

Concerning a Future Dispersion of Israel

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“Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.” (Is 11:11)

This passage is very commonly cited as a proof text by those who argue that there is no room within the prophetic testimony for another chastisement of national Israel specifically including a future dispersion from the land. Because the current State of Israel can arguably be understood to constitute a second great regathering to the land, (the Babylonian dispersion being the first) it is thus reasoned that there is no room within Scripture for “a third time” regathering, and thus there cannot be any future dispersion from the land.

First, a few words should be said concerning the sensitivity of the subject. As Avner Boskey, a respected messianic leader in the land has said many times, this topic should not be discussed unless it is discussed with anguish and tears. I wholeheartedly agree that this subject is one that no doubt should stir the deepest levels of grief and pain in the heart of the believer. That said, while sensitivity to the weight of what is being discussed is absolutely right, it is not a subject that we should avoid if we are not in every moment feeling the full weight of emotions that are no doubt within the heart of God over this subject. Israel’s coming chastisement is a critical component of the unfolding story of her ultimate and eternal restoration. It is also a topic that is essential for Gentiles to understand, as preparing to stand with Israel in the days ahead is a non-negotiable matter. The failure of the Christian Church during the Shoah will forever remain one of the darkest stains of its long and blemished history. In order to avoid the mistakes of the past, we must understand what is coming. This is not merely an issue of theology, but one of action.

Now, as for Isaiah 11, first, it must be acknowledged that the Hebrew phrase used within the text is indeed rightly translated as “a second time.” The demand for a rigidly literal interpretation however is not justified here. A better understanding of the phrase would understand it as essentially meaning “yet another time,” or “yet again.” Let’s consider some other similar examples in Scripture where such expressions are used.

In Hebrews 9:17-18 the Sinaitic / Mosaic Covenant is referred to as, “the first covenant.”

“For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood” (Heb 9:17–18).

Needless to say, the Mosaic Covenant was not literally the first covenant, but simply a previous or earlier covenant. No one can deny that long before the Mosaic Covenant

was made, there was the Noahic Covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant. Yet here in Hebrews, it is called the “first covenant.” The term “first” here is simply a general expression meaning “one that came before.”

Another example is found in Moses’s request of Pharaoh to lead the Hebrews into the desert to make, “a three-day journey. As Douglas Stuart in the New American Commentary rightly explains, this phrase,

“is not to be taken literally; it is an idiom for “an official, formal, foreign visit.” Moses again used this phrase, just as it was dictated to him in 3:18 and as he had employed it in 5:3, to remind Pharaoh that no mere simple, informal, brief, or local religious observance could substitute for what the God of Israel was demanding of Egypt’s king. “Three-day journey” can also carry the overtone of “far from here” or “very far away” as in Gen 30:36 (“Then he put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob”). Pharaoh obviously understood it this way since his counterbargaining reply in the next verse asked that the Israelites “not go very far,” in a vain attempt somehow to save face by suggesting that they would actually not make a full, permanent departure from Egypt. (Douglas K. Stuart, Exodus, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 218.)

Numerous other examples could likely be found. The point here is simple. Isaiah 11:11 cannot be used to support the claim that Israel will never see a future dispersion of any kind. The testimony of Scripture is simply too consistent and clear on this matter. Whether the testimony of Moses (Deut 32), the Prophet Jeremiah (Jer 30), Gabriel the Angel (Daniel 12), or Jesus Himself (Mat 24), the warning as to what is coming is clear. Now is the time to prepare to stand with God’s people in the days ahead.