

# Suffering Israel: Sharing the Sufferings of God and Messiah ?

By Edjan Westerman | April 30, 2023

## “In all their affliction”

Marc Chagall (1887–1985) spoke of his bewilderment as a Jew being confronted with a world of pogroms, Jewish-Christian encounters, and antisemitism coming to its culmination in the Shoah. When he inserted into his paintings crucifixion scenes picturing a crucified Jewish Jesus amidst Israel’s sufferings, he wished to blend Jewish elements with a universal meaning. The picture of this suffering Jew—the central figure in the Christianity he knew—should present vividly the sufferings that befell the Jewish people at that time and also have some universal meaning in the confrontation with evil. One can ask, however, whether this was just an artistic blending of motifs arising from a chaotic world or an intuitive and prophetic portrayal of the Messiah’s presence amidst Israel’s sufferings.

In his novel *Night*, Eli Wiesel tells of his main character Eliezer, a Jew who is compelled to watch the suffocating death of a little boy who, at the gallows in a Nazi camp, asks, “Where is God?” Eliezer hears a voice within, answering, “here He is—He is hanging here on this gallows.” Again, we can ask whether this is solely an expression of utter despair or Elie Wiesel touching a reality too hard to grasp, a reality that speaks of God’s presence.

“In all their affliction, he was afflicted” (Isa 63:9, RSV).<sup>1</sup> These prophetic words can be cited as a commentary on Chagall’s crucifixion scenes, but do they also imply that we would have found Messiah Yeshua in the Babi Yar ravine, his life mixed up with the ashes of so many of his people? Has he shared the sufferings of his people, but also, has his people in some way shared his sufferings? Has there been mutuality in shared suffering between Messiah and Israel? And is there any relation to “the participation in (Messiah’s) sufferings” (Phil 3:10) that Paul and Peter speak about at several places in their letters?

This article engages with these questions to form the centerpiece of a triptych of articles, the first of which focused on the faithfulness of God as expressed by the continuing presence of the *Shekhinah* in Israel’s midst.<sup>2</sup> The second article explores the presence and involvement of the pre-incarnate Messiah in the whole of (Israel’s) history. In one of its last paragraphs, I asked:

Is the Lamb-as-slain the deepest mystery revealed about the whole of Israel’s history? Does his struggle and sacrifice—therein as God’s perfect image also revealing the LORD—precede Israel’s sufferings instead of being predominantly a reaction to these? Is the righteous suffering of Israel, therefore, a sharing in the sufferings of this Righteous One who

shall realize the ultimate purposes of the Lord, in the manner that Paul speaks about his own sufferings (Col 1:24)? Is Israel's righteous suffering therefore in a deep and mysterious manner connected to the pain of the Lord God, who wishes to bring his people to completion in order to bring all creation to its consummation?<sup>3</sup>

To address these questions, we must confront the reality of the Shoah, its victims and survivors, and the generational pain it caused. We must ask, however, whether it is possible to say any word without downplaying the sufferings of the people of Israel as a whole.<sup>4</sup> Without a reverent recognition of God's eternal election of his people Israel, any word could turn into an act of theological imperialism or "colonialization"<sup>5</sup> of Israel's suffering. My search as a Christian theologian to find some understanding can only happen from a spirit of deep contrition while in actual loving nearness to the whole of the people of Israel. Only from a post-supersessionism that has also reached my heart, and keeps transforming me, may my thoughts try to touch these burning questions and perhaps form words. Prerequisite is also my willingness to follow Messiah wherever he will lead. May the Spirit of God guard my heart and lips in this undertaking.

The article's title and the questions formulated above explore the connection between Israel's suffering and the sufferings of God and the Messiah. They encompass thereby the times of both Tanakh and the New Testament and all that followed—including the Shoah—and still will follow until the arrival of Olam Haba.

The question, therefore, is whether there is one narrative that binds this all together that leaves no room for compartmentalizing. It searches for unity in all God's dealings with Israel, the eschatological Body of Messiah Yeshua, and the nations. It asks for a deeper and more unifying understanding of the times that began with Messiah's revelation in Israel's midst, in which Israel and the nations still live. It asks for a deeper understanding of the relation between Messiah Yeshua and all Israel, an understanding of the mutuality in sharing the sufferings of the times. It also asks about the meaning of the prolonged sufferings of both Israel and the Body of Messiah.

## **The Route to Take**

I will try to walk a route that is predominantly biblical-theological in its perspective,<sup>6</sup> seeking light from both Tanakh and the Scriptures of the New Covenant. We will look first at (1) the definition of the times that began with the incarnation of the Messiah in Israel's midst and continue today. Then we will pay attention to (2) the overlap between Olam Hazei and Olam Haba (this age and the age-to-come) in the life and ministry of Messiah Yeshua while also dealing with how both relate to the focal point of this article.

The next theme to study will be (3) how Messiah leads the way for his people(s) into the darkness of the Day of the LORD. What sufferings are implied for himself, as well as for Israel and the Body of Messiah, both then and until this day? We will also reflect upon (4) the relation between the Messiah, Israel (communal and individual), and the Body of Messiah. Connected with this theme is the following: "circles of holiness" can be discerned throughout Tanakh. A threefold divine structuring of the people, the

Temple, Jerusalem, the Land, and also the commandments. We will ask (5) whether these “circles of holiness” can also be discerned within both the avodah (work or service) and the sufferings of Messiah and his people. Finally, we will gather our findings while reflecting upon the theme of (6) participation in Messiah’s sufferings, bringing this into dialogue with the painful questions that have confronted us since the Shoah, and with the prayers of Israel and its Messiah.

The article will end with a brief retrospect in which we will evaluate our findings in relation to the ongoing Jewish-Christian encounter.

## 1. The Definition of the Times

Some 2000 years separate us from the times when Messiah Yeshua walked the precincts of the Temple and the Land, died, and was resurrected outside Jerusalem. The destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 70 ce and the ensuing history of Israel’s deepened exile with its persecution culminating in the Shoah, as well as the growth of the Church worldwide, including the persecution of Christians in our days, and even the return of Israel to the Land, all take place in what Scripture calls the last days. It all happened and still happens in the Acharit Hayamim, “the end of days.”<sup>7</sup>

The full revelation from God given in his Son, meaning all that came about by Messiah’s life, death, and resurrection in Israel’s midst, took place in “the last days” (Heb 1:1). Now “the end of the ages” has come over us (1 Cor 10:11). Paul (2 Tim 3:1), James (Jas 5:3), Peter (Acts 2:17; 1 Pet 1:5; 2 Pet 3:3) and John (1 John 2:18) use this terminology when speaking about the times they lived in.<sup>8</sup> With the appearance of Messiah Yeshua, the eschatological last days had begun! They form the beginning of the end of the present age, Olam Haze. These days will end with the final breakthrough of Olam Haba, with the coming of the Messiah, and “the end,” the divine telos, the divine goal.<sup>9</sup> That is what the disciples ask about after hearing Yeshua speak of Jerusalem’s destruction (Matt 24:3). His answer also shows that within this last-days period, there will be a progression and a culmination of hard times.<sup>10</sup> Sitting on the Mount of Olives, Messiah speaks of the whole of history spanning from then and there until his return. He does not compartmentalize history, nor do his messengers within the New Testament.

When Paul speaks of the sufferings of the present age, he also includes the whole of God’s history with Israel. His summary of hardships, given at the end of Romans 8, continues with a mention of his heartbrokenness because of the people of Israel, his flesh and blood relatives (Rom 9:1–3). Only after reflecting on (the time of) the ultimate completion of God’s ways with his people Israel do Paul’s sorrows give way to praise and consolation (Rom 11:33–36).

It follows from this unifying perspective that we, too, are still living in these last days of the present age. With all its disasters and the history of the mission to, and the arrogance of, the nations, Israel’s long past is subsumed under the present age and its sufferings (Rom 8:18) and awaits “the revealing of the sons of God” (Rom 8:19 RSV).<sup>11</sup>

This “last days” definition qualifies these times as utterly decisive. There is urgency. Repentance is asked for (Acts 2:18, 3:19), and the nations are likewise exhorted (1 Thess 1:9–10). A Judge has been appointed (Acts 17:30–31). He is at the door (Jas 5:9). “[I]t is

time for judgment to begin with God's household . . . it begins with us" (1 Pet 4:17–18). "Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you . . . as you participate in the sufferings of Christ" (1 Pet 4:12–13). These are times that make one look for "the times of refreshment . . . from the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

In these "last days," the Spirit asks for holy living and will consequently bring suffering due to opposition from both sin as such and from human and spiritual powers. "Antichrists" will appear, and persecution and hardships will happen, also at a macro level. The birth pangs have begun (Matt 24:8), but Paul warns of what is still to come (2 Thess 2:2–3).

The long shadows of the Day of the LORD are touching life already as the "sufferings of the present age" (Rom 8:18). Yeshua-followers groan together with all of creation "as in the pains of childbirth" (Rom 8:22). They join in the groaning of the Spirit of God and Messiah (Rom 8:25). The holy life and service of Messiah's servants, including a variety of sufferings, is in their bodies filling up and sharing in what is lacking in Messiah's afflictions (Col 1:24).

The entire history of Israel and the nations is taking place under these long shadows of the Day of the LORD. Israel's plight (Luke 21:20–24), the nations, and creation are intertwined and connected as they are called to give account before God. These are the days of Israel's exile and return to the land. These are also the days when the Body of Messiah is being formed worldwide and in which the history of Israel and the ekklesia<sup>12</sup> unfolds itself. Such are the times that precede Olam Haba.

## **2. The Overlap between Olam Hazeh and Olam Haba in Messiah**

Messiah Yeshua's appearance already qualified the times as the last days of the present age (Heb 1:1). But in Messiah, Olam Hazeh and Olam Haba also overlap. There is an interaction between the two eras in the life and ministry of Messiah Yeshua. This overlap is still a reality until the final redemption is fully realized.

Messiah Yeshua's enfleshment in Israel's midst implies that, in the fullest sense, he takes upon himself the avodah required of the priestly nation in the present age.<sup>13</sup> His life and ministry are simultaneously filled by the Ruach Hakodesh, the Spirit of God that empowers his life, words, and acts with the powers of the age-to-come (Matt 4:23–25; 10:1, 7–8). The present age meets in him the age-to-come. As the righteous Israel-in-One, he enters the (approaching) Day of the LORD that he also speaks about (Matt 7:22–23; 10:15; 19:27–30; cf. Matt 3:12). He enters the judgment of the Day of the LORD as Israel-in-One. He enters the curses foretold as befitting Israel's unholiness (Deut 28). He enters the impending deepening of the exile. Israel's exile had not ended with the return in Ezra's time; it would even worsen and be prolonged.

In his execution and death outside the city, Messiah experiences this deepening exile from Jerusalem, from life (in God's land) itself. Death is the deepest form of this exile. And even in his resurrection, which also takes place outside the city, this reality of being exiled from the city of the Great King (Psa 48:2) is not yet taken away. Even his exaltation to heaven is happening in a manner and at a place that speaks of exile and a kingship that is not yet in Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> He was the first in Israel to undergo the full

measure of the judgment of the Day of the LORD, which included being exiled, and he still suffers exile as God's Messiah because of not being King in Jerusalem yet.

Therefore, we must conceive of a simultaneity of exile and enthronement for him,<sup>15</sup> of an "already" and a "not-yet" that involves and affects him even at the right hand of God. He still shares the sufferings of the present age, in heaven and on earth, because he represents Israel as the Israel-in-One and therefore shares in the not-yet of Israel's redemption. But he is also the living Shekhinah of the LORD (John 1:14), which would accompany the people wherever they had to go. Much more: the Shekhinah always would lead the way, even into exile (Ezek 11:22–23). Also, in this capacity, he shares in this not-yet.

Only when we learn to conceive of this complex reality that is caused by the fact that Messiah is both Israel's representative and—as the Son of God—the enfleshed glory of God will we be able to understand a bit of the continuing involvement of God and his Messiah with the sufferings of the present age.<sup>16</sup> We must grow into a deeper knowledge of the implications of "I have seen the affliction of my people . . . I know their sufferings" (Exod 3:7) and "In all their affliction, he was afflicted." We will need to envisage the love of Messiah as active in this overlap between Olam Hazeq and Olam Haba. We need to also take into account that his love is the love of "the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world" (Rev 13:8).

We need to discern the overlapping of the present age with the age-to-come in him and to realize that this overlap is still in some way a reality since then. But also, we need to recognize that another overlap is taking place in him—between God's eternal Israel-centered love (for creation) and its actual revelation in Messiah's perfect avodah in Israel's midst. Only then will we be able to understand more of Messiah's continuing relationship with all Israel as well as with the Body of Messiah.

Both N.T. Wright and Mark Kinzer in *Jerusalem Crucified, Jerusalem Risen*<sup>17</sup> relate the death of Messiah Yeshua to Israel's exile. They read and interpret Scripture against the background of contemporary Jewish thought but differ at crucial points. Both emphasize that Yeshua appeared within the religious context of the Jewish people, which at that time was very much influenced by a thought complex circling around exile and redemption. The people understood themselves to be still in exile and longed, and sometimes also strived, for the end of exile. Wright designated this thought complex as "continuing exile."<sup>18</sup>

Wright opines that Messiah Yeshua died under the curses that had caused Israel's exile and that he procured in his resurrection the eschatological return of Israel (and creation itself) from exile. But he also posits that Yeshua's message implied a reinterpretation, meaning that the deepest exile was all creation's estrangement from God, resulting in death. Israel's function was to bring creation back to its origin. Messiah's cursed death and resurrection "launched"<sup>19</sup> the return-redemption for all creation. In Messiah's resurrection, Israel was returning from exile; that is: it returned to God.<sup>20</sup>

Consequently, for Wright, Israel's exiled existence (continuing until today) is no longer an exile of the elect nation from the actual land of God. The continuing history of Israel's exile has no meaning. Israel must enter into a de-Israelized redemption. With all nations, it is called to this "return," receiving forgiveness and a new relation to God

and awaiting the breakthrough of the coming age. Consequently, Wright has no place for a “not-yet” of Messiah’s kingship over all Israel, nor for the simultaneity of exile and enthronement for Messiah.

Kinzer interprets the death and resurrection of Messiah also against the background of the thought complex summarized above and, therefore, in relation to the exile. Unlike Wright, however, he does not reinterpret Israel’s election, peoplehood, and Land, so Israel remains genealogically and geographically the center of God’s redemption for all creation. The resurrection of Messiah confirmed these divine mercies granted to Israel. Kinzer speaks about Messiah Yeshua proleptically suffering Israel’s exile of 70 ce.<sup>21</sup> In his resurrection, Messiah received the guarantee of Israel’s future redemption. After his exaltation to heaven Messiah Yeshua is still present through his Spirit. For Kinzer, however, Messiah’s suffering exile has been a divine reality in the past. While Kinzer is passionately clear that Messiah Yeshua is still involved with his people until the present day, he does not interpret Messiah’s sharing in the continuing history of Israel as a continuation of his exile that overlaps with his enthronement at God’s right hand. It is my opinion that we should emphasize that in this overlap between *Olam Haze* and *Olam Haba*, Messiah also knows of a not-yet that includes himself, that is, of a not-yet of Israel’s final restoration and a not-yet of his kingship from Jerusalem.

But, to return to the course of my argumentation, Scripture has it that the last days have arrived and that they are still the reality we live in. Messiah entered in these days the deepest darkness of exile, and till today this situation, to some extent, continues for him and for Israel. His righteous suffering and resurrection were not that of the last one representing the redemption-oriented function of genealogical Israel, as Wright posits, but instead that of the first one of the people, who will lead his people into the fullness of its calling, as well as all creation into the redemption to come.

### **3. Into the Darkness of the Day of the LORD: Messiah Leading the Way**

Following his immersion in the Jordan, Messiah Yeshua was led by the Spirit of God into the desert (Matt 4:1). The Spirit of God that “stood”<sup>22</sup> among the people was now upon him and was leading him into this desert of temptation in preparation for what was to follow. Just like Israel, he too—Israel-in-One—needed to be tempted in order to overcome and to be consecrated completely for his tasks. Luke tells us that this desert confrontation with the devil would get a sequel at a later time (Luke 4:11).

In Messiah’s sufferings and death, this confrontation with the powers of darkness is continued (John 8:31). As the perfect Israel-in-One, he enters the night of darkness and judgment that accompanies and is part of the Day of the Lord. He enters this night of curses in his capacity as Israel’s perfect representative and as the First One of Israel, the One to be followed by the many. This darkness contains banishment from the City of God and suffering what Joel prophesied about the Land and the people (Joel 3:2–3) when his garments were divided, and they cast lots for one of them (John 19:23–24; cf. Ps 22:19). In his nakedness Messiah suffered the curse of the “garments” of the Land being ripped away from the people, and the loss of the intimate nearness of the Lord (cf. Jer 13:11). In all this he will be followed by his people.

Messiah Yeshua leads his people, both as the First One of Israel and the Living Shekhinah of God. In both capacities, he is the first to enter the last days of this present age, including the days of exile. This darkness of the Day of the Lord overshadowing Yeshua has not been taken away fully from him since then.

As I did above,<sup>23</sup> Mark Kinzer also stresses the relation between Messiah's death and the impending disasters that would befall the people. He states that Messiah Yeshua suffered in a proleptic—that is, in an anticipatory—manner Jerusalem's destruction and the exile that followed.<sup>24</sup> But I would add that Messiah has not suffered this darkness only in a proleptic manner, relating his sufferings at the time of his death to what would happen in 70 CE. Messiah entered the darkness of exile and destruction that, in some manner, still has not ended for him. Although his resurrection heralded God's vindication of his avodah and the future redemption of the people, the Land, and the city, the darkness of the last days is still a reality not just for the Jewish people but also for its Messiah. The reality of him leading his people and also the Body of Messiah, and creation itself, through these still darkening last days, affects him and affects God in ways we should not presume to understand fully. This realization makes it possible for us to understand the connections between the sufferings and death of Messiah and the sufferings impacting him that were still to follow in the history of the Jewish people until this day.

The unifying perspective of the “last days” helps us understand that all darkness experiences of Messiah, his first followers from Israel and the nations, and the whole of Israel and the Land as well, are interconnected. Scripture, therefore, also presents elements that are separated in time together within this unifying perspective, sometimes showing congruency in content and form.<sup>25</sup> Messiah leads the way for all and stays involved with all. The first believers from Israel must leave Jerusalem, too (Acts 8). The sufferings of a path of sanctification are their share too. The sanctification of the Name (Acts 5:41) can lead to persecution for Jew and non-Jew (2 Tim 3:12) and even to Kiddush HaShem,<sup>26</sup> as Stephen experienced (Acts 7:54–60).

But Messiah Yeshua stays involved with all Israel. He is King of all Israel, even though only part of it has recognized him as such. As the First One of Israel, he leads his people into the whole gamut of last-day tribulations that we mentioned above and the nearing of the Day of the LORD. His ways with all Israel are part of the afflictions of Messiah that are still lacking (Col 1:24).

The histories of the Body of Messiah and of all Israel are situated in the same last days. They must be understood from this overarching perspective, although there are naturally differences too, just as there were differences in Israel's attitude toward David's kingship during his Hebron years. But before we continue, we need to reflect further on the nature of the relation of Messiah to all Israel as well as to the Body of Messiah.

#### **4. The Relation between Messiah, Israel, and the Body of Messiah: Brit 'Am**

How do we conceive of the nature of Messiah's continuing relationship with his people(s)?<sup>27</sup> What is it based on? It is essential to reflect on this because it relates to

the intriguing questions of the why and how of God's and Messiah's involvement with, and presence among, his people(s).

The Servant of the Lord is appointed to be brit 'am (Isa 42:6; 49:8).<sup>28</sup> He is to be a "covenant for the people."<sup>29</sup> He has been called and given by God for this purpose (Isa 49:1). In himself, he will be the covenant(al bond) that binds the people to God and God to the people of Israel. His appointment results in his being a light to the nations (Isa 42:6), but also implies a restoration of the people of God in the land (Isa 49:8–9).<sup>30</sup>

Messiah's function as brit 'am can be explained by pointing to the well-known concept of corporate personality. One person can be the representative of the whole so that his life and actions represent the life and actions of those he represents. This one-and-many duality also helps in understanding the place of Israel within the larger community of nations. It is clear from Scripture that the LORD has included this representational aspect in his calling of Israel. This representational function is, therefore, also at the center of Messiah's task within God's redemptive actions regarding Israel and the nations.

The question arises whether this brit 'am function of Messiah Yeshua speaks about a God-given functional unity between him and the people or does it also imply an ontological unity? I think this is based not so much upon an ontological (incarnational) unity with the people. Better to see it grounded in the faithfulness of God, who promises that his Shekhinah will lead and accompany the people at all times. Messiah's participation in the (difficult) ways of his people is, therefore, a divine gift originating from the faithfulness of God. His representational task is based on a divine ordination to this goal. His presence among his people creates a unity between him and the people but does not imply an ontological unity with the people that would mean that where the people are, he naturally will be too.<sup>31</sup> The corporate personality structure cannot be reversed in its direction. Representation by Messiah does not necessarily imply his immanence among Israel.<sup>32</sup> But if that is the case, how then can we speak of participation in Messiah's ways by the people, as Paul and Peter do (cf. Phil 3:10; Col 1:24; 1 Pet 4:12–13)? This brings us to the next paragraph.

## **5. "Circles of Holiness" within Messiah's Avodah?**

Part of the revelation granted in Tanakh is the fact that God chose to structure his people and their worship in "circles of holiness."<sup>33</sup> These circles—spheres or subdivisions—are oriented toward a center of holiness. We find this structure within the camp of Israel with the tabernacle as its center, the tribe of Levi (priests and Levites) encamping around it, and the other twelve tribes around these two inner circles.<sup>34</sup> It is also the structure of the Tabernacle/Temple with the Most Holy Place, the Holy Place, and the Courtyard. The avodah of the people is also structured along this threefold pattern with the high priest, the priests (and other Levites), and the people as a whole. The desert blueprint of the camp of Israel is also the model for the future structuring of the land, with the Temple as its center, surrounded by Jerusalem and the tribes. It can also be observed with regard to edible, permitted, and sacrificial animals.<sup>35</sup> Even the whole earth can be seen ordered in this manner. Jerusalem as its center, the Promised



Land as the first “circle” around it, and the nations as the outer ring.<sup>36</sup> This structure also shapes the outreach reported in Acts (cf. Acts 1:8).

We now focus on this aspect of structure because we are pondering the relation between Messiah Yeshua on the one hand and Israel and the Body of Messiah on the other hand. Is his service as God’s Servant purely personal, or can others join in? Is his avodah strictly his avodah? Or can it also be shared by others? Also related is the question of the individual or collective interpretation of the songs of the Servant of the LORD. When we can define the totality of his life—before and even after his resurrection—as his priestly avodah, could we also then speak of “circles of holiness” within it? Would such structural language help us discern and safeguard the uniqueness of his avodah and integrate the priestly participation of others?

Like the high priest, Messiah Yeshua functions as Israel’s representative in a corporate personality setting, but he can also be joined by others. He is Israel-in-One and, in that capacity, also Israel’s First One, acting alone and drawing others after him. His avodah is that of a non-Levitical high priest (Heb 7).<sup>37</sup> Discerning within it the three spheres of holiness helps us understand the unity and also the diversity within his service. In the center stands his service in the Most Holy Place, meaning the sacrifice of his life as fulfilling the Yom Kippur liturgy, taking place at Golgotha, and being presented in the heavenly Temple (Heb 8:1–2). There he is alone; the avodah he performs is only possible by virtue of his blameless and sanctified life. It is clear from Scripture that the uniqueness and once-and-for-all aspect of this avodah makes him the center of everything that the priestly people of Israel—also representing all creation—were called to do and be (Heb 9:24–26). The redemption wrought in this Most Holy Place is redemption by him alone, uniquely God-given!

But his avodah did not end there. Powerfully, he still serves as Israel’s high priest, blessing God in heaven and by his Spirit on earth. In this ongoing service, he is not alone, but he shares it with many (Rom 12:1; Heb 13:15; 1 Pet 2:5,9; Rev1:6). This service of Messiah Yeshua takes place in the “circle” of the Holy Place, where the high priest served God together with the priests. In this sphere of holiness, Yeshua continuously brings blessing to God, and wrestles and offers himself up in prayer for Israel, the Body of Messiah—his kehilla comprising both Jews and non-Jews—and all of creation. Here he can be joined by other priests (2 Cor 12:15; Fil 2:17; 2 Tim 4:6; Rev 5:8,10). Also, in this “circle,” his actions are redemptive, based on what is perfected in the Most Holy Place. Participation of the priests here has, therefore, also a redemptive quality: it partakes in the outworking of blessing based on what has been realized by Messiah in the Most Holy center.<sup>38</sup>

The third part of Messiah’s avodah is bringing the blessings from the Most Holy Place to the outer “circle” of the Courtyard. In the Tabernacle and Temple, priests joined in this task of bringing blessing to the Courtyard (cf. the structure of Lev 16 and Luke 1:22–23). God let his priests participate in reaching out to the people, and it is also clear that the whole people were and are called to participate in bringing the blessings that originate from the Most Holy Place to all the world. The service of Messiah’s co-workers here is made possible (again) by the gift of the Holy Spirit and also has a

redemptive quality since it contributes to the realization of God's salvific purposes with Israel and the nations.

This structural perspective makes us understand the participation of the many in (some of the) tasks of the One. In Daniel 7, we meet the Son of man receiving royal glory and power (Dan 7:14), but we also see that this implies a royal position for "the holy people of the Most High" (Dan 7:22). In chapter 10, we meet Daniel, who in a three-week fast obviously shares in a three-week struggle of the "man dressed in linen" (10:5), who appears to him "above the waters of the river" (12:6). This perspective can also help us understand that the unifying s(S)ervant-terminology in Isaiah can be understood to also imply a differentiation in participation. Israel as a people can be called God's servant, and at the same time, there can be explicit mention of a servant with a task for Israel (Isa 42:6; 49:6, 8). Perhaps this one-and-many perspective can also be found when the "seed" of the servant is mentioned (Isa 53:10).<sup>39</sup> Will this "seed" partake in the distribution of blessings and in reaching out with them also to the nations (52:15)?<sup>40</sup> Can we also understand the teaching of God's Torah to the nations to be part of this—a reaching out (Isa 2:2–5)?

Yeshua himself also often speaks about or implies the participation of his co-workers in his God-given task (cf. 1 Cor 3:9). At the same time, it is clear that there is a path that he needs to walk alone (Matt 26:31, 56; cf. Heb 7:28). The calling of the twelve—implying the promise that all Israel will follow—shows that God wishes them to participate in the way of his Messiah. Calling fishermen may imply that Messiah Yeshua is actively gathering Israel, beginning to fulfill God's promises of return for his people (Jer 16:16; Matt 4:18–22; John 21:1–14). They are to be Yeshua's envoys who also share in his power (Mk 3:13–19).<sup>41</sup> Sharing in his travels, they must also share his way of the cross (Matt 16:24–27). Yeshua acknowledges that they stood by him in all his trials (Luke 22:28), sharing the opposition he met (cf. John 9:34; 20:19). They are invited to share in his prayer struggle (Matt 26:36–46). They share in the glory—the gift of the Spirit (cf. Num 27:20)—that the Father has given Yeshua (John 17:22). They will also share in his royal glory (Luke 22:29–30). They are to be his witnesses in the "circles" (Acts 1:8) that God has structured into his creation. The book of Acts shows how this draws them also into all kinds of troubles, captivity, and martyrdom.

The Scriptures speak at many places, therefore, of sharing in the privileges, tasks, and sufferings of Messiah Yeshua. The "in him" terminology that is so abundant speaks of communion with Messiah in all areas of the liturgy of life (Rom 12:1). Sharing in the administering (diakonia) of the blessings wrought by Messiah alone, as in the "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18), is possible by the God-given room for participation "in him."<sup>42</sup>

The avodah of Messiah takes place, both in heaven and (by his Spirit) on earth, within the last days, encountering the darkness(es) of the Day of the LORD. Messiah's avodah entails a prolonged struggle with powers that oppose God's kingdom (cf. Eph 6:10–20; Rom 8:38). Afflictions are still lacking (Col 1:24), implying that also a fullness of suffering has to be reached. This avodah-with-afflictions of Messiah concurs with the not-yet of his kingship over all Israel, which entails a continuing estrangement of part of Israel from his kingship. It all belongs to the sufferings of the Lamb-as-slain (Rev 5:6; 13:8) that has been his part from creation's beginning.

We will now turn to the question of how we must understand the participation in his sufferings that Scripture speaks about. It will be the focus of the next paragraph, which also relates to the questions we began this article with.

## **6. Participation in Messiah's Sufferings**

The history of Israel and the Body of Messiah Yeshua takes place within “the last days,” inaugurated with Yeshua’s coming into Israel’s midst. Also, the history of the nations and creation is developing within this period. The darkness of the coming of the Day of the LORD is upon these days, although the intensity of it may vary in different periods. Israel’s dispersion in exile has not ended yet. The times of the gentiles have also not come to their fullness. Their hatred has multiplied, as shown in the Shoah, and it is still a present reality. Meanwhile, the nations are being reached with the knowledge of God in Messiah Yeshua. Creation is groaning in birth pangs. It is one history that is not to be compartmentalized because it is the One and Only God of Israel and his Messiah who are involved with all of it, wishing to bring Olam Haba.

We described above how Yeshua—as Israel-in-One also representing creation—entered into the judgment, vicariously suffering this darkness of the Day of the LORD. His suffering was a uniquely individual (high priestly) ministry in the “the Most Holy circle” within his avodah, at the same time taking place also in the Most Holy Place in the heavenly Temple (Heb 9:11–12; 24–26). By his sacrifice, he merited forgiveness, holy life, and the ultimate fulfillment of Israel’s calling and destiny. But even his resurrection does not blot out the fact that he still is not enthroned as King in Jerusalem.

This “not-yet” affects even heaven and implies Messiah’s continuing sharing of Israel’s exilic existence. He therein reveals the fact that as Living Shekhinah, he leads the way for Israel even into exile. This also is a self-revelation of the Lamb-as-slain-from-creation who has been involved with Israel’s history all the way. It is why there are still afflictions lacking for Messiah in this overlap between Olam Hazeh and Olam Haba.

We now need to address the theme of participation in Messiah’s sufferings. What has been merited, received, and guaranteed in “the Most Holy Place” of his avodah leads to God’s blessing, prayers of thanksgiving, and prayer struggles in which others may accompany this First One priest of Israel. Participation of priestly people is needed to live and administer these redemption goods in “the circle of the Courtyard.” Also needed there is teaching about the message that is good news for Israel too. Healing and life need to be administered; forgiveness and reconciliation; instruction for Israel and the nations on what a dedicated life should look like as symbolized by the tamid-offering.

This administration is, however, a task that brings with it afflictions. Those who share in this will meet the opposition of humans and demons, their own hearts and desires, and false prophets and gods. They are called to fulfill this task in a world not yet redeemed from death and creation’s every pain. In this undertaking, they will share the pains of Hashem himself; they will share his pathos, as Abraham Joshua Heschel named it.<sup>43</sup> Like Jeremiah, they will be taken up in the heartbreaking sufferings of God, who wished to have enough tears to be able to weep over his people (Jer 8:23

[9:1]).<sup>44</sup> Like the baby boys in Bethlehem, who shared in Messiah's persecuted existence, murdered because of him (Matt 2:16–18).

At the same time, their sharing this darkness will be meant as divinely ordained times of sanctification. Sufferings related to this goal can be designated as participation in Messiah's sufferings (1 Pet 4:13). The ultimate end is to be glorified in being conformed to the image of Messiah (Rom 8:29–30). We do not have an instrument for "spectral analysis" of the varieties of darkness that Scripture knows of for these last days. So we should be on our guard to speak with a self-induced prophetic certainty about the exact purposes of God in all that takes place in these days.

It is, however, clear that the ministry of Messiah in these days is shared with his followers, both from Israel and the nations. Paul has a part in administering the reconciliation and all that it entails (2 Cor 5:17–21), which causes him to "share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ" (2 Cor 1:5; cf. 4:10). This participation also has a redemptive character. Paul's suffering contributes to the outworking of Messiah's redemption (2 Cor 1:6; 4:7–15). It is all "for your benefit," he writes (2 Cor 4:15). Sharing in the weak ways of Messiah forms an opportunity for God to grant Messiah's power more abundantly (2 Cor 12:9–10). Messiah's followers from Israel and the nations are called to be his redemptive co-workers in this administering of "good things that are now already here" (Heb 9:11).

The question we have to deal with now, however, is whether Messiah's afflictions are also shared with the whole of the Jewish people. Is Israel sharing the ways he walks, even when only part of the people has recognized him to be Israel's Messiah?

It is crucial here to begin with the foundational truth that Messiah, both as the Lamb-as-slain-from-creation and as God's Living Shekhinah, leads the ways of his people. Wherever he goes, the people go, regardless of their knowledge of this promised reality. This is "the arm of God's faithfulness."<sup>45</sup> Messiah leads his people—whatever their attitude toward him—through these last days until "the times or dates that the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:7). He carries them on his heart before God's Throne. He waits as David waits in Hebron to be recognized by the whole people. He reaches out to the nations while sharing Israel's hardships and the nations' hatred toward it. "In all their affliction, he was afflicted" (Isa 63:9, RSV). This truth makes us understand that Chagall painted a reality unseen.

But is the reverse also true? Is Israel sharing, unwittingly participating in his sufferings, in Messiah's administering of what he all alone had merited? It is obvious that part of Israel has knowingly participated in his ministry and sufferings in the period following his resurrection and ascension.<sup>46</sup> But can this also be said of Israel as a whole? Could their sharing in these afflictions have redemptive meaning too?<sup>47</sup>

During centuries of anti-Jewish thinking and practice in church life, these questions would perhaps have been considered improper, absurd, or even sacrilegious. But we need to ask them because they are related to the enduring presence of Messiah Yeshua among his people. In his sharing of Israel's continuing exile, he is the expression of God's faithfulness toward his people. His unrecognized presence concurs with his not yet being King over all Israel. This has not been recognized during the centuries of church history by non-Jewish believers. Like Judaism, the Church also should have had knowledge of two manners of Messiah's involvement.<sup>48</sup> But in fact, only the image of

the enthroned Christ “rejected by his people but believed by the nations” influenced Christian theology. From the perspective of the Church, he was “ours” and not “theirs.” What the more and more non-Jewish Church did not understand, however, is that Judaism’s non-recognizing attitude toward Yeshua as Messiah very soon came to be confirmed and strengthened by a fully supersessionist, de-Jew-ized and de-Israel-ized Christian theology and church life.<sup>49</sup>

At this point, it helps us to think of the concept of “the fractured euangelion” that has been coined by Mark Kinzer.<sup>50</sup> This designation implies that there was one message about the good news that, because of Messiah Yeshua, could and should be told. This message became fractured and carried by two parties excluding each other. It was not only about forgiveness of sins and eternal life through Jesus, and resurrection and a new creation to come, as the Church proclaimed it. This was the part that the Church, in general, understood, took hold of, and claimed as its property.

Its supersessionist perspective blinded the Church, however, to God’s eternal love for and election of Israel and its special position among the nations. Also, the physical-geographical aspect of God’s election of the people, the land, and Jerusalem as his city in relation to Jesus’ incarnation, life, death, and resurrection remained unrecognized or was spiritualized. The restoration of the people in the land and of Jerusalem as the place for God’s Temple also suffered this fate in general Christian thinking. These were, however, the promised realities that the Jewish people generally clung to, prayed for, and awaited with fervor. These promises and their future realization became, as it were, the Jewish part of the fractured euangelion.

The realization of this given of the fractured euangelion is dawning slowly. The message about Messiah Yeshua should be healed to be one again. It has been a hurtful message; it should become besorah, good news, again.<sup>51</sup> Paul states that Yeshua’s workers must at some point appear before the judgment seat of God and that they will discover that they are in need of forgiveness and reparation of “the buildings” they have built (1 Cor 3:1–17; 4:1–5). When one thinks of the Christian church and the Jewish people appearing before God, would this then be different? Will not both realize that correction and forgiveness are needed?<sup>52</sup>

We will now return to the question of participation by Israel in Messiah’s sufferings. It is clear that nobody participates in the “Most-Holy circle” of his avodah. In the surrounding circles, however, participation will be possible. Messiah Yeshua lived the fullness of Israel’s calling. He was recognized as Israel’s one and only perfect Tzaddik (righteous person) in his resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:4; Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14; Jas 5:6; 1 John 2:1). He thereby also merited and received the prerogative to be the beginning and end of Israel’s redemption. He secured Israel’s eternal calling to be ultimately fulfilled by the people. He is the God-given guarantee for Israel’s return to the land, and of the restoration of the city and Temple of God. He is “[t]he One who breaks open the way . . . [who] will go up before them . . . the LORD at their head” (Mic 2:13). In this manner, he has been, and still is, present among his people—leading and waiting, creating, preserving, and battling. The prayers of Messiah Yeshua before the Throne (Rom 8:34) are contributing to the realization of full redemption for Israel, as they are for the complete salvation for the whole of creation. Clearly, the prayers of the

Christian church have not really been in alignment with his prayers for Israel and its future.

But the Jewish people as a whole, in their prayers, unwittingly shared in his longings. Like Daniel (Dan 10:1–14), Israel has been sharing the prayers of Messiah. These prayers have been and will be contributing to the outworking and ultimate realization of what has been promised, even all prayers full of pain. Israel's mourning and weeping have been heard, as God hears Rachel's weeping in Ramah because her children "are no more" (Jer 31:15). The consolation for weeping Rachel-Israel is "your work will be rewarded" (Jer 31:16). May we infer that this mourning and weeping before God is also seen as work?<sup>53</sup> In some manner contributing to the work of waiting and prayerful expectation of Messiah? Since he is Israel's First One leading the people and drawing it in the end fully after him, we may trust that Israel's prayers speak of redemptive participation, as do the prayers of Messiah's followers within the Body of Messiah.

Moreover, since Messiah, present among his people, is also the One in whom "all things hold together" (Col 1:17), both Israel's history and its future are related to this "holding together." This means that in some way or another, every contribution to Israel's physical and spiritual survival, <sup>54</sup> and every movement within Judaism that kept it alive, is related to this sustaining activity of Messiah. Might we not conclude that, again unwittingly, (parts of) his people participated in furthering God's redemptive purposes and in the accompanying hardships too (e.g., Est 4:14–17)?

The Messiah also experienced the hatred of the nations. This hatred hits him full face through the bodies and souls of his people. The spiritual forces behind this hatred fiercely oppose the divine purposes. It is God's 'am segula, his treasured possession Israel, that is receiving the blows. His "apple of the eye" gets hurt manifold times. Did not Israel also share Messiah's afflictions in this respect? Sharing in the night that must be lived through before the morning dawns? Sharing in Messiah's maltreatment?

Here too, we are dealing with the question of the redemptive aspect of this suffering with Messiah. It is clear from Scripture that Israel's survival, return, and restoration is related to the victory of Messiah's righteousness in the world of nations and to creation's redemption from all pains in Olam Haba. There will be life from the dead (Rom 11:15). Israel's restoration will ultimately be followed by the return of God's Presence to Jerusalem and the times of restoration for everything (Acts 3:21). Perhaps we may, or even should, reckon with an implied<sup>55</sup> co-suffering and co-contributing of suffering Israel to the healing of the world, and the ultimate breakthrough of God's eternal life in this world. Does the avodah of Messiah, as described in Isaiah 53, also imply co-service—within the "Holy Place circle" of his avodah—by suffering Israel? Did not the six-million-fold killing of the light in the apple of the eye of God cause a spiritual reorientation to begin in the churches? Was not the heart of the nations finally moved to give back to Israel its place among the nations when confronted with this horrifying death that took place among them?<sup>56</sup> Does this perspective mean that, in some manner, the suffering of the Jewish people contributes to Tikkun Olam, that is, to the ultimate restoration of all things?

As mentioned above, we do not have an instrument for "spectral analysis" of the darkness, meaning that we cannot precisely discern what God's specific purposes are with what Israel and the Body of Messiah have to go through.

Paul knows that God's ultimate purpose for his people(s) is to be conformed to the image of Messiah and glorified in him (Rom 8:28–30). Nothing can sever them from this loving intention of God (Rom 8:38–39). Paul speaks here as a Yeshua-believing Jew and focuses on the Jewish and non-Jewish believers in the Body of Messiah.<sup>57</sup> But he also moves on and asks about Israel as a whole (Rom 9–11). And we, too, should ask what the divine purpose might be, with all darkness that has surrounded the Jewish people until this day.

## **Until the End: Sharing the Hosea-sufferings of God and Messiah**

The broad perspective, the revealed purpose of God with all Israel, is what Jewish men recite when binding their tefillin—their phylacteries.

And I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord. (Hos 2:19–20 RSV).

These words are spoken by Hosea, who vividly shared in the pain of God implied in his life calling and message. Israel understands that the process from betrothal to consummation is a long-term goal that comes with hardships. As also the seven day repetition of the sanctification liturgy of the priests<sup>58</sup> suggests that to be sanctified to priestly service is a process that implies uncomfortable situations too. This sanctification stands as a model for the sanctification of the people as a whole too. God wishes to betroth all Israel and suffers unto this goal many hardships that also his people must undergo. And the people are being drawn into the communion of love that this is all about.<sup>59</sup> In the end also Messiah Yeshua will be revealed, the bridegroom that has been present all along, just as Joseph had been caring all along, and finally revealed himself to his brothers (Gen 45:1–3).

These hopeful perspectives, however, do not take away the fact that for Israel and the Body of Messiah, and also for creation as a whole, these last days can have different outworkings. The righteous and the unrighteous are not identical and will react differently. There are, both in the community of followers of Jesus/Yeshua and in the midst of Israel, those who are not living according to what has been entrusted to them (cf. Rom 2). The priestly sanctification and betrothal of Israel by God ask for a wholeheartedly sanctified life. Sanctifying hardships can accompany the fulfillment of calling as we see happening with Jeremiah, who had to align with God's will (Jer 20:7–18) and at the same time was called to co-suffer with God (cf. Jer 45). Purposes of sanctification and co-serving in the redemptive outworking of Messiah's avodah can go together. Hardships can make us understand the intense opposition of creation against God's salvific actions while pursuing our calling. They can also provide a mirror in which we encounter our own unwillingness. The underlying foundation is, however, the Lamb-as-slain, whose sufferings precede those of Israel and the Body of Messiah and who draws after himself. This implies that sometimes Israel and the Body of Messiah only can say, "Yet for your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered" (Psa 44:23; Rom 8:36). Then the servants of the LORD share as living tamid-sacrifices in the existence of the ultimate Servant (Isa 50:4–11).

This existence, sometimes forced upon, sometimes willingly and knowingly accepted, connects to both “arms” with which the God of Israel reaches out to his people and the nations to fulfill their calling and destination. In different ways, it shares in and contributes

to the nearing of the times of the restoration and in filling up Messiah’s afflictions for his kehila. Edith Stein exemplified this at the time of her arrest for deportation to Auschwitz in 1942.<sup>60</sup> When she and her sister Rosa were arrested, she said to her sister, “Come let us go for our people.” Edith, a Jewish Jesus-believer and Carmelite nun,<sup>61</sup> embodies the willing acceptance of the darkness that came over her in the assurance that this filling up Messiah’s afflictions would contribute to the redemption of Israel. “Taking upon herself this cross”—so prominent a theme in her spirituality and theological thinking—made her participate in God’s redemptive love for his people and the world as a whole. Her self-sacrifice echoes the conviction of the apostle Paul, referring to his sufferings, opening up the opportunity for more power of the Spirit, and bringing about blessings for others (2 Cor 1:5–6; 4:7–15).

Edith Stein also embodied in herself the special position of Jewish Jesus-believers. They form a living overlap between the Jewish people on one side and the Body of Messiah, with its duality of Jewish and non-Jewish believers, on the other side. The Nazis at that time considered them Jews and treated them accordingly. The death camps brought them together with the greater whole of Israel as if the non-acceptance of Jewish Jesus-believers by the greater Jewish community was overruled. And their being rounded up by the Nazis showed to the Church as a whole that forced assimilation and non-recognition of their enduring Jewish identity from the Christian side was also not acknowledged by Heaven. They also bridged in their death the schism that had evolved between Israel and “the Church.” Edith Stein and many like her participated in Messiah’s sufferings related to his presence among all Israel and his presence within and through the Body of Messiah.

The baffling reality of Jewish suffering confronts Christians and churches with their theological, spiritual, and practical complicity in this drama. Realizing that Chagall intuitively painted the truth, that Elie Wiesel gave words to a deep mystery, and that Messiah died again and was dumped as filth in the Babi Yar ravine brings no peace of mind and heart. The deep sorrow of God, mouthed by Jeremiah and other prophets, and the tears of Yeshua over one Jew (John 11:34), make us realize that countless tears have been wept, unseen and unrecognized by almost all, including ourselves.

There is one narrative that connects the suffering of all the people of Israel and the sufferings of God and the Messiah. It encompasses the times of both Tanakh and the New Testament and everything that took place since then and yet will take place. It knows of high costs and asks for humility and willingness to be drawn into the existence symbolized by the daily tamid-offering. It draws us to participate in the longings of God, in the prayers of the Messiah and the Jewish people. It asks for perseverance in the hope of the full redemption of Jerusalem (Luke 2:38) and the willingness to wait for the times of restoration that God has decreed, even if this may not be in our lifetime. It is a narrative about a Love that never fails and asks for participation in this Love, whatever the costs.



## Retrospect

In this article, we have pondered the relationship between Israel's sufferings and the sufferings of Messiah Yeshua. This soul-searching undertaking belongs to the recasting of Christian theology that Jennifer Rosner mentions.<sup>62</sup> This recasting is necessary because Christian theology and church practice have had severe and deadly consequences for the Jewish people. This article wishes to contribute to a deeper understanding of the indissoluble bond—even in suffering—between the God of Israel and Messiah Yeshua on the one hand and Israel on the other. Seeking understanding while reading Scripture from a post-supersessionist perspective reveals depths of divine love and involvement. It confronts us with painful realities that we have to own up to. So much of Israel's suffering has been caused by people using the name of Jesus, by Christian thinking and practice. May the understandings and the narrative shared by the Jesus-believing faith community change more and more in this respect.

But what will happen when the outline of the above is also brought to the table within Jewish-Christian encounters? Could that cause people to feel uncomfortable? Could that give the impression that now also the suffering of Israel gets stolen, that is Christianized or theologically colonized? So much has been suffered by the Jewish people “because of Jesus,” and now they are even stuck with him in all experiences and memories of pain and death?

Never should our rethinking cause again any other harm to God's “eye-apple” (Zech 2:8). When it comes to sharing some of the insights gained above, this should only show how we, who have come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, are taking the call to repentance seriously and redirecting our ways and thinking. May this, as such, be of comfort to the Jewish people as a whole. May it be a blessing in our mutual encounters.

May it also be a blessing to God, whom we await to reveal to both Israel and the nations the ways he has walked.

- 
- 1 All Scripture references are from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.
  - 2 Edjan Westerman, “For Better and For Worse: The Faithfulness of God through the Exile and Return of the Shekhinah,” *Kesher* 38 (Winter/Spring 2021): 15–25.
  - 3 Edjan Westerman, “Presence and Involvement: The Pre-incarnate Messiah in the History of Israel,” *Kesher* 41, (Summer/Fall 2022).
  - 4 Jennifer M. Rosner, *Healing the Schism, Barth, Rosenzweig, and the New Jewish-Christian Encounter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 294–295 lists this necessity as one of the tasks for the “recasting of Christian theology in light of Israel.” Mark S. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 226–230, describes briefly some of the answers given to these questions.
  - 5 I heard Gavin D'Costa using this terminology during a webinar of Yachad BeYeshua about Edith Stein (10/13/2021).
  - 6 I know there will be a lot of systematic theological consequences too.
  - 7 For the Hebrew expression see for example Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 4:30, 31:29; Isa 2:2; Jer 23:20, 30:24; Ezek 38:16; Dan 10:14; Mic 4:1. The meaning oscillates between “what comes after this time” and “the end times.” G. Dellling, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1969), s.v. *telos*, Vol. 8, 50–88.

- 8 “The last days,” “the end of the ages,” “the last hour,” “the end”—all these designations are related to the concept of the present age/era coming to an end, and a new age arriving.
- 9 See footnote 7.
- 10 Matt 24 speaks of the not-yet of the end (vs. 6), the beginning of birth-pains (vs. 8) and of the moment that the end (telos) will come (vs. 14).
- 11 Paul thinks primarily of Yeshua-believing Jews and non-Jews, but we can also interpret this verse while thinking of the ultimate goal of God’s redemption that he writes about in Rom 9–11.
- 12 I prefer using (like Mark Kinzer and many others) this Greek expression to avoid misunderstandings when translating the history-laden designation “church.” “Ekklesia” and also “Body of Messiah” are designations that can more easily regain and retain their Scriptural meaning as the eschatological community of believers from both Israel and the nations.
- 13 Edjan Westerman, *Learning Messiah: Israel and the Nations, Learning to Read God’s Ways Anew* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2018), especially chapters 14–19.
- 14 Cf. Westerman, “For Better and For Worse.”
- 15 This simultaneity also asks for systematic theological reflection. It needs to be studied within a pneumatological Christology and/or a Christological pneumatology.
- 16 This has bearings also on our knowledge of God. The “not yet” affects God. Exile is in some manner a reality, even in heaven.
- 17 Mark S. Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified, Jerusalem Risen: The Resurrected Messiah, the Jewish People, and the Land of Promise* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2018). Kinzer provides an insightful, thorough, and detailed critique of Wright’s views. While acknowledging Wright’s contribution “in highlighting the importance of exile and restoration for the New Testament,” he states that “we should also recognize the limitations of his manner of elucidating that theme,” 56.
- 18 He states that “. . . ‘exile [is] the best controlling metaphor to characterize this continuing moment in the single, though complex, perceived narrative of a great many Jews, including Pharisees, in the second-Temple period,” N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (London: SPCK, 2013), 162.
- 19 “Paul believed as Jesus himself had claimed that this project had now been decisively launched.” N. T. Wright, “Responding to Exile,” in *Exile: A Conversation with N.T. Wright*, ed. James M. Scott (Downers Grove: IVP, 2017), 331 (Kindle edition).
- 20 Jesus’ teaching implied that “the resurrection would be seen as the launch of the real return from exile, the ultimate liberation of the people of God, from the exile that lay deeper than the exile of Egypt or Babylon” (61). “For Paul, the period of exile has ended in Christ” (62) . . . “by Jesus’ death on the cross” (80), N.T. Wright, “Yet the Sun Will Rise Again: Reflections on the Exile and Restoration in Second Temple Judaism, Jesus, Paul, and the Church Today,” in *Exile*, ed. James M. Scott.
- 21 Kinzer, *Jerusalem*, 282. Jesus bears “in advance the wrath of Rome that his people would face a generation later,” 275.
- 22 Haggai 2:5. The Hebrew has ‘omedet (stood) and reminds us of the Pillar of Fire and Clouds.
- 23 Also see my *Learning Messiah*, Chapters 16 (16.8), 17 (17.5), 19 (19.5).
- 24 Kinzer, *Jerusalem*, 281–282. While speaking of “proleptic” suffering creates a connection between Messiah’s suffering and the actual destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 70 ce, and to Israel’s deepening exile as a result of this, there needs to be some interpretive-terminological adjustment because Messiah’s sufferings relate not only to these events, but also to what will follow during the *whole* of Israel’s history, *including* the darkness that will happen before the ultimate restoration. Kinzer wishes to highlight the connections between the sufferings of Messiah, the events of 70 and the ultimate hardships for Jerusalem and the people, and interprets these connections in terms of typology; see footnote 25.
- 25 Kinzer, *Jerusalem*, 281–282, understands this congruency in content and form between events happening at different points of time in terms of typology. When he speaks about the Jewish people suffering proleptically the final tribulation that precedes the return of the Lord to Zion, he

writes that the “events of 70” anticipate typologically that final tribulation. The people suffer these events in a manner that represents “not only a foreshadowing but a relationship of ‘real presence’ in which the eschatological reality of the archetype inheres proleptically in the type.” In fact Kinzer reasons *backwards* from the eschatological ultimate darkness that will befall Jerusalem (the *archetype*) to the events of 70 (the *type*) that are *proleptically* suffered by of Messiah, whereas I interpret *forwards* starting from the unifying eschatological whole of the darkness of the last days, being entered fully into by Messiah as Israel’s First One, and him being followed in phases into this darkness by the whole of the people of Israel.

- 26 The Hebrew means literally “sanctification of the Name.” It has become a designation for martyrdom.
- 27 James speaks about God choosing also a “people for his name from the Gentiles” (Acts 15:14). Cf. Zech 2:11.
- 28 See *Learning Messiah*, Chapter 16.
- 29 This can also be translated as “covenant of the people.” It is remarkable that the Tanakh translation of the Jewish Study Bible (Oxford: JPS, 2004), translates “covenant people” and states that the Hebrew is uncertain. I have at other times noted that Jewish readers often chose exegetical solutions that ruled out that this *ebed* (servant) would have a function for the people of Israel.
- 30 The designation “covenant for the people” in Isa 49:8–9 shows that we should read these verses in close connection to the verses 1–7 (also about the *ebed*), and in the context of the whole chapter. Interpretation should follow the lines of Isa 42:1–7. Differences in interpretation led to differences in delineation of parts of this chapter.
- 31 Interpreting the continuing Presence of Messiah among Israel along the lines of ontology would imply that he would likewise also be present among the nations, since his representing Israel implies also representing the nations and creation. The physical presence of the Temple was also no ontological guarantee for God’s Presence among the people (Jer 7:1–15), as is shown when the Shekhinah leaves the Temple (Ezek 11:22–23). In this I differ from Kinzer who sees the continuing Presence as due to Messiah’s incarnation and the (proleptic) sharing of Messiah in Israel’s fate. His suffering and death transformed the character of what the Jewish people would suffer in 70 ce, “granting it a redemptive power” through his atoning work, and as a result “the Jewish people are ontologically (though not yet epistemologically) knit to Jesus through their experience of exile,” Kinzer, *Jerusalem*, 225.
- 32 Messiah’s immanence among Israel should be studied as a separate theme.
- 33 I am greatly indebted for this idea to Jacob Milgrom. See *Leviticus. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1991–2000), Vol. I Chap. 1–16, Vol. II Chap. 17–22, Vol. III, 23–27. I was privileged to meet with Milgrom personally in 2006, on a Shabbat afternoon in his Jerusalem garden. In my *Learning Messiah* I made use of his insights.
- 34 The twelve tribes camping around the Tabernacle and the Levites (arranged according to the four wind directions) form the bridge to mankind as a whole.
- 35 “All animals for mankind—few animals for Israel—the sacrifices for the Lord,” Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 722–724.
- 36 “*The earth* (for mankind)—the land (for Israel and the ger [=foreigner] who accepts God’s laws and His claim on the land) —*the Sanctuary* (for the priests),” Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 722–724.
- 37 Like Melchizedek (Gen 14:18–20; Heb 7:1–10). Cf. *Learning Messiah*, Chapter 18 (18.6).
- 38 Also Kinzer, *Jerusalem*, is like me exploring the question if there is a redemptive aspect to the suffering of Israel, and if so how that is to be conceived. He states about Jesus’ Jewish disciples, “They are privileged now to share in the atoning suffering of their Lord, who took upon himself Israel’s sin and its judgment,” (222). A further qualification is needed here to make clear what this sharing in the atonement through Messiah actually implies. Thinking from the three-circle structure may be useful in this task.

- 39 Cf. Gen 3:15. Is the one-and-many perspective also present when Aaron and his sons are mentioned?
- 40 The Servant of the Lord is called to be a light for the nations (Isa 42:6; 49:6) with the purpose that God's salvation will reach the ends of the earth (42:6). The designation *brit 'am* in itself implies that the Servant will prepare Israel to fulfill completely their God-given task including being a light for the world.
- 41 I chose here and elsewhere not to list all parallels from the synoptic gospels.
- 42 Messiah Yeshua can also be seen to be the Sanctuary-par-excellence. To be "in him" can then be understood as meaning to be represented by him in the "Holy of Holies," and to be co-serving with him in "the Holy Place and in the Courtyard." Cf. Eph 2:14–16, which can also be interpreted to have such a "locational" Sanctuary-aspect.
- 43 Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets, Part II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975). The prophet "carries within himself the awareness of what is happening to God" (89).
- 44 Jeremiah 8:13–9:23 forms the Haftarah for Tisha B'Av.
- 45 Cf. Westerman, "Faithfulness," 22.
- 46 Cf. footnote 42.
- 47 Kinzer, *Jerusalem*, 55–56, speaks about "a dynamic connection between [Messiah's] redemptive work and the suffering endured by the Jewish people as a consequence of the exile," that was established when Messiah Yeshua took upon himself Jerusalem's suffering upon the cross. The exile is therefore "potentially redemptive," because it is transformed "through association with Jesus' suffering and death." Since Messiah bore the judgment aspect of Jerusalem's suffering, "the Jewish people in post-70 exile . . . [is] *benefiting* corporately from the redemptive suffering of Jesus—even apart from explicit communal reception of Jesus as Israel's Messiah" (emphasis added). This does not, however, answer whether Jewish suffering could involve *contributing* to redemptive purposes.
- 48 Jewish texts speak of two images of Messiah, *Mashiach ben-Yosef* and *Mashiach ben-David*, the first a suffering Messiah, the second a more triumphant Messiah.
- 49 Christian readers should take this into account when reading about Jewish disbelief in the NT. Kinzer, *Jerusalem*, 150, fn 35, also warns against exegetical conclusions that claim "that Jews today who remain skeptical of Jesus' messianic status have unambiguously 'rejected the word of God.'"
- 50 Kinzer, *Jerusalem*, Chapter 5, 225–239.
- 51 *Besorah* is the Hebrew word for good tidings, gospel. Cf. the title of Mark S. Kinzer, Russell L. Resnik, *Besorah: The Resurrection of Jerusalem and the Healing of a Fractured Gospel* (Eugene: Cascade, 2021).
- 52 No form or shape of Christian faith will be able to stand upright when the Presence of God will come near. Paul states (1 Cor 2:9, quoting Isaiah 64:4) that God has prepared something that surpasses all imagination, expectation, and understanding. The same will be the case for any form or shape of Judaism. This is also the opinion of David Novak, "Supersessionism Hard and Soft," *First Things*, February 2019, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2019/02/supersessionism-hard-and-soft>. He too quotes 1 Cor 2:9, besides Berakhot 34b and Isa 64:4, and finds here common ground for Christianity and Judaism that calls for humility.
- 53 Cf. 1 Thess 1:3; 2 Thess 1:11. Both mention "work of faith." Also Yeshua designates faith as "work" (John 6:29).
- 54 Rev 12:13–16 speaks of a period of safekeeping in the desert.
- 55 Kinzer, *Jerusalem*, 252, speaks about Jesus proleptically participating "in the Jewish torment of 70 ce, so that Jewish faithfulness unto death in coming centuries might participate retroactively in his martyrdom." Cf. footnote 51.
- 56 Kinzer, *Jerusalem*, 252–253, speaks about "a partial communal death that helped prepare for a partial communal rebirth."

- 57 It is important to note that Paul's words should not exclusively be interpreted in an individualistic manner. God's overall purpose is related to the collectivity that the Body of Messiah constitutes.
- 58 Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8. Cf. *Learning Messiah*, Chapter 8.
- 59 The prayer of Jesus in John 17 can also be read against this background of the bridal love that God seeks from his people.
- 60 Edith Stein (1891–1942) was murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau on the 9th of August, 1942.
- 61 After experiencing the truth of God's revelation in Jesus (1921), she was baptized and entered into the Roman Catholic Church (1922). She entered the Carmelite order in Cologne (1933) and chose as her monastical name Teresia Benedicta a Cruce (Teresia Blessed by the Cross). Her choice had many reasons but she also linked it herself to the Cross of Christ in relation to the fate of the people of Israel that had begun to manifest itself already. Based on Ilse Kerremans, *Edith Stein, Leven aan Gods hand* (Antwerp: Halewijn, 2014).
- 62 Cf. footnote 4.