



MBS027

A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



WHY IS GOD SAVING GENTILES TODAY?



By Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum



ariel.org

WHY IS GOD SAVING GENTILES TODAY?
By Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION - DEUTERONOMY 32:8-9	3
I. TO TAKE OUT FROM AMONG THE GENTILES A PEOPLE FOR HIS NAME -	
ACTS 15:13-18	4
A. The Situation before Acts 2	4
B. The Messianic Mission According to the Old Testament	5
1. The Beneficiaries - Isaiah 42:1 and 6.....	5
2. The Chronological Sequence - Isaiah 49:1-13	6
C. The Calling of the Gentiles - Romans 9:1-24	7
D. Partakers: The Position of the Gentiles.....	7
1. In Relationship to the Middle Wall of Partition	8
2. In Relationship to the Olive Tree.....	9
E. The Responsibility of the Gentiles - Romans 15:25-27	9
F. The Timing of the Calling of the Gentiles - Romans 11:25-27	10
II. TO PROVOKE JEWS TO JEALOUSY - ROMANS 11:11-14.....	10
A. The Etymology	11
B. The Meaning	11
C. The Purpose	12
D. The Gentile Responsibility	12
CONCLUSION	12

© 1983, 2005 Ariel Ministries. All rights reserved.

No part of this manuscript may be reproduced in any form, except in brief quotation in a review or professional work,
without written permission from the publishers. Cover illustration by Olivier Melnick.

Email: Homeoffice@ariel.org • www.ariel.org



*Behold, the days come,
says Jehovah, that I
will make a new
covenant with the house
of Israel, and with the
house of Judah
Jeremiah 31:31*

In recent centuries, the issue has been whether God is saving Jews today, but in first century congregations, the real issue was: Is God saving Gentiles? And if so, why?

INTRODUCTION - DEUTERONOMY 32:8-9

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, When he separated the children of men, He set the bounds of the peoples According to the number of the children of Israel. For Jehovah's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

God has an overall prophetic program and this prophetic program is subdivided into three distinct plans: God has a plan for Israel; He has a plan for the Church; and He has a plan for the Gentile nations. However, all three of God's plans of His overall prophetic program are centered around the Jewish people to the extent that, as Moses writes in these verses, when God providentially laid down what would later become the borders of various nations, this was somehow based upon the number of Jews who would play a role in that nation's history.

In verse 8, Moses calls God *the Most High*. According to Genesis 14:18-20, whenever God is called *the Most High*, it emphasizes Him as *the possessor of heaven and earth*. So, as Possessor of this earth, He can subdivide it as He wills and give whatever portion of the earth to whatever nation or tribe or people He chooses. But when He did so, providentially laying down what eventually became the borders of the United States of America, that was somehow based upon the number of Jews who would play a role in American history.

Verse 9 declares: *For Jehovah's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance*. So if God has a program for Gentile salvation that must also somehow be connected with His program for the Jewish people. There are two reasons for Gentile salvation, and both of them have a

direct connection with God's plan and program for the Jewish people. First, to take out from among the Gentiles a people for His Name, and secondly, to provoke Jews to jealousy.

NOTES

I. TO TAKE OUT FROM AMONG THE GENTILES A PEOPLE FOR HIS NAME - ACTS 15:13-18

For the first seven chapters of the Book of Acts, the gospel stayed within the Jewish world alone, but things began to change with the stoning of Stephen. In chapter 8, the gospel went out to the Samaritans. This created some surprise in the Congregation of Jerusalem, but because there was some Jewish ancestry to the Samaritans, this was eventually acceptable. Then in chapter 9, God saved Paul and called him to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. In chapter 10, He first used Peter to open the door of the Body to the uncircumcised Gentiles. That created the first stir in Jerusalem, so in chapter 11, when Peter explained that he had to be obedient to a vision that he had received, the controversy died down. But in chapters 13-14, as Paul and Barnabas were sent out and began planting churches that were primarily Gentile, and uncircumcised Gentiles at that, this stirred up the contriving all over again.

So in chapter 15, the very first church council met in Jerusalem to discuss the issue concerning Gentile salvation: Are Gentiles saved simply on the basis of grace through faith or must they also be circumcised and keep the Law? After Peter and Paul gave their testimonies, James, the leader of the congregation, stood up to give his final verdict in Acts 15:13-18: *And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Brethren, hearken unto me: Symeon has rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After these things I will return, And I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen; And I will build again the ruins thereof, And I will set it up: That the residue of men may seek after the Lord, And all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, Says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.*

The key phrase is in verse 14: *to take out of them [the Gentiles] a people for his name*, which is the first reason for Gentile salvation.

A. The Situation before Acts 2

From the time the Jewish people began to multiply following Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, there were always two Israels. There was Israel the whole, meaning all Jews, all who were the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But within the larger Israel, there was the smaller Israel that the prophets called the Remnant of Israel. In Galatians 6:16, Paul calls this *the Israel of God*. It was that segment of the Jewish people who believed what God had revealed through Moses and the Prophets. Isaiah 8:14-16 points out that what divided the Remnant from the non Remnant was their attitude toward the Law and the Prophets: the Remnant believed what God had revealed

while the non Remnant rejected what God revealed and pursued idolatry and occultism. Isaiah also predicted that when Immanuel finally comes, He will be the new point of division between the Remnant and the non Remnant: the Remnant will accept Immanuel, but the non Remnant will reject Him.

This program continues with the New Testament, so Paul writes in Romans 11:5-6 that even today *there is a remnant according to the election of grace*. And indeed, what separates the Remnant from the non Remnant today is that the Remnant believes in the Messiahship of Jesus, but the non Remnant rejects Him (Rom. 11:1-14; I Pet. 2:1-10). That program has not changed, but what has been added is that now God has a similar arrangement with the Gentiles. The Remnant is God's people from among Israel who are a people for His Name spiritually, and now God will have a people from the Gentiles to be a people for His Name as well. There will be Jewish people who believe and Gentiles who believe, united into this one Body. But Jewish believers have a dual citizenship in that they are members both of *the Israel of God* and members of the Church as well.

B. The Messianic Mission According to the Old Testament

Had the early Jewish believers understood the messianic mission of the Old Testament a bit better, the fact that God would have a program of Gentile salvation that comes strictly by grace through faith, apart from circumcision, apart from the Law, they would not have been caught by surprise.

Already in Genesis 12:3, when God made His covenant with Abraham He said: *in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed*. This is the first appearance of the Abrahamic Covenant and God made a promise in it that some day the spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant would extend to the Gentiles. The Abrahamic Covenant contained both physical promises and spiritual promises. While the physical promises were limited to the Jewish people only, the spiritual promises were to extend to the Gentiles.

The Prophets declared that the Messiah would be the means by which these spiritual promises would extend to the Gentiles.

1. The Beneficiaries - Isaiah 42:1, 6

Isaiah's favorite title for the Messiah is *the Servant of the Lord* or *the Servant of Jehovah*. He has several "Servant of the Lord" passages throughout his book. One example is in chapter 42:1 and 6.

Verse 1 states: *Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delights: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.*

Verse 6 states: *I Jehovah have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you, and give you for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.*

In verse 1, Isaiah points out that part of the messianic mission included: *to bring forth justice*, justification, to the Gentiles. In verse 6, he declares that the messianic mission was to benefit two different peoples. First, He is to be *a covenant of the people* in that the Messiah will the One to fulfill all of God's covenantal promises to the Jewish people. The word *people* is a singular noun and refers to the Jewish people. Secondly, He is also to be *a light of the Gentiles*. What Isaiah does not state here is the chronological sequence in which this will occur, only that both things will happen.

2. The Chronological Sequence - Isaiah 49:1-13

Verses 1-4 describe the Messiah in the stage of discouragement because of Israel's rejection of His messianic claims. The best place to fit the fulfillment of these verses is to make them a part of His agony of Gethsemane. While the Gospel writers emphasize one facet of His agony, Isaiah reveals another facet: He agonized over Israel's rejection of His messianic claims. From a human perspective, this would imply that His messianic mission ended in failure. According to Luke's account of the agony of Gethsemane in Luke 22:39-46, a message comes to the Messiah from God the Father at that point, by means of an angel.

The message is in verses 5-6: *And now says Jehovah that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, and that Israel be gathered unto him; (for I am honorable in the eyes of Jehovah, and my God is become my strength;) yea, he says, It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*

The message of the angel to the Messiah is: while His goal is to bring about Israel's final restoration, that was not to be the totality of the messianic mission. This alone would have been *too light* or too simple of a mission for the Messiah to be only the Restorer of Israel. This way the Messiah will be God's *salvation unto the end of the earth*. The figurative statement, the end of the earth, refers to the larger Gentile world and is also used in Acts 1:8. God had a wider mission that included for the Messiah to be *a light to the Gentiles*. So in the program of God, the Messiah would come and He would be rejected by His own people, but as a result of that rejection, He would then become *a light to the Gentiles*. That will fulfill the first part of the messianic mission in accordance with Isaiah 42:6.

Eventually, the period of His being a light to the Gentiles would end and the prophecies of verse 8 will proceed: *Thus says Jehovah, In an acceptable time have I answered you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you; and I will preserve you, and give you for a covenant of the people, to raise up the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages.*

At some point, the program of His being *a light to the Gentiles* will come to completion and He will begin to deal with Israel again, until Israel as a nation accepts Him. Then He will be *a covenant of the people*; He

will restore all the people to the Land and He will give all the Land to the people. As to the chronological sequence, He is to be *a light to the Gentiles* first, and then He will be *a covenant of the people*. The chronological sequence given here by Isaiah 49 is the same as Romans 9-11.

Gentile salvation has always been part of the messianic mission of the Old Testament, and if only the Jewish believers had recognized this, they would not have been caught off guard. What the Old Testament said would happen, the New Testament says did happen.

C. The Calling of the Gentiles - Romans 9:1-24

In verses 1-23, Paul affirms that what Isaiah said prophetically, has now been fulfilled. He points out that Israel's rejection of the Messiah did not catch God by surprise; it was part of the divine plan. As verse 6 points out, while the majority of Israel rejects Him, there is still a Remnant of Israel that accepts Him, and they are the true Israel.

But the rejection was very much a part of the divine plan, for in this manner, the salvation message went out to the Gentiles as Paul states in verse 24: *even us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles?*

As Paul develops this, he points out that God is not only the God of the Jews, He is also the God of the Gentiles. As the God of the Jews, He would have a program of Jewish salvation; but by the same token, being the God of the Gentiles, He would also have a program of Gentile salvation. Paul declares that now this program of Gentile salvation has begun in earnest, and indeed, by the time he wrote this epistle, Gentile believers were already outnumbering Jewish believers.

D. Partakers: The Position of the Gentiles

That naturally led to the next question, "Now that God is saving Gentiles in their uncircumcision because they put their faith in the death and resurrection of the Messiah for their sins, what is the position of the Gentiles in connection with the Jewish people, and what is the position of the Gentiles particularly in connection with the Jewish covenants?"

Ever since Augustine, one of the early church fathers, the common teaching concerning the position of the Gentiles has been that, the Church has taken over Israel's covenants. This teaching is stated in two different ways. One way this is presented is that when Israel rejected the Messiah God transferred all of the covenantal promises to the Church, hence a theology of transference. A more common way to express this today is that the Church has replaced Israel in God's covenantal standing, hence a theology of replacement. Therefore, the covenants are being fulfilled in, by, or through the Church, and therefore, there is no special ethnic future for the Jewish people. Even they realize, however, that the Church is not fulfilling these covenantal

promises and prophecies literally, so they claim that these promises and prophecies must be interpreted allegorically. They claim that when the Bible speaks about gathering the Jewish people into the Land, it does not mean a literal restoration of the Jews back into the Land of Israel, but this must be interpreted allegorically of God's gathering His elect into the Church. That is how they interpret many of these “regathering prophecies.” Thus from their perspective, the Church has taken over Israel's covenants.

1. In Relationship to the Middle Wall of Partition

The apostle describes the position of the Gentiles as partakers in relationship to the middle wall of partition in Ephesians 2:11-16: *Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye that were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.*

Paul points out that God made certain covenantal promises to the Jewish people. In verse 12, the word *covenants* is plural because he is dealing with the four unconditional, eternal covenants God has made with the Jewish people: the Abrahamic Covenant, the Land Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant. God's blessings are mediated by these four covenants. He also points out that God made a fifth covenant with the Jewish people, but unlike the other four, the Mosaic Covenant, which contains the Mosaic Law, was conditional and temporary. Among the purposes of the Mosaic Law, the purpose he deals with here was to serve as *the middle wall of partition* to keep Gentiles as Gentiles away from enjoying the spiritual blessings of the Jewish covenants. As long as the Mosaic Law was in force, if a Gentile wished to partake of the covenantal promises and blessings, he would have to undergo conversion to Mosaic Judaism, be circumcised, take upon himself the obligations of the Law, and live like a Jew had to live under the Law. So Gentiles as proselytes to Mosaic Judaism could benefit, but not Gentiles as Gentiles. Among the accomplishments of the death of the Messiah is that this *middle wall of partition...the law of commandments* was broken down. As Paul states it elsewhere, “the Law was rendered inoperative.”

The result of this is spelled out in Ephesians 3:5-6: *which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it has now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*

The key word for the position of the Gentiles is the word *partaker*.

What Paul does not say is that Gentiles have become “takers over” of the promise, as replacement theology teaches, but he does say is that they have become *partakers of the promise*. The word promise is singular since he is emphasizing the key spiritual promise of salvation by grace through faith in the person of the Messiah. The position of the Gentiles, then, is that of partaking of the spiritual blessings of the Jewish covenants. They do not partake of the physical blessings, but they do partake of the spiritual blessings.

2. In Relationship to the Olive Tree

In Romans 11:16-24, Paul gives his famous illustration of the olive tree to teach the same thing that he taught in Ephesians 2-3. The olive tree does not represent Israel; Israel is represented by the natural branches. Israel is the owner of the olive tree and for that reason cannot be the tree itself, since the owner and that which is owned are distinguished. The olive tree does not represent the Church or the Gentiles; the Gentiles are represented by the wild olive branches. The olive tree represents the place of spiritual blessings, rooted in the Patriarchs and the Abrahamic Covenant.

There are two types of branches partaking of the blessings of the tree according to verse 17: *But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them, and did become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree.*

Once again, Paul used the *term* partaker to show how the Gentiles relate to the spiritual blessings of the Jewish Covenants: Jewish believers and Gentile believers are now partaking *of the fatness*, the sap, or the blessings *of the olive tree*.

Again, the olive tree is not Israel, but Israel is the owner of the tree according to verse 24: *For if you were cut out of that which is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree.*

By saying *their own olive tree*, Paul shows that the tree itself is not Israel, but Israel is the owner of the tree. The position of the Gentiles is that of partaking of the Jewish spiritual blessings of the Jewish covenants.

E. The Responsibility of the Gentiles - Romans 15:25-27

but now, I say, I go unto Jerusalem, ministering unto the saints. For it has been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. Yea, it has been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister unto them in carnal things.

This is the third time Paul used the term *partaker*, but now he makes a clear distinction between the spiritual and the physical blessings. Now Gentile believers *have been made partakers of their [Jewish] spiritual things*. As soon as a Gentile becomes a believer, he falls into debt. Fortunately, Paul also spells out how they can pay off this debt: by sharing with Jewish ministries materially.

The Gentile responsibility here applies both individually and corporately. Corporately, when churches determine their missions giving program as they grow, they should begin with a Jewish ministry to support. Individually, as Gentiles begin to map out their missions giving, they should begin with a Jewish ministry to support. Sharing with Jewish ministries materially is the way Gentile believers can pay off their debts. Which ministry one chooses to support is a private matter between the giver and the Lord, but the obligation to support a Jewish ministry is clearly taught here: Gentiles have become partakers of Jewish spiritual blessings, and therefore have the responsibility to share with Jewish ministries materially.

F. The Timing of the Calling of the Gentiles - Romans 11:25-27

As already indicated in Isaiah 49, after the Messiah is the light to the Gentiles for a while, that program will come to an end and then God will turn to the Jewish people and bring them all to saving faith. Paul picks up that same theme in Romans 11:25-26: *For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part has befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved.*

Paul does not want Gentile believers to be *ignorant* about two things. First, the *hardening* of Israel is partial because there are still Jewish people coming to believe in the Messiahship of Jesus. Secondly, this *hardening* of Israel is temporary, *until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*. The Greek word for *fulness* means a “set number.” God has a set number of Gentiles He intends to bring into the Body. He has not revealed what that set number is, therefore, the Church is to continue to witness and to share until that set number is reached. At that point, the program ends and that is essentially when the Rapture will occur. At that point, God will begin to deal with Israel again until *all Israel shall be saved*. Isaiah 49 has already prophesied that at that time He will restore all the people to the Land and He will restore the whole Land to the people.

This does not mean that all Jews of all time will be saved, but all Jews of a specific period of time, which is following *the fullness of the Gentiles*. According to Zechariah 13:5-8, two thirds of the Jewish population will die in the Tribulation, and one third will survive. The entire one third that survives will all come to saving faith; this is the all Israel that shall be saved. So, the first reason for Gentile salvation, to call out from among the Gentiles a people for His Name, will ultimately lead to Israel's national salvation once the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

II. TO PROVOKE JEWS TO JEALOUSY - ROMANS 11:11-14

I say then, Did they stumble that they might fall? God forbid: but by their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. Now if their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? But I speak to you that are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an

apostle of Gentiles, I glorify my ministry; if by any means I may provoke to jealousy them that are my flesh, and may save some of them.

The second reason for Gentile salvation is to provoke Jews to jealousy. Paul begins with the question in verse 11: *Did they stumble that they might fall?* The Greek word for *fall* means “to fall irrevocably,” so as never to be able to rise again. Earlier, in Romans 9:30-33, Paul said that Israel did stumble. Now the question is, “Did they stumble for the purpose of falling irrevocably?” The answer comes quickly: *God forbid*. In the Greek, this is the strongest way of saying “No.” It is the strongest Greek negation. Literally, it means “May it never be!” Rather, by means of Israel's stumbling, *salvation is come unto the Gentiles*, but the purpose of Gentile salvation here is to provoke the Jews to jealousy.

A. The Etymology

The whole phrase “to provoke to jealousy” comprises only one Greek word, *parazeilao*, which is a combination of two Greek words. The first part of the word is *para*, which means, “to come alongside of.” The second part of the word is *zeilos*, the source of the English word “zeal.” The root meaning of *zeilos* is “to flame,” “to cause to burn,” “to seethe,” “to make red hot.” From the root meaning, there are three derived meanings: “to be zealous,” “to be envious,” or as it is used here, “to be jealous.”

B. The Meaning

When these two words are put together, it teaches that a Gentile believer must come alongside, *para*, a Jewish unbeliever and live such a life and be such a consistent verbal witness, that eventually the Jewish person begins to burn and to seethe with jealousy, *zeilos*, until he finally says, “What is this Gentile doing with my Messiah?” and becomes a believer himself. It is unfortunate that the Church has done more to provoke the Jews to anger than *to jealousy*. While the Church has failed to fulfill this calling, individual Gentiles have not failed. More than one survey has been taken among Jewish believers, particularly in North America. When the question is asked, “Were you led to the Lord by a Jewish or Gentile believer?” not just a small majority, but the vast majority said they were led to the Lord by a Gentile believer who provoked them to jealousy.

It must be remembered that no one is saved by how someone else lives. Often people try to be “spiritual” about their disobedience regarding their witnessing to Jews by claiming, “Well, I will just live a Christian life in front of them and eventually they will ask me what makes me different and I can tell them.” But their Jewish neighbor never gets around to asking them why they are different. As Paul said earlier in Romans 10:17: *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (KJV). While how one lives must conform to what he believes and preaches and teaches, eventually, there must be a presentation of the gospel so that the Jewish person will know exactly what he must believe to receive salvation.

Because the second reason for Gentile salvation is to provoke Jews to jealousy, in verses 13-14 Paul declares that he is delighted, he glories over the fact that God called him to Gentile evangelism. Why is he so happy that God called him to do Gentile evangelism? Is it because it is so much easier? It may be easier, but that is not the reason he gives. Paul was trained to be a Jewish rabbi, one who used rabbinic logic, and here is one example. Paul is delighted that God called him to do Gentile evangelism because the more Gentiles he leads to the Lord, there will be that many more Gentiles to provoke Jews to jealousy, and therefore, there will be that many more Jews who will also come to faith. That is good Jewish logic.

C. The Purpose

In verses 1-10, Paul made the claim that even today there are Jewish believers coming to faith. Verse 5 states: *Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*

But now, *at this present time*, the point of verses 11-14 is the primary way that God will bring Jewish people to believe in the Messiah: by being provoked to jealousy by Gentile believers who witness and live their lives in conformity with that witness.

D. The Gentile Responsibility

The Gentile responsibility is to provoke Jews to jealousy, both by how they live and the verbal witness of the gospel, and not to provoke the Jews to anger.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with Deuteronomy 32:8-9, both reasons for Gentile salvation are connected with God's plan and program for the Jewish people. The first reason is to take out from among the Gentiles a people for His Name, which will ultimately lead to Israel's national salvation when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. The second reason for Gentile salvation is to provoke Jews to jealousy, which will lead to the present day Remnant's salvation, as Jewish people become believers and become members of *the Israel of God* today.☆

IF YOU ENJOYED THIS BIBLE STUDY, DR. FRUCHTENBAUM RECOMMENDS:

MBS002, 003, 005, 006, 007, 015, 018, 026, 040, 062, 080, 087, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 122, 134, 155, 157, 158, 176, 177, 178 and 179

