

The Role of Israel in the Biblical Story: from Election to Repudiation, from Calvary to Eschatological Fulfilment

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Abstract

This article follows the role of Israel across the whole arc of the biblical story: from the calling of Abraham, through the covenant at Sinai, the kingship of David, the division after Solomon and the repudiation of the northern kingdom, to the exile of Judah. The heart of the argument is the question how God can take back the people he has sent away without breaking his own law — a question that Jeremiah 3:1 raises itself, with Deuteronomy 24:1-4 in hand. I show that Scripture also answers that question itself, and I use the answer to test the common explanation that treats the death of Christ as a legal mechanism. I then discuss the objections to supersessionism (replacement theology), the significance of the restoration of the state of Israel in 1948, the predicted wars of Psalm 83, Ezekiel 38-39 and Zechariah 12-14, and the calling of Israel as a light to the nations (Isaiah 49:6; 60:1-3). Wherever an argument rests on a choice made by a translator rather than on the original text, I say so.

Keywords: Israel, covenant, repudiation, certificate of divorce, Deuteronomy 24, supersessionism, replacement theology, New Covenant, bride of Christ, 1948, Ezekiel 38-39, Psalm 83, Zechariah 14, light to the nations, Romans 11, Septuagint

I. Introduction

No subject stands so much at the centre of the Bible as the identity, the calling and the destiny of Israel. From the calling of Abram in Genesis 12 to the new Jerusalem in Revelation 21, the history of Israel runs through the whole like a backbone. Whoever misreads Israel misreads the Bible. And whoever replaces Israel by the church cuts through the root from which the whole story draws its food.¹

This study follows that line through its main stages: the promises to the patriarchs (II); the covenant at Sinai and the picture of marriage (III); the kingship and the division after Solomon (IV); the repudiation of the northern kingdom and the exile of Judah (V). Then comes the question this article turns on: how can God take back a people to whom he himself has given a certificate of divorce (VI)? After that I discuss the New Covenant (VII), the objections to replacement theology (VIII), the restoration of 1948 (IX), the predicted wars (X) and the calling of Israel as a light to the nations (XI). Section XII sets out the objections to my own argument.²

One point of method first. I quote Scripture from the New King James Version, NKJV (1982). But a translation is somebody else's interpretation; where an argument has to rest on something, I let it rest on the Hebrew or the Greek. Where the New Testament uses a Greek word, I look first at how that word is used in the Septuagint — the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible on which the New Testament writers were raised. In a few places the original text points in a different direction from the one the translation suggests. I have not written those places away; I have named them.

II. The election of Israel: the covenant with Abraham

The story of Israel begins not with a people but with one man. In Genesis 12:1-3 God calls Abram out of Ur

and gives him a threefold promise: “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (NKJV). Three pillars stand in it: a people, a land (described in Genesis 15:18-21 as reaching from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates) and a blessing that spreads through Abram's offspring to all the nations.³

The Hebrew makes a distinction here that the translation carries only in part. Two different verbs are used for cursing. The man who belittles Abram is *umeqallekha*, from the root *q-l-l* (*q-l-l*), “to hold in contempt, to revile” — and that word is singular. What God does to such a man is *a'or*, from *a-r-r* (*a-r-r*), the solemn covenantal curse. Those who bless, moreover, stand in the plural. The Hebrew therefore sets the many who bless over against the single man who sneers, and human belittling over against the divine ban. The NKJV keeps half of this: “those who bless you” is plural, “him who curses you” singular. What no English rendering can show is that the two verbs are not the same word. The Septuagint loses even more, using the same stem twice (*καταρωμένους* / *καταράσονται*) and flattening the distinction altogether. A reader who works from the Greek can no longer see it.⁴

The covenant is ratified in Genesis 15 with a striking ceremony: God passes between the divided animals alone, as a smoking oven and a burning torch (Genesis 15:17). In the treaty customs of the ancient Near East both parties walked between the pieces and so called down on themselves the fate of the slaughtered animals if they should break the treaty. That God passes through alone means that he binds himself one-sidedly. Fulfilment therefore hangs on his faithfulness and not on Abram's. This point decides much of what follows: the covenant with Abraham cannot be undone by the disobedience of

his descendants, because those descendants were not a party to the ratification.⁵

The promise is repeated to Isaac (Genesis 26:3-4) and to Jacob, who receives the name Israel (Genesis 35:10-12), and passes through his twelve sons to the twelve tribes. About that name a small precision is in order. Genesis 32:28 explains it itself: כִּי־שָׁרִיתָ עִם־אֱלֹהִים (*ki sarita im-Elohim*), “for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed” (NKJV), where the last words render וַתִּקַּח (*wattukhal*). That is a narrative explanation of a name, a play on words inside the story itself. In form, however, יִשְׂרָאֵל (*Yisrael*) is a sentence name in which אֵל (*El*) is the subject, as in יִשְׁמַעֵל (*Yishmael*, “God hears”). Philologically, then, “God strives” or “God rules” is more likely than “he who strives with God”. Both readings make sense, but it is the first — the explanation Genesis gives — that carries the story, and not an etymology. The Septuagint, for its part, keeps only the second element: ἐνίσχυσας, “you have been strong”.⁶

III. The covenant at Sinai and the picture of marriage

The exodus from Egypt and the giving of the law at Sinai turn the descendants of Abraham into a people. There God says: “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine” (Exodus 19:5, NKJV), and: “And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6, NKJV).⁷

The prophets describe that relationship consistently as a marriage. Jeremiah has God say: “I remember you, The kindness of your youth, The love of your betrothal, When you went after Me in the wilderness, In a land not sown” (Jeremiah 2:2, NKJV). Ezekiel: “Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine” (Ezekiel 16:8, NKJV). The picture is therefore not something later readers have read into the text, but the prophets' own language.⁸

Unlike the covenant with Abraham, the covenant at Sinai is two-sided and conditional. The blessings of Deuteronomy 28:1-14 apply on obedience, the curses of 28:15-68 on disobedience. That does not cancel the one-sided covenant with Abraham. The two regulate different things: the covenant at Sinai settles whether Israel actually enjoys the land and the blessing, the covenant with Abraham guarantees that God's purpose with Israel goes on regardless.⁹

One warning about terms is needed here, because a good deal in section VI depends on it. It is customary to call the Torah Israel's marriage contract and to use the word *ketubah* for it, and to call the presence of God in the tabernacle the *shekhinah*. Neither word occurs in the

Hebrew Bible. The *ketubah* is a rabbinic institution; the earliest witnesses date from the second century BC and later. שְׁכִינָה (*shekhinah*) appears only in rabbinic literature and in the Targums. The Bible itself speaks of בְּרִית (*berit*, covenant), of סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית (*sefer ha-berit*, the book of the covenant, Exodus 24:7), and, for God's dwelling, uses the verb שָׁכַן (*shakhan*): “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8, NKJV), where “that I may dwell” is וְשָׁכַנְתִּי (*weshakhanti*). From the same root comes מִשְׁכָּן (*mishkan*, tabernacle, literally “dwelling”). This is more than a quarrel about words. To call the Torah a *ketubah* is to slide a later Jewish legal institution under a text that does not know it — and it is precisely the legal character of that institution on which the reasoning in section VI would have to lean. I therefore use the terms only with that note attached.¹⁰

IV. The kingship and the division after Solomon

With David a fourth line is added. In 2 Samuel 7:13 God promises him a lasting line of descendants: “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (NKJV). Individual kings may be chastised (2 Samuel 7:14-15), but the dynasty itself and the promise of a lasting throne are not withdrawn.¹¹

Under David and Solomon the kingdom reaches its greatest extent. Solomon builds the temple, and the glory of God fills the house (1 Kings 8:10-11). But his later years are marked by apostasy: “For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David” (1 Kings 11:4, NKJV). The prophet Ahijah announces that the kingdom will be torn away (1 Kings 11:29-39).¹²

After Solomon's death, around 930 BC, the harsh conduct of his son Rehoboam drives the ten northern tribes to secede under Jeroboam. Two kingdoms arise: the northern one, which keeps the name Israel and is also called Ephraim, with Samaria as its eventual capital, and the southern one, Judah, consisting of Judah and Benjamin, with Jerusalem. The division is not only political. Jeroboam at once introduces the calf worship at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:28-30) and so sets the northern kingdom on a course of lasting idolatry.¹³

V. The repudiation and the exile

The prophets describe that idolatry in the language of marriage: Israel commits adultery against her Husband. Hosea, whose own marriage to the unfaithful Gomer serves as a prophetic sign, passes on God's charge: “Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; For she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband!” (Hosea 2:2, NKJV).

And God will punish her “For the days of the Baals to which she burned incense” (Hosea 2:13, NKJV).¹⁴

Then comes the act on which everything turns. In Jeremiah 3:8 God declares: “Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also” (NKJV). Note the scope: the certificate of divorce concerns the northern kingdom. Judah receives none; what is said of Judah is that she paid no attention to the example.¹⁵

Isaiah 50:1 is often brought in as a second witness to that divorce. This calls for care, because the text does something else: “Thus says the Lord: ‘Where is the certificate of your mother’s divorce, Whom I have put away? Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you? For your iniquities you have sold yourselves, And for your transgressions your mother has been put away’” (NKJV). This is a rhetorical question, and the expected answer is: there is no such certificate, and there is no such creditor. Isaiah 50:1 therefore does not confirm the divorce — the verse rejects it as an explanation and lays the cause at the door of the people’s own iniquities. The verse cannot be set alongside Jeremiah 3:8 as supporting evidence. To use it so is to make the text say the opposite of what it says.¹⁶

In 722 BC the Assyrians under Shalmaneser V and Sargon II take the northern kingdom, deport its population and settle foreign peoples there (2 Kings 17:5-6, 23-24). The ten tribes are scattered among the nations and are called, in Hosea’s language, לֹא אֶמִּי (*lo-ammi*), “not My people” (Hosea 1:9). The wording goes further than is usually noticed: the verse ends with וְאֶנֹכִי לֹא־אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם (*we-anokhi lo-ehyeh lakhem*), rendered “And I will not be your God” (NKJV), in which the divine name אֶהְיֶה (*ehyeh*) of Exodus 3:14 sounds through. The breach is thus expressed as the withdrawal of the Name itself. At the same time the next verse stands immediately beside it: “Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered” (Hosea 1:10, NKJV) — numerous, but unrecognisable as Israel.¹⁷

The southern kingdom holds out another 136 years. In 586 BC Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem and the temple and carries the population to Babylon (2 Kings 25:8-21). But unlike the northern tribes, Judah keeps its identity through the seventy years of exile and returns under Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. The difference is essential: Judah is chastised, Israel is sent away. And it is exactly that difference which raises the question the next section deals with.¹⁸

VI. Deuteronomy 24 and the return: the question Scripture asks itself

Here lies the load-bearing step of this article, and that is why I put it in the text and not in a note. The argument that is often made runs like this. The Torah forbids a man to take back the wife he has sent away. God sent Israel away. Therefore God cannot take Israel back — unless something happens that removes the impediment. That something is said to be the death of Christ: the divine Husband dies, and with that the prohibition lapses. Calvary thus becomes the legal mechanism behind the restoration of Israel.

The text of the law runs: “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man’s wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance” (Deuteronomy 24:1-4, NKJV).¹⁹

The argument is attractive, and it ties law, prophets and cross together in an impressive way. Yet it does not survive a test against the original text, and it fails at four points. I set them out, because they decide what is left of the case.

First: the impediment arises from the second marriage, not from the divorce. The defilement of verse 4 comes solely from verse 2: וְהָלַכְהָ וְהָיְתָה לְאִשׁ־אֲחֵרָה (*wehalekkeh wehayetah le-ish-aher*), “and goes and becomes another man’s wife”. Without that second, lawful marriage there is no impediment. The verb in verse 4, הִטְמִינָהּ (*hottamma’ah*), stands moreover in a passive stem: she has been defiled, it has happened to her. The Septuagint confirms this with μετὰ τὸ μιανθῆναι αὐτήν, “after she has been defiled”. Anyone who wants to apply the law to Israel must therefore be able to point out who that second husband is. Idolatry is called harlotry and adultery throughout the prophets — not a legally valid second marriage. It is therefore uncertain whether the condition of verse 2 has been met at all.²⁰

Second: Deuteronomy 24 knows of no release by the death of the first husband. The law regulates exactly the opposite case: the first husband may not take her back after the second has sent her away or has died (verse 3). About the death of the first husband the text says nothing — and his death would not solve the problem but abolish it, since a dead man does not remarry. The idea that the husband’s death dissolves the bond comes not from Deuteronomy 24 but from Romans 7:2-3. These are two

different legal figures, and the common argument quietly merges them.

Third: Paul applies his own picture the other way round. Romans 7:1-4 reads: “Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. ... Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another — to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God” (NKJV). In the picture the husband dies; in the application the believer dies. Paul does not say that the Husband has died so that the wife is free, but that the wife has died with Christ so that she may belong to him. To use the picture in the first way is to use it against the application Paul himself gives it.²¹

Fourth, and this is decisive: Jeremiah asks this very question himself, and answers it. The third chapter of Jeremiah opens with an unmistakable reference to Deuteronomy 24: “They say, ‘If a man divorces his wife, And she goes from him And becomes another man's, May he return to her again?’” (Jeremiah 3:1, NKJV). The problem was therefore not discovered by later interpreters; the prophet puts it on the table himself. And he does not leave it unanswered. A few verses further God calls the same repudiated wife back: “Return, backsliding Israel,” says the Lord; “I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful” (3:12, NKJV), and with a word that says everything: “Return, O backsliding children,” says the Lord; “for I am married to you” (3:14, NKJV). This is not a distant prospect and not a pointer to a legal act still to be performed. It stands there in the present tense, centuries before Calvary, addressed to the people that received the certificate.²²

Hosea says the same thing in other pictures. The unfaithful wife comes to her senses: “Then she will say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband, For then it was better for me than now’” (Hosea 2:7, NKJV), and the chapter runs out into: “I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy” (Hosea 2:19, NKJV). In Hosea 3 the prophet even buys his wife back — in his own person he does precisely what Deuteronomy 24 forbids, and that is not a transgression but the prophetic sign itself.

What is left, then? In my view this, and it is not less than the legal argument offered but more. Scripture does not hide the legal difficulty, and it does not solve it with a construction either. It asks the question out loud (Jeremiah 3:1) and answers it by an appeal to who God is: “I am merciful”, *ḥasid* (Jeremiah 3:12). The return of Israel is therefore not a legal outcome but an act of grace that goes beyond the law — exactly as the law itself regulates the

divorce but nowhere promises the reunion. Calvary, on this line, is not the removal of an obstacle but the place where that grace is paid for. That is a stronger foundation than a watertight legal argument, because it does not depend on whether the analogy holds at every point.²³

VII. The New Covenant

The New Covenant is announced “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Jeremiah 31:31, NKJV) — that is, with both parts of the divided people, including the part that had been sent away. Not with the nations as such. Believers from the nations are added to it: they are grafted into the olive tree of Israel (Romans 11:17) and so share in the blessings of a covenant promised to Israel.²⁴

Romans 10:4 calls for a correction that touches a great many arguments. The verse is commonly quoted as “Christ is the end of the law”, after which the reader is told that *τέλος* (*telos*) really means “goal”. In English that tension is real, and it has to be faced. The NKJV reads: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (NKJV). The English reader therefore has “end” in front of him on the page and hears “goal” from the pulpit, and he is entitled to know which of the two the word itself will carry. Here the Septuagint is decisive. There *τέλος* almost always renders *קֵץ* (*qets*, “end, term”), and in the phrase *εἰς τέλος* it renders *נֶצַח* (*netsah*, “for ever”); in the psalm headings *Εἰς τὸ τέλος* stands for *נֶצַח*. All of these are terminal or durative, not purposive. The sense “goal, aim” is good Greek, but it belongs to classical philosophical usage and not to the Septuagintal idiom in which Paul moves. The reading “goal” therefore remains defensible on the ground of the argument of Romans 9:30-10:13, but not on the ground of the word. In English this is a genuine choice that has to be argued for, not a false opposition between a translation and its explanation. The Dutch and Spanish situation differs, and the difference is instructive: the *Herziene Statenvertaling* already reads “einddoel”, “final goal”, so that the interpretation has been built into the translation and the tension never reaches the reader. That is a good illustration of why an argument must rest on the original text and not on a translation. The same exegesis looks self-evident in one language and contested in another, and only the Greek can decide between them. I therefore present the reading “goal” as an interpretative choice and not as a lexical fact.²⁵

The bridal picture continues in the New Testament. Paul presents the church as a bride to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-32), and Revelation ends with the marriage of the Lamb: “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7, NKJV).²⁶

VIII. Replacement theology

Supersessionism — usually called replacement theology — is the view that the church has permanently replaced Israel as the people of God, and so inherits the promises while Israel keeps the curses. That view became influential from the second century onwards and has, besides distorting the biblical story, contributed historically to centuries of persecution of the Jews.²⁷

Paul deals with the question directly in Romans 9-11. He asks: “I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not!” (Romans 11:1, NKJV). Behind that “Certainly not” stands *μη γένοιτο* (*mē genoito*). It is customary to call this “the strongest no in Greek”, but that is not correct, and it is not necessary either. Grammatically it is an optative, a wish that something may not happen; the strongest factual negation is *οὐ μή* with the aorist subjunctive. The Septuagint shows what the expression does carry: there *μη γένοιτο* stands for *חלילה* (*halilah*), a formula of recoil that rejects something as sacrilege (Genesis 44:7, 17; Joshua 22:29). Paul therefore rejects the thought not merely as untrue but as unthinkable — which strengthens his refusal rather than weakening it.²⁸

He goes on to say that the hardening of Israel is partial and temporary: “that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in”, after which “And so all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:25-26, NKJV). That last expression needs a precision. *πᾶς Ἰσραήλ* (*pas Israel*) stands without the article and answers to *כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל* (*kol-Yisrael*), which in the Hebrew Bible denotes the people as it acts as a whole — all Israel gathered at Mizpah (1 Samuel 7:5), all Israel at Shechem (1 Kings 12:1). Nowhere there does it mean “every single Israelite without exception”. For the case against replacement theology this is not a weakening but a strengthening: the expression stands over against the Gentiles of verse 25 and therefore cannot possibly refer to the church. The precision does, however, guard against an overstatement that would otherwise leave the argument exposed.²⁹

The image of the olive tree in Romans 11:17-24 is the sharpest of all. Israel is the cultivated olive tree, believers from the nations are wild branches grafted into it. The tree is not replaced and not cut down. Some natural branches are broken off, wild branches take their place and share in the root. And then comes the warning: “do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you” (Romans 11:18, NKJV).³⁰

The conclusion stands in Romans 11:29: “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (NKJV). The word is *ἀμεταμέλητος* (*ametamelētos*). It does not occur in the Septuagint — there is nothing to be done about that — but the related verb *μεταμέλομαι* does, and there it stands for *נָחַם* (*naham*). The most important passage is Psalm

110:4 in the Hebrew numbering, which is Psalm 109:4 in the Septuagint: *ὅμοσεν Κύριος καὶ οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται*, an oath that the Lord will not go back on, Hebrew *נָחַם וְלֹא יִנְנָהֵם* (*welo yinnahem*). Hebrews 7:21 quotes that line word for word. The semantic field is therefore: not withdrawing a sworn undertaking — precisely what Romans 11:29 needs. At the same time some modesty is in place: in 1 Samuel 15:35 the Septuagint does use the same verb of God. The irrevocability lies therefore not in the word but in its object — an oath, a calling. That does not make the argument weaker, but it makes it an argument from the context and not from the dictionary.³¹

The prophets say it just as firmly. Jeremiah ties the survival of Israel to the survival of creation: only if the fixed order of sun, moon and stars were to depart, “Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever” (Jeremiah 31:36, NKJV).³²

IX. The restoration of the state of Israel in 1948

On 14 May 1948 David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the state of Israel; the United States recognised the new state the same day, eleven minutes later, de facto. For the first time since antiquity the Jewish people again held sovereignty in the land of their fathers. That a people should return to its original territory after nearly two thousand years of dispersion is without a clear parallel in history.³³

The prophets foretold a second gathering. Isaiah: “It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea” (Isaiah 11:11, NKJV). The first gathering was the return from Babylon; the second belongs to the modern age. Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones points the same way: “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel”, and: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel” (Ezekiel 37:11-12, NKJV).³⁴

Ezekiel 37 then foretells the joining of the two sticks, Judah and Ephraim: “and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again” (Ezekiel 37:22, NKJV). That prophecy still awaits fulfilment. The return since 1948 and the gathering of Jewish communities from many dozens of countries may be read as a first stage of it — but that is an interpretation, and I offer it as one.³⁵

The parable of the fig tree is also brought in here: “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all

these things, know that it is near — at the doors!” (Matthew 24:32-33, NKJV). The fig tree does indeed stand for Israel several times in the Old Testament (Hosea 9:10; Joel 1:7; Jeremiah 24). Even so, caution is called for: in Matthew 24 itself the tree is not explained as Israel but used as an everyday example — as you recognise the summer by a tree coming into leaf. Luke 21:29 even broadens it to the fig tree together with all the other trees, which weakens the symbolic reading further. The application to 1948 is therefore possible, but it does not arise from the parable itself. I mention it here as an interpretation and not as a fulfilment.³⁶

X. The predicted wars

The prophets do not sketch the return as a peaceful process. Three prophetic scenarios are usually named in this connection: Psalm 83, the invasion of Gog in Ezekiel 38-39, and the siege of Jerusalem in Zechariah 12-14. They do not carry equal weight, and that difference deserves to be stated.³⁷

Psalm 83. The psalm describes an alliance of surrounding nations: “They have said, ‘Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, That the name of Israel may be remembered no more’” (Psalm 83:4, NKJV). Those named are Edom, the Ishmaelites, Moab, the Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon, Amalek, Philistia, Tyre and Assyria. A clear note is in order here. In form Psalm 83 is a lament with a prayer for intervention, not a prediction. The idea of a future “Psalm 83 war” does not come from the scholarly literature but from popular prophetic writing, where it was worked out and spread by a single author. It is therefore wrong to write that many scholars hold this reading. Anyone wishing to defend it must do so as his own interpretation, with the form of the psalm as the first objection to be met.³⁸

Ezekiel 38-39. Here we are dealing with prophecy proper. God says: “Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him” (Ezekiel 38:2, NKJV). That word “Rosh” calls for a comment, because the Hebrew allows two readings. The text has נִשְׂרֹשׁ (nesi rosh). One may take נִשְׂרֹשׁ (rosh) as the noun “head, chief” — Gog is then the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. One may also read it as a proper name, and that is what the Septuagint does: ἄρχοντα Ῥώς, Μέσσοχ, καὶ Θοβέλ, “the prince of Rhos, Meshech and Thobel”. The NKJV has taken the second road, with the Septuagint, while the Dutch and Spanish translations take the first and read “chief prince”. The English reader therefore already has the Septuagint’s interpretation printed in his Bible, and he ought to know that it is an interpretation and not a datum of the Hebrew text. That matters all the more because of what is built on it. The equation of Rosh with Russia, current in popular prophetic literature, cannot be

sustained on linguistic grounds: the name Rus is a ninth-century borrowing from Old Norse and can have nothing to do with a Hebrew word from the sixth century BC. A translation that supplies the proper name makes that false step easier to take, not harder — which is exactly why the warning belongs here.³⁹

The coalition further includes Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer and Beth-Togarmah. The usual identifications with Iran, Sudan, Libya, Turkey and Armenia are plausible but remain identifications, not data of the text. The invasion takes place “In the latter years”, when the inhabitants have been “gathered from many people” and “dwell safely” (Ezekiel 38:8, NKJV). The outcome is decided not by military strength but by God’s intervention: “I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone” (38:22, NKJV). The purpose is stated in so many words: “Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord” (38:23, NKJV).⁴⁰

Zechariah 12-14. “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples ... I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it” (Zechariah 12:2-3, NKJV). God intervenes: “It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem” (12:9, NKJV).⁴¹

The high point is the recognition of the Messiah: “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son” (Zechariah 12:10, NKJV). Textually this is the most heavily burdened passage in the whole argument, and for that very reason it deserves explanation. The Hebrew has וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אֶת אֲשֶׁר־דָּקְרוּ (wehibbitu elai et asher-daqaru), “and they shall look on Me whom they have pierced”, from דָּקַר (d-q-r), to pierce. The Septuagint, however, reads καταρχήσαντο, “they danced in mockery” — a rendering that presupposes the root דָּקַר (r-q-d, to dance), the same three consonants in another order. John 19:37 quotes the verse as ὁψονταί εἰς ὃν ἐξεκέντησαν, “they shall look on him whom they pierced”, and so follows not the Septuagint but the later Greek versions of Theodotion, Aquila and Symmachus, which keep close to the Hebrew. That deserves mention: it is one of the places where the New Testament does not follow the Septuagint. The manuscript variant ἐλαί (elai, “on Me”) against ἐλαί (elav, “on him”) deserves the same openness; the first is the reading of the Masoretic text and is supported by the Septuagint (πρὸς μέ) and the Vulgate,

and it is also the theologically weightier reading, since the one pierced is then the Lord himself.⁴²

Zechariah 14 describes the return of the Messiah: the Mount of Olives, “Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west” (14:4, NKJV). Popular literature often appeals here to a geological fault line running straight through the Mount of Olives. That claim does not rest on geological research: it goes back to a passing remark made in 1928, and Jerusalem lies well to the west of the Dead Sea rift. It therefore adds nothing to the prophecy. The chapter closes with: “And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be — ‘The Lord is one,’ And His name one” (14:9, NKJV).⁴³

XI. Israel as a light to the nations

The prophets draw Israel's destiny not as separation but as service. Isaiah 49:6: “Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth’” (NKJV). In Isaiah the Servant is both Israel as a people and the Messiah personally; that double reference is not vagueness but the heart of the matter.⁴⁴

Isaiah 60 works it out: “Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people ... The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isaiah 60:1-3, NKJV). Israel is not replaced here but restored to the calling it had from the beginning.⁴⁵

Zechariah describes the nations seeking that mediation: “In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you’” (Zechariah 8:23, NKJV). Micah agrees: “Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord ...’ For out of Zion the law shall go forth, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:2, NKJV).⁴⁶

In the messianic kingdom Jerusalem is the centre (Jeremiah 3:17) and Israel at last fulfils what it was called to be: “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6, NKJV). The line of the biblical story therefore does not run from Israel to the church, but from Israel through Christ to a restored Israel into which believers from the nations have been taken up.⁴⁷

XII. Objections

An argument that gathers only its own evidence does not convince. Below are the four objections I find

weightiest, including the one that touches my own starting point.

The first objection goes to the heart of the matter: Paul applies Hosea to the Gentiles. In Romans 9:25-26 he quotes the very formula from Hosea 1 — Οὐ λαός μου, “not My people” — and applies it to believers from the nations. Anyone who argues, as I do, that the party sent away and the party restored are the same must explain why Paul uses the same words more widely. My answer is that in Romans 11 Paul is unmistakably speaking of ethnic Israel (he offers himself as the proof, 11:1) and that the one use does not exclude the other. But I acknowledge that this is the strongest New Testament objection, and it does not belong in a footnote.

The second objection is the risk of circular reasoning about 1948. If one first assumes that the prophecies of return refer to our own time, and then points to the events of 1948 as their fulfilment, one has put the conclusion into the premise. The return from Babylon was also read as a fulfilment by those who lived through it. An honest formulation is therefore that 1948 is consistent with the prophecies, not that it proves them. I have written section IX in that sense.

The third objection concerns the marriage analogy itself. Pictures prove nothing; they clarify. As soon as one starts working out a picture in legal terms — who is the first husband, who the second, when does which provision take effect — one asks of it more than a picture can bear. That is exactly where the reasoning in section VI ran aground, and it is a warning that applies to my own alternative reading as well.

The fourth objection comes from the Reformed tradition, which argues that the promises to Israel are fulfilled in Christ and that the church is the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16). That is not a careless reading but a considered position, and it is defended by serious exegetes — among them O. Palmer Robertson, whom I cite with approval in section II. Anyone who disagrees with them should represent their best argument and not their weakest.⁴⁸

XIII. Conclusion

The role of Israel in the biblical story is not a side line but the main line. From the calling of Abraham to the marriage of the Lamb, from Sinai to Calvary, from the Assyrian exile to the restoration of 1948, Israel is the people through whom God carries out his plan for the world.

Replacement theology is therefore not merely a mistake in interpretation. If God can withdraw his irrevocable promises to Israel, then no promise is safe — including the promises made to believers from the nations. God's faithfulness to Israel is the guarantee of his

faithfulness to the church, because both rest on the same character.

On the question how God can take back the people he sent away, I have taken a different road in this article from the usual one. The argument that treats Calvary as the legal mechanism removing the prohibition of Deuteronomy 24 does not survive a test against the original text: the impediment depends on a second marriage that is nowhere identified, the law knows of no release by the death of the first husband, and Paul applies his own picture the other way round. But the question itself cannot be argued away — Jeremiah, after all, raises it himself (3:1). And he answers it too: “Return, backsliding Israel ... For I am merciful” (3:12, NKJV), “for I am married to you” (3:14, NKJV). The return of Israel rests not on a legal construction but on who God is. The cross, on this line, is not the key that opens a lock, but the price at which grace is given.

That, I believe, is the firmer foundation. A legal argument stands or falls with the question whether the analogy holds at every point. God's faithfulness does not. And the final destiny of Israel — “a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6, NKJV) — is as certain as the One who spoke it.⁴⁹

Notes

1. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), the opening chapters on the promise as a coherent programme, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=promise-plan+of+god+kaiser>.
2. Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged* (NAC Studies in Bible and Theology 3; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=future+israel+horner>. Horner defends a pronounced position and is cited here as a representative of it, not as a summary of the debate.
3. O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1980), the section on the Abrahamic covenant, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=christ+of+the+covenants+robertson>. In *The Israel of God* (2000) Robertson defends precisely the position I discuss as an objection in section XII.
4. The forms in Genesis 12:3 are מְבַרְכֶיךָ (Piel participle singular with suffix, root בָּרַךְ) and אֲרָר (Qal imperfect first person, root רָר); מְבַרְכֶיךָ stands in the plural. The Septuagint has καὶ εὐλογήσω τοὺς εὐλογοῦντάς σε, καὶ τοὺς καταρωμένους σε καταράσομαι and uses the same stem twice, <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/genesis/12-3.htm>.
5. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Word Biblical Commentary 1; Waco: Word, 1987), commentary on Genesis 15:17, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=wenham+genesis+1-15+word+biblical>.
6. Genesis 32:28 supplies the explanation of the name itself; the Septuagint has ὅτι ἐνίσχυσας μετὰ θεοῦ. For a discussion of both readings, see Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), commentary on Genesis 32, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=hamilton+book+of+genesis+18-50>.
7. Thomas Edward McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=mccomiskey+covenants+of+promise>.
8. Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *God's Unfaithful Wife: A Biblical Theology of Spiritual Adultery* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 2; Leicester: Apollos, 1996), the chapters on Sinai and on Hosea, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=ortlund+god%27s+unfaithful+wife>.
9. McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise*, and Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, both at the passages cited.
10. בְּרִיתָהּ is Mishnaic Hebrew; the Babylonian Talmud ascribes the institution to Simeon ben Shetach, and the earliest surviving contracts date from the second century BC and later. בְּרִיתָהּ does not occur in the Hebrew Bible and appears only in rabbinic literature and in the Targums. On the tabernacle as God's dwelling place within the covenant relationship, see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (NSBT 17; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2004), the opening chapters, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=beale+temple+and+the+church%27s+mission>.
11. Kenneth E. Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism: Its History and Significance for Messianism* (SBL Early Judaism and Its Literature 7; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), <https://cart.sbl-site.org/books/063507P>.
12. Iain W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings* (New International Biblical Commentary; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), commentary on 1 Kings 11, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=provan+1+and+2+kings+hendrickson>.
13. Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), the section on Rehoboam and Jeroboam, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=merrill+kingdom+of+priests>.
14. Ortlund, *God's Unfaithful Wife*, the chapter on Hosea. Note the numbering: in Hosea 2 the NKJV runs one verse higher than the Hebrew text and the European translations that follow it, so that NKJV 2:2, 2:7, 2:13 and 2:19 are 2:1, 2:6, 2:12 and 2:18 in the Hebrew; chapter 1 is numbered alike in both.
15. Ortlund, *God's Unfaithful Wife*, the chapter on the prophets, and David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), the section on the prophetic divorce texts, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=instone-brewer+divorce+and+remarriage+in+the+bible>.
16. John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), commentary on Isaiah 50:1, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=oswalt+book+of+isaiah+40-66>. The rhetorical question expects a negative answer; that also follows from the rest of the verse, which lays the cause at the door of the people's own iniquities.
17. K. Lawson Younger Jr., "The Deportations of the Israelites," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117.2 (1998): 201-227, <https://scholarlypublishingcollective.org/sblpress/jbl/article/117/2/201/185167/The-Deportations-of-the-Israelites>.
18. Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), the section on the scattering of the nations, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=heiser+unseen+realm>. This is a popularising work; it carries no evidential weight here.
19. Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, the opening chapters. Instone-Brewer does not read Deuteronomy 24:1-4 as an absolute impediment binding God himself; he explains the restoration of the relationship from the prophetic motif of return and compassion.
20. The form הִתְרַחֵץ in verse 4 is, according to Brown-Driver-Briggs, a Hothpaal perfect (Gesenius §54.3), a passive-reflexive stem; the Septuagint confirms the passive sense with μετὰ τὸ μιανθῆναι αὐτήν. The condition stands in verse 2: וְהִלָּכָה הָיְתָה לְאִישׁ אֶחָד, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/2930.htm>.
21. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), commentary on Romans 7:1-6, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=moo+epistle+to+the+romans+nicnt>, and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), on the same passage. That Paul in verse 4 reverses the application with respect to the picture in 7:2-3 is uncontested in the commentaries.
22. Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20 and Jeremiah 21-36* (Anchor Bible 21A and 21B; New York: Doubleday), commentary on Jeremiah 3, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=lundbom+jeremiah+anchor+bible>. The reference of Jeremiah 3:1 to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is generally recognised in the literature.

23. Joseph Shulam and Hilary Le Cornu, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans* (Baltimore: Lederer Books, 1997), <https://www.kesherjournal.com/article/law-in-romans-an-interpretive-proposal/>. The argument that the death of Christ removes the legal impediment of Deuteronomy 24 is often attributed to this work. That attribution is mistaken: Shulam identifies the "husband" from whom the believer is freed with the evil inclination (עֲרֵבָה יֵצֵר, yetser hara), not with God or Christ, and he maintains the continuing validity of the Torah. The argument is therefore a construction of its own and is presented here as such.
24. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 15.1 (1972): 11-23, https://etsjets.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/files_JETS-PDFs_15_15-1_15-1-pp011-023_JETS.pdf.
25. For τέλος in the Septuagint, see the renderings of ἔσχατος (for example 2 Samuel 15:7) and of τέλος in the phrase εἰς τέλος (Psalm 73:1, 10, 19 LXX = 74:1, 10, 19 in the Hebrew numbering), as well as Εἰς τὸ τέλος in the psalm headings for Πсалмъ 73, <https://biblehub.com/greek/5056.htm>. Because the NKJV reads "the end of the law" at Romans 10:4, the choice between "end" and "goal" is a real one for the English reader; the Herziene Statenvertaling (Dutch, 2010) has already decided it in the translation by reading "einddoel".
26. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), commentary on Revelation 19:6-10, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=beale+book+of+revelation+nigtc>.
27. Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), the historical chapters, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=vlach+has+the+church+replaced+israel>.
28. μὴ γένοιτο stands in the Septuagint for לֹא־יִהְיֶה in, among other places, Genesis 44:7 and 44:17 and Joshua 22:29, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h2486/kjv/wlc/0-1/>. The equivalence is a tendency and not a fixed rule: at 1 Samuel 20:2 the Septuagint has Μηδαμῶς σοι.
29. For לְכָל־הָעָם as a designation of the people acting as a whole, see 1 Samuel 7:5 (LXX πάντα Ἰσραὴλ), 1 Kings 12:1 and 2 Chronicles 12:1. On Romans 11:26, see Moo, *Romans*, commentary on these verses.
30. Moo, *Romans*, commentary on Romans 11:17-24.
31. Schreiner, *Romans*, commentary on Romans 11:29, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=schreiner+romans+becnt>. ἀμεταμέλητος does not occur in the Septuagint; the verb μεταμέλομαι stands there for μετάνοι, among other places at Psalm 109:4 LXX (= 110:4 in the Hebrew numbering), quoted at Hebrews 7:21, and at 1 Samuel 15:35. At 1 Samuel 15:29 the Septuagint uses μετανοέω in the same place. When checking, allow for the divergent psalm numbering from Psalms 9 and 10 onwards, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g278/kjv/tr/0-1/>.
32. Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36* (Anchor Bible 21B; New York: Doubleday, 2004), commentary on Jeremiah 31:35-37.
33. Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History* (rev. ed.; London: Black Swan, 2008), the chapters on 1947-1949, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=gilbert+israel+a+history>. Recognition by the United States followed eleven minutes after the proclamation and was de facto; de jure recognition followed in January 1949.
34. Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), commentary on the vision of the bones, <https://www.eerdmans.com/9780802825360/the-book-of-ezekiel-chapters-2548/>.
35. Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, commentary on Ezekiel 37:15-28. For a pronounced dispensationalist reading of the modern return, see Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (rev. ed.; San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 1992), <https://ariel.org/product/israelology-the-missing-link-in-systematic-theology/>. That work appeared with the author's own publishing house and counts here as a source for a position.
36. For the fig tree as an image of Israel in the Old Testament, see Hosea 9:10, Joel 1:7 and Jeremiah 24. That Matthew 24:32-33 itself gives no symbolic explanation, and that Luke 21:29 adds "and all the trees," is the chief objection to the application to 1948.
37. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, and Randall Price, *Unholy War: America, Israel, and Radical Islam* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2001), <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=price+unholy+war>. Both are popularising works.
38. Bill Salus, *Isralestine: The Ancient Blueprints of the Future Middle East* (HighWay/Anomalos, 2008; later edition with Prophecy Depot Publishing), <https://www.allbookstores.com/Isralestine-The-Ancient-Blueprints-Future/9780981495774>. The construction of a future "Psalm 83 war" goes back to this work and is not a recognised position in the scholarly literature; there Psalm 83 is treated as a lament and an imprecatory psalm.
39. Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, commentary on Ezekiel 38:2. The Septuagint has ἄρχοντα Ῥώς, Μέσσοχ, καὶ Θοβέλ and so reads Ὁ ἄρχων as a proper name; the NKJV follows that reading with "the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal," whereas the Dutch and Spanish translations read "chief prince." The equation of Rosh with Russia is defended by Jon Mark Ruthven, *The Prophecy That Is Shaping History: New Research on Ezekiel's Vision of the End* (Xulon Press, 2003) — a self-published work — and is philologically untenable, since the name Rus is a ninth-century borrowing from Old Norse.
40. Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, commentary on Ezekiel 38-39.
41. Mark J. Boda, *The Book of Zechariah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), commentary on Zechariah 12-14, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=boda+book+of+zechariah+nicot>.
42. Boda, *Zechariah*, commentary on Zechariah 12:10, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/zechariah/12-10.htm>. The divergent rendering of the Septuagint (κατωρχήσαντο) presupposes the root קָרַח instead of קָרַח; John 19:37 and Revelation 1:7 follow the reading of Theodotion, Aquila and Symmachus with ἐκκεντέω. The variant קָרַח is supported by a considerable number of manuscripts, but קָרַח is the reading of the Masoretic text and is covered by the Septuagint and the Vulgate.
43. Boda, *Zechariah*, commentary on Zechariah 14:4. The claim that a geological fault line runs straight through the Mount of Olives occurs in popular prophetic literature but does not rest on geological research; it is usually traced back to a remark by Bailey Willis in 1928, while Jerusalem lies well to the west of the Dead Sea rift.
44. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, commentary on Isaiah 49.
45. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, commentary on Isaiah 60.

46. Boda, *Zechariah*, commentary on Zechariah 8:23.
47. J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Findlay, OH: Dunham, 1958; later edition Grand Rapids: Zondervan), the section on the millennial kingdom, <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=pentecost+things+to+come>. It is a classic dispensationalist handbook and counts here as a source for a position. For the narrative coherence of the whole, see Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), https://bakeracademic.com/products/9781540966018_the-drama-of-scripture.
48. O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2000), <https://search.worldcat.org/search?q=robertson+israel+of+god>, and for the rebuttal Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?*, the systematic chapters.
49. All Scripture quotations in this article are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV; New Testament 1979, complete Bible 1982; Nashville: Thomas Nelson) and have been checked verse by verse.

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