

## **For Better and For Worse: The Faithfulness of God through the Exile and Return of the Shekhinah**

By Edjan Westerman | February 22, 2021

This article addresses the faithfulness of God (toward Israel) and thereby confronts us with our understanding of him. The extent to which we have learned to understand God's self-revelation through Scripture enables or hinders us to understand God's faithfulness toward his people, and consequently toward the whole of his creation. This includes "us," believers in Yeshua from the nations. I write this article from the perspective of a goy-in-Messiah, a Christian, and a minister within the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

Focusing in this article on the exile and return of the *Shekhinah* gives us an opportunity to understand the interrelatedness of our view of God and our understanding of his faithfulness. This again has a bearing on way in which we look at the history of his people, Israel.

### **Actuality and Theology**

I wrote an earlier version of this article in May 2019, in the center of Jerusalem, on the 6th floor of our balcony overlooking the city, with a view of the Mount of Olives. There I experienced sorrow, together with the whole of Israel, remembering both the Shoah, and the fallen soldiers and terror victims. There I followed the news about the many hundreds of rockets then hitting Israel anew from Gaza. There I shared in the Jewish life of this city. And there I also met on a daily basis men, women, and children, whose lives have been seriously affected by the brokenness of this world. In these encounters I also experienced the bitter pain for Israel and the world not yet fully redeemed.

All of this is in some way connected to the exile of the Shekhinah, which is the theme of this article. This is all, in some way, also related to the Mount of Olives (to be seen from my place of writing) as a place of divine "movement activity." In Christian theology the Mount of Olives is, above all, the mountain from which Yeshua gloriously entered Jerusalem, and later was taken up into heaven, and the mountain also where he will triumphantly return. These aspects have to do with "victory" and carry associations of a more or less triumphant nature. The mountain then is a place of victorious divine acting. And it is this line of interpretation that has overshadowed all the other aspects of this place. For yes, there is a totally different theological side to this mountain, bearing even on our experience of day-to-day life, here in Jerusalem and elsewhere.

### **The Mount of Leave-taking and Parting in Sorrow**

Lying east of Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives formed the threshold to the desert, situated between Jerusalem and the Jordan River. This mount saw sorrowful partings

happen. David, who fled Jerusalem from his rebellious son Absalom, made this his first stop. Ezekiel saw in his visions how the Presence of the Lord, the Shekhinah, departed from the Temple, and “rested” on the Mount of Olives. He “looked” back to the House that he had abandoned, which would suffer destruction. Later, the people would follow into exile, passing this mountain (cf. 2 Kings 25:4).

In a striking parallel of Ezekiel’s vision, Yeshua left the House of God, thereby finishing his actions and words in the Temple, and set himself on this very mountain. Overlooking the Temple and city, he spoke solemnly about the hard times that would come for the people (Matt 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). He parted in sorrow from the Temple and the city, having wept over her there, a few days earlier. The mountain of his *weeping* is therefore also the mountain of his *leaving*. This place of honor-bestowing by God (that is, Yeshua’s exaltation to heaven) is simultaneously therefore also a place of entering into a dishonoring exile, not being welcomed by the whole of the people of Israel.

Elaborating on this exile theme in relation to Yeshua we start with his birth. As Mary’s son, by his “enfleshment”<sup>4</sup> within the Jewish people, he shared in the life of the people that had not yet returned fully from exile.<sup>5</sup> His death also has an exilic aspect. It can be interpreted as the entering of this firstling from Israel into the darkness of the day of the Lord, entering the depths of the (still existing) exile, in its deepest form which is death. The passion narrative of Yeshua is in fact the sequel of his leaving the Temple and locating on the Mount of Olives. He thus departs from the Temple and his family of people. His public appearance and teaching among them ends. He willfully “places” himself outside the Temple and city, and somewhat later he “is placed” outside of it forcibly, removed from God’s Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> His death occurs outside the city (Heb 13:11–13). Yeshua’s resurrection does not really change this. His resurrection appearances are not public appearances. The risen Messiah King is only seen and recognized by a small circle of followers. The city remains unaware of him.<sup>7</sup>

Even Yeshua’s ascension can be understood to have a leave-taking aspect that is in line with the sorrowful partings referred to above. Besides the honor-bestowing aspect, it can simultaneously be seen as consistent with the exile of David, and that of the Presence of the Lord. It is the consequence and sequel of Yeshua taking leave from the Temple. He departs for “a distant country” (Luke 19:11–13).<sup>8</sup> He is not yet Israel’s King in the fullest sense.<sup>9</sup> The final phase of the journey of the Messiah to his throne in Zion was still to come (cf. Acts 1:6).

The Mount of Olives therefore has an exile aspect to it, with regard to both the people of God, and God and his presence. Since the feet of Messiah have not yet victoriously returned there (Zech 14:4), the exile aspect of this mountain should also mold our thinking. It is a place that confronts us with the (going into) exile of the Shekhinah, the exile of the Presence of God, which is still a present reality. This fact directly bears on our knowledge of God, and thus on our understanding of his faithfulness.

## **The Presence of the Lord and the Ways of his People**

The great privilege that Israel is granted in the Exodus is that the Lord himself leads the way by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. The Presence of the Lord accompanies, guards, and guides his people (Exod 13:21–22). Following the Lord’s mighty revelation and presence at Sinai, his presence dwells in the Tabernacle (Exod 40:34–35).<sup>10</sup> Thereafter, he shares the way of his people. Where the Presence moves, the people follow (Exod 40:36–38). The way of God to his land is the way his people have to walk, and God’s Presence in its midst makes Israel different from the nations (Exod 33:14–16).

The Shekhinah is moving toward its resting place (Psa 132:13–14). And the people have to follow, for it is the way toward their own rest (Num 10:33–36).<sup>11</sup> Later, when the Temple has been built, God’s Presence comes down to its resting place (2 Chron 6:41–7:3). It is there that he dwells and hears (2 Chron 6:18–40).

Strikingly, God shares the ways of his people, as the people are called to share in his ways. The covenant of Sinai, as a marriage covenant enacted under the *huppa* of the Cloud (cf. Exod 19:18–20; 24:18), is followed by a shared life and a moving in togetherness. The question is, however, whether this togetherness will be “for better and for worse,” or will the Presence of the Lord leave his people when they become unfaithful toward him? Will he abandon them when they abandon him? Will his presence then be taken away? Shall this gift of his presence be retracted?<sup>12</sup> Or will he somehow, be present “for better and for worse”? The measure of our understanding of God’s self-revelation is crucial here.

### **The Tent of Meeting “Abiding with Israel in the Midst of their Uncleaness”**

At Sinai God revealed to Israel his wish to dwell in their midst (Exod 25:8). Pondering these questions it is good to turn our attention to the Dwelling of the Lord that he has ordered to be erected in Israel’s midst. This, of course looks toward holiness in the camp of Israel, for the Lord wished to walk among them Lev 26:11–12; Deut 23:12–14). Yet, although there were many commandments and regulations in order to keep the camp holy, nonetheless, the Lord’s Tent of Meeting abided “with them in the midst of their uncleaness” (Lev 16:16 JPS).<sup>13</sup> This qualifies Israel and its camp as unclean, not befitting of the holiness of the Lord. Therefore, Israel, and even God’s Tent, had to be cleansed and atoned every year. The sheer fact, however, that God wishes to dwell in Israel’s midst, in a place that again and again will bring forth uncleaness, reveals that the Holy One of Israel so dearly wishes to be near to his people. He seems to “accept” the fact that time and again the place of his dwelling is made unclean, never wholly cleansed. Although he abhors sin and sometimes abhors his people, in the end he will not abhor them (Lev 26:43–44).<sup>14</sup> The Lord so wishes to be with his people that the nearness of uncleaness is in some way part of the “bargain,” too. This explains why we find the Presence of the Lord accompanying the people, even in exile. Although the lands of the other nations are unclean (Amos 7:17; Hos 9:3; Ezek 4:13; cf. Deut 4:28, 28:36), this uncleaness does not prevent the Holy One of Israel from revealing himself there or from acting on behalf of his people.

### **Together in Exile**

We encounter this godly companionship and the Lord's revelation to his people even in unclean places, already in the history of the patriarchs. Abram exiles himself to Egypt, and yet experiences there how God acts on his behalf (Gen 12:10–20; cf. 20:1–18). Also Jacob, fleeing into a self-inflicted, yet also divinely ordained exile, is met by the Lord on his way, and hears that the Lord will accompany Jacob into his exile. The Lord will not leave him, but promises his abiding presence that will accompany Jacob also in his return to the land.<sup>15</sup> Joseph too was cared for when forcibly exiled to Egypt (Gen 39:23).

In the same manner, the Presence of the Lord would not forsake his people when their exile to Babylon was at hand.<sup>16</sup> This is clearly shown by a God-given vision that Ezekiel received while he was already in exile (Ezek 8–11). It demonstrated that although the Presence of God would leave the Temple, the people itself would not be left alone. The Lord himself speaks about his Presence among the exiled people, albeit in a “diminished” manner (Ezek 11:16).<sup>17</sup> He will be present and share all pain with his people (cf. Isa 63:9).

Other visions granted to Ezekiel and Daniel also make it clear that exile does not equate with absence of God.<sup>18</sup> The Lord reveals himself in these unclean places. He hears prayers there, as both Jeremiah in Egypt (Jer 42–44) and Daniel in Babel experience.<sup>19</sup> He keeps caring for his people in these places, as also manifest in the book of Esther.<sup>20</sup> It could even be stated that the vision of Ezekiel shows that the Lord led the way in that special situation of Israel being exiled. Again, he leads and the people follow. His parting, his taking leave from the Temple, would be followed by the people expelled from the God-given land. The people leave and go where he goes.

In all these instances God showed his faithfulness just as the prophet Hosea was commissioned to demonstrate it (Hos 1–3). Hosea had to demonstrate an enduring loving attitude toward his adulterous wife, a faithfulness “for better and for worse,” implying intense suffering. Like Hosea, however, God too shared the pain of “for better and for worse,” irrespective of the fact that the exile of Israel constituted his punishment. His love undoubtedly moved him to share in Israel's exile. This thought confronts us with our view of God. It demonstrates how deep God's love is, that is, how far he will go in his faithfulness. He will not depart from his people even when he smites judgment upon them for disobedience. This faithfulness of God is part of his unchanging character. Always, he will be the same, for ever and ever, “ever since [the] day was, I am He” (Isa 43:13 JPS; cf. Isa 41:4; 43:10; 46:4; 48:12; Psa 102:28).

This also makes us understand that God too can be, and in fact is, “restless.” He longs for his resting place in the physical-geographical midst of his earth, his land (Psa 132:13–14; Ezek 43:4–9).<sup>21</sup> We must therefore also learn to think, and pray, from the perspective of God's longtime suffering and waiting. His love and longsuffering really affect him. We learn to pray for the promised return of the Presence of God to his house, first of all for his own sake, and then also for his people. His return will be accompanied by the return of the people to its God-ordained resting place in his land.<sup>22</sup> This “togetherness in exile” also bears on our understanding of the reality of suffering and death that enfolded Messiah Yeshua. Consequently, it will also deepen our understanding of God's faithfulness toward all his people.

## Yeshua in Exile

Christian theology has stressed the victorious aspect of Yeshua's death and resurrection, underlined by his enthronement to the right hand of God. His enfleshment within Israel, however, in itself already demonstrates an indissoluble connection with the existence of the whole of God's people. He is the living "dwelling" of God which "tabernacles" (John 1:14)<sup>23</sup> in Israel's midst.<sup>24</sup> Does this not also imply that he too abides in the midst of the uncleanness of the people? The incarnation means the entrance of the Word into a world of darkness.<sup>25</sup> The holy Presence of God in Messiah Yeshua does not keep distance from sin and uncleanness. This holy bodily dwelling of God among his people Israel did not only tabernacle amidst their sins and uncleanness, but God even made Messiah "to be sin" (2 Cor 5:21 NIV, RSV), and both judged him in death and resurrected his holy bodily dwelling.

When we ponder these depths we need to reckon with the given that the Lord does not change, and that Yeshua shares in and reveals in a complete and perfect sense the nature of the Lord (John 1:18; Heb 13:8). But if that be the case, does this then not also imply that he, as God's Messiah, remains connected to the *whole* of his people, even when enthroned? And, even when *not* recognized and honored by *all* Israel? Would it not imply then that he still shares in all the distress of Israel? And that his name Immanuel not only promises nearness and incarnation for atonement, but also nearness and sharing as Israel's firstling through the dark ways of his people? And does it not express that he shares the ways of exile, not keeping himself at an absolute distance from whatever took place, or takes place among his people, even when not recognized or welcomed by all of them?

The parallel, observed above, between the Presence of the Lord leaving the Temple and setting itself on the Mount of Olives, and Yeshua doing the same is striking. The "not-yet" of the fullness of redemption and the "already" may also be found here. As stated above, it is possible to interpret Yeshua's death as being *simultaneously* an entrance into exile and also a great exodus.<sup>26</sup> And his enthronement to God's right hand also simultaneously implies the reality of the "not-yet" of his kingship in Jerusalem, for thereby he is in fact not yet "at home" in Jerusalem. He is yet distanced from his kingship in that geographical place.

In a certain sense his death meant entering into physical exile from the city and the land. Looking from this perspective he, as we observed the Shekhinah doing in the Exodus and in Ezekiel's time, leads the way. Later, we see how his "firstlings" are "exiled" from Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-4), later to be followed by the whole of Israel, exiled by Rome (Luke 21:24). Thus in Messiah God's Presence shares the way of the people. In a deep sense he is Immanuel—God with us.

Since the "already" and the "not-yet" aspects of his kingship are simultaneous realities, we have to learn to conceive of this double reality more concretely. We have to link together these two aspects of his kingship over Israel. Simultaneously, he is in heaven, and also present on the earth, where he suffers in his followers (Cf. Acts 9:4). He is the waiting "Hebron-king," who endures the pain of the estrangement of the whole of his people.<sup>27</sup> His presence at the throne also implies that Yeshua is interceding for all

Israel and that all Israel is represented. Prayer is offered there arising from Yeshua sharing in all the sufferings of his people, as a true High Priest does (Heb 2:7–18; 4:15).

## **Exile and the Nations**

Not only did the Presence of the Lord not forsake his people in the exile existence, but through their exilic life God also reached out to the nations. This interpretation of exile may be found also in the Talmud. God “sows” his people among the nations, so that the exile enables converts to join them (b. Pesach 87b interpreting Hos 2:25; cf. Zech 10:9). In the Tanakh we see this truth happening in reality.<sup>28</sup> It contributed to the creation of the multitude of God-fearers we meet in the New Testament.

In a mysterious way the same happened when Yeshua enters the deepest form of exile, followed by his followers. The “not-yet” of his kingship, implying also a physical-geographical exile from Jerusalem, and a reaching out to both his own people and the nations, brings the good news to all nations. Centuries of spreading the knowledge of Israel’s God and his Messiah Yeshua have been part of, and have taken place within, the “Hebron-kingship” of the Messiah. This worldwide blessing has been fruit of the “not-yet” aspect of his kingship over Israel. It was a God-given blessing during the period that his kingship over all Israel had not yet been complete. It is, however, clear from the New Testament that this reaching out to the nations is limited in time (Matt 24:14; Luke 21:24; Rom 11:25). When it ends there will be a healing restoration of the people of God.

## **God Faithfully Sharing the Painful Reality of Exile**

Whether caused by certain theological-philosophical preferences, or by some triumph-theology, or by supersessionist inclinations, mainline Christian theology has failed to recognize the reality of God and his Messiah sharing in the pain of the exile of his people. Texts that speak of divine judgment have been read and incorporated into our theological thought, and also texts about the future mercy and faithfulness of God. But faithfulness and togetherness as a *present* reality all through the history of the Jewish people, has just not been recognized by mainline Christian theology. This, in turn, has affected (as it also has been caused by) our view of God, our reading of Scripture, and our interpretation of history.

## **Divine Togetherness “For Better and For Worse”**

The loving presence of God shares the ways of his people also in exile. Hence, there has been and always will be a loving togetherness between God and his people. God embraces his people with two “arms”—the arm of the message and presence of the resurrected Messiah *and* the arm of God’s faithfulness in sharing the life of exile and bringing about the beginnings of Israel’s restoration.<sup>29</sup> This arm of God’s faithfulness coincides with the actual involvement of the unrecognized Messiah, who shares in the lives of his people in exile, and in the beginnings of their return.

Christian thinking has often only recognized the arm of the resurrected and enthroned Messiah, thereby limiting in an essential manner the togetherness of God with his people. This contributed to a deprecatory, sometimes derisive, and distancing



view of the Jewish people as a whole, with exception perhaps (and that not even always) of the Jewish followers of the Messiah. It caused us to not have a theological category, or “instrument,” that could have enabled us to relate the actual history of the whole of the Jewish people to God’s ways and heart more positively.

We ought to also recognize the other arm with which God reaches out to his people—the arm of his togetherness in exile, and thus, the togetherness with Messiah even in exile. Living in this time of waiting for the final redemption and the unification of the whole of the people in the “Jerusalem-kingship” of the Messiah, we also will then be conditioned to look differently on (the history of) his people as a whole.

We will also start to really believe in, recognize, and expect concretely God’s guardianship over Israel; he neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psa 121:4). We have to reckon with the reality of his togetherness (during all ages) with all his people. This togetherness is not something from a distance, but rather from within, through the sharing of the Shekhinah in the reality of exile.

### **“For Better and For Worse”: What it Means Today**

Looking to the Mount of Olives, when I started writing, and now again from afar, I realize that the feet of the Messiah have not returned there yet. Final redemption has not arrived. Many Jews have returned home, so that many of God’s people live now again in his land. I witnessed, however, also the actual threat of rockets, and extreme suffering, together with much reverence for God and longing for his reign: for Torah and *tikkun olam* (the restoration). I recognized that these have not yet been realized. We are still waiting. The complete return of the Shekhinah has not yet taken place.

Again, this also implies that in some way the Almighty God himself stands beside his people on *Yom HaShoah*,<sup>30</sup> still suffering—presumably more deeply than we ever could imagine— from the sinister onslaught on the apple of his eye.<sup>31</sup> He stands still with them on the streets on *Yom HaZikaron*,<sup>32</sup> that he was and is under attack from Gaza, and that he is actively caring for those who share in an uttermost physical manner in the pain of “unredeemed-ness.”<sup>33</sup> We pray that he will move speedily toward his final return, and that he, with both arms, will be present around his people in all that the life of the whole of Israel entails, both inside and outside the land.

### **Waiting for the Return of the Shekhinah and the Jerusalem-Kingship of Messiah**

Christians have heard the call from Yeshua to follow him.<sup>34</sup> What we did not understand well enough is that this implies following his presence wherever that may lead us, in close parallel to the Shekhinah leading the way of the people of Israel.

Paul meets, on his road to Damascus in a dramatic manner, a Messiah still being persecuted (Acts 9:4–5). He later writes that in his life and ministry he participates in what is still left of the “tribulations of the Messiah” (Col 1:24. See also 2 Cor 1:5; 4:9–11). We are called to share not only in the “already” activities of the enthroned Messiah, but also in the “not-yet” activity, now in the waiting and suffering of the yet hidden and exiled Messiah.<sup>35</sup>

Since we “dismembered,” so to speak, God’s love by not recognizing both his arms, and consequently behaved disapprovingly and condemnatory toward his people, we now have to learn to share his ways, instead of offending him. We should learn to discern his footsteps, although their fullness will stay hidden (Psa 77:20), returning toward Zion, a phased process, as is the ending of exile.

We may not precisely know and recognize how this dual loving faithfulness of God works, and how both arms interrelate.<sup>36</sup> Yet we may expect it to be active in this dual form. Therefore, we prayerfully wait for, and by our love in manifold ways, serve the unity of all Israel around her God and his Messiah. We await the kingship of the Messiah from Zion, his “Jerusalem-kingship.” To us there is a blessing that has been granted and that is geared toward this final goal.

### **Togetherness in Prayer and Expectation**

The longing for the return of the Shekhinah is present at the throne. It is God’s own heart desire. He wishes to take up his rest there. The longing is also present there through the Messiah, who, enfleshed within Israel, embodies both God’s longing presence and Israel’s longing to return to Zion. Both aspects meet before the throne in the Messiah. There he literally is Immanu-El (Matt 1:23).

The whole of Israel’s existence is therefore also present in the prayers at the throne through this High Priest, who knows all suffering from within. This is a hard-to-grasp reality especially when one thinks of all that Israel has suffered, including the sinister reality of the Shoah.

This togetherness at the throne is the heavenly expression of the togetherness that God and his Messiah grant to all Israel on earth, either in the land or still in the diaspora. It is a togetherness that we believers from the nations may share in also. In Messiah we may share in God’s love for his people; in him we learn also to be attuned to his prayers as an expression of the longings of God. At the throne the longings of God, the prayerful longings of Israel and our prayers in Messiah come together. There the Spirit of God brings news about what is going on in the earth (Zech 4:10; cf. 1:10; Psa 11:4; 2 Chron 16:9); there the groaning of the Spirit for both Israel and the whole of creation is being uttered and shared with us on earth (cf. Rom 8:22–27).

Heaven awaits the “the sons to be revealed” (Rom 8:19; cf. 1 John 3:2).<sup>37</sup> When God’s presence returns to Zion, then Israel will be restored to the fullest by this renewed togetherness. When the Messiah, being the embodiment of God’s presence, is fully revealed, that is, when the Son will be revealed and then also his Body, his kehila (congregation or community) will be revealed to the world. Then all Israel will become his perfected kehila, and be revealed to the world as such (Cf. Dan 7:18, 21–22). When this all takes place, restoration will flow from Zion to all nations and all creation.

Therefore, I keep looking to the Mount of Olives from near or from far, expecting to see ultimately God’s faithfulness “for better and for worse” to become visible there.

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Protestant Church in the Netherlands. The Dutch edition of his book *Learning Messiah* appeared in 2015, and was welcomed by a broad readership from all denominations. The English edition was published in 2018.

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- 1 The theme of exile (both of the Shekhinah and of Messiah Yeshua/Jesus) and the related theme of the Hebron-kingship and the Jerusalem-kingship of the Messiah are elaborated upon in Edjan Westerman, *Learning Messiah, Israel and the Nations: Learning to Read God's Way Anew* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018), especially chaps 18–19. Other elements within this article are elaborated upon in this book. See also [www.learningmessiah.com](http://www.learningmessiah.com).
- 2 An earlier and shorter version of this article was published in *Israel and the Church*, a study magazine published by Christians for Israel International, <https://www.c4israel.org>. For this extended version I have chosen not to excise all elements that show the original context of my writing. These very elements may highlight the fact that the theme of this article is not just a theoretical one, but something that is closely related to the life experience of the Jewish people and our encounter with all Israel.
- 3 My visits to the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Clinic of the Feuerstein Institute, while caring for a family member, made this reality a tangible one.
- 4 For this expression see *Learning Messiah*, 15.2, 164. This literal translation of “incarnation” expresses the Indwelling of God’s Son in the flesh of Israel in a more bodily manner.
- 5 Cf. also Matt 2:13–23. His childhood started with a period of exile in Egypt. Living in Galilee was in a certain sense (as seen from the perspective of his royal Judean birth place) “exilic” within the borders of Israel.
- 6 This active and passive “out-placement” shows how Yeshua is both the embodiment of the Divine Presence, leaving in judgment, and the “Israel-in-One,” receiving as Firstling what the Day of the Lord will bring to the people.
- 7 Also, the resurrection appearances in Galilee may be interpreted as having some exile aspect, taking place at a distance from the Temple and city.
- 8 The parable speaks about a man leaving for ‘a distant country’ to receive kingship (Herod the Great received his kingship in Rome). Cf. Luke 15:13.
- 9 Perhaps we may find some parallel with Moses, who did not enter the promised land, but died outside of it (Deut 34); and with Elijah who was taken up to heaven outside the land (2 Kings 2:1–15). The journey of the Messiah has not come yet to its end, just like the people—and with them Moses and Elijah—did not arrive yet at the final destination, the full dedication of the whole people to the Lord in a holy life, in a sanctified land. The way toward that final destination, however, may be entered upon with a blessing. Blessed by Moses are the tribes of Israel to *enter* the land (Deut 33); Elisha receives the blessing in order to *enter* anew the land, and act as Elijah’s successor (2 Kings 2:9–10); the disciples are blessed outside the city, when Yeshua leaves them while blessing them, and *enter* anew the city and the Temple (Luke 24:50–53). The fact that the disciples see Yeshua being taken up toward heaven parallels Elisha *seeing* Elijah being taken up. This meant for Elisha that God appointed him to be successor to the task (2 Kings 2:10). That the disciples were allowed to see Yeshua leave (Acts 1:9) may be interpreted likewise.
- 10 Paul in Romans 9:4 lists the “glory” (i.e. the glorious Presence of the Lord) among the gifts of God to his people Israel.
- 11 God’s Presence looks for a resting place for the people.
- 12 Cf. Romans 11:29, where Paul speaks about “irrevocable” gifts (NIV).
- 13 The verb used is *sh-k-n*, being the root also of *mishkan* (dwelling, sanctuary; Exodus 25:9).
- 14 This chapter shows, that even when Israel abhors God’s commandments (vs. 15, 43), and he then may abhor them (vs. 30), the end will be that he will not abhor them, *even when they are exiled*, in

the lands of their enemies (v. 44). God's determination not to abhor his people is in this chapter both beginning (v. 11) and the end (v. 44).

- 15 Gen 28:15 shows that the Lord meets Jacob on his exile flight, but it states also that the angels climb up to God (in order to "bring news," to report on Jacob's situation?) from the place where he lay down. Thereby it was revealed that he was not left alone.
- 16 In Lev 26:44 the Lord promises that he will not despise his people, even when he sends them into exile.
- 17 Interpretations of the Hebrew (*lemikdash me'at*) vary from stating that God's Presence among the people will be "for a little while" (meaning either for a limited time, or [as promised] for the short period that exile will last) to his Presence being "diminished" due to the fact that the exiled do not have access to the (destroyed) Temple, or to his Presence having a lesser degree. Traditional Jewish interpretation finds here the promise of "little sanctuaries," meaning synagogues and houses of learning.
- 18 Cf. W. Zimmerli, who states that without a Temple, the exile "nicht der Raum der reinen Gottverlassenheit . . . (is; there remains, EJW) eine Form der Nähe im Raum der Verlassenheit." (W. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel*, Biblischer Kommentar, Band XIII/1, 1969, 250).
- 19 The book of Daniel as a whole shows that "unclean" lands do not prevent the Lord from revealing himself in many different ways.
- 20 Esth 4:14 shows that Mordecai expects the continuing care of God for his people, and also in these "unclean" countries. The whole story of Esther demonstrates this fact.
- 21 See also the use of Psa 95:7–11 in Heb 3–4 intended to show that a future rest is to be expected.
- 22 For example, see Ezek 37:26–28 in the context of the whole chapter.
- 23 The Greek verb conveys this same meaning as the Hebrew verb used in Leviticus 16:16.
- 24 The "enfleshment" of Messiah Yeshua takes place in Israel's midst, while Israel in itself forms the center of the world (of nations). We should interpret the "coming into the world" (John 1:9–10) of Messiah Yeshua from this perspective.
- 25 The darkness is clearly sinful and aggressive toward God (John 1:5).
- 26 Luke 9:31 speaks about Jesus' death as his exodus.
- 27 Just like David (cf. 2 Sam 2:4 and 5:1–5) he awaited the unity of all Israel in the recognition of his kingship. The kingship of Messiah Yeshua over the whole of the people of Israel can be qualified as "Hebron-kingship." He is the God-appointed King over all Israel, but not yet recognized by all Israel. This somewhat typological designation helps to keep together both aspects. The designation "Jerusalem-kingship" can be used—again analogous to David—for the full and perfected reality of his kingship over all Israel, his kingship from Zion. See also note 1.
- 28 One can think of Ruth, and of the multitudes that joined themselves to Israel at the times of Esther (8:17, 9:27; cf. Isa 56:3).
- 29 This is of course an anthropomorphic metaphor, describing a dual—and utterly real—continuing relation from the side of God toward the people of Israel.
- 30 The (Jewish) Remembrance Day of the *Shoah* or Holocaust.
- 31 Zech 2:8 calls the people of Israel the apple of God's eye. Perhaps we must, by means of this metaphor, learn to "see" in a much deeper manner the unbearable pain of God because of all forms of brutal attack on the apple of his eye.
- 32 The (Israeli) Remembrance Day for all soldiers and terror victims.
- 33 This extended version of the original article is being prepared—during Sukkot— while for the second time in Israel a nearly total lockdown for Covid-19 reasons is happening. Would not also a divine voice, uttering *Hosha'na* (Save us!) mingle itself among the many *Hosha'not* of his people in Israel and in the diaspora?
- 34 In a deep sense the call issued by Yeshua to follow him could be interpreted as following the Presence of the Lord as manifested in him (cf. John 1:14).

- 35 Both aspects of the Messiah come forward also in the dual Messiah concept within Judaism, that is the victorious Messiah Ben-David and the suffering Messiah Ben-Joseph.
- 36 Elaborating on this theme would demand more space than this article permits. *Learning Messiah* (see note 1), chapter 23, especially paragraph 23.7, provides some elaboration.
- 37 Creation needs the “sons to be revealed” before it can share in the restoration flowing from the restored people. In Messiah the term “sons” is inclusive of both Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Messiah, and it therefore can also include (the promised restoration of) all Israel.