

Session 07

Disaster and the New Judaism

Soon after Paul was executed in 66 AD events began to unfold that would spell the destruction in AD70 of Jerusalem and the Temple and bring to an end the religion of Israel as it had been practiced for 1400 years. 62 years later a horrific war would cause the death or expulsion of most of the Jewish population and begin a period of exile that would last for more than 1800 years, a wandering, homeless people who ended each Passover Seder with the words, "Next year in Jerusalem!"

Daniel stated that "The Messiah shall be cut off" and immediately followed this by saying "The people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city ... bring to an end sacrifice and offering", 9:26-27. These statements are connected, c.f. Luke 13:32-35, John 11:48-50.

The Talmud identified four supernatural phenomena/unusual phenomena in the temple around AD 30 that seem to indicate that the temple is malfunctioning or that God's blessing has been withdrawn:

(a) **The "western light" went out on its own in an uncanny manner.** According to the Talmud, this "western light" or "western lamp" (1 Sam 3:3) was the center lamp of the Menorah. The lamp was described as "western" because of its position to the west of the lamp branches on the east side. According to rabbinic tradition, this "western lamp" remained lit long beyond the normally expected time—miraculously indicating God's blessing and/or presence. Accordingly, the regular self-extinguishing of the main lamp in the temple we find described in the Jerusalem Talmud would seem to indicate a departure of God's presence or lack of his blessing.

(b) **A thread which supernaturally changed from a crimson colour to white on the Day of Atonement (as recorded in post-OT Jewish tradition) ceased to do so.** The thread's miraculous change in colour was thought to display symbolically God's fulfillment of his promise in Isa 1:18, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool." The cessation of this miraculous event seems to imply that the rituals on the Day of Atonement were not effectively dealing with people's sins.

(c) **On the Day of Atonement, when lots were cast (one lot for the Lord and one for the scapegoat—see Lev 16:8), the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand.** Over a number of years, this consistently inauspicious result was recognized as a disturbing variance from the normal statistical expectation. Significantly, rabbinic tradition also reports that at an earlier time, the lot for the Lord always came up in the right hand as a sign of God's favour.

(d) **The gates of the temple opened at night on their own in an inexplicable manner.** This unusual pattern seems to demonstrate either a departure of God's presence, an invitation to invaders, or both. The

In Tractate Yoma 6:3 we read:

"Forty years before the destruction of the Temple the western light went out, the crimson thread remained crimson, and the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand. They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open. Ra. Yohanan ben Zakkai said [to the Temple] "O Temple, why do you frighten us? We know that you will end up destroyed. For it has been said, 'Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars!' (Zech 11:1)".

Talmudic tradition clearly presents the event as a portent of coming destruction.

Although no curtain is mentioned here in the Talmud, the tradition of gates being opened apart from any human intervention is possibly conceptually the closest to the supernatural opening of a temple veil.

Paul was martyred in AD 67-68, in the early stages of the rebellion in Jerusalem; it was provoked by a **massacre at the behest of the Roman Procurator, Florus, 66AD**, against a background of seething resentment at oppression. Temple sacrifice on behalf of the Emperor was discontinued, marking **the beginning of the 1st Jewish revolt**. The Roman garrison was slaughtered. There was civil war between the nobility/priests occupying the Temple and the zealots/poor in the west part of the city. There were riots, massacres, and heavy fighting from Syria to N. Africa.

The Syrian governor Cestus Gallus marched to Jerusalem with a legion and attacked Jerusalem at Succot. He withdrew and was ambushed, losing a major part of his men and equipment. This sparked a general rebellion and brief independence in the Land. Vespasian led a new army of three legions, pacified much of the land, and patiently prepared for the conquest of Jerusalem, while there was much internal conflict and killing within the city.

At some point during this interval **the Christians fled from Jerusalem in the light of Jesus' instruction**, Luke 21:20-24.

Eusebius (325) "The whole body, however, of the church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella. Here those that believed in Christ, having removed from Jerusalem, as if holy men had entirely abandoned the royal city itself, and the whole land of Judea; the divine justice, for their crimes against Christ and his apostles finally overtook them, totally destroying the whole generation of these evildoers from the earth.

The besieged city became a place of horror and death. On August 6th AD70 sacrifices ceased. On the 9th day of Av (September) the Temple was destroyed (as in the case of the first Temple 700 years earlier). The whole city fell a month later and all the inhabitants taken captive. **The temple mount was ploughed** "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest", Micah 3:12.

Massada was taken in AD73. The Jewish state, the Temple, the Sanhedrin, the Priesthood/Sadducees - everything ceased to exist. It seemed the end of Jewish history.

Yet **Jesus looked beyond the destruction to the restoration**, after a time of trouble culminating in His return in glory, Luke 21:24-36. Jewish interpreters also believe that the King Messiah will come. Luke 21:32 can be read in the light of Psalm 102: 18, literally "Let this be written for the last generation", c.f. v12 "all generations". It begins with distress and ends in glory.

The psalm is considered Messianic; v24-27 are quoted in Heb 1 because they were identified with the Messiah.

Before the final assault Yochanan ben Zakkai left the city, hidden in a coffin, and met Vespasian who permitted him to go to Yavneh, a small town south of Jaffe.

The sages at Yavneh became the new Sanhedrin and the Patriarch became recognized by Rome. **The canon of Scripture was fixed. Judaism was reconstructed around the study and practice of Torah.** Detailed study and inventive reinterpretations of Scripture resulted in the Jerusalem and then the much larger Babylonian Talmud.

Ra. Yochanan taught that now, in the absence of sacrifices, atonement was possible through "deeds of love". The flow of Jewish history was essentially replaced by "remembrance" while awaiting the coming of the Messiah to restore Israel, e.g. the Passover service reshaped in the absence of the lamb.

Messianic expectation persisted during this period and **a second rebellion broke out in the Diaspora in AD 115**, taking two years to quell, with major loss of life on both sides. **Hadrian** (Aelius Adrianus) decided to use religion to unite his faltering empire and (like Antiochus IV Epiphanes) **in AD 131 banned Jewish practices**, including reading Torah, circumcision and Sabbath, renamed the city "Aelia Capitolina", and **placed a shrine to Jupiter on the temple mount** (The abomination of desolation).

The final Jewish revolt, led by a "messianic figure" Simon Bar Kochbar (Son of Star), was followed by a very bloody war, continuing until AD 135. A legion was destroyed, and **580,000 Jews (a large part of the population, including most of the rabbis) were killed**, and **many others emigrated to Babylonia. The land was devastated and was repopulated by pagans.** It was renamed "Syria Palaestina". **The temple mount again ploughed to mark total and final destruction,**

The study centre moved to Galilee and the work of editing and compiling the detailed body of law and tradition (Mishnah) continued.

Christianity became the religion of the empire in AD 313. Constantius (successor to Constantine) regarded Jews as a "despicable sect". Around **AD 425 the emperor abolished the Patriarchate in Palestine. The centre of Jewish life and study was now Babylonia** where there was a large and thriving community, having lived under the more benign Persian empire. The enormous Babylonian Talmud was completed by AD 500.

During the Sassanid regime **Babylonian Jews were persecuted by Zoroastrians in the late 5th and early 6th centuries. "Christian" Byzantium conquered Palestine and persecuted Jews there.**

Arab Muslim armies defeated the Sassanids in AD 637, Jerusalem in AD 638, and Alexandria in AD 647, thus including the bulk of the Jewish population in the new Muslim empire.

The subsequent story of the Jews is of a people wandering in the lands of the Christians and the Muslims. Different cultural practices and dress codes would develop among the Sephardic Jews of Southern Spain and the Ashkenazi Jews of northern Europe, but they never lost the common bond of Talmud, Torah, and Festivals and the belief that Israel was their true home and that Jerusalem was the place where the God of Abraham had chosen to put His Name and the focal point of their prayers.

Always they were stateless and insecure, at the mercy of the host nations, envied and despised in equal proportions, used and abused as circumstances suggested, convenient explanations for national misfortunes, the butt for humour and religious prejudice, excluded from society and sometimes placed in ghettos, caricatured as the embodiment of evil, and their disproportionate suffering the permanent consequence of their high crime of deicide. **Sometimes they flourished within relatively benign regimes such as Muslim Spain or 19th/early 20th century western Europe** but the illusion of acceptance was always a veneer and the poison of **anti-Semitism lay concealed beneath the surface, ready to burst out afresh when circumstances permitted.**

Anti-Semitism has a long and inglorious history. It arises from a mixture of fear, envy, and loathing in various proportions. At its heart lies the uniqueness and chosenness of Israel and the consequent impossibility of conforming and blending into society. It is part of who they are and not just what they do. Even if they try to do what others do they are still regarded as outsiders.

What are the root causes of Anti-Semitism?

- **They are a chosen people.** Abraham was chosen out from the nations, Gen.12:1-3, Isaiah 51:2; Israel was God's first-born, Exodus 4:22-23, God's special treasure, Exodus 19:5-6, A people dwelling alone, not reckoning itself among the nations, Num. 23:9.
- **They introduced monotheism to a world that prefers alternative gods and philosophies to the One Creator God Who demands total and undivided loyalty and defines human conduct.** Of course many times in its history Israel departed from that and chose the gods of the nations, but God would not allow them to escape from her calling, Ezek. 20:32-33.
- **Jewish people are unusually blessed, talented, and successful**, e.g. Joseph Gen. 39:2-4, Daniel and friends, 1:19-20. **They are prominent in science and technology, music, the arts, and banking. In less than 70 years they have created a modern nation state.** The State of Israel is the 100th smallest country in the world with less than 1/1000th of the world's population, yet her people have accomplished so very much even as she has struggled in war and been forced to spend more money per capita on her own protection than any other county on earth.
 - Israel is the only country in the Middle East that based its principles of government on both democratic liberal values and on the values of the Biblical prophets.
 - Israel is the largest immigrant-absorbing nation on earth.
 - Israel has the world's second highest per capita rate of published books.
 - Israel is the only nation on earth that resurrected an ancient language, Hebrew, as its national language.
 - Israel is the only country in the world that entered the 21st century with a net gain in its number of trees.
 - Israel developed the cell phone, Windows NT and XP operating systems, Pentium MMX Chip technology, the Pentium-4 microprocessor, the Centrino Processor, voice mail technology, and AOL Instant Messenger ICQ.
 - Israel designed the airline industry's most impenetrable flight security system.
 - Israel designed and implemented the Iron Dome Defense system.
 - Israel has the highest ratio of university degrees in the world.
 - Israel produces more scientific papers per capita than any other nation, and one of the highest per capita rates of patents filed.
 - Israel is second in the world in the number of start-up companies behind only the U.S.
 - Israel has the world's largest per capita number of biotech start-ups.
 - Israel has the third largest number of NASDAQ listed companies, behind the U.S. and Canada, and is ranked second for venture capital funds.
 - Israel has the highest average living standard in the Middle East.
 - 24% of Israel's workforce holds university degrees, ranking third in the industrialized world; 12% hold advanced degrees.
 - Israel leads the world in the number of scientists and technicians in the workforce.
 - Israel is a world leader in water renewal, recycling, desalination, and solar heating.
 - Israel invented the drip irrigation system used around the world.

- An Israeli company is developing a toilet that needs no water and generates its own power to turn solid waste into sterile and odorless fertilizer in 30 seconds, thereby affecting 1.1 billion people who do not use a toilet.
- An Israeli scientist has developed a way to preserve 50% of every grain and pulse harvest lost to pests and mold in the developing world.
- Israel won international praise for the speed and expertise with which it responded to a 7.0-magnitude earthquake in Haiti that killed 300,000 by sending a team of 240 Israeli doctors, nurses, rescue and relief workers to set up an advanced field hospital to work in search-and-rescue missions.
- An Israeli company developed a water purification system that delivers safe drinking water from contaminated water, seawater and even urine thereby addressing the tragedy of 1.6 million children under the age of five who die annually from untreated drinking water in developing nations.
- Israeli scientists developed the first fully computerized, no-radiation, diagnostic instrumentation for breast cancer.
- Hadassah medical researchers found the gene that causes liver disease, thus paving the way for new treatments for alcoholism.
- Tel Aviv University Scientists say a nutritional supplement commonly sold in health food stores can delay the advance of degenerative brain disorders such as Parkinson's disease.
- Israel's Given Imaging developed the first ingestible video camera, so small it fits inside a pill that can view the small intestine from the inside to detect for cancer and digestive disorders.
- Israeli researchers developed a device that helps the heart pump blood that is synchronized with a camera that helps doctors diagnose the heart's mechanical operations through a system of sensors.
- An Israeli company developed a computerized system for ensuring proper administration of medications, thus removing human error from medical treatment.

Since the Nobel was first awarded in 1901 approximately 193 of the 855 honourees have been Jewish (22%). Jews make up less than 0.2% of the global population. This year (2014) 6 of 12 laureates were Jewish. Asked why he thought it is that Jews have won so many Nobel Prizes, **Richard Dawkins said** "... I don't know. But I don't think it is a minor thing; **it is colossal** ... Race does not come into it. **It is pure religion and culture.** Something about the cultural tradition of Jews is way, way more sympathetic to science and learning and intellectual pursuits than Islam.."

- **They have a central place in the purposes of God and are, therefore, a target for satan,** Daniel 10:20-21, 12:1.

Examples.

Ishmael, Gen. 21:8-9, Esau, 28:41-42, Potiphar's wife, 39:9, 14-17, Pharaoh, Exodus 1:8-10, Amalek, 17:8-16, 1Sam 15:2, Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 3:14-18, Darius' officials, Dan. 6:11-15, Haman, Esther 3:1-6, Antiochus IV, Daniel 8:21-25, Maccabees, Titus, Hadrian, and many examples in the succeeding 2000 years to the present time.

Manifestations of Anti-Semitism (Treating Jews differently because of who they are as a people)

- Second class citizenship/inferior status in Christian and Muslim lands
- Segregation/employment exclusion/Ghettoes - e.g. Eastern Europe.
- Insult/racial slur/caricatures - "pigs and monkeys"/cartoons/Palestinian school books
- Misrepresentation; biased/distorted reporting/Apartheid State/Nazi
- Defamation - blood libel/plots to control the world
- Falsifying history - no Jewish Temple/Historic Palestinian people/Nation State of Palestine
- Ignoring context/Switching cause and effect - "occupation" and rocket attacks
- Boycotts - academic and economic
- Disproportion/unequal judgement compared to other nations/UN resolutions
- Unreasonable demands that would threaten national security
- Violence - "Moral equivalence"/Incitement/Celebration/ Resurgence in Europe led by Muslim immigrants
- Genocide/Hamas charter
- Anti-Zionism
- Replacement Theology

Israel

Church

Islam



Christian believers suffer in similar ways in the modern world and for similar reasons, whether in "liberal" democracies that increasingly require conformity of belief and acquiescence, totalitarian atheistic states, or majority Muslim countries/areas within secular states and, especially, in strongly Islamic states. Historically this was also the case in situations where institutional Christianity was wedded to political power.

The marriage of religion and politics is a manifestation of the two beasts of Revelation, persecuting those who bear testimony to Jesus and those who keep the commandments of God. Anti-Semitism and persecution of the Church are from the same source.