

# The Instrumentalization of the Messianic Claim by Religious Nationalist Zionism <sup>1</sup>

## Introductory note: On the topicality of the issue

The term "Zionism" soon established itself as a common name for the Jewish national movement from the end of the 19th century, after it first appeared in writing in the journal *Self-Emancipation* on May 16, 1890, edited by Nathan Birnbaum (1864-1937), born in Vienna.

More than a hundred years later, a remarkable paradigm shift of the concept began to gain ground even in the mainstream of Israeli society, whose interpretation had until then been held only by extreme marginal groups. In the last two decades, an elite has come to power that no longer represents the vision of its founding fathers in terms of a (secular) "Jewish *and* democratic state" that, according to Israel's Declaration of Independence of May 14, 1948, "*guarantees social and political equality to all its citizens without distinction of religion, race or sex.*" Rather, national legislation has for years increasingly emphasized "Jewishness" (especially in the July 19, 2018 Law on the Nation-State, which is considered the Basic Law), according to which "*only Jews have the right to national self-determination*" – regardless of the 24% share of non-Jewish citizens of Israel, such as Druze, Bedouin, Christians, and Circassians.

Liberal-democratic-minded Israelis from fields such as justice, sociology and independent journalism have therefore not tired for years of warning against this anti-secular transformation process, which is increasingly being driven forward openly, arrogantly and power-consciously by religious ultra-nationalists. One of their own, military historian Yoaz Hendel, chairman of the *Institute for Zionist Strategies* (IZS) from 2012 to 2019 and meanwhile Minister of Communications and Knesset Member (MK), among others, has categorically defined the limits: "*Secular Tel Aviv has become irrelevant. The entire dispute between liberals and conservatives in Israeli society today is conducted within religious Zionism. This represents the new elite, and it is no longer interested in compromise.*"<sup>2</sup>

Likud politician Tzipi Hotovely, a law graduate and 2015 vice foreign minister, explained her government's position as "*this earth [Hebrew "Erez": earth, land] belongs only to God*"; and, "*He has decided to give it to us [Jews] as an inheritance*".<sup>3</sup> At the *Jerusalem Post Diplomatic Conference* on Nov. 23, 2016, she stated unequivocally in her speech, "*The truth is: any future solution should include Judea and Samaria [note: meaning the West Bank] under Israel's sovereignty. For this is Jewish homeland.*" [*emphasized spoken*].<sup>4</sup>

This systematic permeation of Israel's key institutions with Jewish religious extremism, coupled with geopolitical maximalism, has long since spread to the army and the religious military rabbinate. What has become well known is the call to prayer by the then commander of the *Giv'ati Brigade*, Col. Ofer Winter, to his soldiers during *Operation "Solid Rock"* (2014 against Gaza), which sociology professor Yagil Levy commented as follows: "*Winter's statement clearly shows that the war in Gaza is a holy war and must be fought for God's glory. As he sees it, an attack on Israel is an attack on God. In Winter's war, the rules are different. It is a holy war.*" Ofer Winter had entered the army from Talmudic high school with an educational mission to influence it to that end. "*A war waged in a religious spirit provides full justification to suffer martyrdom. [...] In the terminology of this kind of war, the Palestinians are Philistines, and afterwards there are no Philistines left in the country. This kind of war could even justify ethnic cleansing*".<sup>5</sup> The Gaza war was not simply an operation to restore calm in the sector, but a vendetta against those who blasphemed God for

<sup>1</sup> The three case studies presented here of the misuse of biblical-messianic prophecies by the modern Israeli administration and the agencies of its state-directed and financed propaganda ("Hasbara") by no means claim to be entirely exhaustive. Thus, on the occasion of the numerous celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Jewish state, it was repeatedly publicly celebrated as "*the light for the nations*" – for example, on Sunday afternoon, May 13, 2018, in the large ceremonial hall of the Vienna City Council. This was done in the context of purely secular advances such as achievements and inventions of the Jewish state in fields such as high tech, economics and arms exports. The designation of the immigration and colonization of Palestine as "aliyah" is another misuse of biblical terms (see below).

<sup>2</sup> According to report in *Yedi'ot Achronot* (one of Israel's two largest circulation and most widely read daily newspapers) in Dec. 2015, quoted in *Ha'aretz*, Dec. 25, 2015, under the headline, "Religious Ultranationalist Zionists Have Taken Over Israel."

<sup>3</sup> "Hotovely: 'Dire au monde que nous avons raison'" – Telling the world we are right), *IsraPresse*, May 1, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxBsBmOmQidg>.

<sup>5</sup> These quotes are taken from an interview with Yagil Levy conducted in Tel Aviv in December 2015 (*Ha'aretz*, Dec. 17, 2015: "For Religious Zionists, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict is Holy War, Scholar Says"), on the occasion of the publication Y. Levy's new (Hebrew) book, "The Divine Commander: The Theocratization of the Israeli Military."

attacking Israel. Already during the previous Gaza war, *Operation "Cast Lead"* (2009), the brigadier general and head of the military rabbinate, Rabbi Avichai Rontzki, had presented the enemy as "Amalek" to army soldiers.<sup>6</sup>

A 2017 series by veteran Israeli investigative journalist and filmmaker Shai Gal on the "Jewish Underground" of the 1980s documented how members of the largest terrorist organization of far-right Jewish settlers in the West Bank have now become a dominant power factor in the current Israeli government. Formerly convicted and imprisoned extremists who blew up cars (occupied by Palestinian Christian mayors, among others), shot into crowds, planted bombs on buses, and stockpiled explosives en masse with the goal of destroying the Dome of the Rock (which arguably would have triggered a world war) now sit at the center of Israeli power politics. Thus they are now much more effectively able to realize their vision of the "reconstruction" of the Jewish-Biblical Great Kingdom with a Third Temple on the Temple Mount and simultaneous cleansing of everything "un-Jewish".<sup>7</sup>

These examples as the "tip of the iceberg" of efforts to reintroduce ancient Hebrew traditions may illustrate how Jewish-religious (ultra-) nationalism by its actors claims for itself exclusive biblical legitimacy and how its implications are accordingly executed consistently and purposefully. This should challenge "Christian Zionists" who claim to stand "at Israel's side" to fundamentally and comprehensively question this totalitarian claim of religious-nationalist Judaism on the basis of the overall context of biblical-progressive revelation. The following remarks may be a suggestion for this.

### 1. The claim to be "the true Israel" – the "righteous" and "just" of God

Whoever speaks today of "the Jews" as "God's people" and "the apple of God's eye" and thereby means the followers of the Jesus-denying, post-biblical religion of Rabbinical (i. e. Orthodox) Judaism, has thereby both the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) and the New Testament against him. This is all the more true when one also dubs the non-Biblical construct of the modern "Jewish" state "Israel" as the "apple of God's eye", regardless of the historical fact that it was founded in the spirit of the secular-political ideology of "Zionism" – stemming from the age of nationalism.<sup>8</sup> To name their "Jewish" nation-state, its secular founders used the sacred name "Israel", although a not insignificant proportion of the population living in it are not Jews (today about a quarter of the state's people, and the trend is rising). From the point of view of the biblical-messianic typology of Old and New Testament, however, only the true "Israel", Jesus the Nazarene (Jeshū'ah HaNasri), is entitled to this title, because it is written (Isa 44:5): *"He will be called by the [honorary] name 'Israel'"*, or (Mas.T.): *"will confer an honorary name on (someone) with the name Israel"*, like the honorary name given to Cyrus II, the anointed liberator of Judah (45:4).

The original meaning of the name "Israel" is not known to us with certainty. On the one hand, the ancient Hebrew script was declared useless for sacred texts by the rabbis in the 2nd century CE, but on the other hand, the Masoretic punctuation, which annotates the text – although without changing it – was not completed until the early Middle Ages. Jacob, the progenitor of the Twelve Tribes people, was given this new name when he wrestled at night by the Jabbok River with the mysterious messenger [of God] who met him on his return journey to the father's house from which he had fled. The meaning of the name can be traced back to and explained by several word roots: *śry/h* ("to fight") or *śrr* (Hebrew *sarah* "to rule/to have the upper hand"), if the sibilant was originally a *śin* (dot above left). So the possible meaning: *"God rules"* can also be transferred: *"God is the One who overcomes everything else in power and greatness"* (Hansjörg Bräumer 1987).

But if it was a *šin* (point right above, spoken: *shin*), then the name points to the quality *"upright, right, straight"* (*yśr*). But since God is upright, right and straight, he could not overlook Jacob's crooked ways and the once committed wrong against Esau (Gen 27:35f) without sanction; for he had

<sup>6</sup> When he took office in 2006, Rontzki had distributed a pamphlet titled *"Your Camp Shall Be Holy,"* which contained the text of a writing by extremist Rabbi Schlomo Aviner, an allusion to Deut 23:15. Since then, he has been strengthening the influence of rabbis in military units, increasing their number fourfold in just a few years.

<sup>7</sup> Report in Ha'aretz, July 5, 2018, "How a Group of Jewish Terrorists Ended Up in Israel's Halls of Power." Even seniors in politics who had seen Gal's documentary commented to him that it had helped them realize what had really happened here over the past 30 years. In the interview, Shai Gal concluded, *"It's not just an Israeli story; it's the story of how an extreme ideology finds its way into mainstream politics."*

<sup>8</sup> Their paramilitary vanguards against British Mandate rule in Palestine were recruited from the non-religious, left-wing nationalist wing of the Mapai Party around David Josef Grün (Grien) alias David Ben-Gurion and Yizchak Ben Zwi and the right-wing nationalist-chauvinist ("revisionist") wing of military-political groups and terrorist underground organizations such as Irgun, Cherut and Likud around Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky and Menachem Begin.

promised the descendants of Abraham only on condition of inheriting his promises that they *"keep the way of the Eternal by doing righteousness and justice, so that [!] the Eternal may bring upon Abraham what he has spoken concerning him"* (Gen 18:18-19).<sup>9</sup> Obviously, Jacob was not to return to the promised land of inheritance at the border river without facing his past; it caught up with him by asking him his name: Jacob, the "heel-holder" (cf. Gen 25:26). Despite the painful chastisement of the shattering of his hip – at the same time as the "prototype" of the suffering Messiah, who, though a righteous man, was *"smitten by God for our iniquities, to bring righteousness to the many,"* Isa 53:4-11, see below), Jacob clung in faith to the promise of the One to whom he had made a solemn vow when he fled (Gen 28:20-22). The "victory" of Jacob, which was promised to him by God, *"consisted in standing firm, in remaining close to God, in enduring the night and being recognized by God"* (H. Bräumer), until *"the sun rose for him"* and he received the requested blessing (Gen 32:23-32).<sup>10</sup> Thus he was justified and made worthy to take up the inheritance of his fathers in a new spirit, *"in righteousness and justice."* At the same time, he became the model of the future progenitor of the new messianic people, *"Jesus Christ [i. e., Messiah] the righteous"* (1 Jn 2:1). This One intercedes for sinners, as promised both by Isaiah of the *"root shoot,"* the chosen *"righteous one, my servant,"* who will *"help the many to righteousness"* (Isa 53:2, 11), and by Jeremiah of the *"righteous shoot"* who will be *"awakened"* and *"reign as king and act intelligently and do justice and righteousness in the land. [...] And this will be his name: 'YHWH, our righteousness'"* (23:5-8; so also 33:14-17; cf. Melchizedek: "king of righteousness," Gen 14:18 with Heb 5:5-6; Isa 31:2; 45:24; Dan 9:24; Mal 3:20; Mat 5:6; Phil 3:9; Jas 3:18; 2 Pet 3:13; 1 Jn 3:7, 10; Rev 19:11; 22:11). Thus, the honorific name "Israel" or "Ishar-el"<sup>11</sup> passed to its descendants, the 12-tribe people.

### **Excursus: On the etymology and oldest pronunciation of the name 'Yisrael'.**

In a detailed scientific treatise on "The Etymology and Oldest Pronunciation of the Name 'Yisrael'" [Hebrew] the author Ed Sachsse (in: Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 34 [1914] p. 1) comes to the conclusion that from the attempts of explanation made in the course of the centuries *"the original pronunciation must have been approximately J(a)-šar-el"*. It is also suggested by the only two passages on which the name is attested inscriptionally and whose renderings agree. The first is from Assyrian in cuneiform under Salmanassar II, the second is found on the well-known victory column of Merenptah in Egyptian hieroglyphics. Thus it must be assumed that the name was not "Israel", but – still into the time of Hosea – actually "Ishar-el". Finally, the author remarked on the word meaning that the Qal must have the meaning "to be straight". Except in Hab 2:4, it occurs in the phrase *"to be right in someone's eyes."* Evenness, straightness is a quality of the faithful, God-fearing man. *"He did what was right in the sight of God and did not deviate to the right or to the left"* (cf. 1 Kings 15:5 and more). "Right," then, is one who does not deviate but consistently follows his way. Along with consistency, it then expresses sincerity and trustworthiness (cf. 2 Kings 10:15). Inherence is a quality of God (Deut 32,4), who keeps his covenant. It gave man the possibility to trust the God who was there, who is there and who will be there. The author's final sentence is: *"For consistency on the part of God – also in punishment – demands also from man consistent life governed by moral norms as a necessary correlative."* [End excursus]

But beyond this honorific name "Israel" or "Ishar-el", an even more exalted name was mentioned about Israel-Jacob's descendants: "Jeshurun" (Isa 44:1-2). How did this come about? When the 70 heads of the 12-tribe people gathered at Mount Sinai for the covenant-making ceremony and unreservedly accepted the Eternal as their King over them to become His proprietary people, they

<sup>9</sup> The significance of the situation in which these words of the greatest importance for the future history of Israel's salvation were spoken lies in the fact that it happened in view of the imminent final judgment on the hopelessly corrupt cities of the Jordan plain, of which Abraham was about to become aware. When in the end only Abraham's nephew Lot – the only one found to be "righteous" – was saved with his daughters by the skin of his teeth (cf. 1 Pet 4:18; 2 Pet 2:6-9) – as it were "the remnant from Sodom" – this event henceforth served in Israel's history as a warning example in view of almost permanent lawbreaking, corruption and crying injustices (Isa 1:8-10; Jer 23:14; Ezek 16:46-52; Am 4:11). In the end, therefore, Jerusalem, "the city" of utter depravity (Rev 11:8; cf. Mat 10:15; 11:23-24; Rom 9:29), met precisely this inevitable final judgment of utter destruction, from which only a "remnant" was saved (Luk 21:21; Mat 24:13).

<sup>10</sup> The naming is not necessarily directly associated with the meaning of the name in the Bible. Hannah had prayed for a son and was heard. Although it is said that she gave him the name "Samuel" (*shamma-el*, "heard of God"), it does not say, "for I have been heard," but, *"For from the Eternal I have asked him"* (1 Sam 1:20). – Note: This, together with the hint that the Old Testament allows several word roots that can be associated with the name "Israel", is thanks to the habilitated archaeologist Peter van der Veen and his scientific article: "Israel in Canaan Before Pharaoh Merenptah?" in: Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections Vol. 2:4, 2010, 19).

<sup>11</sup> Explanation in the following excursus.

made a solemn vow on the Torah, the "constitution" of their kingship: *"All that the Eternal has spoken we will do and obey."* (Exo 24:7). Thus it was called "Yeshurun" (*yešurūn*), meaning "the upright," the "righteous" (Deut 33:5.26). This honorific name was meant to describe the ideal character as a holy, royal priestly people (Exo 19:5-6) who obeyed the terms of the covenant *"in everything."* However, *"Jeshurun grew fat and cast out";* it became *"fat, thick, and feisty"* and *"rejected the God who made it, and despised the rock of its surf. [...] And the Eternal saw it, and rejected them out of displeasure against his sons and daughters."* (Deut 32:15, 19:35-36; cf. Hos 13:6; Mal 1:6ff; Heb 10:30). Moses prophesied this in the "Song of Retribution" in view of the still distant end of the Sinai age (the "last days"), which had begun with Israel's vow of allegiance to their Savior-God, but would lead one millennium and a half afterward to the final judgment on the covenant-breaking of their distant descendants, so that the covenant-God *"left them neither root nor branch"* (Mal 3:19; Mat 21:41-46; 1 Thes 2:15-16). Nevertheless, the Eternal One upheld His promise, even though it was ultimately only One of Israel-Yeshurun who was declared worthy by his obedience: Jesus, the true *"righteous"* and *"just"* one (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14; 1 Pet 3:18; 1 Jn 2:1; cf. Rev 5:1-5), the one *"overcoming all others in power and greatness"* (Col 1:20-22). Thus the prophecy of being called "Israel" and "Yeshurun"<sup>12</sup> applied to him alone, the chosen servant of God (Isa 42:1ff; 44:1ff), because in the end *"the heads of the house of Jacob and leaders of Israel abhorred justice and perverted everything straight [upright, righteous: yšrh]"* (Mic 3:9; cf. Am 5:7; 6:12; Hab 1:4), passing judgment on the *"One in whom they found no guilt worthy of death," "demanding that he be put to death"* (Acts 13:27-28), and asking instead for the release of a murderer (3:14).

Balaam also prophesied in this idealized way about the uniqueness and glory of Israel-Jacob towards the distant future (*"not near"*, Num 24,17; in contrast: *"near"* to the end time in Rev 1,3<sup>13</sup>), to the "star" that will come out of him one day (Mat 2,2; Rev 22,16), to the "One" who will reign (or "descend") and will exercise just retribution of blessing and curse (cf. Hos 12:3) on those who bless him and on those who curse him (Num 24; Gal 3:8-9 and 1 Cor 16:22 according to Gen 12:3). Thus, all prophetic signs point in one direction: to the "days" – then still distant – of the Messiah-King, when Jesus of Nazareth, the "Nazorean" (the promised "offspring," Jer 23:5), came into the world to fulfill in his person all the promises of the prophets and "all righteousness" (Mat 3:15; Luk 18:31-34; 24:25-49; Gal 4:4f; 1 Pet 1:10-12; cf. Dan 9:24; 12:3).

**Conclusion:** Whichever explanation of the meaning of the biblical honorific names of Jacob and the Old Testament people of God one may consider – all of them are in obvious contradiction to the origin and character of the Jewish military state<sup>14</sup> existing today and the policy of its religious-Zionist elite.

## 2. The claim to be "Zion" and "the gathering of Israel"

But not only the name "Israel" means – biblically seen – an inadmissible appropriation of a messianic title. In particular, the New Testament fulfillment of the old prophetic "Zion" promise does not permit a name-like application to modern "Zionism". The eschatological Messianic gathering of the nations to "Zion," prophesied in Isa 2:2, 14; 11:10; 66:18; Mic 4:1-8; Hag 2:7; Zech 2:15; 8:20-23, first began in the first century CE by the Messiah himself in his earthly days (cf. Mat 4:12-25; Jn 4). The authority and finality of his gathering, beginning with Israel for the fulfillment of all restoration prophecies, culminates in the thrice-tested word: *"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."* (Mat 12:30; Mar 9:40; Luk 11:23). He gathered the multitudes, who were *"hurried and neglected like sheep that have no shepherd"* (Mat 9:36; Mar 6:34; Luk 10:2; Jn 4:34-38; cf. Num 27:15-17; Ezek 34:1-6), not to the earthly temple mount (cf. Jn 4:21), but – quite the opposite – to Himself (cf. Isa 49:5a: *"to Him"*), read: Mat 11:28; 18:20; Jn 7:37. This messianic gathering continued through his disciples, whom he sent

<sup>12</sup> Noteworthy is the translation of "Yeshurun" in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX) as "beloved," Greek *egapemenos*, from *agape*, love. For in this meaning, too, "Jeshurun" would correspond to a prophecy of Jesus, the "beloved [Son]" (Eph 1:6; cf. Mat 12:18), just as subsequently those "beloved in him" (*egapemenoi*) are ennobled as his fellow heirs in the "kingdom of the Son of his love" (Col 1:13; 1 Thes 1:4; Jude 1).

<sup>13</sup> On this occasion it should be pointed out that the last, mainly prophetic book of the New Testament (Rev), although aiming at an – at that time – upcoming fulfillment, must have been written before the end of the temple age, both because of overwhelming circumstantial evidence with regard to the end of "the city" (Jerusalem) and the Levitical temple, and as a result of church-historical evidence, cf. <http://www.thomasschirrmacher.info/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/Offenbarungvor70-neu-2009.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> In modern Israel, the armed forces, the *Israel Defense Forces* (IDF), enjoy heroic status, as it were, and are regarded by the public as sacrosanct in the face of any kind of criticism. How different the prophecy of the messianic fulfillment in Zech 4:6!

empowered *"into all the world"* before *"sitting down at the right hand of God"*<sup>15</sup> – as the true Mount Zion –, while *"cooperating and confirming the word by the signs that followed"* (Mar 16:15-20). This eschatological gathering also fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah in ch. 49 (esp. vv. 6-12) with regard to the true "children of Abraham," the believers from all nations (cf. Gal. 3), *"who will come from east and west, from north and south, and will sit down to the banquet in the kingdom of God,"* mind you: to the explicit exclusion of the indomitable "sons of the kingdom" according to Mat 8:10-12; 25:30.41, 25-26 and Luk 13:24-30.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, two thousand years after the fulfillment of the biblical "Zion" promise in the glorified Messiah, the *"mediator of the new covenant"* (Heb 8:6; 12:22-24), a secular-nationalist, but also religiously dressed up movement like "Zionism" presents itself as a bizarre anachronism. It labels the immigration and colonization of Palestine as biblical "aliyah" (i. e. "going up" according to the edict of Cyrus II in 538 BCE, 2 Chr 36:23).

### 3. The claim to be "the land" (Erez)

What is the messianic fulfillment of the land promise to Abraham? In accordance with the Master's word that *"the meek shall inherit the land"* (Mat 5:5), the Letter to the Hebrews teaches unequivocally: Abraham did not seek in truth a physical land and an earthly city for himself and his descendants-in-the-spirit, as did all the believers in ancient Israel: *"They all died in faith and did not obtain the promise"* (Heb 11:13). What promise? The Abrahamic land promise! Therefore, it is true of New Covenant believers that they are the true *"offspring of Abraham, and by promise his heirs"* (Gal 3:29), along with Old Testament believers, *"But now they are seeking a better <father's land>, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city,"* namely, *"a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God"*<sup>16</sup> (Heb 11:10, 16), *"the city of the living God"* (12:22). There are not "two Jerusalems", an earthly one and a heavenly one; rather, the second, "better" one, has superseded and replaced the first.

The promise of the *"land"* that *"the meek inherit"* (in contrast to the Zealots and Sicarii, who wanted to fight for an independent *"Jewish state of God"* by force of arms and assassination) is fulfilled in the *"unfading inheritance"* (1 Pet 1,4) of the redeemed, the indestructible eternal life in the Son of God, filled with the joy of lived sonship to God in safety "under the fig tree" (Mic 4,4; Zech 3:10), in the fullness of the Messiah (Jn 10:10b) and figuratively painted – in the fruitfulness of the juicy branches of the "true vine" (Jn 15:1ff; vs. the degenerate vine according to Hos 10:1; Isa 5:1-7; Jer 2:21-22; 11:16-17), *"firmly planted in their land and not uprooted again from their ground which*

<sup>15</sup> To the "throne of God," the symbol of dominion over the nations, corresponds also *"the mountain which God has chosen as his dwelling place," "the temple mountain exalted above all heights"* (Ps 68:17; Isa 2:2; Mic 4:1 with Dan 2:34-35; Zech 8:3; cf. Isa 52:13; Phil 2:9), the true holy *"Mount Zion, the city of the living God"* (Heb 12:22). Stephen's apologia against the earthly temple mount, which had already become meaningless at that time, in Acts 6:11-14 and 7:47-49 also corresponds to this.

<sup>16</sup> The modern "Jerusalem," on the other hand, has no biblical foundations. Ancient Jerusalem, the "city of the great king," had fulfilled its historical-prophetic mission with the coming, the work of redemption and the final judgment on the temple cult. Its population had been in the "Great Revolt" for three and a half years (until 9. Aw 70 CE) internally by the rival insurgents who were "pagan" in the eyes of God (*"They claim to be Jews, but they are not, but lie,"* Rev 3:9), according to Flavius Josephus, harassed and "trodden down" and finally "crushed" by the military of the nations – Roman as well as auxiliary and mercenary troops – during the six-month siege and conquest, until their mission was accomplished, so that *"there was not one stone left upon another that was not broken down"* (Luk 19:44; 21:6, 24). Whatever has been built over the ruins since then, such as a Roman garrison city called "Aelia Capitolina" after a failed Jewish attempt at restoration under the "Messiah" Bar Kochba: Its "master builders" were not God, but were – up to this day – people without a divine mandate. "Christian" Zionists, however, want to read into Luk 21:24 a temporally protracted being *"trodden until"* 1948 and possibly also *"the return of the Jewish people to Israel"* into this one little word *"until"* (so John Hagee, W.J.J. Glashouwer and epigones). But here is not meant an eons-long "trampling": The literal sense conveys a final total destruction related to the *"judgment of wrath on this people"* (21:23f). It is a connection to Isa 25:2 and 26:5-6 and obviously the fulfillment of Dan 9,26f (*"until the end there will be war, sealed desolations"*) and refers typologically probably also to Jezebel (cf. Rev 2:20), who was literally trampled underfoot (2 Kings 9:33); on the meaning of the word see also parallels such as Mic 7:10; Zech 10:5 and Mal 3:21, Ps 18:39 and 108:14 with Rom 15:20. Isaiah had been called as a prophet and commissioned to reproach the Jews for their hardening – *"How long, Lord?"* he asked. The answer was unequivocal: *"Until [sic!] the cities are desolate, without inhabitants, and the houses without people, and the land is laid waste."* (6:11). For then the prophecy and thus his commission were fulfilled, cf. Deut 28:24: *"until you are destroyed."* The Lord Jesus, referring to Isaiah, hinted at the same thing in Jn 12:38-40, this time definitively, without promise of restoration of the city and (earthly) temple. *"Your house"* – finally only a *"den of robbers"* and no longer *"my Father's house"* – was *"left desolate"* for them (Mat 23:37). That the end of Jerusalem was finally decided corresponds with the prophetic parables of the barren fig tree, which was able to produce "green leaves again" but no more fruit and therefore – after a three-year grace period (Luk 13:6-9) – was cut down as useless (Mat 21:19: *"No more shall fruit come from you for ever!"*).

*I have given them*" (Am 9:15; cf. Acts 15:13-17; Jn 10:28). No earthly land ownership teaches the completed Word of God for the New Covenant! For he who *"has"* the Son of God *as life*" (1 Jn 5:12), and with him the *"great riches of his glorious inheritance"* (Eph 1:7.11, 18; 2:7; 3:6.8, 16; Phil 4:19; Col 1:27). He himself *is* the promised land.

In him the New Testament priestly people of the Messiah King (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6) also inherits the promise of the tribe of the Levites: These had not been allotted an earthly tribe land in Canaan, for the Eternal had said to Aaron, *"In their land you shall have no inheritance, nor possess any part of the land among them: I am your portion and your inheritance in the midst of the Israelites!"* (Num 18:20; cf. Isa 66:21). Was this a disadvantage compared to the other tribes of Israel? On the contrary – it was an unsurpassable privilege of their election, to be always in His presence – the "good part" (Luk 10:42)! Jeremiah consoled himself over the loss of the land: *"The LORD is my portion!" confesses my soul; therefore I will hope in him.*" (Lam 3:24; cf. David in Ps 16).

The apostle Paul of Tarsus, who had studied as a strictly Pharisaic scribe under the respected Gamaliel I in Jerusalem, freely confessed after his conversion that he had everything and full sufficiency in his Savior; it would have been unthinkable for him to think of a "promised" earthly land possession in "Judea and Samaria" just because he was a Benjaminite Jew by birth (cf. Phil 3:2-11; Col 1:25-27; 2:3, 10; 3:1-3; 2 Tim 4:18); for Jesus, God's Anointed, was his life (Phil 1:21), and he was his inheritance, his "landownership." Thereby Paul *"aligned the word of God completely"*, *"fulfilled and made full, unfolded completely according to the content and intention of God"* (so Jantzen/Jettel in the footnote of their translation on the word meaning of Greek *pleeroosai* in Col 1,25). It includes *"all the riches of understanding present in full measure,"* or: *"of an understanding brought to full measure."* If, then, the revelation through the gospel of the "mystery of the Messiah" still hidden in the ancient prophetic writings definitely means the full participation of believers from the nations in Israel's promises ("full citizens", Eph 2:11-22), and therefore *"in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"*, then this must include *all* that has ever been promised. It is therefore impossible that the "land promise" to Abraham and his descendants would not be included; rather, it is fulfilled in the revelation of the Son of David, the Messiah-King, and His assumption of dominion through His exaltation. Therefore, Paul could assure the elders of the church with a clear conscience that he had *"not failed to declare to them the whole counsel of God"* (Acts 20:27). Whatever had been *"concealed"* in the previous prophetic writings – *"now it had been revealed and made known through prophetic writings [note: the New Testament] to all nations by command of the eternal God for the obedience of faith"* (Rom 1:2f; 16:26; cf. Num 49:10).<sup>17</sup>

**From all this results the following finding:** The eternally valid promises of God had indeed found a provisional fulfillment in the visible, earthly land possession of Israel under the Levitical priesthood. But they served only as a "shadow of things to come," a "foretaste" of the "better" (Heb 7:19.22; 8:5.6.9ff; 9:23; 10:1), a parable-like model of the "true, greater and more perfect tent, which is not made with hands, i. e., not of this creation" (8:2; 9:11), and of the "true One" (1 Jn 5:20) whose work of justification and sanctification (1 Cor 6:9-11) has completed and replaced all that is provisional. Thus, no one can claim that "promises to Israel" – as if they were exclusively valid "for the Jewish people" – are still outstanding. A subsequent appeal of unworthy despisers of the true one to an inheritance already acquired long ago according to the Scriptures and allotted to worthy co-heirs (Rev 3:4; Rom 8:17) means a sacrilegious, anti-Messianic claim.

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<sup>17</sup> But already the book of Daniel, which foreshadows the history until the messianic restoration of Israel, anticipates, as it were, the New Testament revelation on the biblical "land" promise: "land" = "kingdom" (worldwide and eternal kingship of the Messiah, "heavenly" and not of this world) = "resurrection" = "eternal life" [in the Messiah]. Dan 7:14, 18, 27; 12:2-3; cf. Mat 13:43; 25:23, 34, 46.