

ISAIAH 54:9-10, YAHWEH'S COVENANT FIDELITY, PART 1

Just as God promised to never again destroy the world by means of a catastrophic flood—and He has kept that oath—He promises Israel that He will fulfill His covenant obligations to the nation and they will never experience His wrath again. He reminds them that He has an everlasting lovingkindness for the nation and her people, and once the nation is restored, He will never again be angry with them or subject them to divine temporal discipline.

Isaiah 54:9–10 ⁹“For this is like the days of Noah to Me, When I swore [שָׁבַעַן] that the waters of Noah Would not flood the earth again; So I have sworn that I will not be angry [קָצַף] with you Nor will I rebuke [נָעַר] you. ¹⁰“For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, And My covenant [בְּרִית] of peace [שְׁלוֹמִים] will not be shaken [מוֹת],” Says the LORD who has compassion on you.

I am not clear on the reason for the NASB to read, “the days of Noah” in the first clause because it literally reads “waters of Noah” just as the second clause reads. The word “day” is simply not in the text.

Isaiah 54:9 ⁹“For this *is like* the waters of Noah to me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again pass over the earth ... (LEB)

Isaiah 54:9 ⁹“For this *is like* the waters of Noah to Me; For as I have sworn That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth ... (NKJV)

This is not a promise that the nation will not experience ongoing divine temporal discipline up to the point of restoration, but it is a promise that once the nation is restored, Israel will never again experience neither God's anger nor His temporal discipline. “Since Israel did indeed endure discipline after the return from Babylon, this promise must be understood as referring to the end of days when Israel turns to the Messiah in faith. It is a reference to the promise not to abandon or discipline Israel once they have been restored in the millennium” [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, “Isaiah” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1091-1092]. Once they get to this point in history, reconciliation with Yahweh has been accomplished and the nation has been restored. Just as the world will never again be flooded as an expression of God's wrath on mankind, so He will never again pour out His wrath on the nation of Israel as He has done at various times, in various ways, and in various places throughout the course of the nation's divine temporal disciplinary program. Neither of these things can ever occur again, and this declaration is secured by the very Word of God who has sworn an oath that He must honor.

Angry, קָצַף, means to be angry, to be furious, and to have wrath referring to being in a state of strong displeasure with a focus that an action of anger often follows. The sense is one of being or becoming angry and therefore feeling aversion and antipathy for something.

Rebuke, נָעַר, means to rebuke, to reprimand, to disapprove, and to censure referring to telling another person that they have done wrong, doing it with conviction and zeal which implies disapproval and a straining of relationship. The sense of the word is to censure severely and angrily. The word reveals the act of sharply criticizing a person by

another. When God is the one rebuking someone, the word portrays the result of His righteous anger.

“So also now there is the pledge *not to be angry... to rebuke*. The former is the outburst of exasperation (the same word as in 8); the latter is the mental attitude lying behind such an outburst, a sense of being offended. Both in emotion and expression—i.e., totally—wrath is gone” [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 341].

God is still dealing with Israel in this way. In fact, the ultimate exercise of His wrath has yet to be imposed on the nation and that will occur during the Tribulation. Once that passes, Israel and Yahweh will live in harmony. God swears on oath that it will be so.

Ezekiel 20:33–38 ³³“As I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you. ³⁴“I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; ³⁵and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. ³⁶“As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you,” declares the Lord GOD. ³⁷“I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; ³⁸and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the LORD.

When God swears to do something, it is without a doubt, going to come to pass. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18); therefore, when He swears an oath to do something, it will happen as promised. Sworn, שָׁבַע, means to swear an oath and to make a sworn promise. Since God can swear by no one greater than Himself, God’s Word stands alone as completely trustworthy. Man must swear by God, or by something greater than themselves such as the altar or the Temple, and even then, that oath is considered the end of a dispute, because, at least theoretically, man’s oath to fulfill his promise should be honored.

Hebrews 6:13–18 ¹³For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴saying, “I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU.” ¹⁵And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶For men swear by one greater *than themselves*, and with them an oath *given* as confirmation is an end of every dispute. ¹⁷In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

“It is the nature of swearing to appeal to a higher authority. God is the highest authority so, His Word settles and confirms. God made the same affirmation men make. Yet, God could not appeal to a higher authority; there is nothing higher or greater than God Himself. He is the greatest authority, and His Word confirms all. There is no argument against His Word” [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, “Hebrews” in *Ariel’s Bible Commentary: The*

Messianic Jewish Epistles: Exposition from a Messianic Jewish Perspective: Hebrew-James, I & II Peter-Jude, 93].

Some theologians think that the covenant of peace is a reference to the bow in the cloud that was the sign of Noahic Covenant.

Genesis 9:11–13 ¹¹“I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.”
¹²God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; ¹³I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.

Given the eschatological nature of the restoration of Israel at the end, this is much more likely to be identifying the New Covenant. It also seems that the Noahic Covenant is set apart as being different from the covenant of peace in Isaiah. “The ‘covenant of peace’ is a synonym for the new covenant and describes its function of making and maintaining universal peace for Israel and also for the nations, as the Noahic covenant had demonstrated God's universal commitment to never again destroy the earth by flooding” [J. Randall Price, “Ezekiel 37:15-28: The Restoration of Israel under the One Shepherd,” in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament*, gen. ed. Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum, 1110].

Ezekiel mentions a covenant of peace twice (Ezek. 34:25, 37:26) and both times it is in the context of the Messianic Kingdom.

“The Lord will make a covenant of peace with the Jewish people under the kingship of Messiah. The peace will be more than an absence of war or temporary armistice. The word *shalom* means whole or complete. Therefore, it refers to the nation coming into a whole or right relationship with the Lord and the realization of all the blessings of the new covenant. The elimination of harmful beasts will be fulfilled in the messianic kingdom. God will make the places around My hill (Mount Zion) a blessing to surrounding nations. The peace that Israel has always longed for, which the Lord has promised in the Messianic Age, will be experienced when the land is blessed with showers in their season ... showers of blessing, just as He promised to provide rain as a reward for obedience (Dt. 11:14, 28:12)” [Charles H. Dyer with Eva Rydelnik, “Ezekiel” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1254].

Covenant, בְּרִית, means a covenant, a treaty, a contract. What makes the New Covenant different than other ordinary covenants is that it is unconditional. The covenant is entirely dependent on God for the fulfillment of the covenant stipulations. God confirmed this when He said that the covenant of peace “will not be shaken.”

Shaken, מוט, means to be moved, removed, or fall. Here, it is used figuratively to represent being removed which results in having a change of state as an extension of a shaking motion which causes something to fall. “This verb, which occurs as a figure of speech referring to great insecurity, can also denote dependability and certainty when used of God and prefixed with a negative [which is the case here] ... Such assurance is strengthened even more by the everlastingly secure covenant which God made with Abraham

and David. The promise is unconditionally maintained in perpetuity for all who will participate by faith. While the mountains may move and the hills shake, God's loyal love will never move and his covenant of peace (the new covenant, the Abrahamic and Davidic covenant) will never shake" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "מוֹט," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 493-494]. While the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants will be completely fulfilled at this time alongside the New Covenant, I think the context of this specific verse is limited to the New Covenant.

Peace, שָׁלוֹם, means much more in Hebrew than our English understanding of "peace" allows. In English, peace means "1. freedom from disturbance; quiet and tranquility; mental calm and serenity; 2. freedom from or the cessation of war or violence" [s.v. "peace," *The Oxford American College Dictionary*]. In Hebrew, *shalom* means peace or tranquility, but the word also indicates a life characterized by completeness and soundness. "The general meaning behind the root *sh-l-m* is of completion and fulfillment—of entering into a state of wholeness and unity, a restored relationship.... *shalom* means 'absence of strife' ... 'Peace,' in this case, means much more than mere absence of war. Rather, the root meaning of the verb *šē-lem* better expresses the true concept of *šālôm*. Completeness, wholeness, harmony, fulfillment, are closer to the meaning. Implicit in *šālôm* is the idea of unimpaired relationships with others and fulfillment in one's undertakings.... This sort of peace has its source in God" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "שָׁלוֹם," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 930-931]. The "covenant of peace" represents a state of affairs that is much more than what we might consider to be a period of peace and tranquility. Many of us would consider the life we have lived in the USA to be a life characterized by peace and tranquility, but the conditions of life for Israel, and the world, during the Messianic Kingdom will far surpass anything humanity has known to this point in history with the exception of life before the Fall.

It is a distinctive feature of covenant theology to embrace theological covenants that are not identified in the Scriptures (redemption, grace, and works), while simultaneously disregarding and misunderstanding the covenants that are specifically identified in the Scriptures and that are exclusively made with Israel. That is the situation facing us in this verse. For example, to a covenant theologian, the covenant of peace is not the New Covenant made with Israel and with Judah (Jer. 31:31), rather, it is the theological covenant of grace. This results in an interpretation of this verse that is informed by covenant theology as the basis for the interpretation which then forces the translator to make the text conform to the theology. We know it should be the other way around; our theology should flow out of an exegetical examination of the text, and that is a dispensational distinctive that sets it apart from all others as a system of theology. "This is a covenant [covenant of peace] that brings peace to man, and is an equivalent expression for *my mercy*. The reference is to the covenant of grace, wherein God freely offers life and salvation to sinners. The choice of the word *peace* to express the blessings of God is typically Isaianic. Here the thought is that God has entered into covenant with man, and this covenant is of such a nature that it brings peace to man" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:368]. In this theological train of thought, the New Covenant belongs to the church (notice that Young continually refers to Israel as the "Church") and not to Israel, and he believes the Kingdom is now and will not exist as a literal 1,000-year Messianic Kingdom during which Christ Jesus is ruling the world from the Davidic throne in Jerusalem.

Even though God will not flood the earth again, there will still be problems for the Israelites as well as for the world until the end of history as we now know it. When that happens, God will not remove his lovingkindness from the nation. Mountains and hills may be shaken and removed, but Israel will continue to have God's lovingkindness. Most theologians see this as a figure of speech comparing the certainty of God's promises to love and keep Israel in peace with even the most massive of upheavals imaginable taking place around them, which is true, but is that all there is to it? Is it really just figurative speech?

I am thinking this is possibly, emphasize possibly, a reference to the destruction that will take place during the Tribulation. The verbs used here are imperfect meaning the translation could read, "For the mountains will be removed and the hills will shake" which makes this a reference to the future. A future sense fits with the eschatological nature of this prophecy. The translations that use "may" (NASB, ASV, LEB, ESV) or "if" (NET Bible) make it sound like there is only a possibility that these things will take place; perhaps the mountains will be removed and the hills shaken, but perhaps not. The grammar is not saying that; the grammar says it is going to happen in the future. The Word of God reveals that the earth will be seriously shaken (Mt. 24:7; Rev. 6:12, 16:18) and the mountains removed (Rev. 16:20) during that time, yet God is not going to abandon Israel or allow the nation to be completely destroyed. He is going to save them through it and establish the Messianic Kingdom at the end of it when the New Covenant, the covenant of peace that Isaiah is referring to, will be fulfilled. "Even if the world could be punished again as in the Flood, God's love and compassion will never cease" [John A. Martin, "Isaiah" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1110]. The fact is that both the world and Israel are going to be seriously punished again, just not to the point of total destruction; however, it would be totally destroyed if the Lord didn't limit the duration of the punishment (Mt. 24:22).

Isaiah 54:10 ¹⁰For the mountains depart, and the hills remove ... (LSV)

Isaiah 54:10 ¹⁰For the mountains depart, and the hills remove ... (YLT)

Isaiah 54:10 ¹⁰For the mountains shall depart And the hills be removed ... (NKJV)

Furthermore, the promises will never be abrogated that His lovingkindness will never be removed from the nation and the covenant of peace will be a permanent governing agreement between Israel and Israel's God.

Replacement theology and amillennial eschatology make it impossible to understand what is going on here. Since these types of theologians do not believe in a literal Messianic Kingdom that is inaugurated at the end of the Tribulation, they have to apply it to the Babylonian captivity. "This is not a promise that the Church of God shall never again suffer affliction or the removal of God's favor. It is, however, a promise that a visitation such as was the period of His indignation will never again come to the Church. The tragedy of the exile was that it brought the theocracy to an end, and so it seemed that the Davidic dynasty had perished and the promises of God were cast aside. Whereas other and terrible calamities would come upon the Church, never again would she have to experience anything like this" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol.

3, 3:367]. I would suggest that since the Babylonian exile, many terrible things have happened to Israel that are much larger in scope than even that incident in the history of the nation. The Babylonian destruction of Judah and Jerusalem and the captivity were monumental, primarily because that event inaugurated the times of the Gentiles, but Israel has suffered other horrendous calamities throughout history. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the subsequent *diaspora* with the following destruction of the nation in the second century by the Romans when they put down the Bar Kochba revolt. The Israelites have suffered persecution and murder nearly everywhere they have gone in the world, but particularly by means of the pogroms in Europe. The Crusades resulted in the murder of thousands of Jews as the Roman Catholic armies traveled to the Holy Land, and once in the land, they killed the resident Jews there. The doctrine of replacement theology has led many Protestants into antisemitic behaviors since the Reformation began. Some of Luther's hate-filled literature was used by Hitler to justify the Holocaust. Speaking of which, the Holocaust stands alone in terms of sheer destruction and the imposition of terror into the lives of the Jewish people. Entire Protestant denominations today are doing their best to assist Islam in their desire to destroy Israel. The Jews have suffered at the hands of Muslims wherever they have lived in Muslim nations, and that continues to this day. The reconstituted nation has suffered several wars at the hands of Islam, and they are not only under the threat of Islamic invasion at all times, they suffer terror attacks in the furtherance of Islam's antisemitic agenda. Finally, the Tribulation will be so much more in terms of death and destruction that whatever preceded it will fade in significance once it gets started.

One covenant premillennialist wrote, "Since the Jews were actually driven into exile again after their revolt against the Romans in A.D. 135, this can only mean that God accounts the Christian Church as true Israel" [Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah" in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 158, quoting Gleason L. Archer, Jr.].

The point that I am making here is to suggest that replacement theology and amillennial eschatology make it impossible to properly understand the Word of God as it relates to Israel and to the Church and their respective roles in fulfilling God's plan for world history. That fact is very evident in Young's commentary on this verse.

For the third time in three different verses God assures the people that these things will come to pass because He guarantees it: "Says your God," (v. 6), "Says the LORD your Redeemer" (v. 8), and "Says the LORD who has compassion on you" (v. 10). There will be one last promise in this chapter that is a guarantee based on the truthfulness and faithfulness of God: "... declares the LORD" (v. 17).