Israelology among the -ologies:
To What Extent Should Israelology Be Used as a Category in Our Systematic Theologies?
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Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum coined the term "Israelology" and first brought it to the attention of evangelical and dispensational theologians with his 1989 New York University dissertation "Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology."[1] He has further made the subject a hallmark of Ariel's Bible Commentary series where authors demonstrate ways in which each book may contribute to the common areas of systematic theology, including Israelology. In addition to providing examples of how Dr. Fruchtenbaum has incorporated a study of Israelology in his commentaries and manuscripts among the other areas of systematic theology, this paper will suggest additional ways in which considering this area of theology enhances one's study of Scripture.

Fascinatingly and ironically, Roman Catholic and ecumenical theologians have also begun to utilize the term "Israelology" and explore its meaning. However, these approaches use the term to describe any study of Israel's history and institutions by Christians. Roman Catholic theologian Matthew Levering wrote *Engaging the Doctrine of Israel: A Christian Israelology in Dialogue with Ongoing Judaism* in which he explores the subjects such as Scripture, exodus, Torah, Temple, land, and Davidic kingship within the domain of Christian theology or the place of Judaism within the theological work of the church.[2] Ellen Charry, professor emerita at Princeton Theological Seminary, defines Israelology as "the Christian doctrine of Israel, the church's theological teaching on the place of Jews and Judaism in the divine economy."[3] Shaun C. Brown (Disciples of Christ) in his analysis of the ecumenical Lutheran scholar George Lindbeck refers to his Israelology as "his emphasis upon the church and Israel as one elect people of God."[4] This interest within the broader theological academy is not precluded by Fruchtenbaum's definition of Israelology. He states, "This term refers to a subdivision of Systematic Theology incorporating all theological doctrines concerning the people of Israel."[5] Like any other doctrine that may be studied, one's Israelology—like one's soteriology or any other -ology—may be more or less aligned with the teachings of Scripture. For this reason, Fruchtenbaum goes on to define what he means by "Israel."

> As used in this work, the term Israel is viewed theologically as referring to all descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, also known as the Jews, the Jewish people, Israelites, Hebrews, etc. The term is not limited to the present political and national state in the Middle East, which is merely a part of the whole; nor is it limited to those who adhere to the religion of Judaism only.[6]

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[1] Now published as Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2022).

[2] Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Israel: A Christian Israelology in Dialogue with Ongoing Judaism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021), 1. See also the review of Levering's "Christian Israelology" by Philip A. Cunningham, review of *Engaging the Doctrine of Israel: A Christian Israelology in Dialogue with Ongoing Judaism*, by Matthew Levering, *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 18, no. 1 (2023): 1–12.

[3] Ellen T. Charry, "Toward Ending Enmity," in *Karl Barth, the Jews, and Judaism*, ed. George Hunsinger (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 150n.2.

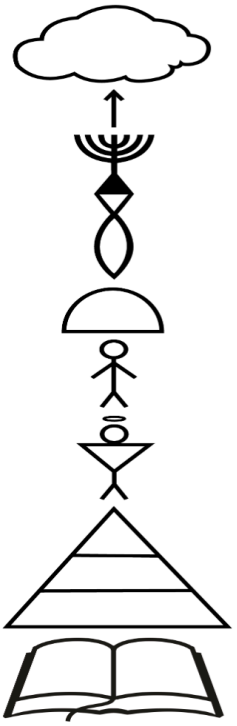
[4] Shaun C. Brown, *George Lindbeck and The Israel of God: Scripture, Ecclesiology, and Ecumenism* (Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue; Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021).

[5] Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 2.

[6] Ibid.

Peter Lang is a broad academic publisher with its headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland. It publishes an academic series entitled "Edition Israelogie" (or "Israelology Edition" in English) edited by Helge Stadelmann and Berthold Schwarz. The series has included monographs and revised dissertations by scholars such as Michael J. Vlach, Michael G. Vanlaningham, Benjamin Lange, Berthold Schwarz, and other English- and German-language authors. These works are more recognizably aligned with Fruchtenbaum's Israelology—an Israelology that refers to all theological doctrines concerning the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (the people of Israel, the Jewish people) past, present, and future.

Manfred Kober, Fruchtenbaum's former classmate at Dallas Theological Seminary, emphasizes the logical order of the "-ologies" with the doctrine of Scripture listed first since it is the source of divine revelation.[7] While other systems of theology may begin with the doctrine of God—or even with church tradition—those with a high view of Scripture affirm that Scripture is our authoritative and inerrant source of all that can be known about God, so it is appropriate to begin with the doctrine of bibliology (see the bottom of the list first). From bibliology, the interpreter begins to understand the doctrine of God Himself, theology proper, with a study of His existence, His being, His names, His attributes or perfections, His triune nature, His actions, His decree, His creation, His providence, etc. In light of God's triune nature, the next major doctrines become Christology and Pneumatology. Since at this time, mankind is made a "little lower than the angels" (Ps 8:5; Heb 2:7), the next areas of systematic theology logically follow as angelology (the doctrine of angels, Satan, and demons) and anthropology (the doctrine of human beings). The universal problem of mankind after Genesis 3 is sin (the doctrine of hamartiology), and God's gracious provision for salvation from sin is studied under the heading of soteriology. Those called out of this sin-cursed world during this age, from the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 until the time of the Rapture, are part of the *ekklesia*—the universal church—the doctrine of which is called ecclesiology.[8] And finally in most systems comes the doctrine of last things, eschatology. He would often encourage his students to write out shapes representative of each doctrine to reinforce the logical order of each area of systematic theology. In so doing, this pedagogical exercise strengthens the muscle memory of the logical flow of thought from one doctrine to another.



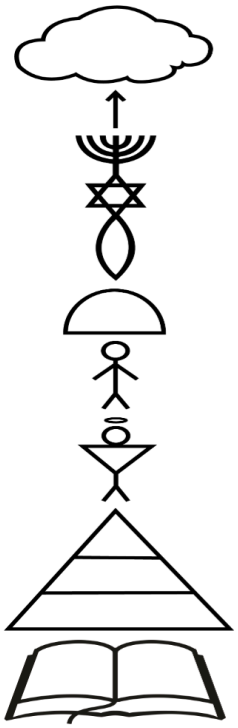
[7] See his many available manuals on systematic theology and Bible doctrine at https://www.manfredkober.com/m_manuals.html. My wife Bernice produced the graphics here.

[8] The choice of a lampstand or menorah to illustrate ecclesiology is based on John's Patmos vision where the risen Messiah stated that "the seven lampstands are the seven churches" (1:20). For a helpful discussion of various interpretations of John's use of the menorah symbol, see Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 97.

The Missing Link in Systematic Theology

What is often neglected in many treatments of systematic theology is the fact that while these ten areas of Bible doctrine cover most of the key topics, they ignore a term or theme mentioned 2,583 times in Scripture—namely Israel.[9]

Most of the Bible is the story of Israel. Genesis records the call of the patriarchs and the establishment of God's unconditional covenant with Abraham, promising land, seed, and blessing. God's promised line of blessing continued through Isaac and through Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. The book of Exodus explains the bondage of slavery in Egypt and God's great deliverance of the descendants of Jacob, the children of Israel, who entered Egypt as a small family and departed as a great nation. The Torah records how God initiated His covenant relationship with Israel as a nation at Mount Sinai, giving Israel His instructions for tabernacle worship and life in the Promised Land. The historical books trace the history of Israel in covenant faithfulness and unfaithfulness, including the divine discipline of the Babylonian Captivity and the return to the land and rebuilding of the Temple after the Exile. The poetic and wisdom books display Israel's worship of God and highlight the value of fearing the LORD as the Creator and Judge of all. The prophetic books record continued covenant concern for Israel, promising discipline and restoration as well as future ultimate salvation.



The New Testament continues these themes as Israel's promised Messiah comes to His own in fulfillment of prophecy (Luke 1:32–33, 54–55, 68–75), proclaims good news, is accepted by a remnant and rejected by the majority and its leaders—so consistent with Old Testament examples that Stephen asked members of the Sanhedrin, "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?" (Acts 7:52). As Isaiah asked before him, "Who has believed our message?" (Isa 53:1). Despite Israel's disbelief, the New Testament consistently holds out the hope of God's covenant faithfulness to Israel (Luke 1:32–33, 54–55, 68–75; Acts 1:6–8; Gal 3:17–18) and Israel's future ultimate salvation (Matthew 23:37–39; Rom 11:29; Rev 1:7). Even in this present age, God's love for unbelieving Israel is expressed by Paul who stresses, "ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE" (Rom 10:21).

In spite of the ways that Israel is richly woven throughout the fabric of Scripture, many interpreters look right past clear promises to Israel and apply Israel's promises to themselves individually or to the church collectively. No thought is given to the covenant context of Israel's relationship to God, the Bible, biblical interpretation, or the role of Israel in God's redemptive plan. The study of the doctrine of Israel is often relegated to highlighting Israel's covenant failures, spotlighting Israel's religious apostasy, or gaslighting modern Jewish believers in Jesus

[9] Mike Stallard, "What Is the Meaning of the Word 'Israel' in the Bible?" *Ariel Magazine* 53 (2024): 24–31.

to make them doubt or detest their Jewish identity if they follow Jesus.[10] But studying the role of Israel in Scripture should never bring about these results in light of Paul's admonitions to Gentile believers in Rome: "Do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root *supports* you" (Rom 11:18).

Examples from the Reclaimer-Reformer of Israelology

While Arnold Fruchtenbaum coined the term "Israelology," he did not claim that an appreciation for the biblical priority of Israel and the Jewish people did not previously exist. In the pages of the New Covenant Scriptures, there are numerous examples of seeing the importance of the people of Israel and God's promises to Israel. But the New Testament's straightforward assessment of God's plan for ethnic Israel quickly faded among early church fathers as the Gospel spread further and further from Jerusalem and from Jewish contexts into the Gentile world (Acts 1:8).[11] Very much like the reclamation of the gospel itself came through the Protestant Reformation, the recovery of a biblically-informed Israelology is the natural consequence of the call for *semper reformanda* (always being reformed) based on the literal-grammatical-historical approach and the movement away from spiritualizing and allegorizing what the Scriptures teach about Israel.[12]

Since a biblical theology or exegetically derived theology[13] should precede any systematization of theology (or the topical arrangement of Bible doctrines),[14] this section illustrates the value of considering the question of Israel (past, present, and future) as essential to understanding the message of any book that addresses the topic. A thorough biblical theology must address what a biblical book or author intended to communicate about Israel en route to determining an overall doctrine of Israel or Israelology. An appendix provides examples of how Dr. Fruchtenbaum has incorporated a study of Israelology in his commentaries and manuscripts among the other areas of systematic theology.[15]

What Israelology Contributes to Systematic Theology

The familiar German metaphor of interpretive *Brille* (glasses or lenses) is derived from a much older image of colored spectacles that distort perception. Israelology should not be understood as an external hermeneutical lens that is worn by the interpreter to blur and distort the biblical text. It is not a newfangled lens placed before the interpreter through which the text is

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[10] See Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged* (NAC Studies in Bible & Theology; Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007); Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel and the Church: The Origins and Effects of Replacement Theology* (Rome, Italy: Instituto Biblico Evangelico Italiano, 2000).

[11] Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), 27–34.

[12] Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018); Robert L. Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics: Then and Now* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002); Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).

[13] Biblical theology is the arrangement of Bible doctrine or theme by author, book, or corpus of biblical literature (Mosaic, Deuteronomic, Isaianic, pre- or post-exilic prophets, Markan, Pauline, Johannine, etc.) toward the goal of tracing that doctrine throughout the biblical record.

[14] D. A. Carson describes biblical theology as a "bridge discipline" between responsible exegesis and responsible systematic theology. See his "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 94. See also Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), 14–15. Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity Vol. 1: Prolegomena and the Doctrines of Scripture, God, and Angels* (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 12–13. The importance of exegesis prior to theology is Kaiser's essential argument in *Toward an Exegetical Theology.*

[15] For key examples, see p. 8 for Genesis and p. 15 for Romans.

now to be viewed but rather a once neglected but integral part of the hermeneutical process that seeks to correctly observe what is already stated in the text.

Israelology is a tool in the interpreter's toolbox. Like one might use the tools of grammatical, lexical, literary, and historical analysis, so also an Israelological analysis encourages interpreters to examine the biblical covenants and dispensations in order to appreciate what is to be found through the exegesis of the text. An appreciation of God's dealings with ethnic Israel is derived from the pages of Scripture itself.

Thorough exegesis requires examining the text using multiple tools of investigation, and Israelology should appropriately be included among these tools of analysis. The following tools should be at hand for ready use by the exegetical theologian:

1. **Grammatical analysis** — examines how words, clauses, and sentences function together to determine the meaning of the text.
2. **Lexical analysis** — investigates the meaning and range of key words within their immediate and broader biblical contexts.
3. **Historical analysis** — reconstructs the historical setting, circumstances, people, events, and institutions that inform the passage.
4. **Literary analysis** — identifies genre, structure, imagery, repetition, rhetoric, and other literary features that shape the author's message.
5. **Geographical analysis** — locates places, regions, routes, boundaries, and physical features that illuminate the setting and significance of the text.
6. **Biblical-theological analysis** — traces themes and doctrines through the progressive development of revelation across the canon.
7. **Israelological analysis** — evaluates how a passage contributes to the biblical doctrine of Israel, including Israel's election, covenants, land, identity, role, preservation, and future hope.

When a proper appreciation of Israel is observed in the text, a greater appreciation of God's inclusion of Gentile nations also comes into proper view. In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul described his calling and passion to bring about "the obedience of faith" among all the nations, and the whole epistle is bracketed by this theme (1:5; 16:26). His approach was to proclaim the gospel to the Jew first and also to the Greek (1:16). He would call himself "the apostle to the Gentiles" and even "magnify [his] ministry" (11:13)—knowing that Gentile salvation was eternally part of God's plan and that it contributes to the salvation of his own countrymen by provoking them to jealousy (11:14).

As of late, the task of systematic theology has been increasingly understood from a hermeneutic of suspicion.[16] Theology is done from a perspectival vantagepoint based on adjectival hermeneutics (womanist, Black, White, Latin, gay, etc.). In the history of ideas, the pride of modern thinkers over their pre-modern pagans and polytheists produced the claim of scientific truth. But soon the enlightened thinking of modernity was scrutinized by post-moderns and also found wanting. Postmodernism viewed the so-called scientific truths of Western culture with extreme skepticism, viewing it as a colonialism in need of deconstruction. The relativism of personal truth would bring individual autonomy. But that is not enough today. Today the trend is toward a metamodernism that claims to allow for reason to coexist with faith. But faith in the

[16] Ndzi Leonard, "Contemporary Perspectives on Theology: Navigating Faith in a Modern World," *Greener Journal of Social Sciences* 15, no. 1, (2025): 213-224; Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Kevin J. Vanhoozer. *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

God of the Bible might not be tolerated. Information is everywhere, but analysis is too time consuming to be practical. We don't analyze texts, we tweet. Rather than an appreciation of the past (even talking to Grandma), there is cyberculturalism to inform people about who they are. One cannot even speak of something as unifying as a worldview because societies are often so fractured and lacking in civility that no one is permitted to speak for them. With artificial intelligence comes an anti-culture anarchy that is ready to burn it all down and transform teenagers into terrorists. If post-moderns were skeptical and wanted deconstruction, these trans-subjective truth seekers demand destruction. It's a scary time to do academic theology in the public square.

It's even more scary for Jewish people. A new antisemitism claims not to hate Jews but to hate Zionists who are labeled with every pejorative possible to promote public persecution of Jewish institutions, individuals, and influences.

Popular Ideas ~~Worldviews~~ in Perspective

Pre-modern Ancient Times - 1500s	**Modern** 1500s - 1900s	**Post-modern** Late 1900s – 2000?	**Post-postmodern** 2000? – Present
Theism / Faith	Enlightenment / Reason	Spirituality / Mysticism	Reason with Faith
Belief in Miracles	No Miracles	No Answer for the	Metamodernism
Paganism / Animism	Anti-supernaturalism	Miraculous	Trust, Dialogue, Sincerity
Religious / No atheism	Questioning Religion	Neo-paganism	Informed Naiveté
Greek Philosophy	Rationalism / Pragmatism	Self-styled Religion	Pragmatic Idealism
Limited Technologies	Scientific Revolution	Extreme Skepticism	Moderate Fanaticism
East Moves West	Spread of Western Culture	Cautious of Technologies	Cyberculturalism
Oral / Illiterate	Industrial Age	Globalism / Pluralism /	Hyperhybridism
Populations	Historical Criticism	Diversity	Twitterature
		Deconstruction	Artificial Intelligence
			Anti-culture Anarchy
Truth is from God	Scientific Truth	Personal Truth	Trans-subjective Truth
(Revelation)	(Realism)	(Relativism)	(Rejectionism)

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Into this culture of chaos, a proper theology of Israel and the nations could bring hope and healing to Jews and Gentiles alike. Giving attention to Israelology could benefit church and synagogue, the neighborhood and the nation, individuals and ideologies. If Christians were discipled from the start with a proper view of God's covenant love for the Jewish people, even in times of covenant unfaithfulness as recorded in the Prophets, and if Christians were immediately introduced even in the initial hearing of the gospel to a Jewish Jesus, perhaps there would be less hatred of Jews in Jesus' name. Consider how Paul counseled Timothy to include Jesus's Jewishness in his communication of the gospel: "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel" (2 Tim 2:8). Israelology is not the approach of just another special interest group attempting to make a claim to the biblical text. Israel was used in the plan of God to produce the biblical text.

How does giving attention to Israelology enhance and benefit one's study of Scripture and the discipline of systematic theology in particular? Giving sustained attention to Israelology enhances both biblical interpretation and systematic theology by ensuring that Israel is treated as

a major theological subject rather than as a peripheral issue confined to eschatology. It brings together biblical data concerning Israel's election, covenants, land, national identity, historical role, present condition, relationship to the nations, and future hope, and then asks how those truths relate coherently to the other points of theology. Proper attention to Israelology provides seven benefits:

1. **Promotes fuller biblical synthesis** — Israelology gathers the biblical teaching about Israel into a coherent whole rather than leaving it scattered across other theological categories (Gen 12:1–3; Jer 31:31–37; Rom 9:4–5).
2. **Clarifies God's covenant faithfulness** — sustained attention to Israel requires theology to reckon seriously with God's promises to the patriarchs and the nation (Ps 89:28–37; Gal 3:15–18; Rom 11:28–29).
3. **Sharpens the relationship between Israel and the believing community** — Israelology helps define both continuity and distinction within God's redemptive purpose (Rom 11:17–24; Eph 2:11–22; Rev 21:12–14).
4. **Strengthens eschatology** — it gives proper weight to passages concerning Israel's future repentance, salvation, restoration, and role in Messiah's reign (Zech 12:10; Matt 23:37–39; Rom 11:25–27).
5. **Improves biblical-theological integration** — Israelology highlights Israel as a major thread in the unfolding of revelation and in God's purposes for the nations (Gen 12:1–3; Isa 49:5–6; Rom 15:8–12).
6. **Guards against antisemitism and theological contempt** — attention to Israel's continuing place in God's purposes encourages Messiah-like love, grief, prayer, and concern for the Jewish people (Matt 23:37; Rom 9:1–5; Rom 11:17–21, 28).
7. **Enhances the coherence of systematic theology** — Israelology helps show how theology proper, the biblical covenants, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology fit together within God's larger redemptive purposes (Luke 1:32–33, 68–75; Rom 11:25–36; Eph 1:9–10).

Israelology: To What Extent?

To what extent should Israelology be used as a category in our systematic theologies? Israelology should function as a recognized and integrative category within systematic theology because the Jewish people function as the conduit of blessing and connective tissue of Scripture. Israelology should not replace exegesis or biblical theology, nor should it become a controlling lens imposed on every passage. But it should be central to the theological enterprise because of its centrality in the biblical narrative. Israelology should gather and synthesize the biblical teaching concerning Israel's election, covenants, land, identity, present condition, relationship to the believing community, and future hope.

Its inclusion among the -ologies is warranted because Scripture's teaching about Israel is too extensive to be confined merely to ecclesiology or eschatology. Israelology also strengthens other doctrines by highlighting God's covenant faithfulness, clarifying the relationship between Israel and the church, and giving proper attention to Israel's future salvation and restoration. Properly used, Israelology should arise from careful literal-grammatical-historical exegesis and biblical theology. It also serves an ethical purpose by challenging arrogance, contempt, and antisemitism and encouraging a Messiah-like love and concern for the Jewish people.

In short, Israelology should not be marginalized but given a substantial and coherent place within systematic theology because God has made Israel an eternal and central part of His revealed redemptive purposes.

Appendix

This appendix provides examples of how Dr. Fruchtenbaum has incorporated a study of Israelology in his commentaries and manuscripts among the other areas of systematic theology.[17]

Genesis

"Genesis makes four contributions to the Doctrine of Israel: First is Israel's national election (Rom 9:6-13) by God. In the account of Isaac and Ishmael, Isaac was chosen as the seed line; and Ishmael was set aside. Furthermore, with Jacob and Esau, Esau was set aside; and Jacob was chosen. This is all part of Israel's national election.

The second main contribution to Israelology is the Abrahamic Covenant, with three main facets: the seed, the Land, and the physical and spiritual blessings. Each of these facets, plus others, will be detailed in the exposition of the Book of Genesis.

The third contribution to Israelology is the origin of Jewishness and the origin of the Jewish people.

The fourth contribution is the origin of the Twelve Tribes of Israel from the twelve sons of Jacob."[18]

Joshua

"The book of Joshua makes a large contribution to Israelology in two areas: the covenants and the Promised Land.

As far as the covenants are concerned, they come up in Joshua 1:7-8; 22:5; 23:6, 16; and 24:25. These passages show the influence of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the Land Covenant on the history of Israel. As to the Abrahamic Covenant, Joshua records the beginnings of the fulfillment of the land promise. Furthermore, when the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, a mass circumcision was ordered, which is a commandment of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 17:9-14).

As to the Mosaic Covenant, six specific points can be made:

1. The command to eliminate the Canaanites and to conquer the land began to be fulfilled in the book of Joshua.
2. The principle of conditionality of the Mosaic Covenant is seen in that there are blessings for obedience, but cursings for disobedience. Jericho is an example of blessing for obedience. Ai would be an example of cursing for disobedience.
3. The book of Joshua details the role of the Ark of the Covenant, referred to in at least four different ways as the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth (Josh 3:11); the ark of Jehovah, the Lord of all the earth (Josh 3:13); the ark of covenant (Josh 3:14); and the ark of the covenant of Jehovah (Josh 3:17).
4. Joshua records two ceremonies, in which the Mosaic Covenant is renewed. The first renewal ceremony took place at Mt. Ebal (Josh 8:30-35) and the second in Shechem (Josh 24).
5. The book speaks of the observance of the Passover upon crossing the Jordan River, a Mosaic Law institution.

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[17] The author would like to acknowledge and thank Jack Nakashima of Ariel Ministries for his assistance in the initial collation of these materials which were then edited for use in this paper.

[18] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Genesis* (6th ed.; San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2023), 21.

6. The Tabernacle was erected at a more permanent place, in Shiloh.

Finally, as to the Land Covenant (Deut 29-30), two things can be noted. First, the enjoyment of the land was dependent upon obedience. Second, because of incomplete obedience, neither Joshua's generation nor subsequent generations were able to conquer all of the Promised Land.

In summary, it can be noted that the book of Joshua makes major contributions to Israelology in the area of the covenants by emphasizing God as a covenant-keeping God.

The second area of contribution concerns the Promised Land. Six things can be noted:

1. Joshua records the beginnings of the possession of the land, and in this one book it is stated over fifty times that God was giving the land to Israel.
2. While God was giving the land to Israel, the Israelites still had to fight to get the land, using military efforts.
3. The division of the land by lot shows that it is at God's and not at man's disposal.
4. The conquest and retention of the land was based upon obedience (Josh 10:40; 11:20, 23; 23:9-16).
5. This was the beginning of the fulfillment of the land promises, but it is not the totality of the fulfillment. Only in the Messianic kingdom, when Israel is an obedient people, will they finally possess all of the Promised Land.
6. The land is viewed as a rest, and this concept has two aspects. First, the land itself is a rest, a promise that was made in the Mosaic Law (Ex 33:14; Num 32:20-22; Deut 3:18-20; 12:10; 25:19). This rest is viewed as being fulfilled in Joshua 1:13, 15; 11:23; 14:15; 21:44; 22:4; and 23:1. Yet, Hebrews 3-4 states that this was not the totality of the rest God intended. The second aspect pertains to the land as a rest from the conflict with the enemy."[19]

Judges

"Israel's conquest and inheritance of the Land was the result of the fulfillment of the promises of God in the Abrahamic Covenant, which made ownership of the Land unconditional. The failure to take all the Promised Land was a result of breaking the Mosaic Covenant, which taught that enjoyment of the Land was conditioned on obedience."[20]

Ruth

"Israelology is the Doctrine of Israel. The name of Israel appears five times in this book. Furthermore, the book provides examples of people living at that time of the Judges who were keepers of the Law of Moses. The book teaches that God is the covenant-keeping God. Finally, it provides the historical background to the Davidic Covenant (God's covenant with David) and the Kingdom of David."[21]

Isaiah

"The contributions the book of Isaiah makes to the doctrine of Israel can be summarized by stating that it speaks of the past, present, and future of the people of Israel. Furthermore, it

[19] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Joshua* (2nd ed.; San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2026), 16-17.

[20] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Books of Judges and Ruth* (2nd ed.; San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2015), 21.

[21] Ibid., 278.

discusses the past, present, and future of the remnant of Israel, that segment that believes in God and is faithful to Him (Isa 8:14-17; 10:20-23; 28:5).

In the context of the doctrine of Israel, the book mentions both the Assyrian and the Babylonian captivities. The Babylonian Captivity especially had a lasting effect on Israel in that it brought the problem of idolatry to an end."[22]

Jeremiah

"Israelology discusses the theological past, present, and future of the people and the nation of Israel. It is the doctrine on which Jeremiah spends the most time. His book shows that Israel would be punished for specific violations of the Law of Moses (Jer 16:10-13; 17:21-27; 22:8-9). It talks about Israel's captivity in Babylon and also mentions Israel's worldwide dispersion. Furthermore, it deals with Israel's future repentance.

The book announces the coming of the New Covenant (31:31-34), which will displace the Law of Moses and the Mosaic Covenant. This, in turn, will lead to Israel's final restoration."[23]

Lamentations

"As for Israelology, Lamentations shows the outworking of the Mosaic Covenant. God made this covenant with Israel (Ex. 19:3-8), and its scriptural account extends from Exodus 20:1 to Deuteronomy 28:68. The key provision of the Mosaic Covenant was the Law of Moses, which contained a total of 613 commandments. Included in these provisions of the law were blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. It was signed and sealed by the *Shechinah* glory in such a way that rendered the covenant conditional (Ex 24:1-11)."[24]

Ezekiel

"The book of Ezekiel makes several important contributions to Israelology. The phrase *bet Yisrael* ('house of Israel') appears 146 times in the Hebrew Bible. Ezekiel uses it 83 times, constituting 57 percent of its usage within this single book. The term *Yisrael* ('Israel') appears over 180 times, and *Yehudah* ('Judah') is mentioned 15 times. When the Kingdom of Israel is contrasted with the Kingdom of Judah, the term 'Israel' is substituted with 'Joseph' or 'Ephraim' or 'Samaria,' the third option being the name of its capital (e.g., 16:46; 23:4; 37:16, 19). This observation leads to the conclusion that Ezekiel treats the terms *Yehudah* and *Yisrael* as interchangeable.

The book of Ezekiel focuses on five aspects of the doctrine of Israel. First, it emphasizes God's covenantal relationship with Israel. Because of the nature of the covenants that YHWH made with His people, He is obligated to fulfill certain things, both in judgment and blessing. For example, while He was responsible for scattering His people Israel (11:14-16), He will also regather them (v. 17) so that regenerate Israel can cleanse the land of all pollution (v. 18). This prophecy in Ezekiel is based on the promises that God made to His people in the Land Covenant (Deut 29:1–30:20; Ezek 16:1-63).

Second, the book contributes to the understanding of Israel's election. In dealing with the concept of election, a distinction must be made between individual election and national election.

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[22] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Isaiah* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2021), 16.

[23] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: Jeremiah and Lamentations* (2nd ed.; San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2025), 34.

[24] Ibid., 736.

The former is soteriological and results in the salvation of that individual. This type of election extends to both Jews and Gentiles, and any person who has ever believed, either Jew or Gentile, is the object of God's individual election. However, the concern of Israelology is national election because only Israel is considered to be an elect nation. National election does not guarantee the spiritual salvation of every individual within the nation since only individual election can do that, nor does national election guarantee the physical salvation of every member of the nation. What national election does guarantee is that God's purposes for choosing the nation (Ex 19:6; Deut 4:5-6; 6:6-9; Isa 43:10-12; Heb 2:16-17) will be accomplished and that the elect nation will always survive as a distinct entity. It guarantees the physical salvation of the nation and, in the case of Israel, even a future national spiritual salvation. It is the national election of Israel that is the basis of Israel's status as the chosen people (cf. Deut 4:37; 7:6-8; 10:15-16; 14:2). The fact of Israel's national election is shown in the book of Ezekiel in passages that confirm the Davidic Covenant (Ezek 37:24-25) and the Land Covenant (16:1-63). These two covenants are unconditional and guarantee the eternality of Israel's national election.

Third, the book details Israel's sinfulness, especially the sin of idolatry (e.g., 5:11; 8:5-18; 23:38-39). Ezekiel looks upon this key sin as spiritual adultery.

Fourth, the book of Ezekiel details God's judgment of the Jewish people, both at the hands of Babylon (e.g., 17:12) and by means of the tribulation (e.g., 13:1-7).

Fifth, Ezekiel contributes to the understanding of Israel's Messianic hope (e.g., 11:14-18). This hope includes the blessings of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34), confirmed by Ezekiel in 16:60; 34:25-31; and 37:26-28. The New Covenant promises that the people will be indwelled by the Holy Spirit (36:27) and enjoy material blessings (34:25-27). It also promises that the sanctuary will be rebuilt (37:26- 28) and that Messiah will rule from the throne of David in Jerusalem (48:35)."[25]

Hosea

"Hosea makes several important contributions to Israelology. The Hebrew term *Yisrael* ('Israel') appears forty-four times in the book, while its substitute *Ephrayim* ('Ephraim') is mentioned thirty-six times, and *Shomron* ('Samaria'), the capital of the Northern Kingdom, appears six times. This usage indicates that Hosea treats *Yisrael*, *Ephrayim*, and *Shomron* as interchangeable terms.

The book of Hosea focuses on six key aspects of the doctrine of Israel. First, it emphasizes YHWH's covenantal relationship with Israel, demonstrating that God is obligated to both judge and bless His people based on the covenants He made with them. For example, while YHWH was responsible for scattering His people Israel (1:4; 9:3), He will also regather them (1:10–2:1, 23). This prophecy is consistent with the promises of the Land Covenant (Deut 29:1–30:20; Ezek 16:1-63).

Second, the book affirms Israel's status as YHWH's possession and wife (2:23). In dealing with the concept of election, a distinction must be made between individual election and national election. The former is soteriological and results in the salvation of the individual. This type of election extends to both Jews and Gentiles, and any person who has ever believed, either Jew or Gentile, is the object of God's individual election. However, the concern of Israelology is national election because only Israel is considered to be an elect nation. National election does not guarantee the spiritual salvation of every individual within the nation since only individual

[25] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Ezekiel*, vol. 1 (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2024), 28-30.

election can do that, nor does national election guarantee the physical salvation of every member of the nation. What national election does guarantee is that God's purposes for choosing the nation (Ex 19:6; Deut 4:5-6; 7:6-9; Isa 43:10-12; Heb 2:16-17) will be accomplished and that the elect nation will always survive as a distinct entity. It guarantees the physical salvation of the nation and, in the case of Israel, even a future national spiritual salvation. It is the national election of Israel that is the basis of Israel's status as the Chosen People (cf. Deut 4:37; 7:6-8; 10:15-16; 14:2).

Third, the book of Hosea highlights Israel's sinfulness, particularly the sin of idolatry (2:17; 10:1-3), which is likened to spiritual adultery (2:2-5; 3:1). Israel is lost because of a lack of knowledge of spiritual truth (4:6).

Fourth, the book details God's judgment of the Jewish people, both through the Assyrians (2:6-13; 5:8-14; 8:8-10) and through the tribulation (5:15; 6:3).

Fifth, Hosea contributes significantly to the understanding of Israel's Messianic hope (6:2). This hope encompasses the blessings of the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34), which Hosea anticipates in 2:14 and 18. It also includes the Messiah's future reign from the throne of David in Jerusalem (3:5). Additionally, the book highlights a critical precondition for the Messiah's second coming: Israel's confession of her sin in rejecting the Messiahship of Yeshua (5:15; 6:1-3).

Sixth, the book of Hosea emphasizes YHWH's enduring love for His wife, Israel, despite her unfaithfulness. This love is most clearly portrayed in 11:1-11 and 14:4."[26]

Joel

"Joel's emphasis on Israelology is evident in his focus on Judah, the Southern Kingdom. He gives particular attention to the Temple in Jerusalem, identifies the specific sins of Judah, and details the divine judgment that will come upon the nation as a result."[27]

Amos

"Amos distinguishes between Judah and Israel, addressing both separately in his oracles. While Judah is condemned for rejecting the Torah (2:4-5), Israel receives the majority of the prophetic critique. Geographical references such as Hamath in 6:14 (cf. Josh 1:4; I Chron 18:3) and the River of Egypt (Wadi el-Arish) in 8:8 outline the borders of the Promised Land (cf. Gen 15:18).

Amos's vision of Israel's future restoration (9:14-15) reinforces God's enduring covenantal relationship with the Jewish people. The final promise—they shall no more be plucked up out of their land (9:15)—emphasizes the permanence of the restored nation in the Messianic Age."[28]

Obadiah

"A proper systematic theology must grapple with the question of Israel. Paul's epistle to the Romans—the first true systematic theology in church history—places Israel at its center, devoting three full chapters (Rom 9–11) to the topic. This extended focus highlights the

[26] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Minor Prophets*, vol. 1 (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2025), 22-23.

[27] Ibid., 166-167.

[28] Ibid., 236.

importance of understanding Israel's role not only in redemptive history but also in God's future purposes.

The book of Obadiah contributes to this theological picture by portraying the conflict with Edom as a conflict between two nations bound by the closest possible kinship, having originated from twin brothers—Jacob and Esau. The intensity of the judgment against Edom is thus framed not only in political terms but also as a betrayal of familial bonds.

Moreover, the book illustrates the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant, particularly the principle stated in Genesis 12:3: *I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse*. Edom's hostility toward Israel places it under divine judgment, demonstrating that God remains faithful to His covenantal promises and continues to defend the people descended from Abraham."[29]

Jonah

"The prophet's reluctance to preach to Nineveh was not born out of an anti-Gentile sentiment but out of deep concern for Israel. From the prophecy of Amos, Jonah recognized that Assyria would eventually be the instrument of Israel's destruction. His confession in 4:2b indicates a theologically informed resistance: *O YHWH, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repent you of the evil*. Jonah understood that if Nineveh repented, God, in His mercy, would spare them. Jonah's attempted flight, then, was not a failure of courage but a deliberate act grounded in his awareness of God's character and a conflicted loyalty to Israel, his people."[30]

Micah

"The book of Micah provides valuable insight into the historical and theological condition of the divided kingdom. The prophet ministered during a period that witnessed the downfall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel into Assyrian captivity and the political subjugation of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, which was forced to pay heavy tribute to Assyria.

At that time, Israel was both politically and spiritually weakened due to widespread idolatry. Judah, though still comparatively stronger and led by some godly kings, was not immune to similar decline. The effects of growing idolatry were already evident. While Israel was guilty of national idolatry, the people of Judah had established unauthorized sites of worship—miniature temples that rivaled the central sanctuary in Jerusalem. In doing so, they disregarded the divinely appointed role of the Temple.

Micah also maintains a clear theological distinction between national Israel and the faithful remnant within her. This remnant plays a central role in God's redemptive plan.

Ultimately, the book anticipates Israel's national restoration in the Messianic Kingdom (4:6-8)—a restoration that includes both spiritual renewal and the reestablishment of Israel's kingdom under divine rule."[31]

Nahum

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[29] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Minor Prophets*, vol. 2 (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2026), 11.

[30] Ibid., 58.

[31] Ibid., 125-126.

"The book of Nahum contributes to Israelology by presenting Judah's struggle with Assyria as ultimately a theological, not merely political, conflict—one between the God of Israel and a hostile Gentile empire.

Furthermore, Nahum's prophecy illustrates the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant, especially the principle articulated in Genesis 12:3a. Nineveh's aggression toward Israel places it under divine curse, thereby affirming God's ongoing covenant faithfulness and His commitment to defend the descendants of Abraham.

Rabbi Cohen also recognizes the centrality of Israel in Nahum's prophecy, stating that the prophet sees nothing but the downfall of Nineveh and the destruction of those who oppress the Jewish people and defy the God of justice. This theme, Cohen notes, is expressed in striking and elevated language and culminates in a *paean*—a triumphant declaration of the vindication of righteousness. Cohen contrasts this with the tone of prophets like Jeremiah, who, overwhelmed by the suffering of his people, could find no solace in the downfall of Israel's enemies. Nahum's celebratory tone, however, is understandable as the outcry of a 'sensitive soul that throbbed with the pain of his oppressed people.'"[32]

Habakkuk

"The book of Habakkuk reflects the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant. In Genesis 12:3, God promised to bless those who bless Abraham's descendants and to curse those who curse them. This covenant establishes a lasting principle: Although God may use Gentile nations as instruments to discipline Israel, He will hold those same nations accountable when they exceed their appointed role or act with undue cruelty. In the context of Habakkuk, God used the Babylonians to bring judgment upon Judah for her disobedience. However, as seen elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Jer 25:12; Zech 1:15), God later judged Babylon for going beyond what He had intended.

Furthermore, the book reveals that YHWH has planned a great future for His people Israel. At the return of the Messiah, the nation will experience restoration and salvation (Hab 3:3-6)."[33]

Zephaniah

"The book of Zephaniah makes a significant contribution to the doctrine of Israel by demonstrating both God's disciplinary judgment upon His people and His ultimate plan of restoration.

First, the book situates Israel's experience within the wider context of the surrounding nations (2:4-15). By announcing judgment against Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Cush, and Assyria, it emphasizes Israel's central role in God's redemptive purposes. The fate of the Gentile nations is directly tied to their relationship with Israel and Israel's God. This theme parallels Isaiah's oracles against the nations (Isa 13–23) and Jeremiah's collection of foreign-nation prophecies (Jer 46–51), both of which show that God's dealings with the Gentiles cannot be divorced from His covenants with Israel.

Second, the divine judgment upon the Gentile nations reflects the cursing aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:3). As God promised Abraham, those who curse Israel will be cursed. Zephaniah's oracles against the nations demonstrate that divine retribution is not arbitrary but covenantal, rooted in God's binding promise to Israel's patriarchs. This motif also

[32] Ibid., 227.
[33] Ibid., 273.

appears in Obadiah, where the downfall of Edom is tied directly to its hostility against Israel (Obad 9-15).

Third, the book highlights the sins of which Judah herself was guilty (1:4-13). Idolatry, violence, deceit, and complacency had corrupted the nation, bringing Judah under the covenantal curses announced in the Torah (Lev 26:14-39; Deut 28:15-68). Zephaniah makes clear that Israel is not exempt from judgment; rather, as the covenant nation, her accountability before God is heightened. Jeremiah expressed a similar warning when he reminded his fellow Jews that having the Temple in their midst would not shield them from judgment if they persisted in sin (Jer 7:1-15).

Fourth, the book of Zephaniah identifies four groups of leaders who bore particular responsibility for leading the nation astray: princes, judges, false prophets, and priests (3:3-4). Each failed in their God-given role to shepherd and uphold the covenant. Ezekiel, writing later, would make the same charge when he depicted Israel's leaders as corrupt shepherds who exploited the flock (Ezek 34:1-10).

Fifth, the judgment is concentrated upon Jerusalem, the heart of the nation (3:1-7). The city, meant to be a place of justice and faithfulness, had become a center of rebellion. Zephaniah's words demonstrate that God's covenantal relationship with Israel involves both privilege and responsibility. The nearness of God's presence magnifies the seriousness of sin within His chosen city. Micah had earlier made the same point, indicting Jerusalem for turning Zion into a place of bloodshed rather than justice (Mic 3:9-12).

Finally, the book of Zephaniah concludes with a vision of Israel's ultimate restoration (3:14-20). After judgment, God will gather the dispersed, remove their shame, and rejoice over them with singing. This eschatological hope affirms that God's covenant with Israel remains irrevocable and that her future restoration rests securely upon divine promise. Isaiah had already envisioned such a day of rejoicing, when God would wipe away Israel's reproach (Isa 25:8-9), while Jeremiah spoke of the regathering and renewal of the nation (Jer 31:7-14). Ezekiel likewise portrayed Israel's final restoration in the vision of the dry bones (Ezek 37:1-14). Together, these prophets presented a consistent testimony to God's faithful dealings with His covenant people—a testimony that Zephaniah confirmed in his own distinctive voice."[34]

Acts

"Reflecting on the Gospels, the book of Acts affirms that Israel rejected the Messiah (2:22-23, 36; 3:13-18; 4:10-11). It also mentions that the second coming is conditional upon Israel's acceptance of the Messiah (3:19-20).

The book also affirms that the Messianic kingdom will someday be reoffered and restored to Israel, though the timing cannot be known (1:6-7; 3:20-21).

Acts affirms the Messianic Jewish identity and Jewish practices, at the same time recognizing that there is also a Gentile Christianity. The book makes it clear that Gentile believers are not obligated to practice either circumcision or submission to the Mosaic Law (15:1-29). Paul's action in having Timothy circumcised (16:1-3) shows that circumcision would continue to be obligatory to Jewish believers, though not on the basis of the Mosaic Covenant, but on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant (16:1-3).

The book of Acts demonstrates the principle that the gospel must go out to the Jew first by affirming it through Paul's activities. Although Paul was called to be the apostle to the

[34] Ibid., 342-343.

Gentiles, he is seen as being very careful to go to the Jew first (13:5, 14; 14:1; 16:11-13; 17:1-2, 10, 16-17; 18:1-4, 19; 19:8; 28:17).

Finally, throughout the book, there is a consistent distinction between Israel and the church."[35]

Romans

"The contributions that the letter to the Romans makes to the doctrine of Israel can be summarized by stating that it speaks of the past, present, and future of the people of Israel. Regarding the past, the epistle speaks of the Law of Moses in connection to Israel (7:1-14) and of Israel's rejection of the Messiah (11:1-21). It further mentions the results of Israel's stumbling (9:33).

Israel's unchanged status as the chosen people is mentioned in 9:1-18 and 11:28.

Regarding the future, the epistle elaborates on the national salvation of Israel at the end of the tribulation period (11:25-27)."[36]

The Three Questions

". . . Paul answers three questions in his development of Israelology in the Book of Romans. The first question is: 'If what Paul wrote in Romans 1:16 is true-that the gospel is to the Jew first-why are there so few Jews being saved?' To summarize Paul's answer, in Romans 9:1-5 he confesses that he had a deep love and sorrow for Israel. In Romans 9:6-13, he then teaches that their rejection of the Messiahship of Yeshua was not due to a failure of God's promises nor was their rejection in Romans 9:14- 29 due to it an injustice on the part of God. The real problem in Romans 9:30-10:21 was their own rejection of the righteousness of God. However, consolation is to be found in Romans 11:1-10 in the salvation of the Remnant in the present day according to the election of grace. Consolation should also be seen in Romans 11:11-22 in the present acceptance of the Gentiles. Consolation should also be seen in the future in that all Israel will believe, and there will be a future restoration of Israel in Romans 11:23-32. Finally, in Romans 11:33- 36, all of these are evidences of the wisdom and the glory of God.

The second question is: 'How do the Gentiles know they can trust God when His promises to Israel have not been fulfilled?' This is a logical question in light of what Paul said at the end of chapter 8. To summarize his answer to this question, Paul states three things. First, Israel's failure is related to spiritual pride and self sufficiency, therefore, the fault does not lie with God. Secondly, Israel's rejection is not complete nor total; there were individual Jewish people who did not reject the Messiahship of Jesus. Thirdly, Israel's rejection is not final; in fact, the nation as a nation will receive the Messiah some time in the future.

The third question that Paul answered in these chapters is: 'Has the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles nullified God's promises to Israel?' He will answer a very firm 'No!'"[37]

Paul's Doxology - Romans 11:33-36

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? or who has been

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[35] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Acts* (4th ed.; San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2024), 16.

[36] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Romans* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2022), 14.

[37] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Theology of Israel: A Study of Romans 9–11* (MBS 80; San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2005), 5.

his counsellor? or who has first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen.

Paul concludes his Israelology with his familiar doxology. As Paul reflected on God's plan and program in relationship to Israel, how He brought Israel into this state; how He is calling from among the Gentiles today to bring many of them to salvation; how this Gentile calling will come to an end some day; and how God will again deal with Israel and bring them all to salvation, he concludes with this tremendous doxology that extols the *wisdom* of God and the *riches* of God in that wisdom. Indeed, if one fully understands God's dealings with the Jewish people, if he clearly understands God's plan and program for Israel, and if he appreciates it from God's standpoint, he, too, will have to say with Paul: *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!*"[38]

The Church and the Jews

"The Church has Lost her Balance

Ephesians 2:11-16 not only teaches that the Church has received spiritual blessings from the Jews, but it also deals with the concept of the one new man, the Church. Paul points out that this one new man is composed of both Jewish believers and Gentile believers in verse 15. For the Church to keep her balance, it needed both Jewish believers and Gentile believers united into one body. However, because of the failure to proclaim the gospel to the Jews, the Church has lost her balance; many of our church splits and doctrinal problems have arisen because there were no Jewish believers in the Church to provide a corrective measure.

The Church has Lost her Blessings from God

The second thing the Church has lost by withholding the gospel from the Jews is her blessings from God.

1. **The Principle of the Covenant: Genesis 12:3**

   I will bless them that bless you, and him that curses you will I curse.

   One of the ways one can curse the Jews is by withholding the gospel from them. Those who take a stand against Jewish evangelism, and even worse, those who fail to practice it, are automatically depriving themselves and the Church of blessings from God.

2. **The Outworking of the Covenant**

   Withholding the gospel from the Jews was a way of boasting over the Jews, the broken branches. This is something that Paul warned against in Romans 11:13-29, when he warned the Gentile world, the wild olive branches, not to boast against the natural, Jewish branches, which were broken off. But when Gentile believers took a haughty attitude, saying, 'The Jews are beyond salvation,' in essence, they began boasting over the Jewish branches.

   This boasting takes on various forms. One of the major forms is in the systematic theology know as 'Covenant Theology.' There are three major lines of Covenant Theology: Covenant Postmillennial, Covenant Amillennial, and Covenant Premillennial. All of these lines identify the Church as the "New Israel" to a lesser or greater degree. All of them are saying that some of the promises that God made to Israel will never be fulfilled to literal, ethnic Israel, rather, they will only be fulfilled to the Church. Covenant Theology, which has appropriated the Jewish blessings for itself while leaving the Jews with the curses, is guilty

[38] Ibid., 28.

of boasting over the branches, and that is exactly what the Book of Romans as a whole argues against.

The Book of Romans, the first systematic theology, contains the themes of biblical faith in doctrine and practice. In the first eight chapters, Paul deals with the theology of God's righteousness. He points out that the righteousness of God has been revealed against all the unrighteousness of men, and that all men, Jews and Gentiles alike, have failed to attain God's righteousness. Because man, on his own, cannot attain the righteousness of God, God took the step of providing righteousness for man by means of His Son.

There are three facets of God's righteousness in the work of salvation. The past aspect is justification; once a person has become a believer in the Messiahship of Yeshua, he is once-and-for-all justified from sin. The present facet of the salvation of God's righteousness is sanctification; the Holy Spirit is now indwelling us, slowly conforming us more and more to the image of the Son of God. The future facet of God's salvation is glorification; we shall some day be glorified, and we shall be like Him. This is the theology of God's righteousness.

In light of the theology of God's righteousness in chapters 1-8, Paul then deals with the practice of God's righteousness in chapters 12-16. The question is, 'Okay, so what difference does that make?' He shows how one should work out God's righteousness in a day to day experience. That is the reason the Book of Romans is the great book of both the doctrine and the practice of God's righteousness.

Between the theology of God's righteousness in chapters 1-8, and the practice of God's righteousness in chapters 12-16, Paul deals with the issue of Israel and how God's righteousness works its way out in His dealings with Israel, past, present, and future in chapters 9-11. Concerning the past, Israel's rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus did not catch God by surprise in chapter 9; it was very much part of the divine plan. Concerning the present, God is not dealing with Jews nationally, but with individual Jews so that whosoever, Jew or Gentile, calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved in chapter 10. Then, he deals with both the present and future in chapter 11. In the present, even today, there is a Remnant among the Jews according to the election of grace. There are Jewish people individually coming to saving faith, and these become the Remnant of Israel, the true Israel of God. Concerning the future, the day is coming that, when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, all Israel will be saved. So Paul deals with the theology of Israel or Israelology between his discussion of the theology of God's righteousness and the practice of God's righteousness.

3. The Center of One's Theology

The point is clear: the Jew must be the center of one's theology. This is the exact area where Covenant Theology has failed. Dispensationalism fulfills this biblical demand. Covenant Theology fails to fulfill this demand because of its consistent confusion between Israel and the Church.

Because of the role of Israel in Dispensational Theology, there is a sense of urgency in the realm of Jewish evangelism. That is why, even today, most Jewish missions in this country are being supported by dispensational churches, rather than by Covenant Theology churches.

Their attitude toward Jewish evangelism becomes a standard of judgment upon their theology: *for by their fruits ye shall know them.* Covenant Theology fails to take Israel into

consideration because of their confusion between Israel and the Church; for them, the Church is the whole 'bag' of God's program.

A theology of any kind that leads to a failure to proclaim the gospel to the Jewish people shows them to be guilty of boasting over the broken branches. Those who boast over the broken branches are failing to receive certain blessings from God."[39]

I Peter

THE PRESENT

"The doctrine of the Remnant of Israel teaches that there is always a segment of the Jewish people who are believers. The teaching of the New Testament is that the Remnant of Israel today is composed of Jewish believers in the Messiahship of Yeshua (Jesus). In the New Testament, that doctrine is found primarily in Paul's Israelology of Romans 9, 10, and 11. There is one other passage on the Remnant of Israel relevant to Israel Present, I Peter 2:1-10.

A. I Peter 2:1-10

1. Introduction: I Peter 1:1-2

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

By taking Peter's words literally, it is clear that this Epistle was not written to the Church at large, nor to a body of Gentile believers, but to Jewish believers living outside the Land within a majority Gentile population. Not once does Peter use the term 'Church' in this epistle. The term *the Dispersion* of I Peter 1:1 is a technical Jewish term for Jews who live outside the Land. It is used twice elsewhere: John 7:35 and James 1:1, which all commentators agree refer to the Jews of the Diaspora. There is no reason to make I Peter the exception, since it fits well into Peter's calling as the Apostle to the Circumcision (Gal 2:7-8). Furthermore, Peter keeps making reference to the fact that his readers live among Gentiles (I Pet 2:12; 4:3). While many try to make the term 'Gentiles' mean 'unbelievers,' that is never its Jewish usage, nor even a New Testament usage, as a look in a concordance will show. Peter is using the term 'Gentile' in its normal usage of 'non-Jew.' Peter is addressing Jewish believers living among a majority Gentile population. Expressions such as *vain manner of life handed down from your fathers* (I Pet 1:18) have clear Jewish overtones, distinguishing these Jewish believers from their past lives in Rabbinic Judaism.

In this section of the Epistle, Peter draws a contrast between the Remnant and the non-Remnant. His purpose is to show that, while the non-Remnant has failed in its calling, the Remnant has not failed. Thus, what Peter states here may not necessarily be true of the Church as a whole, but it is true specifically of Jewish believers who now make up the Remnant of Israel.

2. The Spiritual State of the Remnant: I Peter 2:1-3

Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation; if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

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[39] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Church and the Jews* (MBS 179; San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2005), 8–11.

Peter's statements show that he is writing to the Jewish believers who are in need of the *spiritual milk* of the Word of God.

3. The Stone of Stumbling and the Rock of Offence: I Peter 2:4-10

After describing the spiritual state of the Remnant in verses 1-3, Peter then deals with the topic of the Stone of Stumbling and the Rock of Offence.

a. The Messiah, the Living Stone: I Peter 2:4

unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious.

The Messiah Yeshua is described as the *living stone*, who, though *rejected* by men, is *elect* and *precious* with God.

b. The Status of the Remnant: I Peter 2:5

ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

With Exodus 19:5-6 clearly in his mind, Peter states that, because of the kind of salvation they have, Jewish believers are two things. First, they are *living stones* and as such are part of *a spiritual house*. This spiritual house is the spiritual House of Israel, the Remnant of Israel or, in Paul's words, the *Israel of God* (Gal. 6:16). Secondly, Jewish believers are a *holy priesthood*. This, too, was the calling of the nation as a whole. The nation failed, but the Remnant of Israel has not failed and is today offering *spiritual sacrifices* to the Lord.

c. The Distinction Between the Remnant and the Non-Remnant: I Peter 2:6-8

To explain the distinction between the Remnant and the non-Remnant, Peter begins with the status of the Remnant in verses 6-7a: *Because it is contained in scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: And he that believes on him shall not be put to shame. For you therefore that believe is the preciousness.*

Verse 6 is a quotation from Isaiah 28:16 to point out that the *chief corner stone* is the Messiah who is *elect* and *precious* before God the Father, and those who believe in Him will not be ashamed. In verse 7a, he then makes the application and states that, while the Messianic Stone is indeed precious, it is only *precious* for the Remnant.

Concerning the non-Remnant, verses 7b-8 state: *but for such as disbelieve, The stone which the builders rejected The same was made the head of the corner; and, A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; for they stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*

In verse 7b, Peter quotes from Psalm 118:22 to show that the Messianic Stone that would be rejected by the leaders of Israel was already predicted. In verse 8a, he quotes Isaiah 8:14 to show that, for the unbeliever, the Messianic Stone was to be *a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence*. In the Isaiah passage that was discussed earlier, it was shown that Isaiah dealt with the contrast between the Remnant and the non-Remnant. Peter concludes with an application in verse 8b: the non-Remnant indeed stumbled, for those who rejected the Word were destined to stumble. Isaiah predicted that Immanuel would be the point of division between the Remnant and the non-Remnant. Peter teaches that this has now taken place and Yeshua the Messiah has become that new point of division.

d. The Status of the Remnant: I Peter 2:9-10

This passage concludes with a further description of the status of the Remnant in verse 9a: *But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession.*

With Exodus 19:5-6 still in mind, Peter now adds four other descriptions to show the position of the Remnant in contrast to Israel the Whole. First, they are *an elect race*, based on Isaiah 43:20. Being elect shows that they were chosen at God's initiative (I Pet. 2:4, 6). This is a reference to their individual election. The use of the term *race* shows that Peter is also dealing with their national election. The Church, however, is not a race; it is composed of believers from all races. Secondly, the Remnant of Israel is *a royal priesthood*. In verse 5, the Remnant was called *a holy priesthood*, emphasizing their right to approach the Heavenly Sanctuary. Now, they are also *a royal priesthood*. Since the High Priest Jesus is a priest king after the Order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:1-28), these believers are therefore *a royal priesthood*, for they are both priests and kings. For now, they are functioning as priests (Heb. 13:15-16), but in the future they will function as kings, exercising royal authority in the Messianic Kingdom (Rev. 5:10; 20:6). While it is true that all believers constitute a priesthood, the priesthood of all believers cannot legitimately be derived from this passage; rather, the concept of the priesthood of the believer is taught in Revelation 1:6; 5:10; and 20:6. Thirdly, the believing Jewish Remnant is *a holy nation*. Israel became a nation at Mount Sinai and was called upon to be *holy* and separated from sin to God. However, the nation as a whole failed, but the Remnant has not failed. The Church is not a nation (Rom. 10:19), it is composed of believers from all nations. Fourthly, they are *a people for God's own possession*. This is based not only on Exodus 19:5-6, but also on Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Isaiah 43:21; and Malachi 3:17. While they became a nation at Mount Sinai, they became a people with Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. The Remnant is *God's own possession*, for those Jewish believers were purchased by the blood of the Messiah and therefore belong uniquely to God (I Pet 1:18-19).

Having described the status of the Remnant in this way, Peter next gives the purpose for their election in verse 9b: *that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

The background to this concept is Isaiah 43:20-21. They are to *show forth the excellencies* or the attributes *of the God who called* [them] *out of darkness into his marvelous light.* They are to proclaim the message to those outside.

In verse 10, this section concludes with a reference to Hosea 1:10-2:1 and 23: *who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

Formerly, they were part of the non-Remnant; spiritually, *in time past* [they] *were no people* [and] *had not obtained mercy*. Now they are members of the Remnant, *the people of God,* and *now have obtained mercy.*

4. Summary [for 1 Peter]

To summarize the status of the Remnant, Peter is not drawing a distinction between Israel and the Church or between unbelieving Jews and believing Gentiles. The distinction is between Jews who believe and Jews who do not believe. His point is that, while Israel as a whole failed, the believing Remnant of Israel has not failed, thus the Remnant of Israel

is fulfilling the calling of the nation as a whole. Paul will make the same point in his theology of Israel in Romans 9, 10, and 11."[40]

[40] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Remnant of Israel: Past, Present and Future* (MBS 191; San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2005), 8–12.