

## Peace in the Hebrew Bible

by Emilio G. Chávez

*The various related meanings of the word šālôm (shalom) in the Hebrew Bible.*

This Hebrew word, which is so often translated “peace,” has a more complex meaning. It is derived from a Semitic root well-known and attested in the ancient Near East, *šlm*, whose primary meaning may be “to have enough,”<sup>1</sup> but which really has a variety of meanings: “to come to a conclusion, to repay or make complete, to pay or requite fully, to bring to an end, to fill up, to conclude or keep a peace, or be reconciled, to stay or keep unharmed, or healthy or happy, or in good condition, to restore a land to its ruler, to fulfill a vow, to save oneself.”<sup>2</sup> A secondary root has the meaning “to be or become friendly, peaceful.”<sup>3</sup> Most or all of these meanings are also to be found in the Hebrew Bible. Here we will look at certain instances of this root in its various derived forms (nouns, verbs, adjectives) in order to appreciate its complexity, but also to arrive at some notion of what the word which we so often translate as “peace” entails. We will then discuss Hebrew Bible passages which deal more specifically with our topic, in order to finally attempt a synthesis of what the Hebrew Bible teaches about “peace.”

We begin with a passage from “Trito-Isaiah,” a part of the Book of Isaiah dated to the post-exilic period (after 538 B.C.E., when many Jews returned from exile in Babylon to the Holy Land).<sup>4</sup> Isa 60 is a “Zion restoration” passage, in which is presented a dreamy, wonderful vision of what Jerusalem will be like in God’s future, when God restores the city, which was in shambles at the time. In Isa 60:20, Jerusalem is told by the prophet that “your sun shall not go (down) anymore, and your moon shall not be withdrawn, for the LORD (YHWH) shall be for you an eternal light, and your days of mourning shall be finished (*šālmû*).” The following verse is significant: all the people of Zion shall be righteous, in order to inherit the land forever,<sup>5</sup> the work of the LORD’S hands, “in order to be glorified” (or “adorned,” meaning the LORD . . . or the land?).

The meaning “uninjured, unscathed” of *šlm* is found in Job 9:4, which asks the rhetorical question, “Who has hardened himself against God and come out unharmed (*višlâm*)?” Of course, no one has. On the other hand, if one is pure and upright, God will “awaken himself” and “restore” (*w<sup>e</sup>šillam*) that person’s dwelling-place of righteousness,

Job 8:6. This idea of restoration is also found in Joel 2:25. Here the LORD responds to the people's repentance, and promises to "make whole or good" (*w<sup>e</sup>šillamty*) the years during which they were devoured by the LORD'S "great force" (or "army," i.e., a locust plague and other natural disasters with which he had afflicted them). The verb form of *šālôm* is used in the sense of "restitution" in the Covenant Code, Exod 21:37: whoever steals large or small cattle shall make fivefold (if large) or fourfold (if small) restitution (*y<sup>e</sup>šallēm*). The verb means "to pay a debt" in 2 Kgs 4:7; "pay vows to God" in Deut 23:22; "pay back" (the good one has done) in 1 Sam 24:20, where Saul wishes David that the LORD will repay him (David) in kind (*y<sup>e</sup>šallemka*) for having treated him (Saul) kindly when Saul was himself trying to kill David. The LORD will also "pay back" (requite) one's iniquities, Isa 65:6-7.<sup>6</sup> In these instances of the root *šlm* we see the idea of coming around full circle, either being restored to a good situation after having been wronged or after changing one's evil ways and turning to the good, or having one's evil deeds come back upon his head; in other words, the notion of closure or completeness.<sup>7</sup> This is a primary meaning of the word *šālôm*.

*šālôm* is identical to soundness of body, good health, which is lacking to the sinner in Ps 38:4. King Hezekiah, grateful for his recovery, confesses that his "bitterness" (the time when he was sick) was for his good (or welfare, *l<sup>e</sup>šālôm*), Isa 38:17. Thus the *šālôm* greeting is an inquiry as to someone's welfare: Joseph asks his brothers "as to (their) *šālôm*," inquiring also about the *šālôm* of their elderly father Jacob, Gen 43:27.<sup>8</sup> On the social level, *šālôm* is total well-being, a peace founded on righteousness, perfect security. It is the *šālôm* of paradise, of great fertility and lack of care, of the messianic age, when the Spirit of God will be poured forth from above, Isa 32:15-20. This carefreeness is what the psalmist describes when he says that lying down to bed in peace (*b<sup>e</sup>šālôm*) and going right to sleep is one and the same thing for him, since only the LORD makes him dwell (or remain) securely (or carelessly, *labetaḥ*), Ps 4:97. This is also the LORD'S promise to Abram regarding his peaceful death, Gen 15:15.

*šālôm* can characterize human relations, one's familiars, one's friends, as in the expression "all the men of my *šālôm*" in Jer 20:10, or "men of your *šālôm*" in 38:22. In Ps 41:10, it describes the betrayal of one's intimate friend, "the man of my *šālôm*."<sup>9</sup> It also can characterize relations with God; in Isa 54:8-10, the LORD harkens back to the

time of Noah, when he promised that the flood waters would never again engulf the earth, in order to assure Jerusalem that he will no more be angry at her, for he loves her with an eternal love (*hesed 'ôlām*) which will not go away, as his covenant of *šālôm* will also not be moved. Those who delight in righteousness will find that the LORD delights in their *šālôm*, Ps 35:27. The LORD, on the other hand, will make war against his vineyard and burn it, unless they make *šālôm* with him, Isa 27:5 (see 5:1-7). But if the LORD is pleased with someone, he even makes that person's enemies be at peace (*yašlîm*) with him, Prov 16:7.

*šālôm* is closely related to *hesed* ("love, kindness, goodness, mercy," but this is also a complex word) and *'emet* ("truth, faithfulness," often combined with *hesed* as the two main characteristics of God),<sup>10</sup> and also to *sedeq*, "righteousness,"<sup>11</sup> as in Ps 85:11-12. Thus Isa 54:13-15 speaks of a time when Jerusalem will have great peace (*rab š'ôm*), because all her children will be taught by (or will be disciples of) the LORD. Jerusalem will be built (or set up) in righteousness; she will be far from oppression, for she will not fear, and from terror, for it shall not come near to her. Anyone who attacks her is not from God, and shall fall.<sup>12</sup> *šālôm* is also related to joy, as in Isa 55:12; Zech 8:19, and to wealth, as in Isa 66:12-27. Those who love the LORD'S *torâ* ("teaching, instruction") have great peace (*šālôm rāb*), Ps 119:165.

*War and peace in the Hebrew Bible.* It is of course a truism to say that the writers of the Hebrew Bible preferred peace to war. But it is also true that war is extremely important, even essential, in the Hebrew Bible. Many scholars are agreed that YHWH, "the LORD," was originally, and in many ways remained, first and foremost a warrior deity, and that faith in his leadership of Israel's armies was one of the most important constitutive elements in the formation of the Yahwistic religion, the faith of Israel.<sup>13</sup> In this part we will examine certain texts of the Hebrew Bible on war and peace, situating them in a historical and theological context (a *Sitz im Leben*) that will lay the groundwork for interpreting them in a way that promotes justice and peace, and that will also serve as a background for our discussion of messianic or eschatological peace, the peace which will prevail "at the end of days."

We begin with the realistic words of the Bible's somewhat cynical pragmatist, Qohelet (the book of Ecclesiastes), who states that there is a time for everything,

including a time for love and hate, for war and peace, Qoh 3:8. King David's last instructions to his son and successor Solomon are likewise realistic:<sup>14</sup> he is to not let Joab's "gray head go down to Sheol in peace," for Joab murdered David's two commanders, "retaliating in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting on the blood of war on the belt around his waist, and on the sandals on his feet," 1 Kgs 2:5 (NRSV). This text clearly condemns acting in a time of peace as if one is at war: the evildoer must not go unpunished.

An example of mitigated punishment is that given in the Book of Joshua to the Gibeonites, who, fearful that the Israelites would defeat them as they had their neighbors, made a pact with Joshua which was based on their false representation that they came from a far away land (the Israelites were forbidden to make treaties with their neighbors—more on this shortly). When the truth was found out, however, the leaders of the Israelites, despite the people's protests, honored their oath to the Gibeonites and forbore from slaying them, though they were "reduced" to being "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for Israel all their days, Josh 9.<sup>15</sup>

*šālôm* is a "covenant blessing" in Lev 26:6, that is, Israel is told at Sinai that if they walk in the commandments of the LORD, they will be blessed with the bounty of nature and with the peace of being able to lie down (to sleep) in tranquillity, without fear of evil "beasts" and the sword.<sup>16</sup> The "beasts" are the oppressive nations (*gôyîm*) in Ezek 34; Israel are the sheep whose bad shepherds have failed to protect them. Ezek 34:25, in order to illustrate the "covenant of peace" (*b<sup>e</sup>rît šālôm*) which the LORD will make with Israel in the messianic period, says that the LORD will "make cease, put an end to" (Hiphil of *šbt*, the verb from which "Sabbath" comes from) the "evil animals" (*ḥāyyâ-rā'â*) from the land, so that Israel can dwell in the wilderness securely and even sleep in the forest without care. On the other hand, war and violence is a punishment from God for sin. This is vividly reflected in Ezek 7. There the "covenant curses" (Lev 26:14-40; note especially the phrase "avenging sword, vengeance of the covenant," *ḥereb nōqemet n<sup>e</sup>qam-b<sup>e</sup>rît*, in 7:25) come into effect, sword and pestilence etc.,<sup>17</sup> and the LORD sends the evil nations (*rā'ê gôyîm*) to punish Israel, and there will be "apprehension" (*q<sup>e</sup>pādāh*).<sup>18</sup> They will seek peace, but there will be none. It should here be said that Israel is unique among the peoples of the earth in having sacred Scriptures which include texts which are unsparing

in their self-criticism and across-the-board ethical demands. The innovator here was the eighth century B.C.E. prophet Amos, who carried forward the traditional “oracles against the nations” to include Judah and Israel themselves in the list of those to be punished by the LORD, Amos 1-2.<sup>19</sup>

We must here deal with Deut 20, one of the most important passages regarding the conduct of warfare in the Bible. The passage reflects obvious echoes of ancient traditions about warfare, but the present state of the text corresponds to the period of the Babylonian exile, in the mid-sixth century B.C.E.<sup>20</sup> The passage begins with a priestly exhortation to the people not to fear, for the LORD will fight on their behalf. Then the scribes provide exemptions from military duty, perhaps based on ancient taboos, but here with humanitarian and practical aspects: those who have built new houses, planted vineyards or gotten married, or are cowardly, are exempt. As to the cities which the Israelites will wage war against, if they are distant from the land which the LORD is giving the Israelites, peace is first to be proposed to them; if the peaceful terms are accepted, then that city will become Israel’s vassal. But if they do not submit and fight back, then Israel is to kill all their males and take their women, children and property as spoils.

If the city, however, belongs to one of the peoples which the LORD is driving out from the land that he is giving Israel, then no one in them is to remain alive, all is to be destroyed under the ban (*hērem*, from the verb *hāram*). Only the trees are to be spared: they are innocent, unlike the inhabitants.<sup>21</sup> We have seen that this policy was never implemented, at least not completely. In the present form of the text, these words are moral exhortation to have nothing to do with the native inhabitants of the land because they are idolaters who would ensnare Israel and make her turn from absolute faithfulness to the true God.<sup>22</sup> They commit abominations which Israel must avoid at all costs, Deut 20:18. In the background is Deut 7:1-6, where the same peoples are mentioned, stronger nations than Israel, but which the LORD delivering into the hands of Israel, who is his personal property. Why is God doing this? In Deut 7:7-16, the reason given is the LORD’S love for and oath to Israel’s Fathers (the “Patriarchs” Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), but Israel is warned to keep God’s commandments, for whoever does not keep them is destroyed, 7:10. In 9:4-6, Israel is told not to think that it is because of her righteousness

that she is coming into possession of this land, but rather it is because of the wickedness of its inhabitants that the LORD is evicting them,<sup>23</sup> in addition to the oath sworn by God to the Fathers.<sup>24</sup>

Israel shared the ancient Near Eastern idea of land grants given by gods to favored peoples, usually represented by their kings. Some land grants were unconditional, as that (called a *b<sup>e</sup>rit*) to Abraham's descendants in Gen 15:18-21, which delineates the ideal borders Israel is to have (cf. Josh 1:4), an important element in ancient Near Eastern grant documents.<sup>25</sup> Other bestowals of land are based on a conditional treaty, as in Deuteronomy, which reflects Hittite treaties.<sup>26</sup> There is a heavy emphasis in the Hebrew Bible on Israel's obligations under the covenant relationship it has with the LORD to act righteously as a condition to remaining on the Promised Land.<sup>27</sup> This view is found, though expressed in different ways, in the two principal strands (D and P) of the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, and in the Prophets, but it is there, especially in Lev 26 (the conclusion of the "Holiness Code," which ends like Deut) and in Deut 28, and in many of the Prophets. We will now look at two passages related to peace which bear this out.

The eighth century B.C.E. prophet Micah railed against the leaders of Israel for oppressing the poor of the land; Micah seems to have been an agrarian leader from the landed nobility, conservative and zealous for his constituency, made up of farmers who were afraid to lose their patrimonial lands.<sup>28</sup> He describes the leaders of Israel as deboning his people and cooking their flesh in caldrons, Mic 3:1-4. He next attacks the "false prophets," who announce "There will be peace" while their mouths are full (they do not say the truth, but only what those who maintain them want to hear), 3:5-8<sup>29</sup> The true prophet like Micah, on the other hand, is filled with the power and spirit of the LORD, and with justice (*mišpāt*), in order to declare the crimes and sins of Jacob/Israel. In 3:9-12, leaders (*rō'sîm*), priests and prophets are accused of abhorring justice (*mišpāt*) and making crooked what is right (or straight, *hay<sup>e</sup>šārâ*),<sup>30</sup> constructing Zion with blood and Jerusalem with injustice (*'avēlâ*). Their false confidence is placed on their assurance that the LORD is among them, so no misfortune can befall them. Therefore the prophet Micah predicts that on account of them, Zion shall be as a plowed field (i.e., razed to the

ground), Jerusalem a heap of ruins and the Temple mount (*har habbayit*) a wooded high place (*bāmôt*).<sup>31</sup>

Isa 33 is considered to be a difficult to date, but in any case post-exilic, passage, not from the eighth century prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem. The catastrophe prophesied by Micah had already happened,<sup>32</sup> and the people of Israel, purified by this experience, had learned their lesson. Isa 33:1-16 reflects this state of mind. The people of Jerusalem complain about the heavy hand of the nations which inflicted punishment on them.<sup>33</sup> They hope for the LORD to favor them once more. They pray to the LORD, who dwells on high (*mārôm*),<sup>34</sup> who has filled Zion with “justice and righteousness” (*mišpāṭ ûšdāqâ*). It is the LORD who will give stability (*’emûnâ*, also meaning “fidelity”) to Zion, and wealth of salvation, wisdom and knowledge, for fear of the LORD is Zion’s treasure, 33:6. The LORD has punished indeed, and the sinners in Zion are terrified (*pāḥādû*).<sup>35</sup> Who can live in the presence of such a God, who is like a devouring fire (33:10-13)?<sup>36</sup>

The one who walks (in) righteousness and speaks fairly;<sup>37</sup>  
the one who rejects the unlawful gain of extortions,  
and shakes his palms (to indicate) that he will not accept a bribe;  
the one who refuses to listen to (plans for) bloodshed,  
and shuts his eyes (refusing to even contemplate) evil:  
he in the heights shall dwell,<sup>38</sup> craggy fortresses<sup>39</sup> (will be) his refuge,<sup>40</sup>  
his bread will be given to him, his water will be assured. Isa 33:15-16.

Only the righteous person, and the righteous society, can enjoy peace. “There is no peace for the wicked,” Isa 48:22; 57:20-21.

*Peace in the messianic age.* The expected Messiah of Israel is expected to bring peace, *šālôm*. This is reflected in texts such as Mic 5, where the peace to be brought by the future Davidic king (see v. 4<sup>a</sup>) is described. A text traditionally considered messianic, Isa 9:1-6, calls the king “prince of peace,” (*šar šālôm*, v. 5); with his rule, there will be “peace without end,” for the Davidic kingdom will be established and sustained through justice and righteousness (*b<sup>e</sup>mišpāṭ ûbišdāqâ*, v. 6). Indeed, the justice and righteousness that the messianic, Davidic king will bring is described in Ps 72, where the concern is primarily with the poor and weak who are oppressed. All evil will be gone, and righteousness<sup>41</sup> will sprout, so that there will be great peace forever (lit., “until there is no moon,” v. 7). Interestingly, what is said about Abraham in Gen 12:3, that all the families (or clans, *mišp<sup>e</sup>ḥōt*) of the earth shall bless themselves by him,<sup>42</sup> is applied to this Davidic

king-Messiah in the Greek version (the Septuagint) of Ps 72:17. The king, as God's lieutenant on earth, ensures the cosmic order, including the fertility of the land.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the mountains will "carry" *šālôm* (here, peace and well-being for the people), and the hills righteousness, v. 4. The earth will give forth much grain, and everything will flourish, v. 16.<sup>44</sup> This gives the psalm a certain eschatological flavor,<sup>45</sup> and brings us to two important messianic texts.

The first is Isa 11:1-9, and it is clearly "messianic" in attributing the great eschatological transformation in all relationships on the earth to the descendant of King David. In eschatological thinking, what we have is a return to the Beginning, and specifically, to the Garden of Eden or "Paradise" (a Persian word), and this is what we see in this passage. From Jesse's (David's father) line an offspring comes who will have upon himself the spirit of the LORD, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, of valor and knowledge and fear of the LORD. As king, he will not judge by appearances or based on hearsay, and will hear the case of the poor and oppressed; this means he will also smite the earth and slay the guilty (*rāšā'*), but *with what comes out of his mouth*, v. 4.<sup>46</sup> He shall be girded (as if for battle) with righteousness (*šedeq*) and the truth (*hā'ēmûnâ*). Then normally carnivorous animals, such as the wolf, the leopard, the lion and the bear will return to the vegetarian ways of the original creation (Gen 1:28-30), before God allowed meat-eating (in the more condescending dispensation after the flood, Gen 9:1-7, where nevertheless homicide is still prohibited). Thus the wolf shall dwell<sup>47</sup> with the lamb, the leopard with the kid-goat, lions will eat straw like oxen! Suckling children shall not fear vipers, Isa 11:6-8.<sup>48</sup> No one shall commit any wrongdoing or destruction on the LORD'S Holy Mountain, for the whole earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD (YHWH), that is, will have a true and intimate relationship with the one God.

We now come to the peace-in-the-messianic-age passage par excellence, Isa 2:2-4, also found in Mic 4:1-3. The superscription in the Isaianic text says "The thing (or word, *haddābār*) which Isaiah son of Amos saw (*hāzā*)<sup>49</sup> concerning Judah and Jerusalem." The vision begins: "And it shall be at the end of the days (that) the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be firm, at the head (or top, *b<sup>e</sup>rōš*) of the mountains, and lifted up more than the hills."<sup>50</sup> To Jerusalem shall flow (verb *nāhar*, like a river) all the pagan nations (*haggôyîm*), and many peoples shall go, saying



“Let us go up to the house of the LORD,  
to the house of the God of Jacob,  
that he may teach us from his ways (*midd<sup>e</sup>rākāyw*)<sup>51</sup>  
and we may walk in his paths.  
For (it is) from Zion (that) (divine) Instruction (*tôrâ*) issues forth,  
and the word of the LORD (comes) from Jerusalem.” Isa 2:3.

Then the LORD (YHWH) will judge between the pagan nations.<sup>52</sup> This is tantamount to his universal rule, his kingship.<sup>53</sup> The result of this submission to the LORD is that the instruments of death (swords and spears) will become instruments of life (plowshares and pruning-hooks). There shall be war no more.<sup>54</sup>

*Synthesis: Peace is all we can desire, but it is founded on the righteousness which God gives and demands.* Our review of the word for “peace” in the Hebrew Bible, *shalom*, indicates that it has a very full meaning or range of meanings; indeed, that it bespeaks completeness, a state in which nothing more can be desired. Thus, in Jewish thought it is the goal to which we all strive, the sum total of all our longings.<sup>55</sup> Peace is the result of a process brought to closure by making all things right, by correcting all wrongs, making good all deficiencies. Ultimate peace is seen as a miraculous end state brought about by God, and beyond human construction. But, nevertheless, achieving peace is also a task that we have on earth, because God will not bestow this peace without our being well-disposed for it. The beginning of peace is a good relation with God,<sup>56</sup> and this demands righteousness and justice. There is no peace without submission to God (as reflected in the word “Islam”).<sup>57</sup> In the Hebrew Bible, the state in which everything is under God’s rule is the “kingdom of God” (Zech 14:9). But the path to this ultimate state involves heavy and serious ethical demands, and without meeting these, there can be no peace.

The Hebrew Bible, then, presents us with a twofold picture, or diptych: on the one hand, the desirability of peace, which is a return to paradise, and, on the other, a very demanding ethic of righteousness, of right and just action and treatment of others, in which there is no favoritism –in this Israel has lined itself up with the nations in submission to God’s judgment. But if there is any favoritism in the Hebrew Bible, it is definitely toward the poor and weak, as illustrated by Psalm 72, a messianic psalm which can summarize the Hebrew Bible’s teachings about peace. Here the psalmist, praying to

God, aligns himself with God's humble people, 'āniyyîm or 'ānāwîm, those who are afflicted, bowed down and oppressed. He prays that the oppressor be stopped, that the most miserably poor ('ebyôn) be saved. In fact, the reason that other kings will submit to the messianic king depicted here, and pay him homage, is that he will rescue the helpless and have compassion on the poor and wretched, vv. 12-13.

Now some may take all these words as symbolic or as merely suggestive, or relative: who is “poor and oppressed,” who is the “oppressor”? The fact of the matter is that there is no peace when there are restless people among us, people deprived of the essentials of life, people who have nothing or too little to lose to allow others to live in peace, a “peace” which in any case is not the peace of the Hebrew Bible, which is not individualistic or disengaged from the plight of others, which is not the mere absence of war, but a soundness of the body, including the social body, society, the world. We have become a global village, and ‘no one is an island unto himself’. Perhaps this taking cognizance of the other, as an indispensable element towards the building of the peace we all desire, is one of the unique contributions of the Hebrew Bible. The great prophet Amos (who did not like this title, Amos 7:14) came through with an innovation unparalleled in religious history: not just extolling the glories of Israel, but pointing to its greater obligation because of its unique knowledge of, and relationship with, the one Lord of all (Amos 3:1-2). Other prophets would follow in this regard, for example, Ezekiel 16. And so the greatest lesson that the Hebrew Bible teaches about our greatest desire, peace, is ultimately that it must be pursued with a humility that submits to God and reaches out to, cares for, the other, especially if he or she is suffering and weak, for, after all, he or she is ‘our own flesh’, Isa 58:7. “Then your light shall break through like the dawn, and your healing will quickly emerge, your righteousness shall walk before you, and the glory of the LORD shall protect you from the rear.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See the entry “šlm,” by G. Gerleman, in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Ernst Jenni – Claus Westermann, eds. Translated by Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson, 1997), vol. 3, 1337-1348.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. Study Edition*. Ludwig Koehler – Walter Baumgartner, eds. Revised by Walter Baumgartner – Johann Jakob Stamm. Translated and edited under the supervision of M.E.J. Richardson (Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill, 2001), vol. 2, 1532-1533. We will henceforth refer to this dictionary as “*Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon*.”

<sup>3</sup> In Arabic, the root means to “be safe, secure, free from fault,” and ‘to resign or submit oneself, especially to God, whence the participle Muslim and the infinitive Islam, submission to God’; *A Hebrew and English*

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*Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated by F. Brown - S.R. Driver - C.A. Briggs - Edward Robinson. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 1022-1033.

<sup>4</sup> “Holy soil or ground” (*’admat haqqôdeš*), in reference to the Holy Land, appears in Zech 2:16 (in this instance and in others, our verse numbering, which follows that of the Hebrew Bible [Masoretic Text], may differ slightly from that of other versions), an interesting passage calling on the exiles to return to Jerusalem from Babylon..

<sup>5</sup> Or, “forever” (*l’ôlām*) could refer to the people’s righteousness.

<sup>6</sup> See also Deut 32:35; Isa 59:18; Hos 9:7; Ps 91:8. In Isa 34:8, the sense of *šillûmîm* is parallel to that of (the LORD’S) vengeance (*nāqām*).

<sup>7</sup> The “completeness” of *šālôm* can actually be numerical, as in Jer 13:19, “all Judah is exiled completely (*š’lômîm*);” see also Amos 1:6 (Gaza, the Philistine city, “exiled a whole exile” [*hag’lôt gālût š’lēmâh*]). The adjective *šālēm* (applied to the heart) means “perfect or wholly”(in obeying God, or not, as in 1 Kgs 8:61; 11:4), but it describes Jacob’s safe arrival in Shechem, Gen 33:18; cf. 28:21. *šālēm* means “finished, completed” in 2 Chr 8:16 (applied to Solomon’s Temple). Incidentally, “Solomon” (*š’lômōh*) is derived from our root *šlm*; see 1 Chr 22:9. The full weight or measure of something being sold (as opposed to a dishonest transaction) is called *š’lēmâh* in Deut 25:15. “[T]hroughout Jewish literature [*šālôm*] is bound up with the notion of *shelemut*, perfection;” Aviezer Ravitzky, “2. Peace: Historical Versus Utopian Models in Jewish Thought,” in *History and Faith: Studies in Jewish Philosophy* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieber, 1996), 22.

<sup>8</sup> See other *šālôm* greetings in Exod 18:7; Judg 18:15 etc.

<sup>9</sup> See also Ps 55:21, “he extended his hand against his ‘friends’ (*RSV, bis’lômāy*), defiling his covenant.” Cf. Ps 7:5, “if I have requited (*gāmalū*) my friend (or well-doer, *šōlmī*) with evil, or despoiled my enemy (*šōrrī*) without cause (or without success, *rēqām*).” Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59. A Commentary*. Translated by Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 170, states that *šōlmī* is parallel to *rē’a* (“neighbor”). See the trickery used by the sons of Jacob against the Shechemites in order to avenge the humiliation of their sister Dinah in Gen 34. The Shechemites think that the sons of Jacob are “peaceful or friendly” (*š’lēmîm*) with them, 34:21.

<sup>10</sup> In other words, a “hendiadys,” a totality signified by two different but complementary things, in this case, the sum of the LORD’S attitude and saving actions towards Israel. See NELSON GLUECK, *Hesed in the Bible*. Translated by Alfred Gottschalk; edited by Elias L. Eppstein (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967).

<sup>11</sup> *sedeq* or *š’dāqā* also cannot be limited to even a concept such as righteousness. It has also to do with God’s own supernatural sphere, which protects the righteous person (the *šaddīq*, originally one declared innocent, vindicated, in a legal trial). Thus its meaning can approximate that of “salvation, victory, vindication,” as in Isa 54:17; 56:1; 62:1-2; 63:1.

<sup>12</sup> This verse, Isa 54:15, is textually difficult, and its meaning obscure.

<sup>13</sup> In the words of Julius Wellhausen, “Ancient Israel as the people of God was a military camp, and its God was a warrior. War was at the heart of Israel’s religion and thus of its identity,” quoted by Ben C. Ollenburger in the introduction (pages 1-33) to Gerhard von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel*. Translated and edited by Marva J. Dawn (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 3. The term “holy war” was coined by Friedrich Schwally, *Der heilige Krieg im alten Israel* (Leipzig: Deiterich, 1901), who took it from the Arabic *jihād* (discussed in von Rad, *Holy War*, 4); it is now considered more accurate to speak of “wars of YHWH,” as in 1 Sam 18:17; 25:28; Num 21:14. Two of the most ancient parts of the Hebrew Bible celebrate victory in war: Exod 15:1-19, the “Song of Moses” after the victorious crossing of the Sea of Reeds (“Red Sea”) and the defeat of the Egyptians (where YHWH is described as a “man of war,” *iš milhāmā*, v. 3), and the “Song of Deborah,” Judg 5. See the beautiful but terrible verses in Num 10:35-36. For Frank Moore Cross, even the name YHWH has to do with calling into being armies (*šēbā’ôt*); see his *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic. Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA – London: Harvard University Press, 1973), 65, 68-71, 99-111. Of course, Israel was the norm here, not at all unique: “holy,” as opposed to profane, war, was “part of the practice and ideology of war common in the ancient Near East and probably in all of antiquity,” von Rad, *Holy War*, 24. On holy war and *hērem* (“utter destruction, devotion to the ban, anathema”), see Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh. A Sociology of the Religion of Israel, 1250-1050 BCE* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 543-550 *et passim*. Also his article on “War, holy,” in the *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible. Supplementary Volume* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 942-944; Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the*

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*Deuteronomic School* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 166-167, 228-239, indicating differences between P and D texts regarding what the ban requires.

<sup>14</sup> And not necessarily edifying, see 1 Kgs 2:8-9.

<sup>15</sup> Though these were functions related to the all-important cult. Note that David in 1 Kgs 2:8-9 also kept his oath to his curser that he would not kill him, though he had no qualms about his son carrying out the execution, 1 Kgs 2:42-46. The case of the Gibeonites, among others, shows that the total extermination of the native populations mandated by Deut 20 did not take place; see Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 167 fn. 2. Cf. Josh 10:40; 11:18-20; 1 Kgs 9:20-21.

<sup>16</sup> This conclusion to the “Holiness Code” in Lev is similar to the conclusion of Deut, and in fact shows a mix of Priestly (P) and Deuteronomic (D) elements. What is often translated “beasts” here are “living beings, animals” (*ḥāyyā*), which includes what more properly can be translated as “beasts” (*b<sup>e</sup>hēmā*), as in Gen 1:25. These are the “beasts” (*hêwān*, in Aramaic) which represent the foreign empires who historically oppressed Israel in Dan 7:3. At the End of Days, the Almighty will restore the order which was intended in the Beginning (at creation) by taking all dominion away from these beasts and giving it to “one like a human being,” Dan 7:11-14, who is identified as “the holy ones of the Most High” in 7:18, 27, the faithful Israelites in what was thought of as the final great persecution (under the Hellenistic-Syrian king Antiochus IV “Epiphanes,” in the Maccabean period ca. 165 B.C.E.). In Deut 7:22, however, the “animals of the field” (*ḥāyyāt haššādeh*) are differentiated from the Canaanite nations (*gōyīm*).

<sup>17</sup> See also Deut 28:15-68.

<sup>18</sup> See *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon*, vol. two, 1116. This word only appears in Ezek in the Hebrew Bible. Some dictionaries render it “horror,” but Symmachus rendered it in Greek as *athumia* (“dejection, despondency”), the Vulgate as *angustia*. Some versions of the Bible translate it as “terror,” but this word is best reserved for *hittā*, which appears in Gen 35:5; Job 6:21 (the plural “terrors” appears in Qoh 12:5), or for *paḥad*, as in Gen 41:32, 53.

<sup>19</sup> In Amos 3:2, the fact that Israel alone out of all the clans (*mišp<sup>e</sup>hôt*) of the earth was “known by” (= was in intimate relationship with) the LORD is the reason that he will call her to account for all her iniquities.

<sup>20</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 167, is surely right in saying that the Deuteronomic call for the complete extermination of all the inhabitants of the land which Israel is to possess “could only have been created at the writing-desk and does not reflect any real circumstances,” although he thinks it “rather reflects the ideal disposition of Josianic regime [latter part of seventh century B.C.E.]”

<sup>21</sup> Cf. 2 Kgs 3:19. Deuteronomy shows more ecological sensitivity.

<sup>22</sup> The profound reasons for the insistence on separation from foreigners (= idolaters) are best illustrated by the account of Solomon’s end, 1 Kgs 11:1-13. This king, son of David, began as a wise man, but due to his riches and passion for women and international politics, married many foreigners who turned his heart away from the true God. His kingdom was thus taken from his dynasty after he died, except for one tribe, and even it went into exile. See the theological judgment of the Deuteronomistic historian regarding the fall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah in 2 Kgs 17:7-23.

<sup>23</sup> According to Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 274-275, Amalek, in the Deuteronomic passage Deut 25:17-19, is to be blotted out not just for attacking Israel (as in Exod 17:8-16), but for having no “fear of God” (= conscience), when it attacked the exhausted stragglers who could not resist, having been afraid to meet Israel head on.

<sup>24</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 238-239, draws too sharp a distinction, at least in the present form of the texts, between the P and D strands of the Pentateuch. In these Deut passages which we have been seeing, P and D are mixed together. The peculiarly P reason for dislodgement from the land, however, is found in Lev 18:24-30: the Land is holy and cannot suffer the defilement caused by the commission of abominations on it; it purges itself of this impurity by vomiting out the wicked inhabitants. It did this with the native peoples and will do it with Israel, too, when the time comes (reflected in Ezek 36:16-20, which gives the reasons why Judah went to the Babylonian exile). See also the exhortation in Lev 20:22-26, calling for total separation between Israel, called to be holy, and all kinds of impurity.

<sup>25</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 75, cites Gen 22:16, 18; 26:5, as indicating that God’s promise of land is a reward for Abraham’s faithfulness, pointing to the closeness in terminology to Assyrian land grants.

<sup>26</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 72, who states: “While the ‘grant’ constitutes an obligation of the master to his servant [fn. omitted], the ‘treaty’ constitutes an obligation of the servant, the vassal, to his master the suzerain.” See George E. Mendenhall, “Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 17 (1954) 49-76.

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<sup>27</sup> See the wonderful article by Benjamin J. Segal, “Land of Israel,” in *Etz Hayim. Torah and Commentary*. David L. Lieber, senior ed. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2001), 1371-1377. He uses the word “assignment” instead of “grant.” Discussing Lev 25:23, where God says that “The land is mine, you are resident aliens and tenants with me” (*kī-gērīm w<sup>e</sup>tôšābīm ’attem ’immādī*), Segal states that “The very question of rights to the land [God’s assignment to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which came with the responsibilities of the covenant], then, leads to the possibility of exile! If this gift implied obligation, continued disobedience ultimately implied expulsion (Lev. 26:33ff.; Deut. 28:63ff.). No other ancient people so placed a moral qualification on its right to its territory. The Israelites thus extended their original understanding of a universal order that allowed God to expel humans from territory to apply to their own land,” 1375-1376. See footnote 19 above.

<sup>28</sup> See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel. Revised and Enlarged* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1983, 1996), 91-97.

<sup>29</sup> See also 1 Kgs 22; Jer 23 (especially v.17).

<sup>30</sup> “Abhor” (*tā’ab*) is the verb from which “abomination” (*tô’ēbā*, something abhorrent to the LORD) comes; here, the leaders have the same repugnance to what is right and just as the LORD has to what is evil and idolatrous; see, e.g., Deut 7:25-26; Ps 5:6; 106:39-40. There is another “abomination” (*šeqeš*) associated with ritual impurity, as in Lev 7:21.

<sup>31</sup> The “high places” were typically where idolatry was practised; see, e.g., Lev 26:30; Num 33:52; 1 Kgs 3:3; Jer 19:1-6.

<sup>32</sup> Micah’s prophecy was recalled in Jeremiah’s time, near to the Babylonian destruction of 587; Jer 26:16-19.

<sup>33</sup> The nations which the LORD used to punish Israel for their sins will in turn be punished for their excesses in inflicting this punishment; see Joel 4:1-8. Isa 40:2 says that the people of Jerusalem paid double for their sins.

<sup>34</sup> See Isa 57:15: the God who dwells on high is also with the lowly of spirit; cf. 6:1; 40:26.

<sup>35</sup> The LORD is the “Terror of Isaac” (*paḥad yišḥāq*) Gen 31:42, 53; see other instances of the verb in Exod 15:16; Deut 2:25.

<sup>36</sup> Fire is a common image of divine judgment and purification in the Hebrew Bible; see Mal 3:1-5, 19; Nah 1:6.

<sup>37</sup> Or with equity, *mēšārīm*.

<sup>38</sup> See footnote 33.

<sup>39</sup> *m<sup>e</sup>šādōt*; from the singular form of this word comes Masada, the mountain stronghold in which the last Jewish insurgents in the war against Rome (66-74 C.E.) took refuge. See the not unbiased account in Josephus, *The Jewish War, passim*.

<sup>40</sup> *mišgāb*, “a high point for a refuge,” such as cliffs or walls; *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon*, vol. two, 640.

<sup>41</sup> The Masoretic (Hebrew) Text reads *šaddīq* (“just man”), but some manuscripts read, and the Septuagint (Greek translation) has, *sedeq* (“righteousness”).

<sup>42</sup> That is, will pray to be blessed as Abraham was blessed.

<sup>43</sup> See John S. Kselman – Michael L. Barré, “Psalms,” *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. R.E. Brown – J.A. Fitzmyer – R.E. Murphy, eds. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990), 538.

<sup>44</sup> See other visions of End Time fertility and abundance (related to the Davidic Messiah) in Gen 49:8-12; Amos 9:11-15 (cf. Joel 4:18-21).

<sup>45</sup> “Eschatology” envisions the End Time of salvation, the culmination of history when God will save the world and end all evil, suffering and injustice, which state is reflected even in the wonderful renewal and transformation of nature. Conversely, when there is widespread evil and injustice, nature dies; see the eighth century B.C.E ecological statement already in Hos 4:1-3.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Isa 42:1-4; 49:1-6. The righteous and humble king awaited by Zion in Zech 9:9-10 will eliminate the weapons of Israel and Jerusalem and proclaim (or dictate) peace to the pagan nations. These nations are included along with Jews as survivors of the purifying “Day of the LORD” in Zech 14; then Jerusalem will be inhabited safely, v. 11, and the survivors of all the nations will go up to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the most joyous Jewish festival, Succoth, and adore the LORD of hosts, v. 16.

<sup>47</sup> The verb, *gūr*, is that used commonly for the Patriarchs in the Promised Land, e.g., Gen 35:27; Exod 6:4.

<sup>48</sup> Wild animals represent the pagan nations in many texts; see footnote 16 above.

<sup>49</sup> This verb is used often for prophetic visions, as in Isa 1:1; Amos 1:1; Ezek 12:27; Mic 1:1 etc.

<sup>50</sup> The exaltation of Jerusalem over all the whole earth is also found in Zech 14:10.

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<sup>51</sup> This is Tikva Frymer-Kenski's rendering, found in her paper on this passage delivered at the 2001 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Denver (session entitled "The Nebi'im Meet the Prophets"); King James and the Jewish Publication Society's 1917 Tanakh has "of his ways," the 1985 edition has "in his ways." The Hebrew preposition *min* expresses the idea of provenance, source or origin; Paul Joüon – T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew. Part Three: Syntax. Paradigms and Indices* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1996), 489 (§133e).

<sup>52</sup> See instances of this expression in Exod 18:16; Num 35:24; Judg 11:27; 1 Sam 24:13, 16; Ezek 34:17, 20, 22. God judges the world with equity (*mīšūr*) in Ps 67:5 (in the future according to the Septuagint); he will come to do so in the future in Pss 96:13; 98:9. See Jer 25:21. The great eschatological judgment scene is in Joel 4.

<sup>53</sup> See Pss 47:8-10; 72:11; Jer 10:7; cf. Zeph 3:8-9, indicated by Tikva, see footnote 51 above, who also points to Pss 46:7, 10-11 (where God tames the nations and makes wars cease), and 76:4-13 (where God stops war and gets up to judge and save the weak). We have seen the passage in Dan 7 where God takes away the dominion of the "beasts" (unjust, oppressive nations) and restores the order intended at creation; see footnote 16 above. This is a "kingdom of God" passage, as is Zech 14:9.

<sup>54</sup> The two passages where this text is found end in different ways, that is, have undergone different additions. Isa 2:5 has "House of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD." Mic 4:4 presents an image of peace and tranquillity, that of everyone sitting under his vine and fig tree with none to make them tremble (*mahārīd*), for the LORD of hosts has (finally) mandated that it be so. See also 1 Kgs 5:5 [4:25 in other versions]; Zech 3:10. Mic 4:5 adds a contrast between the pagan nations who follow their gods and Israel, who forever will walk with her God. Tikva (see footnote 51 above) speaks movingly about the importance of these texts in Jewish life, where they are sung with the coming of the weekly Sabbath, which is "a taste of the eschatological Sabbath of eternal peace."

<sup>55</sup> See Ravitzky, "Historical Versus Utopian Models," 27: "Peace, *shalom*, is the essence of perfection, *shelemut*', and there is no true perfection but the divine. Peace is the sum of the all, and only the divine comprehends all. Peace is the ultimate realization, the actualization and fulfillment of every potential essence; God alone exists eternally in actuality, as pure, immaterial form."

<sup>56</sup> There is an important class of sacrificial offerings to the Lord in the Hebrew Bible, *haššēlāmīm*, Lev 3:3 etc., "peace offerings."

<sup>57</sup> See footnote three above.

<sup>58</sup> Isa 58:8; the whole chapter answers the complaint "Why does not God listen to us?"