Session 1: Jewish Stewardship of the Oracles of God

I. Introduction

A. Prophetic Calling of Israel

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? [2] Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. (ESV Rom. 3:1-2)

They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple service, and the promises. (CSB Rom. 9:4)

B. Prophetic Orientation of the Land

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. [2] And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (ESV Gen. 12:1-3)

The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, [15] for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. [16] I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. [17] Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you." (ESV Gen. 13:14-17)

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates…” (ESV Gen. 15:18)

Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness… [8] He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth… [17] May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed. [18] Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds. [19] Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory. (NIV Psalm 72:1-19)

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. [10] I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. (ESV Zech. 9:9-10)

C. Apocalyptic Projection of the Land

Then I kept seeing till a throne was erected in a pleasant land; and he sat upon if for the Lord of the sheep; and he took all the sealed books and opened those very books in the presence of the Lord of the sheep… [24] Then his judgment took place. First among the stars, they received their judgment and were found guilty, and they went to the place of condemnation; and they were thrown into an abyss, full of fire and flame and full of the pillar of fire… [28] Then I stood still, looking at that ancient house being transformed: All the pillars and all the columns were pulled out; and

the ornaments of that house were packed and taken out together with them and abandoned in a certain place in the South of the land. [29] I went on seeing until the Lord of the sheep brought about a new house, greater and loftier than the first one, and set it up in the first location which had been covered up—all its pillars were new, the columns new; and the ornaments new as well as greater than those of the first, (that is) the old (house) which was gone. All the sheep were within it. (1 Enoch 90:20-29)

He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God… [6] So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" ([NIV] Acts 1:3-6)

II. History of Gentile Ignorance

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. [8] None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ([ESV] 1 Cor. 2:7-8)

A. Biblical Era

- Nebuchadnezzar >> Belshazzar
- Cyrus the Great >> Alexander the Great, Ptolemaic (Egypt) & Seleucid (Greek >200BC) dynasties
- Antiochus IV Epiphanes > Maccabean revolt (168), Hasmonean kingdom (152), Pompey the Great and siege of Jerusalem (63BC)

B. Post-biblical Era

- Roman Era
    - Titus, 70AD (1.1mil died, 100k enslaved, 40k survived) > Arch of Titus
    - Hadrian, Aelia Capitolina (130), temple to Jupiter >> Bar Kokhba revolt, 132 (600k died, 100k+ enslaved), banned Jews ~500yrs
    - violence, enslavement, expulsion, displacement, forced conversion, and forced migration against the local Jewish population
    - Theodosius I & Gratian, Edict of Thessalonica (380)
    - During the sixth century, “Yeshivat Eretz Israel,” the supreme religious institution for the Jews in Palestine and the Diaspora, was established in Tiberias, where it continued to flourish well into the tenth century, when it moved to Jerusalem.
    - Jewish revolt against Byzantine Empire (614), based in Tiberias, supported Persian/Sassanid invaders who conquered Jerusalem
    - Heraclius ended the Byzantine–Sasanian War of 602-28 and instigated a wide-scale slaughter of the Jews (629), which decimated Galilee of most its Jewish population
- Islamic Era

- Rashidun caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab (638), removed restrictions on Jerusalem; allowed 70 Jewish families from Tiberias to form the core of a renewed Jewish presence in Jerusalem
- Masoretic community based in Tiberias and Jerusalem (5th–10th cent)
- Umayyad caliph, Abd al-Malik commissioned the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock shrine (~692)
- Over the next six centuries, control of the region transferred between the Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid caliphates

- Crusader Era
  - Kingdom of Jerusalem (1099-1291), established by Crusaders (predominantly French, but also Italians and Germans), taken from Fatimid caliphate (Egypt)
  - Massacred most Muslim and Jewish inhabitants, blocked Jews from entering; conquered by Ayyubid Sultan Saladin (1187-92); tumultuous 13th century.
  - Royal palace on Temple Mount around Al-Aqsa Mosque > headquarters of Knights Templar (1119), "Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon" (Cistercian Order, backed by Bernard of Clairvaux)
  - Dome of the Rock > church under Augustinian Order
- Mamluk and Ottoman Eras
  - Mamluk Sultanate (Cairo) decisively conquered Jerusalem (1291), built markets around Temple Mount, Madrasa al-Ashrafiyya & Sabil Qaitbay (1482); stringent *dhimmi* laws
  - The *aliyah* of 300 rabbis in 1211 from France and England, synagogues and yeshivas built; Pope Martin V issued papal order (1428) prohibiting sea captains from carrying Jews to Palestine
  - Waves of immigration during the Turkish Ottoman Era (1517-1917); esp. Tiberias & Safed, 18 talmudical colleges and 21 synagogues (1600)
  - Yochanan ben Zakai Synagogue in Jerusalem (1610); Synagogue of Elijah the Prophet (1625); steep decline in Jewish population in 17th cent
  - Settlements built outside the Old City in 1850s; First Aliyah (1881-1903), EE and Yemen, 30k immigrants, 28 settlements, 90k acres purchased, revival of Hebrew language. Second Aliyah (1904-14), Russian, 35k immigrants, Tel Aviv (1909)
- Modern Era
  - British Mandate (1917-1948); Balfour Declaration (1917), Third Aliyah (1919-23), 40k; Fourth Aliyah (1924-28), 80k; Fifth Aliyah (1929-39), 250k+
  - Jaffa Riots (1921); Palestine Riots (1929); Arab Revolt (1936-1939)
  - Jewish State (1948-present); British Partition Plan ratified by UN, rejected by Arab League > 1948 Arab–Israeli War; Suez Crisis (1956), Six-Day War (1967), Yom Kippur War (1973), Lebanon War (1982), and Lebanon War (2006)

- Much growth 1948-1967 result of 850k Jews displaced from MENA after 1948. 5,000 (1517) > ~50k (1600) > ~10k (1800) > ~100k (1914) > ~500k (1945) > 700k+ (1948) > ~2.5mil (1967), 5mil (2000), 7mil (2020)

C. Further Reading

- Ben-Sasson, H.H., ed. *A History of the Jewish People*. Harvard University Press, 1976.
- Carmel, Alex, Peter Schäfer, and Yossi Ben-Artzi, *The Jewish Settlement in Palestine, 634–1881*. L. Reichert, 1990.
- Johnson, Paul. *A History of the Jews*. HarperCollins, 1987.
- Neusner, Jacob. *Understanding Rabbinic Judaism: From Talmudic to Modern Times*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003.
- Scharfstein, Sol. *Chronicle of Jewish History: From the Patriarchs to the 21st Century*. Ktav Publishing House, 1997.
- Stillman, Norman A. *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book*. Jewish Publication Society, 1979.

III. The Problem of Jewish Infidelity

A. History of Rebellion (cf. Num. 17:10; 27:14; Deut. 1:26; 9:7, 24; 31:27; Jos. 22:16ff.; 1 Ki. 12:19; 2 Chr. 10:19; Neh. 9:16ff.; Ps. 5:10; 68:18; 78:8, 17, 40, 56; 95:10; 105:28; 106:7, 43; 107:11; Isa. 1:2, 20; 30:1, 9; 48:8; 63:10; 65:2; Jer. 2:29; 3:13; 4:17; 5:23; 6:28; 33:8; 52:3; Lam. 3:42; Eze. 2:3ff.; 3:9; 5:6; 12:2ff.; 17:12; 20:8, 13, 21; 24:3; 44:6; Dan. 9:5, 9; Hos. 7:13; Zeph. 3:1, 11)

You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you. (ESV Deut. 9:24)

I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter, impetuous nation… 12 LORD, you appointed them to execute judgment; my Rock, you destined them to punish us. (CSB Hab 1:6, 12)

To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him… 11 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. (ESV Dan. 9:9-11)

B. Paul and the Gentiles

So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. (ESV Rom. 11:11)

"Alain Gignac (1999: 220) has even characterized Paul's argument in this text as an amorous 'game of jealousy': the lover pursues the beloved, the beloved is resistant, and so the lover turns to someone else to provoke the beloved to jealousy. Just so, God pursues Israel the beloved (*agapētoi*, 11:28). All day long God stretched out the divine hands to 'a disobedient and contrary people' (Rom 10:21). But Israel remained largely 'resistant' (Rom 11:25), and so God opened the covenant to Gentiles in order to arouse Israel's jealousy (Rom 11:11). Here the salvation of Gentiles is secondary: though

anticipated in Israel's scriptures, God pivots to Gentiles as an ad hoc emergency measure to regain Israel's love and loyalty."[1]

[1] Collin Cornell, "Israel's Priority in Old Testament Missiology," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (2023): 350.