

**THE BOOK OF JOEL**  
**Lesson 2, Chapter 1 Continued**

One of the most interesting, and possibly surprising, things we have found in our study of the Minor Prophets of Hosea, Amos, Jonah and now Joel, is that God will instigate...He will command... disasters to happen not only upon those who do wicked things **and** who do not acknowledge Him as their God, but also against those who act wickedly but DO know and acknowledge Him. I fully realize that this flies in the face of especially modern-era Christian theology that assumes that God has changed and now offers only mercy...never punishment or disaster... to those who call on His Name, regardless of our wicked behavior. Yet, clearly in the Bible the criteria for if God might decide to send calamity upon His own is our obedience versus our disobedience to His laws and commandments. As these 4 books of Prophecy (and other Bible books as well) explain, the obedience God demands of His worshippers is based upon His one and only written moral code, otherwise known as The Law of Moses. That dynamic has never changed, and the incorrect notion that this principle no longer applies to Christ followers especially, is the primary reason that I have such concern for the Western world and especially for my own nation, the USA, as we have sunk beyond mere disobedience into outright defiance of God. Evil is not just done, it is glorified, and often said to be in compliance with the notions of love and mercy. My advice to us all: prepare! I urge you to prepare spiritually...now... and also to prepare physically and tangibly...now... as you would for a hurricane or war, or some other serious disaster. In our fast-paced world, disasters happen and spread at lightning speed. Things happen so fast that if you are not already prepared, it is too late. Bolster your emergency supplies; prepare your pantries. Set some money and resources aside and make them easily accessible. Don't do this out of fear and panic, but rather in wisdom and forewarning. God gave us His Word to be learned and acted out in our lives. He has told us what is going to happen; will you believe it? As Believers and as students of God's Word, we know in advance what is coming (even if we can't pinpoint precisely when or how), and we know we're not going to escape it any more than the righteous segment of ancient Israel who also had to endure. When it comes to national judgment, all suffer together. And what we have been reading in Hosea, Amos, Jonah and Joel is about national or corporate...not individual... judgment. The good news is that those many who heeded the warnings of God's Prophets in the ancient times

faired considerably better than those who blew it off. They were far better prepared for what was coming so they suffered much less, and better navigated through the difficult times. The same applies to us.

In our previous lesson, we ended at Joel chapter 1 verse 5, when God called to the drunkards to mourn because soon the wine they crave won't be available to them, so severe is the calamity He is about to set in motion. Why are drunkards addressed? It is primarily because they are the epitome of irresponsibility and ambivalence to all that is going on around them. So, they are held up as representative of the people of Judah and Jerusalem in general, as God sees them. They have pulled away so far from the truth of the Torah and the Scriptures, succumbing to the temptations and ways of their pagan neighbors and to the silly doctrines of their religious leadership, that they are oblivious to their precarious condition. They think that they are living as Yehoveh wants them to live, and doing as He commands them to do, and so they blessed and protected. What they refuse to hear from their Prophets is that they have exchanged divine truth for a lie and they are about to pay a horrible, unexpected price for it. The Prophets have been warning them for decades that this is the case, but the leadership and the people have ignored those warnings and gone right on behaving as they had been. Let he who has ears, hear.

Let's re-read the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of Joel.

### **RE-READ JOEL CHAPTER 1 all**

Beginning in verse 5 we see a series of certain segments of Israelite society being told what is going to happen to them. It begins with drunkards, then turns to people in general, then to farmers, and finally to priests. And, as with the drunkards, the intent of the call is for all Judah to come out of their stupor and become sober....but also to prepare!

Verse 6 throws a kind of monkey wrench into the works that can be confusing. After the opening verses speak about an invasion of locusts, verse 6 begins with "For a mighty and numberless **nation** has invaded my land". Therefore, many Bible academics see in these words that the description of the locusts is meant only as a metaphor for a nation that is going to invade and sweep over Judah.

Other scholars say that the word nation means the locusts; that is, the term nation is used figuratively for the swarm of grasshoppers. What is happening is that Joel is using the common literary technique of simile to make the point. What is simile? It is a figure of speech that directly compares two different things that have similar attributes. A simple example of a simile might be "he was as big as a house". He is NOT a house, but because a house is inherently big when compared to the size of a man, then the idea is that a certain man is exceptionally large. A swarm of locusts is not a nation. But, just as a nation operates under a central commander, so do these locusts (their commander is God). The simile is carried even further when this locust-nation is said to have teeth like a lion. Neither locusts nor nations have lion's teeth, but the point of comparison is obvious. A lion was perhaps the most feared predator of that biblical era and it represents a ferocious creature that remorselessly devours its helpless prey. This comparison used for its shock value is rather common in the Bible, and we find it in Job, Jeremiah, Proverbs and the Psalms. So, yes, this is an invasion of voracious grasshoppers and not the army of an enemy nation.

An interesting side note is the wording that speaks of Judah as : "my land". Is this Joel speaking, or is it Yehoveh? Since this entire passage is an oracle from God, it can only be the Lord speaking. And, as I discuss in teachings on the Torah, indeed "the land" (meaning Canaan, the Holy Land) belongs to the Lord; it is His land. Israel was never to see their residing in the Land as any more than a conditional, long-term lease. They were the tenants; God was the landlord. Israel was never to see themselves as property owners the way we do, today, in the Western world, whereby indeed we can own exclusive title to a piece of land in perpetuity. This, perhaps, was the chief purpose of the law of Jubilee that required people who acquire land (within the Holy Land) from someone else for a price, to give it back at the 50-year Jubilee. It highlighted the issue of tenancy versus ownership. Thus, when God arranged for Israel to be exiled, it can best be compared to the eviction of a wicked tenant for not carrying out the terms of the lease agreement.

Verse 7 portrays the locust's "teeth" at work. They decimate the food-bearing plants of Judah. And, again, notice that it is "MY vines" and "MY fig trees". These plants belong to God, not to the residents of Judah. Yehoveh is merely allowing His people the use of the produce that comes from the plants and soil He

created...watered by the rain which He gave them... which is why some of that produce MUST be given back to Him as payment in the form of Firstfruits offerings and in other sacrificial offerings that require a portion of the crops to be given to the priesthood. The trees and vines are stripped bare by the locusts and left to die. The intent is to say that not only is Judah's immediate food supply suddenly gone, but also that the damage is long lasting; it will cause extreme shortages and hunger for at least a couple of years.

Verse 8 uses an example of the acute despair that this unparalleled attack of locusts upon Judah caused. It is like that of a virgin who has lost her husband. Let me explain, because at first glance this makes little sense: a married woman is never also a virgin! To say it another way, how can a virgin (a ***bethulah*** in Hebrew) also be said to have a husband? Here's how it worked. In the standard protocol of biblical Hebrew marriage, a young maiden...a virgin... first becomes betrothed to a man. In this first step, a potential husband comes to the father asking for his daughter as a wife. If agreement is reached between the father and the potential husband, a bride price is paid and now the girl is betrothed. Do not equate betrothal with our modern notion of engagement; betrothal was far stronger commitment. Upon betrothal, often a marriage document is written up. Technically, the two are not yet married. In fact, the young girl...although legally committed to this man... will continue to live at home with her father. Yet, every aspect of Hebrew marriage laws applies to the relationship. If the girl were to become intimately involved with another man, that amounts to the crime of adultery with all the usual penalties associated with it. Essentially, although the girl is not yet married, the man has legally acquired her. In the jargon of the era, they could even be called wife and husband. Usually after a minimum period of 30 days, then the girl is released by her father to go live with her husband. Sometimes there is a family ceremony (this was more so as we get nearer to the New Testament era), but more often than not it was little more than the father delivering the girl to the home of her new husband. Consummation of the marriage was expected to occur immediately and it was that act which served as the formal transfer of authority over the girl from father to husband. Now they were legally married in every aspect.

So, in the situation envisioned in Joel, it is of a betrothed girl still living with her father, and not yet transferred to her husband. She has yet to consummate her

marriage and begin life as a legal wife, and then to do the most important thing a Hebrew woman could do: bear children. Therefore, to any ancient Israelite reading Joel, they understand that there is no greater bitter disappointment in the life of a Hebrew woman than what is described here; that is, during the betrothal period the husband dies. Another well-known biblical example of this type of unmatched grief is contained in the story of Jephthah who, as part of a rash vow to God, promised to sacrifice the first thing that came from his residence to greet him if he came home from a war victorious; that first thing unexpectedly turned out to be his one and only child...an unmarried daughter. The end of the story explains how she was given time to mourn with some of her friends before she allowed herself to be slaughtered on an altar by her father in fulfillment of his vow. The tragedy was that she had not yet had the opportunity to fulfill her role as a woman by becoming a wife and mother. This story elicits so much emotion from Israelite women, that her sad tale continues to be told to this day. A midrash called **Arbaat Yamim** (the four days) was established to remember this tragic event. Every year since, in the month of Tevet, on the day on which Judaism says Jephthah fulfilled his vow, water would turn to blood, and the daughters of Israel would weep for four days over Jephthah's daughter (this ceremonial remembrance is preserved in the **Addenda** to **Mahzor Vitry**).

The words about the virgin dressing in sackcloth is simply the mention of a standard mourning tradition of one taking off their regular clothes and putting on a coarsely woven garment usually made of goat's hair. Heavy, scratchy, smelly, ugly and all around unpleasant. Now, in verse 9 the focus shifts to the Priesthood and the Temple. The grain offering (the **Minchah**) and the drink offering (the **necek** that always consisted of wine) can no longer be offered at the Temple altar because the locusts have destroyed the fields and the grapevines. There were several types or categories of sacrificial offerings. Each kind nearly always included a **Minchah** and a **necek** offering. That is, a legal sacrifice couldn't be performed without the inclusion of these 2 elements. Therefore, this is describing a circumstance in which no altar sacrifices of any kind could occur. For the people of Israel, this was devastating; for the priests even more so. The priests not only had the duty and prestige of conducting the regular...even daily...all-important altar sacrifices, but also the bulk of their family food supply came in the form of these offerings. So, the priests have every reason to lament.

It is interesting in this verse that two categories of Temple workers are described, both greatly affected by the losses caused by the locusts. The first was the priests, the second is usually translated to English as ministers (**Sharath** in Hebrew). As the priests are necessarily Levites, so are the **Sharath**. It's only that the priests serve a different and higher function than the **Sharath**. The **Sharath** are involved in other aspects of ministry around the Temple, such as maintaining the grounds and infrastructure, while the Priests are directly involved in Temple ritual and activities, including sacrificing.

Of course, the upshot of all this about the Temple is that if the priests cannot do their jobs on behalf of the people because the locusts have destroyed the needed offerings. The effect is that the people cannot be delivered from their sins, or complete a vow offering, or celebrate the biblical feasts, and more. It isn't much different than what they'll experience some years later when they are conquered and hauled off to Babylon. So, this matter of the never-before-so-severe locust plague has as big of a spiritual effect as physical effect for all the Israelites in Judah.

Moses in Deuteronomy says this:

**CJB Deuteronomy 28:33-34** <sup>33</sup> *A nation unknown to you will eat the fruit of your land and labor. Yes, you will be continually oppressed and crushed,* <sup>34</sup> *till you go crazy from what your eyes have to see.*

**CJB Deuteronomy 28:42** <sup>42</sup> *The bugs will inherit all your trees and the produce of your land.*

**CJB Deuteronomy 28:51** <sup>51</sup> *They will devour the offspring of your livestock and the produce of your soil, until you have been destroyed. They will leave you without grain, wine, olive oil, or your young cattle and sheep- until they have caused you to perish.*

The point is that what is happening to Judah is exactly what the Law of Moses prescribes will happen as curses if the people rebel and don't obey God. God won't "allow" these things to happen; He will "cause" these things...He will command these things... to happen. What we ought to notice about verse 10 is

that the mechanism of the curse (heretofore, the locust plague), now seems to switch to something else because God says that the soil is grieving, the new wine is dried up (this likely means the grapes still on the vine), and the olive oil is wretched (that is, the quality and output is terrible). This must be speaking of a drought that follows on the footsteps of the locusts; a double-whammy...although the word drought is not found here, it is only implied. The farmers and producers of wine are to lament at this double catastrophe, as is stated in verse 11. We could generally label these occupations as those of the common folk; maybe even peasants. These are those who labor in the fields, and are not necessarily the field's owners. The first word of verse 11 is **yabesh**. It has been translated in a number of different ways from ashamed to despair to confounded, and even into a couple of more English words. Literally, however, the word means to wither or to dry up. Perhaps earlier Bible translators didn't feel that the word wither fit well, so they chose some of those other words I told you about. Actually, in my opinion, to wither or dry up fits the scenario quite well as kind of a pun (better than ashamed or despair), since it is drought that has caused the fields and vines to wilt and dry up (assuming that the cause is a drought, which I feel pretty confident that it is). I'll pause to remind you that Joel is describing something that has already happened; and rather than allowing the people to think how unlucky or unfortunate they have been, he's informing them that God did this to them intentionally as a punishment for their rebellion (a rebellion they didn't believe they were committing, or that whatever they were doing wasn't THAT big of a sin, or that because they were God's chosen people, He loved them too much to ever experience His wrath). Verse 12 continues with the vines withering. Again, the Hebrew word used to mean wither or dry up is used (**yabesh**) and it is usually translated that way, so we see the connection with the opening word of verse 11 that speaks of the farmers and vinedressers as wilting. It's a play on words.

In verse 13, the priests and ministers of the Temple are again addressed. They are specifically ordered to take off their priestly and ministering garments and don sackcloth. They, too, are to join everyone else in mourning and lamenting because of their inability to do their duties for the benefit of the people. This marks an end to their privileged fellowship with Yehoveh...at least for a while until the land again produces that which is needed for the sacrifices. A very important realization and God-principle is brewing, here: it is that merely being

sorry, and doing lamentation rituals, even sincerely repenting, is not what is going to rekindle favor with Yehoveh. What they must depend upon is hope for God's amazing grace; His boundless mercy upon them that is not earned or merited, but rather it is given out of compassion based upon His divine determination. Before they crossed some cosmic line-in-the-sand of wickedness...before God said "no more", much was in their hands. Had they listened to the earlier prophets and repented and changed their wrong behavior, none of this would have happened. But, now that it has, the matter is no longer in their hands.

Now the priests are told to schedule a day of fasting for the nation so that everyone...from the lowest to the greatest...will assemble and together take responsibility for what they have done, and so that corporately, as a nation of sinners, they will cry out in unity to God. Just as sackcloth is a self-denial, so is fasting and God is demanding self-denial in this situation no doubt as a show of sincerity but also as an affliction of discomfort. The priests are told to arrange for this day of fasting because they represent the spiritual leadership of Israel. Let's re-read this verse.

**CJB Joel 1:14 *Proclaim a holy fast, call for a solemn assembly, gather the leaders and all who live in the land to the house of ADONAI your God, and cry out to ADONAI,***

Now, as it is my goal to regularly introduce you to biblical Hebrew words to help in your Bible study, let's paste back in some of the original Hebrew, and look at that verse again.

"***Kadash*** a fast, call for an ***atsarah***, gather the leaders and all who live in the land to the house of ***Yehoveh*** your ***elohim***, and cry out to ***Yehoveh***". ***Kadash*** by definition means to dedicate something holy...not something ordinary or common. An ***atsarah*** means a solemn, sober (the opposite of a joyful) assembly, and the house of ***Yehoveh*** means the Temple in Jerusalem. Notice how God's name is once again employed, and that He is not called "God" but rather it is ***elohim***, which more means divine being. I find it most interesting that Yehoveh's name is used at all...and in fact it is used twice. When something is used twice in a passage it is meant to draw our special attention. My speculation for the need



for this special attention is that, much as was happening with Judah's sister kingdom of Ephraim/Israel, Judah's religious practices and traditions had also become sufficiently corrupted with paganism and false doctrines that it was important to be clear **which** god was demanding this solemn assembly, and **which** temple Judah was to gather at, and **which** god they were to cry out to. As an illustration, ponder for a moment just where we in the Western world stand spiritually in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Barely more than one or two generations ago, if our national leader was to call for a solemn assembly to cry out to God, everyone would know what and who he was referring to (even atheists would know) and there would be a popular outpouring. But, today, the mention of any faith and any god is largely suspect, and such belief is regularly seen as ignorant and primitive if not dangerous to the nation. So, a national leader would probably have to specify which god he or she was talking about. Which means no national leader...even in the face of the worst crisis their nation has ever known...would advocate for such an assembly because of the social and political sensitivities involved. I fear that means that our point of no return has passed largely unnoticed. If a sinful and immoral nation on the decline cannot bring itself together even in a catastrophe that affects all (such as Covid) in order to beseech the God of Heaven for help and mercy, then Yehoveh (who I feel quite certain sent this disaster as a judgment upon us) has no grounds upon which to consider showing that nation mercy. The Bible tells us plainly that the Lord can reach a point (and has in the past) in which even repentance will no longer be sufficient for Him to relent since the offenses against Him have piled up so high and wide that justice demands they be dealt with severely. I wish I knew for sure if that's where we are; but all I...or any of us...have to go on is the written record that God gave to us; and what I have just said to you aptly and honestly describes what that written record tells us about Him and how He responds in such circumstances... even though it may be unpleasant to hear it. Israel wouldn't believe or accept that their own God could turn from benefactor to enemy, but it happened. The result was catastrophic...yet, completely deserved.

Verse 15 is a cry of abject terror! It is the moment when a most extraordinary catastrophe strikes. The locust attack then, is the harbinger...that is, it is a sign of a future event, or a foreshadow of it... the locust invasion and its aftermath were a foreshadow of something terrible. And here we get the famous "Day of the Lord" announcement. The first thing to understand about this term is that in

Hebrew it is NOT the Day of the Lord, it is the Day of Yehoveh. Too much we've been led by implication to mentally picture it as The Day of Jesus, and this happened because in Christianity "The Lord" ceased being Yehoveh the Father, and transformed into Jesus the Son. Here, it is explicit that it is the **Day of Yehoveh** and that is what it means wherever we encounter in the Bible.

Oh, no! Or, Woe! Or, alas for the day! All of these different ways this verse is translated to English need to be taken literally: this is an ominous...not a joyful...day. It is a day of mourning and grief...of pain and tears...not a day of happy excitement and the fulfillment of a wonderful expectation. This term is found 11 times outside of the Book of Joel...and every one of them concerns an oracle of darkness and oppression against Israel, but also it is used for the same purpose against the gentile nations of the world. Let me say this again: The Day of Yehoveh is, biblically, nothing anyone ought to want or to look forward to or pray that it comes. What we ought to pray for instead is what we are looking at right now in Joel: pray for mercy! The Day of Yehoveh speaks of national judgment that of course filters down to individuals, since a nation is nothing more than a large group of individuals. I want to be clear on something: God's wrath and justice gets administered in two different spheres: sphere one is the individual, and sphere two is the national (or corporate). Yeshua, when He was here for His first visitation, was all about individual justice and He did not concern Himself with national or corporate justice. Put another way: our salvation through Christ is one by one and has nothing to do with national justice. In fact, our salvation is mostly about our spiritual condition and has much less to do with our physical condition or current circumstances as human beings living on planet Earth. Corporately or nationally speaking, our deliverance or our demise happens according to the group...or nation...we belong to...regardless of our individual spiritual status...as we will all suffer the same experience whether it is blessing or curse. The Day of Yehoveh is a corporate experience...a national experience... of a curse, so all who are alive and present and part of that group will incur the physical, tangible effects of God's wrath. Most certainly pray for the return of Messiah Yeshua; but please, never pray for the Day of Yehoveh to arrive!

In Hebrew thought the term "day" (*yom* in Hebrew) can mean several different things. Day can mean that time of a 24-hour cycle when the sun is still up, before

it gets dark. Or it can mean a single 24-hour period. It can also mean an indefinite time period but that time period concerns a somewhat identifiable...even a named...event. It can even be nearly a parallel term to the word generation, depending on the context, as in indicating an entire era. Here in Joel, the Day of the Lord means an identifiable event but of an indefinite time period. The Day of Yehoveh is NOT a single 24-hour period that can be marked on a calendar, like (for instance) Independence Day or the Day of Pentecost. The Day of Yehoveh is called this name because it is Yehoveh who is causing it and commanding it. Almost always the Day of Yehoveh will employ completely natural things (such as a locust plague or a drought or even an aggressive nation with an ambitious leader to attack). What qualifies these as a Day of Yehoveh is NOT the physical means that it happens, but rather under whose control it happens at all and for what ultimate purpose. God controls, sets it in motion, and uses it to achieve a certain ultimate purpose. But, it is all about using His wrath as the catalyst for it occurring.

The reality in Joel's era was that Israel knew about the Day of Yehoveh, but was mistakenly convinced that it was reserved only for gentile nations and never for them. And this despite what the Holy Scriptures taught, and especially what the Prophets warned. Israel's constant foe was themselves and their evil inclinations. The constant crime they committed was idolatry; but not idolatry in the sense we usually think of it. Yes, at times some people of Israel kept and worshipped idols. But, the far larger issue was that they committed a national and individual idolatry by re-making God in their own image. They preferred to substitute their doctrines, and their definitions of mercy, and love, and justice for God's. When they, and we, refuse to accept God for what the Bible says He is, and in how He judges and operates, then we have committed idolatry. In no way do I mean this allegorical or metaphorically. I mean it entirely literally, and the consequences of this for us as individuals and nationally are staggering. Have you decided that God is ONLY love and mercy? That is idolatry. Do you think that in God's corporate wrath others will be harmed but somehow you won't because you're a Believer in Yeshua? That is idolatry. Do you think that life sentences for murder is more just and more merciful because since Christ's advent He has brought with Him a different mindset of what justice and mercy is? That is idolatry. In these (and many more) assumptions that are commonly made about God, which are clearly contrary to what His Own Word says to us, is where the problem lies.

It is so very tempting to construct a God that pleases us...a very attractive God that makes our lives easier, and solves our problems, brings about our hopes and dreams...a God who evolves and satisfies our cultural demands and personal desires and pleasures, and allows us freedom to do whatever we want to do without guilt or shame...or consequence. The danger is that when we succumb to this temptation it means we are not worshipping the God of the Bible, but rather the God of our minds. A God that doesn't exist. OT and NT, we constantly read about submitting to God. But what does that really mean? To submit and surrender to God means by definition to submit and surrender our minds and thoughts to His ways and commands regardless of how it might feel to us or how hanging on to our own preferences and choices benefits us more for the present. Yeshua emphasized this point a few times, but none as dramatic, perhaps, than this occasion:

**CJB Luke 14:26-33** ***26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father, his mother, his wife, his children, his brothers and his sisters, yes, and his own life besides, he cannot be my talmid. 27 Whoever does not carry his own execution-stake and come after me cannot be my talmid.***

***28 "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Don't you sit down and estimate the cost, to see if you have enough capital to complete it? 29 If you don't, then when you have laid the foundation but can't finish, all the onlookers start making fun of you 30 and say, 'This is the man who began to build, but couldn't finish!' 31 "Or again, suppose one king is going out to wage war with another king. Doesn't he first sit down and consider whether he, with his ten thousand troops, has enough strength to meet the other one, who is coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 If he hasn't, then while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation to inquire about terms for peace. 33 "So every one of you who doesn't renounce all that he has cannot be my talmid.***

This passage has been spun so many ways by various Preachers and Teachers that I can't count them all. First, here's what it does NOT mean: it does NOT mean to intensely dislike, or to be mean or hostile to your family. Biblically, the word "hate" is almost always meant in a political sense. To hate means the opposite of having allegiance. It means to reject. If you love your king, you are loyal to him and his authority. If you hate your king, you are not loyal to him and reject his authority. Now; what it DOES mean is this: Yeshua is speaking of the

steep cost of being loyal to Him. You can no longer think like you used to think, to behave like you used to behave, and to prioritize your relationships or your values like you used to prioritize them. **He** must displace all other former allegiances in your life and have top billing as concerns everything. If anyone or anything...including your family...stands in your way of having allegiance to Him, or obeying His Father...we are commanded to reject even our family if necessary. Count the cost, He says, and consider it before committing to Him. You can't have it both ways. There is a severe cost to following Him. It isn't all a bed of roses. THIS is the reality. THIS is the real Jesus. THIS is what following Him is actually about. THIS is what He demands of us as a non-negotiable condition for our deliverance from eternal death for our sin. A completely understanding, tolerant Yeshua that accepts a "good enough" fidelity towards Him and His Father doesn't exist; and to picture Him this way is not just misguided in God's eyes, it is nothing less than idolatry. These are harsh words I know, but that is how it is with God...and every attribute, or person, or element of Him is of the same character. This makes submission and surrender to Him so very much harder and much more serious than it appears on the surface...or how it is far too often presented to the Seeker. This reality is also why so many folks hear of God and of Yeshua's salvation, and rush to the front of the Church and pray the sinners' prayer, only later to fall away and live a life that in no way reflects who God is and what He demands of us. The REAL God and the REAL Jesus have been sugar-coated until they are not recognizable. Billy Graham over 20 years ago confessed in a recorded public interview that after years of follow-up studies, it was discovered that only about 1% of the hundreds of thousands of people who came forward over the years to accept Christ at his many crusades remained as Believers. The 99% who quickly fell away acted on emotion, and on incomplete information, so they didn't count the actual cost of being a follower of Messiah Yeshua; they didn't understand who God really is. And when the cost began to be apparent, and that the attractive genie-like God they bought into wasn't really that way at all, they essentially renounced what they had publicly professed. Please think and pray long and hard on this and examine yourself to see where you may, or may not, fit into all that I just said.

The Day of Yehoveh references in Holy Scripture are actually more than the 11 outside of Joel and the 5 within it. There are some other synonymous terms and expressions used that are entirely parallel to it and mean essentially the same

thing: 21 of them to be sure. For instance, in Ezekiel 30 we hear of "The Day for Yehoveh of Hosts". In Isaiah 2 it is "The Day of tumult for the Lord Yehoveh of hosts". In Isaiah 22 it is "The Day of the wrath of Yehoveh". In Lamentations 1 it is "The Day of Yehoveh's vengeance"... and there are several others of the same ilk. So, when we see these sorts of phrases just understand that they are all pointing to the same thing; they all mean the same as The Day of Yehoveh.

Although I've already mentioned it, I'll repeat that the Day of Yehoveh and all of its parallels are derived from biblical Holy War concepts. The most important Holy War concept to grasp is that only God can declare what is Holy War. Humans declaring it because we think it a righteous endeavor does not make it holy. It might be a most worthy and necessary war...WWII comes to mind...but that is NOT Holy War. The second most important Holy War concept must be the Law of the Ban (*cherem* in Hebrew). Ban is a word that in Holy War context means the spoils of war that belong solely to God. In general, Ban applies to everything taken or captured from the enemy in a Holy War....people, animals, material possessions, precious metal and jewels...anything and everything. Since it belongs to God, He will decide what is to be done with it and how to receive it. Sometimes He will instruct some of it to be given to the Priests, and at other times to the individual soldiers and leaders, and sometimes none is to be kept by humans. How, then, does God receive and possess that which is Ban? It is to be destroyed...usually burned up. And, that includes people, animals, material possession, precious metal and jewels...anything and everything. This reality also supports the underlying principle within the many Day of Yehoveh events that will involve the deaths of large numbers of people that all humans belong to God. He has created each one of us, and so our lives belong to Him. In a Holy War, those whom the Holy War is aimed against are considered as Ban. So, while their deaths are of course sad and to be grieved over, nonetheless God has every right to have happen what He has commanded in Holy War, and no one has the right to question whether these many lives and fortunes that were lost was just and fair. Such matters are His and His alone to decide.

We'll continue in Joel chapter 1 next time.