

Romans 9-11

The Centrality of Israel

Background

These three chapters have been traditionally considered as an irrelevant parentheses in the letter to the Romans.

A main reason: Israel is no longer relevant in G-d's economy. They have either been replaced by the Gentiles for non-performance, or are for this age replaced and no longer an entity.

A prominent teaching: The promises to Israel were, after the death of Yeshua, transferred to the Gentile church, and Israel was left out in the cold. This is essentially what is called replacement theology. Most modern Christian viewpoints adhere in one way or another to this viewpoint even until today.

Paul began his letter to the Romans with the theme of the sinfulness of both Jew and Gentile. His overriding concern throughout his travels and writings have consistently been the integration of the Jewish and Gentile community into one unit.

These chapters are the apex of his letter to Rome. Rather than being a parentheses, they are the central point, and the rest of Romans hinges on these chapters.

In the beginning I had proposed an outline that thematically at least followed the organization of the Torah. This section would correspond thematically to that of Leviticus, the duties and task of the Priests. They were chosen without regard to their inherent righteousness, in fact, Levi had been passed over due to his wantonness with a sword. Yet, they were installed as those closest to His Presence and with weighty tasks.

Romans 9-11 Summary

There is a direct connection between chapter 8 and these chapters.

- Nothing can separate us from G-d's love and choice. If we are elected, if we are His, then we can not be separated from Him, nor from His promises.
- Israel is a part of these promises, in fact, they were the original and initial recipients of those promises.
- Paul reminds his readers that those gifts and callings are not revocable. They are still in effect, in fact.
- Paul writes then, to reconcile the apparent rejection of Yeshua by much of Israel with this irrevocable calling. How can this be?
- Paul addresses the conundrum of G-d's choice of Israel, and the rejection of Yeshua by Jewish individuals, and apparently by the nation as represented by the religious leadership. Can the promise of 8:39 be true if Israel is truly cast off?
- Paul goes about the task of reconciling the fact that G-d loves Israel with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:2-3) with their apparent rejection of Him.
- He deals in some depth with how the salvation of Israel, the Jewish people will be accomplished and so vindicate the Word of Hashem.

Romans 9-11 Details

9:1-6:

What about the present condition of Israel (vs 6)? Does this mean that G-d's Word has failed? Why is Israel not flocking to Yeshua? This makes it appear that the promises of G-d have indeed failed. But they have not. But they have what Paul calls advantages:

- **They are children of G-d** (Ex 4:22) Word for children is the same for believers.
- **The Glory of G-d, His Shekinah** (Mishnaic Hebrew) was with them.
- **The covenants belong to Israel.** From Abraham (Gen 17), Moses (Ex 19-24) and even into eternity with the New Covenant (Jer 31, Ezek 36). It is exclusive, yet the point of it is to bring salvation to all the world, the Gentiles by definition.
- The Torah itself was entrusted to Israel. This has two parts
 - The Torah itself, words of life, guidance, instructions from G-d himself
 - **The act of the giving** of Torah itself. A gift. A meeting of the Divine with humanity. A model of marriage for the rest of the world (Deut 4:6f). This is a shadow, an image of the Messiah Himself. Yeshua is also “Torah” in the same way (Heb 8:6)
- **The Temple service.** This is a picture of Yeshua and served as a continual reminder of G-d's grace towards them and was also to point to Yeshua.
- **The Promises** of redemption, reconciliation with G-d, and the Messiah were made to Israel.
- **The Patriarchs** Abraham, Isaac, Jacob were the initial recipients of the Promises.
- **The Messiah Himself** would be one of their own brothers. He would be not only for Israel, but for the whole world as well.

Romans 9:6-29.

G-d's Word has not failed, even though from the contemporary perspective, it may seem so. G-d is not to blame for this. He makes choices, not based upon performance, but upon His gracious choices. God's sovereignty, His justice and mercy are established in this portion. The promises apply to a remnant, a seed of Israel, but also is expanded to include some non-Jews.

- The Promise we need to understand, is not just the gaining of salvation, but rather it is the BRINGING of the way of salvation. It is upon this misunderstanding that much of the misunderstanding of the role of Israel hinges. Israel was called to first of all, bring the message, the means, and the vessel of reconciliation to G-d to all the nations. Israel then, becomes the model society by which this is demonstrated.
 - In Deuteronomy, we are told that G-d will bring His goals about through Israel, whether they be in obedience or disobedience.
 - Paul now goes about the task of explaining how this can come about in the face of Israel's disobedience.
- Is G-d to blame for all of this? No.
 - A Distinction is made between the individual and the nation as a whole.
 - Some of Israel, physically, are indeed cut off from the nation as a whole.
 - Mishnah: (All Israel has a place in the world to come, but not all of Israel is included).
 - The Tanakh itself warns that disobedience can result in a person being cut off from G-d's people.

Romans 9:6-16. The promises outlined. Israel is adopted, a child, maybe wayward, but a child nonetheless. G-d Himself determines who the 'seed' are. Isaac is the picture of this promise, by G-d's own choice.

- Vs 7-9. G-d determines who holds the promise, not man. Not by his acts, character or anything else. The promise was to come through Isaac, and Jacob, and nowhere else. It is a promise made by G-d alone, Sarah is used as the first example of this.
- Vs 10-13. Rebekah gave birth to twins, and Jacob was chosen before they were even born. Not Jacob's choice, but G-d's alone.
 - The older serves the younger, to fit a pattern. Many examples of this pattern in the Tanakh. G-d is not unjust in His choices.
- Vs 14-18. Moses: G-d chooses on whom He will show mercy. (Ex 4:21, 14:4 and other places speak of G-d working on Pharaoh in such a way as to carry out His plans, even though it is through Pharaoh's hardened heart.
- Yeshua displays the intertwining of G-d's justice and mercy. Neither is elevated but both are uniquely satisfied in Yeshua, both our Redeemer and Judge.
- 19-23. We do not have the right to question G-d. Paul quotes Isaiah and Jeremiah 18 using the imagery of a Potter with His clay. Job 38 also teaches us the folly of questioning G-d's choices.
 - Traditional Judaism in our daily Siddur also teaches this truth. Who can say to You, what are You doing?