

# THE GREATEST BARRIER

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The weary shepherd searched for a good place to spend the night. His eyes glanced over the unfamiliar terrain. He had led his flock to an area he had never been to before and now was looking for a place of safety to spend the night. Lions, bears and wolves prowled the land and he knew that unless he found a good shelter, he and his flock would be in danger. He saw a small box canyon. It would be ideal. With high walls on three sides and a small opening across the entrance, he could erect a fence of branches and stones. Wild animals couldn't get in and his sheep wouldn't wander out.

Having made the fence, he settled down to eat some dates, figs, cheese and bread he had brought with him. After he finished he sang to the Lord. Many sheep came to lie down by him as he sang. Some laid their heads and bodies close enough for him to pet them. All the sheep knew his voice, much the way dogs know the voice of their masters. And like a dog, each sheep had a name and responded to it when called. After a while the shepherd fell asleep, content that his flock was safe.

Morning came and with it the need to lead the sheep to water and green pastures. The shepherd approached a section of fence and began to make an opening in it for him to get out. Once on the other side of the fence, the shepherd began to call his favorite sheep by name, shouting to them to come to him. The first one leapt through the small opening, knocking out a few more branches. The next two came almost shoulder to shoulder which widened the breach considerably. The shepherd reeled off many names and there was a rush to the now enlarged opening as sheep continued to take out more sections of the fence. Before long the entire flock was outside, following the shepherd to greener pastures.

The Prophet Micah makes use of this scene in describing Messiah and His Flock, Israel. Only Micah calls the Shepherd by another name; the Breaker. This relates to the breach or hole that Messiah would make in the Heavenly Fence for His Flock to enter the Kingdom of Heaven:

Micah 2:12: 'I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob. I will surely gather the Remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in the fold' (Bozrah); 'like a flock in the midst of its pasture. They shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.' v. 13: 'The Breaker goes up before them. They break out, pass through the gate and go out by it. So their King goes on before them and Yahveh is at their head.'

Verse 12 speaks of Israel as sheep. The Breaker (v. 13) is *Poraytz* and means one who tears down or breaches 'a wall'<sup>1</sup> or breaks out or bursts forth 'from (an) enclosure'.<sup>2</sup> Messiah would breach the Heavenly Fence and thus be called the Breaker (or Breach Maker). This action parallels His ancestor Perez who 'broke forth' from his mother's womb before his brother.<sup>3</sup> Verse 13 goes on to speak of others breaking out and going through the gate. This is the Flock of Israel following after Him through the breach in the Heavenly Fence. In Hebrew the word for gate, door or opening is conceptually the same. It's an opening or hole in something (a wall, a fence). The root idea of gate, *shah-ar* is 'to split open...to break through'.<sup>4</sup> Micah is speaking of God's future Redemption through King Mes-

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 634.

<sup>2</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. 829.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 38:29; Ruth 4:18-22; Mt. 1:3; Lk. 3:33. Perez is English for the Hebrew Peretz.

siah, the Second Moses:

*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...a second Moses...Led by him, they break through the walls...at the future redemption of the people of God'.<sup>5</sup>

The Heavenly Fence the Breaker breaks through is the Firmament of Heaven. In the account of Creation we are told that there is a barrier that actually separates God from the Universe He made. God lives in the Upper Waters and we in the lower waters:

'Then God said, 'Let there be a Firmament in the midst of the Waters and let it separate the Waters from the waters. God made the Firmament and separated the waters which were below the Firmament from the Waters which were above the Firmament. And it was so. God called the Firmament, Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day' (Gen. 1:6-8).

It is this Firmament, the Heavenly Barrier, that the Breacher breaks through. Once on the other side He calls to His sheep, the Remnant of Israel. Psalm 24 says that this Barrier, which it calls 'Gates' and 'Doors' will open for the King of Glory. Verses 1-2 link the Psalm to Creation: '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.' The word for *seas* is the same word used for *waters* in the Genesis account. Both are *my-yim* and should be translated as waters.<sup>6</sup> Speaking of the ancient Barrier it says:

'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 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, King of the Heavenly Armies. He is the King of Glory. Selah' (Psalm 24:7-10).

Keil thinks the Doors are those of the Temple of Solomon but also states they are the Doors of Eternity because of the Hebrew (v. 7 *pit-hay olam*).<sup>7</sup> In his understanding, Yahveh was entering the Temple in Jerusalem. There are two things that make this hard to accept. One, the Psalm speaks of ancient Doors. The Temple wasn't standing long enough to be described as ancient before it was destroyed. It was built around 946 BCE and destroyed by the King of Babylon in 586 BCE (about 360 years). Two, and this is the real problem, the Temple of Solomon hadn't been built when David wrote the Psalm. He most likely died before the Temple was built (1st Kings 2:1-10; 5:1-6:38). Therefore, it would seem unlikely that David was referring to doors on a Temple that didn't exist yet. Rather, David being a prophet (Ps. 2, 110, etc.) as well as King of Israel, understood the ancient Doors of Heaven being opened for Messiah as He triumphantly came back into the Kingdom and Presence of His Father.

The ancient Doors (Gates, etc.) would open for no man other than the King of Eternity. Yeshua, because of His Death and Resurrection, was 'seen' by David passing through the Barrier. The ancient Doors had to give way to Him. His Death proves it. His Resurrection confirms it. The Red Sea being cleaved or breached for Israel to walk across on dry ground is a perfect prefigurement of this Heavenly Reality. Messiah, like Moses before Him, makes a Way for Israel where none existed. Anyone who doesn't believe in Messiah Yeshua, who tries to go through the breach that He made, will find the same fate awaiting him that awaited the Army of Pharaoh when they followed Moses and the Sons of

<sup>4</sup> R. L. Harris, Editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, Associate Editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 945.

<sup>5</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary On The Old Testament, Minor Prophets*, vol. 10 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), p. 304. *Ha* in Hebrew is 'the.' *Ha-Poraytz* is 'the Breaker.'

<sup>6</sup> Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 483.

<sup>7</sup> Keil, *Commentary On The Old Testament, Psalms*, vol. 5, p. 213.

Israel into the Red Sea.

Today, Yeshua stands on the other side and calls to His lambs and sheep on the Earth, both Jew and Gentile (Isaiah 42:6, John 10:1-18, etc.). We hear His Voice and seek to follow Him into our eternal inheritance. Yeshua plainly spoke of Heaven being breached in Matthew 11:12. Just as the Holy Spirit is leading many Jews to Messiah Yeshua, so too many Christians are coming to understand their Hebraic heritage. But because the Church left its Hebraic moorings 1900 years ago, it doesn't properly understand the verse which it translates as:

'From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.'

The English is a great translation of the Greek but the problem is that it's a terrible interpretation of what Yeshua meant. Scholars can be ingenious however and when they don't understand a text, they can invent a 'meaning'. Here is their consensus interpretation: The Kingdom 'suffers violence' in terms of opposition it encounters by either zealots associated with John the Baptist, who wanted 'to take over' and force Jesus to become a military king; or that the Pharisees, etc., who hated Messiah, wanted to snuff out His Kingdom.<sup>8</sup>

'Violent men' taking it 'by force' is interpreted to mean that anyone wanting to enter the Kingdom of Jesus had to be forceful about it (i.e., determined); or that violent men (the Pharisees, etc.), were assaulting the Kingdom.<sup>9</sup> Some might say these interpretations sound reasonable, but even within Christianity there is a well-justified, scholarly criticism of it.<sup>10</sup>

A wise man once said, 'The only thing Greek about the New Testament are the words. The concepts behind the words are all Hebraic.' In most instances, one can get a good understanding from the Greek as to what God is wanting us to know. But in cases like this, we must translate the Greek back into Hebrew in order to understand what Yeshua said and meant. Once that happens it becomes clear that Yeshua was pointing to Micah 2:13. The sentence should read like this:

'And from the days of John the Immerser until now, the Kingdom of Heaven is being breached and the breachers are possessing it.'

The Greek word for 'suffers violence' is *by-aides-zeh-tie* and means, 'to overpower by force' 'to rush',<sup>11</sup> and to 'enter forcibly into something'.<sup>12</sup> The Hebrew word that Yeshua would have used that day contains within it the idea of force and specifically points to the Breaker of Micah 2:13. The word is *poretz*<sup>13</sup> and comes from the Hebrew verb *paratz*,<sup>14</sup> which gives us the noun, Breaker *Poraytz*. The primary meaning of the verb *paratz* is, 'to break or tear down' 'e.g. a wall', 'to break forth, as a child from the womb' 'to burst forth' 'also to break out, act with violence'.<sup>15</sup> Yeshua is holding up a picture

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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), pp. 195-196.

<sup>9</sup> Robert H. Mounce, W. Ward Gasque, New Testament Editor, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), p. 104.

<sup>10</sup> Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, Ed., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Trans. & Ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), pp. 610-611. The essence of the criticism is that the interpretations seem to be 'irrelevant' considering the subject and the expectation of seeing an 'important insight' into the Kingdom. In other words, it doesn't line up with Jesus.

<sup>11</sup> Wesley J. Perschbacher, Editor, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1990), p. 70.

<sup>12</sup> Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, p. 613.

<sup>13</sup> *The Torah, Prophets, Writings and The New Covenant* (Jerusalem: The Bible Society of Israel, 1991), p. 14 in the New Covenant.

<sup>14</sup> Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 634.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

and telling us that the Kingdom of Heaven is about to be breached (by Him), and that His sheep will continue to breach it, entering into their possession or eternal inheritance; His Kingdom.

The Greek word for 'violent men' is *by-ace-tie* and means, 'one who uses violence, or is impetuous, one who is forceful in eager pursuit'.<sup>16</sup> The Hebrew noun would be *port-zeem* and is just the plural of the 'Breaker' (breakers or breachers). Responding to the call of their Shepherd, the Flock of Israel would continue to breach the Heavenly Barrier.

The Greek word for 'seize it' is *hah-pahdz-zu-sin* and means, 'to seize...take away by force, snatch away...to eagerly appropriate'<sup>17</sup>...the action of thieves and wild beasts...carry off, drag away.'<sup>18</sup> It is this action that is the focus of the word, to take possession of one's inheritance, not the negative meaning of it. The Hebrew word for 'seize' would be *oh-hah-zeem* and means, 'to seize...to take, catch, in hunting, to take or have possession'<sup>19</sup>...to take possession (of the land)' (i.e. Israel, Josh. 22:9) and it also speaks of an 'eternal possession' (Gen. 17:8; 48:4; Lev. 25:34).<sup>20</sup> This contrasts the possessing of the Kingdom of Heaven in terms of inheritance, with 'seizing it' violently, as though one were a violent person, something that totally contradicts the character and teachings of Yeshua.

Matthew originally wrote his account of Messiah Yeshua in Hebrew. It was later translated into Greek because it was the lingua franca of that day. But the Greek words hid the Hebrew meaning of what Yeshua meant, at least as far as Matt. 11:12 was concerned. The Heavens have been breached by the only One who could do it, the Breach Breaker or the Son of Peretz. Peretz signifies, 'breaking through by pressing forward.' How conceptually significant for our walk in Messiah Yeshua! And for the understanding of what Yeshua was saying about his Kingdom. Words can only begin to express the depth of awe, thanksgiving and gratitude that I have for the Death and Resurrection of the Son of Peretz, the Son of God. He has made a way for us to live eternally with God. May we all follow Him through the Breach, into the Kingdom of the Heavens.

By His Death, Yeshua has made a Way for you to be forgiven of your sins against God and man. Only a fool thinks they are good enough to get through the Barrier on their own merit. By His Resurrection, the Barrier of Heaven has been breached that you might come through in Joy. Look what God has done for you! Give your heart to Messiah Yeshua. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins and to fill you with His Spirit. Don't be stubborn like Pharaoh! Come through the Barrier the way God intended and take hold of your eternal inheritance! He's calling you now.

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<sup>16</sup> Perschbacher, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon*, p. 70.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>18</sup> Timothy Friberg and Barbara Friberg, Editors, with Neva Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), p. 75.

<sup>19</sup> Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 17.

<sup>20</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.