

Commentary — From the Margins *Questions Asked*

3.

Except for Joshua and Caleb, all of Israel numbered in the census of the second year (Numbers chaps 1 & 2 — 603,550 men) perished in the wilderness because of their unbelief. It was a second nation of Israel—the children of Israel—numbered in the census taken on the plains of Moab (Num chap 26 — 601,730 men) that actually entered into the Promised Land that was God’s Rest, a type of entering into both the Millennium and heaven. But Christians don’t usually think of it being a second nation of Israel that crossed the Jordan on the 10th day of the first month (Josh 4:19) as the chosen Passover lamb of the Lord, the nation about whom the prophet Hosea wrote in thought-couplet poetry:

When Israel was a child, I [the Lord] loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
The more they were called,
the more they went away;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals
and burning offerings to idols.
Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk;
I took them up by their arms,
but they did not know that I healed them.
I led them with cords of kindness,
with the bands of love,
and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws,
and I bent down to them and fed them.
They shall not return to the land of Egypt,
but Assyria shall be their king,
because they have refused to return to me.
The sword shall rage against their cities,
consume the bars of their gates,
and devour them because of their own counsels.
My people are bent on turning away from me,
and though they call out to the Most High,
He shall not raise them up at all. (Hos 11:1–7)

Hosea’s poetics are structured in a physical/spiritual, night/day, darkness/light skeleton that has the indented lines in the preceding citation representing the day or light portion of thought-couplets that have Israel, Ephraim in particular, moving away from the Lord. Verses 8 through 11 of the chapter consists of couplets that focus on what the Lord will do, not on what He has done. However, the Lord isn’t done with His indictment of Ephraim:

Ephraim has surrounded me with lies,

and the house of Israel with deceit,
 but Judah still walks with God
 and is faithful to the Holy One.
 Ephraim feeds on the wind
 and pursues the east wind all day long;
 they multiply falsehood and violence;
 they make a covenant with Assyria,
 and oil is carried to Egypt. (Hos 11:12–12:1 indented lines are the spiritual
 portion of thought-couplets)

Ephraim as an individual tribe [half-tribe] represents the collective House of Israel, the northern Kingdom of Samaria that Assyria took captive in 721 BCE. Israel was then a badly depopulated nation, having experienced mass exoduses to the east and to the west, the western “winds” carrying emigrants to Carthage and to lands even farther to the west ...

What does Hosea mean when he writes that Ephraim made a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt? Does he not mean that Ephraim and the whole house of Israel has anointed Sin and called unbelief righteousness? Does it not mean that Ephraim and the whole house of Israel has made a pact with Death as Jerusalem and the House of Judah would do?

Therefore hear the word of [YHWH], you scoffers,
 who rule this people in Jerusalem!
 Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death,
 and with Sheol we have an agreement,
 when the overwhelming whip passes through
 it will not come to us,
 for we have made lies our refuge,
 and in falsehood we have taken shelter";
 therefore thus says the Lord [YHWH],
 "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion,
 a stone, a tested stone,
 a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation:
 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'
 And I will make justice the line,
 and righteousness the plumb line;
 and hail will sweep away the refuge of lies,
 and waters will overwhelm the shelter."
 Then your covenant with death will be annulled,
 and your agreement with Sheol will not stand;
 when the overwhelming scourge passes through,
 you will be beaten down by it.
 As often as it passes through it will take you;
 for morning by morning it will pass through,
 by day and by night;
 and it will be sheer terror to understand the message.
 For the bed is too short to stretch oneself on,
 and the covering too narrow to wrap oneself in.
 For [YHWH] will rise up as on Mount Perazim;
 as in the Valley of Gibeon He will be roused;

to do His deed—strange is His deed!
 and to work His work—alien is His work!
 Now therefore do not scoff,
 lest your bonds be made strong;
 for I have heard a decree of destruction
 from the Lord [YHWH] of hosts against the whole land.
 Give ear, and hear my voice;
 give attention, and hear my speech.
 Does he who plows for sowing plow continually?
 Does he continually open and harrow his ground?
 When he has leveled its surface,
 does he not scatter dill, sow cumin,
 and put in wheat in rows
 and barley in its proper place,
 and emmer as the border?
 For he is rightly instructed;
 his God teaches him.
 Dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge,
 nor is a cart wheel rolled over cumin,
 but dill is beaten out with a stick,
 and cumin with a rod.
 Does one crush grain for bread?
 No, he does not thresh it forever;
 when he drives his cart wheel over it
 with his horses, he does not crush it.
 This also comes from [YHWH] of hosts;
 He is wonderful in counsel
 and excellent in wisdom. (Isa 28:14–29 indented lines are the spiritual
 portion of thought-couplets)

Despite how badly Ephraim and the whole house of Israel sinned against the Lord, Jerusalem and the whole house of Judah eventually did worse, learning nothing from their lawless elder sister—

I want to interrupt myself and return to Isaiah 28:25 ... how is wheat planted today where sawflies have become a problem? Is not a trap crop of wheat susceptible to sawfly infestation planted along the borders of fields, while wheat seed that is resistant to infestation is planted in the middle of the field, with a certain percentage of susceptible seed mixed in with varieties that show resistance to infestation to slow biological adaptation of sawflies to now resistant varieties? Is not emmer a primitive wheat that would function as a trap crop for whatever wheat variety was then being planted as main crop? Indeed it is. So what does it mean to study to show yourself approved of God? What is it that you are to study? And permit me to again cite Isaiah,

[YHWH] of hosts has sworn in my hearing:
 "Surely many houses shall be desolate,
 Large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.
 For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath,
 and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah."
 Woe to those who rise early in the morning,

that they may run after strong drink,
 who tarry late into the evening
 as wine inflames them!
 They have lyre and harp,
 tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts,
 but they do not regard the deeds of [YHWH],
 or see the work of His hands.
 Therefore my people go into exile
 for lack of knowledge;
 their honored men go hungry,
 and their multitude is parched with thirst.
 Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite
 and opened its mouth beyond measure,
 and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude will go down,
 her revelers and he who exults in her. (Isa 5:9–14 indented lines are the
 spiritual portion of thought-couplets)

The people of Israel are destroyed for lack of knowledge—for lack of
 knowledge about the deeds of the Lord and the works of His hands (Isa 5:12), not
 knowledge of what Scripture says. Much study of Scripture will not save anyone;
 will not feed the hungry or clothe the naked. Knowing to plant a trap crop of an
 earlier variety of wheat on the borders of the person's fields is the knowledge that
 will feed the hungry. Knowing that situations change with the seasons, that a
 person doesn't plow forever, that a person doesn't plow a newly planted field and
 expect to harvest a crop from the field is representative of the knowledge the Lord
 expects His people to have. Knowing that herbs seeds are not thrashed harshly
 but gently beaten with a stick translates into understanding the gray area
 between black and white, good and evil, what the spiritually immature do not and
 cannot understand.

The people of God are destroyed for lack of knowledge—they don't know how
 to read Scripture until they first know to plant a trap crop of emmer on the
 borders of their wheat and barley fields, or know not to thrash dill in the same
 way that they thrash wheat, or know that plowing (opening the ground) is not
 harvesting. Christians are not harvested when Scripture is initially opened up so
 they can read the words of God. The opening of Scripture begins a growing
 season that continues generation upon generation, not for simply the lifetime of
 the disciple. What the prophet Isaiah planted won't produce a harvest until the
 Second Passover liberation of a second nation of Israel, the third part of
 humanity:

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, [physical/physical]
 against the man who stands next to me," declares [YHWH] of hosts. [s/p]
 "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; [p/s]
 I will turn my hand against the little ones. [s/s]
 In the whole land, declares [YHWH],
 two thirds shall be cut off and perish,
 and one third shall be left alive.
 And I will put this third into the fire,
 and refine them as one refines silver,

and test them as gold is tested.
They will call upon my name,
and I will answer them.
I will say, 'They are my people';
and they will say, '[YHWH] is my God.'" (Zech 13:7–9 indented lines are
spiritual portions of thought-couplets)

The problem with citing Hebrew poetry in thought-couplets is the white space left on the page, same problem short-line English poetry faces ... the focus of poetry is the artifice itself, not the phenomena that produced writing of the artifice: in Matthew's Gospel, Matthew's Jesus cited Zechariah 13:7, the physical portion of a thought-couplet that sits in the spiritual portion of a doubled couplet:

Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." (Matt 26:31–32)

The uncited—and should not be cited—portion of the couplet is, *I* [the Lord of Hosts] *will turn my hand against the little ones*, the sheep, killing two of three parts of these little ones ... it won't be the Adversary turning his hand against the little ones, his serfs, his property; for it is, today, in the Adversary's interest to keep the sheep alive so that the demonstration can continue. It will be the Most High God who turns His hand against Israel as the Lord turned His hand against the nation of Israel numbered in the census of the second year. It is in the Lord's interest to end the Adversary's demonstration and to not bring into the Thousand Years, His portion of the demonstration, badly corrupted sheep.

The prophet Ezekiel addressed this situation:

And the word of [YHWH] came to me: "Son of man, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it and break its supply of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast, even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, declares the Lord [YHWH]. If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they ravage it, and it be made desolate, so that no one may pass through because of the beasts, even if these three men were in it, as I live, declares the Lord [YHWH], they would deliver neither sons nor daughters. They alone would be delivered, but the land would be desolate. Or if I bring a sword upon that land and say, Let a sword pass through the land, and I cut off from it man and beast, though these three men were in it, as I live, declares the Lord [YHWH], they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they alone would be delivered. Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out my wrath upon it with blood, to cut off from it man and beast, even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, declares the Lord [YHWH], they would deliver neither son nor daughter. They would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness. For thus says the Lord [YHWH]: *How much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four disastrous acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast! But behold, some survivors will be left in it, sons and daughters who will be brought out; behold, when they come out to you, and you see their ways and their deeds, you will be consoled for the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, for all that I have brought upon it. **They will console you, when you see their ways and their deeds, and you shall***

know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, declares the Lord [YHWH]." (Ezek 14:12–23 emphasis and double emphasis added)

In the writings of the prophet Ezekiel, endtime readers can most easily see that the Tetragrammaton *YHWH* is a linguistic determinative that later scribes didn't know how to handle ... a determinative is an ideogram that denotes semantic categories and thereby helps to disambiguate interpretation of a word or text. They have no counterpart in speech—they are included among logograms or logographs representing words or morphemes so that the inscribed text is not inferior to utterance, with logograms existing in contrast to phonograms that represent phonemes (speech sounds).

In the above citation, if the phrase <*declares the Lord* [YHWH]> were removed in everyplace it appears, there would be no appreciable loss of meaning. If one introductory expression disclosing that the following passage was spoken by the Lord and not by Ezekiel, there would be no appreciable loss of meaning. If no introductory expression were given, there would still be no appreciable loss of meaning for it would not take sophisticated readers more than a clause to realize that the Lord is speaking to a *son of Adam*.

See for yourself what is lost:

Son of man, when a land sins against Me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out My hand against it and break its supply of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast, even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness. If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they ravage it, and it be made desolate, so that no one may pass through because of the beasts, even if these three men were in it, as I live, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters. They alone would be delivered, but the land would be desolate. Or if I bring a sword upon that land and say, Let a sword pass through the land, and I cut off from it man and beast, though these three men were in it, as I live, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they alone would be delivered. Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out my wrath upon it with blood, to cut off from it man and beast, even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, they would deliver neither son nor daughter. They would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness. How much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four disastrous acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast! But behold, some survivors will be left in it, sons and daughters who will be brought out; behold, when they come out to you, and you see their ways and their deeds, you will be consoled for the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, for all that I have brought upon it. They will console you, when you see their ways and their deeds, and you shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it.

Not much has been lost, has it?

Moses would have learned to read and write in Egyptian glyphs, a formalized system that combined logographic and alphabetic elements into what was thought to be god's words (*sacred writing*, with the glyphs themselves called, *the sacred engraved letters*), which explains much about why Moses didn't write in Egyptian script when Israel left Egypt, but wrote instead in a proto-Semitic script in which only consonants (that tend toward silence) were inscribed. Without

elevating Pharaoh to god-like status, Moses could not use the inscribed language of Pharaoh even though this would have been the language in which he was schooled. Thus, Moses borrowed the linguistic structure of a nomadic people that had passed through Egypt and emigrated to the Levant, but this linguistic structure also used always unpronounced determinatives for clarification. What differed was how linguistic determinatives were inscribed: in cuneiform script, the determinative was a little easier to identify—but Moses wrote his proto-Semitic inscription in neither Egyptian glyphs nor in cuneiform script, but in a blocky form of Phoenician script that may have been in use by the peoples of the Levant before Israel left Egypt.

The script Moses choose to use was itself silent for no vowels where inscribed. The reader had to know how the text was to be read before the reader could read the text, meaning that memorization of the text (as in repeatedly chanting the text, what is done by school boys studying the *Qur'an* in tribal areas of Pakistan) is necessary before the text can be read, thereby giving to prayer beads (rosaries) importance that is absent when reading fully inscribed texts [Indo-European language texts].

As a singer sings on stage from memory, permitting the music to bring to mind [to call into existence] the words that accompany the music, with Marty Robbins once singing his entire repertoire of songs (three hours worth) on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry when a winter snowstorm had shutdown traffic in Nashville (I watched the live broadcast of the event from Kodiak in 1981, I believe), the chanting of a Semitic text calls into existence the vowels to be assigned to the consonant clusters represented by the text. But chanting can only call into existence what already exists in the memory of the reader. So when a Semitic language text is lost for generations then found again as happened to Scripture in the days of King Josiah, the text really cannot be read as it was “read” before. All further readings of a formerly lost Semitic text are necessarily approximations of the original reading, with later readers—in the case of Scripture—not knowing what to do with linguistic determinatives, which are neither logographs nor phonetic glyphs, but rather silent glyphs that narrow possible meanings of logographic or phonetic words.

A determinative provides the inscribed context for an inscribed utterance so that the reader has available to him or her the information that the auditor of the utterance has by being present when the utterance was made, which is why the Tetragrammaton *YHWH* can be removed from Ezekiel’s writings with no appreciable loss of meaning, and would have been able to be removed from earlier writings if scribes hadn’t imbedded the Tetragrammaton as a naming icon in the texts themselves when transcribing earlier texts into Imperial Hebrew during the era of the kings and deportation.

Now, to the subject of the Ezekiel citation: a person’s righteousness can only save the person when the Lord sets His hand to destroy a land and to bring the people of the land into covenant with Him. And it is the Lord who will destroy a land to save a few. Again, it isn’t in the Adversary’s interests to destroy a people [other than Israel] prior to when he is cast into time and then comes as a roaring

lion to devour whomever he can because he knows his time is short; because he knows that his demonstration of self-rule and transactional economies has failed to convince the remaining two-thirds of angels to rebel against God.

In a book-length manuscript I completed earlier this spring, *Rereading Prophecy*, I addressed the concept of the Tetragrammaton *YHWH* being a linguistic determinative, not a category of linguistic icons familiar to most modern readers. Just as few endtime Christians have ever read a Greek, Second Sophist novel—and certainly are not familiar with the stock motifs of a Sophist novel—which the Book of Acts is, few endtime Christians have familiarity with *semantics* as a field of study. I know that while I was building rifles, repairing chainsaws and outboards, fishing commercially out of Dutch and Kodiak, I couldn't have told you what a *phoneme* was, let alone a *determinative*, but through no fault of my own, in 1988, I entered University of Alaska Fairbanks' graduate writing program without an undergraduate degree (I entered on the strength of my prose), and I had to get caught up in a hurry. In 1991, I accepted a Doctor of Arts degree fellowship in English from Idaho State University, Pocatello, where *Semantics* was part of the curriculum I was required to take. And a semester of *Semantics* was enough to pique my interest in the subject—and my interest was enough for me as a writer to grasp why the clunkiness of Hebraic expression existed: Imperial Hebrew scribes strove to include every word in received texts into their redaction of these texts thus they had to account for imbedded linguistic determinatives when they didn't understand what determinatives were doing in the received texts; the reason for using determinatives in early inscription.

When I first read Earnest Hemingway's novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, about a WWI love affair between an expatriated American, Fredric Henry, serving in the ambulance corps of the Italian Army, and Catherine Barkley, modeled after a nurse that actually treated Hemingway, I didn't like the sparse dialogue: just the text of what was said, without any identification of speaker other than that supplied by the reader. My reading experience was that of a high school student, and frankly, I didn't want to have to keep track of who said what.

But as I became a more mature reader—and later, writer—I realized that identifying phrases and clauses needlessly slow the telling of the story. So when a story already moves slow (as love affairs often do), every word must be considered, and all extra words eliminated. As Joseph Conrad said, *Every word must justify itself*. If a story can be told with 75% of the words used with only a 5% or 10% loss in meaning, then that 25% of the words have to be dumped, which applies to my fiction but not to my pedagogical writings ... if you care-to, read some of my fiction for yourself, all written before I was called to reread prophecy. [*Like Rain on Kupreanof*](#) is a book-length manuscript I recommend as a sample read.

Culturally, as reading and writing communities became increasingly sophisticated, linguistic determinatives were abandoned ... in written works, textual ambiguity is actually a good thing; for ambiguity requires the reader to sort through possible meanings that can be assigned to words [linguistic icons],

and for the reader to assign his or her best choice of meaning to the word, thereby taking *ownership* of the word and by extension, of the text itself. The reader makes the text a part of him or herself by crafting a portion of the text through supplying meaning and context to what isn't otherwise clear.

The above works well for fictional texts, what authors of episodic Second Sophist novels never really understood, but doesn't work so well when permitting readers to *interpret* pedagogical texts ... perhaps it was this fear and realization that caused Imperial Hebrew scribes to transform the linguistic determinative *YHWH* into an always unpronounced naming noun; for determinatives were routinely used to identify the divine as a semantic category in Egyptian glyphs and cuneiform script.

Unfortunately, too many Sabbatarian Christians are novice readers of texts: traditionally, they weren't encouraged to read anything but Scripture. When I came among brethren of the Worldwide Church of God in 1972—this after attending Seventh Day Adventist congregations as a teenager—the only reading material to be found in most homes was published by Ambassador College or by General Mills [i.e., cereal boxes], with Ambassador College publications written at a grade-school level, not something that promoted literary sophistication.

I had developed an interest in Russian novels [in translation] before seriously beginning to keep the Sabbath, and I had developed an intense dislike for yellow-journalism, especially as it was practiced against firearms ownership in 1960s America. So I had acquired a small degree of literary sophistication when, in late fall 1979, while still fishing in the Dutch Harbor district, I read Ken Follett's novel, *Triple*, and threw the novel across the cabin of the boat, saying to myself that I can write a better story. And without any formal training beyond the Freshman Comp sequence, I started pecking out words.

In the damp cabin of my boat, tied to the Old Sub Dock at Dutch, on a manual portable typewriter, I began a book, *Shelikof*, for which I would eventually get a contract.

English was my poorest subject in school, not that I was a poor English student. But I have an inherited audio dysfunction that prevents me from hearing words as others hear them, and which then affects how I pronounce and spell these words. Thus, the reason why I began to write in 1979, wasn't the real reason for beginning to write—the real reason was not then known to me, that I would be called to *reread prophecy*. It would just take me a while longer to acquire the level of literary sophistication needed to do a work for God than it took for me to learn how to set a longline, or to “read” the sea bottom from a nautical chart, or to “read” shop manuals.

As a *natural* mathematician turned gunmaker, turned logger [faller], turned two-cycle mechanic, turned commercial fisherman, turned writer, turned educator, I didn't anticipate becoming a theologian—and certainly I don't appear as one. A dozen years ago, I wrote of challenging Christian orthodoxy, not at all anticipating challenging the biblical canon. But one of the things I have learned as I have so far successfully avoided being tethered to the status quo is that a person has to be willing to take calculated chances: if the person knows he or she

is correct, then the person has to act upon what he or she knows, regardless of the consequences ... in Russian novels, characters tend to come together, separate and go their separate ways only to come together again before separating again, the plot structure appearing as the logograph for a fish, a Christian.

The people of God perish for lack of knowledge; for not knowing the things of this world, the deeds of the Lord, His acts of creation. They study Scripture, believing that in Scripture they will find salvation, when salvation cannot be found in Scripture, but in doing what is right and good, manifesting love for God, neighbor, and brother. And the person who doesn't believe God—which day is the Sabbath—doesn't show love for God by openly flaunting the Law. Rather, this person shows his or her contempt for God by attempting to come before God on the following day.

Moses wrote,

When Moses told these words to all the people of Israel [that they shall perish because of their unbelief], the people mourned greatly. And they rose early in the morning and went up to the heights of the hill country, saying, "Here we are. We will go up to the place that [YHWH] has promised, for we have sinned." Moses said, "Why now are you transgressing the command of [YHWH], when that will not succeed? Do not go up, for the Lord is not among you, lest you be struck down before your enemies. For there the Amalekites and the Canaanites are facing you, and you shall fall by the sword. Because you have turned back from following [YHWH], [YHWH] will not be with you." But they presumed to go up to the heights of the hill country, although neither the ark of the covenant of [YHWH] nor Moses departed out of the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and defeated them and pursued them, even to Hormah. (Num 14:39–45)

Can Christians enter into the presence of God on the day after the Sabbath; on the day after the promise of entering His rest stood (from Heb 4:1)? No, they cannot. And if you have a problem with the door being closed to you, take it up with God—

Matthew's Jesus said,

Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, *you workers of lawlessness.*" (Matt 7:21–23 emphasis added)

Sobeit.

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