice how in **vs. 28** the language is spoken of in the **plural**, “...sift the nations...,” and yet this is **only** referring to Assyria. We must put aside our language and presupposition interpretations when studying the Bible, and allow the Bible to interpret the Bible (other verses interpret the correct meaning, context and symbolism).

\*\* Notice how **vs. 30** describes the spectacular visual displays that will occur in the skies – in our understanding and plain reading it seems clear that this will be a cosmic event of huge proportions of which people surrounding the calamity, if not even those afar, will be amazed and see and know that the Lord is fulfilling this event of the judging and destruction of Assyria as He predicts (**vs. 31-33**). Notice also in vs. 31 and 32 how it says, “The Lord strikes with the rod...which the Lord lays on him...” Again, more personalized metaphoric language describing as if Yahweh Himself will be putting on a miraculous display in the heavens for all to see, and then personally destroying the Assyrian army as with a “devouring fire (vs. 27)” and His breath “like a stream of brimstone... (vs. 33).”

Let's turn to the fulfilling of this prophecy to see what actually happened, so we can better understand this metaphoric cosmologic hyperbole Hebrew language: (**read**) Isa. 37:33-36, "...then the angel of the Lord went, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000; and **when people arose** early in the morning, there were the corpses – all dead."

- Did you notice the amazing statement at the end of vs. 36 – "...**when people arose** early in the morning..." They slept through the night – nobody heard a thing! No watchmen on the towers saw a thing, or raised any alarm bells. What was **described as an earth shattering cosmic visible** spectacle in Chapter 30, **was a silent destruction** of the angel of the Lord coming through the camp of sleeping Assyrians and massacring 185,000 soldiers, which obviously did not even arouse the rest of the Assyrian camp, or the turmoil and panic of the others in the camp would have signalled to the Israeli watch towers that something serious was going on.
- If this is not anti-climactic to how this was described it was supposed to happen in Isaiah chapter 30, from our 21<sup>st</sup> century western concept of language, then I do not know what is. Do we see how important it is that we do not come to the Bible with our modern presuppositions, but rather seek to allow the Bible to interpret itself?

**(Read)** Mic. 1:1-8, "The word of the LORD that came to Micah...which he saw concerning **Samaria and Jerusalem**. Hear, **all you people; Listen, O earth**, and all that is in it...the LORD comes forth out of his place, and **will come down**,...And the **mountains shall be melted** under him, and the **valleys shall be split**, as wax before the **fire...all this is for the transgression of "Jacob," and for the sins of the house of "Israel."** What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not **Samaria**? and what are the high places of **Judah**? are they not **Jerusalem**? Therefore **I will make Samaria like a heap** in the field...and I will pour down **her** stones...and I will uncover **her** foundations...and all **her** pay as a harlot shall be **burned with the fire**...all her idols **I will lay desolate**... pay of a **harlot**, and they shall return to the pay of a **harlot**...therefore I will lament and wail, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the jackals..."

- In this passage, God is prophesying through Micah about the coming destruction of the 10 northern tribes Kingdom of Israel by Assyria in 722, and the subsequent siege on Jerusalem, yet notice the **apocalyptic** end of the universe sounding talk: All you peoples...O earth..."**God**" **will come down** and walk on the high places...mountains will melt...valleys split...

- Once again, we are reminded of the critical importance of “audience relevance:” we need to think like those Hebrews, and to understand the language as they did, and what God was meaning and trying to describe for them. The context clearly tells us in vs. 1 that this promised judgement is pronounced against “**Samaria and Jerusalem,**” so we must allow the language, context, audience relevance, and the many other similar passages, as well as the historical facts, assist us in interpreting prophecies like this.

Let’s look at Isa. 64:1-3, “Oh that **You would rend the heavens,** that **You would come down,** that the mountains might shake at **Your presence** – As when the melting **fire** burns, the **fire** causes the waters to boil, to **make your name known** to your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at **Your presence!** **When you did terrible things** which we looked not for, **You came down,** the mountains shook at **Your presence.**”

- Look what Isaiah is praying for – that God would **come down just like He did in the past** when He did awesome things. We need to slow down here and understand the significance and power of what the Holy Spirit has inspired Isaiah to say – we can miss this if we do not put ourselves into the **Hebrew mindset and cultural history,** because that is exactly what **he is speaking about,** and **in their familiar language style.**
- Isaiah used the Hebrew work Mippaneka **three** times in this passage referring to “**God’s presence.**” That Hebrew word is the close equivalent to the **Greek work Parousia** used in the NT referring to Christ’s coming. Are we able to start to understand some of the Hebrew mindset and metaphoric language of what they were describing and meaning? In all of these many passages we have just looked at speaking of **God coming down,** or **coming out of heaven,** or **riding on a cloud** – **never once, did God ever literally, physically, bodily, visibly come down or out of heaven!** Yet, as Isaiah, David and others have clearly stated in passage after passage, **when God did awesome things in the past, and when he sent judgement through one nation upon another** – it is described as **“God coming...God doing it – ‘His presence.’”**
- Think of the meaning and significance of what Jesus said in this next passage. Jesus was God the Son born in the flesh, born in the time under the OC. Who grew up learning of, and fulfilling, all of the OC laws and observances. **He was a Hebrew, and He was speaking to the OC Hebrews in their own culture, language, history and understanding,** and then in John 5:22 He says to **them,** “For the Father judges no man, but has **committed all judgment unto the Son:**” Jesus spoke this just after He had spoken vs. 19 to these **OC Jews** who were seeking to kill Him, “Then answered Jesus and said unto

them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **The Son can do nothing of himself**, but **what he sees the Father do**; for whatever he does, **the Son also does in like manner.**” What would have been their history they would have thought about? What verses, prophets, historical events would have been vivid in their minds? What understanding and meaning would **they** be thinking from the words He had just spoken to **them** – as **this is critical if we are going to understand passages like this, because Jesus was speaking to them** (we were not standing in front of Him)?

Let’s take a look at just one more passage; this is speaking of a prophecy that was fulfilled in 722 BC with judgement on the 10 northern tribes Kingdom of Israel. Some say that was a partial type fulfilment, which I would agree with, and the final fulfilment was in AD 70 where the remaining Judah/Israel Kingdom was so completely laid waste, and all her records of every tribe’s genealogies, the Levitical priesthood, ordinances, social, political and spiritual power were so completely shattered and destroyed and burned away as never before in her history, that she literally was destroyed beyond ever repair again. However you view this passage, the issue at hand that we are looking at is the metaphorical hyperbole language – (**read**) Amos 8:8-9, “Shall the land not tremble...all of it shall swell like a the river, heave and subside like the river of Egypt...I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight.”

- I don’t think it needs to be explained how the land did not literally tremble, or swell and heave and subside like the Nile river. And the Lord did not physically take the sun out of its place in the universe at noon one day and hide it somewhere (even the terminology is not scientifically correct, as it is not the sun that moves in the sky and “rises or sets,” but it is the earth which spins and turns away from the sun for our night time).
- In (**read**) vs. 2 God states in emphatic language how this is the **end of the Israelite people forever**. Which again needs to be understood in the language being spoken, as the people themselves did not completely disappear, but their relationship/marriage to God in the OC did, and that was the prediction, as we again see the same language as spoken in Deut 32:26 which we looked at before, “...I will dash them to pieces, I will make the memory of them to cease from among men.” They no longer would have the power and control over the relationship access to God. Their exclusive covenantal relationship with God was to be divorced (Jer. 3:8), and through Christ the NC was to have universal ramifications of no distinguishing between Jew and Gentile ever again.