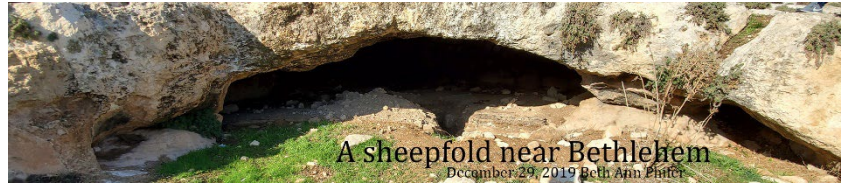




a division of Flower Girl Greetings, LLC  
writings by Beth Ann Phifer

Yeshua and His followers were Jewish. Understanding the first century Hebraic context, meanings, idioms, and culture gives clarity to the New Testament writings.



A sheepfold near Bethlehem  
December 29, 2019 Beth Ann Phifer

## In His Dust – 8. The Explosive Power of the Kingdom

His power in gentleness

July 20, 2023

In these last days, how should we live? As we look at the parables of Yeshua (Jesus), we will see “what the kingdom of God is like,” and we will know how to advance as the darkness increases. Our advance will not be like the armies of the world but will come explosively and powerfully in unassuming ways.

### Matthew 11:11-15

Yeshua said, “Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Immerser (Baptist). Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

**From the days of John the Immerser until now, the kingdom of heaven *suffers violence* [NLT – *has been forcefully advancing*], and violent men take it by force.**

For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (NASB)

The meaning of these verses is lost in most translations of the Bible. However, the New Living Translation is good. Let’s dive into their Hebrew context because their message is SO EXCITING!

### The Jewish Teaching Method of Hinting

Jewish men memorized large portions of Scripture from the time they were 5 or 6 years old. A rabbi or teacher of the Law could speak just one verse of Scripture, and their disciples would be familiar with the entire passage surrounding it. The verse would also *hint* or *connect* to other portions of Scripture.

The Rabbi Yeshua was an absolute Master at using this familiar method of *hinting*. (After all, He was God incarnate and full of the Holy Spirit!) So, when He said, “From the days of John the Immerser until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force,” the people immediately remembered Micah 2:12-13:

I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob,  
I will surely gather the remnant of Israel.  
I will put them together like sheep in the fold;  
Like a flock in the midst of its pasture  
They will be noisy with men.  
The breaker goes up before them;  
They break out, pass through the gate, and go out by it.  
So, their king goes on before them,  
And the Lord at their head.”

Let me explain:

Shepherds lead their sheep during the day, but at night they are protected in a fold of stones or in a cave. The Prophet Micah tells us that God is gathering and protecting the remnant of His people like a shepherd gathers his sheep into a fold.

In the morning, the sheep are noisy, bleating, and very excited to get out of the fold. They are frolicking with joy as they anticipate their release! The “breaker” is the person responsible for removing the stones of the gate that keep them locked in for the night. After the breaker removes the stones of the entrance, the sheep pass through. As they break out into the pasture, the shepherd goes before them to lead them to green pastures and still waters. (See Psalm 23.)

The Jewish people knew these verses in Micah well. Every year at the Passover meal, they place(d) a prominent empty chair at the end of the table for Elijah, symbolizing the Messiah Who would come, this Shepherd King Who would set them free! As they listened to Yeshua speak the words of Matthew 11:12, they knew He was declaring the fulfillment of Micah 2:12-13!

## Interpretation

From the days of John the Immerser until now [from John until My coming], the kingdom of heaven *suffers violence* [The kingdom of heaven has broken loose! It is exploding forth, breaking loose, and advancing with power!] and violent [explosive] men [seek to] take it by force.

**John the Immerser was the breaker** preparing the way! He created a breach in the stone wall of the fold to release the sheep. With his appearance, he made the path straight for the kingdom of God to explode in power and release the captives! (See Isaiah 40:3-11)

**Yeshua is the King Messiah, the Good Shepherd** who goes before the sheep and who has an intimate relationship with Adonai, the Father. “Like a Shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs, and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.” (Isaiah 40:11)

## Application

Yeshua’s words in Matthew 11:12 do not mean we get aggressive and violent with God or demand from Him using loud, repetitive voices to claim what we want. Rather, Yeshua taught us to receive His kingdom as a child. Although Yeshua was often stern and bold, He was not violent. He was gentle. Although the kingdom of God is volcanic in its explosive, conquering power, it comes with joy and gentleness to the hungry and the lost. As His ambassadors, **our gentleness yields explosive power**. For it is “‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of hosts.” (Zechariah 4:5-7)

## Prayer

Oh, Father, I praise You! Your kingdom continues to advance in power in ways we often do not see, but we believe! The gates of hell will never overpower Your beautiful kingdom of love and gentleness!

Your kingdom has broken through! The stone has been rolled away from the entrance to the tomb that couldn’t hold You back! The night-time is over, and the morning has come. We have exploded into the pasture to share the joyful news of Your kingdom! The valleys of the shadow of death through which we walk are increasing, but You are Faithful, our Perfect Shepherd Who goes before us!

You said, “I have other sheep who are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice...” (John 10:16) Guide us to these sheep so we may welcome them into Your fold.

You call us each by name! We will keep our eyes on You and listen for Your voice as You lead us forth! In the Name of Yeshua Messiah, Amen!