

Come to Understanding

They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24

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Egypt and the Name of God

By the time Josiah (whose name means whom Yah heals) became the king of Judah, the “Book of the Law” had been lost. Nevertheless, Josiah did that which, as far as he knew at the time, was right before Yahweh:

2 And he did *that which* was right in the sight of Yahweh, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. -2 Kings 22

He continued for eighteen years until he finally ordered the temple to be repaired. During the restoration, the high priest found a copy of the “Book of the Law.” When Josiah heard the words of the Book, he found that they differed greatly from the traditions which he had been following. His response was sorrowful repentance:

11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he tore his clothes. -2 Kings 22

In the past, Israel had greatly angered Yahweh by worshipping images of Baal and the goddess Ashtaroth:

13 And they forsook Yahweh, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

14 And the anger of Yahweh was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. -Judges 2

Now, Judah was doing the same thing. After learning that the worship of such images angered Yahweh, king Josiah ordered the images of Baal and the grove (the image of the goddess was known as “asherah,” which is also translated as “grove”) to be removed from the temple and destroyed (See 2 Kings 22).

The king of Egypt, Pharaohnechoh, killed Josiah. After the brief reign of Jehoahaz (Yah has seized), one of Josiah’s sons, as the king of Judah, Pharaohnechoh removed him and replaced him with another of Josiah’s sons, Eliakim (God raises up). In either a gesture of goodwill or an act of deception, Pharaohnechoh changed his name to Jehoiakim (Yah raises up).

34 And Pharaohnechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there. -2 Kings 23

Jehoiakim heavily taxed the people of Judah and gave their wealth to the king of Egypt (see 2 Kings 23:35). Even though Jehoiakim bore the name of Yahweh, he ignored the repentance of his father, Josiah, and continued in the evil religious traditions of his ancestors (his fathers):

37 And he did *that which* was evil in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that his fathers had done. -2 Kings 23

While Jehoiakim was the king of Judah, Yahweh gave Jeremiah a prophecy calling upon Judah again to repent. Baruch, Jeremiah’s scribe, explains how the words of the prophecy were recorded:

17 And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How did you write all these words at his mouth?

18 Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words to me with his mouth, and I wrote *them* with ink in the book. —Jeremiah 36

Jeremiah’s prophecy, however, was offensive to Jehoiakim. After the king heard some of the reading of the prophecy, he fearlessly destroyed it. He cut it up and burned it:

23 And it came to pass, *that* when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast *it* into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.

24 Yet they were not afraid, nor tore their garments, *neither* the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. —Jeremiah 36

Nevertheless, even though the king destroyed the words of Jeremiah’s prophecy, Yahweh restored them:

27 Then the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying,

28 Take you again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned. —Jeremiah 36

The people of Judah, who had fled into Egypt following the Babylonian invasion, refused to listen to Yahweh as they insisted on worshipping the “Queen of Heaven:”

17 But we will certainly do whatever thing goes forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for *then* had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. —Jeremiah 44

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8

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They had apparently forgotten why their land had been destroyed by the Babylonians in the first place:

- 16 Therefore pray not you for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear you.
- 17 See you not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?
- 18 The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead *their* dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. —Jeremiah 7

While they were continuing to worship the “Queen of Heaven” in Egypt, Jeremiah reminded them that this was the root of their problems:

- 21 The incense that you burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, you, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not Yahweh remember them, and came it *not* into his mind?
- 22 So that Yahweh could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, *and* because of the abominations which you have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day.
- 23 Because you have burned incense, and because you have sinned against Yahweh, and have not obeyed the voice of Yahweh, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil has happened unto you, as at this day. —Jeremiah 44

Because they refused to listen to Yahweh, even though they had fled to Egypt, Jeremiah gave them this prophecy:

- 24 Moreover Jeremiah said to all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of Yahweh, all Judah that *are* in the land of Egypt:
- 25 Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; You and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her: you will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.
- 26 Therefore hear you the word of Yahweh, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn **by my great name, says Yahweh, that my name**

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shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord Yahweh lives. —Jeremiah 44

This is exactly what happened in Egypt! As King Ptolemy II, the Greek king of Egypt, was preparing to have the Hebrew text translated into Greek, he ran into a problem. The Hebrew manuscripts were written with the name of God, יהוה [YHWH (Yahweh)], but the Greeks worshipped many gods, with the chief god being Zeus (the Romans call him Jupiter)! The king's friend and advisor, Aristeus, argued that both the Greeks and the Hebrews actually worshipped the same god:

...for both these people and we also worship the same God, the framer of all things. We call him, and that truly, by the name of Ζηνα, [Zena, or life, or Jupiter,]... [The Works of Josephus, bk. 12, William Whiston, trans. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), p. 246.]

To solve the name problem, the name of יהוה [YHWH] was removed from the Greek *Septuagint*, as it is called, in Egypt and was replaced with the Greek title, Κυριος [Lord], fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy.

Moreover, these key Scriptures from the Book of Jeremiah declaring the greatness of Yahweh's name are not to be found in the Greek *Septuagint* of Egypt:

- 6 Forasmuch as *there is* none like unto you, O Yahweh; you *are* great, and **your name is great in might.**
- 7 Who would not fear you, O King of nations? for to you does it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise *men* of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, **there is none like unto you.**
- 8 But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the tree *is* a doctrine of vanities.
- 10 But **Yahweh is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king:** at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to contain his indignation. —Jeremiah 10

In fact, the Book of Jeremiah is missing approximately one-eighth of its content in the *Septuagint* compared to the Hebrew text. Many argue that the missing content, much of which praises Yahweh and His name, must have been added to the Hebrew as “literary expansion.” In an effort to support the authority of the *Septuagint* over the Hebrew texts, many have tried to look to the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, which were discovered in 1947 but written *after* the *Septuagint*. However, only one of the six manuscripts of the *Dead Sea Scrolls* containing the Book of Jeremiah supports the shorter version of the *Septuagint* (which was also included among those scrolls). The other five support the longer Hebrew text! [James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994) pp. 128-129.]

Yahweh reminds us again:

- 23 **And I will sanctify my great name**, which was profaned among the heathen, which you have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I *am* Yahweh, says the Lord Yahweh, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. —Ezekiel 36