

The God who Lives--The Witness of the Old Testament

Introduction: The New Testament Witness

The NT refers to the Living God often, and it is a key element in the teaching of the NT deepest in OT background:

*Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, **the Son of the living God.**" (Matthew 16:16)*

*As the **living Father** sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. (Jn 6:57).*

*And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having **the seal of the living God**; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, (Revelation 7:2)*

Rabbi Saul of Tarsus / Apostle Paul

*and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that **you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM.** (Acts 14:15)*

*"AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY **SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD.**" (Romans 9:26)*

*being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, **written** not with ink but **with the Spirit of the living God**, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2 Corinthians 3:3)*

*Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For **we are the temple of the living God**; just as God said, "I WILL **DWELL** IN THEM AND **WALK** AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. (2 Corinthians 6:16)*

*but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is **the church of the living God**, the pillar and support of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)*

*For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have **fixed our hope on the living God**, who is the **Savior** of all men, especially of believers. (1 Timothy 4:10)*

Book of Hebrews

*Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that **falls away from the living God.** (Hebrews 3:12)*

*how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, **cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?** (Hebrews 9:14)*

*It is a terrifying thing to fall **into the hands of the living God.** (Hebrews 10:31)*

*But you have come to Mount Zion and to **the city of the living God**, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, (Hebrews 12:22)*

Historical Background: But weren't ALL gods 'alive'...?

Yes, but only in the same sense humans are--compare the world outside the bible:

The Mesopotamin flood/Noah story Atrahasis:

The Anunnaki, the great gods, (III iii 30)
Were sitting in thirst and hunger (III iii 31)
Their lips were feverishly athirst (III iv 21)
They were suffering cramp from hunger. (III iv 22)
[The gods sniffed] the smell, [III v 34]
They gathered [like flies] over the offering [III v 35]
[After] they had eaten the offering [III v 36]

"Like their human counterparts, the **gods had regular needs for food, drink, bathing, clothing, sex, and admiration**. Ritual texts from the ancient Near East prescribed how these needs were met." [OT:ATSHB, 149]

"Several allusions suggest that the [Mesopotamian] gods were 'washed' periodically and ritually, that **baths** were given to (statues and images of) the gods, and that this gesture, through a **concern for purification, cleanliness, and good health**, which was shared among the great as well as the less great of the world... we are much better informed about the **gods' clothing**, above all about their **collections of outfits**. Similar to lists of food, we have lists of clothing... **Clothing and jewelry**, could be locked up, preserved, and inventoried together... The 'maintenance of the gods' as concerned festive clothing and precious jewelry was thus in no way inferior to the pomp and ceremony surrounding their food offerings. " [OT:RIAM, 132,133; Note: this is so alien to OT thought, which could have no images of God to begin with.]

"In an **Egyptian** temple the service went on ceaselessly from dawn to dusk to ensure that the spirit of the god be content to swell in the cult image hidden away in the interior and not abandon it. At dawn the officiating priest approached the tabernacle that contained the awesome statue. It had been closed and sealed as part of the evening ceremonies of the day before; he broke the clay seals and, amid incantations and prescribed prayers and clouds of incense, **drew forth the sacred image**--probably of wood lavishly adorned with gold--and then **did for it what the palace valets did for the pharaoh**: he bathed and **perfumed** it, **dressed** it in clothes and jewelry, **garlanded** it with fresh flowers, and, replacing it in its shrine, offered it **food and drink**. All day long the ceremony went on, a continuum of music, dance, and hymns. At dusk the priest shut the door, resealed it..." [HI:ELAE:93]

Contrast this with the God of the Hebrew Bible:

Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God.
Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me.
I will not accept a bull from your house, or goats from your folds.
For every wild animal of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.
I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine.
If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and all that is in it is mine.
Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?
Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High.
Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me. [Ps 50]

"God did not need sacrifices; the people did need them. God possessed already all the animals of the world, birds and beasts, domestic and wild (vv 10–11). He had no pressing need for an extra steer or a couple of billy goats, as if he were running short of provisions (v 13)! From one perspective, the language is comical, for it presupposes a rather weak and hungry God, waiting desperately for the next sacrifice to fill his belly, but the power of the language comes from its nature as caricature. To think of sacrifices as something that God literally required was precisely to reduce God to this absurdly hungry deity; yet a superficial and formal offering of sacrifices, based on obedience to stipulations and nothing else, was tantamount to such a view of God." [WBC, in loc]

"The charge God lays against them is not concerned with sacrifice as such (v. 8; for sacrifice and burnt offering, see 40:6) but with the attitude which lies behind the people's bringing of sacrifices. **They seem to think that God needs their sacrifices, that if he did not get his daily allotment of "bulls" and "goats" (v. 9) he would suffer from malnutrition. What nonsense! With irony and not a little amusement, God points out that he has his own well-stocked larder to draw from.** The wild animals in the forests, the cattle who roam the hills in their thousands (cf. REB), all the birds in the air (here the NRSV follows the early versions, reading "air" or heavens for "mountains"), the teeming life in the fields—all belong to me, says God. In any case, if I were hungry, do you think I would tell you? **We are reminded of Deut. 32:37–38, which contains a satirical attack upon the gods of other nations** "who ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their libations" and were powerless.... **Over against this, the psalm stresses one vital point which, in its broadest terms, we may put as follows: God does not need our worship, but we need to worship God. God would still be God if we offered him nothing, but we would not be truly human if we did not make an offering.** Sacrifice should have been food for thought, not food for God. That is why the essence of true worship is spelled out in terms of a "sacrifice of thanksgiving" and the paying of "vows" (v. 14)." [Davidson, R., M.A. (1998). *The vitality of worship : A commentary on the book of Psalms (164–165)*. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Edinburgh: W.B. Eerdmans; Handsel Press.]

The ANE never actually refers to any of their gods as "the living god"--although they really 'acted up' in all the myths!

But before we make fun of *their* idols, think about what THEY would say about *ours*!

The First Mention of the Living God--in a Place Name

Genesis 16.14 - Hagar

So the well there, between Kadesh and Bered, was called Beer Lahai Roi. ("the well of the Living One who sees me.") [The Everyday Bible: New Century Version]

- The story of Hagar

"The barren Sarai gives Hagar to Abram "as a wife" (Gen. 16:3), making any would-be offspring a legal heir according to contemporary Mesopotamian law. Sarai comes to rue the day she manipulated such a union. Hagar, upon conceiving, scorns Sarai (Gen. 16:4), driving Sarai to abuse her in return. Hagar flees into the desert wilderness, pregnant and on foot, headed 240 km. (150 mi.) south to Shur. The angel of the Lord sends her back to Sarai with promises similar to those made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Her son, to be named Ishmael, would produce offspring too numerous to count (Gen. 16:10)—12 tribes which would become a great nation (17:20). [Eerdmans dictionary of the Bible (538). Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans.]

- First understood/stated by an Egyptian slave-woman!
- Why did she call YHWH 'living'? -- because of Seeing and Hearing
- First appearance of the Angel of the Lord...

First Statement that God is Alive is by Himself

Numbers 14

But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, 'The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.'

"Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

*So the LORD said, "I have pardoned them according to your word; **but indeed, as I live, and as all the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD, surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it.**"*

- The story of the spies
- God's character

"The second tack that Moses takes is **to affirm the splendors of the character of God, particularly his grace.** He says, "Now may the LORD's strength be displayed!" (v.17). At this point Moses moves from the reputation of the Lord to the **character** of the Lord, presenting a **composite quotation of his own words of loyal love for and faithful discipline of his people** (see Exod 20:6; 34:6–7). These are the basic ideas of the Hebrew Bible in its revelation of the character of God. Moderns who have rejected the message of the OT have often done so on the basis of a "bad rap." They have been taught through popular culture and through misinformed religionists that the "God of the OT" is a god of wrath whereas the God of the NT is all mercy and grace. ... **But Moses knew God intimately. He knew him as a consuming fire; he also knew his warm embrace.** We tend to focus on the flashes of God's wrath. Moses reminds us that **while the wrath is real, it is long delayed.** The most remarkable thing about the wrath of God is how much provocation he tolerates before he finally acts in righteous judgment. I suspect that there are occasions when we all have wished that God would "zap" this evil or reach out and destroy that evil. But the fact that he has not is a loving reminder that he may extend his patience with us as well. [EBC]

- The surety of His life!

*"as I live. **God swears by his own life,** just as humans swear by God's life (see below, in v 28; and cf. Isa 49:18; Jer 22:24). God may also swear by his **holiness** (Amos 4:2), or by his "self" (Amos 6:8). [AYBC]*

*"as I live Man swears by God but the Lord God swears by **His own life, essence, or being since there is no superior entity** (e.g., Gen. 22:16). [JPS]*

"and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son [Gen 22.16]

God Living "inside" Israel's History

Deuteronomy 5 - Moses and the Israelite leaders

“And when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders.

*“You said, ‘Behold, the LORD our God has **shown** us His glory and His greatness, and we have **heard** His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives. ‘Now then why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we **hear** the voice of the LORD our God any longer, then we will **die**. For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? Go near and hear all that the LORD our God says; then speak to us all that the LORD our God speaks to you, and we will hear and do it.’*

“The LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, ‘I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken. Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!’

- The story at Sinai
- Hearing and Seeing again

"The **demonstration** of God’s power has made the people conscious of His character as “the living God.” This epithet expresses **God’s effectiveness in contrast to the lifelessness of false gods**. The epithet is used similarly before another demonstration of God’s power, the crossing of the Jordan on dry land, when Joshua announces: “By this you shall know that a living God is among you.” [Tigay, J. H. (1996). Deuteronomy. The JPS Torah commentary (73). Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.]

- Mortals in the presence of the Living God...

"God approved of what the people said, because it **sprang from a consciousness of the unworthiness of any sinner to come into the presence of the holy God**; and He added, “Would that there were always this heart in them to fear Me,” i.e., would that they were always of the same mind to fear Me and keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and their children for ever. [Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (2002). Commentary on the Old Testament. (Dt 5:24–27). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.]

"The **idea that no one can see God and live appears** in the narrative of Moses’ seeing the Lord’s glory (Exod 33:18–23), in the experience of Gideon (Judg 6:22–23), and in that of Manoah and his wife (Judg 13:22). [EBC]

Joshua 3 - Joshua at the entrance to Canaan

And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, “Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people.” So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people.

Now the LORD said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you.

“You shall, moreover, command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, ‘When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.’ ”

Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, “Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God.”

Joshua said, “By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan. Now then, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe. It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap.”

- The story of the Crossing
- Only a couple of months after the Deuteronomy passage & the Baal of Peor...
- The emphasis is on 'living'

"There is no article in Hebrew in the phrase “the living God” (v.10). Without the article **emphasis is placed on the fact that Israel’s God is living**. Joshua is not simply stating that the living God is with them. He is affirming that the God who marches with Israel is one who is able to act and to perform mighty deeds in contrast to the pagan gods that have eyes but cannot see, etc. (cf. Ps 115:3–7). [EBC]

- A Living and Present God--Better Get Cleaned UP!

"As the day for the crossing approached **Joshua commanded the people to sanctify or consecrate themselves. It would be easier to understand if he had said, “Sharpen your swords and check your shields!”** But spiritual not military preparation was needed at this time because God was about to reveal Himself by performing a great miracle in Israel’s midst. As a person would prepare scrupulously to meet someone of earthly fame so it was appropriate for the Israelites to prepare for a manifestation of the God of all the earth. **The same command was heard at Sinai when the previous generation prepared itself for the majestic revelation of the Lord in the giving of the Law** (Ex. 19:10-13).

But that was not all. The people of Israel were **to expect God to work a miracle**. They were to be eager, gripped by a sense of wonder. Israel was not to lose sight of their God who can do the incredible and the humanly impossible.

3:6-8. The LORD then told Joshua how they would make the crossing, and explained to Joshua that this miracle would magnify or exalt him as the leader of the people. It was time to establish Joshua’s credentials as God’s representative to guide Israel. What better way to accomplish this than for Joshua to direct their passage through a miraculously parted river? After the crossing the people did in fact revere Joshua (4:14), knowing that God was with him (3:7; cf. 1:5, 9).

3:9-13. But when Joshua passed on the words of God to the people he did not disclose the special promise that he would be exalted by this miraculous event. **Rather he told them that this miracle would certify that the living God, in contrast with the dead idols worshiped by the heathen, was in their midst.** Further, besides opening a way across the flooded Jordan, the living God would also drive out the seven groups of people inhabiting the land. **The promise, the living God is among you, became the watchword of the Conquest, the key to victory over the enemies in the land. It is a promise that appears on almost every page of this book: “I will be with you!” It is a promise that still sustains the Lord’s people—the assurance of His presence.** Since God is the Lord (’ăḏōn, “master”) of all the earth (cf. Ps. 97:5), He was certainly capable of getting His people across a river.

3:14-15a. The day of the crossing of the Jordan, the day when Israel was to enter Canaan, finally arrived. The people folded their tents and followed the ark-bearing priests to the brink of the Jordan. It was the time of the barley harvest, the month of Nisan (March-April), the first month of their year (4:19). **The river was at flood stage—a foreboding sight to the priests and people and a severe test of their faith. Would they hesitate in fear or would they advance in faith, believing that what God had promised (about the water stopping, 3:13) would actually happen?** [BKC]

- A contrast to the gods of the land:

"This archaic appellative immediately evokes a **contrast with the annually dying and rising deity of the pagan context**. [AYBC]

1 Samuel 17:26 & 36 - David and Goliath

"Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies [lit: 'battle lines'] of the living God?"

"Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God."

- The story of the battle
- David already knew about the dead god of Goliath

"The references to a living God in vv 26 and 36 (cf. 2 Kgs 19:4) come in a context where a foreigner has slandered Israel's God. In Jer 10:6–10, the living God is contrasted with idols. **The giant's attempt to curse David by his (dead) god is ineffective (v 43). Dagon, the god of the Philistines, had already been shown up as dead in the book of 1 Samuel (chap. 5)!**" [WBC]

- The Story in I Samuel 5 -- when Samuel was a young boy
- David knew the LORD lives--on the other end of the relationship with Saul: "*The Lord lives, and blessed be my Rock*" (2 Sam 22.47; = Ps 18)

Psalm 42:2 and 84.2 - The Sons of Korah

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God? (Ps 42)

My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. (Ps 84)

- The story of Korah, and his sons!
- Ps 42 -- a psalm of faith surrounded by discouragement

- Ps 84 -- a psalm of exuberance and longing for closeness to God
- Notice how strong the pull toward life is in these psalms:

*As a deer longs for streams of water, so does my soul **long** for you, O God. My soul **thirsts** for God, the God of **life**; when may I enter and see the face of God?* [translation of 42 in WBC]

*My soul **yearns**—even **wastes away**— for the courts of Yahweh; my heart and my flesh **cry out** to the living God.* [translation of 84 in WBC]

- A 'Living' God is not just about power and deliverance--but our own inner lives too!
- The Bread of Life, the Living Water, the Rest for Our Souls

Hosea 1:10 - Reversal of the Covenant, and the Promise of Re-Reversal

*And the LORD said to him, “Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. “On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.” Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And the LORD said to him, “Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them. “But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by the LORD their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen.” When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said, “Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God.” Yet the number of the sons of Israel Will be like the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered; And in the place Where it is said to them, “You are not My people,” It will be said to them, “You are the **sons of the living God.**” And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, And they will appoint for themselves one leader, And they will go up from the land, For great will be the day of Jezreel.*

- The Story of Hosea, in the same timeframe as Jonah (786-746)
- God's patience--the 3 year gap in verse 8
- Children of the Living God - unique to Hosea in the OT (but hearkens to Deut 14.1 and 32.19)
- God's faithfulness as an eternal ground of hope--even hope of change!

"In favor of the authenticity of the passage and its compatibility with Hosean authorship, we observe that Hosea often sets the most opposite ideas side by side in striking contrast. **Total despair alternates with unbounded hope. It is part of Yahweh's sovereign power that he can completely reverse anything.** He can change “my people” into “not my people,” and he can reverse the direction too. The name and relationship can be changed back again. This is Hosea's essential theology, and Hos 2:1–2 (or 3) predicts such a future switch in the name and status of the covenant people. [AYBC]

"The crisis that Hosea had to interpret was **different** from any that had occurred in Israel's previous history. **There had already been occasions in Israel's past when God made threats that he did not carry out.** His impending judgments were staved off, either by the intervention of a prophet who made effective intercession

(Genesis 18; Exodus 32; Amos 7; Psalm 106; etc.), or by repentance (1 Kings 8), or out of sheer compassion. **Not so now** (Hos 1:6): Hosea makes no intercession on behalf of Israel. The people produce no change of heart. Yahweh's hand falls; Israel is discarded (Hos 1:9). Hos 2:1–3 follows, describing the steps that Yahweh will take only after he has completed his judgment. **As such, Hos 2:1–3 lies in the future**, a more remote future than the one viewed in Hos 1:5. According to Hos 3:4–5, this “end of days” will come only after “many days.” **The scope of Hos 2:1–3 points to a future that history cannot contain**; the eschatological dimension is **remote, not in the sense of being far distant in time, but as something beyond historical possibility without the direct intervention of God**. **These remote possibilities are always at hand**, and all time perspective is lost in talking about them. They reverse history, canceling its evil, not by denying it or moving away from it into some transcendental realm. The realities of this remote future are still Israelites and Judahites. The day is the day of Jezreel. This gathering up, this salvaging of history is not its negation, but its fulfillment. [AYBC]

- "The use of the epithet “living” affirms that God’s final word to Israel is **life** [AYBC]

2 Kings 19:4 - Hezekiah when faced with the greatest army of his day

“Perhaps the LORD your God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.” [=Is 37.4]

2 Kings 19:16

“Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God.” [=Is 37.17]

- The story of the Assyrian delegation

Then Rabshakeh said to them, “Say now to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, “What is this confidence that you have? You say (but they are only empty words), ‘I have counsel and strength for the war.’ Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me?

“Now behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, even on Egypt; on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.

“But if you say to me, ‘We trust in the LORD our God,’ is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, ‘You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem’? ... Have I now come up without the LORD’S approval against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, ‘Go up against this land and destroy it.’ ”...

Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in Judean, saying, “Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria.

“Thus says the king, ‘Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you from my hand; nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, “The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.” Do not listen to Hezekiah... But do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you, saying, “The LORD will deliver us.” ‘Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? ‘Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria from my hand? ‘Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?’ ”

- The psychological warfare:

"YHWH said to me, 'Attack this country.' That YHWH had called upon Sennacherib to attack Judah is not an idea necessarily drawn from the prophecies of Isaiah (e.g. Isa 10:5–6), but was an idea current in Assyrian political thought. Royal inscriptions often describe local deities abandoning their faithful to join the Assyrian side. It is not unlike Sargon's claim that his conquest of Babylon came about as a call of Marduk to rescue the Babylonians from the illegal rule of Merodach-baladan (ARAB 2.31). Similarly, in his Babylonian inscription, Cyrus tells that he was called by Marduk "to march against his city" (cf. ANET3, 315)..... The notion that YHWH sent Sennacherib against Judah because of Hezekiah's breach of loyalty to Assyria, sworn allegedly in YHWH's name, has been rightly criticized by Childs, loc. cit. Moreover the Assyrian evidence, reexamined, shows that Hezekiah was not under a loyalty oath when he rebelled. See H. Tadmor, "Treaty and Oath," 150–51. [AYBC, Cogan, M., & Tadmor, H. (2008). II Kings: A new translation with introduction and commentary (232). New Haven; London: Yale University Press.]

"After Rabshakeh had thus, as he imagined, taken away every ground of confidence from Hezekiah, he added still further, that the Assyrian king himself had also not come without Jehovah, but had been summoned by Him to effect the destruction of Judah. It is possible that some report may have reached his ears of the predictions of the prophets, who had represented the Assyrian invasion as a judgment from the Lord, and these he used for his own purposes. [Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (2002). Commentary on the Old Testament. (2 Ki 18:25). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.]

- God's turn: YHWH sends His Messenger (Angel of the Lord) against the Assyrian camp
- God's response to Hezekiah: deliverance and judgment upon the reproacher
- Hezekiah as a son of David-- learning from David and Goliath (used the same words...)
- Jericho by praise; Goliath and the Philistines by a rock; Assyria by a plague and a rumor...

Jeremiah 10 - a Satire on Idolatry

Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel. Thus says the LORD, "Do not learn the way of the nations, And do not be terrified by the signs of the heavens Although the nations are terrified by them; For the customs of the peoples are delusion; Because it is wood cut from the forest, The work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool. "They decorate it with silver and with gold; They fasten it with nails and with hammers So that it will not totter. "Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they, And they cannot speak; They must be carried, Because they cannot walk! Do not fear them, For they can do no harm, Nor can they do any good." There is none like You, O LORD; You are great, and great is Your name in might. Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? Indeed it is Your due! For among all the wise men of the nations And in all their kingdoms, There is none like You. But they are altogether stupid and foolish In their discipline of delusion—their idol is wood! Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish, And gold from Uphaz, The work of a craftsman and of the hands of a goldsmith; Violet and purple are their clothing; They are all the work of skilled men. But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes, And the nations cannot endure His indignation. Thus you shall say to them, "The gods that did not make the heavens and the earth will perish from the earth and from under the heavens." It is He who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom; And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens.

- The Story of Jeremiah at the point of the Exile...

- Remembering Isaiah and Hezekiah's experience...

"The greater portion of this section is devoted to a condemnation of idolatry. **It is reminiscent of Isaiah 40:18–20; 41:7; 44:9–20; 46:5–7**, other classic passages on the emptiness of idolatry. Jeremiah shows his **firsthand knowledge of idol worship, both Canaanite and Babylonian**. Scholars generally hold that this passage was meant to dissuade Judah from idolatry in view of her removal from her country to Babylon. This, however, is only partially true because the people were already worshiping idols while in their own land. ... Once men lose their awareness of God, they do not thereby lose their need of God. So they substitute the false worship for the true. Idolatry is the result. [EBC]

- The blindness of following self-created and lifeless gods...

"The **immobility** of the completed idol is now described under two images. It is like an immobile and speechless **scarecrow in a patch of cucumbers**. It has to be **carried about** because it lacks even the power to move from one place to another. ... Here is powerful irony. Idol-worship tried to capture in material objects what is a spiritual experience. As a result it encouraged the absurd practice of people venerating their own impotent creations. Jeremiah's appeal to the people here is not to fear such lifeless inventions, which can do neither good nor evil. (6–7) In contrast to the idols stands the supremacy of Yahweh. Having made the contrast in these two verses with the picture in vv. 2–5, Jeremiah returns to ridicule in vv. 8–9. ... **The incomparability of Yahweh is a theme that is writ large in the OT. He is incomparable, great in himself and great in his name (or character)**. Whereas idols derive their status and authority solely from human sources, Yahweh derives his position and authority from himself alone. **He stands unique**. [NICOT]

"In contrast to the idols, the Lord is the "living" God, the everlasting King. **The idol-gods can only shake the earth by falling over, but they are prevented from falling by being nailed down**. The earth, however, shakes at the wrath of the Lord, and the nations shake at his anger." [WBC]

- Remembering the roots--the incomparable Yahweh

"The twin themes of debunking other gods and affirming the **incomparability** of Yahweh are **old, appearing already in the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:11)** and in the **later but still old Song of Moses (Deut 32:39)**. These themes continue unabated in the sermons of Deuteronomy (Deut 3:24; 4:7, 32–39) and in the "Deuteronomic" prayers of David and Solomon so-called (2 Sam 7:22–23; 1 Kgs 8:23)..." [AYBC]

Jeremiah 23:36 - Jeremiah and the subversion of God's word

"For you will no longer remember the oracle of the LORD, because every man's own word will become the oracle, and you have perverted the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God.

- The story of Jeremiah and the impostor prophets

- God responding to their cutting off the only hope for restoration

"Again, if a prophet or priest or one of the people should utter The burden of Yahweh, then Yahweh would punish (pāqaḏ 'al) that man and his household. It was not for those who were not called by Yahweh to utter his word. All they were permitted to do was to ask among themselves "What did Yahweh answer?" or "What did Yahweh say?" (v. 35). It was not for such as these to give utterance to the burden of Yahweh at any time. That burden was for the man to whom Yahweh entrusted his word (lit. "the man of his word," 'iš deḅārō). If unauthorized people should utter Yahweh's word they would only **pervert (hāpaḳ, lit. "overturn") the words of the living God, Yahweh of Hosts, our God** (v. 36). ... The people were restricted merely to questions directed to the prophet, What did Yahweh answer you? or What did Yahweh say? (v. 37, cf. v. 35). (38–40) **The judgment on impostors was to be severe.** They had been forbidden to claim to be uttering the burden of Yahweh. If they persisted in deceiving the people **Yahweh himself would pick them up (nāšā) and throw them down like a "burden,"** and bring everlasting and unforgettable disgrace and humiliation upon them. [NICOT]

- The fountain of living water--the source of life (Gen 1-2)

For My people have committed two evils:

*They have forsaken Me, the **fountain of living waters,***

To hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. (Jer 2.13)

O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake You will be put to shame.

Those who turn away on earth will be written down (or 'in the earth'),

*Because they have forsaken the **fountain of living water,** even the LORD. [Jer 17.13]*

- The Lord of Hosts -- back to David again, and even Joshua...

"The most frequently used compound title for the Israelite deity in the OT (Heb. YHWH šəḅā-ōṭ). A similar title is "Yahweh, God of hosts." These epithets describe Yahweh as both divine Warrior and divine King, with "hosts" referring to both earthly (e.g., the Israelites or their armies) and cosmic forces (celestial bodies or angels). It appears most often in the Prophets (esp. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and Malachi) and not at all in the Pentateuch. In 1 Sam. 1:3 it is associated with the shrine at Shiloh. **During Israelite conflict with the Philistines it is paralleled with "the God of the armies" (1 Sam. 17:45),** demonstrating, initially, a very militaristic understanding of the title. [Freedman, D. N., Myers, A. C., & Beck, A. B. (2000). Eerdmans dictionary of the Bible (820–821). Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans.]

"Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?"

*He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as **captain of the host of the LORD.**" And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?"*

*The **captain of the LORD'S host** said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so. (Josh 5.13ff)*

[Daniel 6:20/26 - A faithful reader of Jeremiah!](#)

When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?" ... "I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; For He is the living God and enduring forever, And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, And His dominion will be forever.

- The story of Daniel, Darius, and the Lion's Den
- Daniel had identified where HIS allegiance was!
- Living is more than just breathing...

"Daniel's fate is sealed. It will neither be possible for his friends to feed the lions or to engineer his survival in some other way, nor for his enemies to kill him if the lions do not (Rashi). There is also a deeper matter at issue than the conflict between Daniel's foes and his friends. The king has spoken of the possibility of God's delivering Daniel, and the sealing will make it necessary for God to prove himself in an extraordinary way if he is to act at all. "In testing Daniel, the king knows ... that he is testing God" (Lacocque). ... Darius is unable to eat, relax, or sleep as he awaits the outcome of the action forced on him. Perhaps he is even praying against the effectiveness of his action (Plüger) or expressing his penitence for his foolish injunction (Delcor); perhaps we are to recall the Babylonian custom whereby a prisoner who was tortured but survived overnight was then pardoned (Lacocque). When daylight comes, he returns to the lion pit in turmoil and trepidation instead of in the stately dignity and composure of a monarch. By addressing Daniel to ask whether he has survived the ordeal, he builds up our expectation that actually he has. By enquiring whether the "living God" has been able to preserve Daniel, he speaks of that God in terms that contain the seeds of the answer to his question. **This rich OT title for God suggests not merely that God is alive rather than dead, but that he is active and powerful, awesome and almighty, involved in bringing judgment and blessing. It is appealed to when human beings are inclined to slight him or to doubt him in situations of pressure and weakness** (Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; 1 Sam 17:26; 2 Kgs 19:4; Jer 10:10; 23:36; Hos 2:1 [1:10]; Ps 42:3 [2]; 84:3 [2]; **oaths are taken "by the living God"—i.e., at the risk of his intervening in case of default!**). Darius's confession of "the living God" thus also builds up our expectation regarding what we are about to discover. ... Daniel's calm and polite reply, observing courtly protocol, underlines by contrast the king's anxiety and agitation. At the same time his "Long live the king" strikingly affirms Darius's kingship. It is the first time the phrase has occurred on the lips of Daniel or his friends (cf. Neh 2:3). If to be the living God implies activity and power, to be the living king implies having a share in God's life and power (cf. P. A. H. de Boer, " 'Vive le roi! ' " VT 5 [1955] 225–31). Daniel's prayer that Darius may do so both honors and relativizes Darius's kingship by the interweaving of references to the living God with those to the living king (vv 7, 21, 22, 27 [6, 20, 21, 26]), as have his earlier affirmations of Nebuchadnezzar's kingship as God-given (2:37; 5:18). [WBC]

- "A man under authority..."

"As with Nebuchadnezzar's, the form of an encyclical presupposes and expresses Darius's own authority, but its use thus actually underlines the higher authority of the one to whom it bears witness. **The world powers testify to the sovereign authority of God, which they have witnessed at work. Once more the familiar affirmations of Israel's hymns issue from unexpected lips and express a new message.** In a similar way, the "impossible" legal requirement that people tremble with fear before Daniel's God gains part of its significance from the fact that its author is the person before whom people have earlier trembled with fear (5:19). **Something similar happens when Darius testifies to God as the living God who endures for ever.** Daniel has just greeted him with that standard wish "Long live the king" (literally, "May the king live forever"): the courtly homage is relativized by the royal confession itself. To be living is to be active and powerful: the living God is enthroned as King forever (Ps 10:16; 29:10), and he can therefore also be his people's savior. [WBC]

- An encouragement to His exiled people

"The poems of the book of Daniel, whether expressed by Daniel (2:20–23) or by kings (4:3, 34–35, 37; 6:26–27), emphasize the greatness of God. There is no emperor so great that he is not under the control of the living God. **To be deported to a strange land raised questions in the minds of Israelite exiles about the power of their God** (11:32). In their testing, they needed reassurance. **Darius's letter announces the climactic revelation about the God of Israel: This God is the living God! Because this God is living, he can reveal mysteries, humble arrogant rulers, and deliver the faithful.** The Most High God is the living God. [Lederach, P. M. (1994). Daniel. Believers church Bible commentary (142–144). Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press.]

- "I believed--therefore I have spoken"

Summary Statements for Reflection

The name living God **implies much more than simply "God is alive, not dead."** The living God **acts, is conscious and aware of what is going on, and is powerful** (Dan. 5:23). This God controls the affairs of humans and nations, raises up, and puts down. This God judges and blesses. When humans are arrogant, the living God is able to humble them. If humans overestimate their power and defy his rule, God is able to intervene and to humble them. When humans are overwhelmed and in dire need, God is a refuge and strength. [Lederach, P. M. (1994). Daniel. Believers church Bible commentary (142–144). Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press.]

'**Life**' occurs particularly frequently in the **Gospel of John**. As God is the living God, so God has granted Jesus to have life in himself (John 5:26) and to **bring life to humanity** (John 6:33, 51; 10:10). Jesus is 'the bread of life,' '**the light of life,**' 'the resurrection and the life,' 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (John 6:48; 8:12; 11:25; 14:6). The one believing in Jesus receives eternal life both in the present ('has passed from death to life,' John 5:24) and in the future ('I will raise him up at the last day,' John 6:40). [Achtmeier, P. J., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). Harper's Bible dictionary (1st ed.) (560–561). San Francisco: Harper & Row.]

The OT emphasizes differentiation of the God of Israel from the pagan gods and religions of the surrounding cultures (cf. G. E. Wright, The OT Against Its Environment [1950]). **The OT speaks much more of the living God than of the true God. A living God does something; He possesses power; He is spirit; He can answer by fire** (1 K. 18:24). The pagan gods are essentially lifeless, breathless, and powerless....God's action in history, God's revelation through his prophets, and God's creation and control of the universe are the criteria that show Him to be the living Lord, whereas the pagan gods and idols are speechless, powerless, and helpless. It is therefore the presupposition of the entire corpus of OT writings that the God of Israel is the true and living God, and that the faith He founded in Israel corresponds to the reality as it is in Yahweh. [Bromiley, G. W. (1988; 2002). Vol. 1: The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised (189–190). Wm. B. Eerdmans.]

Related texts: The living God (Josh. 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:26; 1 Sam. 17:36; Isa. 37:17; Jer. 10:10; Dan. 6:26; Rom. 9:26; 2 Cor. 3:3; 1 Tim. 4:10; Heb. 3:12; Heb. 9:14; Heb. 10:31; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 7:2); I know that my redeemer lives (Job 19:25); reproaching the living God (2 Kgs. 19:4; 2 Kgs. 19:16); the well of the living One who sees me (Gen. 16:14); the Lord lives (2 Sam. 22:47; Ps. 18:46); the man in linen swore by him who lives for ever (Dan. 12:7); do not enter Gilgal, do not go to Beth-aven, do not swear, 'As the Lord lives' (Hos. 4:15); you are the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16); as the Father has life in himself (John 5:26); as the living Father sent me and as I live because of the Father (John 6:57); a living God who made heaven and earth and sea (Acts 14:15); we are the temple of the living God (2 Cor. 6:16); to serve a living and true God (1 Thess. 1:9); the church of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15); he who lives for ever and ever (Rev. 4:9; Rev. 4:10; Rev. 10:6; Rev. 15:7). [Day, C. A. (2009). Collins Thesaurus of the Bible. Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.]