

## THE BOOK OF JOEL

### Lesson 4, Chapter 2

Who doesn't want to know the future? Especially in this the 21<sup>st</sup> century, even totally secular folks have a sense of foreboding that something earthshaking and calamitous is coming upon our entire planet. The latest belief of what this foreboding "something" is, is wrapped up in the climate change frenzy that so many millions (if not billions) believe is leading rapidly to the extinction of human life on earth. Most of the Judeo-Christian world has this same sense, but views the outcome very differently. Therefore, lately, the Book of Revelation is being taught more than I've ever known it to be taught in Churches; but this same sense of foreboding has caused me to want to delve deeper into the various books of Old Testament prophecy about the End Times, which are essentially the source documents for John's Book of Revelation. No one book of prophecy... including Revelation... gives us all the definitive answers we seek about the future; each is but a piece of a complex and multi-faceted puzzle...the Book of Joel is also but one of those puzzle pieces. We must be cautious in our approach to prophecy because it seems that at various times in history, certain prophetic books became all the rage and what they had to say became over-weighted and thus were taken out of context from the larger picture. That is, the feeling was that one particular book could be consulted that was the most relevant to what was happening, and therefore was the only place one need go to find the answers to what was coming. For some time in the modern era, for Christians that book has been the Book of Revelation. More recently we can add to that the Book of Joel. My concern is that just as the Jews in Yeshua's day over-weighted what the Book of Daniel had to say and so it led the bulk of Jewish society to misinterpret the coming of their Messiah, so today we tend to over-weight Revelation and Joel. These books must NOT be interpreted in isolation or we'll have some very incorrect expectations that result in some rigid doctrines that are most dubious...as I think is prevalent among Christ-Believers and the various denominations right now.

The reality is that even when we put all of the several Prophets' words about the End Times together, great mysteries remain. So, we must not only have the patience to take the time and put in the effort to learn and digest what God's Word tells us about it, but also we must maintain the faith that even though we

have only been given the information to see the future but dimly, there is more than enough revealed to us to discern the highway that gets us there, some of the milestones that mark the way, and the certainty of the final destination. One of the more certain elements of that final destination is the return of Our Lord Yeshua to earth to rid the world of the wicked powers, to kick Satan out as the ruling power of the world, and to establish The Father's kingdom, in righteousness, to its fullest. But even this outcome, of itself, is composed of a series of organically connected events as opposed to a single grand spectacle. One of those events that is central to Joel's message is The Day of the Lord (or more literally, the Day of Yehoveh), and perhaps the most important thing we can take from what Joel tells us is that there is (was) more than one. This is a crucial and foundational principle about End Times prophecy that we must have at the forefront of our minds, and through which we sift all the things we learn about it.

In the opening chapter and a half of the Book of Joel that extends through chapter 2 verse 17, we learn about a Day of Yehoveh event when Israel...or more accurately, Judah...gets invaded and overcome by an army. The remaining passages of Joel are about a future Day of Yehoveh that takes place in what is most popularly known as the End Times. However, the nature of this attack is entirely different than all the earlier ones. This one is not aimed at Israel but rather against all the wicked nations and powers of the world. In this attack those wicked nations and powers will be defeated and replaced with the righteousness of God.

In Joel chapter 2 verse 11 makes at least partially known the identity and the intent of the enemy forces that come against Israel (so this is certainly not speaking of the End Times) and this event is likened to an earlier invasion of locusts. The verse 11 event speaks of a foreign army whose leader, ironically enough, is Israel's own God: Yehoveh. This enemy army is doing the bidding of Israel's God (even though they don't realize it) as the means for Yehoveh to punish Israel for their long-term rebellion against Him. Even so, the exact nation this army is from is not named.

Still stinging from the devastating effects of the locust invasion that Joel opened his book speaking about, Judah now hears that the dreaded Day of Yehoveh (The

Day of the Lord) is imminent. And, it is **they** that shall suffer it. The result of God's wrath upon Judah is so unimaginable in its scale and intensity that the rhetorical question is asked: "who can endure it?" In the prophetic accounts such as this one in Joel, and especially in the hindsight of recorded history, the question as always is which of the attacks upon Judah (and Israel) is this speaking about....if any? And, if it isn't speaking about any of those that we know about, then what event in history...or in the future... might this be pointing to?

I've spoken to you in earlier Joel lessons that when we read these Prophets like Joel it can be hard to untangle which events in which period of history are being referenced. And this is because biblical prophecy is (often as not) envisioning more than a one-and-done fulfillment event. Rather, it can be...and often is... envisioning multiple fulfillments of the same prophecy taking place at different times in history under differing circumstances. And, yet, these multiple fulfillment events are so interwoven in the prophetic narrative than only in hindsight and only with sufficient knowledge of the history of Israel can we get a better idea of which fulfillment event (or series of fulfillments) is being spoken about. No passage is better at demonstrating this conundrum than Joel verses 10 and 11. So, let's re-read a portion of Joel chapter 2 to set the stage for today's lesson.

### **RE-READ JOEL CHAPTER 2: 10 – end**

There is no doubt that at least part of the fulfillment events depicted in these 2 verses CAN NOT be merely a human-led invasion of Judah and Jerusalem with all its usual and customary catastrophic outcomes. Rather, we learn that the heavenly cosmos is going to be disrupted as well; something which no human invasion can cause. So, whatever is being pictured is infinitely more impactful and far more expansive in global scale than what happens only in Judah and Jerusalem. Events like those described are not geographically confined because events that concern the sun and the moon are seen and experienced everywhere on our planet and not in isolation. Because this prophetic theme is not limited just to Joel, let's look at one that isn't so often associated with the Day of Yehoveh, but it most certainly does speak to it: the Book of Malachai.

**CJB Malachi 3: 1-6** *"Look! I am sending my messenger to clear the way before me; and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple. Yes, the messenger of the covenant, in whom you take such delight- look! Here he comes," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot. <sup>2</sup> But who can endure the day when he comes? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire, like the soapmaker's lye. <sup>3</sup> He will sit, testing and purifying the silver; he will purify the sons of Levi, refining them like gold and silver, so that they can bring offerings to ADONAI uprightly. <sup>4</sup> Then the offering of Y'hudah and Yerushalayim will be pleasing to ADONAI, as it was in the days of old, as in years gone by. <sup>5</sup> "Then I will approach you for judgment; and I will be quick to witness against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers; against those who take advantage of wage-earners, widows and orphans; against those who rob the foreigner of his rights and don't fear me," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot. <sup>6</sup> "But because I, ADONAI, do not change, you sons of Ya'akov will not be destroyed.*

Malachai presents another good example in which the Day of Yehoveh is in sight, but yet some other events are as well, and they all seem to be thrown in together like the ingredients of a stew pot.

The day which no one "can endure" that is spoken of here in Malachai relates directly to Joel's day that no one "can endure". Even so, clearly the first words of Malachai's message have to do with something that occurs earlier: the arrival of John the Baptist and then Messiah Yeshua (*"Look! I am sending my messenger to clear the way before me; and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple.*). Something that no one in Joel's day could have seen coming, but in hindsight it becomes clear. Just as clearly, because Yeshua represented salvation and not judgment (He did not come to condemn or punish), and therefore certainly not as the refiner of the Levites (the Priesthood). Further, since Malachai lived and wrote well after the time of the Assyrian attack and exile of Israel, and then later still after the Babylonian attack and exile of Judah (and even after Judah's return), then neither of these enormous events can be any part of the events he's describing. Even more, whatever and whomever this judgment includes, it does NOT include Jacob (meaning Israel) being destroyed. Confusing? It certainly had to have been for the Israelites who first read and heard Malachai's prophecy, but it ought to be less so for us.

Due to the passing of history, more can be intelligible to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than it was for ancient Israel because by process of elimination we can at least know what this prophecy is NOT talking about. It cannot be talking about the Assyrian exile of the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim/Israel or the Babylonian exile of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. This also must necessarily be talking about an event that comes AFTER the time that Yeshua walked the earth because the predicted outcome didn't happen. The Levites were not purified during Yeshua's day and in fact within 40 years after His death, Judah's and the Priesthood's continuing corruption led to a Jewish revolt against their Roman occupiers, with the result that Rome destroyed the Temple in 70 A.D., banished the priesthood out of existence, and effectively altogether emptied Jerusalem of Jews. After that, nothing of any prophetic significance or fulfillment happened until Israel was re-born as a nation of Jews in 1948. So, by a simple process of elimination of the possibilities, the judgment that Malachai is speaking about is one that has yet to happen. We can use that same method to help us to better discern Joel.

Now, I tell you this because even though we don't have all the answers to the many and various as yet unfulfilled biblical prophecies of the End Times, nonetheless we can eliminate certain events of the past concerning Israel as being the single, most dreaded of all the several Days of Yehoveh that Joel, Malachai, Isaiah and others tells us about; a day that even involves great cosmic events. And, equally important, is that we also learn is that while all the previous Day of Yehoveh events were judgments against Judah or Israel or both, the future one...what we could loosely call The End Times one... is actually a judgment against the nations (even though Israel will certainly feel some of the effects due to the global nature of the fulfillment). That is, it is a reversal of all the earlier biblically related Days of Yehoveh. Keep this firmly in your mind as we continue in our study of what Joel has to say.

Chapter 2 verse 12 begins with a call for repentance. "Return", *SUV* in Hebrew, is a word nearly always translated to "repent" in English and I think because the way "repent" has been re-defined by the Constantinian Christian Church to be mostly a change of heart without the necessity of an accompanying change of behavior, then it is better that everywhere we see the word "repent" in our Bibles we scratch it out and write in the word "turn" or "return". This is because turn and return are words about actively doing something as opposed to repent, which

has become a word of something that happens only internally, passively, in our minds, even to the point that (doctrinally speaking) doing something actively (changing our physical works from bad to good) to prove our repentance is actually a wrong or sinful response.

Even so, no matter how we might view it, simply the way all humans work is that every change of behavior necessarily begins with a change of heart (a change of mind). There is nothing mysterious about that. Even if that change is a bad change... that is we determine to steal or to murder...that first begins within our minds, because our minds control the actions of our bodies and our outward behavior, and not the other way around. And, God says that the first necessary outward signs of returning (repenting) are fasting, weeping, and mourning....active things, physical things. Fasting and mourning are actions of self-denial. Weeping is a visible sign to others of your grief and sorrow. Even so, the Lord says to tear one's heart (mind) and not your garments. That is, it was the standard Israelite cultural tradition of mourning and sorrow to literally tear the cloth of one's garment. As we all probably realize, such cultural behaviors can become so automatic and mindless that what it is meant to indicate at a much deeper level becomes lost on merely the mechanical act of doing of it.

It has always fascinated me in my visits to Israel to witness secular Jews who don't even believe in God, celebrate the Sabbath and the biblical feasts using many of the same religious rituals as the religiously observant Jews do. It's no different for them than agnostics participating in Christmas celebrations because, in the end, what they're doing is not an act stemming from any kind of religious conviction, it's just something people of our culture do. In ancient Israel many things like tearing one's garment and donning sackcloth were customary when mourning a death without any thought about the source or meaning behind. They had just become mindless robotic habits as opposed to actually obeying God in the spirit these actions were intended. Therefore, God says that rather than Judeans focusing on tearing the fabric of their garments they should tear the fabric of their hearts (their minds). This did NOT mean to avoid tearing one's clothing; it was said in order to highlight that to God, one who tears their clothing but is not sincerely acknowledging their need and intent to change their lives by going back to God's ways (thereby abandoning their current wrong ways) is achieving nothing....He is not impressed. Listen to the words of this Psalm:

**CJB Psalm 51: 16-21** ***<sup>16</sup> Rescue me from the guilt of shedding blood, God, God of my salvation! Then my tongue will sing about your righteousness- <sup>17</sup> Adonai, open my lips; then my mouth will praise you. <sup>18</sup> For you don't want sacrifices, or I would give them; you don't take pleasure in burnt offerings. <sup>19</sup> My sacrifice to God is a broken spirit; God, you won't spurn a broken, chastened heart. <sup>20</sup> In your good pleasure, make Tziyon prosper; rebuild the walls of Yerushalayim. <sup>21</sup> Then you will delight in righteous sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then they will offer bulls on your altar.***

The same idea of the call to repent (to turn) out of sincerity and not out of mechanical or ritualistic customs appears in Psalm 51. Although I want to be clear that when we read that God says that He doesn't want sacrifices and rather what He wants is a broken spirit, this is no way is saying that God is abolishing the sacrificial system. Rather, this is a polemic against mindless (or wrong-minded) ritual customs of sacrificing animals that doesn't reflect any change of mind or behavior. It is just going through the motions because...well, that's what you are supposed to do because everybody else does, too.

Verse 13 goes on to say that a change of behavior stemming from a change of mind is even something that Yehoveh does, so Judah certainly shouldn't be shy about doing the same themselves. That is, when the end of verse 13 says that God suffers Himself to repent of the evil, it means for God to actively change His mind and to relent from causing the destruction (the evil) He fully intended to visit upon Judah. So, in like kind God is seeking a total re-orientation of mind and behavior from the Judeans...from evil to righteous... towards Him. The mourning and lamentation rituals are easy to do; small children could do them. But a deep-rooted remorsefulness on account of recognizing the wrongness of one's sin is the requirement if one can have any hope of having their sins forgiven. Even so, this must be done with the understanding that such remorse is no assurance of forgiveness. God will determine on a case-by-case basis IF He is going to show mercy. And, the reality is that turning from our evil ways to God's ways is much, much harder than performing simple rituals or offering up prayers and promises in the moment of despair. And, now I'm speaking to all of us and especially to our Christian friends who have yet to discover the enduring relevance and authority of the entire Bible, and not just the New Testament:

turning from long held and comfortable doctrines and traditions that in reality are biblically wrong, and adopting instead the biblical ways and instructions that are right, is also much, much harder to do than merely recognizing that our current ways are perhaps wrong and/or talking about it in private. For instance, letting go of manmade Easter and Christmas observances, and doctrines of an abolished Sabbath or a Sunday Sabbath is much harder to do because you know you will for sure lose friends. You can count on being ridiculed and called a Judaizer, or a heretic, or being told you're going back under the Law, and denounced by the majority. Aleksander Solzhenitsyn once famously said: **"The simple step of a courageous individual is not to take part in a lie"**. For all the same reasons that many of us were slow to separate ourselves from our denominational doctrines and to come back to God's ways, many are reluctant now. It takes courage and counting the cost to make such a bold move from wrong-minded but well-accepted traditions to the biblical commands. Don't ever think it was any different for those ancient Israelites that God, through His Prophets, were admonishing and encouraging to leave behind those false traditions and manmade doctrines and to instead return to Him. There would be a steep social if not economic cost to do it, and doing it passively without any outward change (that of course would be immediately draw attention to oneself ) was for God no repentance (no turning) at all.

Verse 14 begins with a thought that we've addressed before, but nonetheless can be a little difficult to face. The thought is "who knows?" That is, if one truly returns to God and their years of bad behavior changes, PERHAPS God will relent and not carry out His threat. Nothing is guaranteed. God always has the freedom to make determinations and choose. It must be that Joel says this because Judah's self-assured if not cocky attitude was that 1) God would never do harm against His own people regardless of their bad behavior, and 2) God's favor to them was always unconditional. The truth is that when we pray, we must always enter into it with the "who knows?" kind of mindset. None of what we ask for from Yehoveh is assured despite a belief among many that Yeshua has changed this. There is an often-quoted New Testament verse that is used to say essentially that if 2 or 3 Believers ask for something, then God is obligated to oblige.



**CJB Matthew 18:19-20** ***19 To repeat, I tell you that if two of you here on earth agree about anything people ask, it will be for them from my Father in heaven. 20 For wherever two or three are assembled in my name, I am there with them."***

So, did Jesus become the genie in the bottle that if the secret words are said, the genie has no choice but to grant that lucky person their wish? Did Yeshua overturn the notion of God always having the full freedom to decide on what He does, and rather that if 2 or 3 ask in agreement that God has no choice but to comply? In some circles, a variation of this concept is called "name it, claim it". For instance, if 2 or 3 pray and claim that so and so is to be healed of their infirmity, then is it guaranteed that God will see to it. Yeshua did not say this or mean it this way. In fact, this usually quoted verse as the answer to the question of conditionality and an iron-clad promise from God doesn't even apply to prayer or beseeching God to do the will of what the 2 or 3 have agreed upon. Rather, this is about the leadership of the Believing community making decisions about doctrinal interpretations and governing the community or congregation. And, it is that should the leadership agree on a decision, then God (and by association, Yeshua) stands behind them. Yet, the only way we can know that this is the meaning of this passage in Matthew is if we first learn the Torah and the Prophets so that we can have the proper context for interpretation.

The hope expressed in verse 14 is directly that since the locust invasion and the drought have decimated Judah's food supply, thereby it has also disrupted the ability for the Judeans to bring sacrifices to God so that the penitent person might receive forgiveness of sins. The hope is that perhaps the people repenting will cause God to respond by restoring fertility to the land such that the sacrifices can be resumed, and the people can have their guilt removed. The important thing that we must not lose sight of...despite the wishful thinking of this not being so...is that Yehoveh God's compassion and mercy can be hoped for, and pled for, but people cannot command it or take for granted that it will be given. No one can force the Lord to make any particular decision.

**CJB Zephaniah 2:1-3** ***Gather together, gather yourselves, nation devoid of shame; 2 before the decree takes effect, and the day comes when one passes like chaff; before ADONAI's fierce anger comes on you, before the day of ADONAI's anger comes on you. 3 Seek ADONAI, all you humble in the land, you who***

***exercise his justice; seek righteousness, seek humility- you might be hidden on the day of ADONAI's anger.***

Verse 15 in Joel chapter 2 is virtually a repeat of the command that opens verse 1. "Call a holy meeting of the whole congregation" is the intent. To make this point, in verse 16 the people are defined as the old men (probably meaning the Elders), the children and even the infants. No one in Judah's society is exempt. Even Bride and Bridegroom are to pause the consummation of their marriage and attend. To demand infants to fast, and newlyweds to break-off the marriage procedure is to do the unthinkable; yet, it is demanded in order to point out the unparalleled danger Judah finds itself in.

Verse 17 speaks directly to the Priests. They are to stand at their assigned stations at the Temple and be in intercession for the people, which is what they are to do when they're doing their jobs properly. Between the vestibule and the altar means between the entry into the front chamber of the Sanctuary and the Altar that is placed at the front of the Temple. They are told to plead for the people of Judah, with tears, that God would not give up on His people, nor allow gentile nations to overcome them because the nations might think that Yehoveh is unable to protect His people from invasion. The question coming from the unnamed invader "where is their God? ". This is a sneer that Yehoveh is not as potent as their own gods, and that the covenant relationship between Israel and their God is impotent or it has come to an end.

To sum up the first 17 verses of Joel chapter 2, we can say that the tone is of a dire emergency that surpasses even that of the locust attack of chapter 1. The threat is a coming Day of Yehoveh. That is, of a coming direct attack of God's wrath upon Israel. Therefore, Israel has to do much more than outwardly express lamentation rituals and sorrow if they hope that Yehoveh will stave off this attack. Rather, there must completely and without reservation a change in their behavior, which begins with a complete change of mind, and this by means of a complete return to the ways of Yehoveh. Returning to God, or to the ways of Yehoveh always means only one thing: returning to the Torah and the Law of Moses, which is the written expression of God's will and ways.

El Shaddai, the God of the Mountain, the God who appeared in dark clouds, thunder, and with a terrifying voice as a loud trumpet at Mt. Sinai, is coming. But it is NOT to defend Judah, it is to decimate them. Who hasn't seen an illustration of Christ, riding on a white horse at the front of a numberless army of Saints, double-edged sword in hand, returning to punish the nations with His Father's vengeance? This is what Judah expected of God as relates to Judah's enemies; what they didn't expect was that **they** (Judah, God's chosen people) would be the target of God's anger.

All Believers of every ilk, no matter what you may call yourself; Christian, Messianic, Hebrew Roots, or by some denominational name or branch...please pay attention. This message of the Day of Yehoveh is for a people who are certain that they are the people of God. And, as such, usually see themselves as mostly immune from the effects of the Day of Yehoveh and/or the ominous events leading up to it. But, because of believing and defending manmade doctrines and traditions that actually override and replace God's Holy Scriptures, they have placed themselves outside of God's protection and blessing. It's the same exact pattern and delusion as Israel and Judah operated under; a delusion that we read the Prophets warning them about. And while on an individual-by-individual level deliverance in the sense of dying in a state of righteousness remains possible, nationally speaking each individual is but a member of a larger corporate body. This judgment of the Day of Yehoveh is the judgment of the corporate body, and not the individual; the destruction makes no distinction between the good and the evil, the wicked and the righteous; all will suffer.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Revelation 3:5** *He who wins the victory will, like them, be dressed in white clothing; and I will not blot his name out of the Book of Life; in fact, I will acknowledge him individually before my Father and before his angels.*

Thus, one's only hope is not so much to escape what is coming, but rather it is to appeal to God's mercy and compassion to help them THROUGH this dreadful time. Despite what you may have been told, you, me, all of us are going to suffer when God's judgment of the nations happens because we are all members of those nations. All signs point toward us having entered that time. Therefore, the inherent message of these verses is: prepare! And prepare doesn't just mean adopting a passive mental or spiritual preparation; it means practical life

preparation to help ease the sufferings and deprivations that you and your family will surely have to endure.

Verse 18 changes course and now offers a hope of restoration for Israel. Starting here in Joel there is much prophecy that promises a new and higher level of life for the people of Judah and, I think, all of Israel. I want to explain this nuance about the terms Judah and all Israel. While Joel's prophecy is primarily aimed at the Kingdom of Judah, no doubt the later developments that happen when God's people return to the Holy Land almost 19 centuries after the Temple was destroyed by the Romans, and the modern nation of Israel was reborn in 1948, are also in view... very hazily. Just as originally under David and Solomon Israel was a unified Kingdom of all the tribes, but then was divided through civil war into 2 separate kingdoms, so today Israel is back as a mostly unified nation, but with only some of the 12 tribes having returned; all Israel has not yet come home...it's a long process. So, in the biblical prophecies even though Jerusalem was long ago located in the Kingdom of Judah, and then due to the Roman occupation Judah was renamed Judea, today that same place is again called Israel, and so it shall remain never to be divided up again, no matter how hard the world's nations attempt to do so in the name of peace and fairness to the Palestinians.

The first word of verse 18, which is "then", means something that happens after what has come before this verse. It is phrased in a way that seems to say that in answer to the leading of the prayers by the priests, what we now read is God's response.

When we read the words that Yehoveh "became jealous for His land", this has the meaning of a zealous intercession by God for the sake of His people and their relationship with the Holy Land. It seems that because of the peoples' newfound orientation towards a determination to obey God and to follow His commandments (inherently meaning the letting-go of paganized worship practices and manmade tradition formerly held up as truth), God's zeal has been re-directed from wrath upon Judah to wrath upon the nations. But, even then, we have to be cognizant that the fulfillment of these prophecies will happen in a nearer term as well as at a later term, with different purposes and results in mind.

Not until the later fulfillment in the End Times will God's wrath shift from Israel to the nations.

So, from here forward Joel's book is about benefits for the people of Israel...restoration of blessings. And truly, remarkably, even in the Torah we find a prophecy about this time when Israel is sent into exile, what God's attitude is about His people, and what He will do out of compassion for them.

**CJB Leviticus 26:40-45** ***<sup>40</sup> Then they will confess their misdeeds and those of their ancestors which they committed against me in their rebellion; they will admit that they went against me. <sup>41</sup> At that time I will be going against them, bringing them into the lands of their enemies. But if their uncircumcised hearts will grow humble, and they are paid the punishment for their misdeeds; <sup>42</sup> then I will remember my covenant with Ya'akov, also my covenant with Yitz'chak and my covenant with Avraham; and I will remember the land. <sup>43</sup> For the land will lie abandoned without them, and it will be paid its Shabbats while it lies desolate without them; and they will be paid the punishment for their misdeeds, because they rejected my rulings and loathed my regulations. <sup>44</sup> Yet, in spite of all that, I will not reject them when they are in the lands of their enemies, nor will I loathe them to the point of utterly destroying them and thus break my covenant with them, because I am ADONAI their God. <sup>45</sup> Rather, for their sakes, I will remember the covenant of their ancestors whom I brought out of the land of Egypt- with the nations watching- so that I might be their God; I am ADONAI."***

Once again we are reminded that even in exile, Israel remains God's covenant people. This promise of a continuing relationship and care for Israel was made long before Israel's rebellion in the wilderness, on their way from Egypt to Canaan. One of things we need to notice from both Joel and Leviticus is how God regards the land of Israel (His jealousy towards it) as much as the people of Israel. There are so many Believers, today, who profess a sincere love and concern for the people of Israel, but at the same time press Israel to give up much of the land that God gave to them to the Palestinians in the name of "peace" and "fairness", with the idea of a political two-state solution as the ideal solution. This is a misguided mindset because God organically connects His land with His people. They go together as an inseparable set, and not as two different

considerations. The chosen people suffer when they are not in the land, and the land suffers when the chosen people aren't there to tend it.

We'll continue with the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Joel chapter 2 next time.