

**New Covenant International University & Theological Seminary**

# **THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD**

**A Biblical Theology  
of Covenant, Creation and Community**

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty  
In candidacy for the degree of  
Master of Philosophy in Intercultural Studies

by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **I.1 Thesis**

#### **I.1.1 Title**

The Eternal Purpose of God: a Biblical Theology of Covenant, Creation and Community

#### **I.1.2 Author**

John Clements

### **I.2 Issue addressed**

The Thesis incorporates elements of Hebraic thought into **a biblical theology of covenant, creation and community**. Thus, it seeks to express the message of Scripture according to its own priorities, using biblical rather than philosophical terminology, presenting the Bible's own message within the framework of a primarily Hebraic worldview. To aid recognition of vital theological threads woven throughout the biblical narratives, the Thesis continuously develops a graphical 'panorama' of the biblical narrative.

### **I.3 Research**

#### **I.3.1 Method and design**

Research has been driven by the author's teaching of biblical theology. Originally, the thesis was conceived *graphically*. The development of a line diagram, depicting a biblical panorama or "big picture" overview of the narratives of scripture, thus formed the foundational step of research; the coherency of the evolving diagrammatic panorama effectively acting as a test of the coherency of the hypothesis.

The diagram was subsequently presented in seminar format to Christian believers in both East and West Africa, originally via blackboard, then using electronic 'PowerPoint' slides. Each presentation and assessment of corresponding 'feedback' prompted further research of the themes and development of the thesis represented by the diagram.

The final step involved presenting the thesis and diagram as an educational pamphlet (*not published*). Development of continuous explanatory prose demanded a far higher

degree of coherency and grasp of subject matter, pushing the author towards further reading and prayerful meditation, in order to fully develop the thesis.

### I.3.2 Major findings

The Bible was almost entirely composed by Jewish writers and an examination of its **Jewish** or **Hebraic roots** provides considerable fresh insight into the Christian faith and worldview—particularly in respect of *covenant, community and creation*.

**Covenant** forms the dominant factor governing the biblical paradigm or worldview. The ‘new covenant’ inaugurated by the Messiah likewise forms the dominant factor governing the New Testament paradigm.

Each biblical covenant is associated with a **community**—a ‘covenant community’—who receive a vocation commensurate with the relationship into which they have been brought.

The biblical view of **creation** ultimately anticipates its global renewal, whereupon heaven is united in harmony with earth, God dwelling utterly amidst his people. En-route to this finality, the biblical worldview incorporates the bondage of creation to the effects of *sin* and its partners: death, disease and decay.

Amidst this corrupted creation, the vocation of the covenant community is to be an incarnate Messenger of Hope: both recipient and giver of New Life; a sign, symbol and harbinger of creation’s ultimate, *glorious liberation* from bondage.

### I.3.3 Significance and value of findings

Traditional, post-Enlightenment theologies—i.e. reformed, dogmatic, systematic, critical, non-contextual etc.—having undergirded Western Christendom during the past two centuries, are presently creaking under the strain of increasingly dominant post-modern and post-colonial worldviews.

In order for Christian faith and community to flourish within this hostile cultural climate, the challenge of review, re-evaluation and renewal needs to be faced, enabling Christian theology, praxis and culture to be released from the suffocating philosophical paradigms of the Enlightenment.

Insight into the Jewish roots of Scripture, the biblical covenants and the communities and vocations of both Israel and the Church offers a significant contribution towards such theological renewal, potentially rendering a *widely appealing* paradigm: centring upon God's commitment to creation, in partnership with his covenant community; incorporating the combating of evil through pursuit of this-worldly peace, justice and dignity for human beings; whilst retaining the biblical purview of a final Judgement and Regeneration.

Within an increasingly agnostic 'West', such a covenant, creation and community-centred worldview offers fresh insight and a significant contrast, in particular, to the individualistic drift of modern, protestant-evangelical culture and praxis, with its dualistic perspective of earth and heaven and concomitant focus upon personal salvation and eternal heavenly 'escape' from earth's 'mortal coil'.

Within the increasingly Christian South—where community-centred readings of Scripture are culturally normative and worldviews are typically free of anti-biblical, secular, atheistic and materialistic philosophical presuppositions—burgeoning, mission-focussed Christian communities are potentially ready and able to freely and enthusiastically embrace such a biblical theology of covenant, creation and community as a vital, educational, theological introduction to the Bible.

Finally, the recognition and incorporation of the Jewish roots of the Christian faith builds a small, but potentially significant, cultural bridge towards the Jewish people.

#### 1.3.4 Conclusions

By aiming at a biblical theology based upon an Hebraic worldview centred upon *creation, covenant and community*, this Thesis seeks to provide an educational resource inviting people to enter into and comprehend the worldview, culture and theology *of the Bible*, rather than the worldview, culture and theology *of the West*.

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# CHAPTER I : PROPOSAL

## I INTRODUCTION: THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

For many Christians the Bible is primarily a devotional book, read mainly as an act of worship, in order to better know and understand their Christian faith, often seeking to allow God to speak personally to them through its words. Such an appreciation has made the Bible the best-selling book ever—an achievement it maintains year after year.

Nevertheless, a devotional approach can leave readers wanting more when it comes to understanding the *whole message* of Scripture. Even with elements placed in historical order and given a narrative context, readers can still misunderstand the significance of the Bible's various components—glossing over or missing altogether the relationship between its various elements—causing them to appear overly complex and tending to make a comprehensive understanding—a panoramic overview—frustratingly difficult to grasp.

The goal of this thesis is to provide readers with such a panoramic overview, revealing the true integrity of Scripture and highlighting one of its most rewarding, fascinating and foundational insights, namely: **the eternal purpose of God**.

## 2 A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF COVENANT, CREATION AND COMMUNITY

### 2.1 Biblical theology

*“Biblical theology seeks to express the content of Scripture, its structure and its component parts in the Bible’s own terms, according to its priorities. Dogmatic theology seeks to re-express biblical faith in contemporary (often philosophical) categories. This approach often imposes its own concerns on biblical study and hinders the Bible’s concerns, priorities, and categories from emerging.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> J. Goldingay—no further attribution available.

## 2.2 Hebraic roots

Since the Bible was composed almost entirely by Jewish writers, an appropriate understanding of the Hebraic or Jewish culture, worldview or ‘roots’ of Scripture is essential in seeking to present a biblical theology that allows the Bible to speak in its own terms. Within such an Hebraic worldview, as this thesis will demonstrate, covenant, *Community* and *Creation* are central and convergent concepts.

## 2.3 Covenant

‘Covenant’ is arguably the dominant factor governing the biblical paradigm or worldview. This thesis will set out a basis for consideration of the vitality and relevance of covenant; the form of relationship represented by it; the purpose towards which covenant is aimed and the association of each covenant with a servant-community.

## 2.4 Community

The establishment of each biblical covenant incorporates within its purview a community whose purpose is to uphold the covenant relationship and to serve the purposes set out within associated terms. This thesis will examine the “covenant community” and the special relationship with the Creator-God enjoined via the covenant relationship. In each case, the thesis will confirm, the covenant community exists not for itself, but for the sake of co-serving with God in his redemptive mission towards his creation and humanity, in particular.

## 2.5 Creation

The putting right of a Creation gone awry is the continual backdrop to the establishment of the biblical covenants. This thesis will convey that, although the immediate focus of establishing a covenant community is necessarily narrow, the goal at which the covenants aim is broad and encompassing: the Creator God intends to fully redeem his creation—incorporating all humanity, in its various ethnicities and cultures; ultimately the whole, universal, cosmic created order—from the curse of death, disease and disorder by which it is bound, restoring it into an eternal, harmonious, living relationship with him.



### **3 FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1 Hebraic Terminology**

Hebraic or Jewish terms are woven throughout the thesis. The reader is pointed towards the appendices for both a glossary and a detailed summary of Hebraic, particularly rabbinic, thinking, without consultation of which the thesis may prove less accessible.

#### **3.2 Analysis**

The central Analysis of the thesis contains the following sections.

##### **3.2.1 The covenant foundation of the Scriptures**

Encountering the covenants and examining their foundational role within the biblical narratives.

##### **3.2.2 The vitality of covenant**

Analysing the nature of covenant relationship, its associated terms and the unfolding divine purpose revealed within the Patriarchal covenants.

##### **3.2.3 A new messianic covenant**

Examining the background, fulfilment and inauguration of the new covenant by the Messiah Yeshua (“Jesus Christ”).

##### **3.2.4 Pentecost**

Examining the significance of the outpouring of the Spirit upon the new covenant community and relationship of the Spirit with *Torah*—the ‘Teaching’ or ‘Instruction’ of God.

##### **3.2.5 A new messianic covenant community**

Analysing the extension of the Abrahamic blessing towards the Gentiles and their incorporation into the new covenant community.

##### **3.2.6 Conclusion**

A summary of God’s glorious “eternal purpose” for his creation.

# CHAPTER 2 : REVIEW OF LITERATURE

## I LITERATURE

The missiological context for the Thesis aligns closely with what Bosch, within Transforming Mission, describes as an 'emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm'.

A detailed textual analysis of covenant within Scripture is provided by Dumbrell in Covenant and Creation.

Two separate, though overlapping, 'schools' of theological insight are also of particular relevance to the topics included within this Thesis: the Jewish Roots movement and the New Perspective academy.

### I.1 Transforming Mission

Bosch "...examines the entire sweep of Christian tradition to show five paradigms encapsulating the Christian understanding of how God saves and what human beings should do in response...Bosch outlines the key characteristics of an emerging postmodern paradigm dialectically linking salvation's transcendent and immanent dimensions."

### I.2 Covenant and Creation

Dumbrell's text exposes "God's dealing with his people time and again in the form of a covenant...a progression of purpose and promise which began with creation...which has much to tell us about God's developing relationship with his people."

### I.3 Jewish Roots

The 'Jewish Roots' movement is a network of Christian and Jewish scholars, writers and practitioners concerned with recognition of the Jewish historical and cultural roots of the New Testament and of its authors and its priorities, in order to provide insight and perspective into its teachings.

Typical texts, fully cited within the bibliography, include 'Yeshua' by Dr Ron Moseley and 'Romans' by Joseph Shullam. Marvin Wilson's seminal work, Our Father Abraham, claims to

“delineate the link between Judaism and Christianity, between the Old and New Testaments and calls Christians to re-examine their Hebrew roots so as to affect a more authentically biblical lifestyle.”

The Complete Jewish Bible is a lively, readable translation by Messianic Jew David H. Stern, endeavouring to be fully Jewish in style and presentation, incorporating a new version of the Tanakh (“Old Testament”) alongside the highly acclaimed “Jewish New Testament.”<sup>1</sup> The associated “Jewish New Testament Commentary” and “Messianic Jewish Manifesto” draw upon Dr Stern's years of research in “relating the New Testament text to the Tanakh, to the historical settings, to rabbinic materials and to Christian Theology.”

#### **I.4 New Perspective**

The ‘New Perspective’ is a system of thought in New Testament scholarship seeking to reinterpret the apostle Paul and his letters, in reaction to the traditional Reformation perspective, which understands him to be arguing against a legalistic Jewish culture seeking to earn salvation through works. New Perspectives scholarship contends that Paul was actually combating Jews who were boasting because they were God's people, the “elect” or “chosen ones”. Their “works,” so to speak, were done to *prove* they were God's covenant people, not to earn their salvation. The result is a Judaism affirming *sola gratia*.

In *The New Testament and the People of God*, the opening text of a five-volume series, Wright sets out major signposts and corresponding analysis of “the historical and theological questions surrounding the origins of Christianity,” in particular, offering detailed theological insight into the first-century worldview of Second-Temple Judaism—the world in which Jesus lived, worked, taught and died.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendices, section I.1

# CHAPTER 3 : ANALYSIS

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## I THE COVENANT FOUNDATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

The historical narratives of Scripture—of the Bible—are linked or held together by a series of covenants. Without a true appreciation of the underlying covenantal framework to the biblical narratives, the purposes of God, in connection with his chosen people, can appear to be sporadic, even arbitrary. Without a cohesive understanding, linking key elements of the larger story together, it is easy to misread the story's true sense or import.

For example: viewed in isolation, the account of the division of the nations and their scattering, following the debacle of the building of the Babel tower, in Genesis chapters ten and eleven are not obviously more than a curious, historical backdrop. Whereas, viewed in context, the accounts form a key theological background to the pivotal, **covenantal events** of Genesis chapter twelve, one of the most foundational passages of Scripture.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis therefore begins with the following assertion: **the covenants of God are a vital key in comprehending the nature of God's intent and purpose for his creation.** In examining the evidence leading to this conclusion, the thesis will incorporate the construction of a schematic, biblical panorama of God's 'eternal purpose.'

### I.1 Historical narratives of the Old Testament

In order to demonstrate how a covenantal reading or comprehension of Scripture differs from standard chronological or thematic approaches, I will first examine Old Testament biblical history from the basic standpoint of a series of narrative events. The main elements will then be placed upon a basic 'timeline' chart.

*"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth..."* is the biblical introduction to the first of two complimentary **creation** narratives. Immediately after these accounts, deceit, disobedience and **death** are encountered within the garden of Eden, whereupon God judges the first human beings, for choosing—in the midst of a glorious paradise, full of all kinds of good fruit—to eat from the single disallowed tree "of the knowledge of good and

evil.”<sup>a</sup> Subsequently, murder is committed, a development seemingly setting a pattern for the envelopment of humanity into a settled pattern of evil:

*“The earth was corrupt before God; the earth was filled with wickedness...all living things had corrupted their ways on the earth.”<sup>b</sup>*

Following this development, the earth is flooded by God in judgement; a **flood** survived by just one family, husbanded by Noah, a man who “found favour in the eyes of the Lord.”<sup>c</sup> They are saved through an ark, built in obedience to a revelation from God.

Thereafter, the three sons of Noah, their destinies and that of their various tribal descendants are described. These apparently mundane genealogies and records describe the origin of “the nations”—the “Gentiles,” one of Scriptures’ most significant threads—through their division by family, land and language. A grand scheme to “build a city with a tower...its top reaching up into heaven,”<sup>d</sup> designed to avoid having to spread across the earth, results instead in the nations becoming scattered by a divinely-ordained confusion of languages.

Immediately, scripture introduces the family of *Avram* (Hebrew, ‘exalted father’), a man to whom God makes a series of exceptional promises regarding the destiny of Avram and his descendants—notably concerning a bountiful land which they will inherit and a special blessing that will accompany them. Avram’s name is changed to *Avraham* (“Abraham”), reflecting his new calling: to be a “father of many” (Hebrew, “*av Hamon*”).<sup>2</sup>

Abraham’s tribe grows, particularly the twelve tribes of Israel, his grandson. However, they become slaves in Egypt, for over three centuries, before the now numerous ‘Hebrew’ people are dramatically delivered out of their bondage, during the divinely ordained night of *Pesach* (“Passover”). Following this **exodus** from Egypt, in the midst of a mountainous desert wilderness, under the prophetic leadership of Moses, they are called by God, formed into a nation of people entrusted with the **Torah**—God’s holy instructions and

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<sup>a</sup> Genesis 1-3

<sup>b</sup> Genesis 7:11

<sup>c</sup> Genesis 6:8

<sup>d</sup> Genesis 11:1-9

commandments for his “priestly people.” After forty years of wandering through the wilderness, caused by their distrust and disobedience towards the Lord, a new generation of “Children of Israel” enter the Land promised, centuries before, to Abraham.

Within the Land, God seeks to rule this chosen tribe, this ‘set apart nation’ through a series of divinely-inspired leaders: **judges, prophets, priests** and, finally, **kings**. Eventually, through the reign of the beloved *King David*, the kingdom of Israel is significantly elevated above the surrounding nations—forming a powerful motif for God’s rule on earth.

However, following the disastrous idolatry of David’s heir, the extraordinary prosperous King Solomon, the Twelve Tribes become divided: ten tribes forming the southern kingdom, ‘the House of Israel’; two tribes forming the northern kingdom, ‘the House of Judah.’ Despite a number of short-lived revivals led by certain kings of Judah, both Houses descend abjectly into idolatry and rejection of divine rule, in consequence of which, God ejects them from the Land: they are defeated and taken into exile by powerful enemy nations. When a remnant returns, seventy years later, under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, the prophet Haggai highlights the inadequacy of the national restoration by prophesying of a greater “glory” yet to come.<sup>a</sup>

### 1.1.1 Constructing “the big picture”

Figure 1 portrays the unfolding course of the historical narratives of the *Tanakh*<sup>3</sup>—“Old Testament”—that have been examined, forming the foundation of the unfolding biblical ‘panorama’ that will be constructed by this thesis.

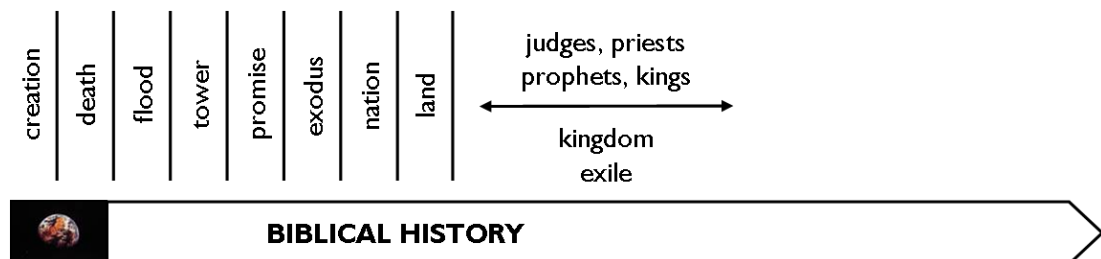


Figure 1 : Biblical History

<sup>a</sup> Haggai 2:5-9

## 1.2 Encountering the Covenants

It is possible to observe a pattern within these events—of election and blessing; rebellion, judgment and disaster; return, forgiveness and deliverance—the lessons of which emphasise the importance of following God’s commands, the dangers of failing to do so and the grace of God to bring deliverance. However, if held to be the primary lesson, such analysis represents a failure to appreciate the true vitality of the Old Testament scriptures, effectively reading them as a set of ancient documents to which Christians are linked only in some vague way through Jesus and his descent from the Jewish people.

Instead, by looking carefully at the inner content of these historical narratives, it is possible to discern another, more profound pattern, running throughout Scripture: a series of divine **covenants**. Analysis of this pattern requires re-examining some of the key themes of the Genesis creation accounts, as well as each of the biblical, Patriarchal covenants.

### 1.2.1 In the beginning...

Firstly, ‘Genesis’ is revealed as something more than simply a story about *beginnings*: it describes a Creation which is “**good**”—suggesting it was originally conformed to God’s divine intention in every way—a **creation blessed** by God. Moreover, the first man: Adam is instructed: “*Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it,*” a command revealing God’s intent and purpose for Adam and the creation he is to uniquely watch over.<sup>a</sup>

However, God’s *judgment* of Adam’s subsequent *disobedience* or faithlessness towards the command to avoid eating from a particular tree, takes the form of a binding **curse**—not in vindictive punishment, rather, as a divine disciplining:<sup>4</sup>

*Because you listened to what your wife said and ate from the tree about which I gave you the order, ‘You are not to eat from it,’ the ground is cursed on your account, you will work hard to eat from it as long as you live; it will produce thorns and thistles for you ... you will eat bread by the sweat of your forehead.<sup>b</sup>*

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<sup>a</sup> Genesis 1:28

<sup>b</sup> Genesis 3:17-19



### I.2.2 Covenant with Noah

Following the flood, God does what he promised beforehand:

*I am herewith **establishing my covenant** with you [Noah] and your descendants after you...never again will all living beings be destroyed by the waters of a flood.<sup>a</sup>*

### I.2.3 Covenant with Abraham

Scripture next records a covenant established with Abraham, confirmed, clarified and renewed by God during several encounters:

*I will make you a great nation, I will **bless** you and I will make your name great and you are to be a **blessing**...I am El Shaddai. Walk in my presence and be pure-hearted. I will make my **covenant** between me and you...You will be the father of many nations...*

*I am **establishing my covenant** between me and you...as an everlasting covenant...As for you, you are to **keep my covenant**, you and your descendants after you.<sup>b</sup>*

### I.2.4 Covenant confirmed with Isaac and Jacob

This covenant is later confirmed to Abraham's son, Isaac and, later, his grandson, Jacob:

*You shall call his name Isaac and I will establish My **covenant** with him for an everlasting **covenant** and with his seed after him. I will fulfil the **oath** which I swore to Abraham, your father..."Your descendants will be as numerous as the grains of dust on the earth... By you and your descendants all the families of the earth shall be **blessed**.<sup>c</sup>*

### I.2.5 Covenant with Israel

After leaving Egypt, the "sons of Israel" find themselves in the Sinai Desert, in the shadow of a mountain from which God calls to Moses, giving him these words to say to the people:

*Now if you will pay careful attention to what I say and **keep my covenant**, then you will be my own treasure from among all the people, for all the earth is mine; and you will be a kingdom of priests and a nation set apart.<sup>d</sup>*

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<sup>a</sup> Genesis 7:18 & 9:8-11

<sup>b</sup> Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-20; 17:1-27, 22:15-18; 26:1-5; 28:3-4, 10-16

<sup>c</sup> Genesis 17:19; 26:3ff.; 28:3ff.; 35:9ff.

<sup>d</sup> Exodus 19:4-6

### I.2.6 Covenant with David

When his people rejected him as their king, God allowed them a human ruler. David was “a man after God’s own heart”<sup>a</sup>; with whom God made a covenant:

*I will establish one of your descendants to succeed you, one of your flesh and blood; and I will set up his ruler-ship; he will build a house for my name and I will establish his royal throne forever; I will be a father for him and he will be a son for me; thus your house and your kingdom will be made secure forever before you; your throne will be set up forever...*

*My house stands firm with God—he has made an everlasting **covenant** with me.*<sup>b</sup>

Before examining these covenants in more detail, I will place them within the biblical panorama this thesis is constructing:

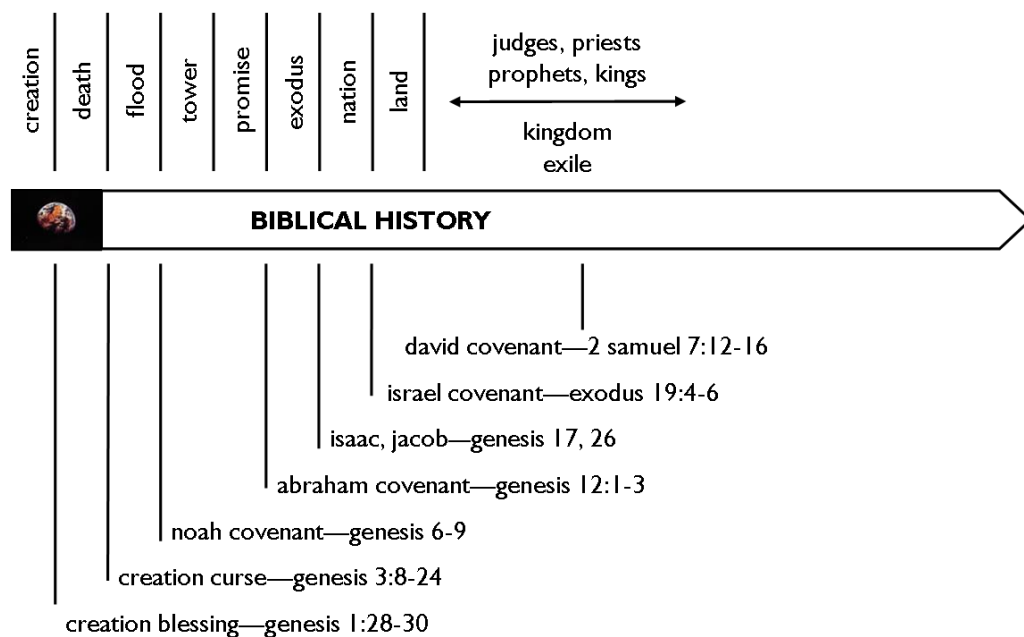


Figure 2 : Biblical History and Biblical Covenants

Figure 2 portrays narrative and historical events of the Old Testament “underpinned” or supported by the biblical covenants, as a large building is underpinned by deep foundations. This pattern represents the emergence of an unchanging, divine purpose founded upon covenant. Within this schema, covenant is not only a thematic unity underlying scripture, it is

<sup>a</sup> Acts 13:21-22

<sup>b</sup> Samuel 7:12-16 & 23:5

the true, practical foundation of God's entire redemptive purposes, as summarised by this first key statement of this thesis:

**God's redemption of his corrupted creation is centred upon covenant relationship, established with human beings<sup>5</sup>**

## 2 THE VITALITY OF COVENANT

### 2.1 The nature of covenant

The Hebrew word translated “covenant” is *berîyth*; it generally refers to a formal, quasi-legal, binding arrangement between two parties.

#### 2.1.1 Parallels with historical covenants

The biblical covenants which God makes with human beings include parallel elements consistent with historical, secular covenants common amongst ancient near-eastern cultures. Secular use of the term ‘covenant’ typically refers to a: treaty, constitution, agreement, alliance, pledge or oath.

Some such covenants were negotiated—including weaker parties approaching stronger ones.<sup>6</sup> In other cases, where one party was recognisably or assertively stronger than the other, perhaps explicitly a conqueror or deliverer within a battle context, that stronger party could impose or dictate covenant terms to the weaker, conquered or rescued party.

These forms of covenant were evidently familiar to the biblical writers,<sup>7</sup> consequently, it is clear that the Hebrew writers intended the divine covenants to be understood, to a significant extent, in the light of secular covenants and, therefore, that covenant relationship is not intended by God to be a mystery to his chosen people—rather, covenant should be understood as the clear basis of his intentions and purposes.<sup>8</sup>

#### 2.1.2 Biblical use of “covenant”

Within biblical use, *berîyth* is frequently combined with another Hebrew word meaning “to cut,” providing the phrase, “to cut covenant”—primarily a reference to the cut which killed a sacrificial animal, with the subsequent sprinkling of its blood, prior to a ritual meal, all

of which formed an important part of the ceremony of making a covenant.<sup>9</sup>

Critically, covenant was typically used to signify not the initiation, but the solemnising of a pre-existing relationship: binding two parties into a solemn commitment or obligation towards one another, through formal ceremony.<sup>10</sup> Typically, the more powerful party—the *suzerain*—offered protection and reward; the lesser or subjugated party—the *vassal*—who returned allegiance, service or tribute,<sup>11</sup> with both commitments combining to serve and uphold the mutually agreed covenant relationship.

Consequently, precise terms typically accompanied covenants, prescribing what constituted a *keeping*, or maintenance of covenant and what constituted a *breaking* or violation, of the covenant relationship. To these terms, covenant parties swore **oaths**—typically, of protection and allegiance respectively—pronounced in the form of, or to the accompaniment of, invocations:  **blessings**  or rewards for keeping covenant;  **curses**  or punishments for violating it:<sup>12</sup>

These distinctions are summarised within the second key statement of this thesis:

**Covenant refers to a binding obligation forming a solemn relationship between two parties;** associated blessings prescribe rewards for keeping covenant; curses prescribe consequences for violating covenant

## 2.2 Understanding divine covenant

### 2.2.1 Revelation of divine character, intent and purpose

Biblical, divine covenant should be understood as **God's binding obligation**—his solemn, declared commitment—towards his unchanging, **eternal purpose** for creation, a purpose he has determined to work out in relationship with a chosen, covenant community. Consequently, the making or “cutting” of each of the biblical, patriarchal covenants marks a turning point within the history of God's unfolding plans and purposes, further revealing his intentions for the covenant community and typically being suggestive of his ultimate goal of creation's restoration.

### 2.2.2 The preparation of a covenant community

With each covenant it becomes apparent that God is setting apart a family, a tribe, a nation, a people—a **covenant community**—the faithfulness of whom forms a vital key to the establishment, service and success of God’s wider purposes for his creation.

In order to serve this greater purpose, the covenant community is chosen and favoured—blessed—by God. However, this *blessing of the covenant community* is not an end but a means: the covenant community is favoured by God in order to allow him to work out greater purposes through them. Whenever this reality is obscured, the covenant community risks significantly frustrating God’s purposes. Thus, the covenant community carries a vital responsibility for allowing God to work out his purposes through them: they are a servant community, a community called to serve God’s purposes.

### 2.2.3 A restoration of ‘creation purpose’

Ultimately, the biblical covenants point towards the restoration of a creation corrupted by rebellion against God’s government and purposes. Primary to this restoration is the reconciliation of human beings—creation’s appointed overseers—into right relationship with the Creator. Flowing out from human reconciliation, God’s covenant purposes may be understood as embracing Creation’s entire renewal and re-harmonisation. Towards this end the biblical covenants are formed—although the clarity of this purpose typically remains veiled, being only subtly revealed within scripture’s narratives and prophecies as an ever-present backdrop to the covenants.

## 2.3 Divine purpose revealed within patriarchal covenants

### 2.3.1 Covenant with Noah

*I am herewith establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you... that never again will all living beings be destroyed by the waters of a flood.<sup>a</sup>*

Recollecting the violence and murder which predated the catastrophic flood, God reminds Noah that he “*made human beings in his image,*” before instructing Noah’s entire

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<sup>a</sup> Genesis 9:9-11

family, “Be fruitful and multiply, swarm over the earth and multiply on it”—a command representing a clear echo of the original creation **blessing**.<sup>a</sup>

A sign accompanies this covenant: a rainbow, which is to serve as perpetual testimony of God’s covenant promise to never again destroy all living things. A sign that offers a hint of the ultimate, inevitable goal of God’s eternal purpose: creation’s renewal.<sup>13</sup>

Scripture refers to God “*establishing his covenant*” with not only Noah, but also with “*his descendants*,” “*with all the inhabitants of the earth*,” “*with every living creature*” and “*with the earth*” itself.<sup>b</sup> A careful reading of these texts may suggest that the covenant “*established*” with Noah reflects a pre-existing ‘covenant obligation’ towards creation, imposed by God upon himself, at creation’s inception: a unilateral obligation he is determined to uphold and fulfil, regardless of humankind’s conduct.<sup>14</sup>

*I will never again curse the ground because of humankind... nor will I ever again destroy all living things. So long as the earth exists, sowing time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter and day and night will not cease.*<sup>c</sup>

In summary, therefore,

**God's covenant with Noah reveals and expresses God's commitment to uphold his creation.** In spite of man's evil, God will not abandon his covenant with—his commitment to—his creation

### 2.3.2 Covenant with Abraham<sup>15</sup>

*I will make you a great nation, I will bless you and I will make your name great and you are to be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse those who curse you and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed.*<sup>d</sup>

God’s plan for “a great nation”—a **blessed covenant community**—that will bless the nations through Abraham, may be understood as the divine response towards the rebellion,

<sup>a</sup> Genesis 8:6-7

<sup>b</sup> Genesis 6:18 & 9:8-16

<sup>c</sup> Genesis 8:20-22

<sup>d</sup> Genesis 12:1-3

degeneration and wickedness of human society recorded in Genesis chapters 1-11. Thus, what initially appears to be a very personal promise towards Abraham and his descendants, in fact, never has anything less than the whole human family within its sights.<sup>16</sup>

The relationship set out within the covenant includes a subtle ‘missionary’ command: “...*you are to be a blessing*,” suggesting that Abraham is intended to convey his sense of promise, protection, blessing and divine purpose—of being in divine covenant—to the tribes and peoples with whom he relates—anticipating that he will be a blessing to them.<sup>17</sup>

**God's covenant with Abraham reveals and expresses God's commitment to bless all the families of the earth through “a great nation.”** God is committed to restoring his creation—marred by human rebellion—using a covenant community to bring human beings back into right relationship with him

### 2.3.3 Covenant with Israel

Four centuries later,<sup>18</sup> following their dramatic exodus from Egypt, Abraham’s descendants, the “*sons of Israel*,” find themselves in the shadow of the Sinai mountain, from where God calls to Moses—his mouthpiece in leading the Hebrews out of Egypt—instructing him to invite the people into covenant relationship with him:

*You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you will pay careful attention to what I say and **keep my covenant**, then you will be my own treasure from among all the people, for all the earth is mine; and you will be a kingdom of priests and a nation set apart.<sup>a</sup>*

Within this invitation, “*all the earth is mine*” is juxtaposed alongside “*a kingdom of priests*,” hinting at Israel’s role interceding on behalf of and mediating God’s covenant faithfulness towards the other nations of the earth. (The promise of being God’s “*own treasure*,” conversely, is apparently an aspect of Israel’s calling intended to be for God’s personal satisfaction.)<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Exodus 19:4-6

Following the unanimous pledge of the people, “*Everything Adonai has said, we will do*,”<sup>a</sup> Ten Words (‘Commandments’) are given to Moses, forming the kernel—the very heart and core—of the Torah.<sup>20</sup> Upon this foundation an array of detailed teachings and commands springs forth, providing Israel with clear instructions for life within the covenant relationship, expressing not only the manner in which they are called to demonstrate love, devotion and allegiance to God, but also forming their pathway to life and destiny: through adhering to Torah—keeping covenant—Israel was intended to demonstrate their wisdom and understanding, enabling them to become “*a light to the nations*.”<sup>b 21</sup>

Within scripture, the covenant relationship between Adonai and Israel consistently has a family-orientated tone to it, most significantly in terms of being made ‘a son by adoption.’ However, within the shadow of the exodus, the culture of the time dictated that the people of Israel recognise Adonai as a Warrior King, a powerful, just Deliver, whom, having powerfully defeated their oppressor, Pharaoh, now required the gratitude and allegiance of his privileged and chosen vassals, as they were brought by him into the sanctuary of the Land promised to their patriarchal ancestor, Abraham.<sup>22</sup>

En route to this Land, ornate, ceremonial temple worship is innovated in recognition of God’s royal status, appropriated by a system of animal sacrifices, the elements of which pointed towards God’s love, mercy and holiness respectively: <sup>23</sup>

- *peace and fellowship offerings*, uniting Israelite worshippers into fellowship with God;
- *sin offerings*, healing breaches in the covenant relationship, caused by sin;
- *burnt offerings*, suggesting dedication and consecration towards serving God.

Nevertheless, in spite of this emphasis upon ritual sacrifice, throughout their history, the Israel’s prophets are repeatedly required to remind Israel that God did not ultimately require or want sacrifices as evidence of covenant faithfulness or devotion, but rather that he was a god who looks deep into the heart in order to judge righteousness.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Exodus 19:8

<sup>b</sup> Deuteronomy 4:5-6, 28:1; Isaiah 42:6



Later prophetic messages represented the covenant relationship in terms of a marriage between Israel and her King, their idolatry posited as adultery.<sup>25</sup> Other post-exile passages concerning God's purposes for the covenant hint at a return from exile that incorporates a restoration of elements of the fertile, fruitful "*paradise*" of Eden<sup>a</sup>—a place in which God and his people could dwell harmoniously together.<sup>26</sup>

Within the covenant relationship, the choices that Israel makes—either faithful covenant relationship or unfaithful idolatry—effectively represent a choice between "*life or death*," "*blessing or curse*," deliverance or disaster, inheritance or exile.<sup>27</sup> Choices revealing God's kindness *and* severity: kindness towards those embracing his covenant, submitting to his government, available to serve his purposes; severity towards those rejecting his covenant, resisting his purposes, rebelling against his goodness, disobeying his teachings.

Thus, through their covenant relationship with Adonai, the people of Israel become recipients of life, blessing, grace and goodness from God that will eventually overflow towards all nations and peoples:

*...the people of Israel! They were made God's children, the Sh'khinah has been with them, the covenants are theirs, likewise the giving of the Torah, the Temple service and the promises, the Patriarchs are theirs...*<sup>b</sup>

**God's covenant with Israel reveals and expresses God's commitment to use a chosen people—a covenant community—to reveal his love and glory to the whole world.** God chooses an unimportant nation to demonstrate through them his goodness, kindness and loving, covenant-faithfulness towards a world of people which has rebelled against his purpose for Creation

#### 2.3.4 Covenant with David

With the covenant relationship casting *Adonai* as Israel's King, Israel's premier prophet,

<sup>a</sup> Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 36:35

<sup>b</sup> Romans 9:4-9

Samuel, recognises a deep tragedy unfolding through Israel's demand for a mortal king to rule over them. Nevertheless, God acquiesces to Israel's demand, saying to Samuel:

*It is not you they are rejecting; **they are rejecting me**; they don't want me to be king over them. They are doing...exactly what they have been doing to me, from the day I brought them out of Egypt until today, by abandoning me and serving other gods.<sup>a</sup>*

Thus, in spite of Samuel's objections and warnings, Israel becomes a national kingdom. Following the failure of Saul, Israel's first choice as king, a young man, David Ben-Yishai ('Son of Jesse')—described as "*a man after God's own heart*"<sup>b</sup>—is chosen and anointed by Samuel to succeed Saul. In time, the Lord promises David:

*I will establish one of your descendants to succeed you, one of your flesh and blood; and I will set up his ruler-ship; he will build a house for my name and I will establish his royal throne forever; I will be a father for him and he will be **a son** for me; thus your house and your kingdom will be made secure forever before you; your throne will be set up forever.<sup>c</sup>*

This covenant<sup>28</sup> reveals that one of David's descendants will build a Temple for God's name and that the royal throne—the reign or government—of David will continue eternally.

During the considerable triumphs and prosperity of David's reign, Israel's unity and covenant faithfulness causes her to become, for the first time in her history, "*the head, not the tail*,"<sup>d</sup> influencing and drawing tribute from kingdoms far and wide.

Following David's death, rulership passes into the hands of his son, Solomon, who begins his reign with great wisdom and overt expressions of covenant faithfulness towards God—including overseeing the lavish construction and dedication of the first Jerusalem Temple.

God confirms his covenant with Solomon, but also warns him of the dire consequences of failing to keep the covenant, through disobeying his commands and worshipping other gods. Whilst initially the kingdom prospers greatly under Solomon's reign, he succumbs to

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<sup>a</sup> 1 Samuel 8:7-8

<sup>b</sup> Acts 13:22; cf. 1 Samuel 13:14; Psalm 89:20

<sup>c</sup> 2 Samuel 7:16; see also 1 Chronicles 17:11-14

<sup>d</sup> Deuteronomy 28:13

the temptation of taking many non-Hebrew wives and concubines, the indulgence of whom leads to his flagrant embrace of acts of devotion to other gods.<sup>29</sup> Solomon's idolatry invites God's judgement and wrath and results in a national division: into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah—and, ultimately, exile from the Land.<sup>30</sup>

Around a century after the division, c.725 BC, scorning the admonition and dire prophetic warnings of Hosea and Amos, Israel's kings have consistently failed to repair the covenant breach and their land of Samaria is overrun by the Assyrians, Israel's people taken entirely into captivity, the Southern kingdom ended.<sup>31</sup> A century and a half later, despite the prophetic warnings of Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah and Jeremiah and even a short-lived revival under the reign of Josiah,<sup>32</sup> a similar fate befalls the Northern Kingdom and "Judah" is taken into exile by the Babylonians.<sup>33</sup>

Did the covenant promise to David thereby fail? Solomon was warned by God that the promise was conditioned upon covenant faithfulness: unfaithfulness would bring desolation upon the king, the Temple and the Kingdom. Nevertheless, the same word to Solomon suggested that, even after desolation, a restoration of covenant remained a possibility:<sup>34</sup>

*If my people, who bear my name, will humble themselves, pray, seek my face and turn from their evil ways, I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin and heal their land.<sup>a</sup>*

Thus, whilst fulfilment of the covenant promise faltered, God's commitment regarding a future king remained in force. The promise is to be fulfilled by a "branch" of David's line: a Redeemer, a King—a Messiah—who would rise in the future to bring deliverance and blessing to Israel, in fulfilment of the covenant promises.<sup>35</sup>

**God's covenant with David reveals and expresses God's commitment to choose and anoint one of David's descendants to eternally establish God's kingdom reign on earth.** God hints at a future Anointed King—a Messiah—who will establish the Kingdom of God eternally

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<sup>a</sup> 2 Chronicles 7:14

## 2.4 Unfolding purpose

Figure 3 updates the biblical panoramic diagram that this thesis is constructing, incorporating elements from the four covenants that have been examined.

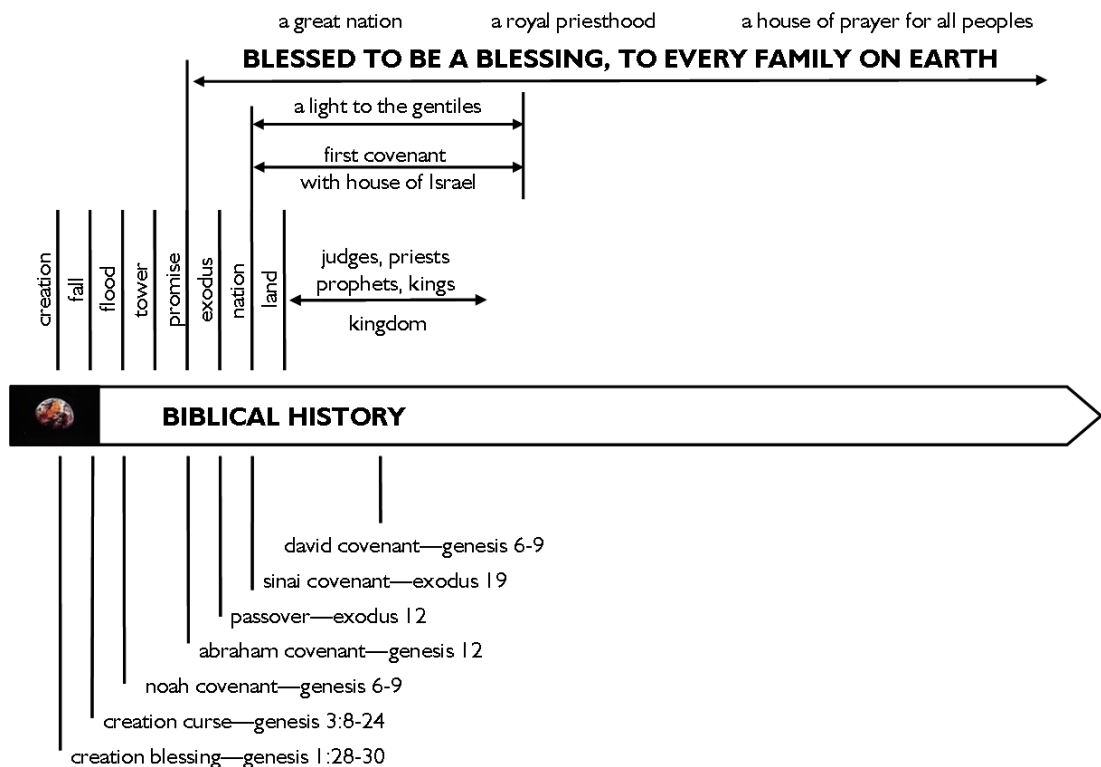


Figure 3 : Covenantal Purposes

The principal, overarching element derives directly from the covenant with Abraham: “a great nation, **blessed to be a blessing to all the families of the earth.**” Thus, God’s universal concern for every ‘family’—every tribe, language and nation—stretches out ahead of Abraham and Israel, forming the foundational framework for the later covenants—including a new, messianic covenant yet-to-come.

## 3 A NEW MESSIANIC COVENANT

### 3.1 Background to the new covenant

#### 3.1.1 Exile, Return and Renewal

Following their forced expulsion from the Land, Judah and Israel enter a lengthy period of spiritual darkness, symbolised by their exile: the continual, painful indicator of God’s ongoing

judgement and reminder of Israel's idolatrous covenant breach.<sup>36</sup> Return from exile—implying a cleansed land and deliverance from Gentile rulers—thus becomes the anticipated sign that Israel's sin has been forgiven, that the severed covenant relationship is being restored, that grace is again being poured out upon Israel. This hope—the “vindication of Israel”—takes on considerable proportions within exiled-Israel's religious traditions.<sup>37</sup>

Although a remnant does eventually return, alongside Zerubbabel, to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple—setting in motion the ‘second Temple’ era, lasting until the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, in 70 AD—and subsequently, alongside Ezra and Nehemiah, in order to continue the process of rebuilding Jerusalem—it becomes clear that the restoration and return from exile is practically and spiritually incomplete and does not form the definitive sign of God's grace, forgiveness and covenant restoration that is hoped for, with Haggai prophesying about a more glorious temple yet-to-come<sup>38</sup> and Malachi, speaking long after Ezra and Nehemiah's work, of the Lord returning suddenly to his temple, in the pristine form of the purifying “*messenger of the covenant*.”<sup>a 39</sup>

### 3.1.2 Messianic expectation

This background shapes Israel's expectation of covenant restoration and conception of God's kingdom rule returning amongst them—particularly in terms of another “*David*”—a glorious, Davidic king, an anointed ruler, a Messiah—who will righteously shepherd the people of Israel, returning them from exile, cleansing the Land, delivering them from pagan oppression, prospering them once again.<sup>40</sup> It is this hope that fuels the keen anticipation of the Messiah's imminent arrival, evident within first-century, ‘second Temple’ Palestine.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.1.3 Spiritual Renewal

Nevertheless, the broader picture provided by the prophets incorporates a prophetic solution to the covenant community's faithlessness, curse and exile that embraces a quite *inglorious* messiah. One who challenges the incumbent leadership of Israel as a despised prophet, calling forth and shepherding a renewed covenant people, demonstrating both an

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<sup>a</sup> Malachi 3:1-4

anointed, spirit-led justice and a mediatory, sacrificial, atoning death that “*makes many righteous*”—even Gentiles, since restoring Israel “*is not enough*,” he will also be “*a light to the nations*.”<sup>a 42</sup> This messiah will live an intercessory life, his sufferance for the sins of his people bringing within the covenant community a new, inner deliverance from wickedness:

*I will cut a new covenant with the house of Israel; I will put my Torah within them and write it upon their hearts; they will be my people and I will be their God...All will know me... because I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more.*<sup>b</sup>

This will be the sign that Israel’s sins have been forgiven, that her spiritual exile is ending: ADONAI, the Lord, “*suddenly coming to his temple*,”<sup>c</sup> in the enigmatic form of his Messiah, inaugurating and mediating **a new covenant**, which, unlike the former one, provides power to induce spiritual renewal within the covenant community: an inner cleansing and forgiveness of sin; a new intimate knowledge of the Lord and his Torah, figuratively, but genuinely, “written” upon the hearts of the covenant people; blessing and empowering them to become the blessing to “all the families of the earth” originally promised to Abraham.

### 3.2 Messiah : goal of the covenants

*The people of Isra’el...were made God’s children, the Sh’khinah has been with them, the **covenants** are theirs, likewise the giving of the Torah, the Temple service and the promises; the Patriarchs are theirs; and from them, as far as his physical descent is concerned, came the Messiah, who is over all...**the goal at which the Torah aims is the Messiah.***<sup>d</sup>

Figure 4 depicts how the Messiah and his mission forms the true goal, purpose and climax of the covenant narratives and prophetic writings of Israel. In turn, the covenant history of Israel provides the appropriate perspective for encountering the New Testament narratives concerning the Messiah and the Kingdom of God arriving through him:

<sup>a</sup> Isaiah 53:11 & 49:6 respectively

<sup>b</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-34, also Ezekiel 36 & 34:16-23

<sup>c</sup> Malachi 3:1-4

<sup>d</sup> Romans 9:4-5, 10:4

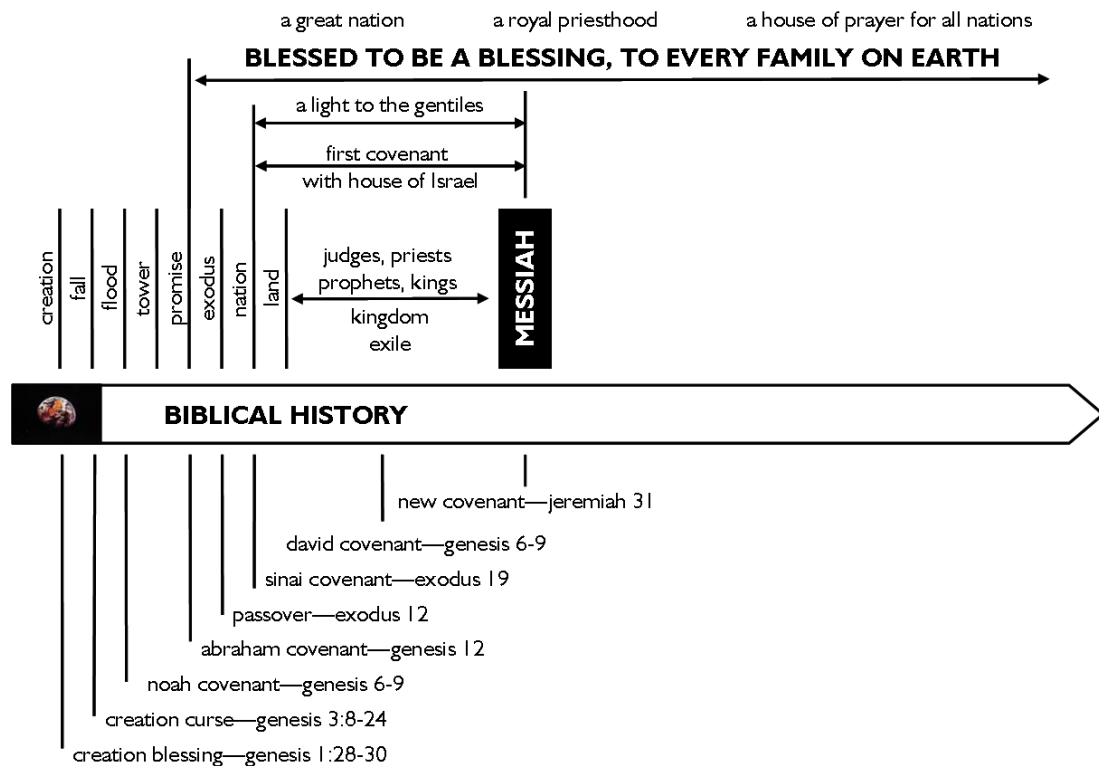


Figure 4 : The New Covenant and the Messiah

### 3.2.1 Revealing the Messiah

The task of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John was to provide historical, biographical accounts of Jesus—incorporating his life, work, signs, miracles, teaching, relationships and, finally, his death, resurrection and ascension—not as impartial observers or secular historians, but as committed members of a **new covenant community**, intent on establishing the significance of Jesus—who he was and what his true purpose was. The greatest reality they aimed to reveal was Jesus' identity as the Jewish **Messiah**,<sup>a</sup> critical to the story they were unfolding and its implications for the emerging new covenant community, centred around the person of Jesus.

In order to subvert populist ideas about a Davidic king ushering in an era of prosperity and military deliverance from political and martial oppression by gentile powers and to portray instead the enigmatic, unfolding mysteries that surrounded Jesus of Nazareth, the gospel writers incorporated a huge range of overlapping *remez*, *midrash*, stories, signs,

<sup>a</sup> John 20:31

events, parables and evidences of fulfilment of prophesy, based deeply within Israel's patriarchal, covenant framework, which together illuminated precisely how Jesus fulfilled ancient, covenant promises and prophetic foreshadows (table 1), portraying and confirming in the understanding of their readers, that Jesus absolutely was the promised One, the **Messiah**, the inaugurator of the **new covenant**.

according to the Prophets, the Messiah would...	gospel texts fulfilling...
<b>be the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob</b> Genesis 12.1-3, 17.19, 21.12, 28.14	Matthew 1.2 Luke 3.34
<b>be a descendant of David and heir to his throne</b> Samuel 7.11-16; Isaiah 9.6; Genesis 12.1-3	Matthew 1.16, 22.40 Acts 2.30
<b>be preceded by one who would announce him</b> Isaiah 40.3-6; Malachi 3.1	Matthew 3.1-3 Luke 1.7, 3.2-6
<b>be anointed with the Spirit of God</b> Isaiah 11.2, 61.1; Psalm 45.7	Matthew 3.16 John 3.34
<b>be a prophet like Moshe (Moses)</b> Deuteronomy 18.15,18	Acts 3.20-22 (Hebrews 3.1-2 ff.)
<b>have a ministry of healing and restoration of oppressed</b> Isaiah 61.1-2; 35.5-6; 42.18	Luke 4.18-19; Matthew 11.5 throughout gospels
<b>be tender, compassionate, unostentatious</b> Isaiah 42.1-4	Matthew 12.15-20
<b>be the Son of God</b> Psalm 2.7; 2 Samuel 7.16; Proverbs 30.4	Matthew 3.17 Luke 1.32
<b>be the one whose death would atone for human sins</b> Isaiah 53.7-12	Matthew 27.38; Mark 10.45; John 1.20; Acts 8.30-35
<b>be raised from the dead</b> Isaiah 53.9-10; Psalm 2.7, 16.10	Matthew 28.1-20 Acts 2.23-36, 13.33-37

Table 1 : Examples of Messianic Fulfilment of Prophecy



### 3.2.2 Comprehending the Messiah

Messiah means “anointed” or “poured on.” Both kings and priests were invested with their authority in a ceremony involving being anointed with olive oil, usually by prophets. Thus, the idea of being given God’s priestly and kingly authority is inherent within the concept of “Messiah.”<sup>43</sup> In fulfilment of the prophecies of Isaiah (Table I, above), Jesus was anointed by the Spirit and fulfilled both these roles—though neither in a way that was expected of him. Jesus also acted as a prophet to the Jewish nation. Thus, as the Messiah, he fulfilled three mediatory roles: *prophet, king and high priest*.

### 3.3 Messiah : mediator between God and man

Biblically, **prophets** have a significant mediatory role in interceding for people before God: Abraham is the first prophet recognised within scripture; he interceded and God heard his prayer.<sup>44</sup> Moses is considered the greatest prophet within Israel’s history; he changed God’s mind when he was planning to give up on the children of Israel.<sup>45</sup> Samuel was an important intercessory prophet, as were Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel. God worked decisively through the intercession of these prophets to change the course of covenant history.<sup>46</sup> Prophets apparently experienced entrance into the heavenly council or presence of God, where they heard God’s word,<sup>47</sup> enabling them to faithfully deliver that word to the people: another vitally important form of mediation between God and his covenant community. Prophets also had an authoritative role in anointing kings and priests.<sup>48</sup>

Faithful **kings** of Israel were also recognised for their important role in interceding in prayer for the covenant nation of Israel, particularly Kings David and Solomon.<sup>49</sup> Kings were also mediators in the sense of acting as God’s representative in leading the covenant community into faithful service of God’s purposes; accordingly kings of Israel were metaphorically identified as being seated upon God’s throne.<sup>a</sup>

The Jewish high **priest**, following in the ministry given to Aaron, mediated on behalf of

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<sup>a</sup> I Chronicles 28:5 & 29:23

Israel, making a *kapparah*<sup>a</sup> for them, once a year, within the “*Holiest Place*.”<sup>b</sup> As such, he drew near to God’s throne in order to obtain grace, mercy and forgiveness for others.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.3.1 Messiah : Jewish prophet : “Son of Man”

Christian faith and tradition has long celebrated the fact of Jesus’ humanity; only more recently have Christian scholars and writers re-embraced the reality that, in his humanity, Jesus was wholly Jewish.<sup>51</sup> Even more specifically, within the first-century Jewish milieu, Jesus was widely accredited as being an authentic Jewish prophet—something easily overlooked by readers familiar with the idea of Jesus as ‘Saviour’. Yet within the gospels, “*prophet*” is the only role with which Jesus is universally and unequivocally identified.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the first role of the Messiah was to act as a prophet to the Jewish covenant community, emerging firmly within the Jewish tradition of prophets such as Moses, Elijah and Jeremiah.<sup>53</sup>

Accordingly, whilst avoiding direct allusions to his identity as Messiah, Jesus openly and regularly referred to himself as “*Son of Man*,” a title echoing one used consistently by the LORD in his diktats towards Ezekiel—one of Israel’s major prophets.<sup>54</sup> “*Son of Man*” was also a key title used within the book of Daniel, in a distinctive, defining reference to the Messiah<sup>55</sup>—a nuance employed suggestively by Jesus, once his “*time*” had arrived.<sup>56</sup>

In his role as a prophet, Jesus’ primary purpose was apparently to announce the immanent arrival of “*the kingdom of God*.”<sup>c</sup> A significant element of this prophetic announcement and enactment of the in-breaking government or reign of God incorporated critiquing the incumbent religious leadership of the Israel: a combination of the sects of *P'rushim* (Pharisees) and *Tz'dukim* (Sadducees). They were held responsible for the ongoing corruption of the covenant relationship: publicly going through the motions of Torah-obedience, yet with “*uncircumcised hearts*,” neglecting the greater commandments of humility, mercy and justice;<sup>57</sup> occupying “*the seat of Moses*”<sup>d</sup>—the privileged position of

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<sup>a</sup> atonement

<sup>b</sup> Exodus 26:31-33, 36:35-36 (Matthew 27:51)

<sup>c</sup> Mark 1:14-15

<sup>d</sup> Matthew 23:2

religious and community leadership—yet making covenant obedience harder for others.<sup>58</sup> Jesus completely denounced these groups—though it is noteworthy that even amongst them some individuals were “*close to the kingdom*”;<sup>a</sup> some actually became disciples of Jesus.<sup>59</sup>

As a prophet, Jesus called the “*lost sheep of the house of Israel*”<sup>b</sup> to repentance: to a renewed covenant faithfulness to YHVH (Adonai, ‘the LORD’) incorporating a radical, new-covenant, kingdom way of life, within an emerging, new-covenant community, centred around himself...as Israel’s Messiah and King.

### 3.3.2 Messiah : King of the Jews : “Son of God”, “Son of David”

Although identification of the Messiah was crucial to the Jewish understanding of their covenant history and promise of national redemption,<sup>60</sup> the idea of a *divine* messiah was completely unanticipated and is, arguably, an almost secondary feature of the gospel narratives. Thus, Luke ends his gospel with Jesus encouraging his disciples to be witnesses—not of his divinity, but—that “...everything written about me in the Torah, the Prophets and the Psalms had to be fulfilled...the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day... You are witnesses of these things.”<sup>c</sup> In Matthew’s gospel, intended for Jewish readership,<sup>61</sup> Jesus is principally announced using a definitive title of the Messiah, “*Son of David*.”<sup>d 62</sup> Similarly, when Jesus is addressed as “*Son of God*,” within the gospels,<sup>63</sup> it should typically be understood as a title used by Jews to refer to the Messiah.<sup>64</sup> Thus, when the high priest questions Jesus, he uses the two titles synonymously: “*I put you under oath! By the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.*”<sup>e</sup> Similarly, when Peter experiences his personal epiphany, he uses the two titles with a similar sense of synonymy, declaring: “*You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*”<sup>f</sup>

This understanding stands in significant contrast to much of the Christian faith and

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<sup>a</sup> Mark 12:28-34

<sup>b</sup> Matthew 10:6, 15:24;

<sup>c</sup> Luke 24:44-48

<sup>d</sup> Matthew 1:1 *et al*

<sup>e</sup> Matthew 26:63; see also Luke 22:66-71

<sup>f</sup> Matthew 16:16; see also John 1:49; Luke 22:66-70; John 11:27

tradition, whereby “Son of God” is typically assumed to be a direct reference to Jesus’ divinity—his being ‘the second member of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.’<sup>65</sup> In fact, within first-century Judaism, the title “Son of God” did not hold this meaning, being used of godly persons in general and of the ‘special one’ sent by God—the Messiah—in particular.<sup>66</sup>

Notwithstanding that “Son of God” was not an implicit claim to divinity, Jesus did nevertheless effectively identify himself as co-existent with God: avoiding open declaration, he employed strong but subtle hints inviting his listeners to draw their conclusions. In this manner, Jesus most significantly revealed his divinity in three particular ways.<sup>67</sup>

Firstly, through his miracles, some of which were of an order that implied he was divine. For example, his command over the stormy waves, which evoked Tanakh passages glorifying God for his command over nature.<sup>68</sup> Hence, the proclamation of his disciples: “*What kind of man is this, that even the winds and sea obey him?*”<sup>a</sup> Secondly, by subtle but provocative use of names and titles, as when he identified himself using the eternal Name of God: ‘I AM’ and when he spoke intimately of God as Father: “*I and the Father (‘Abba’) are one.*”<sup>b</sup> <sup>69</sup>

Perhaps most significantly of all, Jesus identified himself with the second ‘Lord’ depicted within Psalm 110—the *Adon* to whom *Adonai* speaks:

*The LORD [Adonai] says to my Lord [Adon], Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.*<sup>c</sup>

Being invited to sit at God’s right hand constituted the Messiah’s enthronement as heavenly and earthly ruler—thus Jesus’ ultimate claim, following his resurrection: “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*”<sup>d</sup> This image of the Messiah seated ‘at the right hand of ADONAI is found throughout scripture, thus forming the most definitive image of the Messiah and expression of his rule and authority.’<sup>70</sup>

Although these images were firmly rooted in the Tanakh and Jewish understanding of the

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<sup>a</sup> Matthew 8:27

<sup>b</sup> John 8:55-59 & 10:30,38 respectively

<sup>c</sup> Matthew 22:41-46; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42

<sup>d</sup> Matthew 28:18

Messiah,<sup>71</sup> the incumbent religious rulers of his day held to a stunted form of monotheism based upon the *Sh'ma*:

*Sh'ma Y'Israel, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai echad [Hear, Israel!, Adonai our God, Adonai is One];  
you are to love Adonai your God with all your heart, all your being and all your resources.”<sup>a</sup>*

Within that traditional framework of Jewish ‘monotheism’, for a man to identify himself as divine, co-existent with or exalted beside God was blasphemous and punishable by death<sup>72</sup>—even though it was not a true blasphemy, as Jesus’ challenge to his accusers demonstrated:

*We are stoning you...for blasphemy—because you, who are only a man, are making yourself out to be Elohim. Yeshua answered them, “Isn't it written in your Torah, ‘You people are Elohim’? If he called ‘elohim’ the people to whom the word of Elohim was addressed (and the Torah cannot be broken), then are you telling the one whom the Father set apart as holy and sent into the world, ‘You are committing blasphemy’ just because I said, ‘I am a son of Elohim’?”<sup>b</sup>*

Consequently, it is appropriate to recognise within the synoptic gospels that, although definite nuances and hints exist which suggestively reveal Jesus’ divinity, the principal emphasis is upon his identification as Israel’s Redeemer, the promised Messiah.

Approximately fifty years after his death, Jesus’ divine status was more overtly communicated within John’s gospel, not least in its opening announcement: “*the Word was with God...the Word was God,*” identifying Jesus as the eternal *Davar*.<sup>73</sup> By this time many of Paul’s epistles had been distributed, containing his groundbreaking expositions of ‘mysteries now revealed’ and announcements of the Messiah’s divine glory and universal significance,<sup>74</sup> allowing Jesus’ divinity and incarnation—and their extraordinary implications—to dawn more fully within the new-covenant community.<sup>75</sup>

In conclusion, the New Testament embraces the divinity of Jesus the Messiah. However,

<sup>a</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4—see also Mark 12:28-30

<sup>b</sup> John 10:30-36; Elohim means “God”; elohim means both “gods” and “judges”

viewing and interpreting Jewish covenant history principally as a vehicle for God's revelation of himself through incarnation—as much of Christian theology has traditionally done<sup>76</sup>—would seem to be an injustice towards a historically 'Jewish' view of the scriptural narratives. That view suggests it may be more appropriate to propose that it required *not less than* a divine personality—the eternal *Word*—to become incarnate as a human being, in order that the manifold intercessory, mediatory role of the Messiah could be fulfilled.

As “Son of David,” the messianic king, Jesus identified himself as the Branch and Ruler promised via the Davidic covenant, the “*One Shepherd*,” whom God was using to bring about his eternal purpose, through Israel, on behalf of the whole earth.<sup>77</sup> As Shepherd-King, he issues an invitation, a call to all those who will “*hear his voice*”:<sup>a</sup> ‘Turn your life towards God; trust in me, follow me...give allegiance to me, submit to me as your Messiah, your Lord’.<sup>78</sup> In so doing, he inaugurates within those that accept, follow and give allegiance to him a new, Messianic Covenant Community, spiritually centred around himself as the exalted Lord—their Messiah, their King.

### 3.3.3 Messiah : High Priest : “of the order of Melchizedek”

The final aspect of the Messiah's role is as Israel's true *cohen hagadol* (“*high priest*”), inaugurating and guaranteeing a new, superior covenant,<sup>79</sup> which the writer of Hebrews identifies as the ‘new covenant’ prophesied by Jeremiah, to be made with “*the House of Israel and Judah*.”<sup>b</sup> The Messiah mediates this new covenant as a sinless and eternal high priest,<sup>80</sup> unlike the Levitical high priests who went before, under the terms of the Sinai covenant, whose own sin meant that they could only enter the earthly tabernacle once a year. Instead the Messiah, serves in...

*the Holy Place, that is, in the true Tent of Meeting, the one erected not by human beings but by Adonai...Whereas the sacrifices of animals by Levitical priests acted to facilitate Adonai's forbearance of sins committed under the first (Sinai) covenant, they could never*

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<sup>a</sup> John 10:3-4, 16, 27

<sup>b</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-34

*actually take away sin. By contrast, this one [priest], after he had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, sat down at the right hand of God, from then on to wait until his enemies be made a footstall for his feet.<sup>a</sup>*

Thus, Jesus the Messiah enters the true, heavenly tabernacle, in order to offer to Adonai the sacrifice of his life—represented by his blood—and, in so doing, presents again the highly significant juxtaposition of the Messiah sitting down at the right hand of God. In this way, his high priestly ministry within heaven confirms the reality of the “*finished*” work of his earthly death; the two realities—earthly and heavenly—acting together to inaugurate the new covenant: “*Because of this death...he is a mediator of a new covenant.*”<sup>b</sup>

In establishing Yeshua as a priest of different order to Levitical priests, ‘Hebrews’ introduces, *Malki-Tzedek*,<sup>c</sup> a character found in only two places within the Tanakh.<sup>81</sup> *Malki-Tzedek* was the priest of *El ‘Elyon* who received tithes from the Patriarch, Abraham, and blessed him. Since it was a clearly established principle that “*the greater blesses the lesser*,”<sup>d</sup> the writer of Hebrews performs a *midrash*<sup>e</sup> upon the narrative, establishing Melchizedek as greater than Abraham. Having already demonstrated that “*Yeshua deserves more honour than Moses, just as the builder of the house deserves more honour than the house*,”<sup>f</sup> his purpose is to demonstrate that the Messiah—as “*high priest forever to be compared with Malki-Tzedek*”<sup>g</sup>—is also greater than Abraham the principal Patriarch and Father of the Jewish nation—echoing Yeshua’s own claim: “*Before Abraham came into being, I AM!*”<sup>82</sup>

The writer of Hebrews makes a further *midrash* upon Melchizedek’s lineage in order to draw attention to the reality that the Messiah “*became a cohen...by virtue of the power of an indestructible life*”<sup>h</sup>—in consequence of which, he has an eternal, intercessory ministry as advocate for human beings who come to the Father through him:

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<sup>a</sup> Hebrews 8:2; 10:12,13

<sup>b</sup> Hebrews 9:15

<sup>c</sup> “Melchizedek,” meaning, King (*Malki*) of Righteousness (*Tzedek*); he was also King of *Shalem* (“peace”)

<sup>d</sup> Hebrews 7:7

<sup>e</sup> See Appendix I

<sup>f</sup> Hebrews 3:3

<sup>g</sup> Hebrews 5:6,10, 6:20, 7:11,17

<sup>h</sup> Hebrews 7:16

*Because he lives forever...he is totally able to deliver those who approach God through him; since he is alive forever and thus forever able to intercede on their behalf...If anyone does sin, we have Yeshua the Messiah, the Tzaddik, who pleads our cause with the Father. Also he is the kapparah for our sins—and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world...Who will bring a charge against God's chosen people?...Certainly not the Messiah Yeshua, who died and—more than that—has been raised, is **at the right hand of God** and is actually **pleading on our behalf?**<sup>a</sup>*

### 3.3.4 Messiah : centre of new covenant community

As '**prophet**', Jesus called the covenant community of Israel to repent and to enter fully into the "Kingdom of Heaven," which was "arriving"<sup>83</sup> in the person of the Messiah, the new "David," King of the Jews. As '**king**', he formed the centre of a new-covenant community embracing a resurrected Messiah, the anointed Royal Shepherd, not only of the Jews, but also of "other sheep...not from this pen"<sup>b</sup>—the Gentiles: "all the families of the earth." As '**priest**', the Messiah inaugurated the "new covenant" prophesied by Jeremiah, through which an anointed covenant community could experience the *Sh'khinah* of God.

As prophet, priest and king, Yeshua the Messiah—Jesus, the Christ—is shown by the New Testament writers to be even greater than Israel's covenant Patriarchs—Abraham, Moses and David—as they establish that, through his inauguration of the new covenant—at the earthly Pesach of Calvary and the heavenly Tabernacle of the Power on High—he has become the One Unique Mediator between God and human beings:

*God, our deliverer...wants all humanity to be delivered and come to a full knowledge of truth. For God is one and there is but **one Mediator between God and humanity**, Yeshua the Messiah, himself human, who gave himself as a ransom on behalf of all, thus **providing testimony to God's purpose at just the right time.**<sup>c</sup>*

<sup>a</sup> Hebrews 7:24-25; Tzaddik means "Righteous One"; 1 John 2:2; Romans 8:34

<sup>b</sup> John 10:16

<sup>c</sup> 1 Timothy 2:3-6



## 4 PENTECOST

When Israel's prophets anointed kings and priests with oil, it was a symbolic metaphor for the anointing of the Holy Spirit.<sup>84</sup> The story of 'Pentecost,' recorded in Acts, effectively tells of the risen, ascended Messiah—prophet, high priest and king—anointing the new-covenant community with his Spirit, with the effect of transforming uneducated 'am-ha'aretz<sup>85</sup> into community leaders emboldened to give faithful, public witness as powerful, effective 'ambassadors' of the Messiah's royal authority.<sup>86</sup> A witness involving not only the shepherding of the nascent messianic community and the announcement of the Good News of the Kingdom—in word and deed<sup>87</sup>—but also relating what they had learnt and experienced of Jesus<sup>88</sup> to *Jewish covenant history*: remaining faithful both to Torah—the covenant charter of the Jewish nation—and the Messiah—Israel's Redeemer.<sup>89</sup>

### 4.1 Torah and Spirit

*'This is the covenant which I will make with them after those days,' says Adonai:*

***'I will put my Torah on their hearts and write it on their minds.'*<sup>9a</sup>**

Jeremiah's prophesy clearly portrays Torah as a central element of the new covenant—a stark contrast to swathes of *gentile* Christian tradition, which has generally taught that within the New Testament, salvation is no longer by "works," since the "Law" has effectively been abolished and replaced variously, according to the theological point being made, by "grace," "promise" and "the Spirit."<sup>90</sup>

Whilst some elements of Torah clearly *are* effectively replaced under the terms of the new covenant—in particular, 'Hebrews' elucidates the redundancy of the ritual sacrificial system and the Levitical priesthood, in light of the Messiah's sacrifice and priesthood—even this replacement should be understood as forming part of the New Testament's presentation of a radical *renewal of Torah* taking place—initially through the Messiah, subsequently through his apostles, particularly Paul, the former Pharisee—as *one covenant era passes into another*.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Hebrews 10:16

Thus, whereas Christian theology typically posits the “*end of the Law*” and its replacement with a combination of ‘*grace*’, ‘*promise*’ or ‘*the Spirit*’, a Jewish, covenant perspective posits a more complex relationship between Spirit and Torah. For example, Paul at one time writes: “*For we know that the Torah is of the Spirit*”<sup>a</sup>; on other occasion he claims, “*I worship the God of our Fathers in accordance with the Way...I continue to believe everything that accords with the Torah and everything written in the Prophets*”; whilst James writes of “*the perfect Torah, which gives freedom*.”<sup>b</sup>

An Hebraic paradigm, in fact, admits discovery of a significant *synonymy* between the Torah and the Spirit—as set out within Table 2, below—elucidating important parallels and more accurately highlighting the true contrasts existing between ‘Torah’ within the ‘old’ covenant schema and ‘Spirit’ within the new covenant schema:

<b>Torah, ‘Old Covenant’</b>	ref	<b>Spirit, ‘New Covenant’</b>
given to Israel during <i>Shavu’ot</i>	i	given to messianic community at Pentecost <sup>92</sup>
teaches God’s truth	ii	teaches God’s truth
<i>Sh’khinah</i> manifests powerfully	iii	<i>Sh’khinah</i> manifests powerfully
fire from heaven confirms divine origin		fire from heaven confirms divine origin
written on tablets of stone	iv	written upon ‘tablets of the heart’
declares people guilty, brings death		declares people innocent, brings life, freedom
came with fading glory		came with greater, lasting glory
a written text communicating ‘teaching, instruction, commandments of God’	v	a new spirit imparting, communicating ‘heart-mind’ of Messiah
lacked power to transform human nature	vi	transforms human nature, cleanses hearts

<sup>a</sup> Romans 7:14a

<sup>b</sup> Acts 24:14, James 1:25 respectively

<sup>i</sup> Exodus 19.1, 34.22; <sup>ii</sup> Psalm 119; <sup>iii</sup> Exodus 19.16-19, 24.9-11; <sup>iv</sup> Exodus 31.18, 34.33-5, cf. Deut. 6.6; <sup>v</sup> Deuteronomy 4.6-14; <sup>vi</sup> Jeremiah 31.32	<sup>i</sup> Acts 2.1; <sup>ii</sup> John 14.26; 15.26; 16.13; <sup>iii</sup> Acts 2.2-3; <sup>iv</sup> 2 Corinthians 3.2-18; cf. Jeremiah 31.31, Ezekiel 36.26; <sup>v</sup> 1 Corinthians 2.12-16; <sup>vi</sup> Romans 8.3-10
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Table 2 : Parallels and Contrasts between Torah and the Spirit

#### 4.1.1 New and Old Covenant

These parallels and contrasts present a radical distinction within the New Testament not between *Torah* and *Spirit*—each of which represents a gift of God to teach, guide, instruct and lead his covenant community, rather—between an ‘**old**’ **covenant** consisting of a written text declaring human beings guilty, but lacking efficacious power to transform human nature, tending instead to become perverted into a legalistic or ethno-centric system,<sup>93</sup> and a **new covenant** that declares people innocent and is capable of imparting divine power,<sup>94</sup> renewing the human spirit, infusing the Spirit of God within the covenant community united with the Messiah, effectively transforming human nature from ‘old’ to ‘new’.<sup>95</sup>

Consequently, the true contrast presented by the New Testament is between **relating to Torah as consisting only of a written text**—in itself devoid of power to change human nature—and **relating to Torah by the power of the Spirit**, who’s goal is to transform human hearts and minds, bringing them into obedience to God’s will, reproducing the likeness of the Son within the covenant community.<sup>96</sup>

How does the New Testament present this transformation taking place? To comprehend it properly requires an examination of both the Hebrew term ‘*ruach*’ and the nuanced New Testament teaching concerning Torah—three elements of which are particularly significant in regard to this argument:

- Torah has not been abolished, made redundant or replaced;
- Torah has been renewed, giving rise to ‘the Torah of the Messiah’;
- the new covenant has become Torah.

#### 4.1.2 Torah ‘completed’—not abolished or replaced

Matthew wrote about the Messiah’s vocation in terms of his coming to complete—

typically translated “fulfil”—Torah, quoting Jesus’ own declaration:

*Don't think I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. **I have not come to abolish but to complete.** Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah...*<sup>a</sup>

This accords with this thesis’ earlier examination of how Jesus “brought to completion” the messianic prophecies and covenant foreshadows through his three messianic, mediatory roles of prophet, priest and king. Other highly significant Jewish prototypes such as the *pesach* (passover) lamb and the heavenly *manna* are also identified as finding ultimate fulfilment in the Messiah.<sup>97</sup>

A further aspect of the Messiah’s ‘fulfilment’ or ‘completion’ of Torah includes his teaching or amplifying a more complete understanding, even revision, of Torah—something Jewish rabbinic tradition stated only the Messiah could do.<sup>98</sup> Jesus did this particularly within his “sermon on the mount,” where he repeatedly challenged incumbent Torah interpretations—withal, making them more, not less strict—saying, “*You have heard, It is written...but I say to you...*”<sup>b</sup>

An emphasis on the abiding nature of Torah and its continuity within the new covenant schema is also confirmed by Paul, whose epistle to the Romans seeks to reconcile Torah with how the new covenant offers righteousness through trusting: “*Does it follow that we abolish Torah by this trusting? Heaven forbid! On the contrary we confirm Torah.*”<sup>c</sup>

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to develop a comprehensive apologetic of this interpretation regarding Torah,<sup>99</sup> it is worth examining one leading illustration:

*“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes.”*

The Greek word translated ‘end’—here by the Modern King James Version; few modern translations differ—is *telos*, the normal meaning of which is “goal, purpose, consummation,” but not “termination.” Thus, by contrast, the Complete Jewish Bible renders this text:

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<sup>a</sup> Matthew 5:17-18

<sup>b</sup> Matthew 5, 6

<sup>c</sup> Romans 3:31

*For the goal at which the Torah aims is the Messiah, who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts.<sup>a</sup>*

Such an understanding of Torah—that its goal was and is the Messiah—accords a *unity* to the New and Old Testament scripture, as well as a genuine *continuity* to the outworking of God’s covenant-based purposes through the ages, as posited within this thesis.<sup>100</sup>

#### 4.1.3 Torah of the Messiah

The New Testament’s radical transformation of Torah reveals certain elements are no longer binding, the function they performed having been eclipsed by the Messiah;<sup>101</sup> other elements are modified or changed by the Messiah’s teaching or incarnation.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, certain elements are not intended to apply to Gentiles grafted into the Messianic Community, though they continue to be culturally and religiously significant for Jews.<sup>103</sup> This transformation of Torah, brought about by the Messiah and incumbent upon the Messianic Community baptised into unity with the Messiah, is presented within the New Testament as the “*Torah of the Messiah*”:

*With those who live outside the framework of Torah, I put myself in a position of someone outside of Torah in order to win those outside the Torah—although I myself am not outside of God’s Torah but within the framework of Torah **as upheld by the Messiah.**<sup>b</sup>*

*...The whole of the Torah is summed up in this one sentence: “Love your neighbour as yourself”...Bear with one another’s burdens—in this way you will be fulfilling the Torah’s true meaning **which the Messiah upholds.**<sup>c</sup>*

Thus, in distinction to Torah as understood under the old covenant schema,<sup>104</sup> the “Torah of the Messiah” refers to the teaching and commands of God as ‘fulfilled’, interpreted, transformed and taught (“upheld”) by the Messiah and his apostolic disciples, within the New Testament gospels and epistles.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Romans 10:4

<sup>b</sup> I Corinthians 9:21

<sup>c</sup> Galatians 5:4 & 6:2

#### 4.1.4 New Covenant ‘made Torah’

According to ‘Hebrews’—or “Messianic Jews”<sup>106</sup>—the New Covenant has actually become ‘Torah’.<sup>107</sup> *“This covenant has been given as Torah on the basis of better promises.”<sup>a</sup>*

A vitally overlooked detail of New Covenant theology that effectively gives the New Testament an equal status with the Torah of Moses, a claim consistent with the warning:

*If the word God spoke through angels became binding, so that every violation and act of disobedience received its just deserts in full measures, then how will we escape if we ignore such a great deliverance?<sup>b</sup>*

This understanding confirms the two previous conclusions: Torah has not been abolished, or annulled, but *transformed* by the Messiah and the Messianic New Covenant.<sup>108</sup>

#### 4.1.5 Covenant faithfulness implies Torah faithfulness

One consequence of these arguments is the recognition that New-Covenant-faithfulness implies Torah-faithfulness.<sup>109</sup> Baptism unites believers with the Messiah: binding the Messiah into a covenant relationship of loving-kindness, protection and eternal life towards those whom the Father has given to him; binding believers into a covenant relationship of allegiance to the crucified, resurrected Messiah *and* obedience to the covenant terms set out within the “*Torah of the Messiah*,”<sup>110</sup> through submission to the Holy Spirit, who internalises within the messianic community the reality of the Messiah’s atonement, the forgiveness of sin *and* an intimate knowledge of the Torah—of God’s will and purpose:

*This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel... **‘I will put Torah in their minds and write it on their hearts’**; I will be their God and they will be my people...For all will know me...because I will be merciful toward their wickedness and **remember their sins no more.**<sup>c</sup>*

*What the **Torah** could not do by itself, because it lacked the power to make the old nature cooperate, God did by sending his **Son** as a human being...in order to deal with*

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<sup>a</sup> Hebrews 8:6

<sup>b</sup> Hebrews 2:2-3

<sup>c</sup> Hebrews 8:10-12

*sin...so that the **just requirement of the Torah** might be fulfilled in us who do not live our lives according to what our old nature wants but according to what the **Spirit** wants.<sup>a</sup>*

#### 4.1.6 Spirit—Ruach—‘Heart-mind’

Understanding how the Spirit fulfils the ‘just requirements of Torah’ within the faithful covenant community, requires examining the biblical concept of *spirit*.

The Greek word for ‘spirit’ is *pneuma*; the equivalent Hebrew word is **ruach**, the literal meaning of which is **breath**, or ‘air in motion’. Breath represents inner life; the inner life of humans is communicated through breathing, as well as through words, which are effected with breath.<sup>111</sup> Biologically, there is a clear connection between breath, breathing and the human heart.<sup>112</sup> Scripture presents a similar connection between the *ruach* (breath, spirit) and the *heart* of human beings. Within the Tanakh, *ruach* often appears in parallel with *levav*, the Hebrew word for *heart*, in a way that suggests they effectively refer to the same element within human beings. For example: <sup>113</sup>

*I shall give them one **heart**, and shall put a new **ruach** within them. And I shall take the **heart** of stone out of their flesh and give them a **heart** of flesh.<sup>b</sup>*

Most significantly, Scripture communicates God’s earnest desire for a people whose heart, whose *ruach* is like his, that he may thereby have a people who are like him:

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit (*ruach*) inside you; I will take the stony heart out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit (*ruach*) inside you and cause you to live by my laws, respect my rulings and obey them.<sup>c</sup>*

The Hebrew concept of ‘heart’ incorporates: the “mind, heart, soul, inclination, resolution, determination of will; the conscience and moral character; the seat of emotions and passions, especially courage.”<sup>114</sup> Thus, biblically, the **heart of a person** refers not to the sentimental part of human nature—as is common usage within modern western culture—but to the centre of a whole human being where all inner life takes place, whether

<sup>a</sup> Romans 8:3-4

<sup>b</sup> Ezekiel 11:19; also 8:31

<sup>c</sup> Ezekiel 36:26-27

emotional, rational or spiritual; where imagination, motive and purpose are determined. A better translation—albeit unwieldy for general use—might be “heart-mind.” Thus, within the New Testament, the kingdom of God is said to come with repentance, with *a turning of the heart-mind*, towards complete allegiance towards the Messiah.

*Offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for God. This will please him; it is the logical “Temple worship” for you...Don’t let yourselves be conformed to the standards of the present age. Instead, keep letting yourselves **be transformed by the renewing of your minds**; so that you will know what God wants.<sup>a</sup>*

#### 4.1.7 New creation

*Ruach*, then, and its Greek equivalent, *pneuma*, should not be thought of as referring to ‘spirit’ as some kind of ethereal substance, organically different within those who are ‘saved’, but rather as the integrated ‘heart-mind’ of a person: the seat of conscience, reason, imagination and emotion, which has been ‘awoken’, renewed or revived towards God’s Truth within believers in a way that is not generally true within non-believers.<sup>115</sup>

Thus, when the apostle Paul writes of believers being made a ‘new creation,’<sup>b</sup> he is not essentially referring to an organic, or biological, infusion of a ‘new spirit’ in terms of a fresh, divine ‘breath of air’ within them,<sup>116</sup> rather to an inner renewal of the ‘heart-mind’: a renewal of conscience and consciousness that begins with the *confession* of allegiance to Jesus as Messiah and *Lord*.<sup>117</sup> An allegiance brought to its first climax and outward demonstration at *baptism*—the mark of entrance into new covenant relationship with Adonai, bringing the individual into *union* with the Messiah<sup>118</sup>—yet which is in fact a continual, life-long process of inner *renewal*, itself a vital foreshadowing of the final renewal of humanity and creation:

*You have stripped away the old self, with its ways, and have put on the new self, which is continually being renewed in fuller and fuller knowledge, closer and closer to the image of*

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<sup>a</sup> Romans 12:1-2

<sup>b</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17



*the Creator.*<sup>a</sup>

#### 4.1.8 Conclusion

The anointing of the covenant community with the Spirit of God may be understood as the biblically fulfilment of the ‘writing of Torah upon the hearts,’ prophesied by Jeremiah and related to the “*circumcision of heart*” of which Jeremiah, Deuteronomy and Paul refer.<sup>119</sup>

The result is that the human spirits of the covenant community are being actively and powerfully transformed by the Spirit of God into a mature uniting with the will, understanding, conviction and purpose of the Messiah. The ‘Torah of the Messiah’ is the formative instrument of the Holy Spirit to bring the Messianic Community into this conformance—into the glory of the Messiah: a new-covenant people being re-created in the image of the Creator, the first-fruits of his entire renewal of creation.<sup>120</sup>

The New Covenant thus presents the ‘covenant faithfulness’ of the Messiah,<sup>121</sup> redeeming Jews and Gentiles from their bondage to the human condition of sinfulness and its curse (a condition the Torah ‘highlighted’ but could not change), atoning for their sin and writing the Torah upon their heart-minds, bringing them into an unprecedented relationship of intimacy with God, through the Spirit—and into the promised ‘blessing’ of Abraham.

In return, the New Covenant calls for the ‘covenant faithfulness’ of those who profess an allegiance to the Messiah that incorporates, above all, personal acceptance of Jesus as *Lord* and *Messiah*, evidenced through the rite of baptism; a uniting with the new covenant community *and* a Spirit-led adherence to the ‘Torah of the Messiah’ that brings individuals and the covenant community together into an experience of “*the mind of the Messiah*.”<sup>b</sup>

## 4.2 Body of the Messiah

Thus, the purpose of the anointing of the covenant community—‘anointing’ deriving explicitly from the concept of Messiah, ‘the Anointed One’—is to transform the covenant community into a priestly body possessing the character—the mind, the heart, the will, the

<sup>a</sup> Colossians 3:9-10; see also Romans 8:9

<sup>b</sup> I Corinthians 2:9-16

imagination, the purpose, *the spirit*—of Adonai: the Lord, Jesus, the Messiah and God the Father—who are One. Thus, the covenant community becomes the Messianic Community, a ‘mystery now revealed’:<sup>a</sup> the anointed **body of the Messiah**.

*He has put all things under his feet and made him head over everything for the Messianic Community, which is his body, the full expression of Him who fills all creation.*<sup>b</sup>

The idea expressed by Paul within this text is significant, although the language is obscure, suggesting that the Messiah, who “*fills all creation*”, only properly receives “*full expression*” through his body—in the same way that a head requires a body for completion.

Moreover, to the apostle Paul, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit has the effect of transforming the new-covenant community into a ‘spiritual temple’: a veritable “*dwelling place for God*,”<sup>c</sup> in fulfilment of one of the most poignant of ancient covenant promises:<sup>122</sup> “*You will be my people... I will be your God and I will dwell amongst you.*”<sup>d</sup>

#### 4.2.1 Light of the world

That this extraordinary event of the Holy Spirit’s outpouring took place at Pentecost, in Jerusalem, surrounded by “*religious Jews from every nation under heaven*,”<sup>e</sup> who were able to understand the newly-anointed believers speaking in a multitude of languages “*about the great things God has done*,” had another vitally important impact—it sparks into life the final mandate which the resurrected Jesus had given to his disciples:

*All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me; therefore, **go and make people from all nations into disciples**, immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*<sup>f</sup>

As the Messianic Community of—initially exclusively Jewish—believers received the Holy Spirit in this profound way, they were emboldened to act as witnesses: blending insights into

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<sup>a</sup> Ephesians 3:9,10

<sup>b</sup> Ephesians 1:22-23—see also 1 Corinthians 3:16 & 12:11-13; Colossians 1:18,34

<sup>c</sup> Ephesians 2:22

<sup>d</sup> Leviticus 26:12

<sup>e</sup> Acts 2:5-12 ff.

<sup>f</sup> Matthew 28:19-20

the new covenant with their personal experience of the Messiah, the newly released life of the Spirit within them enlivening their hearts, strengthening their resolve, invigorating their minds to provide a new sense of purpose, conviction, clarity, boldness and determination—evidence of the Torah of the Messiah now effectively written upon their hearts and minds.

Forty days earlier, Peter, for example, had fearfully denied Jesus. Now, he is bold and fearless: preaching to thousands, convicting them of their sin, directing them to recognise Yeshua as Lord and Messiah, instructing them to be baptised, in order to save themselves “*from this perverse generation*”<sup>a</sup>; publicly performing a miraculous healing in the Temple area; finally, arrested, imprisoned and brought before the Jewish religious authorities, Peter speaks of the Messiah and his purposes for the covenant nation of Israel with deep insight, knowledge and trenchant authority.<sup>123</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Messianic: anointed, blessed, covenant community

Peter’s Pentecost message to the Jewish people confirms one of this thesis’ key claims: the new, messianic covenant, its commands and its blessings to the Jewish nation, are firmly rooted within the framework of the Abrahamic covenant:

*You are the sons of the prophets and you are included in the **covenant** which God made with our fathers when he said to Abraham, ‘**By your seed will all the families of the earth be blessed.**’ So it is to you first that God has sent his servant whom he has raised up, so that he might **bless** you by turning each one of you from your evil ways.*<sup>b</sup>

The “*all families*” of the Abrahamic covenant represents exactly the same “*all nations*” to which Jesus instructed his disciples to ‘go,’ in order to make people from those nations into faithful disciples of the Messiah.<sup>c</sup> The word translated “nations,” ‘ethnos’, also meaning “gentiles”; thus, clearly Peter is already looking to horizons beyond Jerusalem, saying to the Jews “*to you first,*” the Messiah was sent, implicitly reminding them of Israel’s true, covenant vocation: a nation blessed to be a blessing to the *gentiles* of the earth.

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<sup>a</sup> Acts 2:40

<sup>b</sup> Acts 3:25-26

<sup>c</sup> Matthew 28:19-20

It is the outworking of this “great commission, to all nations” that inevitably breaks into and eventually opens up the dominant Jewish cultural matrix of the earliest messianic community, forcing it to confront its greatest crisis of identity: the incorporation of Gentiles into the new covenant community.

Before examining the complexities of this highly significant challenge to the messianic community’s development, I will update the ‘graphical panorama’ of biblical covenant history: to include Pentecost, the “body of the Messiah” and the new covenant commission to “make disciples of all nations”:

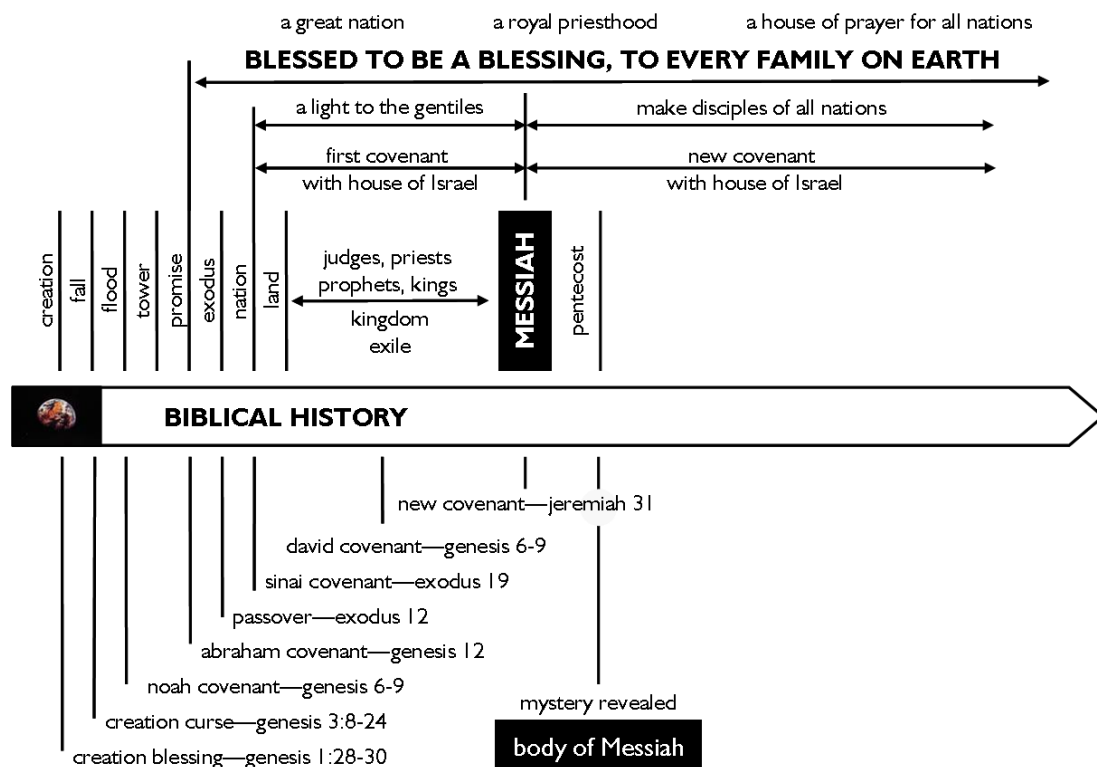


Figure 5 : New Covenant and the Body of the Messiah

## 5 A NEW MESSIANIC COVENANT COMMUNITY

### 5.1 'A light to the Gentiles'

#### 5.1.1 Obscured struggle

When we read the New Testament scriptures from our vantage point today, two thousand years after the earthly life of Jesus, knowing that the gospel has since penetrated so many ethnic groups and cultures and that ‘the Church’ has become an entity distinct from

the Jewish people; Christianity quite distinct from Judaism, it is difficult for us to comprehend the depth of the cultural struggle that the early Jewish followers of Jesus had to engage with.<sup>124</sup> In fact, the development of Jewish tradition, up to that time, meant that Jews scrupulously avoided certain forms of contact with Gentiles, who were associated with paganism, generally considered ‘unclean’ and unsuitable for Jews to associate closely with:<sup>125</sup>

*For a man who is a Jew to have a close association with someone who belongs to another people, or to come and visit him, is something that just isn't done.<sup>a</sup>*

Without understanding this cultural struggle, a great deal of the New Testament doesn't make proper sense. Grasping this is made more difficult by some modern versions of the Bible too readily translating the Greek word *ethnos*, as “nations,” rather than “gentiles.” Though sometimes a suitable translation, in many contexts “nations” is inadequate to communicate the intercultural impact of what is being described.<sup>126</sup> For example, Jesus began his ministry by going to a region of Israel that was associated with Gentiles:

*The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, in the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people which dwelt enveloped in darkness have seen a great light; and for those who sat in the land and shadow of death Light has dawned.<sup>b</sup>*

To translate this as “Galilee of the nations”—as does the Modern King James, for example—obscures a subtle but important statement which Jesus was making with his actions. Even when “Gentiles” is used, the cross-cultural issue is still not always obvious.

The highly significant question, effectively being asked throughout the New Testament, is: can a Gentile be grafted <sup>127</sup> into the Abrahamic covenant community? And, if so, How?

### 5.1.2 Gospels, Jesus and Gentiles

The significance of the Gentiles is clearly depicted by the gospel writers. Matthew, in his patriarchal genealogy of Jesus, deliberately includes four women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba—each of whom is a Gentile. Luke notes the importance of the ministry of John

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<sup>a</sup> Acts 10:28-29

<sup>b</sup> Matthew 4:15,16 (Amplified Bible)

the Baptist proclaiming “**all humanity** will see God’s deliverance.”<sup>a</sup> He also writes about Shim'on, a devout, righteous Jew who meets Jesus’ parents within the Jerusalem Temple, on the occasion of Jesus’ *b’rit-milah*<sup>128</sup>:

*It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah of Adonai...Shim'on took him in his arms... and said, “I have seen with my own eyes your yeshu'ah (“salvation”) which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples—a light that will bring revelation to the **Gentiles** and glory to your people Isra’el.”*<sup>b</sup>

Throughout the course of Jesus’ life, teaching and ministry it becomes clear that he is making a series of significant statements about the Gentiles. To modern readers, these messages may not even initially appear to be about Gentiles, but to first-century Jewish listeners and observers, looking to Jesus as a teacher and prophet—and potentially the Messiah— of Israel, it would have been clear that a series of profound statements were being made. For example, the account of a Gentile woman, whose daughter has a demon:

*The woman was a Greek, by birth a Syro-phoenician and she begged him to drive the demon out of her daughter. He said, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children’s food and toss it to their pet dogs. She answered him, ‘That is true, sir, but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s leftovers.’ Then he said to her, ‘For such an answer you may go home; the demon has left your daughter.’”*<sup>c</sup>

To understand this passage fully, it is necessary to examine the parallel passage in Matthew, where Jesus explains his initial rejection of the women’s requests, declaring: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” At this, the woman falls at his feet, the above exchange takes place, following which Jesus answers the woman: “Lady, you are a person of great trust. Let your desire be granted.”<sup>d</sup>

To hear a Gentile commended for demonstrating great faith or trust would have stunned

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<sup>a</sup> Luke 3:4-6

<sup>b</sup> Luke 2:25-38

<sup>c</sup> Mark 7:24-30

<sup>d</sup> Matthew 15:22-28

Jesus' Jewish followers and listeners. However, it was the application of her trusting faith that especially interested Jesus: she was not only an example of a trusting Gentile, but the "great trust" for which she is commended clearly rested on understanding that Jesus, the Jewish prophet, would not deny the overflow of God's grace to the Gentiles. In this sense, she understood the kingdom—the government-of God—more than the religious Jews who claimed to be heirs of Abraham's faith and of Moses authority!

A similar echo is found in Jesus' commendation of a Roman centurion, who says to Jesus:

*'Sir, I am unfit to have you come into my home. Rather, if you will only give the command, my orderly will recover. For I too am a man under authority. I have soldiers under me, and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes; to another, 'Come!' and he comes; to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it.'*

On hearing this Yeshua was amazed and said to the people following him,

*'Yes! I tell you, I have not found anyone in Isra'el with such trust! Moreover, I tell you that many will come from the east and from the west to take their places at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven with Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya'akov. But those born for the Kingdom will be thrown outside in the dark, where people will wail and grind their teeth!'*<sup>a</sup>

This was a very strong message, worthy of a Jewish prophet! The Jewish leaders and religious sects knew that they were being addressed by this warning: not only were Gentiles to be invited "*from the east and...west*"—apparently including the very pagans, the despised Romans, now oppressively ruling over Israel—while "*those born for the kingdom*"—a direct allusion to those taking pride in their physical descent from Abraham—would be rejected. No wonder some of them began to plot Jesus' death—as their spiritual ascendants had done with other prophets before.<sup>129</sup>

### 5.1.3 Gentiles within early messianic community

This emerging struggle between Jewish and Gentile identity within the early messianic community continues in the book of Acts, chapters ten and eleven providing the most telling

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<sup>a</sup> Matthew 8:8-12

account. Therein, Peter, a close apostle of Jesus, enters a trance and receives three visions which, at first sight, seem to be about *treif* food.<sup>130</sup> However, Peter comes to understand that the real meaning is that:

*God has shown me not to call any **person** common or unclean... I now understand that God does not play favourites... whoever fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him, no matter what people he belongs to.*<sup>a</sup>

In other words, Peter, even after receiving from Jesus the ‘great commission’ to make disciples of all nations, still needed to be convinced by the Holy Spirit, in order to be ready to go and speak to a group of God-fearing Gentiles!

As these Gentiles are listening to Peter explaining that Jesus’ had “*been appointed by God to judge the living and the dead... that everyone who puts his trust in him receives forgiveness of sins,*” the Holy Spirit comes upon the Gentiles—to the shock of Jewish onlookers!—enabling them to “*speak in tongues,*” following which Peter decides to immerse them “*in the name of Yeshua the Messiah.*”<sup>b</sup>

This important event sparks a veritable revolution, as others, thrust out of Jerusalem by a persecution, begin to speak about Jesus beyond the Jewish synagogues and communities—including the Greeks of Antioch. The evangelisation of Gentiles gathers pace with the missionary work of Paul and Barnabas throughout Greece. In each place, beginning by speaking in the synagogues, when unbelieving Jews stir up trouble for them, they retort that they will therefore take the message to the Gentiles, citing Isaiah 49.6 in support: “*I have set you as a light for the Gentiles, to be for deliverance to the ends of the earth.*”<sup>c</sup>

As a result many people believe and trust in Jesus and the message about him spreads widely. As one of the ‘pillars’ of the community, Peter’s revelation and declaration of the acceptability of Gentile peoples in the eyes of God—if they “*do what is right*”—has made it

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<sup>a</sup> Acts 10:34-35

<sup>b</sup> Acts 10:36-48

<sup>c</sup> Acts 13:47



clear that the hitherto wholly Jewish new-covenant community must accept the social integration of Gentiles.

Peter's revelation, however, has left important theological questions unanswered. Inevitably, as the new covenant community continues to work out the implications of the Messiah's life, death, resurrection and teaching, more and more issues and questions are raised—none more vital to the embryonic messianic community than the Gentiles and their manner of entrance into both covenant relationship and the covenant community. The role of comprehending and answering these questions falls, in God's providence, to a man named *Sh'aul*, a zealous Pharisee, with an education in both Greek and Hebrew language and culture, as well as a deep regard for and understanding of both Torah and covenant.<sup>131</sup>

*Sh'aul*, also known as Paul,<sup>132</sup> in a series of nuanced, yet impassioned epistles, takes on the task of offering both a series of profound theological explanations, as well as a determined, indignant, personal defence of the identity, nature and freedom of the messianic covenant community.<sup>133</sup> In particular, Paul opposes those who wish to undermine new-covenant truth and liberty and who are attempting to take the messianic community into directions that, according to Paul, are entirely against the counsels of God and the intent of the Messiah.

## 5.2 Covenant incorporation of Gentiles

### 5.2.1 Foreigners to the covenants

*Remember your former state: you Gentiles by birth... at that time had no Messiah; you were estranged from the national life of Israel; you were foreigners to the covenants embodying God's promise you were in this world without hope and without God.<sup>a</sup>*

In his epistle addressed to the Ephesian community of messianic followers, Paul is found confirming this thesis' foundational premise: **the covenants embody God's purpose and promise**. Hitherto, this hope has been directed solely toward Israel; Gentile estrangement from the "*national life of Israel*" implying nothing less than being outside of God's covenant

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<sup>a</sup> Ephesians 2:11-12

faithfulness<sup>134</sup>—where they are without any hope of deliverance through God’s appointed Messiah. Indeed, according to Paul they are “*without God*” at all: essentially, estrangement from Israel—from the covenants—represents complete estrangement from God.

### 5.2.2 Once far off, now brought near

Paul, however, does not stop there; his message now firmly one of hope for the Gentiles: “*You who were once far off have been brought near through the shedding of Messiah’s blood.*”<sup>a</sup>

Paul declares that, through Messiah’s death, Gentiles, formerly without hope, formerly outside the scope of the covenant faithfulness of God, have now been brought near to God; brought into covenant relationship through the Messiah, alongside the Jews—yet without becoming Jewish converts.

How could this be? How, in terms of covenant—the governing paradigm of Jewish worldview and mainstay of their relationship with Adonai—could Gentiles be incorporated? Were the Gentiles to form a second covenant group? Were they to become circumcised, to become Jewish proselytes? These were the kind of questions that immediately rose within the minds of first-century Jews and those who understood their Torah-dominated culture. Paul continues with his explanation, employing two key Hebraic terms to describe what has occurred through the Messiah’s death:

*[The Messiah] himself is our **shalom**—he has made us both one and has broken down the **m’chitzah** which divided us, by destroying in his own body the enmity occasioned by the Torah, with its commands set forth in the form of ordinances.*<sup>b</sup>

### 5.2.3 The breaking down of the m’chitzah

First of all, Paul refers to a *m’chitzah* being broken down. *M’chitzah* is the term for a partition or divider which acts to separate people into two groups, such as the partition which is still used to separate men from women in an Orthodox Jewish synagogues. Here though, Paul is referring to a wall within the Temple. This Temple divider is a stone

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<sup>a</sup> Ephesians 2:13

<sup>b</sup> Ephesians 2:14

partition, approximately one and a half metres in height, which separates the Temple's inner courts—the Holiest Place, into which only Jews could enter—from the Court of the Gentiles, an outer area of the Temple where non-Jewish worshippers of Adonai could enter, but beyond which they were completely barred.

Paul's reference to the *m'chitzah's* destruction employs it as a powerful metaphor to drive home the reality that the Gentiles are now on an equal footing with the Jews in relation to Adonai, the Lord. Paul declares that Jesus did this by destroying the enmity between the Jews and Gentiles 'stirred up by' the existence of Torah.<sup>135</sup>

The Jews' gift and embrace of Torah had separated them out as God's covenant people—yet it was not intended to be so for their own benefit, rather in order that they should serve God's purposes, ultimately, becoming "*a light to the Gentiles.*"<sup>a</sup> That purpose was now working out through the Messiah and the emerging Jewish remnant: the messianic-covenant community. But for centuries Torah had effectively highlighted the division between the Jews and Gentiles, thereby stirring-up hatred between the two communities which God intended one day to join into a single covenant community—a reality so extraordinary and so significant that Paul refers to it as nothing less than a new humanity:

*He did this in order to create in union with himself from the two groups a single new humanity and thus make shalom.*<sup>b</sup>

According to Paul, Torah-observance *as understood by the non-Messianic Jews*, could no longer be the arbiter or defining characteristic of who belonged to the covenant community—of who was being faithful to the covenant God. Paul's renewed understanding of Torah contends that those counted as members of the new-covenant community are those faithful to the crucified and resurrected Messiah: confessing allegiance to him as Lord and abiding in a relationship of trusting faithfulness, obeying the Torah as interpreted and upheld by the Messiah and his apostles.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Isaiah 49:6

<sup>b</sup> Ephesians 2:13-15

Within this community neither “*being circumcised nor being uncircumcised matters; what matters is being a new creation.*”<sup>a</sup> In this community, love for neighbour is the highest command, second only to loving God himself, and fellowship between those of different races, religious factions and ‘doctrinal sensibilities’ is paramount. Thus, even though Torah-observance continues to be a feature of life for members of the new covenant community, the enmity stirred up by it is destroyed, since fellowship, love and unity are elevated above all other commands.<sup>137</sup>

#### 5.2.4 Shalom

*Shalom* is thus the second key term which Paul employs to describe what is happening through this reconciliation, this uniting of two groups formerly divided against each other. This weighty Hebrew word is typically translated as ‘peace,’ though it actually holds a much fuller meaning incorporating all of the following: tranquillity, safety, well-being, welfare, health, contentment, success, comfort, wholeness and integrity. *Shalom*, thus understood, represents God’s ideal will for human beings. But because of rebellion, evil and wickedness the ‘shalom’ he originally intended humans to experience and enjoy has been corrupted, broken, destroyed.

Paul is therefore saying that in the Messiah—through Gentiles being incorporated into the covenant relationship, being joined with the messianic covenant community—God’s gift of ‘shalom’ is being restored to them: an indication of the reconciliation that has taken place between them and the Jews, by both being joined with the Messiah, but more significantly, an indication, a sign, of the reconciliation between pagan Gentiles *and God himself*. Thus, those formerly cut off from the covenant community and promises are now reconciled and brought into the covenant faithfulness of God, represented by *shalom*.

Through this reconciliation, a ‘new humanity’, is being created: incorporating paganised Gentiles, as well as exiled Jews, now reconciled to God: One Body united with the Messiah, in which God has begun to restore humanity—a kind of first-fruits of his restoration of the

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<sup>a</sup> Galatians 6:15

whole creation.<sup>138</sup>

### 5.2.5 Access in one Spirit to the Father

Paul's reference to the *m'chitzah* also hints at the destruction of the *parokhet*—the veil that separated the Holiest Place from the Holy Place, into which the high priest normally only entered once a year, within which the *Sh'khinah* presence, the glory of God had dwelt within the “ark of the covenant.”<sup>139</sup> Metaphorically, the tearing of the *parokhet*<sup>140</sup> represented the ending of the ministry of the earthly high priests, the signal that the earthly temple and sacrifices were being superseded by the sacrifice and intercession of the Messiah. This is essentially the message of the biblical book of Hebrews.

*Inside the parokhet...a forerunner has entered on our behalf, namely, Yeshua, who has become a high priest forever...If the system of cohanim (priests) is transformed, there must of necessity occur a transformation of Torah...<sup>a</sup>*

Whereas the ‘old covenant’ priesthood, descended from Aaron, established by Moses, catering for the people of Israel alone, “*did not bring anything to the goal*”—hence the requirement for a *kapparah* to be made year after year—by contrast, the new covenant established by the Messiah, provides a once and for all times *kapparah*, a single offering that “*has brought to the goal for all time those who are being set apart for God and made holy.*”<sup>b</sup>

*This is the kind of high priest that meets our need—holy, without evil, without stain, set apart from sinners and raised higher than the heavens; one who does not have the daily necessity of offering up sacrifices...because he offered one sacrifice, once and for all, by offering up himself...he lives forever...and consequently he is totally able to deliver those who approach God through him, since he is alive forever and thus forever able to intercede on their behalf.<sup>c</sup>*

Here we again see evidence of the overlapping and intersecting circles of Hebraic thought, flowing from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, through the *midrashic* expositions of

<sup>a</sup> Hebrew 6:19b-20 & 6:12

<sup>b</sup> Hebrews 10:14

<sup>c</sup> Hebrews 7:26, 25

the writer of Hebrews; at the centre of all these circles of thought, each time, is the new centre of God's covenant revelation: the Messiah and the new, messianic covenant, the way into which is open not only to members of the 'old covenant' community,<sup>141</sup> "those nearby," the Jews, but also to those "far off," the Gentiles.

#### 5.2.6 Fellow-citizens, members of God's family

Paul, having set out exactly where the Gentiles formerly were and how they have "now been brought near" to God by the Messiah, reaches the summit of his proclamation of what has happened to them:

*So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers. On the contrary, you are fellow-citizens with God's people and members of Gods' family. You have been built on the foundation of the emissaries and the prophets, with the cornerstone being Yeshua the Messiah himself. In union with him the whole building is held together...growing into a holy temple in union with the Lord. Yes, in union with him, you yourselves are being built together into a spiritual dwelling place for God!<sup>a</sup>*

A summary of Paul's description of the former state of Gentile peoples includes being:

- in this world without hope
- without God
- having no (hope or promise of the) Messiah
- estranged from the national life of Israel
- foreigners to the covenants

In complete contrast to this former, forlorn state, Gentiles united with Messiah are described as being:

- fellow citizens with God's people
- members of God's family
- joined to the house—the commonwealth—of Israel

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<sup>a</sup> Ephesians 2:19-22

- grafted into the 'vine' of Israel
- incorporated into covenant community

The result of this transformation of fortune is that Jewish and Gentile followers of Yeshua together form:

- a new, messianic covenant community
- a single 'new humanity' of Jews, Gentiles
- a building founded upon the Messiah, his apostles and prophets
- a 'holy temple'—a dwelling place for God
- the mystical 'body of messiah,' filled with the Spirit of God

#### 5.2.7 Gentiles share faith of Abraham

Traditionally, the Jews saw themselves as the natural and spiritual descendants of Abraham, the premier Patriarch of the Jewish nation and faith.<sup>142</sup> This was why they found it difficult to accept that Gentiles could become sharers in the covenant promises of God: Gentiles were not descended from Abraham.

Thus, in order to challenge the complacency of Jews who assumed that their natural, physical descent from Abraham brought them favour with God, Paul reminded the Jews that it was specifically and *only* those who stood in the tradition of Abraham's trusting faithfulness towards God's covenant promises—not merely those who were natural descendants—who were registered by God as righteous.<sup>143</sup> A real Jew, according to Paul, must not merely be a physical descendant, nor merely familiar with what Torah says, but a real Jew must do what the Torah says: being faithful as Abraham was, trusting God and giving him glory and praise, even when hope appears forlorn.<sup>144</sup>

The ultimate goal of Paul's exegesis is to establish that the trusting new-covenant faithfulness of Gentile followers of the Messiah is as equally authentic as the trusting new-covenant faithfulness of Jewish followers. To confirm this argument, Paul directly connects messianic faith expressed by Gentiles with the faith expressed by Abraham:

*Those who rely on trusting and being faithful are blessed along with Abraham, who trusted*

*and was faithful.<sup>a</sup>*

Paul makes the same point in his epistle to the Romans:

*Is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, he is indeed...*

*because as you will admit, God is one.<sup>b</sup>*

Ergo, although Jews and Gentiles come from very different cultures and spiritual backgrounds and Gentiles do not share in the former covenants, both are alike under the condemnation of sin and both, through expressing faith in the Messiah, are made equal in the sight of God.<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, Paul is suggesting that the incorporation of the Gentile peoples into covenant relationship with God is no afterthought: it was in the mind and heart of God centuries before, precisely when he made the covenant with Abraham:

*The Tanakh, foreseeing that God would consider the Gentiles righteous when they live by trusting and being faithful, told the Good News to Abraham in advance, by saying, 'In connection with you, all the Gentiles will be blessed.'<sup>c</sup>*

Paul thus expounds the idea that God's consideration of the Gentiles as righteous—as faithful members of the covenant community—was not only foretold within Scripture, but the covenant blessing given to Abraham—“*in connection with you, all the Gentiles will be blessed*”—actually represents God's seminal revelation to Abraham of the new covenant message: the “Good News” of the Messiah.

Accordingly, this “Good News”—the announcement of the kingdom reign of God arriving within the Messiah, of which Paul has been made an emissary<sup>d</sup>—is to be understood as having been previously announced to Abraham. Effectively this announcement represents the divine response to the rebellion of humanity.

Hence, the present work of God through the Good News, though ‘new’ in clarity and application, is not new in character or intent. In fact, it represents “*a mystery now made*

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<sup>a</sup> Galatians 3:9

<sup>b</sup> Romans 4:11-16

<sup>c</sup> Galatians 3:8

<sup>d</sup> Romans 1:2-6



*plain*”—one entirely in accordance with the Torah and the faith of the Patriarchs with whom the covenants were made:<sup>146</sup>

*Good News, in harmony with the secret revelation of the secret truth which is the proclamation of Yeshua the Messiah, kept hidden in silence for ages and ages, but manifested now through the prophetic writings, in keeping with the command of God the Eternal and communicated to all the Gentiles.<sup>a</sup>*

Clearly, God's 'eternal purpose' was within his heart and mind from the onset of covenant history. It was proclaimed to the Patriarch Abraham, confirmed by Torah and the Jewish Prophets, brought to completion in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, and expounded by the revelatory, apostolic teaching of Paul to the early Messianic Community!

#### 5.2.8 Inheriting the blessing, receiving the Spirit

Within his announcement to Abraham, God revealed his commitment to bless Abraham and, through him, all the families of the earth. This blessing is brought towards its goal within the new covenant, as the Gentiles—formerly cut off, without hope of reconciliation with God—receive forgiveness for sins, deliverance from the power of death and the Holy Spirit:

*Yeshua the Messiah did this so that **in union with him the Gentiles might receive the blessing announced to Abraham**, so that through trusting and being faithful we might receive what was promised, namely, the Spirit.<sup>b</sup>*

Here Paul explains that the Gentiles receipt of the Spirit is a direct fulfilment of the covenant promise.<sup>147</sup> The Abrahamic blessing represented God's covenant response to the rebellion of man and the reality of which is described in the events of Genesis chapters three through to eleven, recording the curse of death proclaimed upon Adam;<sup>148</sup> humankind's exile from the fruit-laden garden and subsequent descent into a breed exhibiting only evil, chaotic wickedness. Thus, whereas sin and rebellion brought the **curse** of death, deceit and decay, union with the Messiah brings the **blessing** of the Spirit who gives life:

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<sup>a</sup> Romans 16:25-6

<sup>b</sup> Galatians 3:9-14

*If the Messiah is in you, then, on the one hand, the body is dead because of sin; but, on the other hand, the Spirit is giving life because God considers you righteous.<sup>a</sup>*

Similarly, whereas the Sinai covenant was glorious, bring illumination and condemnation of sin, but lacking power to deliver human beings from the law of sin and death;<sup>149</sup> by contrast the new covenant transforms those who live by trusting faithfulness in the Messiah, the new 'breath' of the Spirit inhabiting the new covenant people of God, changing them into the image, mind and character of the Messiah:

*ADONAI is this text means the Spirit. And where the Spirit of ADONAI is, there is freedom.*

*So all of us, with our faces unveiled, see as in a mirror the glory of the Lord...we are being changed into his very image, from one degree of glory to the next, by ADONAI the Spirit.<sup>b</sup>*

### 5.3 Covenant partnership : blessing the nations

Furthermore, Adonai invites those who are willing to trust in and follow his Messiah, to receive the fresh 'breath' of his Spirit, to become **covenant-partners**, pursuing his eternal purpose.<sup>150</sup> Gentile followers of the Messiah, by being united spiritually to the Messiah have become the spiritual "seed of Abraham" and, as a consequence, heirs of the blessing:

*If you belong to the Messiah, you are seed of Abraham and heirs according to the promise.<sup>c</sup>*

#### 5.3.1 Inheriting the blessing

Accordingly, those united with the Messiah are not only those who themselves are 'blessed,' but also those who are "to be a blessing...to all the families of the earth," receiving not only the blessing of first horizon of the covenant promise—the blessing of God towards them—but the also receiving the injunction of the second horizon—the injunction to be a blessing to all the families of the earth:

*I will make of you a great nation. I will bless you and I will make your name great and **you are to be a blessing**. I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse anyone who curses*

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<sup>a</sup> Romans 8:10-11

<sup>b</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

<sup>c</sup> Galatians 3:26-29

*you; and **by you all families of earth will be blessed.***<sup>a</sup>

What this means is that the body of the Messiah—the Messianic Community, the *ekklessia*, the Church—has inherited the Abrahamic blessing and are, therefore, themselves, like Abraham *avinu* before them, **blessed to be a blessing...to all the nations of the world**. God has invested his blessing in those who follow the Messiah, in order that they reach out to other families, peoples and nations to bless them.

### 5.3.2 Failing to inherit the blessing

Adonai's covenant promise to bless Abraham was not simply for his own benefit or that of his descendants; Abraham and his descendants were blessed *for a specific purpose*: to demonstrate God's covenant faithfulness and for his blessing to spread out to all nations. Whenever Israel became insular and parochial and failed in serving the God's purposes, Israel suffered God's judgement. Yet God could not abandon his eternal covenant—instead, he disciplined them, sometimes severely, in order to return them towards faithful covenant service.

In two thousand years, the Messianic, Christian covenant community—the Church—has also become insular, parochial, self-serving, even idolatrous and, for long periods, largely failed in its vocation to be a blessing to the nations of the world. Oftentimes, other forces—military, legal, political and religious—entered into the moral vacuum, further short-circuiting the blessing that God intended to come through his covenant community. Nevertheless, the blessing of God has continually flowed out towards all nations and in the twentieth century, if numerical growth is any measure, it reached surging proportions.<sup>151</sup>

### 5.3.3 The responsibility of the blessing

Today, the Abrahamic blessing of God remains upon those who are united with the Messiah through their faith: they are **blessed to be a blessing to all the nations of the world**. To receive the blessing without seeking to be a blessing to peoples outside covenant represents faithlessness towards the new covenant into which followers of the Messiah have

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<sup>a</sup> Genesis 12:1-3

been brought and, effectively, a rejection of the covenant terms. Thus, Paul suggests that those confessing allegiance to the Messiah must act in covenant partnership with God—sharing practically in the “*fellowship of his suffering*”<sup>a</sup>—or they cannot claim an inheritance alongside the Messiah:

*The Spirit himself bears witness with our own spirits that we are children of God and if we are children, then we are also heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with the Messiah—*

***provided we are suffering with him in order to be glorified with him.***<sup>b</sup>

Thus, all those united with the Messiah—Messianic Jews and Gentile Christians—are called into a form of ‘covenant community partnership’ with God: *called to serve the eternal purpose of God.*

**God’s ‘new covenant’ with the house of Israel expresses and reveals God’s commitment to create a faithful messianic covenant community...**a Holy Spirit-anointed covenant-keeping community, receiving and imparting the ‘shalom’ of the kingdom, through forgiveness of sin—‘a single new humanity’—a mystical ‘body of the Messiah’—comprising Jew and Gentile together, reaching out to all nations with the Good News of God’s reign through his Son

## 6 CONCLUSION

### 6.1 God’s eternal purpose

#### 6.1.1 The covenants reveal God’s eternal purpose

From the genesis of creation, throughout the ages and the various biblical covenants, to the present and into the future, God has been and remains committed to his eternal purpose. He has never been, nor ever will be, diverted from it, until all is fulfilled. In the new covenant he has been faithful to this eternal purpose, revealed progressively through the covenants and the prophetic writings that bear witness to it:

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<sup>a</sup> Philippians 3:10

<sup>b</sup> Romans 8:17

God's covenant commitment	...with	...therefore / through the covenant
to uphold his creation	<b>Noah</b>	God will not abandon his commitment to his creation, in spite of man's evil
to bless all the families of the earth through 'a great nation'	<b>Abraham</b>	God is committed to restoring his creation—marred by human rebellion—using a covenant community to bring human beings back into right relationship with him
to use a covenant community to reveal his love and glory to the whole world	<b>Israel</b>	God chooses an unimportant nation to demonstrate through them his goodness, kindness and loving faithfulness towards a world of people which has rebelled against his eternal purpose for Creation
to anoint one of David's descendants to eternally establish God's kingdom reign on earth	<b>David</b>	God hints at a coming Anointed One—a Messiah—a coming King who will establish the Kingdom of God eternally
to create a renewed, faithful covenant community, reaching out to bless all nations through the Good News of God's reign through his Messiah	<b>Israel, Messiah Yeshua</b>	God establishes a Spirit-anointed, covenant-keeping community of Jew and Gentile together, receiving and imparting the 'shalom' of the kingdom

Table 3 : God's purposes through the covenants

Clearly, throughout 'covenant history', God has been resolutely working out his purposes in covenant partnership with human communities:

- The first covenant recognised his commitment to creation. He would not 'begin again,' but work through *this* creation.
- The second and third covenant revealed and established his method: a covenant nation through which all other nations would ultimately be blessed.
- The fourth and fifth covenants revealed an Anointed King—a king, in some mysterious way, who was actually the Eternal One, God himself—acting to bring reconciliation, redemption and righteousness to a renewed covenant-community, **blessed**—by the outpouring of the Holy Breath of God—to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Together the covenants reveal...

**God's eternal purpose accomplished in the Messiah Yeshua.<sup>a</sup>**

#### 6.1.2 Bringing many sons to glory

*Those who love God and are called **in accordance with his purpose**...he determined in advance would be **conformed to the pattern of his Son**, so that he might be the **firstborn among many brothers**; and those whom he thus determined in advance, he also called; and those whom he called, he also caused to be considered righteous; and those whom he caused to be considered righteous, he also **glorified!**<sup>b</sup>*

Paul, writing to the Roman believers, arrives at one of the summits of his epochal arguments, speaking specifically about those called *in accordance with God's eternal purpose*, for whom the process of their *conformance to the pattern of the Son*, the Messiah, comes to completion with their *glorification*. The writer of Hebrews makes essentially the same point when he declares:

*In **bringing many sons to glory**, it was fitting that God, the Creator and Preserver of everything should bring the Captain of their salvation to the goal through suffering.*<sup>c</sup>

The Messiah was brought by God, through suffering, to his goal.<sup>152</sup> Which goal? The goal of “bringing many sons to glory”...“that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” Thus, God's eternal purpose may be understood as bringing many ‘sons’ to glory.<sup>153</sup>

### 6.2 New covenant glory

What does it mean to be brought to glory? The New Testament principally presents the following five distinct, though overlapping, aspects of ‘glory’.

#### 6.2.1 The glory of the Messiah

‘Glory’ typically refers to “brilliant, radiant beauty, splendour” or “high honour.” The Hebrew word, *Sh'khinah*, refers uniquely to the glorious presence of God. In the old

<sup>a</sup> Ephesians 3:11

<sup>b</sup> Romans 8:29-30

<sup>c</sup> Hebrews 2:9-10

covenant schema, the *Sh'khinah* presence dwelt in the Holiest place, only entered by the high priest, once a year. In the new covenant schema, the *Sh'khinah* presence was no longer confined to the temple, but located absolutely within the Messiah:

*...his Son, to whom he has given ownership of everything and through whom he has created the universe. This Son is the radiance of the **Sh'khinah**, the very expression of God's essence, upholding all that exists by his powerful word.<sup>a</sup>*

The New Testament, however, also presents the Messiah as a relatively inglorious figure, “emptying” himself and “taking the form of a slave,” in order to obey God, in a way that resonates with the curious Messianic prophesy of Isaiah, “he was not well-formed or handsome...his appearance did not attract us...he was despised; we did not value him.”<sup>b</sup>

Thus, the New Testament presents a more subtle form of glory. One that does not physically overwhelm, as when angels met prophets like Daniel, Ezekiel and John, causing them to fall on their faces,<sup>154</sup> but rather which invites trust, confidence, love and self-surrender and, ultimately, transformation into the likeness of the character of the Messiah.

*The Word became a human being and lived with us and we saw his **Sh'khinah**, the **Sh'khinah** of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.<sup>c</sup>*

#### 6.2.2 The glory of knowing the Messiah

Such transformation takes place mysteriously within the hearts of those in covenant relationship with the Messiah.

*God who...said, “Let light shine out of darkness”...has made his light shine in our hearts, the light of the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of the Messiah Yeshua.<sup>d</sup>*

Those who respond to this glory of the grace, truth and humility of the Messiah are thus, themselves “...changed into his image from one degree of glory to the next.” However, this transformation does not take place in a spiritual vacuum, but by following in the footsteps of

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<sup>a</sup> Hebrews 1:1-3

<sup>b</sup> Isaiah 53:2-3

<sup>c</sup> John 1:14

<sup>d</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:6

the Messiah, who “*learned obedience through his sufferings.*”<sup>a</sup>

### 6.2.3 The glory of suffering with the Messiah

Peter was one of three disciples who ascended a mountain with Jesus and saw him transformed, exhibiting brilliant, radiant splendour and actually heard the Father speak:

*We saw his majesty with our own eyes...we were there when he received honour and glory from God the Father and the voice came to him from the grandeur of the Sh'khinah, saying 'This is my son, whom I love; I am well pleased with him!'*<sup>b</sup>

Yet, Peter also saw Jesus completely abased, humbled to the point of a despicable death on an execution stake—and was almost certainly changed more by the latter than the former. Peter thus presents this aspect of God's ‘glory’ to his readers: the willingness to be completely humbled and to suffer in the pursuit of serving God's eternal purpose.<sup>155</sup>

*If you are being insulted because you bear the name of the Messiah, how blessed are you! For the Spirit of the **Sh'khinah**, that is, the Spirit of God, is resting on you...if anyone suffers for being Messianic, let him not be ashamed; but let him bring glory to God by the way he bears his name.*<sup>c</sup>

Peter carefully subverts the traditional notion of the *Sh'khinah* presence, transforming it to include the resting of the Spirit of God upon those who suffer for following the Messiah. The essence of this subversive message is, in reality, the core of the Good News: the immense paradox that true life, eternal life, real, restored, abundant human *life* comes through embracing *death*.<sup>156</sup> Not primarily the final death, but a life of ‘sharing in the fellowship of the Messiah's sufferings’. Thus, Paul writes of his own apostolic experience:

*We have all kinds of troubles, but we are not crushed; we are perplexed, yet not in despair; persecuted, yet not abandoned; knocked down, yet not destroyed. We always carry in our bodies the **dying** of Yeshua, so that the **life** of Yeshua may be manifested in our bodies too. For we who are **alive** are always being handed over to **death** for Yeshua's*

<sup>a</sup> Hebrews 5:8

<sup>b</sup> 2 Peter 1:17; cf. Matthew 17:6

<sup>c</sup> 1 Peter 4:12-16



sake, so that Yeshua's **life** also might be manifested in our mortal bodies. Thus, **death** is at work in us but **life** in you.<sup>a</sup>

Paul also declares "I die every day,"<sup>b</sup> in speaking of the surrendering of his life to serve God, in spite of abasements, hardships, persecutions, hunger, danger...

*It was because of him that I gave up everything and regard it all as garbage in order to gain the Messiah and be found in union with him...I gave it all up in order to know him, that is to know the power of his **resurrection** and the fellowship of **sharing in his sufferings** as I am being conformed to his **death**...*<sup>c</sup>

Paradoxically, Paul explains, those who suffer with the Messiah are being transformed into his likeness through an experience of 'dying to live.'<sup>157</sup> They are highly honoured—blessed—yet willing to lay aside honour, wealth, acclaim in order to reach out to others: to be a blessing to the all the *ethnos* of the world. The glory manifested in those who so live, invisible in this life, will prove of immeasurable worth in the age to come:

*Our light and transient troubles are achieving for us an everlasting glory whose weight is beyond description*<sup>d</sup>

Effectively, within the new covenant matrix, for those "with an ear to hear,"<sup>e</sup> a new subtle, form of honour is ascribed to those willing to "take up their cross" in following the Messiah along the narrow road of living an intercessory life on behalf of others:<sup>158</sup>

*By his knowing pain and sacrifice my righteous servant makes many righteous; it is for their sins that he suffers. Therefore, I will assign him a share with the great...for having exposed himself to death...interceding for the offenders.*<sup>f</sup>

Those willing to travel this road will share with the Messiah in his glory:

*We are also heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with the Messiah—provided we are*

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<sup>a</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:8-12

<sup>b</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:31

<sup>c</sup> Philippians 3:8-11

<sup>d</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:17-4:17

<sup>e</sup> Revelation 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9

<sup>f</sup> Isaiah 53:10-12

*suffering with him in order to be glorified with him. I don't think the sufferings we are going through are even worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us in the future.<sup>a</sup>*

#### 6.2.4 The glory of resurrection with the Messiah, in the new heaven and earth

The New Testament presents the Messiah's glorification-through-resurrection as the 'first-fruits' of a new creation, which ultimately in the *olam-haba*, the age to come, will be consummated in a regeneration of creation that effectively marks a reuniting of God's glory with the whole of creation:<sup>159</sup>

*The creation waits eagerly for the sons of God to be revealed; for the creation was made subject to frustration...but it was given a reliable hope that it too would be set free from its bondage to decay and would enjoy the freedom accompanying the glory that Gods' children will have.<sup>b</sup>*

In the Regeneration, the *Sh'khinah* presence will dwell continuously amongst human beings, his glory covering and reigning over the earth, filling it with his *shalom*.

*We, following along with his promise, wait for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness will be at home...<sup>c</sup> I saw a new heaven and a new earth...I heard a loud voice from the throne say, See! God's *Sh'khinah* is with mankind and he will live with them. They will be his peoples and he himself, God-with-them, will be their God.<sup>d</sup>*

At that time, God's covenant people will be glorified—restored, through their resurrection from the dead, to the absolute fullness of life and humanity, as manifested by the Messiah. Not an ethereal escape to a celestial paradise dislocated from this earthly creation, but inhabiting a glorious spiritual body fitted for life within a renewed creation:

*There are heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies, but the beauty and glory of the heavenly bodies is of one kind, while the beauty and glory of earthly bodies is a different kind. So it is with the resurrection of the dead...As surely as there is a physical body, there*

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<sup>a</sup> Romans 8:17-18

<sup>b</sup> Romans 8:19-23

<sup>c</sup> 2 Peter 3:13, citing Isaiah 65:17 & 66:22

<sup>d</sup> Revelation 21:1-3—evoking Leviticus 26:11, Isaiah 7:14, 8:8; Jeremiah 31:34; Ezekiel 37:27

is also a spiritual body...<sup>a</sup>

This spiritual body is not simply about being alive forever. Rather about liberation from the *curse* of corruption, death, disease, mortality. Receiving the fullness of life, of true humanity, united with and formed into the character, the image of the Messiah; having the capacity to fully live, on earth, sharing in the *olam' haba*—the world, the age to come—as God intends human beings to live: *Created* in unhindered fellowship with *Creator*.<sup>160</sup>

### 6.3 Completing the biblical panorama

In conclusion, the final elements can be included in the schematic biblical panorama constructed by this thesis: the incorporation of the messianic gentiles, the great commission and new covenant 'ministry of reconciliation' and the final culmination of the Messiah's return and the resurrection of the dead in the renewed creation completing **God's eternal purpose**: to bring many people to his glory.

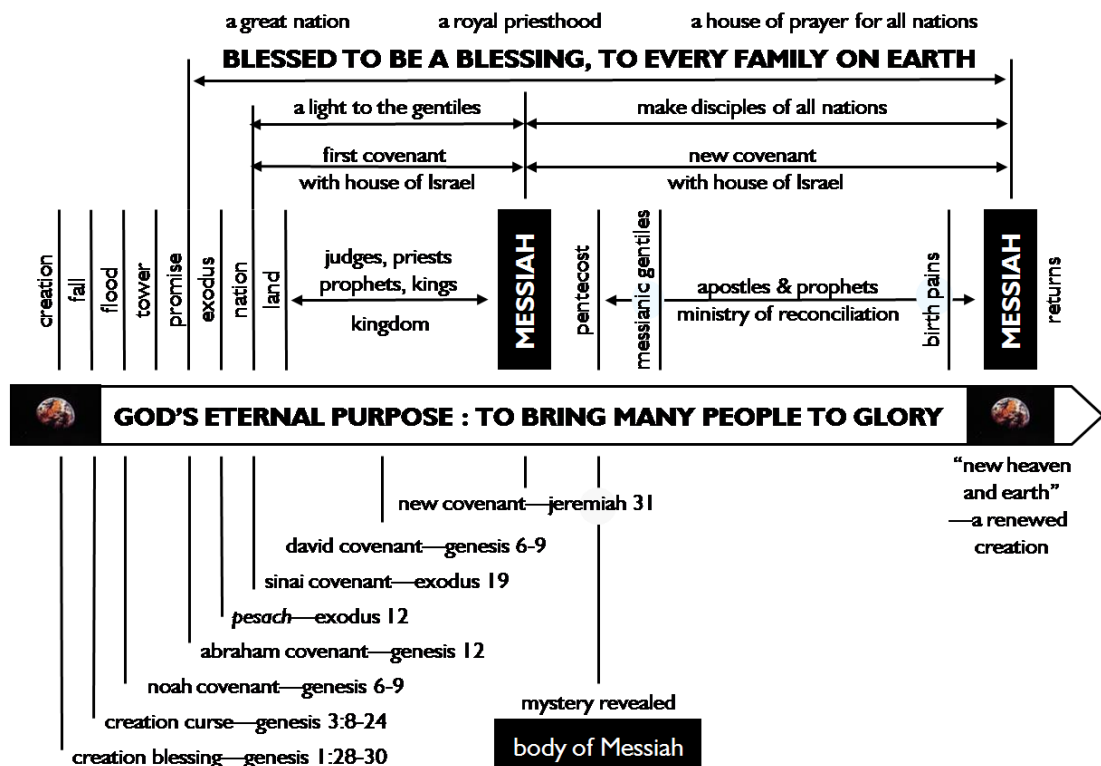


Figure 6 : The Eternal Purpose of God

<sup>a</sup> I Corinthians 15:40, 44 (Amplified Version)

## ENDNOTES — AUTHORITIES, REFERENCES AND EXCURSIVES

A number of authors—namely, Wright, Dumbrell and Stern—and particular texts—see abbreviations below—are continuously cited, to avoid repetition, full citations are not always included in the endnotes, but appear for all texts in the Bibliography.

Abbreviations used in endnotes:

- NTPG — The New Testament and the People of God
- JNTC — Jewish New Testament Commentary
- Yeshua — Yeshua, A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church

<sup>1</sup> Dumbrell, W., p.47, 61 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 12-17

<sup>3</sup> The Jewish Scriptures, known to Gentiles as the Old Testament. See Appendix 2—Glossary.

<sup>4</sup> How so? Because it is not an *abandonment* of relationship—though it undoubtedly changes the former one—it is rather a disciplining of Adam's choice by giving him over to a hitherto unknown experience of unavoidable adversity.

<sup>5</sup> Wright, NTPG, p.260 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 21.22-32; 26.26-33; 31.43-54; 2 Kings 20.29-34

<sup>7</sup> Dumbrell, W., p.94 ff

The term *beriyth* appears over 250 times within the Tanakh, with no distinction, other than context, made between secular and divine covenant: e.g., 2 Samuel 10.19; 1 Kings 15.19, 20.34; 2 Kings 18.7 & 24.1

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 34.10-15 is an example of a text that incorporates both human and divine covenants in a passage of speech Adonai speaks to Moses. The same Hebrew word is used for both and no significant terms are attached to either usage, implying no distinction is intended between them.

<sup>9</sup> Jeremiah 34.18 ff.; note similarity with Abraham's experience in Genesis 15

<sup>10</sup> Dumbrell, W., p.16-20

<sup>11</sup> 2 Kings 17.3

<sup>12</sup> Dumbrell, W., p.17

*"When God made his promise to Abraham, he swore an **oath** to do what he had promised...When God wanted to demonstrate still more convincingly the unchangeable character of his intentions to those who were to receive what he had promised, he added an **oath** to the promise." Hebrews 6.10*

<sup>13</sup> Dumbrell, W., p.26-31, 33-36

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, chapter 1 (p. 11-41); see Hosea 6.7 and margin notes (most translations, not CJB)

<sup>15</sup> Although the term "covenant" is not mentioned directly within this passage (Genesis 12.1-3), that a covenant was being formed is confirmed by ensuing texts within Genesis 15, 17, 22. Therein, as well as specific reference to the covenant, over thirty promissory elements (blessings) are included, particularly with respect to Abraham's descendants, whom Adonai promises will inhabit the land of *Kena'an*, as well as through whom Abraham will become "a father to many nations."

Dumbrell, W., chapter 2

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.64-5

Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 251-2, 259-60 ff., 407

<sup>17</sup> Dumbrell, W., p. 64-5

<sup>18</sup> Genesis 15.13-14 & Exodus 12.40

<sup>19</sup> Dumbrell, W., p. 85-89

<sup>20</sup> Literally “Teaching,” or “Instruction”; for further notes on “Torah” see ‘Appendix 2 : Glossary of Terms’

<sup>21</sup> Leviticus 18.5; Deuteronomy 4.1-40; cf. Leviticus 26-29; Deuteronomy 6.4-8

*“I give you good instructions; do not forsake my Torah. It is a tree of **life** to those who take hold of it and those who hold fast to it are happy. Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.” (Proverbs 4.2 and 3.18)*

Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 261-3, 246;

Dumbrell, W., p. 123 ff.

<sup>22</sup> Dumbrell, W., p. 98-104, 93-97

Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 261

Exodus 4.22; 6.6; 15.19.5

<sup>23</sup> Dumbrell, W., p. 112-13, 104 ff.

Exodus 25-31, 35-40 (tabernacle, priesthood); Leviticus 1-10 (offerings)

<sup>24</sup> Amos 5.21-24; Psalm 51.16-17

<sup>25</sup> Jeremiah 3.1; Ezekiel 16.26-29 et al.; also James 4.4

<sup>26</sup> Dumbrell, W., p. 119-123

<sup>27</sup> E.g. Deuteronomy 30; Joshua 24

<sup>28</sup> See 2 Chronicles 7.18 and Psalm 89.3

<sup>29</sup> 2 Chronicles 9, especially v. 22-24; 1 Kings 11.1-13 ff.

<sup>30</sup> 1 Kings 11.1-13

<sup>31</sup> 2 Kings 17.7-23 & 18.12

<sup>32</sup> 2 Kings 22-23

<sup>33</sup> 2 Kings 24-25; Daniel 1.1-2

<sup>34</sup> 2 Chronicles 7.12-22

<sup>35</sup> Jeremiah 23:5-6; Isaiah 9.6-7, 11.1-5; Amos 9:11; (Zechariah 6.12-13)

The apostle Peter, speaking on the day of Pentecost about God’s oath to David, confirms that this is indeed what happened in the person of Jesus, the “Son of David”:

*Therefore, since [David] was a prophet and knew that God had sworn an oath to him that one of his descendants would sit on his throne, he was **speaking in advance about the resurrection of the Messiah**, that it was he who was not abandoned in Sh’ol and whose flesh did not see decay. God raised up this Yeshua!*

<sup>36</sup> Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 268ff.

*“By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept, as we remembered Zion... How can we sing a song about Adonai here on foreign soil?” (Psalm 137)*

<sup>37</sup> Isaiah 40.1-2; Jeremiah 31.31,34,38,40; Ezekiel 36.24-5,28

Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 273, 299-301 ff.

*“Israel’s God had to deal with her sins. The end of exile, in fact, would be seen as the great sign that this had been accomplished...sacrifice, suffering and the experience of exile were held to carry redemptive significance. The age to come, the end of Israel’s exile, was therefore seen as the inauguration of a new covenant between Israel and her god...When Israel finally ‘returned from exile’, and the Temple was (properly) rebuilt and re-inhabited by its proper occupant—this would be seen as comparable with the making of the covenant on Sinai. It would be the re-betrothal of YHWH and Israel, after their apparent divorce. It would be the real forgiveness of sins; Israel’s god would pour out his holy spirit, so that that Israel would be able to keep the Torah properly from the heart. It would be the circumcision of the heart of which Deuteronomy and Jeremiah had spoken. And...it would above all be the ‘kingdom of god.’ Israel’s god would become in reality what he was already believed to be. He would be the King of the whole world.”*

<sup>38</sup> Haggai 2.1-9

- <sup>39</sup> Wright, N.T., *The Challenge of Jesus*, p. 76-7, 86-7  
Most commentators agree that the two messengers within Malachi 3.1 (prophetically) refer to John the Baptist and Jesus respectively—Matthew 11.10-11
- <sup>40</sup> Ezekiel 34.23-24 ff., 37.24-25; Isaiah 11.1, 55.3-4; Jeremiah 30.9; Hosea 3.5  
Wright, N.T., *NTPG*, p. 267 (Psalms of Solomon); see 33 above
- <sup>41</sup> See, for example, Matthew 2.4, 22.42, 26.63; Mark 12.35; Luke 3.15; John 1.20, 4.25-42, 7.26-31, 41-42
- <sup>42</sup> Ezekiel 34; Isaiah 50.4-11, 52.13-53.12
- <sup>43</sup> Stern, D., *JNTC*, p.1
- <sup>44</sup> Genesis 18 & 20.7
- <sup>45</sup> Deuteronomy 34.10; Exodus 32.7-14 ff.; Numbers 12; Hebrews 3.1-6
- <sup>46</sup> Psalm 106.23
- <sup>47</sup> Jeremiah 23.18-22 and Amos 3.7; compare Matthew 11.25, 13.11 & John 15.5
- <sup>48</sup> E.g. Samuel (1 Samuel 10.1; 15.1, 17; 16.13; 1 Chronicles 11.3), Elisha (1 Kings 19.16); 1 Kings 1.34—a priest and a prophet anoint a king  
John the Baptist's role in baptising Jesus is probably best understood in this light. Following the baptism of John, the Spirit of God came upon him in a dramatic new way and his identity as 'the Son of God' (the Messiah) was powerfully affirmed by the Father—Matthew 3.13-15
- <sup>49</sup> 2 Samuel 12.16; 15.31; 24.17; 1 Kings 8.26; 2 Kings 20.5; 1 Chronicles 21.17  
1 Kings 8.54; 2 Chronicles 7.1, 12
- <sup>50</sup> Hebrews 4.14-16; 6.18-19; 9.1-10 ff., 10.19-22
- <sup>51</sup> Romans 9.5  
Wright, N.T., *NTPG*, p. 427-8 *et al*;  
Wright, N.T., *The Challenge of Jesus*, chapter 2  
Wright, N.T., *What St Paul Really Said*, chapter 4  
Wright is recognised as emerging from a school of disparate theological scholarship referred to as 'New Perspectives' or sometime, *covenantal nomism*, where he features alongside E.P. Sanders and Jimmy Dunn. These scholars have pioneered an understanding of the New Testament which re-examines long held assumptions (hence 'new perspective') about the Judaism of Jesus and Paul's day, and thus, how Paul in particular should be understood in the light of his Jewish roots.
- <sup>52</sup> Matthew 13.57, 16.14, 21.11,46; Mark 6.15; Luke 7.16, 13.33, 24.19; John 4.19, 6.14, 7.40, 9.17; Acts 3.22
- <sup>53</sup> Wright, N.T., *The Challenge of Jesus*, chapter 2
- <sup>54</sup> "Son of Man"—Matthew 24.30, 25.31, 26.64; Mark 8.38, 14.62, Luke 9.26, 21.27, 22.69; Ezekiel 2.1 ff.  
Stern, *JNTC*, p. 35, emphasising the "full identification with the human condition" implied within this title, as taught in Romans 5.12-21, 8.3-39, 1 Corinthians 15.21-49 etc.
- <sup>55</sup> Daniel 7; Wright suggests (*NTPG* p. 291-7) that the designation "Son of Man" could have been understood as a reference to a community, i.e. a remnant of Israel, not necessarily only an individual—or both, a theme explored at length within Perriman's "*The Coming of the Son of Man*," in a radical, explorative eschatology.
- <sup>56</sup> "Son of Man"—Matthew 26.64  
Jesus' "time" or "hour"—John 2.4, 7.6,8,30, 8.20, 13.1, 17.1
- <sup>57</sup> Acts 7.51; Romans 2.29; Leviticus 26.41; Deuteronomy 10.16, 30.6; Jeremiah 9.26; Ezekiel 44.7-9
- <sup>58</sup> Matthew 23.1-39, incorporating the "eight woes" addressed directly to the Torah-teachers and P'rushim!
- <sup>59</sup> Acts 6.7, 15.5, 21.20, 26.5
- <sup>60</sup> John 10.22-24; "Are you the Messiah?" was the major question addressed to Jesus by the religious elite.

<sup>61</sup> Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 384

<sup>62</sup> Stern, JNTC, p.2

Matthew 22.43-45, Mark 12.35, Romans 1.3; see also Acts 13.23, together with: 2 Samuel 7.12-16; Isaiah 11.1 (in context of Isaiah 7-12); Jeremiah 23.5-6; Zechariah 3.8; Ezekiel 37.24; Amos 9:11-12; Psalms 89:3-4,35-36, 132.11 *et al*

Also: Matthew 9.27, 12.23, 15.22, 20.30, 21.9 & 15 and parallel passages within Mark and Luke where various individuals or crowds called out to Jesus using this title.

<sup>63</sup> Within Paul's epistles, particularly the introduction to Romans (vv.3-4), Jesus as God's Son, "descended from David *physically*" is contrasted with his being "powerfully demonstrated to be Son of God *spiritually*...by his...resurrection from the dead"; both aspects appear to combine towards Paul's summary announcement: "he is Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord."

<sup>64</sup> Wright, N.T., The Last Word, p. 84

Wright, N.T., New Testament and PoG, p. 395

Wright, N.T., What St Paul Really Said, p. 70 ff.

Stern, D., JNT Commentary, p. 21

Shulam, J, p. 30 — along with Wright and Stern, Shulam points out that the terminology of 'son of God' was also commonly applied to Israel, thus use of the title deliberately strengthens the identification of the Messiah with Israel.

<sup>65</sup> Wright, N.T., The Challenge of Jesus, p. 78-82

<sup>66</sup> Stern, D., JNTC, p. 21

"This theologically important New Testament term can mean:

1. a godly person
2. the special one sent by God
3. the son of God in the flesh
4. a human whose presence on earth required a special creative act of God, hence Adam or Yeshua ("second Adam")
5. Yeshua who in his earthly lifetime could relate to God as his personal father, "Abba"
6. the divine eternally existent individual or Logos ("Word") who has and always will be within the inner "structure" of Adonai, the one God, in equal and subsidiary relationship with the Father"

<sup>67</sup> Wright, N.T., What St Paul Really Said, chapter 4

<sup>68</sup> Psalm 89.9, 93.4 *et al*; John 20.30

Boyd, Gregory A., God At War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict, 205-214

<sup>69</sup> Stern, JNTC, John 8.58-9—p. 183; John 10.30,38—p. 188-9

John 5.18 specifically links the charge of blasphemy with Jesus making himself "equal with God"...by claiming that God was his Father—achieved not through espousing the title "Son of God," but through his making claims such as "I and the Father are one." (John 10.30; also 5.17-18,23, 8.54-8, 14.6,23, 16.28, 17.5)

<sup>70</sup> Matthew 22:41-46, 26:62-66; Mark 12.35-37, 16.19; Daniel 7:9-14; Acts 2.33-36; Acts 5.30-31, 7.55-56; 1 Corinthians 15.25; Ephesians 1.20-2; Colossians 3.1; Hebrews 1.3, 1.13, 10.12-13, 12.2; 1 Peter 3.21-22 *et al*

To these citations could be added the opening greetings of Paul's epistles which almost invariably mention both "God [*theos*] the Father and the Lord [*kurios*] Jesus Christ," in recognition of their united, divine authority.

Wright, N.T., What St Paul Really Said, p. 77-8

David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand of God: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (SBL Monograph 18; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973)

<sup>71</sup> <http://www.hebrew-streams.org/works/monotheism/council.html> provides a detailed study on "the Heavenly Council," incorporating biblical evidence of "heavenly throne-room" imagery, including a human vice-regent figure...

Wright, N.T., *The Challenge of Jesus*, p. 77

<sup>72</sup> Stern, JNTC, John 8.58-9, p. 183; John 10/30, p. 189

<sup>73</sup> John 1.1-18—the Word ‘tabernacles’ with human beings; the Tabernacle was the abode of the *Sh’kinah*, prior to the construction of the Temple, strengthening the theme of the Messiah replacing the Temple.

Stern, D, JNTC, p. 154 — Logos is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew, *Davar*, meaning “Word” and biblically carrying the sense of not only ‘what is spoken’ but also ‘what is done,’ a thing or reality that *is*.  
<http://www.hebrew-streams.org/works/ntstudies/divrei-yishkon.html>.

Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 413-6 — Logos also has connotations of a ‘rational principle governing the universe’ (Greek thought) and ‘a hypostasis associated with divine wisdom’ (Judaism)

<sup>74</sup> Romans 16.25-27—see also 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; Colossians 1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3;; 1 Timothy 3.16; 2 Timothy 1.10; 1 Peter 1.2

<sup>75</sup> Wright (*What St Paul Really Said*, 1997, p. 65 ff.) suggests that the following texts, from Paul’s epistles, display the clearest indication of nascent Trinitarian thought and doctrine: 1 Corinthians 8.6—referencing Deuteronomy 6.4, the *Sh’mā*; Philippians 2.5-11—cf. Isaiah 45.23; Galatians 4.1-7; Colossians 1.15-20

<sup>76</sup> Wright, N.T., *The Challenge of Jesus*, chapter 5—Wright presents a discussion that looks beyond the either-or debate regarding “Is Jesus God?” in order to focus upon how Jesus and his disciples and followers understood him and his vocation.

<sup>77</sup> John 10.10-18; Hebrews 13.20; 1 Peter 5.4  
 Ezekiel 34.12, 23-24 and 37.24; also Genesis 49.24; Psalm 23

<sup>78</sup> Wright, N.T., *What St Paul Really Said*, chapter 3

<sup>79</sup> Hebrews 7.22; 8.6

<sup>80</sup> Hebrews 2:17; 3:1; 4:14, 15; 5:1, 5, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 26; 8:1, 3; 9:7, 11, 25; 10:21; 13:11;

<sup>81</sup> Genesis 14 and the messianic Psalm 110

<sup>82</sup> Romans 4.16; Isaiah 51.2; John 8.58 (cf. Luke 11.31)

<sup>83</sup> Matthew 3.2, 4.17, 10.7; Mark 1.15; Luke 10.9-11

Wright, N.T., *The Challenge of Jesus*, chapter 2

<sup>84</sup> 1 Samuel 16.13, “*Sh’mu’el (Samuel) took the horn of oil and anointed him there in his brothers’ presence. From that day on, the Spirit of ADONAI would fall upon David with power.*”

Also: Exodus 30.30-33; 40.15; Leviticus 8.12 etc.

<sup>85</sup> Stern, JNTC, p.233; literally, “people of the Land”—ordinary, unlearned people. Also John 7.49.

<sup>86</sup> 2 Corinthians 5.19,20

<sup>87</sup> Acts 3-6

<sup>88</sup> Acts 4.20

<sup>89</sup> Acts 2.15-40; 3.12-26; 7.1-53; 8.32-36; 13.16-41; 15.14-18; 24.14-16 (Paul “*I continue to believe everything that accords with Torah and everything written in the Prophets.*”); 28.23-29

[Note: contrast the above passages, typically replete with Tanakh citations, with occasions when the apostles communicated the Good News to Gentiles, e.g. Acts 10, which mentions “*all the prophets bear witness to him,*” but barely quotes the Tanakh]

<sup>90</sup> Fuller, Daniel P. *Gospel and Law*, chapter 3, p. 65 ff.—Fuller highlights the role of various dialectic theologies, including ‘covenant theology’ [n.b. *not* equated with the arguments advanced within this thesis!] and ‘dispensationalism’ in particular, in eliciting this false dichotomy, with its roots in 2<sup>nd</sup> century Marcionism.

Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 414

Moseley, Dr Ron, *Yeshua, A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*, p.73 ff.

Stern, D., JNTC, p. 156

Dumbrell, W., *Covenant and Creation*, p. 126



In contrast to a 'Westminster Confession' Reform tradition which casts "the (old) covenant of works" against "the (new) covenant of grace", it is notable that Calvin declared the reality of only one covenant: the covenant of grace that stands for all time: "God has never made any other covenant than that which he made formerly with Abraham, and at length confirmed by the hand of Moses."—Calvin, *Commentary on Jeremiah*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989), 31:31-34

<sup>91</sup> Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 365-9

<sup>92</sup> From the JNTC: "The festival of Shavu'ot ("Weeks") is one of the three *regalim* ('pilgrim festivals') when every Jewish male goes up to Jerusalem (Matthew 20.17-19). The others are *Pesach* (Passover) and *Sukkot* (Tabernacles); see Matthew 26.2 and John 2.13, 7.2.

The name "Shavu'ot" comes from Exodus 34.22 and Deuteronomy 16.9-10, which along with Leviticus 23.15-16, determine that the festival is to be seven weeks after the start of *Pesach*. Leviticus 23.16 also says "You shall number fifty days" hence in the New Testament the Greek name for the holiday is "*pentékostēs*," which means "fifty" and is usually transliterated into English as "Pentecost." Two other names for the festival are found in the Tanakh: "*Yom-HaBikkurim*" ("Day of the First-Fruits," Numbers 28.26) and "*Chag-HaKatzir*" ("Feast of the Harvest," Exodus 23.16)

<sup>93</sup> N.T. Wright argues that the significance of 'doing' Torah, within Second-Temple Judaism, was concerned with marking oneself, or one's group, out as the righteous remnant, faithful members of the covenant community, those who would be vindicated when the Lord 'restored Israel'. Probably fortunately, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to develop these distinctions and arguments, however, see footnote 110 below: "*Opposed to legalism, not to Torah.*"

<sup>94</sup> 2 Peter 1.4

<sup>95</sup> One of the clearest passages which makes explicit this dichotomy is Hebrews chapter 8, which essentially goes as far as suggesting that the first covenant would never have needed replacing, had it not been for its inability to induce faithfulness amongst the covenant community.

The 'fault' though was not with the covenant, but with the people. The 'old' covenant thus exposed the sinfulness, or unfaithfulness of the people (v.9). This is the general argument of the New Testament regarding 'Torah' (when referring to the first or 'old' covenant). The New Covenant is superior because of its basis upon better promises: namely that it includes Torah being written upon the hearts of the covenant community—a transformation of the human heart—as well as a once-and-for-all atonement for sin.

<sup>96</sup> Galatians 3.21-2; also Romans 8.1-4, 13-14; Galatians 4.6-7, 5.16, 25 *et al*

<sup>97</sup> John 1.29, 36; Acts 8.32; 1 Peter 1.19; John 6.31-58

Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 416

Wright, N.T., *What St Paul Really Said*, p. 82—Wright refers to the death and resurrection of the Messiah as the "coping-stone of the divine plan..."

<sup>98</sup> Moseley, Dr Ron, *Yeshua, A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*, p. 73ff.—

Within rabbinic literature, the Greek words translated as "abolish" and "fulfil" have Hebrew equivalents that throw a new light on this scripture: 'abolish' referring to "incorrectly interpret," while the idea behind 'fulfil' means to 'correctly interpret', as well as 'to cause it to stand erect and upright'. Thus, Jesus was declaring his intention to 'correctly interpret' the Torah. It was consistent with rabbinic methods and ideas for this to include expanding or strengthening Torah commands, as in the 'sermon on the mount', as well as radically revising commands, such as Jesus did with his teaching about the Sabbath, hence, "*The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath*"—a direct messianic claim to be transforming Torah.

These ideas strengthen the idea that Jesus' inauguration of the new covenant was about a renewal of the principal, Abrahamic covenant, not about bringing it to an end, but to greater effectiveness through the atonement and subsequent gift of the Spirit which forms the new covenant relationship and blessing.

Stern, D. *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, (1997), p. 136 & p. 240-3—within rabbinic tradition, only the Messiah could amend—or renew—the eternal Torah through his interpreting and teaching of it

<sup>99</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis to present the arguments surrounding a cluster of key scriptures that together allow a promulgation of this theology. An exhaustive apologetic that does consider every single New Testament passage concerned with these is contained within the 'Jewish New Testament Commentary.' A

summary of the position espoused within the Commentary is contained within the 'Messianic Jewish Manifesto.' Both works are by Dr David H Stern and fully referenced within the Bibliography.

See also: Fuller, Daniel P., *Gospel and Law*, chapter 4

- <sup>100</sup> See Stern, D., *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, Chapter V: Torah, for a full discussion of: Christian Theology of "the Law," including a discussion of '*nomos*,' the Greek word for Torah / Law.

Wright, N.T., *What St Paul Really Said*, p. 47

- <sup>101</sup> Such elements are principally the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system. The purity ("kosher") laws are often assumed to have been replaced (Wright, NTPG, p. 453), however, Stern (JNTC, p. 93-4, 257-8, 528-531) refutes this, suggesting that the *primacy* of these commands has been transformed within the new covenant: fellowship between individuals and groups now being of *greater* importance (Romans 14).

- <sup>102</sup> Stern, D., JNTC, p. 240-1, 432, 466, 566-70  
Stern, D. *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, p. 136, 240  
Wright, N.T., *The Challenge of Jesus*, chapter 5

The *Temple* was principally subverted by the New Testament concept of the body of the Messiah, whereby first the Messiah's resurrected body and then the bodies of new covenant believers, individually and corporately, are identified as a "temple of the Holy Spirit"; a subversion made more radical by the AD 70 destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, as prophesied by Jesus.

Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 365-9

- <sup>103</sup> Most particularly, the *b'rit milah* (covenant circumcision), Sabbath observance and food laws.

Stern, D., JNTC, p. 462-7

This was basically the central issue of the Acts 15 council and of Paul's arguments in Galatians 2

Moseley, Dr Ron, *Yeshua, A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*, p. 77-81

- <sup>104</sup> Related principally via the Mishnah—rabbinic commentary upon the Torah—and Oral Torah...

- <sup>105</sup> "*Torah came through Moses, grace and truth through Jesus Christ.*" The suggestion is of a development, not a dichotomy: Torah was given through Moses; it became the defining document that identified and codified the will of the creator God. Yet in itself it lacked the empowering grace to deliver human beings from the curse of mortality and sinfulness. The truth that came through the Messiah came with that grace, with the power to deliver.

Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 411

Stern, D., JNTC, p. 156

Moseley, Dr Ron, *Yeshua, A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church...*, p. 77-81—Moseley posits a scheme of accepting the ongoing validity of many of the tenets and commands of the Pentateuch; the significant distinction he draws is between those which applied to the Jews only (Sabbath-keeping, dietary laws etc.) and those which are universally applicable (prayer, study, monogamous marriage, avoidance of sexual perversion, respect for property etc.) because they are to do with good relationships and reverence for God, falling broadly into the four categories of Torah observance deigned as appropriate for Gentiles by the Acts 15 council.

- <sup>106</sup> The Greek title, "*Pros Ebraious*" ("To Hebrews") of the New Testament book, 'Hebrews', is found on many of the earliest manuscripts, suggesting its early adoption, although it was not actually part of the original letter. The title is clearly intended to indicate that the contents of the epistle are of interest to believers in Yeshua the Messiah who are Jewish—the *cahanut* (priesthood), sacrificial system, angels, Malki-Tzedek, Avraham, Moshe, Israelites in the wilderness, biblical covenants, Tanakh's people of faith, role of Torah in the New Covenant etc. Today, Jews are rarely thought of as Hebrews and thus 'Messianic Jews' is more appropriate.

- <sup>107</sup> See 'Jewish New Testament Commentary,' notes on 'Messianic Jews' 8.6b, for a full discussion on why this is not only a valid translation, but the only translation that is consistent with the use of '*nomos*'—translated throughout Messianic Jews (Hebrews) as 'Torah' (or 'Law')—and its derivative nouns, such as *nenomothetêtai*, which is here translated as 'given as Torah,' but typically, within Gentile translations, as 'established' or 'enacted,' which has no precedent. E.g. Hebrews 7.11, where *nenomothetêtai* is exclusively translated, "received the law" (where law clearly refers to Torah, not some kind of political or general

'legislation'; hence, translated 'given the Torah' by the CJB)

<sup>108</sup> Stern, D., *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, chapter 5

<sup>109</sup> ***Opposed to legalism, not to Torah.***

If the New Testament upholds the Torah of the Messiah, how should those passages which apparently speak disparagingly about "the law" be understood? The answer is based upon the premise that the Spirit is not against Torah, but is against *legalism*.

Paul points out that "life" was promised, in Leviticus 18.5: "the person who does these things will attain life through them." (Romans 10.5). Within Jewish cultural life, Torah was recognised as a "tree of life" to faithful covenant partners—as both Psalm 119 and Hebrews 11 testify, in different ways. However, it was also paradoxically an occasion of stumbling to many, who sought to obtain 'life' through a mechanical obedience devoid of trust in God himself:

*Israel, even though they kept pursuing a Torah that offers righteousness, did not reach what the Torah offers. Why? Because they did not pursue righteousness as being grounded in trusting but as if it were grounded in doing legalistic works. (Romans 9.31-32)*

Paul is effectively explaining that Torah faithfulness can become perverted into legalism, a binding "yoke" of proud, unspiritual pseudo-obedience, seeking to obey the written Torah without dependence upon God's grace, mediated through the Messiah, by the Spirit.; consequently, a system devoid of either grace or mercy (Acts 15.10).

Under the Sinai Covenant, an elaborate system of animal sacrifice served to provide atonement for sin, in recognition of *Torah's inability to transform human nature*; thus, at that time, covenant faithfulness required involvement with this system of sacrifice, mediated primarily through the Temple and the Levitical priestly caste.

Within the New Covenant, sacrifices for sin have been done away with by a once-for-all atonement through the Messiah, which provides for human transformation and deliverance from the sinful aspect of the human nature. (*Hebrews 10.9.10*)

The question that Paul tries to answer—primarily within his 'epistle to the Romans'—is does this atonement—this being made holy, once and for all—mean that it is not longer necessary to submit to Torah—the Teaching or 'Instruction' of God?

*Does it follow that we abolish Torah by this trusting? Heaven forbid! On the contrary we confirm Torah. (Romans 3.31)*

In another twist to the 'antinomianism' debate: N.T. Wright (in this representing the "New Perspectives" scholarship) suggests that within Second-Temple Judaism, Torah provided rules the obeying of which evidenced the "badges" of covenant membership, the "wearing" of which (by 'doing' acts of Torah obedience) demonstrated who was "in" the covenant community and could therefore expect to be "saved" from destruction when the judgement of God vindicated Israel by destroying her enemies. These 'badges,' Wright claims were 'worn' by various groups within Judaism as a way of showing who represented the "righteous remnant," who were faithful to the covenant, who were the true heirs to righteousness, the "true Israel." Wright's claim is that they "signalled to oneself and to one's neighbour, that one was hearing the story and living by it." [NTPG, p. 232, 238]

Ostensibly this sounds quite different to the traditional translation of the concept of 'legalism' as a "ladder" of righteousness, by which the 'legalist' seeks to obligate God to provide him with a 'berth in heaven.' [Stern] However, aside from the misleading focus of deliverance provided within Wright's analysis—concerned with either an earthly deliverance or a post-mortem one—the contrast between these two positions is possibly less than it appears at first.

It seems to me that the Torah 'legalist,' whether as traditionally defined by Stern, or as posited by Wright, endeavours to incorporate acts of Torah-obedience as a method of *establishing recognition* of their (or their communities) *right to justification* (*being considered by God to be righteous, "in the right"*)...i.e. an establishment of God's favour, his covenant blessing, based upon *works*, rather than his *grace*. *Neither* represents God's proper intent for Torah, which was trusting faithfulness towards God expressed within the covenant relationship.

*For further discussion see:*

Fuller, Daniel P., *Gospel and Law*, chapter 4, esp. p. 87 ff.  
 Wright, N.T., *What St Paul Really Said*, chapter 7

<sup>110</sup> John 10.27-9

Moseley, Dr Ron, *Yeshua, A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church...*, p. 76

<sup>111</sup> Think, for example, how breathing communicates: anxiety, through breathlessness; determination, through 'taking heart' by drawing fresh breath; depression, through sighing etc.

<sup>112</sup> See Appendix I for a discussion of methods of 'doing Biblical theology', particularly those which are unorthodox within a modern Western paradigm.

<sup>113</sup> Further: "The heart of the Egyptians will melt within them . . . the ruach of the Egyptians will be demoralized within them." — Isaiah 19:1; see also Psalm 51.10 *et al*

<sup>114</sup> From Strong's Concordance

<sup>115</sup> Although: Romans 2 (v.14-16 and 26-27) reminds us that those without explicit knowledge of Torah are capable of doing those things which Torah requires, because it is—somehow—already "written upon their hearts."

<sup>116</sup> Though such a belief or concept is not necessarily excluded, it is not the essence of the process of anointing, which is to transform the covenant community into a body which possesses the character—the mind, the heart, the will, the imagination and purpose—of the Messiah and of God the Father—who are One.

<sup>117</sup> Romans 10.4-13

<sup>118</sup> Romans 6.23 *et*

<sup>119</sup> Jeremiah 4.4, 31.33, 32.39-40; Deuteronomy 10.16; 29.6; 30.6; Ezekiel 11.19, 36.26-7; 44.7; see also Leviticus 26.41; Jeremiah 9.23ff.; Exodus 6.12; also Acts 7.51, Romans 2.26-9; [Philippians 3.3](#)

<sup>120</sup> James 1.18

Wright N.T., *What St Paul Really Said*, chapter 8, which states that the key texts that amplify New Testament teaching about creation's renewal are: 1 Corinthians 15, Romans 8, Colossians 3; 2 Corinthians 4 & 5 and the closing verses of Philippians 3.

<sup>121</sup> Wright, N.T., *What St Paul Really Said*, chapter 6, p.95-111—within which Wright elucidates Paul's teaching on *dikaïos theou*, "the righteousness of God", explaining how the historical and literary contexts posit an interpretation of this concept representing "the covenant faithfulness of God" (and, or the Messiah).

It is this author's suggestion that "righteousness" when applied to human beings, may also be understood as a reference to "covenant faithfulness," an amplification which, I suggest takes nothing away from the forensic application of righteousness (law court analogy), but does tie in this central New Testament teaching to the covenant paradigm which this thesis posits as fundamental to the entire canon of scripture.

Dumbrell, 1984, p.34: "*righteousness in the Old Testament basically indicates behaviours consistent with the nature of a relationship already established. In the later Old Testament the presupposition for behaviour response is universally the covenant relationship...*"

Wright, NTPG, p. 271-2 *et al*

<sup>122</sup> Genesis 17.7; Exodus 6.7; Jeremiah 7.23, 11.4, 30.22, 31.33, 32.38; Ezekiel 11.20; Hebrews 8.10

<sup>123</sup> Acts 3.1-10, 4.13

<sup>124</sup> Stern, D., *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, p. 241

<sup>125</sup> Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 238-9—Wright suggests that there was a good deal of interaction between Jews and Gentiles, particularly with regard to business, however, the goal was "non-assimilation as far as one could manage it." Cf. Stern, JNTC, p. 259

<sup>126</sup> E.g. Acts 10.45; 15.7

The Greek word, *ethnos*, is used over 150 times in the New Testament. Within the King James version—echoed in most translations—the split is approximately 90 Gentiles / 60 nations (or nation).

- <sup>127</sup> The obscure word echoes the apostle Paul in the book of Romans, chapter 11, who speaks about Gentiles as wild olive branches, being ‘grafted’ into the natural olive tree of Israel.
- <sup>128</sup> *B’rit-milah*, literally “covenant of circumcision,” the sole requirement for a Jew’s being under the covenant God made with Abraham, performed on the eighth day of a male Jew’s life [Stern, 1992, p. 105]  
*B’rit* = covenant: new covenant, *b’rit hadashah*.
- <sup>129</sup> Matthew 23.29-38; Luke 11.42-54, 13.33-5; Acts 7.52
- <sup>130</sup> *Treif*, literally “torn,” referring indirectly to non-kosher food, unfit for Jewish consumption  
 Stern, JNTC, p. 93. According to Stern, it is a common misconception, based partly on these verses, together with Mark 7.19, that the ‘kosher’ dietary laws are annulled by the New Testament.
- <sup>131</sup> As Stephen did indirectly by showing his own considerable knowledge of the covenant history of Israel, before he was stoned to death, Acts 7, the apostle Paul regularly sets out his own credentials when he is speaking to Jews—Acts 22.3ff, 26.4ff., Romans 11.1, 2 Corinthians 11.22—nowhere more thoroughly than in his letter to the Philippians 3.5-6:  
*“B’rit milah on the eighth day, an Isra’eli by birth, from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew speaker, with Hebrew-speaking parents, in regard to the Torah, a Parush, in regard to zeal, a persecutor of the Messianic Community, in regard to the righteousness demanded by legalism, blameless.”*
- <sup>132</sup> Stern argues that contrary to popular conception, Paul was not a new name given to Sha’ul upon conversion. Like many diasporic Jews of his era, Sha’ul maintained two names, one Jewish, one Greek or Roman. Stern makes this point particularly in order to dispel the notion that Paul was a new ‘Christian’ name taken upon conversion, indicating a renunciation of his Judaism—something that simply doesn’t accord with scripture (Acts 16.3 et al)
- <sup>133</sup> Galatians 5.12 “I wish the people who are bothering you would go the whole way and castrate themselves.” 1 Corinthians 16.22: “If anyone does not love the Lord, a curse on him”; 2 Corinthians 11.12-15, etc.
- <sup>134</sup> As pointed out earlier, within these footnotes, the concept of ‘covenant’ is so deeply embedded within the entire Jewish worldview and comprehension of Torah, that it is not actually mentioned explicitly that often within the New Testament. Following are two examples of key terms which, by their close association with the term, effectively obviate the need for a specific mention of ‘covenant’.  
 The Hebrew word, *חֶסֶד*, *cheśed*, appearing 249 times in the Old Testament, typically translated *mercy*, *goodness*, *lovingkindness* et al—and the sometimes-equivalent New Testament Greek, *χάρις*, *charis*, translated *grace*, *undeserved favour* etc.—is understood by some commentators to be a term specifically referencing God’s *covenant* mercy or “*covenant faithfulness*”—the mercy of God expressed through his covenants. This idea is supported by Paul’s exposition in Ephesians 2, which effectively suggests that being outside of the covenants is to be devoid of God’s mercy, by definition.  
 Similarly, in the New Testament the term “the righteousness of God” is taken by Wright to be properly understood as a reference to God’s *covenant faithfulness*, shedding new light on passages which employ this otherwise obscure term [see 118 above].
- <sup>135</sup> See Stern 1992, JNTC, p. 585, commentary upon Ephesians 2.15a, explaining how the enmity between Jews and Gentiles was ‘occasioned by the Torah’, yet implying no fault with the Torah.
- <sup>136</sup> Shullam, Joseph, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans*, 1997, chapter 10. Shullam points out the unique innovation that Paul makes within the tenth chapter of Romans, expounding the relationship between righteousness gained through Torah-observance (“doing”) and righteousness based upon Yeshua’s faithfulness.  
 Shullam claims Paul is developing a rabbinic midrash upon Leviticus 18.5 and Deuteronomy 30.11-14 which speak of different grounds of obtaining “life”; combining these two allows Paul to establish a new principle of “faith” which comes “from hearing the word of the Messiah” and confessing allegiance to the Messiah and, implicitly, confidence in his death, resurrection and divine authority: as “Lord.”
- <sup>137</sup> Matthew 22.36-40; **Romans 14-15.16**  
 Shullam, Joseph, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans*, p. 470-1
- <sup>138</sup> James 1.18

- <sup>139</sup> Numbers 10.33 et al.
- <sup>140</sup> Matthew 27.51
- <sup>141</sup> Hebrews 8.13
- <sup>142</sup> Luke 3.8; John 8.39
- <sup>143</sup> Romans 9.7,8; Galatians 4.22-31
- <sup>144</sup> Romans 2.28-9; 4.20-22
- <sup>145</sup> This is the basic contextual argument summed up within Romans 3.22-24
- <sup>146</sup> “To which the Torah and Prophets bear witness”—Romans 3.21
- <sup>147</sup> An alternative rendering of this passage might be “received what the Spirit promised,” referring to the blessing, rather than the Spirit. However, since this thesis has examined the gift of the Spirit as a direct result of the new covenant, which is itself foreshadowed by the Abrahamic covenant, I prefer the sense communicated by this more typical rendering.
- <sup>148</sup> “In that day [that you eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] it will become certain that you will die.” Genesis 2.17
- <sup>149</sup> Romans 8.3
- <sup>150</sup> Bruggeman, Walter, *The Bible Makes Sense*, St Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, OH, 2003, p.75
- <sup>151</sup> Jenkins, Philip, *The Next Christendom*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p.1-3
- <sup>152</sup> Isaiah 53 et al; Philippians 2.6-11
- <sup>153</sup> The terminology of ‘sons’ is to be understood as a reference to human beings, both men and women. The preceding verse in Hebrews referring specifically to the Messiah tasting death “for all humanity.” Sons, therefore, is used here as a metaphor for those who are being made like the Son of God, the Messiah, as set forth in Romans 8.29-30
- <sup>154</sup> E.g. Daniel 8.15-17 ff.; Ezekiel 1.28; Revelation 1.17
- <sup>155</sup> Wright, N.T., *What St Paul Really Said*, p. 47
- <sup>156</sup> John 10.10
- <sup>157</sup> Newbiggin, Leslie, *The Open Secret*, SPCK, 1995, p.26ff.
- <sup>158</sup> 2 Timothy 2.10; Wright NTPG 416
- <sup>159</sup> Matthew 12.32 et al; Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 266, 278
- <sup>160</sup> John 10.10, 16; John 17.20-23  
Wright, N.T., NTPG, p. 266

# **CHAPTER 4 : CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

## **I CONCLUSIONS**

The Thesis proffers a biblical theology of covenant, creation and community and, thereby, a presentation of what the bible describes as “God’s eternal purpose accomplished in the Messiah.”

In seeking to express the message of scripture ‘according to its own priorities’, the Thesis has deliberately incorporated essential elements of Hebraic thought and worldview. Within this framework the Thesis elucidates the vitality and convergence of covenant, creation and community, with a central place given to the Messiah and his Spirit, in the unfolding of the biblical meta-narrative.

## **2 RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **2.1 Biblical theology as cultural challenge**

Traditional western orthodoxies, Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, are being increasingly re-examined at this time in history, for a whole array of reasons including, but not limited to: postmodernism and post-colonialism; the gravitational shift towards the global south of the worldwide Christian community; the emergence of a post-Holocaust Messianic Jewish movement; and the worldwide numerical ‘explosion’ of Pentecostalism.

Each of these factors represents a new raft of theological challenge, as communities associated with all of these disparate movements innovate their own reading of scripture—and do so within a rapid, highly-networked world, where theology is no longer a one-way exchange ‘from the West to the rest’.

Consequently, a biblical theology conversant with these trends and prepared to examine and represent scripture afresh in the light of them—in the “Berean” tradition (Acts 17.11)—is well-placed to participate in addressing and challenging the culturally-biased, some would say mired, Christianity frequently represented within the West.

## 2.2 **Biblical theology as education-in-partnership**

Furthermore, such a biblical theology may also prove to be well-equipped for crossing cultural boundaries in order to offer and provide theological education to those normally least able to receive it: i.e. leaders and members of the rapidly-expanding missional Christian communities of the global south, particularly Africa, whose enthusiasm and willingness but lack of theological education effectively presents the argument for co-partnership between the Christian communities of these emerging missional nations and the technologically and historically well-equipped Christian communities of established missional nations, such as the United Kingdom.

## 2.3 **Biblical theology as faith-in-action**

The biblical theology of covenant, creation and community represented within this thesis, by dint of its intentional focus upon a non-western, Hebraic worldview and its embrace of a narrative, community-centred reading of scripture, recommends itself to readerships both within the west and beyond—with an implicit encouragement to messianic, Christian **communities** to actively engage in **covenant** partnership with the **Creator God**, in seeking to serve his **eternal purpose** for **creation**!



# APPENDICES

## I APPROACH TO SCRIPTURE

### I.1 Translation

The principal translation utilised within this thesis is the Complete Jewish Bible, translated by David H. Stern. As well as being a fresh, lively and interesting text to read, it incorporates a number of innovations which are particularly relevant to the 'Jewish roots' premise of this thesis (see Abstract and Chapter I: Introduction). Namely, it:

- makes no separation between the "Old" and "New" Testaments
- corrects mistranslations in the New Testament resulting from anti-Jewish theological bias
- offers original Hebrew names, using English transliterations
- focuses upon Messianic prophecy
- is accompanied by a comprehensive New Testament commentary, justifying potentially controversial elements within the translation
- aids recognition and understanding of the 'Jewish roots' of scripture, including the *PaRDeS* methodology of rabbinical interpretation of scripture (see below) and, most significantly, of the Jewishness of the Messiah and the Messianic faith.

### I.2 Inspiration of Scripture

The thesis approaches Scripture as "inspired by God," where "inspiration" bears its literal meaning, "breathing into," as discussed by Dr David Stern, in the introduction to his Complete Jewish Bible translation:

*In regarding God as the ultimate 'author' of the Bible, the understanding is that he did not dictate his words verbatim to men, as a businessman would to a secretary, but that the authors expressed what God had breathed into them through their own personalities in their own words.*

*Sometimes these words were originally uttered with an immediacy that attributes them directly to God: “Thus says the Lord”! At other times, they are written with a sense of authority from a writer, such as the apostle Paul, who has had an intimate experience of God which clearly governs his insight, his judgement and his presentation of the truths he holds dear, as a trust given by God.*

*The alternative view is that the Bible may contain many complex thoughts, some beautiful, some not, philosophical insights, high moral sentiments; that it is a “work of genius,” but, ultimately, that it is not a communication from God in any distinct manner that would set it apart from other works.*

Stern provides evidence for strong confidence in the former view, offering the following three reasons for considering the Bible to be “inspired by God.”

#### I.2.1 The Bible claims to be God’s word

*“Thus says the Lord” is found over two and a half thousand times in the Bible, placed there by numerous authors, over a period of more than a millennium; this is a claim that is not made very often, so when it is – particularly when many people believe it and suffer for that belief too – it may be worth investigating the claim...*

#### I.2.2 The Bible seems to be God’s word

*Its breadth of subject matter, its wisdom, honesty, understanding of the human condition, its expressions of joy and sadness, awe and fear, anger and love, frustration and peace... all ultimately point towards a character underlying the words who is worthy to be called, known and worshipped as God. Within its pages paradoxes are exposed, some are settled, others must be held in tension (such as why bad things happen to good people) through trusting.*

#### I.2.3 The Bible proves to be God’s word

*Whilst the Bible is not a scientific document, it is a historical one and historical and archeological evidence is continually being discovered which appears to demonstrate the reliability of the writers and suggest that what they have to say about the unverifiable, may also be trustworthy. [Stern 1992]*

### I.3 Rabbinical modes of interpretation

Further to this understanding of the inspiration, is the issue of *interpretation* of Scripture. Stern, in his “Jewish New Testament Commentary” (p.11-14; also Moseley, p.129) relates a time-honoured methodology of the Jewish rabbi’s, an approach which recognises not one but four basic modes of interpreting Torah, or Scripture (and which, once understood, becomes relatively self-evident throughout the Biblical canon).

#### I.3.1 *p’shat* - “simple”

The plain meaning of the writer, the equivalent of grammatical-historical exegesis. Note: what was *p’shat* then, isn’t necessarily *simple* now! I.e., what was a straightforward issue to the writer, within the first-century cultural matrix, may not be a straightforward matter of interpretation to us, within our twenty-first century cultural matrix.

#### I.3.2 *remez* - “hint”

Wherein a word, phrase or other element in the text hints at a truth not conveyed by the *p’shat*. The implication is that God can hint at things of which the writers themselves were unawares.

#### I.3.3 *midrash* - “(re)search”

An allegorical application, a species of eisegesis—reading one’s own thought’s into the text. The implication is that words of Scripture can legitimately become ‘grist for the mill’ of human intellect, whereby God can guide to truths not directly or immediately related to the text at all.

#### I.3.4 *sod* - “secret”

A mystical or hidden meaning arrived at using numerical values of Hebrew letters, noting unusual spellings, transposing letters etc. The implication is that God invests meaning in the minutiae of Scripture, even individual letters.

#### I.3.5 PaRDeS

Interestingly, these modes are frequently recollected using the acronym “PaRDeS”, which is coincidentally the Hebrew word for “garden” or “orchard,” from which derives the word

“paradise,” which, in typically Jewish fashion, serves to remind us of the link between study—which in rabbinic thought is considered as a form of divine worship—and the garden of Eden, the paradise from which humankind came and representative of the renewal of creation that has begun in the Messiah, which he will complete when he returns again.

Modern readers of the Bible by using “grammatical-historical exegesis” tend to ignore all modes of interpretation except the *p’shat*, discounting them as eisegesis (reading thoughts into the text; cf. exegesis: extracting the authors original thoughts from the text). This is in reaction to the tendency of early Church Fathers to over-allegorize and misuse the other three approaches to textual analysis.

However, the New Testament is a Jewish book, written by Jews in a Jewish context and the first-century Jewish context incorporated all four ways of handling texts. As an aid to understanding, examples of each are included below.

#### 1.3.6 ‘remez’ — an example

*So he got up, took the child and his mother and left during the night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod died. This happened in order to fulfil what Adonai had said through the prophet, “Out of Egypt, I called my son”—Matthew 2:14-15*

The last part of this is a direct quotation of Hosea 11:1. The Hosea passage presents the *p’shat* meaning, in a clear reference to Israel, as a people, being brought out of Egypt in the Exodus narrative. (Israel is called God’s son as far back as Exodus 4:22). There is no question that the Hosea passage is speaking about Israel and not the Messiah. That is the *p’shat* meaning of that passage.

What is Matthew doing, then, by quoting Hosea in this way? Some would suggest a midrash is being presented. David Stern, in his Jewish New Testament Commentary, prefers the suggestion that it is in fact a *remez*, a hint of a deeper truth that is being highlighted:

*“The Messiah has been presented as God’s son a few verses earlier, Matthew 1:18-25, reflecting Tanakh passages such as Isaiah 9:6-7, Psalm 2:7 and Proverbs 30:4. Thus the Son equals the son: the Messiah is equated with, is one with, the nation of Israel. This is*

*the deep truth Matthew is hinting at by calling Yeshua's flight to Egypt a "fulfilment" of Hosea 11:1 (the mystical identification between the Messiah and the people of Israel is an idea expounded at length by Karl Barth, in his church dogmatics, one of the best known Christian theologians of the 20th century). The phrase, "what Adonai had said through the prophet" takes our attention off the prophet himself and puts it on God who spoke through him. It lets the reader understand that Adonai might have been saying more than that which the prophet himself understood when he wrote. It prepares the reader for the possibility that behind Hosea's p'shat was God's remez, to be revealed in its time."*

### 1.3.7 'midrash' — an example

This is an interesting example because many Christians are unaware of the real p'shat of these verses and so most people are unaware that the most common interpretation of Matthew 18:18 is actually a midrash:

*"Yes, I tell you that whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.*

*To repeat, I tell you that if two of you here on earth agree about anything people ask, it will be for them from my Father in heaven. For wherever two or three are assembled in my name, I am there with them."*

First century Jews would have understood the simple p'shat of this verse to be referring to dealing with making legal judgements and halakah (instruction meaning 'way to walk', a Jewish law or decreed communal practice). The words rendered "prohibit" and "permit" are literally "bind" and "loose," terms used in first century to mean "prohibit" and "permit." The Jewish Encyclopaedia explains that in this way:

*"Jesus, when appointing his disciples to be his successors, used the familiar formula... by these words he virtually invested them with the same authority as that which he found belonging to the scribes and Pharisees who "bind heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but will not move them with one of the fingers' that is 'loose them' as they have the power to do." (Matthew 23:2-4)*

Many Christians are more likely to have heard the familiar midrash on these verses which suggests that they refer to the “binding and loosing” power available to believers in prayer. From a Jewish point of view, it is not necessary to say that either view — the p’shat or midrash — is correct and the other not so. Both are acceptable interpretations through which God is enabled to speak.

### 1.3.8 ‘sod’ — an example

In Jewish interpretation, gematria (same root word as ‘geometry’) is a system of deducing the sod of a text by positing a meaningful connection between words whose numbers are either identical or which are related by simple arithmetic.

*“An example from Rabbinic literature: God is sometimes called the ‘Place’ (“Makrom”).*

*Gematria explains that the letters of YHVH are equivalent to 10, 5, 6, 5, the sum of the squares of which number 186 - the same as the number of “Makrom” (MKVM).*

*The most cited biblical example of a ‘sod’ is the 666 of Revelation, upon which many have remarked, for example, noting that certain forms of the Roman Emperor Nero equate to that number. Another example: the Greek for Jesus, Iesous, equals 888; since ‘7’ is regarded as the perfect number and triple repetition symbolises absolute ultimacy (e.g. Isaiah 6.3); ‘888’ thus signifies that the Messiah, Jesus, is absolutely and ultimately beyond perfection!”*

*[Rabbinic interpretive definitions and examples taken from Stern 1992]*

## 1.4 PaRDeS, Hebrew thinking and post-modernity

Interestingly, some of the texts historically most hotly-contested between Judaism and Christianity — such as Psalm 2:12 and 22:14, Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 53 — may be viewed, understood, even harmonised, by reference to these rabbinic modes of interpretations — in ways that a strict adherence to historical-critical analysis wouldn’t normally allow.

In fact, the Hebrew writers of scripture consistently utilised and demonstrated a form of thought that has been described as “harmonic synonyms”: employing overlapping circles of meaning; saying the same thing in two different, but parallel ways; employing subtle use of

imagery and symbol; including multi-layered meaning within names, titles and so on.

In similar vein, the author has employed a range of metaphors and analogies, signs, symbols, pictures, graphical representations, biblical names and titles — alongside basic historical and biblical analysis — in order to communicate most fully and effectively the author's understanding of biblical truths. This style is continued in the author's further work, including a training course that adopts this methodology.

Such ways of thinking are atypical—sometimes even anathema—to western theological traditions of Enlightenment-driven systematic, higher-critical and dogmatic thought. The incorporation of such thinking reflects the author's belief that new, intercultural ways of reading scripture are appropriate and likely to be found increasingly relevant as helpful forms of communication, particularly within the traditionally narrative-and-symbol-based non-western “majority world”—though, increasingly, also within the emerging matrix of post-industrial, post-Christian, post-modern, post-colonial western culture.

## 2 GLOSSARY

Throughout this thesis a number of Hebrew or Jewish terms are used. This reflects the author's use of the Complete Jewish Bible translation, by David H. Stern, a decision in turn reflecting a commitment to comprehending a more typically Hebraic worldview.

### 2.1 Hebrew terms

#### 2.1.1 Adonai

Typically translated “Lord” or “my Lord”. Adonai is also a frequent substitution for God's personal name—the four Hebrew letters *yud-heh-vav-heh*, written in English *YHVH*, *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*—in order to avoid speaking God's name, out of reverence.

Within the Jewish New Testament, *kurios*, the Greek word for Lord (either in a divine or human sense) is translated as Adonai only when it is certain YHVH is meant.

#### 2.1.2 Avinu

Our Father; used poetically alongside the Hebrew name for Abraham: *Avraham avinu*.

#### 2.1.3 Chesed

Loving-kindness; particularly in terms of covenant faithfulness.

#### 2.1.4 Cohen hagadol

High priest. *Cohen*, priest; *cohanim*, priests.

#### 2.1.5 Davar

Word. Or “thing”; hence Messianic Jew Richard Wurmbrand has suggested a midrashic understanding of John 1.1: “In the beginning was the Real Thing...”

#### 2.1.6 Elohim

God, angels, judges. See Psalm 82.1-2,6-8 and John 10.34-36 for Yeshua's wordplay on it.

#### 2.1.7 M'chitzah

Divider. Literally, ‘that which divides something in half’. Used for the synagogue divider which separates men and women. Used metaphorically within the New Testament (Ephesians 2.14) to refer to the Temple division, beyond which Gentiles could not progress,



but which was effectively destroyed by the new covenant, in which “there is neither Jew nor Gentile” in the Messiah.

#### 2.1.8 Mitzvah; mitzvot

Command; commands, from the Torah, or Pentateuch. Traditionally, there are 613 mitzvot for the Jewish people to obey. Colloquially, the term may be used to mean “doing a good deed, helping someone with a favour.” The Messianic Jewish Manifesto [chapter V] and Yeshua, A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church [chapter 5] (see bibliography) both discuss which commands God continues to expect Jews and Gentiles to respectively observe today.

#### 2.1.9 Isra’el, or Israel

The people who descended from Israel, or Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, the Patriarch of the Jewish nation. Also used for the modern nation of Israel, not referred to in this thesis, so no distinction is made between these two different, though related entities.

#### 2.1.10 Messiah

English transliteration of Mashiach, meaning “anointed,” “an anointed one.” Equivalent Greek is “christos,” which comes into English as “Christ.”

#### 2.1.11 Midrash

Allegorical interpretation or homiletical application of a text. The hearer is expected to understand that the maker of the midrash is not expounding the plain meaning (p’shat) of the text, but introducing his own ideas—and, thus, a form of eisegesis. See *Appendix I*.

#### 2.1.12 ‘Olam haba

The world to come. The Bible envisages a renewal of the *‘olam hazeh* (this present world), so that the *‘olam haba* will be experienced by those who are resurrected—an important realisation for those who envisage the ‘after-life’ as an ethereal existence, floating on heavenly clouds!

#### 2.1.13 P’shat

The plain meaning of the text, as originally intended by the writer. See *Appendix I*.

## 2.1.14 Remez

A hint. A word, phrase or other element in the text hinting at a truth not conveyed by the *p'shat*. See *Appendix I*.

## 2.1.15 Sh'kinah

Technical term for the presence of God *tabernacling*, or manifesting with his people. The 'tabernacle' was originally a kind of tent—the 'Tent of Meeting' or 'Tent of Witness'—formed by a series of curtains on poles, which the people of Israel erected as part of their ceremonial worship. At the centre, in the Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Covenant where God dwelt. A high priest entered this sanctuary, once a year, to make a sacrifice on behalf of the people. Thus, the Jews did not conceive of the true God as 'far away' either from themselves or the world; he was transcendent—not contained by, but nevertheless *active within* the world.

When John says, "The Word became a human being and *dwelt* among us and we saw his *Sh'kinah*" the word for *dwelt* is the same word as for 'tabernacle'. Thus he is making the important theological point that the glorious presence of God which previously 'tabernacled' with Israel within the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle and, afterwards, the Temple, was now 'tabernacling' with Israel through the Son, Jesus!

## 2.1.16 Sh'ma

The central pronouncement of Judaism; consisting of Deuteronomy 6.4; the focus of morning and evening synagogue prayers. According to Jesus, it formed the 'most important mitzvah' [Mark 12.28].

## 2.1.17 Torah

Literally, "Teaching" or "Instruction" but usually translated (by Gentiles!) as "Law" because Greek uses *nomos*, ("law") to render Hebrew Torah. May refer to (1) the Five Books of Moses, the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), called the Written Torah; (2) that plus the *Nevi'im* (Prophets) and *K'tuvim* (Writings), i.e. the whole *Tanakh* [John 10.34]; (3) that plus additional material considered in varying degrees to

be authoritative within Judaism (the Oral Torah). Un-capitalised, torah may refer generically to “principle” or “law.”

#### 2.1.18 Tanakh

Acronym formed from the first letters of the three parts of the Hebrew Bible: Torah, Nevi'im and K'tuvim: hence, the Old Testament. Rendered “scripture” or “it is written” in most New Testament translations, where it is cited so frequently because the writers understood it to be God’s authoritative Word to mankind.

#### 2.1.19 Yeshua

The personal name of the Messiah of Israel. In the Septuagint and the New Testament, Yeshua was brought over into Greek as *Iêsous* and then into English as “Jesus.” It means “Y-H-V-H saves” [Matthew 1.21] and is also the masculine form of *yeshu'ah*, which means “salvation.”

### 2.2 Other significant terms

#### 2.2.1 Panoramic

From a distance; a panoramic view is sometimes described as a “birds eye” view. The idea is of a visual overview, allowing the viewer to see further than is possible from the viewers normal “ground level” viewpoint.

#### 2.2.2 Gentile

Typical New Testament rendering of Hebrew, *Goy* (pl. *Goyim*), corresponding to the Greek word *ethnos*, which is also variously rendered as “nation,” “pagan,” “non-Jew,” or even “heathen” (not in CJB). In general use, it refers to those who are “Non-Jews,” which may have a positive, negative or neutral connotation, depending upon context.

#### 2.2.3 Narrative

A story. A message that tells the particulars of an act or occurrence or course of events. *Fiction* is not implied; narrative refers to the manner in which information is being conveyed.

The Bible presents itself as a series of narratives, although some texts, such as the Prophets and the Writings are part of a larger narrative that is not always explicit. Similarly,

the manner in which these narratives are linked and the interpretation upon them provides a meta-narrative—sometimes master- or grand narrative—is an abstract idea that offers a comprehensive explanation of history.

#### 2.2.4 Mediator

One who mediates, intervenes, intercedes between a number of parties. An intercessor.

#### 2.2.5 Messianic

Relating to Messiah

#### 2.2.6 Messianic covenant

The ‘new covenant’ prophesied by Jeremiah, which was fulfilled and inaugurated by Israel’s Messiah, Yeshua, through his sacrificial death and heavenly mediation.

#### 2.2.7 Messianic covenant community

The community joined to the Messiah through the new covenant—the church. The Greek word, *ekklesiā*, typically translated “church” or “assembly,” technically means “a calling out; a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation.”

#### 2.2.8 Scripture

For Christians and Jews, the Bible; the Hebrew Bible is the Tanakh, the “Old Testament.” Depending upon context may also be used of other sacred writings.

#### 2.2.9 Suzerain, Vassal









a *vassal* is a (noble) subordinate or dependent of a *suzerain* or (over)lord, who has given his allegiance and loyalty to that lord, in return for protection and land; typical of suzerain-vassal covenants popular in the Ancient Near East.

#### 2.2.10 Worldview



From German, *Weltanschauung*. A comprehensive view of the world and human life. Related terms: paradigm—the generally accepted perspective of a particular discipline at a given time; culture—the knowledge, values, patterns and institutions shared by a society.

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