

~EARTHQUAKE (517)

[Hebrew, *ra'`ash*, Greek, *sei-smos*]

.. Figurative And Symbolic Uses

- A sudden tremor or a shaking of the earth's surface as a result of forces at work within the globe. The Hebrew noun *ra'`ash* refers not only to the quaking of the earth, or an earthquake.
- But it said; Go out, and you must stand on the mountain before Yehowah. And, look! Yehowah was passing by, and a great and strong wind was rending mountains and breaking crags before Yehowah. Yehowah was not in the wind. And after the wind there was a **quaking**. Yehowah was not in the **quaking**. (1 Kings 19:11)
- The words of Amos, who happened to be among the sheep raisers from Tekoa, which he visioned concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah the king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, the king of Israel, two years before the **earthquake**. (Amos 1:1)
- But also to the **tremors** caused by a tramping army.
- For every boot of the one tramping with **tremors** and the mantle rolled in blood have even come to be for burning as food for fire. (Isaiah 9:5) Footnote
- The **rattling** of war chariots or a javelin.
- At the sound of the stamping of the hoofs of his stallions, at the **rattling** of his war chariots, the turmoil of his wheels, the fathers will actually not turn around to the sons, because of the dropping down of their hands. (Jeremiah 47:3)
- A club has been regarded by it as mere stubble, and it laughs at the **rattling** of a javelin. (Job 41:29)
- Pounding of horses
- With **pounding** and excitement it swallows up the earth, and it does not believe that it is the sound of a horn. (Job 39:24)

- The Greek *sei-smos'*, **earthquake**, denotes a quaking, shaking, or trembling.
- But the army officer and those with him watching over Jesus, when they saw the **earthquake** and the things happening, grew very much afraid, saying; Certainly this was God's Son. (**Matthew 27:54**)
- And, look! The curtain of the sanctuary was rent in two, from top to bottom, and the earth **quaked**, and the rock-masses were split. (**Matthew 27:51**)
- Yes, for fear of him the watchmen **trembled** and became as dead men. (**Matthew 28:4**)
- And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as when a fig tree **shaken** by a high wind casts its unripe figs. (**Revelation 6:13**)
- **Shakings** and **tremblings** of the earth occurred throughout Biblical history, at times as a result of natural geologic forces
- And you people will certainly flee to the valley of my mountains, because the valley of the mountains will reach all the way to Azel. And you will have to flee, just as you fled because of the **earthquake** in the days of Uzziah the king of Judah. And Yehowah my God will certainly come, all the holy ones being with him. (**Zechariah 14:5**)
- And sometimes as direct acts of God for judicial purposes or for purposes involving his servants. The geology of the area explains Israel's past history of seismic activity, which still is not finished.
- The temple area of Jerusalem is situated on a line of structural weakness within the earth. The Mosque of el-Aqsa, located in the temple area, not the Dome of the Rock, which is a shrine, has been repeatedly damaged by **earthquake** activity.
- A tremendous **earthquake**, apparently coupled with volcanic action, provided an awe-inspiring setting for the inauguration of the Law covenant at Sinai.
- And Mount Sinai smoked all over, due to the fact that Yehowah came down upon it in fire, and its smoke kept ascending like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain was **trembling** very

much. (**Exodus 19:18**)

- The earth itself rocked, heaven itself also dripped because of God, this Sinai **rocked** because of God, the God of Israel. (**Psalms 68:8**)
- Yehowah had a direct hand in this display of power, for he spoke out of the mountain by means of an angel.
- When the sound of the horn became continually louder and louder, Moses began to speak, and the true God began to answer him with a voice. (**Exodus 19:19**)
- Why, then, the Law? It was added to make transgressions manifest, until the seed should arrive to whom the promise had been made, and it was transmitted through angels by the hand of a mediator. (**Galatians 3:19**)
- For you have not approached that which can be **felt** and which has been set aflame with fire, and a dark cloud and thick darkness and a tempest. (**Hebrews 12:18**)
- And the blare of a trumpet and the voice of words, on hearing which voice the people implored that no word should be added to them. (**Hebrews 12:19**)
- For the command was not bearable to them. And if a beast touches the mountain, it must be stoned. (**Hebrews 12:20**)
- Also, the display was so fearsome that Moses said; I am fearful and **trembling**. (**Hebrews 12:21**)
- At times the fear-inspiring force of **earthquakes** has been an evidence of Yehowah's hand in judging violations of his law.
- Yehowah is slow to anger and great in power, and by no means will Yehowah hold back from punishing. In destructive wind and in storm is his way, and the cloud mass is the powder of his feet. (**Nahum 1:3**)
- He is rebuking the sea, and he dries it up, and all the rivers he actually makes run dry. Bashan and Carmel have withered, and the very blossom of Lebanon has withered. (**Nahum 1:4**)

- Mountains themselves have rocked because of him, and the very hills found themselves melting. And the earth will be upheaved because of his face, the productive land also, and all those dwelling in it. (**Nahum 1:5**)
- In the face of his denunciation who can stand? And who can rise up against the heat of his anger? His own rage will certainly be poured out like fire, and the very rocks will actually be pulled down because of him. (**Nahum 1:6**)
- An **earthquake** was the executorial method used by Yehowah against the rebellious Dathan, Abiram, and the household of Korah, the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them down alive into Sheol.
- Immediately they got away from before the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, from every side, and Dathan and Abiram came out, taking their stand at the entrance of their tents, together with their wives, and their sons and their little ones. (**Numbers 16:27**)
- And the earth proceeded to open its mouth and to swallow up them and their households and all humankind that belonged to Korah and all the goods. (**Numbers 16:32**)
- So down they went, and all who belonged to them, alive into Sheol, and the earth went covering them over, so that they perished from the midst of the congregation. (**Numbers 16:33**)
- Elijah experienced a **quaking** of the earth before Yehowah spoke to correct his viewpoint and to send him back to further service assignments.
- But it said; Go out, and you must stand on the mountain before Yehowah. And, look! Yehowah was passing by, and a great and strong wind was rending mountains and breaking crags before Yehowah. Yehowah was not in the wind. And after the wind there was a quaking. Yehowah was not in the quaking. (**1 Kings 19:11**)
- And after the quaking there was a fire. Yehowah was not in the fire. And after the fire there was a calm, low voice. (**1 Kings 19:12**)
- And it came about that as soon as Elijah heard it, he immediately

wrapped his face in his official garment and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave, and, look! There was a voice for him, and it proceeded to say to him; What is your business here, Elijah? (**1 Kings 19:13**)

- To this he said; I have been absolutely jealous for Yehowah the God of armies. For the sons of Israel have left your covenant, your altars they have torn down, and your prophets they have killed with the sword, so that I only am left, and they begin looking for my soul to take it away. (**1 Kings 19:14**)
- Yehowah now said to him; Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and you must come in and anoint Hazael as king over Syria. (**1 Kings 19:15**)
- And Jehu the grandson of Nimshi you should anoint as king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat from Abel-meholah you should anoint as prophet in place of you. (**1 Kings 19:16**)
- And it must occur that the one escaping from Hazael's sword, Jehu will put to death, and the one escaping from Jehu's sword, Elisha will put to death. (**1 Kings 19:17**)
- And I have let seven thousand remain in Israel, all the knees that have not bent down to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him. (**1 Kings 19:18**)
- **Earthquakes** have been a miraculous aid to Yehowah's people, as when Jonathan and his armor-bearer courageously attacked a Philistine outpost.
- Yehowah backed up their faith in him by bringing about an earthquake that threw the entire camp of the Philistines into confusion, so that these killed off one another and were thoroughly routed.
- So Jonathan said to the attendant, his armor-bearer; Do come and let us cross over to the outpost of these uncircumcised men. Perhaps Yehowah will work for us, for there is no hindrance to Yehowah to save by many or by few. (**1 Samuel 14:6**)
- But if this is the way they should say; Come up against us! We must then go up, because Yehowah will certainly give them into our hand, and this is for us the sign. (**1 Samuel 14:10**)

- So the men of the outpost answered Jonathan and his armor-bearer and said; Come on up to us, and we will let you know a thing! At once Jonathan said to his armor-bearer; Come up after me, because Yehowah will certainly give them into the hand of Israel. (1 Samuel 14:12)
- Then a trembling occurred in the camp in the field and among all the people of the outpost, and the force of pillagers **trembled**, even they, and the earth began **quaking**, and it developed into a trembling from God. (1 Samuel 14:15)
- And the watchmen belonging to Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin got to see it, and, look! The **turmoil swayed** this way and that. (1 Samuel 14:16)
- Thus Saul and all the people that were with him were called out. So they came as far as the battle, and there the sword of each one had come to be against his fellowman, the rout was very great. (1 Samuel 14:20)
- And Yehowah proceeded on that day to save Israel, and the battle itself passed over to Beth-aven. (1 Samuel 14:23)
- On the day of Jesus death, about three o'clock in the afternoon, an **earthquake** took place, splitting rock-masses open, causing the memorial tombs to be opened, and causing dead bodies to be thrown from their graves.
- The curtain of the sanctuary in the temple rebuilt by Herod was torn in two, from top to bottom. Prior to this, darkness had fallen over the land. Some think that volcanic action was involved, for often volcanoes belch out smoke and dust that blacken the sky. But there is no real evidence that there was any volcanic action connected with this **earthquake**.
- From the sixth hour on a darkness fell over all the land, until the ninth hour. (Matthew 27:45)
- And, look! The curtain of the sanctuary was rent in two, from top to bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rock-masses were split. (Matthew 27:51)
- And the memorial tombs were opened and many bodies of the

holy ones that had fallen asleep were raised up. ([Matthew 27:52](#))

- And persons, coming out from among the memorial tombs after his being raised up, entered into the holy city, and they became visible to many people. ([Matthew 27:53](#))
- But the army officer and those with him watching over Jesus, when they saw the **earthquake** and the things happening, grew very much afraid, saying; Certainly this was God's Son. ([Matthew 27:54](#))
- Well, by now it was about the sixth hour, and yet a darkness fell over all the earth until the ninth hour. ([Luke 23:44](#))
- Because the sunlight failed, then the curtain of the sanctuary was rent down the middle. ([Luke 23:45](#))
- Another **earthquake** occurred on the day of Jesus resurrection, when an angel descended from heaven and rolled away the stone from in front of his tomb.
- After the Sabbath, when it was growing light on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to view the grave. ([Matthew 28:1](#))
- And, notice! a great **earthquake** had taken place, for Yehowah's angel had descended from heaven and approached and rolled away the stone, and was sitting on it. ([Matthew 28:2](#))
- The apostle Paul and his companion Silas, while in prison at Philippi, had their prayers and songs of praise answered by a great **earthquake** that opened the prison doors and loosened the bonds of the prisoners. This led to the conversion of the jailer and his household.
- But about the middle of the night Paul and Silas were praying and praising God with song, yes, the prisoners were hearing them. ([Acts of Apostles 16:25](#))
- Suddenly a great **earthquake** occurred, so that the foundations of the jail were shaken. Moreover, all the doors were instantly opened, and the bonds of all were loosened. ([Acts of Apostles 16:26](#))

- The jailer, being awakened out of sleep and seeing the prison doors were open, drew his sword and was about to do away with himself, imagining that the prisoners had escaped. ([Acts of Apostles 16:27](#))
- But Paul called out with a loud voice, saying; Do not hurt yourself, for we are all here! ([Acts of Apostles 16:28](#))
- So he asked for lights and leaped in and, seized with trembling, he fell down before Paul and Silas. ([Acts of Apostles 16:29](#))
- And he brought them outside and said; Sirs, what must I do to get saved? ([Acts of Apostles 16:30](#))
- They said; Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will get saved, you and your household. ([Acts of Apostles 16:31](#))
- And they spoke the word of Yehowah to him together with all those in his house. ([Acts of Apostles 16:32](#))
- And he took them along in that hour of the night and bathed their stripes, and, one and all, he and his were baptized without delay. ([Acts of Apostles 16:33](#))
- And he brought them into his house and set a table before them, and he rejoiced greatly with all his household now that he had believed God. ([Acts of Apostles 16:34](#))
- Jesus foretold **earthquakes** in significant number and intensity as a feature of the sign of his presence.
- While he was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately, saying; Tell us, When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things? ([Matthew 24:3](#))
- For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and **earthquakes** in one place after another. ([Matthew 24:7](#))
- All these things are a beginning of pangs of distress. ([Matthew 24:8](#))
- And there will be great **earthquakes**, and in one place after

another pestilences and food shortages, and there will be fearful sights and from heaven great signs. (Luke 21:11)

- Since 1914 C.E., there has been an increase in the number of earthquakes, resulting in much distress. With data obtained from the National Geophysical Data Center in Boulder, Colorado, supplemented by a number of standard reference works, a tabulation was made in 1984 C.E. that included only earthquakes that measured 7.5 or more on the Richter scale, or that resulted in destruction of five million dollars (U.S.) or more in property, or that caused 100 or more deaths.
- It was calculated that there had been 856 of such earthquakes during the 2,000 years before 1914 C.E., or 1 every (2.33 years) The same tabulation showed that in just 69 years following 1914 C.E. there were 605 of such quakes, or 1 every (0.11 years) (approximately 1 per month), a 2000% increase. These statistics are a means of indicating the extent of suffering from earthquakes during this period of history.
- For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another. (Matthew 24:7)

•• Figurative And Symbolic Uses

- Earthquakes are often used figuratively in the Scriptures to describe the shaking and overthrow of nations and kingdoms. Ancient Babylon trusted in false gods such as Nebo and Marduk, which in the people's imaginations filled their heavens.
- They also relied greatly on the strength of their mighty military force, but God said in pronouncement against Babylon,
- That is why I shall cause heaven itself to become agitated, and the earth will rock out of its place at the fury of Yehowah of armies and at the day of his burning anger. (Isaiah 13:13)
- As far as Babylon was concerned, it must have been a great shock when her empire fell and her territory ceased to belong to her as the third world power and she became merely a province in the Persian Empire.
- In that very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed (Daniel 5:30)

- And Darius the Mede himself received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old. ([Daniel 5:31](#))
- Elsewhere, David describes Yehowah as fighting for him as by means of an **earthquake**.
- And back and forth the earth began to shake and to rock, the foundations of the heavens themselves became agitated, and they kept shaking back and forth because he had been angered. ([2 Samuel 22:8](#))
- And the earth began to shake and rock, and the foundations of the mountains themselves became agitated, and they kept shaking back and forth because he had been angered. ([Psalms 18:7](#))
- Yehowah speaks of **rocking the heavens and the earth**, the sea and the dry ground, of **rocking all nations** in behalf of his people, with the result that the desirable things of all the nations would come in and he would fill his house with glory.
- For this is what Yehowah of armies has said; Yet once, it is a little while, and I am rocking the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry ground. ([Haggai 2:6](#))
- And I will rock all the nations, and the desirable things of all the nations must come in, and I will fill this house with glory, Yehowah of armies has said. ([Haggai 2:7](#))
- The apostle Paul uses as an illustration the awe-inspiring display at Sinai, comparing it with the greater and more awesome assemblage of the Christian congregation of the firstborn before God and his Son as Mediator at the heavenly Mount Zion.
- He goes on to follow through with the illustration of the **earthquake** that took place at Sinai and gives a symbolic application, encouraging Christians to continue serving in courage and faith, realizing that the Kingdom and those who hold on to it will be able to remain standing while all other things of the symbolic heavens and earth are shaken to pieces.
- For you have not approached that which can be felt and which has been set aflame with fire, and a dark cloud and thick darkness and a tempest. ([Hebrews 12:18](#))

- And the blare of a trumpet and the voice of words, on hearing which voice the people implored that no word should be added to them. (**Hebrews 12:19**)
- For the command was not bearable to them. And if a beast touches the mountain, it must be stoned. (**Hebrews 12:20**)
- Also, the display was so fearsome that Moses said; I am fearful and trembling. (**Hebrews 12:21**)
- But you have approached a Mount Zion and a city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, and myriads of angels. (**Hebrews 12:22**)
- In general assembly, and the congregation of the firstborn who have been enrolled in the heavens, and God the Judge of all, and the spiritual lives of righteous ones who have been made perfect. (**Hebrews 12:23**)
- And Jesus the mediator of a New Covenant, and the blood of sprinkling, which speaks in a better way than Abel's blood. (**Hebrews 12:24**)
- See that you do not beg off from him who is speaking. For if they did not escape who begged off from him who was giving divine warning upon earth, much more shall we not if we turn away from him who speaks from the heavens. (**Hebrews 12:25**)
- At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, saying; Yet once more I will set in **commotion not only the earth but also the heaven**. (**Hebrews 12:26**)
- Now the expression Yet once more signifies the removal of the things being **shaken** as things that have been made, in order, that the things not being **shaken** may remain. (**Hebrews 12:27**)
- Wherefore, seeing that we are to receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us continue to have undeserved kindness, through which we may acceptably render God sacred service with godly fear and awe. (**Hebrews 12:28**)
- For our God is also a consuming fire. (**Hebrews 12:29**)

- The greatest **earthquake** of all yet to come is a symbolic one, described in connection with the seventh of the symbolic seven final plagues of Revelation. It is pictured as wrecking, not one or two cities, as some of the most violent **earthquakes** have done, but the cities of the nations. John's account of this cataclysm reads,
- And lightnings and voices and thunders occurred, and a great **earthquake** occurred such as had not occurred since men came to be on the earth, so extensive an **earthquake**, so great.
(**Revelation 16:18**)
- And the great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and Babylon the Great was remembered in the sight of God, to give her the cup of the wine of the anger of his wrath.
(**Revelation 16:19**)