

REPLACING REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

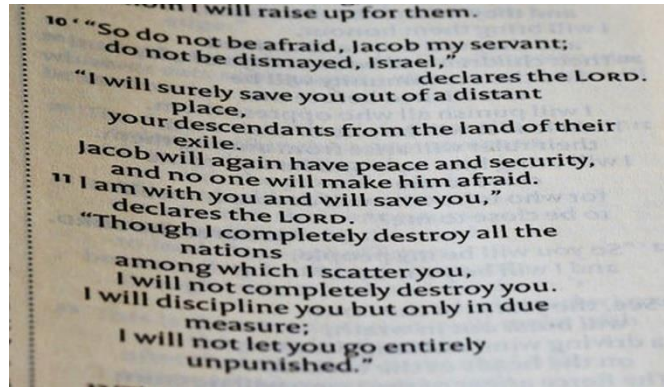
A Devotional Meditation on Ha'azinu (Give Ear)

Deuteronomy 32:1-52; 2 Samuel 22:1-51; Isaiah 56:1-8; Jeremiah 30:1-25; Micah 4:1-5;
Acts 1:6-8; Romans 3:1, 9:1-5; Ephesians 2:8-22; Galatians 3:29, 6:12-16

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Since the earliest days of Christianity, a major element of theology in most Christian sects is that the Jewish people have missed out on God's purposes because they rejected their Messiah. Christians believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah of Israel and the world. In the original Hebrew, his name, Yeshua, and his title, Messiah, refer to his role as the Savior and King of Israel. So if the Jewish people, who are the visible remnant Israel, are no longer Israel because they rejected their Messiah, then what happens to all those promises God made to Israel? The theological conclusion is that someone else, namely those who have accepted Jesus, took their place.



Jeremiah 30:10-11. Photo by Brett Jordan, June 16, 2023, [via Flickr](#).

This is the reasoning of Replacement Theology. Those who hold to it point to the New Testament to justify their premise, using passages like this from Paul:

But may I never boast—except in the cross of our Lord *Yeshua* the Messiah. Through Him the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything—but only a new creation. Now as many as live by this rule—*shalom* and mercy on them and on the Israel of God.

Galatians 6:14-16 TLV

This “Israel of God” is taken in some theological circles to mean a spiritual Israel that has superseded the natural or physical Israel of the Jewish people. Physical Israel failed to keep God's commandments, walked away from his covenant, and incurred his wrath. That's what might be concluded from passages like this one by Moses:

The Rock who birthed you, you ignored.
You forgot God who brought you forth.
Adonai saw, and He spurned His sons
and His daughters out of vexation.
He said, “I will hide My face from them,
I want to see their hereafter.
For they are an upside down generation,
children with no faithfulness in them.
They made Me jealous with a non-god.
They vexed Me with airy idols.
So I will make them jealous with a non-people.

With a foolish nation I will vex them.
For fire has ignited in My nostrils—
it will burn to *Sheol* beneath,
devour the earth and her produce,
and scorch the foundations of mountains.
I will heap calamities upon them.
With My arrows I will finish them.

Deuteronomy 32:18-23 TLV

There is peril in taking scripture out of context. In this case, the peril is missing the whole point of God's plan of redemption and Israel's central role in that plan. Moses alludes to that a few verses earlier when he writes:

When *Elyon* [the Most High] gave nations their heritage,
when He separated the sons of man,
He set boundaries for the people
by the number of *Bnei-Yisrael* [Children of Israel].
But *Adonai's* portion is His people—
Jacob is the share of His inheritance.

Deuteronomy 32:8-9 TLV

This passage is the Song of Moses. God knew the people of Israel would walk away from him in the future, and this song he gave to Moses would remind them of their covenant identity so they could find their way back.

That physical Israel would find their way back, or, more accurately, that God would bring them back, is the prophecy that gets more attention in the Bible than any other. It will happen through great tribulation. Jeremiah calls that the Time of Jacob's Trouble when he describes the process and the outcome:

"For I am with you," declares *Adonai*,
"to save you,
for I will make a full end of all the nations
where I scatter you.
but I will not make a full end of you.
For I will discipline you justly,
but will not leave you unpunished."

Jeremiah 30:11 TLV

This doesn't fit with the Replacement Theology model. It's not the only place in the scripture that God promises not to destroy Israel completely, even though he will make an end of all the other nations. Apparently, he is serious when he said that Israel is his inheritance.

That seems to be what the Apostles understood when they asked Yeshua when he would restore the Kingdom to Israel. Yeshua didn't rebuke them for asking, but instead told them it wasn't their place to know the time, but rather to be his witnesses. They were to tell others that he is Israel's Messiah and teach them how to live according to God's ways. When non-Jews received that message with joy, the Apostles had to figure out

what that meant in the context of God's promises to the Jewish remnant of Israel. Passages like this from Isaiah informed their understanding:

Adonai Elohim,
who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares,
"I will gather still others to him,
to those already gathered."

Isaiah 56:8

Rather than replacing the Jewish people in the covenant, these Gentiles were the others being gathered with them. That's why Paul can refer to Gentiles as becoming part of the Commonwealth of Israel and Abraham's seed (descendants), but at the same time affirm that the Jewish people are still the native born Israelites, and have a big role to play in the covenant.

The irony is that it's not the Jews who are replaced in God's covenant plan, but the non-Jewish nations. That's what we realize when we take this to the logical conclusion. If Israel is God's inheritance, and if he intends to make an end of all other nations, then that means the only nation that remains in the Kingdom is the nation for whom the Kingdom is named: Israel. The only way non-Israelites can survive the judgments that God will bring on the earth is by somehow becoming part of that Kingdom. That's what it means that all nations will go up to Zion, the Mountain of the Lord, to learn his ways, and why his Temple will be the House of Prayer for all nations. In other words, instead of the nations replacing Israel, Israel will absorb the nations.

Another irony is that Messiah's Kingdom won't be either Jewish or Christian, but Messiah's. How that looks is still a mystery. The Jewish State of Israel is all we have at the moment, but the growing Christian Zionist support for the Jewish State is compelling the two halves of God's Covenant People to relate in ways the world hasn't seen since the 1st century. Even though we don't know exactly how this works out, we are beginning to see how God is replacing Replacement Theology.