

THE BOOK OF ROMANS Lesson 22, Chapters 9 and 10

Last week we concluded by reading Hosea chapter 2, which is the proof text that Paul used in Romans 9:25 and 26 to help to explain how it is that on the one hand Israel is (and remains) God's elect, and yet on the other hand God's plan was always to show mercy to the gentiles and offer them the same redemption He offered Israel. Yet as we read Hosea 2 it is clear that the chapter was explicitly referring to Israel and Judah (together forming the whole House of Israel) and not gentiles. It was about Israel becoming unfaithful to her spiritual husband, Yehoveh, and as a result Yehoveh removing Israel from His presence by means of exile; even going so far as to label Israel **lo-ammi** meaning "not My people". There was also a second label that the Lord gave to faithless Israel and it was **lo-ruchamah** meaning no pity. However God said a time would come when the people of Israel would recognize their unfaithfulness and sincerely repent. God would in turn show pity to Israel and shower them with His mercy. From being a people who, because of their rebellion, God viewed as "not My people" God would take them back and they would again be His set-apart and favored people. So the question for us is: what right does Paul have to apply these Hosea passages to gentiles when clearly this is all about Israel?

In order to answer that important question we need to take a little detour. In modern Christian Bible study there are several approved ways to approach studying, interpreting and applying Holy Scripture; this is known among academics and Church government as hermeneutics. I won't go into the several ways to interpret and apply God's Word except to say that allegory is one of the approved hermeneutical methods. Allegory is, in modern Church settings, hands down the most widely employed method of Bible interpretation and study because in the hands of a trained or naturally skilled orator it can be used to lead his or her audience to wherever the orator wants to take them. Allegorical interpretation and presentation means that a story is told about some Bible passages that expresses a hidden or underlying meaning of those passages, but which also doesn't reflect the plain meaning of those same words. There is nothing wrong with allegory in principle; the problem comes when Scripture is taken completely out of context and/or the plain meaning of the passage is said to have been replaced or overridden by the teacher's take on an underlying, hidden meaning. That, for instance, is how Christianity is able to interpret many direct mentions of Israel in the Bible as actually meaning "the Church".

Jews, too, employ hermeneutics when studying the Bible and so it is nothing new; Christians didn't invent it. When Paul went to the Academy of Gamaliel for his religious training he would have been taught in depth what I'm about to teach you in brief. Jewish Bible interpreters have numerous well-thought-out and long established ways to dissect Bible passages in order to extract meaning. I'm going to give you the 4 best known ways, but be aware that there are a number of other Jewish study and interpretation principles that I won't be sharing with you today. These 4 methods of study and interpretation are known as **Peshat, Remez, Derash,** and **Sod.** **Peshat** means to interpret and teach in the plainest most straightforward sense of the Scripture text as taken within its context. The passage says what it means and means what it says. **Remez** means that the Scriptures hint at something more, something deeper than the

plainest sense of the words seem to mean. It goes beyond the elementary level to the philosophical level. Thus **Remez** most closely resembles the allegorical style of preaching seen in modern Western churches (although it is not precisely the same thing and I'll show you the difference shortly). **Derash** is more like a discussion or exposition of the pertinent Bible passages that often brings in various external sources like Rabbinical rulings, historical records, long held customs and debate. It more closely resembles what we might call exegetical Bible study, which is what we do here at Seed of Abraham. We are more familiar with this form of Bible interpretation when it is called Midrash. And finally there is **Sod**; **Sod** means secret. **Sod** is the preferred way of **Kabbalah** (Jewish mysticism) with its numerology and multi-level spiritual planes. Paul would have been familiar with all of these methods and in his letters he uses different methods at various times in his interpretations of Bible passages.

My point is this: Paul's method of interpretation of Hosea chapter 2, making what in the plain sense is entirely about Israel also apply to gentiles, is easily identifiable as **Remez** (that is, the Scripture passage hints at something deeper). However much of what we have been reading in the last few chapters of the Book of Romans has been Paul interpreting and teaching in the **Derash** method of study. Recall how I've shown you that Paul's straw man, and Paul's way of having his straw man state a theological principle (usually a Jewish Tradition) and then Paul refuting it using standard Rabbinical terms like "Heaven Forbid" or "may it never be", is a well-established method used by Rabbis and is comparable to what we find in the Jewish Talmud. But most commonly in Romans Paul seems to use the **Peshat** method of Bible interpretation (the plain sense meaning) when he quotes and then comments on OT Scripture.

Here's the thing to understand: when reading any of Paul's letters, and especially in Romans, he tends to quote Old Testament Bible passages and then interpret them according to one or the other of the 4 interpretation methods I've just told you about. That is, Paul is all about demonstrating that everything to do with redemption, including the nature and purpose of Messiah, comes from the Old Testament because that is what he had (the OT WAS the Bible for Paul; no NT existed). He is using the Torah and the Prophets as his primary reference sources to prove the validity of Yeshua of Nazareth as the God-sent Messiah, and to explain that now that He has come what it means. But an even bigger challenge for Paul is to prove that gentiles are included in this redemption, and that is how God had always intended it.

One of the several reasons that Paul can be so confusing to Christians (and especially to gentile Christian scholars) is that they are either unaware of, or unfamiliar with, the various Jewish Bible interpretation methods and principles in vogue in Paul's day. One time Paul is interpreting an OT passage in its plainest sense; the next time he is interpreting it more philosophically (even allegorically) and another time he is using other sources of evidence than the Bible (such as Jewish Tradition, **Halakhah**) and rolling it all together to make and prove his point. Most Jews in his time perfectly well knew the differences and could better understand his intent (although due to Paul's intellectual level it was often very complex and challenging). But gentiles were nearly hopelessly lost and overwhelmed and depended on their Jewish friends to help them with it. We do NOT see this same writing style or biblical interpretation with any other New Testament writer because Paul was the only classically trained Jewish Theologian among the several New Testament Writers; and he was formally trained in the ways of the Pharisees (the Rabbis) at an elite school. Peter was just a common fisherman. Luke was

intelligent and educated, but it was as a Physician and writer; not as a Theologian. James, like his brother Yeshua, was a country boy and a blue collar craftsman (a carpenter's son). John was the son of a family of fishermen and in time he became more of a Jewish holy man (of which there were many in his day).

So if our intent is to actually understand Paul (and not just try to prove a doctrine we believe in) we have to begin by understanding how to READ Paul. These various methods of Bible interpretation that Paul used were like tools in his tool box. He had a wrench, pliers, a screwdriver, a hammer, a paint brush and a few more tools at his disposal. He would choose the right tool at the right moment to help explain his theology. He switched interpretation tools rather naturally just as a skilled craftsman would; it was second nature to him due to his extensive religious training. As Bible students we need to be able to recognize and identify which of the several different Bible interpretation methods Paul is using at any particular moment in his letters because he bases his entire understanding of Christ upon those Old Testament Scriptures. Why is that? Because the Gospel is, itself, an Old Testament Gospel. There is no such thing as a New Testament Gospel; that designation is the invention of a gentile Church system that is partly anti-Semitic and partly ignorant of the New Testament culture, which was 100% Jewish.

So; understanding, now, that in Romans chapter 9 verses 25 & 26 Paul is using the **Remez** Bible interpretation method to interpret Hosea chapter 2, let's continue with Romans 9:27 and see how he interprets yet another Old Testament Scripture passage; this one is taken from the Prophet Isaiah.

RE-READ ROMANS 9:27 – end

Verses 27 and 28 are a passage taken from Isaiah chapter 10, and verse 29 is a passage taken from Isaiah chapter 1. Because I'm spending some time today showing you the importance of learning some techniques about how to read Paul, and also how to identify which of the 4 basic methods of Scripture interpretation Paul has chosen to use, we'll take the time to read more of these chapters from which these short OT Scripture passages were taken. Remember: one of the principles of Bible interpretation and communication as used by Jewish teachers, Rabbis and scholars was that when a person was debating or instructing on a subject and used a Scripture passage as his proof text, he would only use a brief portion of the Scripture passage and expect the reader to know, or to find out, what the rest of the passage said because all of it applied. The entire passage was the intended context; not merely the abbreviated portion that was written for reference. However know that the abbreviated passage we see in Paul's letter was from Isaiah 10:22 & 23. So let's look at Isaiah chapter 10. Open your Bibles.

READ ISAIAH 10:1 – 25

Once again, as with Hosea chapter 2, this entire Scripture passage in Isaiah is about Israel. The only involvement of gentiles has to do with Assyria, which God is using to bring His wrath upon Israel for their rebellion against Him. Rabbi Shulam makes a great point about this section of Romans chapter 9: it is that when we back away and look at it from the mid-

distance, we see that in Romans 9:14 -23 Paul is making it clear that neither God's election of Israel (or of anyone for that matter) nor His rejection of Israel (or of anyone for that matter) is dependent upon the human will or human activity, but rather it is always dependent upon God's mercy. But then in verse 24, we see that because of the way that God elects those to His Kingdom (that is, God has full liberty to elect whomever He chooses according to whatever criteria He chooses) that it is not only Jews but also gentiles who can be elected. Thus, Paul is showing through OT Scripture that the elect are now composed of certain gentiles and a "remnant" of Jews. The bottom line is an unexpected one: Israel was elected NOT for the purpose of excluding all other people (gentiles) from election, but rather they were elected to facilitate the inclusion of all the peoples of the world in conjunction with God's plan of redemption for the entire earth.

This reality, however, causes Paul another difficulty; he has to tell his readers and listeners that while all that he just said is true (that only some of Israel, a remnant, will be saved at this time), this does not change God's plan for the final and complete salvation of **all** of Israel at a later time. This Paul deals with starting in Romans Chapter 10, but mainly deals with it in Chapter 11.

But back in Romans 9:27 &28, which refers to Isaiah 10, we see that the "remnant" of Jews that Paul is saying will be saved as a result of trust in Messiah, he is equating with the remnant of Israel that will return to the Holy Land after the Assyrian exile. So once again Paul is interpreting these Old Testament Scriptures NOT in the plain sense (**Peshat**) but rather using the **Remez** interpretation method. He sees the remnant of Israel in Isaiah 10 that was saved by God's mercy from death and destruction at the hands of the Assyrians, as a hint at an even deeper level that is referring to the remnant of Israel that will be saved from death and destruction at God's own hand (God's wrath) at a later time, and has to do with their rejection of their Messiah.

Now is when I want to point out the difference between usual Christian allegorical preaching and the Jewish Bible interpretation method of **Remez**, which on the surface look more similar than different. The difference is this: in **Remez** both the plain sense of the text (the **Peshat**) just as it is written AND the deeper meaning (the **Remez**) are assumed and retained. Digging beneath the surface of the text does not eliminate the surface meaning. It is not an issue of one or the other. Often, however, when a Christian teacher or Pastor allegorizes a Bible Passage it is meant to overturn or replace the plain sense as it was originally written. So, for instance, since the Church allegorizes the blessings given to Israel as now belonging to the Church, then every positive mention of Israel in the Bible is now said to actually mean "Church". Thus Israel no longer means Israel; Israel is eliminated and replaced by the Church. But for Paul, it can be, and should be, seen as both. In the case of Israel it is meant in two different ways, on two different levels, both valid, both continuing to exist. Thus it is with Paul's point concerning a remnant of Israel being saved. From the plain sense of the words of Isaiah 10, only a remnant of Israel will be saved from the destruction of the Assyrian exile. But ALSO, from the **Remez** sense, only a remnant of Israel will be saved from another and different destruction for not accepting God's Messiah.

The common point between the two events, then, is this: both the destruction of Israel at the

hand of Assyria (a past event in Israel's history) and the destruction of Israel at the hand of God (a future event) are due to God's wrath. Assyria was merely the instrument of God's wrath on Israel. Further, the reason that a remnant will survive is NOT because the remnant of Israel is somehow better or more moral nor has more merit than those who were destroyed. Rather in both the case of the Assyrian remnant and the case of the later remnant that will be saved by trust in Christ, it is as a result of God's mercy that they survived.

Paul in Romans 9:29 backs up his use of Isaiah 10 to prove his point by referring to Isaiah 1. But before he does that there is an interesting little sentence there at verse 28 that we mustn't overlook. Still part of Isaiah 10, this verse says (in paraphrase) that this destruction of Israel by God's wrath and allowing only a remnant to survive, is not only certain but it will be without delay. The reason Paul included this verse is because he truly felt that God's wrath, the destruction of Israel, the creation of the remnant of Israel and the return of Yeshua were very, very near; imminent. At any moment Paul expected this to happen. This belief heavily influenced his thinking and his message in all of his letters. No doubt Paul died a bit surprised that Christ had not returned yet; and if we could speak to him right now, he'd probably tell us that he's stupefied that 2000 years later Christ still has not returned.

Let's expand on Isaiah 1, the proof text Paul uses in verse 29 to back up what he has just explained.

READ ISAIAH 1:1 – 14

The context of this passage is Israel's rebellion and God's disgust with them. God is intent to destroy most of unfaithful Israel leaving only a remnant to survive. Part of the reason for His disgust with Israel is that they have polluted His God-ordained Feast Days and Sabbaths with their own way of doing things (they have involved paganism in their traditions) and so God will not accept their burnt offerings.

But notice that there is a difference between what Paul has quoted in Romans 9:29 (as representative of Isaiah 1:9) versus what Isaiah 1:9 actually says. In Romans 9:29 Paul speaks of a seed that God allowed to survive, while the actual verse he is supposedly quoting (Isaiah 1:9) says that it will be a "remnant" that God will allow to survive (the word "seed" doesn't actually appear in Isaiah 1). So Paul is switching up on us; he now is using the **Derash** Bible method for interpreting Isaiah 1:9 and not the **Remez** that he's been using the last few verses. **Derash** makes Paul free to substitute a word to make his point. He substitutes "seed" for "remnant" because those Israelites who survive God's wrath (the remnant) will indeed be "seed" (as in seed of Abraham). Paul, earlier in Romans chapter 4, established the **Halakhic** principle (a Tradition or a religious ruling, if you would) that all real (or "true") Israelites are seed of Abraham. And he defines seed of Abraham as those who trust God and so trust in Messiah Yeshua. Thus the remnant of Israel plus some number of gentiles will form God's elect and all of God's elect are seed of Abraham. The identifiable characteristic that makes the remnant the remnant, and that separates some gentiles from all other gentiles, is their common trust in Yeshua as Messiah, and nothing else.

Verse 30 is Paul anticipating an objection to his contention that God's elect will henceforth

include only some Jews (but not all Jews). Even more, the elect will include some gentiles. Remember: while Christianity rightly sees salvation as an individual by individual issue, Judaism in Paul's day (and today) sees salvation as a collective national issue. All the Jewish people or none of the Jewish people. And what sticks in the craw of the Jewish people in general is that while for millennia they have been striving, as individuals and as a nation, to obtain righteousness, the gentiles have done no such thing; they are new to the party. So even though the gentiles had put forth no effort whatsoever to attain righteousness, God in His mercy gave it to them anyway! And it wasn't because gentiles tried to keep The Law of Moses that they obtained this righteousness; it was ONLY because of God's mercy upon them based upon these gentiles' trust in Yeshua.

On the other hand, says verse 31, the Jews kept pursuing The Law that offers righteousness, but they never reached what The Law offers. If we stopped reading right here, we'd assume that Paul is speaking of a works-righteousness way to salvation that the Jews had open to them (or at the least, they tried for). In other words it sort of sounds as though keeping The Law of Moses indeed would have given righteousness to those Jews who properly did the Law. But that isn't what it is saying. Rather, says Paul, the issue is that while pursuing The Law is good, it must be done based on trusting rather than on one's own merit from performing The Law flawlessly. I think David Stern's CJB captures the essence of what Paul is saying perfectly: ^{CJB} **Romans 9:32** *Why? Because they did not pursue righteousness as being grounded in trusting but as if it were grounded in doing legalistic works. They stumbled over the stone that makes people stumble.*

It is rather interesting that years later Isaiah 28:16, which is what Paul is quoting as verse 33 in Romans 9, came to be understood among the Rabbis as a messianic prophecy. And indeed it is because this stone Israel stumbled over is identified as Immanuel, God is With Us, that we can believe that the stone is Yeshua.

Matthew 1:18-23 CJB

¹⁸ *Here is how the birth of Yeshua the Messiah took place. When his mother Miryam was engaged to Yosef, before they were married, she was found to be pregnant from the Ruach HaKodesh.* ¹⁹ *Her husband-to-be, Yosef, was a man who did what was right; so he made plans to break the engagement quietly, rather than put her to public shame.*

²⁰ *But while he was thinking about this, an angel of ADONAI appeared to him in a dream and said, "Yosef, son of David, do not be afraid to take Miryam home with you as your wife; for what has been conceived in her is from the Ruach HaKodesh.*

²¹ *She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Yeshua, [which means 'ADONAI saves,'] because he will save his people from their sins."* ²² *All this happened in order to fulfill what ADONAI had said through the prophet,* ²³ *"The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call him 'Immanu El.'" (The name means, "God is with us.")*

Let's move on to Romans chapter 10.

READ ROMANS CHAPTER 10:1 - 4

The opening of chapter 10 not only expresses the reason for Paul giving up every desirable thing in life in order to travel and put himself in danger, and to live a life of poverty and uncertainty when he didn't have to, but also explains why Israel has put itself in danger when they didn't have to. Paul is a man of action; he believes so strongly in the power of the Gospel and that Yeshua is the righteousness that the Gospel points to, that little else in life matters to him but that his brethren of Israel would be accept that message and be delivered from the curse of The Law, which is eternal death.

He notes why Israel has put itself in such danger and it is NOT because they didn't care to know God. In fact he personally testifies to Israel's zeal for Yehoveh. This zeal for God is not merely Paul's personal opinion; the leader of the Messianic Movement, James, the brother of Yeshua, testifies to it as well.

Acts 21:18-20 CJB

¹⁸ The next day Sha'ul and the rest of us went in to Ya'akov, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ After greeting them, Sha'ul described in detail each of the things God had done among the Gentiles through his efforts. ²⁰ On hearing it, they praised God; but they also said to him, "You see, brother, how many tens of thousands of believers there are among the Judeans, and they are all zealots for the Torah.

So Israel falling short of what is required of God for righteousness is not because of lack of effort or sincerity on their part. In some sense Paul shouldn't even have had to say such a thing because it is self-evident. If Israel was admittedly so zealous for God, and zealousness brought righteousness, then why was a Messiah necessary at all? If being fervent Believers in the God of Israel was the requirement for salvation, then why would any typical Jew who observed Sabbath, endured travel to the Temple from far away for Passover, circumcised their sons, prayed 3 times per day, brought their firstfruits to the Priests and sacrificed at the Altar need a Savior? Paul answers that question in verse 2. He says that all this zeal of his brethren is not based on correct understanding. Zeal and devotion and commitment only have value if they are connected with the correct goal. Please note that nowhere here or anywhere else in Romans or any of Paul's letters does Paul ever imply that doing The Law of Moses is wrong or a misdirected zeal. Rather, as Paul continues in verse 2, the problem is that the people of Israel are unaware of God's way of making people righteous and instead they throw all their effort into attaining righteousness in their own way. What is Paul meaning by "doing it their own way"? By doing the Law? Not exactly.

Let's back up a second to review the matter of Judaism in Jewish society in this era. Jewish Tradition, ***Halakhah***, was the driver of Jewish Society. For the religious leadership that operated the synagogues and that the Jewish people regularly interacted with, ***Halakhah*** was considered as the proper interpretation of The Law of Moses and thus reflected proper behavior for Jews. It is the equivalent of Christian denominational doctrines. However in reality

any actual legitimate connection between The Law of Moses and Jewish Tradition was a weak one. It was so weak that Yeshua on more than one occasion reprimanded the synagogue leadership, the Pharisees, for their **Halakhah** that had gone far afield from both the letter and the spirit of the Law of Moses. It was **Halakhah** that Jews followed in their quest for righteousness.

Matthew 15:1-9 CJB

^{CJB} **Matthew 15:1** Then some P'rushim and Torah-teachers from Yerushalayim came to Yeshua and asked him, ² "Why is it that your talmidim break the Tradition of the Elders? They don't do n'tilat-yadayim before they eat!" ³ He answered, "Indeed, why do you break the command of God by your tradition? ⁴ For God said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.'

⁵ But you say, 'If anyone says to his father or mother, "I have promised to give to God what I might have used to help you," ⁶ then he is rid of his duty to honor his father or mother.' Thus by your tradition you make null and void the word of God! ⁷ You hypocrites! Yesha'yahu was right when he prophesied about you, ⁸ 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from me.'

⁹ Their worship of me is useless, because they teach man-made rules as if they were doctrines."

Paul says that the proper pursuit of righteousness is contained in the Torah (The Law), but righteousness is not the Torah itself. He puts it this way in Romans 10:4: ^{CJB} **Romans 10:4** **For the goal at which the Torah aims is the Messiah, who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts.** This English translation of the Greek captures the truest essence of Paul's statement. However Believers are more used to seeing it in this form: ^{KJV} **Romans 10:4** **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.**

As I've pointed out on numerous occasions, the gold standard among Christian academics for commentary on the Book of Romans is the one created by C.E.B. Cranfield. However his (and the fine works of other Christian scholars) tend to go unheard by Church governments especially when it comes to issues about the Law of Moses. Here is Cranfield's commentary on the meaning of the phrase "Christ is the end of the Law" in this verse:

"The (Early) Church Fathers seem generally to have tended towards (it meaning) a combination of fulfillment and goal. Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and Bengel all understood the verse as expressing a positive relationship between Christ and The Law.....So we conclude that the Greek noun (telos) should be understood in the sense (of) Christ is the end of the law in the sense that He is its goal, aim, intention, real meaning and substance; apart from Him it cannot be properly understood at all."

This is the sense that I know to be the truth, and that Seed of Abraham stands by, because no other sense of it is warranted grammatically or is intellectually honest. Nor does any other sense of "Christ is the end of the law" match with Christ's own words and admonitions as

concerns the Law of Moses.

In modern English especially, the word “end” almost always means to terminate or abolish. But “end” has historically also meant something else; goal. We still memorialize this sense of the word “end” in a well worn expression in the Western Word: The end justifies the means. “End” certainly does not mean to abolish or terminate. End means goal. The purpose. The aim. And this is precisely the sense that is meant in Romans 10:4.

We'll continue with Romans 10 next time we meet.