

High Priest, offering His own blood on behalf of those He would save. Here, in our text, we have the final use of the term in a concluding fashion, summing all things up in Yeshua our Messiah.

25 See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven.

The language our author uses here links both to the immediate context, in which the majestic voice of God was heard speaking at Sinai, but also connects to the opening of this epistle in which he states that God in times past spoke through the prophets but in these last days He “has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world” (Heb 1:2). Likewise, in the same way that the blood of Abel spoke to God, so the blood of Yeshua “speaks” to us, and thus in this sense God is speaking to us now even as He spoke to the nation of Israel at Sinai.

The *kal v'chomer* argument our author makes it quite apparent. Using the same Greek word here (translated “refuse”) as he used in verse 19 to describe the people’s “asking” or “begging” that the thunderous voice of God would cease,¹ he clearly is drawing a parallel between Israel at Sinai and some who were part of the community to which he was writing. At Sinai and in the subsequent wilderness journey, the words spoken on an earthly mountain were time and again rejected by the people resulting in the 40 year desert wanderings and the death in the desert of all the men of age who left Egypt save two: Joshua and Caleb.

Now our author is urging those to whom he sends his letter not to follow the disobedient pattern of the ancient nation but rather to listen and thus to obey the voice of God Who speaks through His apostles and prophets, and Who spoke in a definitive way in His Son, Yeshua.

To *refuse* Him who is speaking is, for those who, like the recipients of this letter, have been associated with the believing community, to trample under foot the blood of the covenant (10:29), or what is the same thing, to treat with contempt the goodness of God’s word of grace (6:5f), or, again, to rebel against the living God. (3:12).²

1 Greek παραίτεῖσθαι (*paraiteomai*).

2 Hughes, *Hebrews*, p. 555.

Like Israel of old, who begged Moses to implore God not to speak directly to them, so there were those in the community our author addresses who were apparently wavering in their confession of Yeshua, with some already denying Him and refusing to listen to the Gospel message centered in Yeshua and His salvific work on behalf of sinners. They were in danger, like their forebears under Moses, of refusing to listen to the very voice of God centered in the words and life of Yeshua, His Messiah.

And this is a warning to us as well, for in the wider Messianic movement, the centrality of Yeshua is, in some circles, being marginalized. The idea that religious Jews who practice a Torah-centered Judaism need not confess faith in Yeshua to be saved is, it seems, quite similar to what the author of Hebrews was combating. The remarkable thing is this: Yeshua is the goal of the Torah (Rom 10:4) and if He is not given the first place in all things, the Torah becomes something far different than what God ordained. It becomes an end in itself rather than a spiritual means by which, through His Ruach, we are enabled to walk in this life in a way that both pleases Him and honors His great Name.

26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying,
 “YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN.”

The quote is from Haggai 2:6.

MT	Lxx	Hebrews
<p>עוֹד אֶחַת מְעַט הֵיא וְאֲנִי מְרַעִישׁ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־ הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־הַחֲרָבָה׃</p> <p>Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.</p>	<p>Ἔτι ἅπαξ ἐγὼ σεισω τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὴν ξηρὰν·</p> <p>Yet once I will shake the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;</p>	<p>ἔτι ἅπαξ ἐγὼ σεισω οὐ μόνον τὴν γῆν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν οὐρανόν.</p> <p>Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.</p>

While the author of Hebrews has followed the text of Haggai loosely, he has used the portion that fit his current needs. It may be that he quoted from memory, putting “earth” first and “heaven” second since this fit the flow of his exhortation, that his readers not follow the ex-

ample of the people at Sinai, who rejected the voice from an earthly mountain. Since they have heard the voice from heaven, i.e., the very voice of Yeshua through words of His apostles, the Messiah Who now has ascended to heaven, they dare not refuse to hear, i.e., to obey Him, for to do so would have eternal consequences.

The context of the quote in Haggai is the assurance to Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest that God would, once again, put down the Gentile domination, exalt the throne of David, and make Jerusalem and its temple the center of worship and allegiance for all nations. In short, the re-established temple in the days of Zerubbabel was a foreshadowing of the final temple in which the Messiah Himself would reign. In bringing this to the minds of his readers our author points to the ultimate victory that would be Yeshua's and thus urges them to remain loyal to Him in order to participate in His victory.

Most interesting in this regard is that the victory over Egypt by which He brings His people to Sinai is, in this sense, typical or prophetic of the ultimate victory which will be Yeshua's in the eschaton. For the exodus itself becomes the paradigm for eternal redemption in Yeshua. The earth trembled at Sinai, and it will tremble again, along with the heavens, so that the eternal kingdom can be set up without any further opportunity for the enemies of the Lord to wage war against it.

We may learn a very good lesson from this approach of our author: the end times ought to be an incentive for us to press on and persevere in the ways of grace, for a meditation upon the end times will inevitably convince us that He is the ultimate victor. We cannot, therefore, grow weary in the battle, for certainly we shall reign with Him if we persevere!

27 This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Our author now proceeds to give an interpretive application to the text of Haggai 2:6 which he has just quoted. The phrase "Yet once more..." stands for the whole, as is typical when referring to a text by its opening line. But our author's emphasis is upon the opening words of Haggai 2:6, $\eta\eta\aleph \gamma\iota\epsilon$ (Lxx, *ἔτι ἄπαξ*), which he interprets to mean "once more and never again." Having given the picture of Sinai which shook with the thundering voice of HaShem at the giving of the Torah, he reminds his readers and us that there is coming a day which will see the final judgment, not only of transgressors but also of the whole created

universe. In this he reminds us of the quotes from the Tanach in the opening of the epistle (1:10–12).

and, “YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN; AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT, AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP; LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED. BUT YOU ARE THE SAME, AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END.” (Ps 102:25–26; Is 51:6)

When Mt. Sinai shook as the majesty of the Lord enveloped the mountain and trembled as His thunderous voice sounded forth, so the created universe will melt away when the final judgment of the Almighty takes place.

This accords with Peter’s words as he describes the eschatological judgment.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. (2Pet 3:10–12)¹

The reason for the final destruction of the current created material universe is that it has been corrupted with sin. It cannot exist together with the eternal kingdom, for in this kingdom all unrighteousness is banished, as our author notes: “so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” As Hughes notes:

For the people of God, who belong to the order of things which are unshakable, the removal of all that is insecure and imperfect is something to be eagerly anticipated; for this final shaking of both heaven and earth is necessary for the purging and eradication of all that, being in harmony with the divine mind, is permanent, and for the inauguration of the new heaven and the new earth, that is, the renewed or

1 Cf. Is 24:19; 34:4; Mic 1:4.

“changed” creation, in which all God’s purposes in creation are brought to everlasting fulfillment at the consummation of the redemption procured in and by Christ, and this will take place with the return of Christ in glory and majesty (Rev 19:11ff).¹

Many Christian commentators, in commenting upon this verse, go on to say that what the author of Hebrews intends to show is that the “old” has given way to the “new,” or the “impermanent” has given way to the “permanent,” but having the “old covenant” as contrasted with the “new covenant” in mind. Thus, those things that are shakeable are the old levitical system of sacrifices and those things instituted through the mediation of Moses which have been surpassed and superseded by the one perfect sacrifice of Yeshua.²

But this is clearly not our author’s perspective. The main point he wishes to emphasize is that God, the Creator and Judge of all the earth, will judge all people in respect to His Son, Yeshua, into Whose hands He has given all judgment.

For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. (John 5:22–27)

Those who belong to Him will be saved, and thus dwell in His eternal kingdom which cannot be shaken, but all who have rejected Him will not be able to stand but will experience the eternal judgment of the infinitely holy God. As our author has noted in v. 25: Israel was severely judged for refusing to hear the voice from Sinai. How much greater will be the judgment of those who spurn the voice from heaven!

1 Hughes, *Hebrews*, p. 558.

2 See Owen, 4.364ff; Hughes, pp. 558f; Kistemaker, p.399; Samson, p. 461.

28–29 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.

It is obvious in this verse that our author has summed up those things which cannot be shaken in a single concept, that is, the kingdom of God. In the present world, the kingdom of God truly exists but not perfectly, for the kingdom of God is known and witnessed wherever the rule of God is seen in the lives of those who confess Him to be their King. Yet the kingdom of God finds its ultimate and eternal expression in the world to come in which the community of the redeemed will live harmoniously, willingly being governed by the Sovereign Who is Lord of all, the King of kings and the Lord of lords (Rev 19:16).

In an ultimate sense, then, the eternal Kingdom of God is that to which the Gospel itself points, and why Yeshua and His disciples are described as proclaiming “the gospel of the kingdom.”

Yeshua was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. (Matt 4:23, cf. 9:35)

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matt 24:14)

This reminds us that the Gospel is first and foremost focused upon the holiness and purity of God and the means by which He may dwell with those He has created in His image. Its primary focus is not how to make life better for the person who receives the Gospel, but how God can be glorified in the world which He has created and ultimately in the world to come. But when the Gospel is presented as “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for you life,” it starts off on the wrong foot! When the Gospel is presented in this manner, the sinner is being told that the “good news” uncovers a way to make life better for him or her. But the Gospel of the Kingdom focuses first upon the need to submit to the ruling King which immediately brings into view the need to bow before Him and seek His mercy, and all the more when the sinner recognizes that he or she has already rebelled against the King and is therefore currently a subject of His wrath. The “Gospel of the Kingdom” is that God reigns, and that all must honor and serve Him. Thus the apostolic presentation of the Gospel often begins by a call to repent and believe in God and in His Messiah, Yeshua.

A good example of this is Paul's method of presenting the Gospel to the philosophers on Mars Hill (Acts 17:22ff). He begins by presenting God as the creator and therefore sovereign over all creation as well as sustainer of the universe and all that it contains. He next affirms that God has determined the times and boundaries for each person, as well as maintaining their very lives, for "in Him we live and move and exist" (v. 28). And the capstone of his Gospel presentation is that God calls people everywhere to repent since He has fixed a day for judgment against all unrighteousness, a day in which the risen Messiah, Yeshua, will be the judge.

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30–31)

Thus, when our author proclaims that "we receive a kingdom," he is talking about the final and eternal aspect of the Gospel, that which he has described earlier in v. 22 as "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." This is the place where God and His people eternally dwell in the realm of continual righteousness, for all sin has been forever abolished, and thus the new heavens and earth, and the redeemed people who live there, enjoy uninterrupted happiness and shalom in the very presence of God. This is the ultimate goal to which the Gospel points, i.e., the redeemed fulfilling the very role for which they were created, that is, to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude... – When we receive the Gospel in its purity, not as something manipulated to make its reception palatable to the sinner, but as the clarion call of God to repent and by faith, receive the gift of salvation, at that point we have come to realize how desperate a situation we occupied as the objects of God's holy wrath, and thus how indescribable His mercy is in forgiving us by the sacrifice of His own Son. There is therefore only one proper response and that is one of gratitude.

As ingratitude lies at the very root of all sin and rebellion against God (Rom 1:21), so gratitude is the pulsating heart-beat of every positive response to the gospel, gratitude which spontaneously bursts forth in the apostle's exclamation: "Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!"¹

For the English "let us show gratitude," the Greek has *ἔχωμεν χάριν* (*exōmen charin*), "let us have grace." But this expression, especially when followed by the object of grace (in the dative) means "to give thanks to" or "to show gratitude to." Our text lacks the object of grace, or so it appears, but even so, there are examples of this same Greek construction which clearly means "to show gratitude." Note, for example, Acts 2:47.

αἰνοῦντες τὸν θεὸν καὶ ἔχοντες χάριν πρὸς ὅλον τὸν λαόν. ὁ δὲ κύριος προσετίθει τοὺς σωζομένους καθ' ἡμέραν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό.

...praising God and having favor (*ἔχοντες χάριν*, "having grace") with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:47)

It is possible, however, to read our current text as having God as the object of gratitude by noting how the following phrase attaches to *ἔχωμεν χάριν* (*exōmen charin*), "let us have grace." The phrase "by which we may offer to God an acceptable service" seems to function as the object of "let us have grace," so that the obvious meaning is "let us have gratitude to God by which we are enabled to offer to Him acceptable service (i.e., worship)." Therefore, thankfulness ought always to characterize the believer, for he or she has come to realize both how condemnable a sinner is in view of God's infinite holiness, and thus how great is His love and mercy extended through Yeshua and the giving of Himself as sacrifice for sinners.

Paul characterizes those who refuse to honor God and who therefore live in rebellion to him, as also failing to be thankful.

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (Rom 1:21)

In contrast, the heart of the true believer in Yeshua is characterized by thanksgiving to God: "Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!"

¹ Hughes, *Hebrews*, p. 559.

(2Cor 9:15). And this thankfulness stems from the very thing our author states, namely, that “we receive an unshakable kingdom.” We did not earn it, nor did we receive it as a matter of family inheritance. The kingdom in which we have citizenship¹ is ours because we have received our place as a matter of God’s pure and undeserved grace.

by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe... – Our lives are to be living sacrifices of praise, as a continual thank offering to God for Who He is and for all that He has done for us. The term “acceptable service” (*λατρεύωμεν εὐαρέστως*) seems close to Paul’s words in Rom 12:1.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Rom 12:1)

“Acceptable service or worship” means worship/service to God that aligns with His prescriptions. Even as someone bringing a sacrifice during the days of the Tabernacle or Temple had to do so in line with the prescriptions of the Torah, so “acceptable service” means “that which conforms to God’s guidelines,” that is, what is acceptable is what He will receive, and He has clearly revealed in His word what is acceptable and what is not. All too often in our modern world people take for granted that if some mode of worship or service seems right in their own estimation, it is something God will surely receive. But that which God receives is what comes forth from a heart willing to obey Him. God is not looking for innovation in worship and service—He is looking for obedience to His word in all aspects of worship and service.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. (Ps 51:17)

with reverence and awe. – (*μετὰ εὐλαβείας καὶ δέους*) – The Greek word translated “reverence” (*eulabeia*) is found only here and in 5:7.

In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety (*eulabeia*). (Heb 5:7)

¹ Cf. Eph 2:19, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household.”

The word *eulabeia* has the sense of “reverent awe in the presence of God, awe, fear of God.”¹ Thus a close and intimate relationship with God includes a growing understanding of His greatness, His power, and His awesome holiness, all of which is matched by His infinite love and mercy.

The Greek word translated “awe” is *deos* and is found only here in the Apostolic Scriptures. In classical Greek its meaning generally is “emotion of profound respect and reverence for deity.”² Once again, the close and loving relationship of the believer with the Almighty never loses a sense of awe that such a relationship is possible! The mercy and love of God only heightens the sense of gratefulness and awe for such a privilege as our salvation grants.

1 BDAG, “εὐλάβεια”.

2 BDAG “δεος.

...for our God is a consuming fire. – Our author concludes this pericope with a line quoted from Deut 4:24, a phrase repeated in Deut 9:3.

MT	Lxx	Hebrews
<p>Deut 4:24 כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֵשׁ אֹכְלָה הוּא אֵל קַנָּא:</p> <p>For Adonai Your God is a consuming fire; He is a jealous God.</p>	<p>Deut 4:24 ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεός σου πῦρ καταναλίσκων ἐστίν, θεός ζηλωτής.</p> <p>For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.</p>	<p>Heb 12:29 καὶ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν πῦρ καταναλίσκων.</p> <p>For also our God is a consuming fire.</p>
<p>Deut 9:3 וַיִּדְעֶתָ הַיּוֹם כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ הוּא הָעֹבֵר לְפָנֶיךָ אֵשׁ אֹכְלָה הוּא יִשְׁמַדִּים וְהוּ אֵ יִכְנִיעַם לְפָנֶיךָ וְהוֹרֵשְׁתָם וְהֵאבְדֶתָם מְהֵרָ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה לְךָ:</p> <p>Know therefore today that it is ADONAI your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as ADONAI has spoken to you.</p>	<p>Deut 9:3 καὶ γνώσῃ σήμερον ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεός σου, οὗτος προπορεύεται πρὸ προσώπου σου· πῦρ καταναλίσκων ἐστίν· οὗτος ἐξολεθρεύσει αὐτούς, καὶ οὗτος ἀποστρέψει αὐτούς ἀπὸ προσώπου σου, καὶ ἀπολεῖς αὐτούς, καθάπερ εἶπέν σοι κύριος.</p> <p>And you shall know today, that the Lord your God He shall go before you: He is a consuming fire; He shall destroy them, and He shall turn them back before you, and shall destroy them quickly, as the Lord said to you.</p>	

Our author used the same verbiage as the Lxx (πῦρ καταναλίσκων), a phrase his readers may well have known.

Having reminded us of the fire and thunder on Mt. Sinai at the

giving of the Torah, our author concludes this section by emphasizing the holiness of God and that His holiness consumes His enemies. Indeed, the parallel phrase used in Deut 9:3 is in the context of Israel preparing to enter the Land, and a promise that He would consume the idolaters who inhabited the Land.

This picture of God as a “consuming fire” is contrasted by the mercy and kindness of God extended to those who are truly members of His kingdom. Such mercy and grace therefore creates a heart of gratitude from which acceptable service and worship is the natural response. As Hughes writes:

Gratefulness, moreover, is the impulse, the motive force, which constrains us, as a holy priesthood belonging to the unshakable kingdom (Rev 5:10), to *offer to God acceptable worship* by presenting ourselves, thankfully, as a living sacrifice in His service (Rom 12:1; cf. 14:17f) and by declaring the wonderful deeds to Him Who called us out of darkness into marvelous light (1Pet 2:5, 9). Such worship flows from and is a manifestation of the response of our lives. All self-esteem and self-righteousness renounced, it is centered entirely on Him Who is our sovereign Redeemer and Lord. Moreover, remembering our own insignificance and unworthiness and the infinite majesty of Him before Whom we serve, it is offered *with reverence and awe*.¹

That God is a consuming fire does not motivate true worship from fear of being consumed, but from gratitude that the child of God will never be consumed by the all-powerful, sovereign hand of God. For since Yeshua has died to pay the price of His people’s sin, the wrath of the Father has already been consumed upon Him. Such realization produces a growing heart of gratitude for God’s grace in the Messiah.

But to those within the community of believers to whom this epistle was written, who were contemplating turning their backs upon Yeshua, denying Him and returning to their former way of life, our author reminds them that the God they seek to know is the Father of Yeshua, and to reject the Son is likewise to reject the Father.

He who descended on Mount Sinai in fire and spoke to His people from the midst of that fire still consumes in the white

1 Hughes, *Hebrews*, p. 560.

heat of His purity everything that is unworthy of Himself.¹

What describes “worthy” in the mind of God is nothing more nor less than His Son Yeshua, for we hear His voice from heaven: “This is the Son of My love—listen to Him!” Therefore, to turn from the Son and to deny Him is to incur the wrath of the Almighty. But to be embraced by the Son through the grace He gives is to be forever accepted by the Father and seen as worthy before Him.

1 F. F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 384.