

**THE BOOK OF JOEL**  
**Lesson 5, Chapter 2 Continued**

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Joel, we witness the beauty and the justice of Yehoveh on display: severe wrath for Judah's rebellion and treason against Him, and extreme mercy and outpouring of blessings for their obedience and sincere repentance. This fact is revealed in that Joel Chapter 2 is divided into two distinct halves each reflecting one side of the coin of God's divine character: the first half continues through verse 17 and it is about an enemy army invading and decimating Judah for their insistent, long-term rebellion against Yehoveh. The second half begins at verse 18, with Yehoveh turning the tide and restoring Judah, and instead punishing the nations for their maltreatment of Judah and Israel. Each of these events are marked as a Day of Yehoveh.

There are several, not just one, Days of Yehoveh (Days of the Lord). The fall of the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim/Israel in 723 B.C. was one. The invasion and exile of the Southern Kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. was another. The coming of Christ actually represents another Day of Yehoveh of an unusual type (when God's wrath was rained down upon one person in payment for the sins of all), and Yeshua's second coming will be yet another, also of a unique type. Arguably, there are at least a couple more that while not technically labeled as a Day of Yehoveh, in effect and force they are (such as the invasion of Canaan by Israel, led by Joshua, and centuries later the Roman invasion of Jerusalem when the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D.).

Joel is certainly not the first prophet to speak of these things, nor is he the last. One of the other such prophets is Zechariah. Prophecy is a most difficult challenge to understand because it can be so cryptic and complex; so, it helps us to better understand Joel's words when we add in some of what the other prophets said about the same events and what leads up to them. As concerns Israel's merciful restoration after the several Days of Yehoveh events that have targeted Israel for God's wrath, here is a passage from Zechariah that fleshes out what Joel's prophecy beginning in verse 18 has to say about it.

**CJB Zechariah 1:12-17** ***<sup>12</sup> The angel of ADONAI said, "ADONAI-Tzva'ot, how long will you keep withholding mercy from Yerushalayim and the cities of Y'hudah?"***

***You've been angry with them for the past seventy years!"<sup>13</sup> ADONAI replied with kind and comforting words to the angel who was speaking with me.<sup>14</sup> The angel speaking with me then said to me, "Here is what ADONAI-Tzva'ot says: 'I am extremely jealous on behalf of Yerushalayim and Tziyon;<sup>15</sup> and [to the same degree] I am extremely angry with the nations that are so self-satisfied; because I was only a little angry [at Yerushalayim and Tziyon], but they made the suffering worse.'<sup>16</sup> Therefore ADONAI says, 'I will return to Yerushalayim with merciful deeds. My house will be rebuilt there,' says ADONAI-Tzva'ot; 'yes, a measuring line will be stretched out over Yerushalayim.'<sup>17</sup> In addition, proclaim that ADONAI-Tzva'ot says, 'My cities will again overflow with prosperity.'<sup>18</sup> ADONAI will again comfort Tziyon, and he will again make Yerushalayim the city of his choice."***

Zechariah prophesied around 520 B.C. That is, he wrote going on 70 years after Babylon invaded Judah and exiled the people, and just before the Persians released Judah to go back home, and a few more years before Ezra and Nehemiah would take on the task of rebuilding the Temple. In relation to Joel, then, Zechariah probably prophesied around 250 years later after what we're reading in Joel's book. The theme in this portion of Zechariah is pleading with God to fulfill the already given prophecy that Yehoveh WOULD restore Judah, because as of yet He had not. What I want to highlight is the very great degree of God's jealousy and care for Judah and Jerusalem...the people, the land, and the Temple. Conversely, in this same passage the Lord declares His building anger with the nations (meaning gentile nations) who simply made Israel's misery worse. The point and principle of this pronouncement applies to us in the modern age as much as it did to the nations in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. It also applies especially to the Constantinian Church (the modern-day Church) that has claimed for 1600 years that it is the representative assembly of Believers that Yeshua began; yet I would assert that claim needs to be re-examined.

Why do I make such a strong statement and claim as this? It's because of the truth; it's because the alarm must be sounded even though so many will turn a deaf ear and respond just as the residents and leaders of Judah did (and earlier in Ephraim/Israel) that we read about in Hosea, Amos and Joel. They, too, sincerely believed that their manmade doctrines had become the new truth, and that God's actual Word was less important or relevant for them.

The foundational principles of the modern Church turn what we are reading in Joel and in the other Prophets I have quoted in our study, on its head. Constantinian Christianity is based on the belief that Israel's restoration blessings have been turned over to gentile Christians, that Israel has permanently lost favor with God, and that along with that loss of favor the entire justice system and moral code Yehoveh set down for them (the Law of Moses) has also been rescinded. Unwittingly I suspect, Christians in general have become accomplices with the nations in their poor treatment of Israel even though, admittedly, a portion of the Church at least has decided to be friendly towards Israel in some ways. Over and over in the Bible we read of God's great jealousy and favor for Judah and Jerusalem, and of the promise that He would not only restore them, but also that those blessings would overflow like never before. Even more, that the seat of Heavenly government from which Yeshua would eventually rule and reign would be in Zion (Jerusalem). What we read not only in the Old Testament, but also in the New, is that in the end the nations and those people that stand with those governments in their disfavor and maltreatment of Israel will receive God's angry wrath. Church...if you are listening... do you seriously believe that the claim of faith in Jesus exempts you from that promise of God to punish those who join in the maltreatment of His chosen people? How can you know on whose side you stand, and how God judges on this matter? Read the Prophets. The Prophets make it abundantly clear that, for people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our stance on 2 issues is the best indicator of whether we're on God's side or not. Do you insist that Jews must give up their Jewishness in order to join the assembly of gentile Believers who follow Yeshua? Do you support the idea of a 2 State Solution, or any political resolution to the status of the Holy Land that might evolve, that proposes to divide that land, by giving a portion of it to Israel's enemies...those who worship a false god? If you do, then you stand with the nations and you will be judged according that stance, and you will suffer what the nations are going to suffer. So, if you believe what Joel and Zechariah and others are telling all who care to read and hear, then the next dilemma so many will face is: do you intend to stay and fight for reform within your denomination, or will you separate yourself from it and seek a congregation that wants to acknowledge God's Word as true and relevant, from Genesis to Revelation? My advice is that unless you are a highly-placed leader with enough influence to making reform within your denomination even remotely

possible, then God tells the rest of us something so very simple and straightforward:

**CJB Revelation 18:1-5** *After these things, I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority; the earth was lit up by his splendor. <sup>2</sup> He cried out in a strong voice, "She has fallen! She has fallen! Bavel the Great! She has become a home for demons, a prison for every unclean spirit, a prison for every unclean, hated bird.*

*<sup>3</sup> "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of God's fury caused by her whoring- yes, the kings of the earth went whoring with her, and from her unrestrained love of luxury the world's businessmen have grown rich." <sup>4</sup> Then I heard another voice out of heaven say: "My people, come out of her! so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not be infected by her plagues, <sup>5</sup> for her sins are a sticky mass piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.*

My plea to you...God's instruction to you through His Prophets... is one of self-preservation. If and when we finally recognize that what our place of worship might actually stand for is NOT what God says we are to do, then we are certainly not admonished to stay and fight, but rather to "Come out of her, My people". Run. Flee. Get as far away from it as you can, and don't look back (don't become as Lot's wife). Instead separate yourself, and then seek the ancient biblical faith as Moses, the Prophets, Yeshua and the Apostles taught. As I feel so strongly that at this point in human history we have stepped over (or at least stand upon) the threshold of the End Times, it pays to remember something that is oh so painful to admit; it is that it has been recognized for centuries by various Church leaders that at least some part of the Christian world is going to be reckoned by God as members of the symbolic Babylon of the Book of Revelation, despite their insistence they are not; and those members will share in God's wrath. Some professed Believers...who knows how many...are most definitely going to be left behind as Tim LaHaye's novel so deftly presents it. Yeshua warns about this in the most dramatic way.

**CJB Matthew 7:20-26** *<sup>20</sup> So you will recognize them by their fruit. <sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, only those who do what my Father in heaven wants. <sup>22</sup> On that Day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in*

***your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?' 23 Then I will tell them to their faces, 'I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!' 24 "So, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on bedrock. 25 The rain fell, the rivers flooded, the winds blew and beat against that house, but it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand.***

Just as Joel and the other Prophets are speaking candidly ONLY to those who believe in Yehoveh, God of Israel, can we not see that Jesus is talking ONLY to those who openly claim belief in Him? Who other than those who say they follow Yeshua would prophesy (which, in that era meant to teach) in His Name? But, He doesn't stop there. He says that upon coming to understand what He's teaching, next there MUST BE a transfer from inner belief to outward action. Those who don't take concrete action are described by Him as those who are "stupid" because even though they now know the truth, they continue to depend on false doctrines (a foundation of sand) to deliver them...doctrines that are NOT the truth.

The finger pointing as to who the Book of Revelation's symbolic Babylon is, and therefore who these particular Believers are that Christ considers as not accepted by Him, is usually aimed toward Catholicism. Yet, this is so very hypocritical because the reality is that 95% of foundational Protestant-based doctrines ARE Catholic doctrines. The main difference is that Catholics have a Pope, and Mary-worship is part of their tradition. But the underlying anti-Semitism, the built-in bias against the Jewish people, the explicit insistence that the Jews are cursed and their blessings have been transferred to gentiles, and that the Jews operate under one divine justice system and gentiles under another, has been thoroughly carried forward into the bulk of Protestant and Orthodox-based Christianity, even if often this is subtle and not necessarily spoken too loudly from the pulpit.

God's oracle to Joel is historically about Israelites who claim to be God's people, but behave and believe quite differently from God's scriptural instructions to them. Unfortunately, the majority wouldn't take this warning seriously and even

fought against those who attempted to return to the true faith. I cannot stress enough that this applies to us, today, just as much as it did to the ancient Israelites because that is how biblical prophecy works. One of the reasons for Torah Class undertaking the study all 12 Minor Prophets in depth is to become more aware of our predicament, and to not be "stupid" as Yeshua warned. So, as we continue in Joel, just place yourself as among those the good Prophet is speaking to...because you are. As they say: if the shoe fits, wear it.

Let's re-read part of Joel chapter 2.

### **RE-READ JOEL CHAPTER 2: 18 – end**

God's oracle is phrased in such a way that we are to understand that the compassion and mercy He is going to have at a future time upon Judah and Jerusalem is based upon the positive response of the priests who are told to stand at their posts and pray for mercy.

Nearly all English versions have the verb tenses stated incorrectly. That is, the syntax of the original Hebrew requires that we take the imperfect (the incomplete) tense when coupled with the Vav consecutive form as making the described action as something that has already happened. In other words, this passage ought to read not as something that will eventually happen, but as something that has already been decided in Heaven, and thus in spiritual terms it has already occurred. Here is how it should read:

<sup>JPS</sup> **Joel 2: 18** *Then was the LORD jealous for His land, and had pity on His people.*

So, what Joel is saying is that as of the moment he speaks this prophesy, the process of fulfilling it begins. This allows me to remind you of an important principle of biblical prophecy in general, which is that whatever God has decided in Heaven is brought into this physical world and set into motion upon His Prophets speaking it. Whatever, then, comes later after the prophecy is delivered by a Prophet is but the long series of events that are designed to move the ball forward in order for this prophecy to reach its fullest fulfillment in our physical world.

The promise that God makes to Judah includes this ongoing balance, or connectedness, of the people and the land. One without the other is incomplete; God sees the land of Israel and the people of Israel as an organic unity. Thus, in God's wrath, when Israel is removed from the land, the land quits producing. But in verse 19...the restoration of Israel...the land begins to again produce abundantly, if not miraculously. One of the several reasons that I insist all Believers need to make at least one pilgrimage to Israel is to personally see this land so amazingly productive, as proof of the literalness of God's promises. Prior to Israel's return in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the land they formerly lived in had become a largely denuded wasteland. Millions of trees had been chopped down because the Arab absentee landlords imposed a tree tax on the migrant Arabs and Bedouins who had moved into the area. Thus, the migrants destroyed the trees in order to avoid paying the tax. The fertile Hula valley in the north had become little more than mosquito infested swampland. The area surrounding the Galilee was rocks and weeds. The deserts were barren and sterile. But today, all that has changed and Israel has again become a net exporter of produce that ranks among the finest available anywhere.

This new reality for Israel is that they will no longer be a reproach...a laughingstock...of the nations. Rather, they will become envied; which, indeed, has happened. Of course, along with the envy comes jealousy and recriminations from those who hate Israel or deny the concept of Israel as a set-apart and specially blessed people. The source of this jealousy and recrimination is embodied in verse 20 when it speaks of the northern nation or nations...enemies of Israel... that God will drive into a waterless desert. Is this speaking of a specific nation? Probably not. Because Israel is bordered by the Mediterranean on the west and the desert to the east, then invasions almost always came from the north. Obviously the invasions of Assyria and Babylon came from the north. The Prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel in particular speak of invaders coming from the north.

**CJB Ezekiel 38: 1-6 *The word of ADONAI came to me: <sup>2</sup> 'Human being, turn your face toward Gog (of the land of Magog), chief prince of Meshekh and Tuval; and prophesy against him. <sup>3</sup> Say that Adonai ELOHIM says, 'I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshekh and Tuval. <sup>4</sup> I will turn you around, put hooks in your***

*jaws and bring you out with all your army, horses and horsemen, all completely equipped, a great horde with breastplates and shields, all wielding swords. <sup>5</sup> Paras, Ethiopia and Put are with them, all with breastplates and helmets; <sup>6</sup> Gomer with all its troops; the house of Togarmah in the far reaches of the north, with all its troops- many peoples are with you.*

**CJB Jeremiah 1:13-16** <sup>13</sup> *A second time the word of ADONAI came to me, asking, "What do you see?" I answered, "I see a caldron tilted away from the north, over a fire fanned by the wind." <sup>14</sup> Then ADONAI said to me, "From the north calamity will boil over onto everyone living in the land, <sup>15</sup> because I will summon all the families in the kingdoms of the north," says ADONAI, "and they will come and sit, each one, on his throne at the entrance to the gates of Yerushalayim, opposite its walls, all the way around, and opposite all the cities of Y'hudah. <sup>16</sup> I will pronounce my judgments against them for all their wickedness in abandoning me, offering incense to other gods and worshipping what their own hands made.*

There are other mentions of the nations and armies coming from the north; but getting too specific about identifying in modern terms who these are in our day is probably too big of a reach, and much too speculative to attempt. Here in Joel, the term "the northerners" or "the northern one" is more of a generalized and parallel term for any invader since invaders of Israel and Judah (for geographical reasons) almost always came from the north, and we are told that it will be the same for the final Holy War battle of Armageddon. God says that the enemy will be forced into the eastern and western seas, and the odor of the decomposition of the countless bodies of the dead enemy soldiers will ascend up to God, just as the odor of the corruption of these northern nations ascended up to God. The final phrase in this verse... "for it has done great things"... is a bit puzzling. Who or what is "it" that has done great things? Probably, because this passage has Israel being encouraged to rejoice over the turn of events to their favor, then we must assign the "great things" spoken of not to an "it" but rather to Yehoveh. So, the idea is that Yehoveh's destruction of the invaders from the north is due to their corruption, and this destruction must be at God's direct hand because only He could bring about such a great thing.

In fact, verses 21 – 23 act together in a call to rejoice. Within those verses, Joel summons the earth, the domestic and wild animals, and the people of Judah to

praise God for what He has done on their behalf. We have read how terribly the soil suffered because of the locust invasion and the drought. The various wild and domestic beasts of the field suffered because the plants and grasses they fed on had been destroyed. The people suffered because of the twin disasters of the locusts and the drought. Just as the land, the animals, and the people suffer together, so do they rejoice together when the land is bountiful and their *shalom* is restored.

Verse 23 is actually a bit controversial. Most Bibles interpret the Hebrew of this verse as speaking about rain. However, some versions instead translate the Hebrew intent not as rain, but rather as about a teacher. That word in question is in Hebrew *moreh*, and it can legitimately be translated as both rain and as teacher. Let's compare a couple of different Bible versions.

**CJB Joel 2:23** *Be glad, people of Tziyon! rejoice in ADONAI your God! For he is giving you the right amount of rain in the fall, he makes the rain come down for you, the fall and spring rains- this is what he does first.*

**YLT Joel 2:23** *And ye sons of Zion, joy and rejoice, In Jehovah your God, For He hath given to you the Teacher for righteousness, And causeth to come down to you a shower, Sprinkling and gathered -- in the beginning.*

So, in one case it is rain that comes down from above; in another case it is a Teacher of Righteousness. It is interesting that in the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls society, they predicted in the End Times a coming Teacher of Righteousness. Where did they get that notion from? On the surface, one might think that the Dead Sea Scroll writers, the Essenes, took their cue from here in Joel and from Hosea, which used the same word in a similar way. But, there is no document of the Essenes that says that's where the idea came from. So, it is very hard to know exactly where their interpretation of a Teacher of Righteousness emerged, or if it came from their own minds or even as Godly inspiration. Nonetheless, in the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls documents, the mention of a Teacher of Righteousness is a central character and sometimes it is connected to the advent of a Messiah. Most commentators believe this is speaking about rain (not a teacher) because earlier we read about the drought conditions that are now being reversed. That said, there is a third possibility that I think well reflects the

underlying dynamic of most prophecy. It is that since Joel speaks of both spiritual and material blessings ahead for Judah, then it may be that we need to render *moreh* as the "Teacher of righteousness" in the first part of the verse, and then later in the same verse the same word addresses actual watery rain. That is, the spiritual blessings of Messiah first, and then later the material blessings of the rain upon the soil. I don't want to spend any more time with this because the meaning is too ambiguous to get too rigid about it.

Verse 24 is almost the same as verse 19 when it speaks of the land producing abundantly. The 3 standard household staples of grain, juice from the grapes (wine), and olive oil all are addressed and then in the following verse it is most interestingly expressed as this new abundance being but repayment for the years of scarcity that the 4 locust attacks caused. The repayment is a recompense to the people for their suffering, so to speak. We get a very similar thought in the Book of Leviticus, when a list of curses against Israel for not obeying God is given. This particular one, however, speaks of a payback in terms of benefiting the land, as opposed to the people....although because the land and the people are organically connected, then of course the people will also benefit.

**CJB Leviticus 26:31-35** ***<sup>31</sup> I will lay waste to your cities and make your sanctuaries desolate, so as not to smell your fragrant aromas. <sup>32</sup> I will desolate the land, so that your enemies living in it will be astounded by it. <sup>33</sup> You I will disperse among the nations, and I will draw out the sword in pursuit after you; your land will be a desolation and your cities a wasteland. <sup>34</sup> Then, at last, the land will be paid its Shabbats. As long as it lies desolate and you are in the lands of your enemies, the land will rest and be repaid its Shabbats. <sup>35</sup> Yes, as long as it lies desolate it will have rest, the rest it did not have during your Shabbats, when you lived there.***

So, basically Leviticus is saying that one of the reasons that Israel will be ejected from the land will be because they ignored the 7-year cycles of Sabbath years. That is, according to the Law of Moses, the land is to be worked, planted and harvested for 6 consecutive years, but in the 7<sup>th</sup> year it is to lie fallow (thereby giving the land its sabbath rest). Therefore, with Israel in exile, the land (ironically enough) gets repaid the years of sabbath-year rests that it should

have, but didn't, get because of Israel's disobedience. The thing to notice is, again, how connected the people of Israel and the land of Israel are.

The first half of verse 26 is fairly straightforward. The restoration of blessings shall be so startling and seemingly impossible that the people will spontaneously burst out in praise to God, in what is nothing less than a full reorientation from their former ways of unfaithfulness to obedience and righteousness. The final words of the verse however, aren't as clear cut (as the number of ways this winds up being translated to English demonstrates). Whereas the CJB says "...when My people will never **again** be shamed", the KJV says "...when My people shall **never be** ashamed". And the YLT says, "...and not ashamed are My people **to the age**". The difference lies is just how long a period of time after God restores these blessings might these blessings continue. One version makes it forever. Another is indefinite (it could be for any length of time) and yet a third puts it in terms of not being ashamed through-out what is called "the present age". The issue is this: if "never again", or "through the end of the present age" are what is being envisioned, then this verse has to be speaking of the future and final End Times event. If not, then it could be something that lasts just for a while, with another fulfillment of it coming yet later still. If it is about the End Times, then we again have a conflation of Joel seeing prophetic fulfillments both in the nearer and in the far future times. I think this is exactly that. Judah will return from their Babylonian exile, and the land will flourish again. They will be allowed to stay in the land from around 500 B.C. to 70 A.D., when the Romans will dispossess and exile them on God's behalf. Then the land will again stop producing. Israel will not be allowed back in to the land until the year 1948 (when the modern state of Israel was reborn), after which time they will never again be dispossessed and exiled...and this is a "forever" promise.

Ezekiel speaks eloquently about that time of the "forever" promise that we are living in right now. The proof of which is the return first of Judah (the Jews) to the land after the Roman exile from 1900 years ago, and lately in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the return of Ephraim/Israel (also known as the 10 Lost Tribes) to the land from their Assyrian exile of 2700 years ago.

**READ EZEKIEL 37 all**

Joel and Ezekiel line up perfectly, with Ezekiel greatly expanding on Joel. Since what Ezekiel has described never happened before in history, but it is happening now in modern Israel, then what we are witnessing with our own eyes is what Ezekiel and Joel were speaking about. We are assured that now that all the tribes are returning, and the land is nearly entirely under Israel's possession, they will never again be ejected from it by God. And, the only way that each time in history that they were invaded and ejected was because God led certain nations to do so, because otherwise no nation or empire could possibly succeed in ejecting them since Yehoveh was their protector and He cannot be defeated.

This is something that both Israel and those followers of Yeshua who love Israel can rest easy about. However, much too much of the modern Church WANTS Israel ejected from part of the land (especially from the West Bank, what at one time was called Samaria), and WANTS half of Jerusalem removed from the Jews, and given over to the Arab Palestinians in concession to the demands of Muslims the world over, believing that this is the fair and just road to a lasting Middle East peace (the greater part of Jews in America, and about half the Jews in Israel, want this to happen as well). I want all to please hear me: just remember that the word Palestinians is but the Greek translation of the Hebrew word **P'lishtim**, which in English is Philistines. The Roman Emperor that destroyed the Temple renamed it that in order to heap shame upon the Jews. That is, he renamed Israel to that of their staunch historical enemy, Philistia. Therefore, any time or event from the destruction of the Temple on back into prior history cannot be what the second half of Joel 2:26 is speaking about, nor what Ezekiel 37 is describing. However, since 1948 we HAVE entered that time frame, and we are so very privileged to live in such a time as this that the ancient Prophets would have given anything to see.

Verse 27 completes chapter 2 with the words that because of what Yehoveh has done, then Israel will know that He indeed is their God and there is no other to turn to. And it repeats the promise that Israel will never again be held in shame for having been kicked out from their own land, by their own God.

The next chapter of Joel, chapter 3, begins with some words that explain that God's several interventions in the history and fate of Israel and the world are

anything but on hold. Those words are "After this". So, next week we'll study Joel chapter 3, and find out what exciting things happen "after this".