

# KINGDOM VIOLENCE

## MATTHEW 11:12

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I don't think I'm the only one who has grimaced upon reading Matthew 11:12, where the Lord speaks of the Kingdom of Heaven suffering violence and the violent take it by force. What did Jesus mean? Resorting to the commentaries doesn't help either. It seems that knowledge of Greek doesn't help us to understand what Yeshua (Jesus) meant: 'violent men' would take the Kingdom by force. Really? Doesn't Yeshua tell us to turn the other cheek and love our enemy? How can their words be reconciled with Yeshua's words in Mt. 5:3: 'Blessed are the *poor* in spirit, for *theirs* is the Kingdom of Heaven'? Violent men and poor in spirit are not synonymous. While some of what the commentators write doesn't seem unreasonable, none strike the Chord of Truth, and actually, all lead us down a wrong trail. Only when the Greek text is translated back into what Yeshua would have said in Hebrew,<sup>1</sup> are we given a translation

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<sup>1</sup> For an excellent book on why Hebrew was the language of Yeshua and the Apostles, see David Bivin and Roy Blizzard's, *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2001). Biblical scholarship has had to take into account many recent (20th century) findings that have determined that Hebrew was the spoken language in Israel at the time of the Apostles. For centuries many thought that it was Aramaic, but even renowned Aramaic scholars like Matthew Black and Max Wilcox concede that 'Hebrew was' the 'living language' and the 'normal vehicle of expression' (ibid., pp. 12-13). This understanding rests on a number of findings in different fields:

1. One is the discovery of the bar Kochba letters, dated at 134-135 AD, in which Hebrew is the language.
2. Much of the literature of Qumran is in Hebrew and not Aramaic (ibid., pp. 14, 20-21). The ratio of Hebrew to Aramaic is 'nine to one' and it's most likely that the Aramaic found was written much earlier, when Aramaic was the spoken language of the returning captives from Babylon (ibid., p. 29).
3. There's also the witness of the early Church Father Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis in Turkey (70-163 AD) who wrote, 'Matthew put the words of the Lord in an ordered arrangement in the Hebrew language' (ibid., pp. 23-24).
4. The three Synoptic Gospels, having been translated into modern Hebrew from the Greek text (for Israelis today), contain many places where the Greek words form *perfect Hebrew syntax and idiomatic expressions* (ibid., pp. 53-65). This confirms Papias.
5. Of the 215 ancient coins in the Israel Museum covering a period of roughly 450 years, from the fourth century BC until 135 AD, '99 have Hebrew inscriptions' and 'only one has an Aramaic inscription' (ibid., p. 33; the other 115 coins are Roman).
6. Early Rabbinic literature was all written in Hebrew (ibid., p. 43).
7. The New Testament declares Hebrew to be the language of Yeshua and the Apostles. Unfortunately, scholars and translators have said that what the New Testament 'meant' was Aramaic. That Aramaic was used is not to be denied, but just as an Englishman can say, '*Bon appétit*,' without anyone suggesting that all of Britain speaks French as its primary language, so too, could Yeshua use Aramaic words and phrases (Mk. 5:41; 7:34; Jn. 1:42).
  - a. The New Testament speaks of the inscription over the head of Yeshua being in *Hebrew*, Latin and Greek (Jn. 19:20) and of,
  - b. Mary addressing Him in Hebrew (Jn. 20:16).
  - c. Paul says that Yeshua spoke to him in Hebrew (Acts 26:14) and,

that allows us to see not only what Yeshua actually said that day, but also what He was clearly alluding to. His Jewish followers that day understood what He meant. The following are several English translations from the Greek text of Matthew 11:12 that don't understand the need to translate the verse back into Hebrew. The first five speak of the *Kingdom suffering violence*, while the last three have the Kingdom being taken by violence (violent men).

1. KJV: 'From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven *suffers violence, and violent men* take it by force.'
2. NRSV: 'From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven *has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.*'<sup>2</sup> (The NRSV also has an alternate reading in the margin: the kingdom of heaven 'has been coming *violently.*'<sup>3</sup>)
3. NKJV: 'And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven *suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.*'
4. NASB: 'From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven *suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.*'
5. Jewish New Covenant: 'From the time of Yochanan (John) the Immerser (Baptizer) until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been *suffering violence; yes, violent ones are trying to snatch it away.*'<sup>4</sup>
6. Kenneth Wuest: 'Indeed, from the days of John the Baptizer until this moment, the kingdom of heaven is being *taken by storm, and the strong and forceful ones* claim it for themselves eagerly.'<sup>5</sup>
7. KJV *Interlinear*: 'But from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of the heavens is *ta-ken by violence, and (the) violent seize it.*'<sup>6</sup>
8. Nestle-Aland *Interlinear*: 'And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of the Heavens is *forcibly entered and violent men seize it.*'<sup>7</sup>

From the first five translations the Kingdom of Heaven is under attack, and the last three speak of entry

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d. Paul spoke to the crowd at the Temple in Hebrew (Acts 21:40; 22:2). There are also other references specifically to the Hebrew language (Jn. 5:2; 19:13, 17; Rev. 9:11; 16:16).

*ISBE* states, With the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947f.), 'it became obvious that Hebrew was indeed' the language of Yeshua. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, General Editor; Everett F. Harrison, Roland K. Harrison and William Sanford LaSor, Associate Editors, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. one (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 233, IV *Aramaic and the NT*.

*ISBE* also says, "In a compelling article on 'Hebrew in the Days of the Second Temple' (*JBL*, 79 [1960], 32-47), J. M. Grintz has offered...evidence to show that Hebrew, rather than Aramaic, lay behind the Gospel of Matthew. A number of expressions in the Gospel can only be explained on the basis of Hebrew, like the use of 'Israel' (Aram. regularly uses 'Jews') and 'gentiles' (Aram. has no word like 'gôyîm')". The spoken language of Jesus and the Apostles was Hebrew, not Aramaic.

<sup>2</sup> Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort, Translators, J. D. Douglas, Editor, *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990), pp. 38-39. As a side note, notice that both Interlinears translate the Kingdom as the Kingdom of the Heavens, and not 'Heaven.' In Hebrew it's never Heaven, but the plural, Heavens.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> David H. Stern, *Jewish New Covenant* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Covenant Publications, 1991), p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth S. Wuest, Translator, *The New Testament, An Expanded Translation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961, reprinted, 1998), p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> George Ricker Berry, Editor, *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000), pp. 27-28.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*, pp. 38-39.

into the Kingdom being done by force or violent men. Some try to persuade us that the violence to the Kingdom was done by either the Zealots, who wanted to forcibly make Jesus King, in order to defeat Rome, or by the antagonists of Jesus, like Herod and the Pharisees, who wanted to snuff out the Kingdom. Theologian R. T. France states that the,

‘violence began with the time of John’s preaching because that was when the kingdom of heaven began to be proclaimed.’<sup>8</sup>

France goes on to say there are two possible understandings of what this *violence* might be:

1. ‘P. W. Barnett argues that Jesus refers to the *political* activists among his (and John’s) followers who tried to divert his mission into one of national liberation, a movement which reached its climax after the feeding of the 5,000.’ France discounts this theory, though, stating, ‘It is not clear however, why this issue should be introduced here, unless (and this must be speculation), John’s followers had moved increasingly in a political direction, causing Jesus, while endorsing John’s message, to dissociate himself from his ‘violent’ followers.’<sup>9</sup>
2. ‘More commonly Jesus is understood to refer to the violent opposition encountered by ‘the kingdom of heaven,’ already seen in the arrest and imprisonment of its herald, and more ominously foreshadowed in the growing official opposition to Jesus himself. In the context of John’s question from prison this seems the more relevant sense. So while John was the last of the old order, his fate was the foretaste of the conflicts which are already beginning to affect the new order.’<sup>10</sup>

Could the Kingdom of Heaven, which Yeshua told Pilate was not of this Earth (John 18:36), actually be under attack by wicked, violent men? Did John have a lot of political disciples?<sup>11</sup> It seems possible, and this is a major problem with passages like this that commentators really don’t understand. They create (i.e. make up) a scenario that seems to be plausible, but in this case, is diametrically opposed to the words, character, and lifestyle of Jesus.

The ‘violence’ that France mentions, of John being imprisoned, is not pertinent. John wasn’t imprisoned for preaching the coming Kingdom, but for rebuking Herod for his adultery, a very ‘Old Testament’ commandment (Ex. 20:14; Mt. 14:3-4; Mk. 6:17-18; Lk. 3:19-20). That there was ‘violence’ or tension between Yeshua and the Pharisees, etc., who prevented Jews from following the Messiah by their lies about Him (e.g. ‘He casts out demons by Beelzebub;’ Mt. 12:24; 23:13), is evident to anyone who reads the four accounts of His Ministry in Israel two thousand years ago, but how that fits into understanding what Yeshua said about the Kingdom and violent men taking it by force, leaves much to be desired, although one could say that they presented a sort of hurdle that the Kingdom had to leap over.

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<sup>8</sup> R. T. France, M.A., B.D., Ph.D., The Rev. Leon Morris, M.Sc., M.Th., Ph.D., General Editor, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Matthew* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), p. 195.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 195-196.

<sup>11</sup> In John 6:14, after the feeding of the 5,000, because the miracle was similar to Moses ‘giving’ Manna to Israel in the Wilderness, and the King of Israel, the Messiah, would be ‘like Moses’ (Dt. 18:15-19), the Jewish people realized the significance of the miraculous bread and wanted to make Yeshua the King of Israel: “Then those men, when they had seen the sign (miracle) that Jesus did, said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”” (John 6:14 NKJV) “I will raise up for them a Prophet *like you* (Moses) from among their brethren, and I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.” (Deuteronomy 18:18)

John 6:15 does say that they were *about* to come and take Him by force, but Yeshua easily alluded them and went up to the mountain to be alone. The next day they found Yeshua in Capernaum and He spoke to them about eating His flesh (Jn. 6:53). He lost so many disciples, though, because of that saying, that He turned to Peter and asked him if he, too, wanted to leave Him (John 6:66-69). That seems to be the only time ‘force’ is mentioned in wanting to make Yeshua King, and it didn’t amount to anything.

The three Greek words that the sentence turns on are, 1. βιάζεται *biazetai*; 2. βιασταὶ *biastai*; 3. ἀρπάζουσιν *harpazusin*:

1. The Kingdom of Heaven is being *violently attacked* or *forcefully advancing*. βιάζεται *biazetai* from *biazo*; “*to force, use violence*,”<sup>12</sup> or to “*inflict violence on*.”<sup>13</sup>
2. Violent men<sup>14</sup> seize it (to destroy it), or use “force...to obtain its privileges with the utmost eagerness and effort.” βιασταὶ *biastai*.<sup>15</sup>
3. The violent men “lay hold of it” (NKJV), or “take it by force” (NIV). ἀρπάζουσιν *harpazusin*, from the verb *harpazo*. “To snatch away.”<sup>16</sup> “To seize, carry off by force...claim for oneself eagerly, to snatch out or away.”<sup>17</sup>

France states that the term ‘men of violence,’ (#2, βιασταὶ *biastai*; violent men),

“is an unusual word which always conveys a bad sense...the verb is probably to be read as passive, not middle: it refers *to violence inflicted on the kingdom of heaven*, which Jesus condemns (take by force, *harpazo*, normally means ‘plunder’ or ‘seize’).”<sup>18</sup>

It’s hard to imagine how violent men could plunder or seize the Kingdom, but be that as it may, some might say that the use of ‘force’ is more like ‘inner resolve’ or ‘determination’ to *enter* the Kingdom. Determination is a good thing, but it really doesn’t have anything to do with what Yeshua meant. Robert Mounce offers some further insight into the Greek word/s and says:

“The interpretation of verse 12 has been discussed at length. One’s approach turns on whether (#1) *biazetai* is passive (‘has suffered violence’) or middle (‘has been coming violently’). Because the noun (#2) *biastai* (forceful men) that occurs in the parallel clause is used in a negative sense (the cognate verb *biao* means ‘to defraud, cheat, or overpower’), it is better to take (#1) *biazetai* as passive and translate ‘has been enduring violent assault’ (Weymouth). Jesus is saying that ever since the days of John the Baptist *the kingdom of heaven has been under assault by violent men who are trying to overcome it by force*. These men are sometimes identified as Zealots who want to force the kingdom’s arrival. More likely they are like Herod, who imprisoned John, and the Jewish antagonists of the gospel.”<sup>19</sup>

One might agree with this scholarly interpretation, for lack of a viable alternative, but within the scholas-

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<sup>12</sup> Brown, *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*, p. 39.

<sup>13</sup> βιάζω Joseph Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, paragraph 2167 (Accordance Bible Software). “in Matt. 11:12...*the kingdom of heaven is taken by violence, carried by storm*, i.e. a share in the heavenly kingdom is sought for with the most ardent zeal and the intensest exertion...The other explanation: *the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence* namely, from its enemies, agrees neither with the time when Christ spoke the words, nor with the context.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*, p. 39.

<sup>15</sup> βιαστής Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, paragraph 2171.

<sup>16</sup> Brown, *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*, p. 39.

<sup>17</sup> ἀρπάζω Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, paragraph 1779. “to seize and carry off speedily, John 6:15; Acts 23:10; used of divine power transferring a person marvelously and swiftly from one place to another, *to snatch or catch away*...2 Cor. 12:4...1 Thess. 4:17.”

<sup>18</sup> France, *Matthew*, p. 195. ‘αρπαζουσιν *harpazusin* is the word that is translated ‘seize’ in the NA Interlinear; *harpazo* is the verb; to snatch away.

<sup>19</sup> Robert H. Mounce, W. Ward Gasque, New Testament Editor, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), p. 104.

tic community there are critics of this understanding. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* states,

‘In view of Mk. 10:17 ff.; Mt. 5:3ff.; 7:21, and also the present chapter (vv 27-29), it is *hardly conceivable* that He should have spoken of men deliberately and *successfully* seeking to wrest the kingdom to themselves.’<sup>20</sup>

Great point! The *Theological Dictionary* goes on to state, concerning the Zealot theory, that,

“The difficulty here is that Mt. is concerned with the prophets, the Law, the Baptist, Jesus and the βασιλεια’ (*basilia*: Kingdom). ‘It is thus hard to see the point of a special reference to an irrelevant subject when we naturally expect an important insight on the situation depicted.’ In any case the Zealot movement had already been started before the appearance of John.”<sup>21</sup>

Another good point! We expect an ‘important insight’ from Yeshua concerning the Kingdom of Heaven, not an ‘irrelevant subject’ from Yeshua about its sad situation. It’s good to know that there are others who questioned what the commentaries present. Once the Greek is translated back into Hebrew we’ll see a very ‘special reference’ and truly incredible ‘insight’ in verse 12 that points directly to an ancient biblical text in Micah (circa 720 BC). This will reveal what Yeshua meant that day. The Jewish people that day, although not fluent in Koine Greek, knew what He was alluding to.

David Stern adds some spice to the Greek/Western understanding by stating that not only was it a physical assault on the Kingdom, but a spiritual one as well. *Demons* were attacking the Kingdom through their human hosts, and trying to stop Jesus from being crucified. This theory, though, with no pertinent Scripture evidence, only supersaturates an already bloated interpretation. Stern writes,

“The Greek is difficult. As rendered, it means that violent ones (demons and their human vehicles) are trying to keep God from carrying out his plan through Yeshua, e.g., through Herod having put Yochanan in prison (v. 2). An alternative understanding, ‘the Kingdom of Heaven has been advancing forcefully; and forceful people are seizing hold of it,’ seems inconsistent with vv. 25-30.”<sup>22</sup>

*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* joins the chorus and teaches,

‘The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. The verb (#1) may be regarded either as middle—*violently forces its way* (cf. Lk. 16:16), or as passive—*is violently treated*. The latter is more consistent with the next clause. From John’s initial announcement of the coming of the Kingdom, *the response had been a violent one*, whether by vicious opponents (cf. vv. 18, 19; 14:3, 4) or by enthusiastic supporters. The violent take it by force (or, seize it). Compare Lk. 16:16.’<sup>23</sup>

Alfred Edersheim speaks in the same vein, but unwittingly reveals the key to the answer (which I’ve italicized):

“When we remember that in ‘the Sermon on the Mount’ the call was only to ‘enter in,’ we feel that we have now reached a period when the access to ‘the narrow door’ was ob-

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<sup>20</sup> Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, Editors, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Translator and Editor, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), p. 610.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 611.

<sup>22</sup> David Stern, *Jewish New Covenant Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Covenant Publications, 1992), p. 43.

<sup>23</sup> Charles F. Pfeiffer, Old Testament, Everett F. Harrison, New Testament, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p. 948.

structed by the enmity of so many, and when it needed ‘violence’ *to break through*, and ‘take the Kingdom...by force (Mt. 11:12). This personal *breaking through* the opposing multitude, in order to enter in through the narrow door, was in opposition to the many—the Pharisees and Jews generally—who were seeking to enter in, in their own way, never doubting success, but who would discover their terrible mistake.”<sup>24</sup>

‘From the time that John began to preach the Kingdom, hindrances of every kind had been raised. To overcome them and enter the Kingdom, it required, as it were, violence like that to enter a city which was surrounded by a hostile army.’<sup>25</sup>

Being Jewish doesn’t necessary give one the correct understanding. Edersheim presents the Kingdom as a kind of an American football game with an ‘end zone’ where one needs to make a ‘touchdown,’ running into and past all the opposing players standing in the way of the entry into the Kingdom. Of interest to us, though, is his unconscious use of the term ‘*breaking through*.’ It has nothing to do with the meaning he attaches to it, but it speaks to what Yeshua said. More on this in a moment. Edersheim, though, goes on to object to the scholarly interpretations, saying, ‘The common interpretations of this verse have seemed to me singularly unsatisfactory.’<sup>26</sup> He grimaced, too.

That there are ‘hindrances of every kind’ to all those who would seek to enter the Kingdom, is certainly a reality, but this isn’t what Yeshua meant. The Nestle-Aland Greek-English *Interlinear* reads,

‘And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of the Heavens is forcibly entered (#1) and violent men (#2) seize it (#3).’<sup>27</sup>

The word for ‘forcibly entered’ is βιάζεται (#1) and means, ‘to urge, constrain, overpower by force; to press earnestly forward, to rush, Luke 16:16.’<sup>28</sup> Another Greek lexicon states that the word occurs ‘always with a component of force...in a good sense press (in), try hard to (enter).’<sup>29</sup> Yet another lexicon reveals that inherit within the Greek word is the meaning, to ‘apply force...use force, enter forcibly into something.’<sup>30</sup> As we’ll see, the use of force to go past, or rather through something, is what the Hebrew word speaks of; a ‘breaking through,’ as Edersheim unknowingly wrote of.

The word for ‘violent men’ is βίασται (#2) and means, ‘one who uses violence, or is impetuous, one who is *forceful in eager pursuit*.’<sup>31</sup> The last phrase is where it doesn’t have a negative sense, but a good sense. The meaning of force is present in the Hebrew word, in a pictorial sense of sheep *breaking through* a fence in order to get to the other side where the shepherd is.

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<sup>24</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), p. 682.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 460.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., note 31.

<sup>27</sup> The Greek for both words in Nestle-Aland is identical to the Textus Receptus.

<sup>28</sup> Wesley J. Perschbacher, Editor, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1990), p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> Timothy Friberg and Barbara Friberg, Editors, with Neva Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), p. 91.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Bauer, augmented by William F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and Frederick Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 140.

<sup>31</sup> Perschbacher, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon*, p. 70.

# The Hebraic Perspective

When the Greek text is translated back into what Yeshua would have said in Hebrew, it's easy to see what the Lord was speaking of. The Hebrew word for 'is forcibly entered' (the Greek βιάζεται #1) is *poretzet* פּוֹרֶצֶת<sup>32</sup> and comes from the Hebrew verb *paratz* פָּרַץ.<sup>33</sup> The primary meaning of the verb *paratz* is,

*'to break or tear down...e.g. a wall...to break asunder, to break forth, as a child from the womb, Gen. 38:29; of water, to burst forth...a torrent bursts forth...also to break out, act with violence, Hos. 4:2.'*<sup>34</sup>

The son born to Judah and Tamar, of whom the Messiah would come through,<sup>35</sup> was Perez (*Peretz* in Hebrew; פֶּרֶץ from our verb *paratz*). The name means 'one who breaks out...one who breaks open' or one who makes an opening (in something like a wall). *Peretz* is actually one of the biblically based rabbinic titles of the Messiah. He's called the 'Son of *Peretz*,' the One who would break through (something). He's 'The Breacher' or 'The Breach Maker' or 'The Breaker.'<sup>36</sup> The noun *peretz* also conveys the same meaning as the verb:

*'a breach of a wall...a breaking forth, Gen. 38:29; of water, a bursting forth...overthrow, calamity.'*<sup>37</sup> A breach, 'made at the moment of birth; Gn. 38:29'<sup>38</sup> (the birth of Perez).

Here is the concept of violence or natural force in the breaching of a wall (e.g. in a war or by a torrent of rushing water). The Hebrew verb and noun carry the connotation of force or violence, but primarily of 'force' or 'action' in the sense of tearing down or *breaking through* something.

The next Hebrew word is a noun from the second Greek word (#2) and means, 'violent men,' but in Hebrew it's פּוֹרְצִים (*port'zim*, again from *paratz*) and it's just the plural of *Peretz*, *the one who tears down*. These are breakers or breachers of a wall or a fence, etc.

The third Hebrew word for the third Greek word, to 'seize it' (#3) is אוֹחֲזִים (*ohah'zim*) and means 'to seize...to take, catch, in hunting, *to take or have possession*.'<sup>39</sup> The verb means 'to take possession (of the land)' e.g. Israel possessing Canaan; Josh. 22:9), and also speaks of an 'eternal possession' (Gen. 17:8;

<sup>32</sup> *The Torah, Prophets, Writings and The New Covenant* (Jerusalem: The Bible Society of Israel, 1991), p. 14 in the New Covenant.

<sup>33</sup> Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 634.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Gen. 38:29; Ruth 4:18-22; Mt. 1:3; Lk. 3:33.

<sup>36</sup> Sanford R. Howard, *L'Chayim: Finding The Light of Shalom* (Thorsby, AL: Sabbath House, Inc., 1999), pp. 162-163. In the *Midrash Rabbah*, chapter 12, section 6, vol. 1, p. 92 of the Soncino edition of 1960, it has this in reference to Gen. 3:15: 'Rabbi Berekiah said in the name of Rabbi Samuel and B. Nachman: 'Though these things were created in their fullness yet when Adam sinned they were spoiled, and they will not return to their perfection until the Son of Peretz (Messiah) comes.' According to Gen. 38:29, Ruth 4:18, and 1st Chron 2:4-5, Peretz was the first of the hereditary heirs of Judah, the son of Jacob. Thus here was a progenitor of King David and of the more illustrious King Messiah.' Judah is acknowledged by Scripture and the Rabbis as the one through whom King Messiah would come from. 'The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be (Gen. 49:10)' The Rabbis state this in *Midrash Rabbah* on Genesis, chapter 97, NV, volume 2, p. 906, that, 'The scepter (staff) shall not depart from Judah alludes to the Messiah, Son of David' (p. 203).

<sup>37</sup> Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 634.

<sup>38</sup> פֶּרֶץ Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, authors; M. Richardson, translator, *The Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 3 (Boston, MA USA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), p. 973.

48:4; Lev. 25:34).<sup>40</sup> This speaks of *possessing* of the Kingdom of the Heavens in terms of inheritance versus forcibly seizing it or wanting to impede it. With these three Hebrew words we can now translate Matthew 11:12 as our Lord spoke it:

‘And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven is *being breached* (by the Breach Maker) and *the breachers are possessing it*.’

With this understanding the prophetic passage in Micah appears. It speaks of the Messiah as a shepherd who *breaches* or *tears open* a section of the sheepfold *fence* or *wall*. He goes through the opening and once on the other side, calls his sheep by name and they begin to go through the opening he made. As they do, it enlarges as more and more sheep *press through* the opening, shoulder to shoulder.

Yeshua was speaking of Himself as the Breach Maker Shepherd who would make a way for His Sheep to follow Him into the very presence of God the Father—the Kingdom of Heaven. With the Lord’s death, resurrection and ascension, He made a way in the Fence of Heaven called the firmament or expanse that separates the physical universe from the presence and dwelling place of the Father (Gen. 1:6-8). Yeshua calls to His Flock and they are Born Again and enter into the Kingdom of Heaven through the opening that He made for them. The Sheep (believers; breachers) *break down* and *break through* the breached Fence opening as they heed the call of their Shepherd and enter into His Kingdom.

## The Prophecy of Messiah—The Breach Maker

In Matthew 11:12 Yeshua alludes to the Messianic prophecy in Micah 2:12-13, which speaks of the Messiah, the Shepherd-King, as the Breach Maker, making a way for His sheep to go through the fence to green pastures. The passage reads:

‘I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob! I will surely gather the Remnant of Israel! I will put them together like sheep in *Botzrah* (English: Bozrah—the capital of Edom,<sup>41</sup> known for its vast flocks of sheep); like a flock in the midst of its pasture. They shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.’ (Micah 2:12)

‘**The Breach Maker** (the name of the Messiah; *Poraytz* פָּרַץ from the verb, ‘to tear down,’ to breach, to break through) *goes up before them*. **They break out**, pass through the **Gate** and go out by it.<sup>42</sup> So their King (Yeshua) *goes on before them* and Yahveh (Messiah Yeshua; Yahveh the Son) is *at their head*.’ (Micah 2:13)

This is what Yeshua pointed to that day in Matthew 11:12. He was declaring that He was the (Good) Shepherd, the Breach Maker, who would make a breach in the heavenly Fence (the firmament of Heaven

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>40</sup> Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, Authors, Mark E. Biddle, Translator, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), p. 82.

<sup>41</sup> Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, authors; M. Richardson, translator, *The Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Boston, MA USA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), p. 149. The ‘capital of Edom.’

It can also mean a sheepfold. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, based on the lexicon of Wilhelm Gesenius; Edward Robinson, translator and E. Rodiger, editor, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Abridged (Accordance Bible Software), paragraph 3041.

<sup>42</sup> The Hebrew word that is translated into English as ‘it’ is ‘*bo*’ בּוֹ. It’s a preposition (by) with a third person singular suffix (him). The phrase should read, ‘pass through the Gate (for Yeshua is also the Gate), and go out by *Him*.’



that kept men from God's presence), so His Sheep (the breachers) could follow Him into their *eternal inheritance*, the heavenly realm, also called the New Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12; 21:2; cf. Gal. 4:26). A literal translation of Micah 2:13 reads,

‘And the *One breaking open* will go up before them and *they will break open* and *they will go through the Gate* and they will go out through *Him*, and their King (i.e. Yeshua) will pass through before them (with) Yahveh (i.e. Yahveh the Son) at their head.’<sup>43</sup>

The Kingdom of Heaven had been proclaimed, first with John and then with Yeshua Himself. Contrary to Christian theology, Yeshua wasn't disparaging Mosaic Law and the Prophets,<sup>44</sup> but holding up what Moses and the Prophets had spoken of—the gem of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Breach Maker was proclaiming that the Kingdom was on the horizon —prepare to enter it!

The Kingdom wasn't *suffering violence*, but on the contrary, the Shepherd, by His death, resurrection and ascension, tore open a hole, breached the heavenly Fence that separated Israel from her God. Another picture of this is what Matthew writes of when the Veil was torn at Messiah's death:

“Then, behold! The Veil of the Temple was *torn in two from top to bottom*, and the Earth quaked and the rocks were split.” (Matthew 27:51)

The Veil of the Temple was the inner Veil that separated the Holy of Holies (where God dwelt on Earth) from the Holy Place. This Veil was a picture of the firmament of Heaven that kept everyone out of the presence of God; God's dwelling place. The author of Hebrews also speaks of this Veil as *Yeshua's flesh* and says that a Way has been made into the presence of God (the Father) because that Veil—Yeshua's flesh, was ripped open or torn apart at His crucifixion:

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the *Holy of Holies* by the Blood of Yeshua, by a *new and living way* which He consecrated for us, *through the Veil, that is, His flesh.*” (Hebrews 10:19-20)

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<sup>43</sup> John Kohlenberger the 3rd, Editor, *The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Corporation, 1979), p. 533.

<sup>44</sup> Most Christian teachers place their anti-Mosaic Law theology upon Lk. 16:16 (and Mt. 11:13), for that's what “Law” means here; Mosaic Law as its coupled with “Prophets” (cf. Mt. 5:17-19), by teaching that “Jesus is saying that Mosaic Law is not for Christians,” but Yeshua wasn't speaking against Mosaic Law. He was speaking of an obvious fact—*until* John the Baptist came, the Kingdom of Heaven hadn't been proclaimed. That's all. Yeshua's words didn't have anything to do with Mosaic Law being nullified by His Kingdom coming to Israel, as Yeshua clearly speaks of *in the very next verse*: “It is easier for Heaven and Earth to pass away than for one tittle of the Law to fail.” Mosaic Law, as defined by Yeshua, not the Rabbis (Jer. 31:31-34; Mt. 5-7; 15:1-20; Rom. 3:20, 31; 7:7, 12, 14; Heb. 8:10; 10:16), is God's lifestyle for every Christian. It's God's way to walk out their faith in Messiah Yeshua. For articles and my book (#9) on why Mosaic Law is God's way of walking out our faith in Messiah Yeshua, read:

1. *Grace, Holiness and the Pharisaic Church* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Grace-Holiness-and-the-Pharisaic-Church.pdf>.
2. *Hebrews and the Change of the Law* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Hebrews-and-the-Change-of-the-Law.pdf>.
3. *Law 102* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Law-102.pdf>.
4. *Law and Grace* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Law-and-Grace.pdf>.
5. *No Longer Under the Law?* at <http://seedofabraham.net/No-Longer-Under-the-Law.pdf>.
6. *Seven Ways Yeshua Fulfilled the Law* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Seven-Ways-Yeshua-Fulfilled-Law.pdf>.
7. *Take the Quiz!*, at <http://seedofabraham.net/Take-the-Quiz.pdf>.
8. *The Feasts of Israel as Time Markers After the Resurrection* at <http://seedofabraham.net/The-Feasts-of-Israel-as-Time-Markers.pdf>.
9. *The Lifting of the Veil—Acts 15:20-21* at <http://seedofabraham.net/The-Lifting-of-the-Veil.pdf>.

This Veil is also pictured in Yeshua as the Gate through which the sheep had to go to enter the Kingdom. In John 10:1, 7, 9 Yeshua speaks of Himself as the Gate (also Door in English, of a sheepfold):

“‘Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the Gate into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber...I am the Gate of the sheep....I am the Gate. If anyone enters *through Me*, he shall be *saved*, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.’ (John 10:1, 7, 9)

The sheep going in and out speak of temporal life in this universe where believers find them coming and going out of the presence of God. After Judgment Day, when the Kingdom fully manifests, believers won't be going out.

Obviously, when Matthew was translated into Greek by Christian scribes ‘there was something lost in the translation.’ The commentaries say the Kingdom of Heaven ‘suffers violence.’ The idea of force is inherent in the Hebrew word/s, but the Greek lacks the true understanding that can only be gotten by translating it back into Hebrew, what Matthew was originally written in. This, then, opens up the link in the Scripture chain to Micah that accurately presents what Yeshua *meant*. Micah then becomes part of the Scripture chain that reveals both the eternal salvation of the Father, and the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Yeshua, the King of Glory, as Psalm 24 declares, but first, The Shepherd.

## The Shepherd

In ancient Israel the shepherd would take his sheep and put them into a place for the night that would be safe from bear, wolf and lion. If possible, a small box canyon was ideal. The canyon walls afforded protection on three sides with its high cliffs, and the shepherd could build a fence of rocks and branches across the opening so the no wild animal could easily come in, and no sheep could wander off.

*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states that the sheepfold or fold was ‘a wall or hedge made of stones, which might be used for a defense of a fold,’<sup>45</sup> and that,

‘Sheepfolds were of various types. At times they were located in or near a cave (e.g., 1st Sam. 24:3). Some were permanent enclosures with a roof and stone walls, while others were temporary, consisting simply of an open pen with thornbush sides.’<sup>46</sup>

When daybreak came the shepherd would make a small *opening* in the fence for himself. This passage-way would be known as a ‘door’ or a ‘gate.’<sup>47</sup> Once on the other side the shepherd would *call to his sheep by name* and they would begin to *break through* to the other side.

Messiah Yeshua is the Good Shepherd—the Breach Maker. His Sheep *hear His Voice* and follow Him out of the sheepfold:

‘the sheep hear His Voice: and *He calls His own sheep by name*, and *leads them out*. When He puts forth all His own, *He goes ahead of them*, and the sheep follow Him because they know His Voice.’ (John 10:3-4)

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<sup>45</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley, General Editor, Everett F. Harrison, Roland K. Harrison and William Sanford LaSor, Associate Editors, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. Two (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 326.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 464.

<sup>47</sup> William Wilson, *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, no publishing date is given), p. 182. The word for gate has as one of its synonyms, the word door. The Hebrew word *petach* is also used, which means an opening.

The Shepherd ‘going ahead of them’ parallels Micah’s Shepherd as ‘He goes ahead of them,’ and the sheep follow Him because they hear His voice calling to them by name. Yeshua was saying that He would lead Israel out of this world of darkness into His Kingdom.

*ISBE* says that the shepherd spent much of his day ‘talking to his sheep until they all recognized his voice.’<sup>48</sup> *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* states:

‘So close is the connection between shepherd and sheep that to this day Middle Eastern shepherds can divide flocks that have mingled at a well or during the night simply by calling their sheep, who follow their shepherd’s voice.’<sup>49</sup>

In Hebrew the word for gate, door and opening are conceptually interchangeable. The concept is of an opening or hole in something (a wall, a fence, etc.). The Hebrew word for gate is *sha’are* שַׁעַר and means ‘to cleave, divide...an aperture...a gate.’<sup>50</sup> It also means,

to “break, break off, through...gap, opening...tear in two, dissolve...split, divide, tear down...gate.”<sup>51</sup> “The root idea is ‘to split open’ and ‘to break through.’”<sup>52</sup>

## Yeshua—The Breach Maker

Yeshua is both the Breacher of the Fence *and* also the Fence, Gate or Door through which the Sheep pass through. The Sheep (also breachers) go *through* the Gate (cf. John 14:6). Leland Ryken states that, ‘Jesus used the imagery of a gate for entrance either into life or into destruction (Mt. 7:13-14).’<sup>53</sup> He writes:

“Jesus elaborates the image of the gate (‘door’ in some older translations), in his Good Shepherd Discourse (Jn. 10:1-17). The good shepherd ‘enters by the gate’ and leads his sheep out through the gate of the sheepfold, an image of safety. In an extension of the metaphor, Jesus calls himself the gate: ‘I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved’ (Jn. 10:9 NRSV).<sup>54</sup> In the context this certainly refers to being a door for the sheep and hence the gate or entry-way to salvation.”<sup>55</sup>

C. F. Keil sees the passage in Micah 2:12-13 speaking of God’s future Redemption-Salvation through Messiah, the Second Moses, following the great redemption prototype from Egypt through Moses:

‘And the Lord will gather together all Jacob, not merely a portion, and yet only the remnant of Israel...the further description rests upon the fact of the leading of Israel out of Egypt, *which is to be renewed in all that is essential at a future time*. The following clauses also predict the miraculous multiplication of the remnant of Israel (see Hos. 2:1, 2; Jer. 31:10), as experienced by the people in the olden time under the oppression of

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<sup>48</sup> Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. Four, p. 464.

<sup>49</sup> Leland Ryken, James Wilhoit and Tremper Longman the 3rd, General Editors, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 782.

<sup>50</sup> Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 733.

<sup>51</sup> Dr. Francis Brown, Dr. S. R. Driver, Dr. Charles A. Briggs, based on the lexicon of Professor Wilhelm Gesenius; Edward Robinson, Translator and E. Rodiger, Editor, *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Lafayette, IN: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1978), p. 1044.

<sup>52</sup> Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p. 945.

<sup>53</sup> Ryken, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, p. 322.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

Egypt (Ex. 1:12). The comparison to the flock of Bozrah<sup>56</sup> presupposes that Bozrah's wealth in flocks was well known...The comparison which follows, 'like a flock in the midst of its pasture,'...refers to the multiplication, and to the noise made by a *densely packed and numerous flock*. The same tumult will be made by the assembled Israelites on account of the multitude of men.<sup>57</sup>

'In v. 13 the redemption of Israel out of exile is depicted under the figure of liberation from captivity. Egypt was a slave-house (ch. 6:4; cf. Ex. 20:2); *so is exile a prison* with walls and gates, which must be broken through. פֹּרֵץ, *Ha'Poraytz*, the Breaker-through who goes before them, is not Jehovah, *but as the counterpart of Moses*, the leader of Israel out of Egypt, the captain appointed by God for His people, answering to the head, which they are said to choose for themselves in Hos. 2:2, *a second Moses*...in the highest sense, Christ, who opens the prison-doors and *redeems the captives of Zion*...Led by him, they *break through* the walls, and march through the *gate*, and go out through it out of that prison...Their King...goes before them at their head...Just as Jehovah went before Israel as the angel of the Lord in the pillar of cloud and fire at the exodus from Egypt (Ex. 13:21), so at the future redemption of the people of God will Jehovah go before them as King, and lead the procession (see Isaiah 52:12; cf. Rom 11:25f.).<sup>58</sup>

Even though Keil failed to realize the connection of Micah 2:13 to Matthew 11:12, he did see the imagery of the gate or walls being broken through by the 'Breaker;' Messiah, the Second Moses.

This brings us to yet another picture of Yeshua breaching the heavenly firmament, and Moses. When Israel had her back up against the Red Sea, and certain death awaited them in the swords and arrows of Pharaoh's army, Moses *breached or cleaved the Sea apart* by the power behind the Staff or Branch in his hand,<sup>59</sup> and Israel walked through the midst of the 'cleaved' Sea on dry ground. Both this and Yeshua's breach were impossible in the natural and both speak of God's graciousness to Israel over her enemies; Pharaoh (slavery) and Satan (death), who is the Prince of the Prison of Darkness. All who are born live in his prison and he would seek to keep Israel from her freedom and life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The passage in Micah relates to the End of Time ('I will surely assemble *all* of you, Jacob'), which symbolically began with Yeshua in the days of John the Baptist. Symbolically, because the Kingdom wasn't entered into until Acts Two, when Yeshua's sacrificial blood could be applied to a person so he could be Born Again and filled with the Holy Spirit, and cleansed so that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit could dwell in a vessel of clay and begin to transform it into the Image of Messiah Yeshua. When John the Baptist and Yeshua spoke of the Kingdom, the breach had not yet been made in the Heavens, which breach was made by His death, etc., but one day all Israel (both Jew and Gentile) shall go through that firmament who is Yeshua, and live forever in the presence of the God of Israel.

This is what Yeshua spoke of that day in Mt. 11:12; that the Kingdom of Heaven would be breached by Him (the Shepherd Breach Maker) and all His sheep, the breachers, would come to inherit it, pressing in or breaking through it into God's presence, both here and now, and in the future. In this they would be like Yeshua, making the breach wider for themselves and others following after them.

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<sup>56</sup> *Bozrah* is taken by Keil to be a proper noun, the name of a city that boasted of many sheep. It can also be translated to be a common noun meaning a sheep pen.

<sup>57</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary On The Old Testament, vol. 10, Minor Prophets* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001; originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1866-91), p. 303.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>59</sup> For an understanding of this branch as Yeshua see *The Branch* at <http://seedofabraham.net/The-Branch.pdf>.

# The Ancient Gates Are Opened

The ancient Gates are written of in Psalm 24, where it speaks of the Gates opening for the King of Glory to enter into the heavenly realm or the Kingdom of Heaven:

‘Lift up your heads, Oh *Gates* and be lifted up, Oh ancient *Doors*, that the King of Glory may come in! Who is the King of Glory? Yahveh<sup>60</sup> (i.e. Yeshua, God the Son), strong and mighty. Yahveh mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, Oh Gates, and lift them up, Oh ancient Doors, that the King of Glory may come in! Who is this King of Glory? Yahveh (Yeshua), King of the heavenly Armies; He is the King of Glory! *Selah.*’ (Psalm 24:7-10)

Some think that the gates and doors were those of the Temple in Jerusalem. There are three problems with this. One, it speaks of *ancient* gates and doors. At the time when David wrote Psalm 24, *if the Temple was even in existence*, the doors could hardly have been called ancient.

Two, that of assuming that the gates and doors speak of the *Temple in Jerusalem*. The Temple isn’t mentioned in the Psalm. If King David wrote this, and it’s most likely that he did, as the beginning of the Psalm records it as a Psalm of David, the Temple hadn’t been built yet. Therefore, it would be unlikely for the ancient gates and doors of the Psalm to be referring to an earthly Temple that didn’t yet exist. The Temple wouldn’t be built until after David’s active reign and possible death. His son, King Solomon, would build the earthly Temple beginning in the fourth year of his reign, but it wouldn’t be finished until the eleventh year (1st Kings 2:1-10; 5:1–6:38). So, even if David wrote the psalm on his death bed, the gates of the Temple would not have been seen as ancient.

Three, Keil writes that the doors are those of the (earthly) Temple, but he also states that these are the Doors of Eternity<sup>61</sup> because the Hebrew speaks of it (v. 7, פִּתְחֵי עוֹלָם *pit’hay olam*). In Keil’s understanding the Father was entering the Temple in Jerusalem. In fact, though, the Psalm depicts Yahveh the Son, Yeshua, coming to the Gates of Heaven, the firmament that separated Israel from the Father, *a firmament that no mere man could penetrate or go through*, but Yeshua, because of His death, resurrection and upon His first ascension, is now ‘seen’ by David rising and *the ancient, eternal Gates and Doors must give way to Him* and let Him back into His heavenly abode because He *is the sinless King of Glory*. Death could not hold him because Death only has authority over those who sin. His Resurrection confirms His sinlessness and in His ascension to the Father these eternal Doors or Gates opened (another way of saying it is that they were breached). *They would open for no one else.*

If Yeshua had sinned He wouldn’t have been resurrected nor would He have been able to return to the holy dwelling place of His Father. He would have lived in Hell forever, with us. That’s what was at stake in the three temptations of Messiah and Gethsemane, etc.

With the Gates being opened to let the King of Glory in, the King brings His Flock, which another Psalm speaks of as having been held captive. This is the prison that refers to Man’s fallen condition in this world of darkness:

“You have ascended on High! You have led *captivity captive!* You have received gifts among men, even from the rebellious, that Yahveh God might dwell there.” (Psalm 68:18)

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<sup>60</sup> The name Yahveh is like the heavenly ‘last name’ of the three Persons in the God Family are Yahveh. There Father Yahveh, Holy Spirit Yahveh, and Yeshua Yahveh. It’s Yahveh the Son that the Psalm is speaking of, for the Father never left the heavenly realm to have to return via the Gates of Heaven. Read how Yeshua is the only begotten Son of God (the Father) in, *Yeshua—God the Son* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Yeshua-God-the-Son.pdf>.

<sup>61</sup> Keil, *Commentary On The Old Testament, vol. 10, Minor Prophets*, p. 213.

Of course, Paul quotes this very verse in relating to what Yeshua did upon His death, resurrection and ascension (Eph. 4:8).

In the beginning of Psalm 24 it speaks of the Earth being established upon the *Waters*. This further links the ‘heavenly breach’ to the firmament of Creation. The preceding six verses of the Psalm read:

‘The Earth is Yahveh’s and all it contains, The world and those who dwell in it. For He has *founded it* upon the *seas* and *established it* upon the *rivers*. Who may ascend into the Mountain of Yahveh? And who may *stand in His holy place*? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully. He shall receive a blessing from Yahveh and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of those who seek Him who seek Your Face, even Jacob, *selah*’ (Psalm 24:1-6).

The seas and the rivers are a reference back to the first chapter of Genesis where the physical Heavens and the Earth were created in the *lower Waters*. Yahveh would dwell in the upper Waters and be associated with those Waters (as say, Yeshua is associated with, and is, the Light; Jn. 8:12). A firmament (or expanse; NIV) separated the two universes.

The Hebrew for seas in Psalm 24 is יַמִּים (*my’yim*) and should be translated as waters.<sup>62</sup> The word for rivers is נְהַרֹת (*nihar’ote*). It can mean, ‘current, stream...river.’<sup>63</sup> The sentence is basically saying the same thing over again, but in a slightly different way to emphasize it, substituting rivers for waters. Saying the same thing, but in a different way, is common in Hebrew. It’s called parallelism. ‘Waters’ and ‘rivers’ parallel one another (as *founded* and *established* also parallel each other and say the same thing). That the verse in question refers to Creation is evident from vv. 1-2, where the Heavens and the Earth are Yahveh’s; He having established them upon the Waters:<sup>64</sup>

‘Then God said, ‘Let there be an expanse in the midst of the *Waters* and let it separate the *waters* from the *Waters*. God made the expanse, and separated the *waters* which were below the expanse from the *Waters* which were above the expanse; and it was so. God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.’

‘Then God said, ‘Let the *waters* below the Heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear’ and it was so. God called the dry land Earth and the gathering of the *waters* He called seas; and God saw that it was good’ (Genesis 1:6-10).

All the words for ‘waters’ and ‘seas’ are יַמִּים (*my’yim*), the same word found for ‘seas’ in the Creation account of Psalm 24:2. The firmament separated Man, specifically Israel from God because only Israel has been redeemed; all Gentiles believing in Messiah Yeshua are part of Israel (Rom. 11:11f.; Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:11f.).<sup>65</sup> It has been breached by the only One who could do it, the Breach Maker—the Son of Peretz.

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<sup>62</sup> Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 483.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 538.

<sup>64</sup> Keil, *Commentary On The Old Testament, vol. 5, Psalms*, p. 211.

<sup>65</sup> See also Rev. 3:12; 7:15; 11:1, 19; 14:15; 15:5, 8; 21:2, 10, 22.

## Conclusion

How can anyone come into the very Presence of God Almighty when there is no way, humanly speaking, to actually get there? It is to this reality that Yeshua speaks of in Matthew 11:12. This is not an ‘irrelevant subject,’ as the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* correctly labeled the teachings of the commentaries on the verse, but truly, an incredibly ‘important insight’ that the *Dictionary* and many others are looking for.

Yeshua spoke of eternity—how God was going to make a way for Israel to enter the Kingdom of Heaven where the Father dwells—that place that is not of this universe, and live there forever. Messiah wasn’t talking the Kingdom suffering violence. He wasn’t speaking of the Zealots forcefully wanting to make Him King nor of Herod’s henchmen violently wanting to stop the King from being crucified or of somehow impeding the Kingdom of Heaven.

Yeshua spoke of His sheep in *this* creation, this world of darkness, enclosed and imprisoned in the sheep-fold of this universe, and of He as the Shepherd-King who would breach the fence that kept them here. The fence, also known as the heavenly Door or Gate, also symbolized Yeshua, who was torn asunder by the crucifixion; a living way now being made in the firmament. Yeshua went before His Flock, having *broken through*, and on the other side He calls to those who are His. His Sheep hear His voice and proceed, as sheep do, through the opening made by the Shepherd, to be on the side where He is. This breach, made by the Messiah, the Breach Maker, was made so that there wasn’t a separation between God and Man, for even before the Fall, Adam and Eve did not live where God lived. Yeshua has truly made a way for us where no way existed. In this He is the Second Moses, leading His people out of darkness and into His marvelous Light.

As for those who would seek to enter who are not Born Again, the same fate awaits them that awaited Pharaoh’s Army when they followed Moses and the Sons of Israel into the Red Sea. This is called Judgment Day.

Micah 2:12-13 is the background for properly understanding what Yeshua said that day when He spoke of the Kingdom.<sup>66</sup> Only by translating it back into Hebrew and knowing the Old Testament Scriptures can

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<sup>66</sup> I am indebted to David Bivin for his presentation of the link between Micah 2:13 and Mt. 11:12. Many years ago I read his book, *Understanding The Difficult Words of Jesus* (Austin, TX: Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, 1984) in which he presented the connection. In his revised edition (2001, pp. 84-87) he states that John the Baptist was the Breaker or Poretz and that Jesus was the King that came through the opening that John made. This he understood from a rabbinic teaching on Micah 2:13, which he himself states actually went *against* what the Scripture seemed to be saying. The rabbinic interpretation must be rejected in lieu of the obvious scriptural one. This is seen from the fact that verse 13 is in Hebraic parallelism, stating the same thing twice, but in different ways. The first part of v. 13 has the Breach Maker going out of the sheep-fold *before* the sheep. The second part has the King passing *before* them, which is the same person, Messiah Yeshua. Also, we know that ‘Poretz’ or Breach Maker is an ancient name for King Messiah and that no one entered the Kingdom of Yeshua until *after* His death and resurrection. Yeshua Himself says that the Torah and the Prophets were proclaimed until John, but that with John, the *Kingdom was now being proclaimed* and many were seeking to be part of it.

John’s role was not to make the opening in the heavenly fence, but to point the Jewish people to the One who would. As such, John came in the Spirit of Elijah to *prepare* the way for the King of Israel, not to make the Way, or to make the breach in the heavenly barrier. John was the messenger sent to prepare the Way before, and for, Yeshua (Is. 40:3, Mal. 4:5-6), but John was not the Poretz, the Breach Maker.

Yeshua says that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John, so John cannot be seen as being included in this picture that Micah presents. John dies, but no one enters the Kingdom until Yeshua’s death, resurrection and ascension. The Shepherd (*Poretz-Breacher*) has made the way for His Flock. This demonstrates the problem in accepting rabbinic interpretation of Scripture *over* Scripture. Sometimes rabbinic interpretation can

one gain an understanding of this passage. Once the enigma is unlocked, a beautiful chain of scriptural understanding unfolds revealing the Son of Peretz in all His glory. He has made a way for us to live eternally with His Father by His Death, Resurrection and first Ascension. Glory, honor and eternal praise to the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for His sheep.

The Greek translations and commentaries weren't able to present this because they failed to understand Mt. 11:12 from its Hebraic perspective, and so they were never able to see the divine Scripture links to Micah 2:12-13, Psalm 24:7-10 and Gen. 1:1f., etc. They are still deeply engrossed in trying to figure out if the Greek word for violence is passive or middle, and just who the violent people are.

The only thing Greek about the New Testament are its words, but the ideas, concepts and the Reality it seeks to present are Hebraic. The God of Israel revealed Himself to Abraham and Moses, not Plato and Socrates. God's people is Israel, forever.<sup>67</sup> A people's psyche is reflected, and is the basis for, their language. Israel was the only nation that God manifested to, led out of slavery, spoke to (e.g. Mt. Sinai), performed incredible miracles for, and gave her His will (which is seen in His words being written down; i.e. Torah/Prophets/Writings, and Yeshua in the NT, as well as Peter and Paul, etc.). Therefore, the Scriptures, both Old and New, reflect this divine reality. The Hebraic Perspective is the way to biblically interpret and understand these Scriptures and this understanding cries out to us to walk out our faith in Messiah Yeshua through all the laws, statutes, ordinances, testimonies, judgments and rules of Moses that apply to us (1st John 2:6). Yeshua kept all of them that applied to Him; shouldn't we?<sup>68</sup>

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be very helpful, but to swallow everything the Rabbis proclaim would be to find oneself renouncing Yeshua.

<sup>67</sup> Num. 23:19-24; 24:3-9; 2nd Sam. 7:10-13, 16, 24; 2nd Chron. 21:7; Ps. 2; 48; 102:16-22; 105:7-11; Isaiah 1:26-27; 2:1-3; 4:2-6; 9:3-4, 6-7; 12:1-6; 14:1-2, 32; 16:5; 24:23; 25:6-10; 26:1-6; 27:6; 28:5; 29:7-8, 22-24; 30:19, 26; 31:4-5; 32:15-20; 33:5, 20-22, 24; 34:8; 35:1-10; 41:8-20; 44:21-23; 45:17, 25; 49:13; 52:8-10; 54:1-17; 60:1-22; 61:4-7; 62:1-12; 63:7; 65:17-25; 66:10-13, 20-24; Jer. 23:5-8; 30:3-24; 31:1-15, 23-28, 31-40; 32:37-44; 33:6-26; 34:15; 35:2; 50:18-20; 51:5, 10, 19, 45; Ezk. 16:60-63; 28:25-26; 34:11-31; 36:6-15, 22-27; 37:11-14, 15-28; 38:1-23; 39:23-29; 43:1-7; 47:13-23; 48:1-29; Hosea 1:10-11; 2:16-23; 3:5; 11:8-11; 13:14; 14:4-7; Joel 2:18-19, 23-32; 3:1-2, 12-21; Amos 9:14-15; Zephaniah 3:8-20; Zech. 2:4-5, 12; 8:18-19, 23; 9:16; 10:6; 12:1-10; 13:1-2; 14:1-21; Mal. 3:3-4, 11-12; Rom. 11:1-12:3; Rev. 21:1-12; 22:16, etc.

See also Jer. 2:1-3; 3:14; Hosea 2:19-20; cf. Is. 62:4.

<sup>68</sup> Revised on 15 May 2017.