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ISRAELITE INTERACTIONS WITH GENTILES IN THE
OLD TESTAMENT AND THE IMPLICATIONS
REGARDING MISSIONS

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ISRAELITE INTERACTIONS WITH GENTILES IN THE
OLD TESTAMENT AND THE IMPLICATIONS
REGARDING MISSIONS

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To Charles and Janie Eavenson,
my beloved parents,
and to
Chuck Eavenson and Christie Krantz,
my cherished siblings

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BT</i>	<i>The Babylonian Talmud</i> (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005)
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>CC</i>	<i>Calvin's Commentaries</i> (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996)
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Conservative Judaism</i>
<i>CTQ</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>FF</i>	<i>Face to Face</i>
<i>IBMR</i>	<i>International Bulletin of Missionary Research</i>
<i>JT</i>	<i>The Talmud of the Land of Israel</i> (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998)
<i>LOJ</i>	<i>The Legends of the Jews</i> (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909-38)
<i>LCC</i>	Library of Christian Classics (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006)
<i>LW</i>	<i>Luther's Works</i> (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959-1965)
<i>Mek. Ish.</i>	<i>Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael</i> (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1933-35)
<i>Mek. Shm.</i>	<i>Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon Bar Yoḥai</i> (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2006)
<i>MR</i>	<i>Midrash Rabbah</i> (London: Soncino Press, 1951)
<i>MTT</i>	<i>The Minor Tractates of the Talmud</i> (London: Soncino Press, 1965)
<i>Mish</i>	<i>Mishnah</i> (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988)
<i>Mis</i>	<i>Missiology</i>

<i>OB</i>	<i>Occasional Bulletin</i>
<i>TOTP</i>	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1985)
<i>PTR</i>	<i>Princeton Theological Review</i>
<i>RRev</i>	<i>Reformed Review</i>
<i>The</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> (Chicago: Word Press, 1980)
<i>Works</i>	<i>Works of Josephus</i> (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987)
<i>YT</i>	<i>The Jerusalem Talmud</i> (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000-10)

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PREFACE

Although many have encouraged me during my time at Southern, I am especially grateful to my committee. Dr. Fuller, my supervising professor, granted much grace along the way, and each time I spoke with him, he provided encouragement. Dr. Martin stirred my initial interest in investigating missional concepts in the Old Testament and provided much valued critical feedback from the outset. Similarly, Dr. Garrett's forthrightness along the way challenged me and helped to improve the final work.

From the beginning through the end, my friends and co-workers at Campus Crusade for Christ supported and prayed for me. Only through the understanding and flexibility of my leaders at CCC, Jim Bengtson and Pam Jones, was I able to continue to work for the ministry I love as I followed this new calling. Thanks to all those from Campus Crusade who faithfully prayed for me.

In addition to the prayer support from my friends at Campus Crusade, while a student in Louisville, I was also blessed by my friends at my church home, Beechwood Baptist. Through flood, Hurricane Ike, ice storm, and the everyday, their encouragement and constant care helped me to be faithful to my call, and I am deeply grateful. I am especially thankful to Pastor Robert Blackburn and the Friendship class, who allowed me to serve in a variety of ways and who never ceased to encourage me along the way.

Words cannot fully express the gratitude I have for my parents, my brother, and my sister. My parents, Charles and Janie, helped by example to instill a love of God's word in my heart, and often I think back on the days when we read the Bible together as a family, such a treasured memory. Their emotional support and prayers helped me to follow God's leading even when I did not know the ultimate destination. In addition, the encouragement from my siblings, Chuck and Christie, helped to brighten my way.

Continually my family inspired me to persevere in following the path the Lord showed me because of their faithful commitment to serve our Savior.

Finally, to my Lord and Savior, I owe everything. His abundant grace and tender mercy never cease to amaze me. May everything bring glory to His Name; all praise to the LORD God Most High.

Nancy J. Eavenson

Louisville, Kentucky

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Although the concept of deliberate mission in the Old Testament is still in dispute, various scholars have contended that God was on mission to reconcile non-Israelites to Himself and certain people of Israel understood the calling to participate in that mission. As one reads the accounts in the Old Testament, it seems that sometimes the actions of individual Israelites helped to fulfill this mission while at other times their actions seemed to undermine God's purpose. Some would argue that the impact of the Old Testament teaching on interactions with Gentiles was manifested missionally with the result that, when Israelites followed principles outlined by their calling and how they were to behave with non-Israelites, Gentiles came to a potentially saving knowledge of God. By the intertestamental period, it would appear some Jews understood certain teachings in the Hebrew Scriptures in a missional way, which led to the openness to and practice of proselytism.

Thesis

This dissertation uses biblical and extra-biblical evidence to show that the Old Testament provides a witness, understood by early Jews and instructive for Christians today, of God's missional intention to use Israel's interactions with Gentiles to bring people to acknowledge Himself as God.

Since the first century, Christians have held the belief that they shared the Old Testament function and mission for the people of God to bring non-believers into an encounter with God that could lead to their becoming members of the faith community. As a result, it is important that the original mission is understood and the relationships of

God's people with non-Israelites are understood. Much can be learned from studying early Israelite understanding of mission and their attendant interactions with Gentiles. In addition, much can be gleaned by observing how that foundational understanding of the Old Testament mission affected early Judaism. This study will focus specifically on how the teachings found in the Hebrew Scriptures did or did not influence how Israelites interacted with Gentiles and what the implications might be for Christian mission today.

Presuppositions

From the start, several presuppositions need to be stated. Each interpreter of Scripture brings to the task a way of seeing the biblical world that is colored by his own understanding of reality. Whether or not acknowledged, these presuppositions do impact how one interprets and evaluates Scripture. To be clear, major presuppositions will be stated at the beginning and the impact those viewpoints will make upon this work will be acknowledged. Several presuppositions will be noted: (1) the acceptance of the divine author and inherent authority of Scripture, (2) an understanding of what is meant by mission versus missions with the initiation of mission by God, and (3) an evangelical Protestant acceptance of the belief that Christians are now also called to participate in the mission of God to bring glory to His name and to reconcile the world to Himself.

To acknowledge the divine authorship of the complete Protestant canon of Scripture has several ramifications. First, accepting divine authorship prompts one to practice the interpretation of Scripture with a consideration of the intention of the divine author and to take into account the whole canon of Scripture even while focusing on one section. As a result, the interpreter accepting the divine authorship considers the interpretations made by New Testament writers regarding Old Testament passages as valid and inspired, just as the original writings. Such an interpretation of Scripture does not negate or invalidate a first meaning understood by the original writers and recipients. Instead, the interpreter accepts that with further revelation, as given to the apostles and

writers of the New Testament, comes fuller understanding of the divine author's overall intention.

Second, an acceptance of the divine authorship and authority of Scripture means that the accounts presented in the whole body of Scripture will be accepted as true representations of Israel's actual history in the world without any shade of error in the original manuscripts. Therefore, when a text is difficult, examination of the textual witnesses will be made to discern as nearly as possible the original reading. Such investigation will be done with the understanding that the Lord has permitted the transmission of the text(s) as they are for a reason, since He maintains sovereign control over the Scriptures during all stages of transmission.

Third, an acceptance of the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures will circumscribe how much emphasis or credence is placed on the theories stemming from historical criticism. For this work, a traditional view, which predates theories popularized by Julius Wellhausen, is accepted for the authorship of most of the Old Testament books. While it will be necessary and valid to investigate the social and cultural situations of Israel and her neighbors for many of the aspects of this study, the settings investigated will be those of the times referenced in the writings, or of any specified human author, with little emphasis given to the situation of any theoretical later editor. For example, the Torah will be accepted as the composition of Moses with the understanding that the Israelite nation had it in their possession from the point that they entered the land of Canaan.

Regarding the presupposition of mission being initiated by God, clarifications about the terms 'mission' and 'missions' first need to be made. As many scholars have noted, confusion exists about the use of the terms mission and missions. In the course of this study, the term 'mission' will be used primarily to describe God's plan to bring humanity to glorify His name with the end result of people being brought into right relationship with Him. If the term 'missions' is used, it will be used with the underlying

understanding that God was the One who initiated the mission. If a passage is described as ‘missional,’ it will be with the understanding that God was the initiator. ‘Missions’ will be understood as activities undertaken by men to fulfill God’s mission. As a result, activities like, but not limited to, preaching, prophesying, healing, or testifying to God’s supremacy will be described as ‘missional’ activities.

Finally, the presupposition regarding the Church inheriting the call of Israel needs explanation. Over the millennia, various beliefs have existed regarding whether the Church has inherited aspects of the call of God to Israel. Positions range from the “replacement theology” of those who believe that the Church has completely replaced Israel to a position that both the Church and the Jews are equally called to work to fulfill the mission of God.¹

In this work, it is maintained that the call on the Church to exalt God Most High in order to draw non-believers to glorify Him is a continuation of the call on Israel, as the elect people of God. As Christopher Wright noted, the Church is therefore “joined with God’s people.”² At the foundation of the call is the mandate to glorify the name of the one true God, the LORD, before all nations. In this way, the Church shares the initial call with the Israelites. What makes the Church unique is the additional call to testify specifically to belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as God made flesh, in whom is the revealed way of salvation for all.

Historical Overview

Although more has been written recently concerning the missional impetus observed in the Old Testament, most references to mission in the Old Testament have

¹Harold H. Ditmanson, “Some Theological Perspectives,” *FF* 3-4 (1977): 6-8. Content of the Fall/Winter 1977 *FF* issue revolved around the question of Christian mission and Jewish witness. In this issue, Jewish and Christian writers presented their perspectives on the past and current understanding of mission for Jews and Christians. Of particular note were the articles by Sidney Hoenig, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Jakob J. Petuchowski, James E. Wood, and Carl F. H. Henry.

²Christopher Wright, *Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 497.

concentrated on Abraham's commission in Genesis 12, the inauguration of the Israelites as a royal priesthood in Exodus 19, and finding a basis for mission today. Barring a few notable exceptions, little has been done in evangelical circles to survey the picture of mission throughout the Old Testament from a relational point of view, especially as it was understood through the eyes of the earliest Jews up through the Talmudic period. In addition, there has been little focus on whether and how the foundational teachings, regarding missional call and relational responsibilities, affected the actual actions of Israelites and Israelite/Gentile relationships.

A survey of the literature touching this subject must begin with classifying the primary source documents of the Hebrew Scriptures. Next, representative comments of early Jewish thought in the intertestamental writings, histories, and rabbinic commentaries will be examined. Then, the perspectives of early Christians will be summarized as seen in the New Testament and in the writings of later Reformation leaders. Finally, the most important contributions of modern Jewish and Christian scholars will be noted.

Old Testament Witness Concerning Israelite Interactions with Gentiles and Implications for Missions

The whole witness of the Old Testament includes a wide variety of passages understood to convey information about God's intended mission for Israel and Israel's varying degrees of participation with Him. In fact, some scholars identify the first hints of mission in the Old Testament with Genesis 1, as does Okoye, who calls the passage a "blueprint for mission."³ Even if some do not recognize an aspect of God 'on mission' in Genesis 1, many recognize the significance of God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 12.

³James Chukwuma Okoye, *Israel and the Nations* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), 24. He calls Genesis a blueprint referring to God's mission "in that it depicts both the purpose of creation and the responsibility of humanity in it and for it."

Evangelical scholar Walter Kaiser even called Genesis 12 the “Great Commission” of the Old Testament.⁴

Hints of blessings to the nations and the role of Abraham’s descendants are further clarified by God’s words to the Israelites at the foot of Sinai before their acceptance of the covenant as recorded in Exodus 19. These passages are foundational to the rest of the Old Testament witness concerning mission. From these beginnings, traces of God’s mission and intention to use Israel as a witness to the nations are seen through the laws He gives concerning Israel’s relationships with Gentiles, through the narratives of individual Israelites’ relations with Gentiles, through the prayers and hymns of the people, and through the prophecies given by the prophets. As the primary records of Old Testament Israel’s involvement in God’s mission, these passages and their interpretation are of principal importance.

Old Testament Israelite Interactions with Gentiles and Implications for Missions as Understood by Intertestamental Jews

Jews who came out of the exile and established the traditions and writings used in the synagogues were the first commentators on the Old Testament writings. How the early Jews thought, wrote, and acted reflected how they understood the Old Testament teachings having to do with Gentile relationships. References to the election and mission of Israel are scattered through the various collections of apocryphal and rabbinic literature. Writings and efforts of the second temple descendants of Israel seem to show a consciousness of their calling to bring Gentiles to an understanding about who the God of Israel was and what His commands were.

Writings that have become known as the Jewish Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha provide insight into how some Jewish people viewed interactions with

⁴Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 7.

Gentiles following the exile. Examples of missional practices, such as the teaching of Jewish beliefs and the proselytization of foreigners, are found in various writings. For instance, since the writing *Joseph and Aesnath* dealt with the conversion of a Gentile to belief in Israel's God, the account is instructive regarding the openness of Jews to conversions at the time the story was recorded. Other general conclusions regarding early Jewish interactions with Gentiles can be made from writings such as the *Letter of Aristeas* and other works.

Writings from the Apocrypha also provide some early witnesses to how Jews viewed interactions with Gentiles and the concepts of proselytizing and conversion. For example, in Tobit, one finds a clear expression of the future promise that all the nations ultimately will be converted.⁵ In Judith, the conversion of Achior the Ammonite was positively portrayed.⁶ Wisdom indicates in its opening verse that those who sincerely sought God would find Him, and Sirach contains a prayer that the nations would know God as Israel knew God.⁷

Baruch, on one hand, lists a prayer of the Israelites for the wellbeing of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. On the other hand, Baruch lauds the Torah as given only to Israel and notes that Israel should not give her "advantages," which seem linked to the Torah and knowledge of what pleases God, to "an alien people."⁸ Punishment for Israel's enemies is invoked in the Prayer of Azariah so that her antagonists might know the glory of Israel's God.⁹

Bel records that King Cyrus was accused by his own people of becoming a Jew

⁵Tob 14:6. Quotations from the Apocrypha are taken from the NRSV. See also Tob 13:10-18.

⁶Jdt 14:10. Judith purposefully went out of her way to 'witness' to the Ammonite. Her witness of God's power led to Achior's conversion.

⁷Wis 1:1-2; Sir 36:1-5, 17.

⁸Bar 1:10-12; 2:14-15; 3:9-4:4.

⁹Pr Azar 1:20-22.

and that, because of Daniel's actions and life testimony, the monarch acknowledged God's singularity.¹⁰ First Esdras 5:48-50 indicates that though most Gentiles in the land were hostile to the returning Jews and were rejected by them, some joined the Jews.¹¹ One other interesting point in 1 Esdras 8:50-53 concerns Ezra's reluctance to use protection from the king because Ezra wanted King Artaxerxes to see that he trusted in the protection of his God. Thus, Ezra's actions bore witness to the truth of his words as a witness to a Gentile king. Though most of 2 Esdras (sometimes called 4 Esdras) is a Christian writing, it has been noted that a part of it is a Jewish apocalypse.¹² In this Jewish section, comments exist concerning how all men might be saved, the importance of the law of God as given to Israel, and the law's availability to all.

All four books of Maccabees, by various authors from an assortment of times, recount different Jewish interactions with Gentiles during their struggle with Hellenism and Gentile domination. As a result, the picture portrayed of Jewish/Gentile relations was often negative. In 1 Maccabees 2:46 a comment exists about forced circumcisions of all boys within the borders of Israel but little can be concluded about the identity of those circumcised and what was done afterwards, if anything, to convert the hearts of those circumcised. In 2 Maccabees an intriguing story exists regarding Heliodorus and his encounter with the power of God that involved the mediation of the Jewish priest Onias with God for the healing of the Gentile and Heliodorus' subsequent testimony to other Gentiles of God's power.¹³ Scattered throughout the different books are stories showing

¹⁰Bel 28 and 41.

¹¹Contrast to 1 Esdr 5:68-71. Esdras contains stories paralleling the history of Ezra and Nehemiah.

¹²George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 287. He identified chaps. 3-14 as being Jewish in origin.

¹³2 Macc 3:22-39. Also, see the account of Antiochus's final illness and confession as presented in 2 Macc 9:11-20, which portrayed him acknowledging the God of Israel and willing to become a Jew himself out of his agony. Also of note were comments about how Gentiles like Lysias came to recognize God's protection of the Jewish people as a testimony to His reality. See 2 Macc 11:13-14 and

that the Jews considered God's supernatural protection of them as signs to the Gentiles of His reality as God.

Overall, the writings of the Jews during the intertestamental period shed some additional light on what the Scriptures themselves said concerning relating to Gentiles but there is little direct evidence in these writings of an organized mission on the behalf of the nations. What can be determined is that some Jews did understand that their actions relating to Gentiles were important, like Judith relating to the Ammonite and Ezra's testimony and actions with Artaxerxes. Intercession for individual Gentiles was a recognized practice. Conversion of Gentiles was understood as possible, and converts, following conversion, were described in positive ways. Obedience to the Torah was considered as key for anyone to be considered righteous and its teaching was of prime importance. Attitudes toward Gentiles fluctuated dramatically, as presented in various works and even within the works themselves, depending upon the Gentile in question.

Jewish historians of the first century also appear to have had little directly to say concerning the concept of the mission of Israelites in relating with Gentiles in the Old Testament. However, both Philo and Josephus made statements in passing that illustrated that proselytizing occurred and that converts were even common and welcomed. Both Jewish historians conveyed through their words an acceptance and respect of converts.

Philo, an Alexandrian Jew living from around 20 BC to AD 50, had less to contribute to the subject than Josephus; however, his comments highlighted two important points. First, proselytes were considered full Jews. Second, he, as a Jew, esteemed Gentiles who gave up so much in the face of persecution to become proselytes. Therefore, though Philo did not specify how he viewed Old Testament teaching on relating to Gentiles and any missional implications, his writings served to encourage openness of his fellow Jews to true God-fearers and proselytes.

similar comments in 2 Macc 8:34-36 (regarding Nicanor) and in 3 Macc 6:28-29; 7:6, 9 (regarding King Ptolemy Philopator).

Josephus also conveyed an appreciation for Gentile converts and provided a witness to the effects of proselytizing by the Jewish people. In *Against Apion*, Josephus stressed that many Greeks had “come over to our laws.”¹⁴ Josephus sought to show that Judaism was attractive to Greeks and that Jews on their part were open to having others join with them. In Josephus, one of the clearest signs of first century Jewish proselytizing efforts may be observed in the history he related concerning the conversion of King Izates and the devotion of his mother, Queen Helena of Adiabene. In the related cases, Jews actively pursued the education of Gentiles about Judaism and succeeded in winning them to their faith.

Early Jewish religious thought is preserved in a variety of writings and collections up through the Talmudic period. Considered the “codification of the Oral Torah,” the Mishnah of Judah ha-Nasi was the foundational work around which many later writings centered.¹⁵ Very little can be found in the Mishnah that directly informs the question of Old Testament Israelite interactions with Gentiles and the implications for mission. However, the structure of the Mishnah was followed in later writings that did have more to say on the subject, like the *Tosefta* (also *Tosifta*), a supplemental work, and the later *Gemara*, or commentary on the Mishnah, including what is written in the collections of the Talmud and the *Midrashim*.¹⁶

One of the most notable evidences in the rabbinical writings of the effect of the missional efforts of the Jews is the existence of the short tractate, *Gerim* (Proselytes). Written right after the era of the Mishnah, *Gerim* dealt with the process involving

¹⁴Flavius Josephus, *Flavius Josephus against Apion* 2.11.123 (trans. William Whiston, *Works*, 801).

¹⁵A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1949), xxvi. The Mishnaic period covered the time following Hillel and Shammai from around 40 BC up through around AD 200.

¹⁶Meaning “completion,” the *Gemara* is commentary that elaborates and completes what is conveyed in the Mishnah. Comments appear often in the *Gemara* that deal with Gentiles and Israel's relations with them and responsibility to them.

conversion to Judaism.¹⁷ Though this work does not deal with the Old Testament Scriptures directly in order to rationalize the need for proselytizing, it provides evidence that there was a need for an orderly and consistent way of accepting converts, which bears witness to proselytizing activity.

Jewish *Midrash*, and especially that which is a part of the *Midrash Rabbah* (Great *Midrash*), provides insight into how early Jewish writers interpreted key Old Testament passages that convey how the Israelites related to Gentiles.¹⁸ For example, in the *Genesis Rabbah*, a record indicated that the souls gathered by Abraham in Genesis 12:5 were considered by R. Jose b. Zimra to have been converts.¹⁹ Within the *Exodus Rabbah*, many comments are preserved which conveyed a positive perspective on God's attitude toward Gentiles coming to Him and proselytes as a whole. For example, in comments on the institution of the Passover in Exodus 12:43, care was taken to defend the rights of proselytes to partake of the Passover and to portray God's heart toward Gentiles who would love Him.²⁰ Also notable in the *Exodus Rabbah* are the comments about Jethro. The *Exodus Rabbah* recorded that God "brought him near . . . for a godly purpose – to become a proselyte."²¹ Comments like these are scattered through the other writings of the *Midrash Rabbah* and help to provide insight into early Jewish thought about passages in the Old Testament regarding Israelite interactions with Gentiles.

¹⁷*Gerim*, trans. Maurice Simon, in vol. 2 of *MTT*, ed. Abraham Cohen (London: Soncino Press, 1965).

¹⁸The Great *Midrash* includes works covering the Torah and the five books: Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. Although it was compiled after the Talmudic period, Cohen noted, "the material belongs in the main to the period of the *Talmud*," which is why the contents of that *Midrash* are consulted in this study. See Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, xxxvi.

¹⁹*Genesis*, trans. H. Freedman, vol. 1 of *Midrash Rabbah*, ed. Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon (London: Soncino Press, 1951), 1:324.

²⁰*Exodus*, trans. S. M. Lehrman, vol. 3 of *Midrash Rabbah*, ed. Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon (London: Soncino Press, 1951), 3:232-37. Positive comments of R. Berekiah and R. Simeon b. Halaftha are preserved here.

²¹*Ibid.*, 323. This train of thought is seemingly attributed to R. Eleazar.

In addition to the dedicated work concerning the practical issues of dealing with proselytes and commentary of the *Midrash*, scattered comments by the rabbis throughout the centuries are preserved in the collections of the Talmud. It has been rightly noted that rabbinic opinions are hardly unified on the concept of mission to the Gentiles or proselytizing. Rabbis were influenced by events of their times and the political atmospheres of their days. As a result, blanket statements are not adequate to describe the perspectives of Jews concerning relating to Gentiles and proselytizing during the years before the Talmud.

For every example of a rabbi who showed openness to reaching out to Gentiles, other examples existed of rabbis who called for the strictest censure of any interaction with Gentiles at all. Some of the prominent rabbis who showed more openness to reaching out to Gentiles included R. Hillel, R. Eleazar, R. Me'ir, R. Hosha'ya, R. Jeremiah, and R. Berechiah. Hillel's statements have often been used to epitomize the perspective of those who supported outreach to Gentiles. His famous statement, "be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving your fellow-creatures and drawing them near to the Torah," is often quoted in reference to outreach.²² In addition, sentiments are expressed by other rabbis like that found in the Babylonian Talmud, which quoted R. Eleazar as saying, "The Holy One, blessed be he, exiled the Israelites among the nations only so that converts should join them."²³ Comments like these clearly indicate that some rabbis, well known and respected teachers, understood from the witness of the Old Testament that God intended to use Israelites for outreach to the

²²Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, 65. Cohen referred to that quote in the context of his calling Hillel "the most prominent of the advocates on behalf of proselytes." For the original quote, see *m. 'Abot* 1.12b in *The Mishnah*, ed. and trans. Jacob Neusner (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 674. For an example of Hillel's positive interactions with seekers, see *'Aboth d'Rabbi Nathan* 24b (trans. Eli Cashdan, *MTT* 1: 91-92). R. Hillel was a first generation Tanna. R. Eleazar and R. Me'ir were also Tannaim. R. Hosha'ya, R. Jeremiah, and R. Berechiah were Amoraim.

²³*Pesah*. 87b (trans. Jacob Neusner, *BT* 4:421). Also, see Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, 64. Also, see Ephraim Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1975), 542.

Gentiles.

However, though records exist which show some rabbis believed in and taught a missional call for Jews to reach out to Gentiles based on their understanding of Hebrew Scriptures, one also finds a few accounts of equally respected rabbis who denounced any attempt to proselytize Gentiles. Distinguished rabbis who argued against proselytizing included R. Shammai, R. Yohai, R. Isaac, and R. Ḥelbo. As Urbach noted, “The most unequivocal dictum against those who accept proselytes was uttered by a Sage who lived in the generation before R. Ḥelbo, namely R. Isaac Nappaḥa, who said ‘Evil after evil shall come upon those who accept proselytes.’”²⁴ R. Ḥelbo himself lamented, “Proselytes are as troublesome to Israel as a sore.”²⁵ Though negative comments can be found throughout the rabbinic works, the scholarly consensus is that the majority understood that proselytes were to be welcomed in spite of someone’s personal aversion.

Old Testament Israelite Interactions with Gentiles and Implications for Missions as Understood by Early Christians

For Christians the most important writings concerning the original mission of God and the evidence of Jewish proselytizing that derived from Old Testament teaching regarding interactions with Gentiles are found in the New Testament. Matthew 23:15 contains the most prominent direct statement concerning the passion of Jewish Pharisees to proselytize intentionally, although disagreement exists about whether this verse relates to making Gentile proselytes.²⁶ In this passage, Jesus observed, “Woe to you, scribes and

²⁴Urbach, *The Sages*, 1:551. He quoted *Yebam.* 109b (trans. Neusner, *BT* 8:589). Also, for other statements that “converts will not be accepted,” see *‘Abod. Zar.* 3b (trans. Neusner, *BT* 17:7). R. Shammai, R. Yohai, and R. Isaac were Tannaim. R. Isaac Nappaḥa and R. Ḥelbo were Amoraim.

²⁵Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud*, 64. For the original quote, “Proselytes are as hard on Israel as a scab,” see *Yebam.* 47b, 109b (trans. Neusner, *BT* 8:242, 589).

²⁶Köstenberger and O’Brien noted that Matt 23:15 “has had the most impact on the present debate” as it related to understanding second temple missionary activity. However, in their discussion concerning this verse they provided a few reasons to prompt reconsideration of the meaning of the verse. See Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology*

Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” In addition to the words of Christ highlighting this activity, the evidence of Jewish proselytizing was witnessed by the references to God-fearers and proselytes in Acts and other New Testament books.²⁷

Beyond the evidence of proselytes and the openness of Jews toward them, the apostles’ treatment of the Hebrew Scriptures indicated an understanding of God’s missional intention and Israel’s role in relating to Gentiles, which the apostles forthwith applied to believers in Christ. One key passage is found in 1 Peter 2:9-12, in which Peter seemed to link the call of God in Exodus 19 for Israel to be a “holy nation” to the call for believers in Christ to separate themselves as a holy people. The intended result was that believers’ lives would show praise to God. Peter further noted, in verse 12, that the desired result of their behavior should be that Gentiles would come to glorify God.

In addition to the earliest Christian witness found in the New Testament concerning Jewish interactions with Gentiles and proselytes made by Jews, a few writings by early Church leaders exist, which provide a little insight into the existence of proselytizing. As with certain Roman authors, some early Christian writers referred in passing to the existence of Jewish proselytism. For example, many of the early Christian leaders wrote works to dispute against the teachings of the Jews. In Tertullian’s opening words of *Adversus Judaeos*, he mentioned a conflict between a Christian and a proselyte Jew that compelled him to put in writing an apologetic for Christianity.²⁸ In this same work, he revealed a belief that, even in the Old Testament, God was reaching out to Gentiles.

of Mission, ed. D. A. Carson, New Studies in Biblical Theology 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 63-64.

²⁷For example, Acts 2:10; 6:5; 10:1-2; 13:43; 16:14; 17:4, 17. Quotations from the NT are taken from the NKJV.

²⁸Tertullian, *Adversus Judaeos*, trans. Geoffrey Dunn, in *Tertullian* (London: Routledge, 2004), 68.

Old Testament Israelite Interactions with Gentiles and Implications for Missions as Understood by the Reformers

Many scholars, following the tradition of Gustav Warneck, have commented on the perceived lack of interest of the reformers regarding missions as a whole, in the sense of actively reaching out to bring non-believers into the community of faith.²⁹ More recently, other scholars have argued for a more generous view of the reformers' understanding of, and interest in, mission.³⁰ However, even scholars who argue that certain reformers had an active interest in mission normally only focus on what the reformers themselves did or believed about the New Testament mission rather than what they thought about Israelite interactions with Gentiles and mission in the Old Testament.³¹ Nevertheless, writings of two of the greatest reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin, provide insight into their personal thoughts concerning a concept of Israelite mission and interactions with Gentiles in the Old Testament.

Throughout Luther's lectures on Genesis and in his commentaries, it is clear that he considered the Scriptures to provide the true history of God's people. Luther believed that the Lord used Abraham and his descendants, as they interacted with Gentiles, in order to bring certain Gentiles into fellowship with God.³² As Pelikan noted,

²⁹Gustav Warneck, *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time*, trans. George Robson, 3rd ed. (New York: Fleming H. Revel Co., 1906).

³⁰See the works by Charles Chaney on each of the two major reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin. Charles Chaney, "Martin Luther and the Mission of the Church," *JETS* 13 (1970): 15-41. Idem, "The Missionary Dynamic in the Theology of John Calvin," *RRev* 17 (1964): 24-38. Also, see Ingemar Öberg, *Luther and World Mission*, trans. Dean Apel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007). In contrast to most other scholars, Öberg actually did provide some overview of Luther's view of mission in the Old Testament in pp. 97-126.

³¹For a list of writings regarding the Reformers and mission, see Hans Kasdorf, "The Reformers and Mission: A Bibliographical Survey of Secondary Literature," *OB* 4 (1980): 169-75.

³²Various methods for reaching Gentiles were cited by Luther, including worshipping, testifying to the truth, preaching, and even marrying Gentiles. Luther felt marriage with Gentiles like Hagar, Tamar, Asenath, Rahab, and Ruth was evidence of Gentiles being brought into the true church of God. See Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 38-44* 44.312 (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. Paul D. Pahl, *LW* 7 [1965]: 14). Luther stated, "By this avenue the Gentiles come into communion and fellowship with the people of Israel, not only in the matter of religion but also in the matter of the same flesh."

“Luther was able to find the history of the church in every part of Genesis.”³³ Going further, Ingemar Öberg unequivocally stated, “For Luther, mission is everywhere in the Old Testament.”³⁴

Luther believed that the true people of God, even in the Old Testament, were the spiritual descendants of Abraham based on faith. Luther understood that the faith of the Old Testament believers was spread as people were drawn to fellowship and worship with believers and when believers went out to relate to others. For example, when describing Abraham’s and God’s relations with Abimelech, Luther noted those interactions allowed the king to come to “a more perfect knowledge of God” and that God’s discipline of him for Abraham’s sake was for the purpose that “God may have the opportunity to perfect him and to include him in the church of Abraham.”³⁵ Likewise, Luther looked upon Joseph as a teacher of the true doctrine of God to the Egyptians.³⁶

Writing in reference to Exodus in his *Preface to the Old Testament*, Luther commented directly on the purpose of the people of Israel. He explained, “God brings Moses forward with the law and selects a special people, in order to enlighten the world again through them, and by the law to reveal sin anew.”³⁷ Luther made so many references to the Israelites’ participation in God’s mission through their relationships

³³Jaroslav Pelikan, *Luther the Expositor* (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, *LW* companion volume [1959]: 91.

³⁴Öberg, *Luther*, 99.

³⁵Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 15-20* 43.115 (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. George V. Schick, *LW* 3 [1961]: 335).

³⁶Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 38-44* 44.448 (ed. J. Pelikan, trans. Paul D. Pahl, *LW* 7 [1965]: 200). Here Luther noted, “Thus the Egyptians first heard the pure doctrine and the promises from Abraham; but later these were obscured by false teachers, until at last there was purification through Joseph.” Luther specifically stated that Joseph instructed Asenath and Luther considered her to have converted to the true faith as a result.

³⁷Martin Luther, “Preface to the Old Testament (1523, Revised 1545),” trans. Charles M. Jacobs with rev. E. Theodore Bachmann in *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull and William R. Russell, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 115.

with Gentiles that Öberg confidently stated, “This people, especially their *summus pontifex* and *episcopus* Abraham, missionize and seek to lead Gentiles to God’s salvation in faith. In this way, the conversion of the Gentiles and faith are important from the beginning of the Bible, according to Luther.”³⁸ For Luther, Israelite interactions with Gentiles in the Old Testament were linked to mission.

Although it has been lucidly argued that John Calvin had a true concern for missions, it is unclear whether he considered the people of the Old Testament to have shared a concern for missions outreach or participated in any type of outreach.³⁹ Calvin’s commentaries are important for understanding how he viewed Scriptures identified by scholars as foundational missional passages. Similar to Luther’s interpretations, Calvin’s explanations of passages like Genesis 12 and Exodus 19 were always presented with an understanding of fulfillment through Christ and through His work.⁴⁰ However, unlike Luther, Calvin did not often ponder the implications of what the Old Testament passages he dealt with meant for the people of Israel relationally. Instead, Calvin placed more emphasis on what the passages meant ultimately in view of God’s plan of redemption.⁴¹

For Calvin, the Old Testament ‘elect’ were limited to the called among the

³⁸Öberg, *Luther*, 107. Also, on p. 105, Öberg argued Luther held mission of the OT believers was clearly centrifugal in addition to centripetal.

³⁹See Samuel M. Zwemer, “Calvinism and the Missionary Enterprise,” *TToday* 7 (1950); Johannes Van den Berg, “Calvin’s Missionary Message,” *EvQ* 22 (1950): 174-87; Scott J. Simmons, “John Calvin and Missions: A Historical Survey,” *A Place for Truth* (2004-05) [on-line]; accessed 9 April 2009; available from <http://www.aplacefortruth.org/calvin.missions1.htm>; Internet.

⁴⁰John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (trans. John King, CC 1). See also idem, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony* (trans. Charles William Bingham, CC 2).

⁴¹An example of the contrast between the two reformers may be seen in their commentary on Genesis 12. Beyond the future fulfillment of Christ as the blessing to all, Luther saw Abraham as bringing blessing to others in his time by preaching to them about the promise of Christ and leading those who would follow into the truth. Calvin commented only on the future blessing to the nations. Luther saw the people Abraham led out of Haran as “the true and holy church,” won by Abraham’s preaching. Calvin commented upon them as slaves. See Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 6-14* 42,458, 461,462 (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. George V. Schick, *LW* 3 [1960]: 275-76, 280). Then, see, John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (trans. John King, CC 1:347-49, 351).

people of Israel. Though Calvin acknowledged the promises present in the prophets' works of a future expansion of God's mercy to all peoples, he viewed that development as only initiated by the coming of Christ.⁴² Thus, for example, in Calvin's commentary on Isaiah, his interpretation was bound to understanding the fulfillment of the call to spread the gospel as it played out in the New Testament Church.

In addition to the Scriptural analysis in his commentaries, Calvin's comments in book 2, chapters 10 and 11, of his *Institutes of Christian Religion* are important for understanding how he considered the salvation and call of the Israelites. According to Calvin, the Patriarchs and people of God "hoped for a common salvation with us by the grace of the same Mediator."⁴³ Yet, Calvin's focus was upon the covenant people, the Jews, and the consummation of their hope in Jesus, not on whether they should have reached out to others.

Calvin even noted, "Until the advent of Christ, the Lord set apart one nation within which to confine the covenant of his grace."⁴⁴ Calvin did not see that Israel had an obligation to share the light God had given them with people of other nations. Instead, Calvin observed, that during the Old Testament God allowed all other peoples to go their own way, "as if they had nothing whatsoever to do with him. Nor did he give them the sole remedy for their deadly disease—the preaching of his word The others were excluded from all approach to him."⁴⁵ Concerning the prophets, Calvin noted, "Their

⁴²Chaney, "The Missionary Dynamic," 26.

⁴³John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2.10.2, (ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, LCC 1:429). Christ, then, was Israel's mediator and they too were saved "not by their own merits, but solely by the mercy of the God who called them." Ibid. (trans. Battles, 1:430).

⁴⁴Calvin, *Institutes* 2.11.11 (trans. Battles, LCC 1:460-61).

⁴⁵Ibid. Calvin spoke of a wall that "confined God's mercy within the boundaries of Israel" and was only broken by the coming of Christ, which allowed the preaching of the gospel to Gentiles. Since he did not think the Israelites had a mission to reach out to Gentiles, Calvin did not pay much attention to their interactions with Gentiles.

labors were useful chiefly to our age.”⁴⁶ In addition, he observed that Christ “did not permit the apostles on their first mission to go beyond the boundaries of Israel.”⁴⁷ Calvin maintained it was this restriction in the Old Testament up through the Lord’s final commissioning of the disciples, which caused the apostles to consider the eventual calling of the Gentiles “so new and strange.”⁴⁸ When it came to Israelite interactions with Gentiles in the Old Testament, Calvin drew no implications for either Jewish or Christian missions.

Old Testament Israelite Interactions with Gentiles and Implications for Missions as Understood by Modern Jews

Surveys by A. Cohen and Ephraim Urbach are very useful for the study of rabbinic thought concerning Israelite interactions with Gentiles, including proselytism and mission. In *Everyman’s Talmud* by Cohen and in *The Sages* by Urbach, each author contributed significantly to the presentation of the whole picture of the rabbinic writings. However, beyond providing overviews of rabbinic thought, each of these modern writers interpreted the overall picture and communicated something of their own understanding of such concepts. Based on the Old Testament passages and Jewish interpretation of them, both writers communicated that overall it seemed that active interaction with Gentiles and proselytism was expected as an outflow of Israel’s relation to God.

One of the first Jewish theologies written at the opening of the modern period was by Kaufmann Kohler.⁴⁹ In part three of his book, *Jewish Theology*, Kohler dealt in

⁴⁶Ibid., 2.11.6 (trans. Battles, LCC 1:457).

⁴⁷Ibid., 2.11.12 (trans. Battles, LCC 1:461).

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Kaufmann Kohler, *Jewish Theology: Systematically and Historically Considered* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918). Kohler suggested that the lack of any Jewish ‘Theology’ to that point was due to “the fact that up to modern times the Rabbinical and philosophical literature of the Middle Ages sufficed for the needs of the student, and a systematic exposition of the Jewish faith seemed to be unnecessary” (vii).

detail with Israel's mission and her relationship to the world. Kohler believed that the mission of the Jews was to bring non-Jews to an acceptance of monotheism. However, he did not go into detail about how those implications for mission were realized.

Although neither dealt in great depth concerning actual missional teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures or how Israelite/Gentile interactions reflected those teachings, Bernard J. Bamberger and William G. Braude both contributed works examining evidence of early Jewish proselytizing activity.⁵⁰ Bamberger's book included a brief four pages on the biblical background leading up to early Jewish proselytism. His assessment was that "before the close of the Biblical period, many heathen were attracted to the religion of Israel and some of them were converted formally."⁵¹ He suggested that it was only "under prophetic influence" that "conversion in any other sense than naturalization became possible."⁵²

Still, Bamberger included a revealing chapter on the existing *aggadot* about supposed Biblical converts, which provided insight into how both Bamberger and early Jews viewed some of the interactions in the Biblical narratives. For example, at the beginning of the chapter on the *aggadot*, Bamberger noted, "As the Jewish people and the Jewish religion, according to tradition, began with Abraham, so with him began proselytization and missionary effort."⁵³ He supported his statement by referring to the specific early stories that had circulated about Abraham's interactions with Gentiles. Similarly, Braude also included examples of early Jewish exegesis on popular Biblical narratives that implied an understanding by the early Jews of an underlying missional

⁵⁰See Bernard J. Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1939). See also William G. Braude, *Jewish Proselyting*, Brown University Studies 6 (Providence, RI: Brown University, 1940).

⁵¹Bamberger, *Proselytism*, 16.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 13.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 175.

meaning to the stories. However, neither he nor Bamberger really fully analyzed the teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures on Israelite/Gentile interactions and the implications for missions; they were primarily looking at the evidence regarding attitudes about proselytism and actual conversions.

Bamberger and Braude did each come separately to the same conclusion regarding proselytism in early Judaism. As Braude noted in his introduction concerning both his and Bamberger's studies, "I am glad to say that we agree in our conclusions that both the Tannaim and the Amoraim wanted proselytes and did all they could to win them."⁵⁴ Although Braude made this positive assessment, he also qualified the missional activity by specifying, "There appears to be no evidence that Jews sent missionaries into *partes infidelium* to bring about mass conversions. Here and there isolated propagandists may have set out on their own initiative. But they approached individuals and not bodies of men and women."⁵⁵

In his life-culminating work, *This People Israel: The Meaning of Jewish Existence*, Leo Baeck dealt with the election of Israel and her calling. He emphatically believed Israel was called with a purpose and "could only understand its existence and its history as God's mission among men."⁵⁶ Baeck indicated that the mission was God's from the beginning and that Israel through the covenant joined with God to fulfill the mission. Baeck's wide-ranging concept of the mission of God was that "humanity shall

⁵⁴Braude, *Jewish Proselyting*, 6. Their opinion was supported by other Jewish scholars as well, including Israel Levi, Jean Juster, and Menahem Stern. One of the latest Jewish advocates for this position is Louis H. Feldman. See Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 288. He provided a bibliography on pp. 555-56.

⁵⁵Braude, *Jewish Proselyting*, 8.

⁵⁶Leo Baeck, *This People Israel: The Meaning of Jewish Existence*, trans. Albert H. Friedlander (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1964). In his introduction of the text, Friedlander noted the immense stature of Baeck in the Jewish community and stated that *This People Israel* was, in effect, "transcending and reconciling much of Rosenzweig and Buber," other prominent Jewish scholars (x).

come to experience God.”⁵⁷ He had a firm belief that Israel was called to interact with others in righteousness and justice with an emphasis on the shared humanity of all. However, in his work, Baeck did not attend to specific interactions of Israelites with Gentiles. His primary purpose was to paint in broad strokes the calling of the chosen people through history.

Lawrence Epstein championed a perspective that falls toward an extreme in the thought spectrum regarding Israelite interactions with Gentiles in the Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish mission outreach. Epstein argued cogently for a renewal of Jewish outreach and his defense for renewed outreach rested primarily upon justification from the Hebrew Scriptures. Specifically, Epstein noted, “The Jewish people has the religious obligation, as embedded in their covenantal agreement with God, to offer Judaism to the world and welcome converts.”⁵⁸ Furthermore, he provided examples of teachings and Israelite/Gentile interactions from Scripture, as well as from early Jewish and Gentile writings, which he used to argue that the early Jews understood their outreach obligation and the importance of their interactions with Gentiles.

Recently, Joel Kaminsky wrote a masterful work concerning the election of Israel and the plan of God for the Jewish people. In his book, *Yet I loved Jacob*, Kaminsky noted that passages explain Israel’s election both out of God’s love for Israel and for Israel’s service for God. In the course of his study on election, Kaminsky briefly touched upon a few specific interactions between those chosen by God and the non-elect. Although his purpose was not to contrast specifically the behavior of the elect against the expectations of them by God, he made several insightful comments stemming from his

⁵⁷Ibid., 26. Very little specific development of that thought was provided.

⁵⁸Lawrence J. Epstein, *The Theory and Practice of Welcoming Converts to Judaism*, Jewish Studies 13 (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), vii, 1. See also Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Conversion to Judaism in Historical Perspective: From Biblical Israel to Postbiblical Judaism,” *CJ* 36 (1983): 31-45. For an older but more extensive treatment, see Joseph R. Rosenbloom, *Conversion to Judaism: From the Biblical Period to the Present* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1978).

brief survey of their interactions.⁵⁹ As he dealt with Abraham’s intercession for Sodom, Kaminsky suggested it was “Abraham’s and his descendants’ duty to do righteousness and justice” as a part of fulfilling the calling regarding the blessing of the nations.⁶⁰

However, though he argued that Israel was elected by God for a unique relationship and that the result of that relationship was often service which impacted the nations, Kaminsky also noted, “the evidence that the Hebrew Bible endorsed the idea of an active mission to convert the Gentile nations is very tenuous.”⁶¹ In addition, Kaminsky rejected the notion that Judaism was a “missionary religion” during the second temple time.⁶² He observed, “Judaism is more tolerant of the non-elect in that its general propensity is to assume that one can remain non-elect and still be in right relationship to God. This fact makes it less necessary to seek to convert non-Jews.”⁶³

Old Testament Israelite Interactions with Gentiles and Implications for Missions as Understood by Modern Christians

As with the Jewish outlook over the ages, the modern Christian perspective concerning Israelite/Gentile interactions and mission in the Old Testament is complicated. Many views exist concerning the existence of missional intent in Israelite/Gentile interactions. A common view toward one end of the perspective continuum is the belief that mission was limited with no deliberate centrifugal outreach of the Israelites in the Old Testament, as maintained by Martin-Achard. Toward the other end of the continuum are the perspectives of scholars like Walter Kaiser, who saw much

⁵⁹Joel S. Kaminsky, *Yet I loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007). For example, he pointed out some implications and consequences of the interaction between Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar on p. 37.

⁶⁰Ibid., 39.

⁶¹Ibid., 175.

⁶²Ibid., 173.

⁶³Ibid., 172.

in the Old Testament as tied to God's mission of saving the world through Israel. Extremes of thought also exist regarding the question of actual Jewish belief and practice during the intertestamental period.

Typically, in most Old Testament theologies, the prevailing thought is that the Jews were not called to evangelize and reach out to non-believers in the same way as the Christians later were. As a result, studies of Israelite interactions with Gentiles and mission in the Old Testament are often relegated to only a few pages in a large theology. Even in theologies written about mission, often there is only a brief summary section on the Old Testament basis before moving on to mission as evidenced in the New Testament and onward.⁶⁴ Few in-depth studies have been done examining the Old Testament expectation for interactions, actual Israelite interactions with Gentiles, and implications for missions.

One of the earliest modern writers to try to identify and define the missional elements of the Old Testament was Harold Henry Rowley, who first wrote *Israel's Mission to the World* and later *The Missionary Message of the Old Testament*. Echoing Luther's perspective, Rowley stated that "the Old Testament is a missionary book."⁶⁵ He further argued that Israel came to a progressive understanding of God's purpose to reach the nations and had "some missionary impetus, and some proselytizing zeal."⁶⁶ Rowley, in his work, identified numerous texts from the Old Testament that could be understood from a missional perspective.

⁶⁴So, for example, in *The Theology of the Christian Mission* edited by Gerald Anderson only 20 or so out of 313 pages of content are devoted to examining the Old Testament foundations. See George Anderson, ed., *The Theology of the Christian Mission* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1961). In addition, David Bosch only devoted four pages to mission in the Old Testament out of his whole work of over 500 pages. See David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 16-20.

⁶⁵H. H. Rowley, *The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (London: Carey Press, 1944), 76.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

Though Rowley mentioned in passing various classical examples of Israelites interacting with Gentiles, he never analyzed the principles from Old Testament teaching about how to interact with Gentiles with the actual interactions. Nor did he dwell on the implications for missions stemming from those interactions. He provided minimal information about how the intertestamental Jews viewed proselytizing.⁶⁷

In 1959, Robert Martin-Achard published *Israël et les nations: la perspective missionnaire de l'Ancien Testament* in which he analyzed key elements pertaining to mission in the Old Testament, including the particularistic and universalistic thought present in some of the passages. He maintained that the presence of universalistic tendencies, and even the assimilation of some Gentiles, did not indicate a responsibility for Israel to proselytize. Martin-Achard argued that though elements of God's mission existed in the Old Testament, "the Old Testament view of history is that its fulfillment is centripetal, not centrifugal."⁶⁸ As a result, his emphasis was not focused on individual Israelite interactions with Gentiles or how the implications of missional teachings in the Old Testament might have affected early Jews.

Martin-Achard insisted that Israel's mission was simply to exist as the 'Chosen People' and by her very existence testify to God, rather than actually trying to proselytize and win non-believers to her faith. According to Martin-Achard, Israel completely differed from the church in the responsibility to participate actively in God's mission. Thus, for Martin-Achard, Israel's actual interactions with Gentiles were incidental to God's mission.

In 1962, Johannes Blauw published *The Missionary Nature of the Church* in

⁶⁷H. H. Rowley, *Israel's Mission to the World* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1939). See his chapter on "Particularism and Proselytism," pp. 39-71.

⁶⁸Robert Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations: A Study of the Old Testament Conception of Israel's Mission to the World*, trans. John Penney Smith (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962), 61. Martin-Achard used the term 'centripetal,' with the meaning of Israel's drawing others in just by her existence, rather than Israel being 'centrifugal,' with the meaning of reaching out to non-Israelites.

which he surveyed current thought about a Biblical theology of missions. He noted that, though little had been done in the past with deriving principles for missions from the Old Testament, more was beginning to be done. In his opening chapter, Blauw distinguished between the ‘universal’ and ‘missionary’ message of the Old Testament. He maintained, “When we call the message of the Old Testament ‘universal,’ we mean that it has the whole world in view and that it has validity for the whole world. This universality is the basis for the missionary message of the Old Testament. By ‘missionary’ we understand the commission to deliberate witness, to going out”⁶⁹ Blauw affirmed, “We must be much more reserved in speaking of the missionary message of the Old Testament than of its universal message.”⁷⁰

Regarding the universal message, Blauw concluded, “Israel has been called in her election by Yahweh to be preacher and example, prophet and priest for the nations.”⁷¹ However, Blauw meant this in the sense that Israel’s existence was testimony to the nations in the same sense as understood by Martin-Achard. Blauw maintained that, when it came to missionary aspects in accordance with his definition, no evidence existed of “any deliberate missionary activity” in the centrifugal sense.⁷² He argued that the prophetic passages taken to be missionary referred to future activities and were bound to what God would do, with no expectation of responsibility or activity to reach out by Israel. Since Blauw did not see any missionary obligation on the part of individual Israelites, he did not deal with individual Israelite interactions with Gentiles.

⁶⁹Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1962), 17.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid., 28.

⁷²Ibid., 34. Blauw initially noted only two passages he considered as missionary highpoints: Isa 40-55 and Jonah. However, he completely discounted Jonah as being missionary, indicating that it should only be classified as universalistic. Ultimately, he was only willing to identify two verses in Isaiah as missionary, according to his definition: Isa 42:4 and 49:6 (39).

Although he did not see centrifugal missionary activity in the Old Testament, Blauw did believe that the Old Testament provided the foundation for later missionary activity. He considered certain Old Testament passages as examples of centripetal missionary activity that gave rise to later mission work. For example, he noted, “Accepting foreigners into the Israelite community can rightly be considered to be a first stage, or rather a stage leading up to the Jewish mission.”⁷³ Blauw echoed the scholars of his day by identifying the intertestamental period as the time when actual Jewish outreach and mission began.⁷⁴ However, he only dealt briefly with the evidences of intertestamental Jewish/Gentile interactions.

Published in 1983, *The Biblical Foundations for Missions* provided a much more in-depth approach to the Old Testament basis for missions than had been supplied before in most theologies. Of the 348 pages, over one third of them were devoted to examining mission in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament section of the work, Carroll Stuhlmuehler argued for the presence of centripetal mission based on the election and separation of Israel, which at the same time had undercurrents of universalism and outward movement.

Stuhlmuehler concentrated on the impact Israelites had, as elect people of God, upon their culture. He described the repetitive process of their interaction with the culture as “acculturation.”⁷⁵ However, he did not deal with specific accounts of interactions of Israelites with Gentiles to determine the individual outcomes.⁷⁶ Instead, he was focused

⁷³Ibid., 56.

⁷⁴Ibid., 55. Blauw provided a bibliographical list of some of the literature to that date pertaining to Jewish proselytizing activity during the intertestamental period (150).

⁷⁵Carroll Stuhlmuehler, “The Foundations for Mission in the Old Testament,” in *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, ed. Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmuehler (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 37. As he analyzed mission passages, he focused on a three-stage cycle of the acculturation process including violence or the struggle of a new people/idea, indigenization or the adaptation to surroundings, and the time of prophetic challenge.

⁷⁶In chap. 3 of *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, Stuhlmuehler did spend some time

on the overall development of missional themes and movement through various periods of Israelite history.

Lucien Legrand continued the conversation concerning mission and the concept of universalism found in the Old Testament in his 1988 work, *Le Dieu qui vient: la mission dans la Bible*, which was translated by Robert R. Barr and published in 1990 under the title, *Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible*. In his short section on the Old Testament, Legrand raised the question of what was meant by the concept of mission in the Old Testament and whether it should be narrowly defined or more broadly defined. Ultimately, he concluded that mission, which must be understood against the backdrop of election and universalism, was expressed in a diversity of ways in the Old Testament.

Legrand noted, “The mission of Israel in the Old Testament is a response to the double summons, ‘Come!’ and, ‘Go!’” and he stressed, “It is fundamentally God, then, who is the real agent of Israel’s mission.”⁷⁷ Legrand wisely cautioned against limiting what might be mission in the Old Testament, based on a restricted contemporary understanding of mission. In addition, he argued, “Election does not cut Israel off from the nations. It situates people in a relationship with them.”⁷⁸

Although Legrand dedicated a thirteen-page chapter to specifying the relationship Israel had with the nations, he really did not address individual interactions with Gentiles. Instead, he focused on the broad themes implying Israel’s comprehension of their missional call from the Psalms and Prophets (primarily Isaiah). Aside from mentioning two brief comments from early rabbis concerning proselytes, a reference to Tobit, and the impact evident in the New Testament, Legrand did not touch upon how the

analyzing the impact Hosea and then Isaiah had on their culture but it was more in the context of their interaction with the surrounding culture as a whole and not in the context of individual interactions with Gentiles.

⁷⁷Lucien Legrand, *Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 30 and 37.

⁷⁸Ibid., 14.

Old Testament teaching influenced early Jews.

Scot McKnight published a significant work called *A Light Among the Gentiles* in 1991.⁷⁹ By design, he specifically did not deal with what the Old Testament had to say about mission or interactions between Israelites and Gentiles. Instead, he focused on “the nature and extent of Jewish missionary activity in Second Temple Judaism.”⁸⁰

Since he was mainly interested in signs of proselytizing and conversions as evidence of Jewish missionary activity, McKnight was not concerned with comparing actual Jewish interactions with Gentiles with what had been outlined by the Hebrew Scriptures. However, his methodology for analyzing the second temple literature was well chosen and will be applied to chapter 4 of this work, with some modification of theme. He examined a “cross-section” of the pertinent evidence that informed on the theme of “Jewish attitudes toward proselytism.”⁸¹

McKnight defined a missionary religion as “one that both defines itself as a missionary movement and behaves in a missionary manner.”⁸² Based upon that definition and an examination of the evidence, he concluded that the assumption that Judaism was missional during the second temple period was erroneous.⁸³ His work redefined scholarly

⁷⁹Before McKnight’s work, the rarely disputed majority opinion was that there was clear missional activity by the Jews leading up to the Christian era. A few notable proponents of the majority position before McKnight included Bernard J. Bamberger, William G. Braude, Adolf von Harnack, George F. Moore, Arthur D. Nock, Joachim Jeremias, and Dieter Georgi. For example, see Dieter Georgi, “Missionary Activity in New Testament Times,” in *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

⁸⁰Scot McKnight, *A Light among the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 1.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 9.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 5. McKnight clarified a missionary manner as “behavior that intends to evangelize nonmembers so that these nonmembers will convert to the religion” (4). He correctly noted that often there might be a gap between espoused belief and practice. In his definition, a missionary religion was only one where missionary practice, as he described it, followed belief.

⁸³McKnight was not the first to suggest that point but his book seems to have been the main work to popularize the thesis. For an earlier expression of McKnight’s premise, see Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, trans. Frank Clarke (London: SCM Press, 1959), 264-71. For work with a similar conclusion following McKnight, see Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in*

opinion concerning Jewish proselytism during the second temple period and has been cited frequently in later publications.

In 1992, Charles Scobie published an article entitled “Israel and the Nations: an Essay in Biblical Theology.” He categorized two ways in which Israelites related to the nations: “*historically*, through *incorporation* and *eschatologically* through *ingathering*” (his emphasis).⁸⁴ Regarding incorporation, Scobie emphasized, “The basic concept is of certain individuals coming to Israel” and that during the Old Testament period “there was little or no thought of reaching out and actively seeking proselytes.”⁸⁵ Scobie saw the focus of ‘ingathering’ as being related to future promise only and believed that it was also centripetal in nature.⁸⁶

Recently, more works have been written focusing on the concept of mission in the Old Testament, such as Walter Kaiser’s *Mission in the Old Testament* (2000). Kaiser, reminiscent in some ways of Luther, argued that active mission, both centripetal and centrifugal, could be found in the Old Testament. As noted previously, Kaiser saw Genesis 12 as a ‘Great Commission’ of sorts to all the earth. Concerning the people of Israel, Kaiser further argued, “All were to be agents of God’s blessing to all on earth. Nothing could be clearer from the missionary and ministry call issued in Exodus 19:4-6.”⁸⁷ Seeing more than just a call to witness passively, Kaiser insisted an active

the Religious History of the Roman Empire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). Goodman dealt with a larger time span than McKnight and was even more negative than McKnight in his assessment of the presence of any missionary tendencies among the early Jews. In addition, see E. Will and C. Orrieux, *Prosélytisme juif?: Histoire d’une erreur* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1992). Will and Orrieux saw no evidence for mission activities by the Jews. For a divergent opinion, see Louis. H. Feldman’s *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian*, mentioned previously in n. 54. Also, see information in the section on John Dickson’s work below.

⁸⁴Charles H. H. Scobie, “Israel and the Nations: An Essay in Biblical Theology,” *TynBul* 43 (1992): 286.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 288.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 292.

⁸⁷Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 24. This thought was also present in his 2008 publication of *The Promise-Plan of God*, which was based on his earlier 1978 publication *Toward an Old*

missionary call to reach out was present in the Old Testament.

Corresponding to his premise that the ancient Israelites were expected to reach out to Gentiles, Kaiser did touch on a few individual encounters. For example, he pointed out the interaction of Moses and Pharaoh led to some Egyptians coming to fear the Lord. Kaiser also dedicated his third chapter (12 pages) to examine briefly cases of individual Israelites reaching out to Gentiles. However, except for his treatment of Elisha and Naaman and later comments made about Jonah, Kaiser's treatment of the individual encounters was brief with little analysis.⁸⁸ Although his final chapter dealt with how Paul viewed certain Old Testament passages missionally, Kaiser did not examine how other early Jews viewed interactions with Gentiles or missional teaching in the Old Testament.

In *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, chapters 2 and 3 (46 pages) contain a brief summary of mission as understood in the Old Testament up through the second temple period. Both authors maintained a centripetal understanding of Israel's role in mission to the nations, arguing that "there is no suggestion in the Old Testament that Israel should have engaged in 'cross-cultural' or foreign mission."⁸⁹ Regarding historical interactions with Gentiles, Köstenberger and O'Brien adopted the perspective promoted by Charles Scobie, namely that Israel related to Gentiles mainly by centripetal incorporation. Like Scobie, Köstenberger and O'Brien saw any 'ingathering' as tied to "eschatological expectation."⁹⁰ Because of their

Testament Theology. See Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008). In addition, Kaiser summarized his view concerning an active missionary call present in the Old Testament in his chapter "The Unity of Mission in the Old Testament" found in his latest book. See Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Recovering the Unity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 183-92.

⁸⁸Kaiser dedicated around seven pages of chapter three to the interaction with Elisha and Naaman and raised several missional points that will be referenced later. He credited Walter A. Maier III with key insights. See Walter A. Maier III, "The Healing of Naaman in Missiological Perspective," *CTQ* 61 (1997): 171-96.

⁸⁹Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation*, 35.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 36.

perspectives, they did not deal at all in detail with the implications of individual Israelite interactions with Gentiles.⁹¹ However, Köstenberger and O'Brien did include a chapter in their book about the missional understanding during the second temple period.

At the beginning of their chapter on mission and the second temple period, Köstenberger and O'Brien clarified that the question they were evaluating was not whether Jews should have been missional. Instead, they focused on whether or not the intertestamental Jews actually acted in a missional way. At a fundamental level, they agreed with the perspectives of Scot McKnight and Martin Goodman and generally accepted that there was not strong evidence for concerted second temple missional outreach on the part of the Jews. However, they differed with McKnight on a few points.

Most notably, Köstenberger and O'Brien disagreed with McKnight about his strict limitation of the definition of mission to exclude passive examples of witness and attraction.⁹² The authors allowed that Gentiles were attracted to Judaism, that some Jews were open to proselytes, and that some individual Jews may have participated in "evangelistic dialogue or the use of propagandistic elements in their literature."⁹³ However, they denied that the faith of the Jews "should be characterized as a missionary religion, with missionary outreach constituting a core tenet of second-temple Judaism which Jews generally held and regularly practiced."⁹⁴

Another work following the evangelical tradition of seeing mission throughout the Old Testament, as popularized by Kaiser, was *Announcing the Kingdom* (2003) by

⁹¹They provided some comments about Jonah but downplayed the missional implications of his understanding and actions. They maintained that Jonah really was not intended "to serve as a paradigm for Israel's outreach to the nations." Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation*, 45.

⁹²Ibid., 62. One of nine issues they outlined before citing their conclusions concerning Jewish mission during the second temple time was that they accepted mission could be understood as passive.

⁹³Ibid., 65.

⁹⁴Ibid. Although Köstenberger and O'Brien made this assessment, they did not provide detailed evidence from intertestamental writings as to why they held this opinion. They referred back to the work of McKnight, Goodman, and others.

Arthur Glasser with Charles Van Engen, Dean Gilliland, and Shawn Redford. On the first page they boldly stated, “The whole Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is a missionary book, the revelation of God’s purpose and action in mission in human history.”⁹⁵ Their stated purpose was to study the “emergence and development of the mission of God in both the Old and the New Testaments.”⁹⁶ As they worked chronologically through the history of Israel, they drew missiological implications from various passages of the Hebrew Scriptures.

In the first three parts of their book, the authors of *Announcing the Kingdom* identified missionary passages and missional activities of Israelites and early Jews. From their perspective, “the dominant Old Testament emphasis is centripetal. Only occasionally does one encounter centrifugal overtones. This means that we find almost no evidence in the Old Testament of Israelites putting forth effort to share their knowledge of God with the neighboring nations.”⁹⁷ At times, as they dealt with specific activities of certain Israelites or the nation as a whole, they drew conclusions for current missional implications.⁹⁸ However, their emphasis was on overall themes and not on analyzing interactions of Israelites with Gentiles for the sake of contrasting actual belief and behavior with what had been prescribed by God.

In chapter 10, the authors of *Announcing the Kingdom* briefly dealt with the intertestamental period and Jewish missionary activity. Based on estimated numbers of Jews returning from the Babylonian captivity and later numbers cited around the time of the Maccabean Wars, they surmised, “One is pressed to conclude that this substantial growth must have been the result of intensive proselytizing activity.”⁹⁹ Although they

⁹⁵Arthur Glasser et al., *Announcing the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 17.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid., 64.

⁹⁸Ibid., 63, 67, 74, etc. Treatments of individual interactions with Gentiles were very brief.

clearly believed proselytizing occurred during the intertestamental time, they did not draw conclusions regarding how the Jews saw the Old Testament teachings on interactions with Gentiles.

John Dickson, reacting to the limited definition of mission by McKnight and the resulting critique of James C. Paget and Rainer Reisner, contributed his own work through which he sought to show evidence of Jewish mission leading up to the Christian era based upon a tweaked definition of mission. In his work, *Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities*, Dickson defined mission as “the range of activities by which members of a religious community desirous of the conversion of outsiders seek to promote their religion to non-adherents.”¹⁰⁰

Notably, in the “range of activities” Dickson considered missional, he included non-proclamation activities, including “ethical or verbal apologetic, financial assistance of missionaries and prayer for the conversion of humankind.”¹⁰¹ Based on his definition and study of intertestamental literature, he maintained a clear missional understanding existed. Dickson did some analysis of key Old Testament ‘missional’ Scriptures, including Exodus 19:6 and 1 Kings 8:41-43, as the teachings were reflected in intertestamental works. However, his primary focus was upon the intertestamental and New Testament works themselves.

In his massive survey of early Christian mission, Eckhard Schnabel dedicated

⁹⁹Ibid., 175. Their reason for assuming intense proselytizing seems tenuous.

¹⁰⁰John P. Dickson, *Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 10. Dickson provided a good summary of McKnight’s approach and noted Paget’s critique before proposing his own definition. Also, see the list in n. 19 on pp. 8-9 of applicable works on conversion. For Paget’s position, see James Carleton Paget, “Jewish Proselytism at the Time of Christian Origins: Chimera or Reality?” *JSNT* 62 (1996): 65-103. Paget argued that McKnight went too far in his conclusion that there was no missionary consciousness among the Jews. Based on his survey of the arguments and evidence, Paget posed a “medial position” between each end of the extreme (102). See also Rainer Riesner, “A Pre-Christian Jewish Mission?” in *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, ed. Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 211-50.

¹⁰¹Dickson, *Mission-Commitment*, 10.

all 120 pages of part one to the exploration of possible missionary themes in the Old Testament and the Jewish missional reality leading up to the Christian era. From the beginning, he commented, “The question of missionary work in the Old Testament is seldom posed by Old Testament scholars.”¹⁰² Schnabel did not analyze individual Israelite interactions with Gentiles; instead, he focused on passages by genre with potentially missional teachings.

Although Schnabel acknowledged the universal outlook of the Hebrew Scriptures, he denied that Abraham or Israel was given a specific call to reach out in missionary activity. As he noted, “Missionary ideas need to be distinguished from missionary praxis.”¹⁰³ Therefore, though he recognized a universal outlook in the Old Testament, an expectation of future inclusion of nations with Israel, an expectation of Israel to passively witness to God’s works, and an expectation of a future sending of the Servant of the Lord to the nations, Schnabel did not see any of those elements as an indication that Israel was missional. When it came to the intertestamental period, after Schnabel’s survey of various primary documents, he concluded, “There was no missionary activity by Jews in the centuries before and in the first centuries after Jesus’ and his followers’ ministry, no organized Jewish attempts to convert Gentiles to faith in Yahweh.”¹⁰⁴

A rather unique work was published in 2004 by Allan L. Effa. In his article “Prophet, Kings, Servants, and Lepers: A Missiological Reading of an Ancient Drama,”

¹⁰²Eckhard Schnabel, *Jesus and the Twelve*, vol. 1 of *Early Christian Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 55. He provided a quick summary of theologies that showed a lack of missional interest in the Old Testament. He did note that there was much to be found about the relationships between Israel and the nations without any missionary focus.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 172. Schnabel’s minimalistic view of Jewish proselytizing followed the reasoning of previous scholars, like Martin Goodman and Scot McKnight, and was based upon a limited definition of missionary attitude and activity. His conclusion about the lack of missionary theory or activity before the time of Christ led him to state, “The missionary work of the first Christians cannot be explained with prototypes in the Old Testament or with models of an early Jewish mission” (173).

Effa focused on detailing missiological applications from the interactions Naaman had with certain Israelites. Following the general example of Maier and Kaiser, Effa drew several insightful missional implications from the story. Although the article was limited to only one passage of scripture and the author did not appear to have referenced how intertestamental Jews viewed the encounter, his article did clearly provide several valid missiological applications for today.¹⁰⁵

Two notable works were published in 2006 that dealt with mission in the Old Testament: *Israel and the Nations* by James Okoye and *Mission of God* by Christopher Wright. In *Israel and the Nations*, Okoye studied passages with missional content and argued that there were four facets to Old Testament mission. He identified the four elements as universality, “community-in-mission,” centripetal, and centrifugal mission.¹⁰⁶ As other writers before him, Okoye concentrated mainly on broad missional themes without examining in detail specific Israelite interactions with Gentiles. In his final chapter, he did briefly mention some intertestamental evidence of missionary consciousness but he did not provide many details. Okoye expressed his acceptance of Louis Feldman’s perspective over that of McKnight’s: that proselytism did occur by Jews during the intertestamental period and that there was an increasing shift to more active missionary activity.

Christopher Wright’s work, *Mission of God*, presented the consistent argument that the whole theme of the Old Testament, as with the New Testament, centered about God’s deliberate and planned mission to the world. Since Wright placed the emphasis upon God as the originator of the mission, he identified texts as missionary based upon God’s intent throughout the whole canon of Scripture. He insisted, “Disciples of Jesus

¹⁰⁵Allan L. Effa, “Prophet, Kings, Servants, and Lepers: A Missiological Reading of an Ancient Drama,” *Mis* 32 (2004): 465-73.

¹⁰⁶Okoye, *Israel and the Nations*, 11-12. See pp. 5-9 in *Israel and the Nations* for a survey of works on the OT and Mission.

must read the Old Testament Scriptures . . . both messianically and missiologically.”¹⁰⁷

Wright located the beginning of Israel’s specific mission with Genesis 12 and the calling of Abraham. He asserted, “Israel came into existence as a people with a mission entrusted to them from God for the sake of God’s wider purpose of blessing the nations.”¹⁰⁸ Although, Wright insisted Israel was called to mission, he also qualified how he understood that mission. He ultimately concluded, “It seems to me that there is no clear mandate in God’s revelation to Israel over the centuries for them to undertake ‘missions,’ in our sense of the word to the nations.”¹⁰⁹ Wright believed Israel was called to behave a certain way to point the nations to God but that they had not been commanded to go out and pursue converts.

Overall, Wright dealt with his topic thematically, searching out missiological themes throughout the whole of Scripture but not taking time to study individual interactions between Israelites and Gentiles in detail. Scattered throughout *Mission of God* were references to how missional truths learned in the Hebrew Scriptures were applicable to Christian missions today. Wright’s work is the most extensive treatment of mission in the Old Testament to date.

One of the most recent works to study God’s use of Israel to reach the world was the book, *Israel God’s Servant: God’s Key to the Redemption of the World* by David W. Torrance and George Taylor. In this book, most notably in chapters 3 and 9, the authors argued that Abraham and his descendants were to reveal God’s truth to the world. As Torrance and Taylor maintained, “Abraham’s descendants were chosen, not for their own sake but for the sake of the world.”¹¹⁰ The authors asserted that Israel was to be used

¹⁰⁷Wright, *Mission of God*, 247.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 65.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 502. Contra Walter Kaiser, who argued that Israel had been commanded to go out and share the message of God’s salvation.

¹¹⁰David W. Torrance and George Taylor, *Israel, God’s Servant: God’s Key to the Redemption*

by God to reach the world, ultimately, and most finally, through Christ. Primarily, their focus was beyond what the Old Testament had to say about mission. They did not analyze individual Old Testament Israelite/Gentile relations and they did not study how Old Testament teaching on mission was applied.

Finally, published in 2010, the most recent book that dealt in depth with mission during the intertestamental period was *Crossing Over Sea and Land* by Michael F. Bird. With a primary focus on missionary activity during the second temple period, Bird concluded that individuals did participate actively in missions. However, he also argued that no organized sense of mission existed in Judaism as a whole.

In most cases of ancient, medieval, and modern scholarship, the focus of study regarding the Old Testament and mission has not been on what mission meant for the interactions between Israelites and Gentiles or on what could be learned and applied to present missions from those interactions. Instead, among believers, the focus has been primarily on providing foundational support for the New Testament mission. Even among Jewish writers the analysis and treatment of Hebrew Scriptures with commonly noted missional elements has been used primarily for the justification of current outreach or the argument against outreach. Therefore, room exists for a specific study that concentrates on what impact missional teachings had or did not have on actual Israelite interactions with Gentiles and how those interactions could inform missional practice today.

Methodology

Analyzing the missional concepts in the Old Testament and the interactions of Israelites with Gentiles will be done through several steps. First, foundational missional concepts and teachings on how Israelites should have interacted with Gentiles will be identified in the Hebrew Scriptures. Then, passages highlighting individual Israelite

of the World (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 2007), 124. Also of note in this work, was the strong critique in chap. 10 of a replacement theology that would see the Church as completely replacing Israel.

interactions with Gentiles will be examined and implications for missions will be drawn. Finally, an investigation will be made to determine how the missional teachings of the Old Testament were understood and applied by early Jews in their interactions with Gentiles immediately following the close of the Old Testament canon up through the early years of the Christian Church. Various methods, as explained below, will be used to examine the Scriptures, the interactions between Israelites and Gentiles, and the later perspectives of intertestamental Jews.

Method for Examining the Hebrew Scriptures

Examination of the Hebrew Scriptures will be the most important element of this study. Since it would be impossible, within the scope of this paper, to cover thoroughly every passage of Scripture that referenced interaction with or inclusion of Gentiles, the selections must be limited. Though it is acknowledged that in some sense the criteria for any limitation are arbitrary, some type of limitation is necessary to control the scope of the work. Therefore, selection and evaluation of pertinent Scriptures will be governed by the following principles.

Criteria for the selection of Scriptures. Several criteria will be used to select passages for deeper analysis. First, texts examined in this paper will be restricted primarily to those from Genesis 12 to Malachi 4.¹¹¹ Second, the passages selected will be representative of other passages. If there are multiple passages that support or provide evidence for a particular concept, a single example from those passages will be examined in detail, with reference to the parallel passages. Third, Scriptures will be selected that

¹¹¹The beginning of the divine “commission” to Abraham to be a blessing to the nations occurred sometime around 2091 BC and the end of the prophetic witness of the Hebrew Scriptures did not occur until the fifth century BC, with the prophecy of Malachi. See Ian Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 113. The authors noted that the 2091 BC date is contingent upon how the biblical writers intended the various dates to be understood, whether just approximations or exact.

provide insight into the greater theological themes undergirding the mission of God.

Method for the evaluation of Scriptures. Each Scripture selected will be examined by employing several principles. First, a simple description of the content or main idea will be given. Then, any key textual issues or words will be examined and observations will be made regarding how different readings might affect the overall meaning of the passage. After the textual discussion, brief facts concerning the context of the passage, including any relevant cultural or social issues, will be discussed. Next, if the passage was used by early Jews, those interpretations and applications will be evaluated. Finally, a summary of missional observations regarding the passage will be made.

Method for Examining Cases of Israelite Interactions with Gentiles

Though it seems clear that the mission to reach the nations was God's from the beginning, He used the Israelites to achieve His purpose. How the Israelites served the purpose of the Lord through their interactions with their neighbors can be instructive for all who seek to be used by God today. To identify principles from the interactions of Israelites with Gentiles that may be applied to current missional practice, a series of passages detailing interactions between Israelites and Gentiles will be examined. In order to restrict the types of interactions considered, each passage will conform to specific selection criteria and will be analyzed based on predetermined evaluation criteria.

Criteria for the selection of narrative interactions. Records, detailing the relationships of God's people with each other and the surrounding peoples, fill the Old Testament. Encounters exist between individuals, such as the interplay between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Encounters are documented between one Israelite and a group of Gentiles, just as the encounter between Elisha and the Syrian Raiders. Stories are also found detailing the relations of multiple Israelites with Gentiles like the story of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and the Babylonians. In order to streamline the analysis

as much as possible regarding the actions of the Israelites, only stories detailing the relationship between one primary Israelite and a Gentile, or group of Gentiles, will be considered. Stories involving groups of Israelites will not be included.

A further delimitation of the interactions will be that each vignette discussed will involve at least one face-to-face encounter between the primary Israelite and the respective Gentile or group of Gentiles. Examples of communications between Israelites and Gentiles only by letter or only through messengers will not be considered. Therefore, though certain encounters are intriguing, like the interplay between Hezekiah and Sennacherib through messengers in 2 Kings 18-19, they will not be considered.

One intention is to analyze the outcomes of the interactions between Israelites and Gentiles in respect to fulfilling God's mission in the Old Testament. Although inconclusive interactions could be instructive, due to the necessity of scope limitation, only those encounters that show clear positive results will be scrutinized. An encounter will be considered to have positive results if God's name is glorified or if deference and honor are given to the Lord as a result of the interaction.

Method for the evaluation of narrative interactions. Each passage selected will be evaluated using the same method. First, a simple description of the basic action of the encounter will be provided. Then, if there are any potentially significant textual issues or words whose meanings might specifically add to the evaluation, they will be examined. After the textual discussion, brief facts concerning the cultural or social background of the Gentile will be noted.

Next, the interaction of the encounter will be evaluated. As a part of the evaluation, several uniform topics will be addressed. The standard subject matter will include: (1) who initiated the meeting, (2) how the Israelite behaved toward the Gentile(s), (3) specific teachings in the Torah applicable to the situation, (4) any unexpected elements to the interaction, and (5) the outcome. Finally, missional

observations will be drawn based upon the analysis of each encounter.

Method for Examining the Reality of Intertestamental Jews Concerning Interactions with Gentiles and Missions

Once the Old Testament's passages concerning missions and the interaction of Israelites with Gentiles have been analyzed, then the immediate impact of the Old Testament teaching will be studied by examining the perspectives of early Jews concerning the general question of interacting with Gentiles and proselytizing and the interpretations of the Jews concerning the specific case studies. As the understanding of the early Jews concerning missions and proselytizing is examined, various sources will be utilized. Comments relevant to Israelite/Gentile relations will be considered in the Apocrypha, Jewish Pseudepigrapha, New Testament, and early rabbinical writings.

All witnesses will be evaluated based on what was actually documented, what may be inferred from the record, and what the apparent attitude or motivation was of the author or speaker. As the sources are examined, one question will be continually considered: How did the Jewish reality up through around AD 250 reflect an understanding of Old Testament mission?

Once the Scriptural evidence, case studies, and later Jewish understanding have been studied, all the conclusions from each section will be synthesized and the following questions will be addressed. Was there a missional expectation for the Israelites as they interacted with Gentiles? What was it and did the early Israelites understand a specific call to mission? If there was a mission expectation for the people in the Old Testament, how did they succeed or fail? Finally, overall conclusions will be drawn concerning the existence of mission aspects in the Old Testament, the effects of interactions between Israelites and Gentiles, and the applications for today.

CHAPTER 2

FOUNDATION FOR ISRAELITE MISSION AND INTERACTIONS WITH GENTILES

Principles for understanding how Israel was to relate with Gentiles are present in the Hebrew Scriptures. Before a detailed study is made concerning how the Israelites actually interacted with Gentiles and the implications of those interactions, the foundations from the Torah and from writings outside the Torah need to be reviewed. Once a general study of the foundational passages is completed, then key phrases and concepts regarding Israelite interaction with non-Israelites will be surveyed.

Foundation Derived from the Torah

Since the Torah consists of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible and documents the beginning of all people, especially in regards to the formation of the Israelite people, the Torah is foundational to the rest of Hebrew Scripture and to this study. With the understanding that the Torah was composed during the time of Moses and therefore potentially available in both oral and written form to the Israelites as they entered Canaan, comes the possibility that successive Israelite interactions with Gentiles were affected by the Torah's content.¹ Aspects within the Torah pertinent to this study

¹Scholars who support or who have compiled evidence supporting the composition of the Torah (or the greater part of the Torah) around the time of Moses include Gleason Archer, Ronald Youngblood, Kenneth A. Kitchen, Duane Garrett, and Walter C. Kaiser Jr. See Gleason L. Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 113-26; Ronald F. Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 12-14; Duane Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 66-87; Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable & Relevant?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 17-23, 25. Dating of the composition of the Torah to the time of Moses is accepted for several significant reasons. First, situations and perspectives found in the Torah do appear to have unique verifiable parallels in the archaeological data and texts dated to around the second millennium (e.g., the Nuzi texts). Second, evidence exists in the composition of second millennium Egyptian influence. Third, the internal claim of the Torah and the OT supports Mosaic authorship of various sections. For

will be examined in two sections: information derived from the general narratives of the Torah and information derived from the actual laws within the narratives of the Torah.

Principles from Torah Narratives

Narratives found in the Torah contain several elements key to the study of mission and Israelite interactions with Gentiles. First, the narratives clearly identify the God of the Israelites as the God of every aspect of creation and highlight the common ancestry of all humanity.² At its core, the Torah teaches human equality as a creation of God and value for all human life. All humanity is presented as created “in the image of God,” as noted in Genesis 1:27, and that identification lent inherent worth to the individual, as shown in Genesis 9:5-6. In addition, as Andreas Köstenberger and Peter O’Brien noted, “Genesis 1 indicates that God’s lordship is over the whole creation including all humankind.”³

Second, from Genesis 3 onward, the Torah teaches that humanity is separated from God by rebellion. The story of the first act of rebellion leads to successive acts of rebellion pointing to a need for restoration between God and man.⁴ Furthermore, as the

example: Exod 15:1; 17:14; 24:4, 7; 34:27-29; Lev 10:11; 26:46; Num 29:40; 33:2; 36:5, 13; Deut 1:1, 5; 4:44-45; 5:1; 31:9, 22, 24-26, 30; 33:1; Josh 1:7; 8:31-35; 21:2, 8; 22:5; 23:6; Judg 3:4; 1 Kgs 2:3; 8:56; 1 Chr 6:49; 15:15; 22:13; 2 Chr 8:13; 23:18; 25:4; 30:16; 33:8; 34:14; 35:6, 12; Ezra 3:2; 6:18; 7:6; Neh 1:7-8; 8:1, 14; 9:14; 10:29; 13:1; Dan 9:11, 13; Mal 4:4. This list does not include all the passages that indicate that the words recorded were what the Lord spoke to Moses or what Moses spoke (e.g., Lev 1:1; Num 1:1; Deut 1:1; and the start of most major sections). Finally, the testimonies of the Lord Jesus, the apostles, and NT authors ascribe Mosaic authorship to sections of the Torah (Matt 8:4; 19:7-8; Mark 1:44; 7:10; 10:3-4; 12:26; Luke 2:22; 5:14; 16:29-31; 20:37; 24:27, 44; John 1:17, 45; 5:45-46; 7:19-23; Acts 3:22; 7:37-38; 13:39; 15:21; 26:22; 28:23; Rom 10:5, 19; 1 Cor 9:9; 2 Cor 3:15; Heb 7:14; 8:5; 9:19; Rev 15:3). For opposing positions, see J. A. Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 80-145; R. N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 53 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987); and Alexander Rofe, *Introduction to the Composition of the Pentateuch*, The Biblical Seminar 58 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 130.

²Gen 1:1, 26-27; 3:20; 7:7, 23; 9:18-19; 10:32; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:5.

³Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 27.

⁴Walter Kaiser noted, “Humanity’s revolt . . . is evident primarily in the three catastrophes of

account of Cain and Abel suggests, restoration with God must be on His terms not through any other means conceived by man. As many scholars have noted, the act of defiance on the part of all mankind to build a tower to the heavens in order to stay together (thus rejecting God's command to go out through the earth) is strategically placed before God's initiation of relationship with Abram in order to bring blessing to all mankind. The principle of man's separation from God by sin leads to the next principle.

Third, beyond God's rightful lordship over all humanity and the separation of man from God due to sin, the narratives of the Torah illustrate God's concern for all humanity, even those who do not acknowledge His authority. From the beginning, God's concern for all humanity is highlighted by the promise of the Seed from the woman that will eventually crush the Serpent, the '*protoevangelium*.' As H. D. Beeby noted,

A serious view of the canon, with regard not only to its content but also to its ordering, reveals that the nations . . . are at the center of the Bible's concern. Before Abraham was, they are; and to them Abraham comes with the promise of blessing. If we accept that Genesis 1-11 is setting the stage for the drama of redemption, then it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the appearance of the nations is the climax to which these eleven chapters are moving. They are the object of God's concern. The work of creation moves toward them, and the work of redemption, commencing with Abraham, begins with them and exists because of them.⁵

It was for this reason that Scott Hafemann called biblical history "the history of redemption" because of the focus on "God's rescue of humanity from its rebellion against its creator and sustainer."⁶

God, as revealed through the Torah, was involved and in full control over all human history. Upon numerous occasions, God intervened in history and related

the fall, the flood, and the 'flop' of the tower of Babel. Here too, in each of these disasters and crises for human civilization, the divine word was present – only it was a word of judgment before it was a word of blessing." Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Promise-Plan of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 36.

⁵H. D. Beeby, *Canon and Mission* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 62. Also, Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 36. Kaiser stated regarding Gen 1-11, "The sweep of these initial chapters of the Bible strongly indicates that God's concern was for the whole world, even before he announced the role the patriarchs and their offspring would play in carrying out this mission for 'all the families of the earth' (12:3)."

⁶Scott J. Hafemann, "The Covenant Relationship," in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 21.

personally with men and women, including those not in the line known to walk with God or call upon His name.⁷ Often God's intervention was so that lives might be spared. Furthermore, the Torah by its existence and content illustrates that God desired to be known and made a way for His creation to know Him. Several passages exist in the Torah alone highlighting God's interactions with humanity for the reason that He might be known. God's revelation is foundational to the concept of mission; without His self-disclosure, no evidence would exist of His mission or real means for man to be involved in His mission.

Fourth, the narratives in Genesis and Exodus describe the formation of the people chosen by God from other peoples of the earth. Content from the narratives and the laws explains what made an Israelite an Israelite. Specifically, the narratives contain two of the primary passages used by scholars in their debate concerning Israel's calling and purpose: Genesis 12 and Exodus 19.⁸ As John Goldingay noted of Israel, "They only exist as a people because of an act of God."⁹ Election of a people of God is one of the underlying themes of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Fifth, the narratives in the Torah convey the commonalities between God's people and the Gentiles. A theme concerning the patriarchs and the Israelites throughout the Torah was that they were all strangers and sojourners at some point.¹⁰ In addition, the Torah illustrates the chosen people's great similarity to the rest of humanity in propensity for sinful failure.¹¹ On the other hand, the Scriptures also show the ability of Gentiles to

⁷For example: Cain in Gen 4:4-15; Hagar in Gen 16:6-13; Abimelech in Gen 20:2-7; Hagar and Ishmael in Gen 21:17-20; Laban in Gen 31:24; Pharaoh in Gen 41:25-32; Balaam in Num 22:21-35.

⁸Further examination of these phrases will follow in the "Key Phrases" section below.

⁹John Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 62.

¹⁰For example, Abraham in Gen 23:4; Jacob in Gen 36:7; Joseph; the sons of Jacob in Gen 47:4; Moses in Exod 2:22.

¹¹For example, Abraham and his cowardice, failure to care for Sarah, and deceptions in Gen

listen to and obey God's direction. Obvious examples include Hagar (Gen 16:6-15; 21:14-20), Abimelech, the King of Gerar, (Gen 20:1-18), Laban (Gen 31:22-55), and the Pharaoh of Joseph's time (Gen 41:15-44). This foundational commonality before God between the chosen people and Gentiles undergirds some of the universalistic elements found throughout Scripture.

Finally, the narratives of the Torah detail examples of how the patriarchs and earliest Israelites interacted with Gentiles. From the early interactions, principles about the elect people's behavior toward people not following the God of Abraham can be inferred. One prime area of interest pertinent to missional themes would be that of intercession or mediation and the part played by God's people. In the first example of physical intercession, Abraham intervened with God's help to deliver not only his kinsman, Lot, but also the people of Sodom from captivity (Gen 14:14-24). In the first example of prayerful intercession, Abraham interceded for Ishmael (Gen 17:18; 20).

Two other examples of intercession by prayer in the life of Abraham are noteworthy: his intercession for any righteous in Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:17-33), and his intercession for Abimelech of Gerar by the express will of God (Gen 20:3-18). In both cases, God positioned Abraham to become an intercessor for those outside the chosen line.¹² In addition, in both cases, statements were made that indicate clearly God's positive response to Abraham's intercession. In regard to the destruction of Sodom and the cities of the plain, 'righteous Lot' was spared (Gen 19:29; 2 Pet 2:7). In regards to the physical restoration of Abimelech and his house, God provided healing in response to

12:11-19; 20:2-10; Isaac's lie in Gen 26:6-10; Jacob's deception in Gen 27:18-33; Reuben's sexual immorality in Gen 35:22 (Gen 49:3-4); Simeon and Levi in their blood lust in Gen 34:25-30; the brothers of Joseph in their murderous impulse, their betrayal, and their lies in Gen 37:20-34; Judah's failure to honor his word and care for his daughter-in-law as well as his sexual immorality in Gen 38:11-18; Moses' premeditated murder of the Egyptian in Exod 2:11-14.

¹²Joel Kaminsky argued that the example of Abraham's intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah and his intercession for Abimelech clarified that the call to blessing in part "comes about through mediatorial services rendered by Abraham and Israel." See Joel S. Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 83.

Abraham's intercession (Gen 20:17). Thus, God expected Abraham and his descendants to intercede for others. God used the interactions of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses to witness to other people concerning His presence and blessing.¹³ By responding to intercessions of His people, God revealed Himself to those outside the chosen people.

Another of the most important corollaries stemming from the interaction of the patriarchs and early Israelites is that throughout interactions, occasional non-Israelites were incorporated into the people of Israel. Notable cases included mixed multitudes leaving Egypt with the Israelites and the offer Moses made Hobab.¹⁴ From the evidence of the Torah narrative, inclusion of Gentiles into the people of Israel was always a possibility and this openness to incorporation continued in the earliest account following the time of the Torah.¹⁵ Restoration with God and incorporation with God's people was shown as possible for any people willing to align themselves with Him.

Principles Found in Torah Legislation

In addition to the principles gleaned from the narratives of the Torah, several expectations for Israelite behavior with non-Israelites may be drawn from the laws provided by God for Israel following the exodus from Egypt and recorded by Moses in the Torah. Rambam (Maimonides; Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon) identified 613 Laws in the Torah: 248 deemed positive commands and 365 deemed negative commands.¹⁶ Although

¹³In both Abraham's and Isaac's interactions with the respective leaders of Gerar, it is clear that God had made known His presence and blessing to His chosen. See Gen 21:22-24 and Gen 25:26-31. See also Laban's comments to Jacob (Gen 30:27) and the observations about Joseph (Gen 39:2-5, 21-23). Repeatedly, Moses interceded with God to end various plagues witnessing to the relationship Moses had with the true omnipotent God (Exod 8:8-13, 29-31; 9:27-33; 10:16-19).

¹⁴Exod 12:38; Num 10:29-32.

¹⁵A prime example just after the time of the Torah is found in Josh 6:25. Rahab's incorporation is significant because she had come to a state of belief in Israel's God and wanted to cast her lot with Him before she ever met the Israelites, based on what she had heard about Israel's exodus. Her encounter with the people of Israel culminated in her inclusion and incorporation into the people of Israel.

¹⁶Tracey R. Rich, "A List of the 613 Mitzvot (Commandments)" Judaism 101 (2007) [on-line]; accessed 22 November 2009; available from <http://www.jewfaq.org/613.htm>; Internet.

disagreement exists about the precise number of laws in the Torah, clearly, the laws present in the Torah provided some of the stones in the foundation for how Israel was to relate with people, including Gentiles.¹⁷ Adele Berlin noted, “We cannot know if or how these laws were applied in real life. We can only observe the type of society that the laws appear calculated to produce.”¹⁸ Such a position is conceded only when no direct Scriptural testimony exists concerning the actions of Israel either following or breaking the laws.¹⁹

Few scholars have dealt in detail with either the implications of interactions with Gentiles based on the laws or the missional elements present in some of the laws. However, some of the most prominent recent scholars who have touched on these concepts in relation to the law include Christopher Wright, Eckhard Schnabel, and Joel Kaminsky.²⁰

With the laws present in the Torah, in most cases of specific laws, the people

¹⁷Rifat Sonsino, *Motive Clauses in Hebrew Law*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 45 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 77. For example, Sonsino noted, “Even within clearly identified Pentateuchal legal texts it is difficult to separate the individual legal prescriptions.”

¹⁸Adele Berlin, “Sex and the Single Girl in Deuteronomy 22,” in *Mishneh Todah: Studies in Deuteronomy and Its Cultural Environment in Honor of Jeffrey H. Tigay*, ed. Nili Sacher Fox, David A. Glatt-Gilad, and Michael J. Williams (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 98. She observed that there are differences of opinion about whether or not the laws were even to be implemented at all. However, based on what Scripture says concerning the laws, the clear sense is that God intended that they be transmitted down through generations and obeyed.

¹⁹For example many passages document idolatry (1 Kgs 11:4-8; Hosea), working on the Sabbath (Jer 17:19-23), failure to release Hebrew slaves every seven years (Jer 34:8-16), charging interest of fellow Jews (Neh 5:1-13), violation of the rights of the vulnerable (Amos 5:11-12), and other examples of explicit statements in Scripture pertaining to Israel’s law observance (or lack thereof). The overwhelming testimony of Old Testament Scripture is that Israelites did not follow God’s directions consistently just as the consistent indictment of the prophets bore witness.

²⁰Christopher J. H. Wright’s treatment of the law is one of the most recent comprehensive studies of the ethical ramifications. See Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004). See the brief section on the law and pagan neighbors in Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Israel, The People of God, and the Nations,” *JETS* 45 (2002): 37-38. See also Joel S. Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 95-105. Kaiser dedicated less than a page to Mosaic Legislation as it affected sojourners or foreigners. The point of his section was that from the laws it seemed clear that non-Israelites “were expected to come to worship the Living God.” See Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 24.

addressed as non-Israelites were those sojourning or living in the midst of Israel. Certain mandates clearly only applied to those non-Israelites by birth who had fully adopted Israelite religion (notably by the external sign of circumcision). Other laws seemed to apply to all foreigners in the midst of Israel regardless of whether they had fully converted or not. Physical location of foreigners in the midst of the people of Israel heightened the necessity of proper interaction. From the laws that reference non-Israelites, several general standards may be noted that are pertinent to a study of Israelite interaction with Gentiles and mission. Some principles include the expectation of the protection of strangers, the equality (or inequality) of strangers in different situations, the worship expectation for strangers, and cases of inclusion (or exclusion) of strangers.²¹

First, throughout the laws Israelites were given a protection mandate for non-Israelites, most often for those who resided within Israel's boundaries but sometimes even in reference to peoples outside her boundaries.²² Because of their vulnerable position as strangers in a foreign land, legislation that referenced widows and orphans *always* included strangers. Positively, protection and care included the provision of necessities (Deut 14:29; 24:19-21; 26:12-13). From the negative commands, Israelites were told they must not "vex" or "oppress" a stranger (Exod 22:21) or fail to provide justice (Deut 24: 17). In fact, failure to provide justice to strangers invoked the curse of God (Deut 27:19). At least a basic understanding of the laws was retained by some of the prophets as illustrated by the fact that the prophets repeatedly held Israel responsible for violating the laws. For example, Malachi 3:5 stated, "'And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness . . . against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, And against those who turn away an alien – Because they do not fear Me,' Says the LORD of hosts."

²¹Some laws teach multiple principles.

²²For example, the laws of warfare that protected enemies who surrendered (Deut 20:10-15).

God gave two main reasons for the protection and valuation of the stranger. One reason was so that Israelites would remember that they, too, had been strangers. In a way, it was a reminder of their equality with other strangers. On one level, Israelites had been strangers before God until He adopted them as His own people.²³ As a result, the Lord was calling them to empathize with the situation of strangers and treat strangers as the Lord had graciously treated Israel. Another main reason the Israelites were prompted to care for the stranger was the most basic fact that God loved the stranger (Deut 10:18). God's example was to direct all of their actions. Israelites were enjoined to love and care for the strangers partly because such actions were characteristics of God.

A second principle found in the laws was the equality of the Israelite with the non-Israelite in many situations. First recorded in Exodus 12:49, the standard formula, "One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you," appeared with little variation in multiple passages.²⁴ Often passages detailing laws indicated that the stranger in their midst (הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם) was to be treated as one native-born (אֲזֵרָה). All were to obey God's moral law and were liable for violations. All were entitled and commanded to observe the Sabbath (Lev 25:6). All were equally commanded to "rejoice before the Lord" (Deut 16:11, 14). All received the same protection and rights in the case of manslaughter.²⁵

²³Exod 22:21 [HB 22:20]; 23:9; Lev 19:34; Deut 10:19 (root גֵּר). These laws contain clauses that are considered motive because they provide the reason for obedience. See Sonsino, *Motive Clauses*, 68. God reminded the Israelites that before him they were still strangers as in Lev 25:23 (root גֵּר). This understanding of the Israelite status as a stranger before God was expressly maintained and reflected by David. For example, 1 Chr 29:15; Ps 39:12 [HB 39:13] (both use root תוֹשֵׁב).

²⁴For example, Exod 12:49; Lev 16:29; 18:26; 24:22; Num 9:14; 15:15-16, 29; 19:10 (listed passages use the root גֵּר for stranger). Various scholars classify the previous statements as either containing examples of parenthetic clauses (exhortations) or motive clauses. Following Sonsino, the clauses appear more parenthetic than motive. See Sonsino, *Motive Clauses*, 68-69. Some writers appear to lump the אֲזֵרָה with the non-Israelites; however, this does not appear to represent correctly the meaning. See Arthur F. Glasser et al., *Announcing the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 120.

²⁵Num 35:15 (root תוֹשֵׁב).

To be fair, one must acknowledge that while some laws clearly required equality between Israelites and Gentiles, some laws allowed clear differences for behavior with fellow Israelites as opposed to behavior with Gentiles. For example, a non-Israelite was never to be crowned as king over the nation.²⁶ In addition, Israelites were allowed to own non-Israelites and keep them in bondage, while any Israelite slave had to be released within a set amount of time.²⁷ Israelites could not eat animals that died naturally but they could sell or give them to non-Israelites and the non-Israelites were permitted to eat them.²⁸ In addition, Israelites could not exact interest from a fellow Israelite but could draw interest upon a loan from a non-Israelite.²⁹ To restrict charging interest against one's own people appeared unique to Israel.³⁰ Seeing a missional element to the loan laws, Michael J. Williams suggested that laws proscribing loans, even with an exclusion of foreigners as beneficiaries, helped illustrate "a covenantal and divine compassion and deliverance that Israel was called to exhibit to the surrounding nations."³¹ It does seem that the key factor when differences were allowed was to note the

²⁶Deut 17:15 (נכרי).

²⁷Lev 25:45-54 (root חושב) In reference to Israelites bought by foreigners, the Israelite could be redeemed at any time for the right price and had to be released by the foreigner on the day of Jubilee if someone had not already redeemed him. Deut 15:12-18 referred to cases when Israelites had been sold to a fellow Israelite, in which case the longest the slave could be kept was for six years (unless the slave chose to stay forever). Similarly, if loans had been given to Israelites (outside of the interest issue), then they had to be forgiven when the seven-year celebration came up, while loans could be maintained against non-Israelites.

²⁸Deut 14:21 (נכרי).

²⁹Deut 15:2-3; 23:20 [HB Deut 23:21] (both cases of נכרי).

³⁰Michael J. Williams, "Taking Interest in Taking Interest," in *Mishneh Todah: Studies in Deuteronomy and Its Cultural Environment in Honor of Jeffrey H. Tigay*, ed. Nili Sacher Fox, David A. Glatt-Gilad, and Michael J. Williams (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 127. See also Hillel Gamoran, "The Biblical Law against Loans on Interest," *JNES* 30 (1971): 127. Gamoran maintained "None of the legal codes of the ancient world outside of the Bible contains laws proscribing lending on interest." See also Edward Neufeld, "The Prohibitions against Loans at Interest in Ancient Hebrew Laws," *HUCA* 26 (1955): 372-75.

³¹Williams, "Taking Interest," 130.

special covenantal relationship God had with the Israelites.

Third, a principle about the expectation of worship from the non-Israelite resident alien was present in the laws. In many respects, the two groups were to behave the same in the land. Certainly, it is significant that sojourners were expected, even commanded, to be with the native Israelites for the reading of the law. The purpose for their presence was the same as for native Israelites, so that they all would learn about God and come to fear God and obey His laws (Deut 31:10-13).

No question existed concerning the fact that Israelites were to worship Yahweh alone. However, did the same rules apply to the sojourners? Israel was told unequivocally to destroy *all* idols in the land (Deut 12:2-3). As Jacob Neusner commented, “Scripture does not contemplate Israel’s coexisting in the land with Gentiles and their idolatry.”³² Examples of compromise later found in the historical books were always presented negatively and as violations of God’s standards.³³ While some similar expectations of worship seemed to have been held, cases existed when non-Israelites were to be treated differently. Of note, when it came to eating the Passover feast and providing animals for burnt offerings, non-Israelites were pointedly excluded.³⁴

³²Jacob Neusner, “Rabbinic Reading: Idolatry and Paganism,” in *Torah Revealed, Torah Fulfilled: Scriptural Laws in Formative Judaism and Earliest Christianity*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Bruce D. Chilton, and Baruch A. Levine (New York: T & T Clark International, 2008), 26. Neusner pointed out that the Halakhah tried to deal with the reality of Israelites interacting with Gentiles in *Abodah Zarah*.

³³For example, Solomon’s compromise by building high places for his wives (1 Kgs 11:4-11).

³⁴Exod 12:43; Lev 22:25. Both these passages translate the word stranger from the Hebrew root נָכַר. Even though the animals for burnt offerings were not to be supplied by non-Israelites, it is important to point out that at least some non-Israelites could apparently still purchase a clean animal and offer a burnt offering, as Lev 22:18 implied (נָכַר was used in Lev 22:18). In the Exod 12:45 exclusion of foreigners from Passover, the root used was הָיִיב as it was also in Lev 22:10 when the foreigner was excluded from eating the holy offering (the bread the priests were allowed to eat) unless they were owned by the priest (Lev 22:11). The Lev 22:10 instance of exclusion was not exceptional though because any non-Levitical Israelites were also excluded from eating of the holy bread and food allotted to the priests as well as from carrying out priestly duties. For other similar cases, see also Exod 29:33; 30:33; Num 1:51; 3:10; 17:5; 18:4-7 (root זָר for stranger). The word זָר could include all non-Levites in these usages. In the case of Deut 25:5, the word זָר seems to apply to anyone outside the husband’s family.

Finally, beyond the notion of equality on a human level, several laws exist that seem to promote the theme of total inclusion from a religious level if the stranger would fully convert. For the resident alien who accepted circumcision, there was no difference when it came to Passover.³⁵ Provision for total inclusion is significant. As Kaiser noted, “Foreigners and Gentiles were expected to come to worship the Living God because of the nature, power, and saving qualities of the Name of God.”³⁶

In addition to legislation specifically mentioning non-Israelites, one must also take into account information regarding Israelite behavior that is present in the Decalogue itself. From the first four commands, it is clear that the Israelites were to behave in a way in their relationship with God that could be observed externally. Such behavior testified to the unique identity of the Lord. In addition, the last five commands were implicitly applicable to all Israelite relationships, including interactions with non-Israelites.

Based on the quick survey of missional concepts found in the Torah, one could argue that Köstenberger and O’Brien were correct when they noted, “Any comprehensive treatment of mission in the Old Testament must begin with God’s creation and his purposes for humanity.”³⁷ God was interested in all humanity before the election of the people of Israel. Even with the formation of Israel, as Wright noted concerning the Old Testament, “Throughout, there was a remarkable openness to the inclusion and absorption of aliens into the Israelite community at various levels.”³⁸ God pointedly expressed his interest in and love for the sojourners. Miracles were often done, not just for the sake of Israel, but that the whole earth would hear of His name. Commands laid

³⁵Exod 12:48-49 (גג).

³⁶Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 24.

³⁷Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 25.

³⁸Christopher J. H. Wright, “Implications of Conversion in the Old Testament and the New,” *IBMR* 25 (2004): 17.

upon Israel were given so that through Israel's behavior, the holiness and uniqueness of God would be manifest. The Torah bears witness to cases of those from outside the covenantal people drawing near to God because of their encounter with the truth about who He was. In this sense, God's activity as exhibited in the Torah was clearly missional.

Even given the foundational missional content of the Torah noted above, some have denied its relevance because they questioned whether its teachings were truly available to the Israelites from the point of entering Canaan. In regards to the question about whether early Israelites had access to the oral or written content of the Torah, the text conveys that from the point of the people entering Canaan, they had the essence of the teachings known as the Book of the Law. Notably, the teachings contained in the Law were revered as having divine originations and there was the articulated expectation that the precepts would be passed on to the people throughout following generations. Kings, especially, were commanded to acquaint themselves with the law and the law was to be read to all the people, including every sojourner (גֵּר), every seven years.³⁹ Specific references to the Book of the Law or the Book of the Lord trace the presence of God's teachings in Israel.⁴⁰ The earliest archaeological record of a Torah passage in written form was found at Ketef Hinnom on two silver amulets possibly dating as far back as the seventh century.⁴¹ Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that at least some of the Israelites throughout the generations following the exodus knew of God's revelation from the law, although it is also clear that there were periods of darkness when all the Lord's teachings

³⁹Deut 17:18-19; 31:10-13. Scholars have pointed out how difficult it would have been for the people to have truly known the law if they only heard it once every seven years. Some suggested smaller sections of the law were read periodically as well. See A. Alt, "The Origins of Israelite Law," in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1968), 162-63. See also a summary of his position by Rifat Sonsino, *Motive Clauses*, 4-5.

⁴⁰David A. Glatt-Gilad, "Law (Book) of Moses within the Deuteronomistic History," *Mishneh Todah*, ed. Nili Sacher Fox, David A. Glatt-Gilad, and Michael J. Williams (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 185-99. Although he approached the study from a perspective that the history was recreated later, his observations about references to the Law in non-Torah writings were helpful.

⁴¹Kaiser, *OT Documents*, 45.

were not as well known to all.⁴²

Foundation Derived from Outside the Torah

Not only are key themes and passages found in the Torah that inform about how Israelites were to relate with Gentiles but writings outside the Torah also contain indications about how Israelites were to relate (or how they did relate) and provide insight on missional expectations. Though much could be written on elements of mission found outside the Torah, due to the scope of this paper and limitations in space, only the highlights can be addressed. Since the primary focus of this paper and the entirety of chapter 3 will deal with the interactions present in narrative content, detailed comment on the narrative information will be saved for that chapter. Therefore, for the purpose of this chapter, missional content found outside the Torah will be presented in the following three sections: missional aspects of intercession, missional aspects found in the Psalms, and missional aspects found in selected prophecies.

Missional Aspects of Intercession

One missional theme that continued from the Torah throughout the other writings included the concept that the chosen people of God should and did intercede with God on the behalf of various Gentiles. One key example of intercession outside the Torah was Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple (1 Kgs 8:41-43; 2 Chr 6:32-33). George Peters observed that in Solomon's prayer, the king "stated the missionary purpose" of the temple, which was that, ultimately, God would be known and all would fear Him.⁴³ In his prayer, Solomon asked God to bring people to understand who He was

⁴²See, for example, the reaction of Josiah to the rediscovery and reading of the law (2 Kgs 22:8-23:3). Note that the priests knew what it was that they had found, so they retained some knowledge of the contents. Also, see the reaction of the people to whom Ezra read the law (Neh 8:1-9).

⁴³George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 117. Though Peters was focused on the "missionary significance of the Temple," the passage also shows the missionary heart of God as voiced by Solomon.

and to fear him just as Israel feared the Lord. Solomon's prayer also communicated an expectation that foreigners would come to the God of Israel and seek His face in the Temple. Hope of relationships between God and non-Israelites was implicit.

Another interesting reference to intercession by Israelites for non-Israelites may be found in Jeremiah 29:7. In this passage, the Lord directed the people in captivity in Babylon to "Seek the peace of the city . . . pray to the LORD for it." Concerning this unique command, Glasser commented, "If a person or nation has *šālôm*, no lack exists in any direction, whether personal or national It has to do with community (Ps 29:11) and means total harmony within the community."⁴⁴ Thus, the Israelites were commanded to pray for total good for the Babylonians. Concerning *שָׁלוֹם*, Glasser further stated "Although in the Old Testament it is not explicitly equated with spiritual peace with God, this eschatological-salvation concept is intimated."⁴⁵ Other examples of intercession for non-Israelites were scattered throughout the extra-Torah writings and the physical intercessions found in the narratives will be addressed more fully in chapter 3.

Specific missional aspects that can be drawn from the examples above include the concept of God and His people's concern for people outside the realm of Israel, which provides support to the theme of the universal scope in God's intent and outreach with people. Cases of intercession, like Solomon's prayer, show that some Israelites had the desire and expectation that non-Israelites would come to worship the true God. For, why would one intercede if one did not expect or hope for a positive response on behalf of God? In addition, cases of intercession again cast the Israelites in the role of mediators and participants in bringing blessing to the nations as a result of God's missional intention.

⁴⁴Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, 130.

⁴⁵Ibid. See also Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1962), 53. Blauw noted of 'peace', "A situation of complete well-being in every respect is designated." Also, see Ps 83:16-18, in which a prayer is voiced for the nations to be disciplined and punished *in order that* they would seek God and come to know the Lord.

Missional Aspects of Psalms

Missiologists and theologians have spoken often of the missional elements found in the psalms. Recent scholars who have highlighted missional elements found in the psalms include George Peters, Walter Kaiser Jr., Christopher Wright, and Terrence Fretheim. Notably, Kaiser characterized “Psalms 2, 33, 67, 96, 98, 117, and 145” as “explicit missionary Psalms in total.”⁴⁶ Beyond those ‘explicit missionary Psalms’ numerous other psalms provide support for various missiological themes including: the themes of the universal extent of God’s rule, God’s world-wide judgment, God’s salvation, the call to spread the account of God to the nations, the call for the nations to praise God, and the positive observation of righteous people scattered throughout the nations.

First, the psalms teach the universality of God’s rule. G. Ernest Wright noted that many passages exist in the psalms and prophecies that affirm “God’s claim to sovereignty over the whole world” and specifically “in the psalms which reflect the celebration of God’s universal rule in relation to the office of the Davidic king (i.e., the royal and ‘enthronement’ hymns.)”⁴⁷ In the Psalter, George Peters cited “more than 175 references of a universalistic note relating to the nations of the world.”⁴⁸

Second, going beyond the present universal rule of God over all, the psalms conveyed the expectation that God would judge the whole world according to His

⁴⁶Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 189. See also George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 116. Peters provided a similar list with the exclusion of Pss 67 and 96 and the addition of 66 and 72. Carolyn Weatherford also included Pss 148 and 86:9 in a list otherwise similar to Peters’, of which she noted, “The songs of worship included in Psalms often provide the groundwork for a missionary devotional message, a sermon, or an appeal for mission volunteers.” See Carolyn Weatherford, *Bible Teaching on Support of Missions* (Nashville: Convention Press: 1977), 18.

⁴⁷G. Ernest Wright, “The Old Testament Basis for Christian Mission,” *The Theology of Christian Mission*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1961), 18-19.

⁴⁸Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 116. For example, see Pss 9; 33:6-9; 47:7-9; 86:8-10; 89:6-14; 93:1; 96:9-10; 97:1-7; 99:1; 110:6; 115:3-8, 16; 135:5.

righteous standard. As David wrote, “The Lord shall judge the peoples [עַמִּים].”⁴⁹ Key facets of the teachings on God’s judgment of all people were that God had the right to judge all people, that He would judge them based on His standards for righteousness, and that God would eventually bring judgment upon all people.

Third, various psalms pointed to the fact that God was good to all people and that God provided salvation to any who would call upon Him.⁵⁰ Psalm 86:5 and 15 noted, “For You, Lord, are good and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You . . . You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.” That the qualities of God found in this psalm were understood by early Israelites to apply to all peoples is confirmed by Jonah’s attribution of these qualities to God in Jonah 4:2. An offer of salvation to any who would call on the name of the Lord again highlighted the universal nature of God’s mercy and provided hope for those born outside the biological lineage of Israel. Hope was offered for God’s deliverance and blessing if any should fear and obey Him.⁵¹

Fourth, psalms existed that some have argued presented a call to spread the account of God among nations and illustrated a desire for the nations to know the Lord. For example, some have argued that Psalm 96 is a prime example of a psalm that not only called the people to tell the nations about God’s glory and uniqueness but was also an exhibition of such a declaration.⁵² Psalm 96 specifically commands, “Proclaim the good news [root בַּשָּׂר] of His salvation [יְשׁוּעָה] from day to day. Declare among the nations His glory.” As Terence Fretheim noted concerning Psalm 96:2-3 and 10, “It is difficult to

⁴⁹Ps 7:8-16. See also Pss 9:4-8, 16 [HB 9:5-9, 17]; 58:11 [HB 58:12]; 67:4; 75:2-7; 82:1, 8; 94:1-2; 96:10-13; 98:8-9; 105:7; 110:6. Several other psalms exist about God’s judgment of His own people (e.g., Pss 50:4-6; 135:14).

⁵⁰Pss 89:1-2 [HB 89:1-3]; 96:2; 98:2-3; 145:8-9; 14-20; 146:5-9.

⁵¹Pss 1; 2:10-12; 107; 128.

⁵²See also Pss 9:1; 18:49; 105:1.

imagine a clearer call to mission than this!”⁵³ Kaiser identified Psalm 96 as “one of the greatest missionary psalms in the Psalter.”⁵⁴ Another example of a psalm that illustrated a desire that nations might come to know the Lord can be seen in Psalm 67, which was a prayer for God’s mercies on Israel in order that God’s way might be “known upon the earth.” Blessings of Israel were besought *to the end* that all nations might know God’s salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) with the result that Israel would be blessed and “all the ends of the earth” would fear God.⁵⁵

Scholars have also pointed out that the praise psalms in themselves served the function of declaring the truth about Israel’s God. Okoye noted of Israel’s praise in particular that it fulfilled an “evangelistic function.”⁵⁶ As James L. Mays also noted, praise “witnesses to the present and coming reign of the Lord. It finds in its very content the motive for its openness and outreach”⁵⁷

Fifth, various psalms specifically called for the nations to praise God, which implied that non-Israelites could know and understand the greatness of God and participate in worship of God.⁵⁸ Thus, psalms like Psalm 96 specifically appealed to all peoples, not just Israel, to praise God. As Kaiser appropriately noted, “when all the

⁵³Terence E. Fretheim, “The Understanding of Mission in the Old Testament,” in *Bible and Mission: Biblical Foundation and Working Models for Congregational Ministry*, ed. Wayne Stumme, Mission in the U.S.A Series (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 19.

⁵⁴Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible*, 187. For a discussion of the Old Testament use of words from the root בָּשַׁר and its connection to the Greek εὐαγγελίζω, see Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 271-74.

⁵⁵Ps 67:2. As Kaiser noted, “‘all nations’ is placed in the emphatic position in the Hebrew text.” Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible*, 189.

⁵⁶James Chukwuma Okoye, *Israel and the Nations* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), 102. Also of note, several times in the Psalms the psalmists pray that the nations might experience discipline for the reason that they might seek and know the Lord. See, for example, Ps 83:16-18.

⁵⁷James L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 68.

⁵⁸Pss 47:1; 67:3, 5; 96; 98:4; 99:1-5; 100:1; 117:1; 148:11-13.

peoples of the earth are called to praise and extol the Lord, the assumption is that someone has transmitted to them the knowledge and worship of the Living God.”⁵⁹ Logically, it would have made sense to the Israelites of the time that the transmission was to be done by those who already knew God, the believing people of Israel.

Finally, psalms existed that indicated there would be people among the nations outside Israel who would reach out to God and that ultimately the whole earth would be filled with His glory.⁶⁰ Claims of universal worship of God included general statements that God would be praised by all, as noted in Psalm 86: “All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, and shall glorify your name.” In addition, statements existed about peoples who would come to fear Him, as in Psalm 67:7.

As evident in the psalms, at least some Israelites understood Yahweh to be the supreme God with all people subject to His rule. Psalms taught by their universal outlook that non-Israelites could approach and fear God and provided positive presentations of hope that non-Israelites would fear God. Various psalms taught Israelites that they stood as witnesses to God and His salvation. In addition, the psalms conveyed the concept of future judgment and the fact that those who trusted the God of Israel would survive. With all themes found in Psalms taken together, the picture Israel was provided of the relationship with God and with the nations positioned them so that the concept of witnessing to others about the identity of God should have been acceptable at very least. God’s desire was to be exalted and glorified among all peoples. Given God’s clear desire for the nations to know Him, Israel, out of love for God if nothing else, should have desired the same and been open to being used to bring the non-Israelites to God.

Missional Aspects of Prophecies

Prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures convey many truths that reinforce themes

⁵⁹Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 36.

⁶⁰Pss 22:27; 66:4; 68:29-32; 72:17-19; 86:9.

found initially in the Torah. As U. Cassuto noted,

Prophetic literature has its roots in the Pentateuchal literature, from which it draws its sustenance. Even the oldest of the 'literary prophets,' Amos and Hosea . . . at no time proclaim new ideals or concepts or beliefs, and this is true *a fortiori* of those who came after them. The prophets speak of their ideals and concepts and beliefs as of principles with which their listeners are already quite familiar. They rebuke their brethren for not acting according to these tenets, or for not understanding them properly, or for drawing wrong conclusions from them; and they teach them how to conduct themselves in accordance with these ideals, how to understand them, how to draw the necessary inferences from them; but they never claim to have created new doctrines or laws.⁶¹

In keeping with the tone found in certain passages in the Torah, throughout the prophetic works, God is conveyed as being directly involved in the destinies of the nation, as caring for all people, and desiring that all would know that He was the Lord.⁶² As R. Bryan Widbin expressed, "From time to time Israelite prophets . . . stressed that Yahweh cared about the destinies of all peoples (Amos 9:7). And if as Master of the universe Yahweh holds exclusive rights to judge all nations, including Israel (Amos 1:3-2:16), then the possibility of divine mercy is open to all who repent."⁶³ The prophets anticipated that nations would know about God's identity and hope of relationship through His use of Israel as mediator and witness.

Some scholars have argued that, based on various prophetic works, at least some in Israel had an understanding that Israel bore responsibility before God for mission to the Gentiles. For example, G. Ernest Wright concluded that the author of the book of Jonah "sees in the figure of the unwilling prophet the Chosen People herself who attempt to escape from God's calling of them for an important responsibility in the redemption of

⁶¹U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), 105.

⁶²For example, the Sodom and Gomorrah account of Gen 18:23-33; His love expressed in Deut 10:18; that all would know He was Lord (Exod 7:3-5); and that His glory would be known (Num 14:21).

⁶³R. Bryan Widbin, "Salvation for People Outside Israel's Covenant?" in *Through No Fault of Their Own?* ed. William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 78.

the world.”⁶⁴ While considerable disagreement exists about the true intention of the author of Jonah, many would agree with Wright’s assessment that in the second part of Isaiah, “the finest missionary texts in the Old Testament appear.”⁶⁵ Part of the reason for this assessment was the testimony to God’s concern for other peoples outside Israel and his purposeful activity to spare them by providing them an opportunity to repent.

God’s activity through the prophets was revealing. For, even if it cannot be argued that all the prophets physically went to non-Israelites to deliver God’s words to those outside Israel, something in the very commission for them to address the nations showed the missional heart of God. Prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah were ‘sent’ by God with a purpose to communicate His words to non-Israelites. As Francis DuBose noted about God’s sending activity, “the sending transcends the necessity for physical mobility. It has to do with purposeful living under the impulse and direction of God regardless of geographic or spatial dimensions.”⁶⁶ Therefore, by ordering the prophets to deliver His words to the nations, God was sending His witnesses on mission to non-Israelites.

One way of separating the missional aspects of the prophetic writings would be based on the overall content of the prophecy.⁶⁷ That is, one group of prophecies foretold of judgment upon the nations and another group foretold of the salvation of the nations. In some cases, both types of prophecy are present in one work. Missional conclusions can be drawn from each type of prophecy.

Numerous prophetic passages against the nations exist. Reasons for God’s disapproval ranged from the nations’ idolatry, to their mistreatment of His chosen people

⁶⁴G. Ernest Wright, *OT Basis*, 19.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 19-20.

⁶⁶Francis M. DuBose, *God Who Sends* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1983), 102. For example, in 1 Kgs 14:6, Ahijah says he was sent (root שלח) from the Lord to convey a message to the wife of Jeroboam when she was the one who initially came to the prophet at his home.

⁶⁷For summaries of missional elements book by book, see Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 121-29. See also Kaiser, *Missions in the Old Testament*, 51-74.

or even basic violation of His moral standards. One of the inherent missional implications of the negative passages may be ascertained from the outcome of the story of Jonah, a prophet sent with an oracle of judgment to the Ninevites, which led to their repentance and forgiveness. In other words, it was possible one reason the prophecies of pending judgment were addressed to the nations was for the benefit of the nations (or individuals in those nations) should they repent.

In many of the words delivered against the nations, God purposefully clarified why various nations would suffer final judgment and this implicitly provided the nations with a way to know what they had done against God's standard, which provided them an opportunity to repent.⁶⁸ Prophecies in Nahum were examples of judgment prophecies against a non-Israelite nation that listed offenses. Yet, even in a book of prophecy foretelling the judgment of Nineveh, Nahum also declared, "The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who trust in Him," which seemed to provide a glimmer of hope to any who would turn to Him, including Ninevites (Nah 1:7). In addition, Zephaniah seemed to include all people in his admonition "Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's anger."⁶⁹ In Jeremiah 49:11, the Lord specifically encouraged the survivors of the judgment He was about to pour out on Edom to trust in Him. Therefore, in various passages, promised judgment was delivered side by side with a glimpse of hope for salvation for those who

⁶⁸For example, Amos 1:3-2:3 where the nations have their sins listed and punishment announced just as Judah and Israel. Admittedly, it is impossible to know whether any people of the condemned nations were spared if Scripture did not provide statements to that effect (as in Jonah, concerning the Ninevites). However, the possibility existed that some of the people were saved from the destruction (as was Rahab when she heard of the Lord, believed, and threw her lot in with Israel). Isa 19:16-25 prophesied about some of the nations who would turn to the Lord after punishment. Also Isa 24:14-15. For other examples of oracles against nations see Isa 8:4; 10:12-19; 13-21; 23-24; Jer 25:9, 15-31; 46-51; Ezek 25-32; Obadiah, Jonah 1:2; 3:2-4; Nahum, Zeph 2:4-15.

⁶⁹Zeph 2:3. The context of this admonition was as the preface to a declaration of judgment against various nations. Even if much was understood as being reserved for the future, the contemporary audience of the time would have understood God's intention that all would turn to Him and seek Him.

would trust the Lord.⁷⁰

Additionally, the existence of so many negative prophecies concerning the nations indicated that God was using (sending, in a way) the prophets of Israel to make Himself known outside of Israel by His declaration of and fulfillment of judgments on nations outside of Israel's boundaries.⁷¹ Such passages communicated God's sovereignty, universal rule, and concern with the world outside national Israel. For, as Francis M. DuBose well stated, "Out of the benevolent and redemptive nature of the God who sends comes his mission to mankind in word and deed."⁷² By clearly addressing the nations, holding them responsible for their sins, and telling them beforehand what their punishment would be, the prophecies bore witness to the identity of Israel's God as God Most High.

Not only were missional elements in the prophecies against the nations; clear missional aspects existed in the numerous prophecies about the salvation of the nations. First, God was presented as the living God, unique in position over everything.⁷³ Isaiah 45:5-6 declared, "I *am* the Lord, and *there is* no other. *There is* no God besides Me." As Bryant Hicks noted, "This monotheism led necessarily to the idea of universality. If Yahweh alone was God, it followed that he was the God of the whole earth—of all nations. That being the case, it again followed that those peoples needed to know fully about that one God and respond to him."⁷⁴

⁷⁰Gerhard von Rad also commented on this mingling of themes, "the shrill message of judgment and the more full and comforting proclamation of salvation are difficult to comprehend in their juxtaposition and interplay." See Gerhard von Rad, *God at Work in Israel*, trans. John H. Marks (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 172.

⁷¹The Lord spoke of sending his prophets to people even outside Israel and Jeremiah at least specifically recognized that God had sent him with words of judgment to the nations (Jer 1:5; 24:15-30).

⁷²DuBose, *God Who Sends*, 120.

⁷³Jer 10:10-11; Isa 40:12-15, 28; 43:10-11; 45:5-6, 18, 22-23

⁷⁴Bryant Hicks, "Old Testament Foundations for Missions," in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice

Second, the prophecies concerning the salvation of the nations taught God's love and concern for all humanity to be saved, not just the elect of Israel.⁷⁵ Few would deny that the highpoint of missional expression in the Old Testament, especially in regards to salvation, would be found in the book of Isaiah. For example, Isaiah 45:22 presented God's plea, "Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth!"⁷⁶

Finally, predictions of a time when mass groups of Gentiles would acknowledge and fear the Lord were detailed.⁷⁷ For example, Bryant Hicks noted that Jeremiah "prophesied doom upon the nations" but he also pointed out that the weeping prophet also prophesied "the time when all these nations would come to the Lord and confess their religions were 'nothing but falsehood, Futility and things of no profit.'" ⁷⁸ As Widbin pointed out, "The prophets imagined a day when all people would use the same language to worship truly the one and only Yahweh (Isa. 45:23; Zeph. 3:9)."⁷⁹ Passages like those above and the missional passages in Isaiah illustrated that at least some in Israel had an understanding that God's mission was broader than just the salvation of the nation of Israel.

One final note should be made about the prophecies. As Thomas Schreiner stated, "It is well accepted in Old Testament scholarship that the prophets contain covenant lawsuits (Hos 4:1; Mic 6:1-2). Prophets, who represented the faithful remnant, called the Lord's judgment down upon Israel and Judah because they failed to conform to

Anderson (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 57-58.

⁷⁵Ibid., 53. As Hicks noted, "The universal concern and focus of God" were elements of "the foundation for missions." See also Joel 2:32.

⁷⁶See also Isa 51:4-5; 56:1-8; 66:18-21.

⁷⁷Isa 2:2-4; 11:1-12; 19:23-25; 43:8-13; 66:18-23; Joel 2:28-32; Amos 9:7-15; Mic 4:1-5; Hab 2:14; Zeph 3:8-10.

⁷⁸Hicks, "Old Testament Foundations," 59.

⁷⁹Widbin, *Salvation for People*, 79.

the stipulations of the covenant.”⁸⁰ Even in prophecies specifically related to Israel, a missional element existed in relation to the nations. Israel and Judah were judged for their failure to keep God’s law and this included their failure to care for strangers.⁸¹ God could not withhold judgment because Israel and Judah were causing His name to be blasphemed among the nations instead of fulfilling their calling to bring glory to His name.

A survey of the missional elements in the passages outside the Torah illustrates that many of the themes present in the Torah are repeated and expanded upon in the rest of Scripture. God is presented as the sole Creator and as sovereign over all people. God is described as caring for and holding all people to account. God’s concern that His name be exalted is highlighted. God is shown to hold Israel accountable when they fail to reflect His righteousness. All people, not just Israel, were called to acknowledge His sovereignty and deity. Incorporation of non-Israelites was not only allowed, it was shown as desirable and in the future, inevitable. All of these themes together, contributed to the background understanding for God’s mission as it played out in the lives of individual Israelites.

Foundation Derived from Key Phrases

Throughout the Old Testament, several key phrases exist that have to do specifically with some aspect of Israel’s relationship with non-Israelites and that have been recognized by scholars as pertinent to an understanding of Israelite mission. In order to understand how these phrases may or may not have affected Israelite behavior, the context and meaning of each phrase must be analyzed. Although other phrases might also inform regarding Israelite behavior to others, due to space limitations, only four of the most representative phrases potentially affecting Israelite and Gentile interactions will be

⁸⁰Thomas R. Schreiner “The Commands of God,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 66-101.

⁸¹For example, Ps 94:6; Jer 7:2-29; 22:2-9; Ezek 22:7, 29; Mal 3:5.

examined.

“In You Shall All Families of the Earth Be Blessed”

Charles Scobie noted, “The call of Abram in Genesis 12 is related to God’s dealings with the nations and is placed specifically in the context of the disintegration of human society and the dispersion of the nations in Genesis 11.”⁸² As noted previously, Genesis 12:2-3 is one of the key passages which some have identified as implying social responsibility to Abraham and his descendants. Kaiser noted, “The Bible actually begins with the theme of missions in the Book of Genesis and maintains that driving passion throughout the entire Old Testament and on into the New Testament. If an Old Testament “Great Commission” must be identified, then it will be Genesis 12:3.”⁸³

In Genesis 12, Abraham received what some scholars believe was the mandate to be a blessing.⁸⁴ For example, as M. Daniel Carroll R. noted, “the mission of Abram and his descendants is to be a blessing.”⁸⁵ Four parallel passages to Genesis 12 exist in the rest of the book. As Table 1 illustrates, two separate verb forms, both niph'al and hithpa'el, are found in the parallel passages. Of note, each occurrence in Hebrew

⁸²Charles H. H. Scobie, “Israel and the Nations: an Essay in Biblical Theology,” *TynBul* 43 (1992): 285. Though Scobie recognized that the call of Abram was tied to God’s desire to reach the nations, he stated, “These texts become problematic in the light of the almost total absence from the Old Testament of any concern that the people of Israel should actively go out and share their knowledge of the one true God with the other nations of mankind” (286).

⁸³Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 7. For a concise survey of works on the OT and Mission, see Okoye, *Israel and the Nations*, 5-9.

⁸⁴Gen 12:2 is read with the understanding about Abraham that “everything he was given was a gift to be shared for the enrichment of others.” Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 18.

⁸⁵M. Daniel Carroll R., “Blessing the Nations: Toward a Biblical Theology of Mission from Genesis,” *BBR* 10 (2000): 24. He stated that they “are to be channels of blessing to others, as well as a paradigm of faith to which others might aspire” (24). It is also true that some scholars do not see a command for Abram or his descendants to be blessing but rather just a statement about their identity. For a more detailed exposition of the entire passage, see Keith N. Grüneberg, *Abraham, Blessing and the Nation: A Philological and Exegetical Study of Genesis 12:3 in Its Narrative Context*, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 332 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 170-90.

Scriptures was translated by the same Greek word in the Septuagint.

Table 1. Occurrences of “be a blessing” in Genesis

Verse	Hebrew	Verb Tense*	LXX	Tense
Gen 12:3	וּנְבָרְכֻךְ	n3cp+vcs	ἐνευλογηθήσονται	ifp3p
Gen 18:18	וּנְבָרְכֻךְ	n3cp+vcs	ἐνευλογηθήσονται	ifp3p
Gen 22:18	וְהִתְבָּרַכְתָּ	ht3cp+vcs	ἐνευλογηθήσονται	ifp3p
Gen 26:4	וְהִתְבָּרַכְתָּ	ht3cp+vcs	ἐνευλογηθήσονται	ifp3p
Gen 28:14	וּנְבָרְכֻךְ	n3cp+vcs	ἐνευλογηθήσονται	ifp3p

*The abbreviation n3cp+vcs stands for niphala perfect 3rd common plural with vav consecutive. The abbreviation ht3cp+vcs stands for hithpael perfect 3rd person common plural with vav consecutive. The abbreviation ifp3p stands for indicative future passive 3rd person plural. The only other case in the Torah of either the niphala or hithpael form of בָּרַךְ being used is a hithpael occurrence in Deut 29:18 and it appears clear by context that the verb in this case is to be taken reflexively.

Much debate exists about whether the meaning of the various forms of בָּרַךְ should be taken as passive, reflexive, reciprocal, middle, or some mixture. As Keith Grüneberg noted in his study on Genesis 12:3, “the arguments are generally about what the word is likely to mean in context, not about what it could or could not mean.”⁸⁶ Interpretation of the verb meaning affects how the passage might be taken missionally. A reflexive or reciprocal meaning would involve the nation’s participation in securing the blessing by their own action. A passive or middle understanding would convey the nations as receiving the benefits of blessing initiated by others. O. T. Allis presented a thoughtful defense of why the passive meaning is the most likely. He correctly pointed out that the reflexive meaning “brings the Old Testament form of the Blessing into

⁸⁶Grüneberg, *Abraham, Blessing and the Nations*, 34. In his study, Grüneberg specifically examined the niphala and how its uses bore upon the meaning of Gen 12. He took into account the morphological, semantic, and relational levels of meaning found in passive, middle, and reflexive uses. Building on studies by Suzanne Kemmer and Stephen Boyd, he concluded that the niphala in Gen 12:3 was passive. Based upon Grüneberg’s examples of how niphals were used reflexively, his conclusion seems correct that “it seems implausible that וּנְבָרְכֻךְ in Gen 12:3 is a direct reflexive” (65).

conflict with the New Testament citation and interpretation.”⁸⁷

Christopher M. Wright dealt in detail with the meaning of בָּרַךְ throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Specifically regarding the patriarchal blessings, Wright maintained, “God’s long range purpose for issuing the blessing promises was to bless all peoples” and that “God called Abraham to be a source of blessing.”⁸⁸ Although Wright agreed that the passive understanding of בָּרַךְ made more sense than a reflexive or reciprocal understanding, he argued that the best interpretation of the niphāl and hithpael occurrences of בָּרַךְ found in Genesis was a middle sense. A middle sense would convey that the “nations shall actually acquire blessing, rather than just wish for blessing or bless each other.”⁸⁹ Wright highlighted the fact that understanding the verbs as having a middle meaning would still properly convey God as the one behind the blessing, ensuring the blessing to the nations and conveying the “status of mediator of blessing upon the patriarchs.”⁹⁰

Israelite understanding that they as a people should or would bring blessing to the Gentiles may also be seen in other uses of בָּרַךְ in the Hebrew Scriptures and in intertestamental writings. For example, Zechariah 8:13 contrasted how Israel had been a curse to the nations with how she would “be a blessing” when God saved her. Isaiah 19:24 foretold of a time when Israel would fulfill her calling as a “blessing in the midst of the land” along with Egypt and Assyria. Sirach 44:21 summarized Genesis 12,

Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations, and no one has been found

⁸⁷O. T. Allis, “The Blessing of Abraham,” *PTT* 25 (1927): 267. The passive “be blessed” meaning is corroborated by both the Septuagint and the Vulgate. In addition, NT authors accepted the passive meaning, as illustrated by Acts 3:25 and Gal 3:8.

⁸⁸Christopher Mitchell Wright, *The Meaning of BRK “To Bless” in the Old Testament*, SBL Dissertation Series 95 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1983), 30.

⁸⁹Wright, *The Meaning of BRK*, 31. Wright explained that though the passive understanding was acceptable grammatically and contextually, doubt about that intended meaning is allowed by the failure of the author to use the clearest form to convey a passive meaning, the pual.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 33. It seems this could also be understood by taking the verbs as passive.

like him in glory; he kept the law of the Most High, and was taken into covenant with him; he established the covenant in his flesh, and when he was tested he was found faithful. Therefore the Lord assured him by an oath that the nations would be blessed through his posterity; that he would multiply him like the dust of the earth, and exalt his posterity like the stars, and cause them to inherit from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Evidence seems the strongest in favor of either a passive or middle meaning for the use of בָּרַךְ.⁹¹ With both interpretations, God is the One bringing about the blessing through Abraham. Given the context of Genesis 12:2-3, it seems clear that God wanted to bring blessing to the nations through Abraham. Ultimately, as the New Testament clarified, this blessing would be fully accomplished through the coming of the Savior.⁹²

However, practically for Abraham and his descendants, they were expected to bring blessing to the nations. Applied expression of this calling seems present in Genesis 18:16-33 where it seems God provided Abraham the opportunity to intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah.⁹³ In addition, the promise repeated to Jacob and his subsequent relationship with Laban, might also be seen as an unfolding of the plan for Abraham's descendants to bring blessing to the nations. As Grüneberg observed, "As Jacob goes into exile in a foreign land he must remember that ultimately his existence is to be for the good of others, even if the primary fulfillment is likely to be dependent on and subsequent to the multiplication of his descendants."⁹⁴

⁹¹Evidence remains strongest in favor of a passive meaning. No question exists that Paul, following the translation of the Septuagint, used the passive when referring to this passage on two separate occasions (Rom 4:13 and Gal 3:8). See Kaiser's defense of the passive meaning. Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity in the Bible*, 185.

⁹²Grüneberg, *Abraham, Blessing and the Nations*, 146. Abraham was commanded to go for God's purpose and the result that God would bring blessing to him and ultimately the nations.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 69. Grüneberg observed, "One might not doubt that when God reveals to a prophet his intention to judge, he aims not just to convey information, but to enable judgment to be averted by the repentance of the people threatened (cf. notably Jonah 3-4) or by the prophet's intercession (e.g. Amos 7:1 ff)." Another time God provided Abraham the opportunity and expected him to intercede is in Gen 20:7.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 85.

“You Shall Be to Me a Kingdom of Priests”

Next to the phrases describing the chosen people as a blessing to non-Israelites, the most referenced verse in respect to Israel’s responsibility to the nations is Exodus 19:6. In this passage, God set Israel apart as a “kingdom of priests.” As Daniel Block noted, “It is not difficult to see in this utterance the Lord’s missionary goal for Israel in a nutshell.”⁹⁵ Block further maintained that, “Israel’s missionary calling was based on the Lord’s previous gracious actions on her behalf.”⁹⁶ Since God delivered and preserved Israel, Israel was to be His people, sanctified for His purpose.⁹⁷

George Peters specifically noted, “Israel is made the mediator between God and the nations. It is to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to mediate the unique revelation of God Israel is called to be a channel, not a storehouse, of blessings.”⁹⁸ As a mediator, Israel would serve God through service to the Gentiles by “representing those persons to God and representing God to those persons.”⁹⁹ However, admittedly, various viewpoints exist about what this passage really meant and whether an expectation was ever laid upon Israel to relate to non-Israelites in the role of a mediator. In addition, it seems strange that if Jews understood this passage in such a way, nothing to that effect

⁹⁵Daniel Block, “The Privilege of Calling: The Mosaic Paradigm for Missions (Deut 26:16-19),” *BSac* 162 (2005): 388. He linked Exod 19:6 with Deut 26:16-19.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 390. Block believed that the verses convey the principle that “those who are called to missionary service are the products of God’s gracious saving and covenantal action” (*ibid.*).

⁹⁷Block correctly pointed out “the nation’s effectiveness in fulfilling her call to mission was conditional” and depended upon her obedience. *Ibid.*, 401.

⁹⁸Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 94. See a discussion of this passage in Jo Bailey Wells, *God’s Holy People: A Theme in Biblical Theology*, JSOTSup 305 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 27-97. Wells noted concerning Exod 19:6 that it “demands a relationship with others, for if Israel is invested with God’s presence, then it may represent it and mediate it to others” (57). Kaiser maintained this view as well. See Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible*, 186. Kaiser stressed, “The election of God was never meant to be an election for privilege or position instead, it was to be an election for service.”

⁹⁹Winston Crawley, *Biblical Light for the Global Task: The Bible and Mission Strategy* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1989), 36.

was mentioned in the *Exodus Rabbah*. Notably, the *Exodus Rabbah* skipped the passage without comment at all.

Still, many would agree with Block who wrote, “Israel was to serve as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, thus connecting people back to Creator God.”¹⁰⁰ Kaiser affirmed, “there could be no doubt about God’s original plan: every Israelite was to be a ministering priest.”¹⁰¹ Additionally, Kaiser argued that the institution of the Levitical priesthood did nothing to obviate the original call to all Israelites to act in a mediatorial way. Joel Kaminsky also noted that in Exodus 19:5-6, “God conceives of Israel as a priestly people, a concept that entails her functioning as a mediator of the divine to the world as a whole.”¹⁰²

“Stranger Who Dwells among You”

Forty-three passages in the Hebrew Scriptures use the formula, “stranger who dwells among you” or a similar construction. Similar phrases include, “stranger close to you,” “stranger in your midst,” “stranger who is within your gates,” and “strangers in Israel.” Since so many of the passages using this formula detail how interactions should occur between Israelites and non-Israelites, a brief study of the primary words used for stranger is helpful. Israelites used several different words to refer to those outside the line of Jacob.

Principle words that were used to describe those not of the line of Jacob

¹⁰⁰Henry T. Blackaby and Avery T. Willis Jr., *On Mission with God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 81.

¹⁰¹Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible*, 186. See also Blauw who espoused a similar concept, *The Missionary Nature of the Church*, 24. See a discussion of the perspectives in John A Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19:6*, JSOTSup 395 (London: T & T Clark, 2004).

¹⁰²Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob*, 84. Kaminsky, however, cautioned against a theology that would understand Israel’s election only in terms of her service to the nations. He emphasized God’s special love of Israel apart from her calling. He noted, “While Exod 19 strongly suggests that Israel plays a priestly mediatorial role, the passage highlights the fact of Israel’s special closeness to God” (85).

include תושב, נכר, זר, גר as well as the general terms for people or nation, גוי and עם. However, as illustrated in Table 2 below, גר was the word used most often in constructions similar to “stranger who dwells among you.” Only occasionally did Scripture use the word תושב in a similar fashion, once a form of נכר was used, and זר was not used at all in such a phrase.

Table 2. Use of phrases similar to “stranger among you”

Word	Meaning	Occurrences (Total/In Phrase)	Hebrew Passages with Phrase
תושב	stranger/ sojourner	14/5	Lev 25:6, 45, 47 (2x); Num 35:15
נכר	foreigner	19/1	Ezekiel 44:9
גר	sojourner/ stranger	92/39	Exod 12:48, 49; 20:10; Lev 16:29; 17: 8, 10, 12, 13; 18:26; 19:33, 34; 20:2; 22:18; 25:47(2x); Num 9:14; 15:14, 15, 16, 26, 29; 19:10; Deut 5:14; 14:21, 29; 16:11, 14; 24:14; 26:11; 28:43; 29:10; 31:12; Josh 8:35; 20:9; 1 Chr 22:2; 2 Chr 2:16; 30:25; Ezek 14:7; 47:22

Both זר and נכר are the words that have the least direct bearing on the understanding of the phrase “stranger who dwells among you.” Derivations of זר or זור were used fifty-six times (זור only once) in the Hebrew Scriptures in reference to a person or persons. When זר was used in parallel with another word, forms of נכרי or נכר were usually the words used.¹⁰³ As a result, the meanings of the two seem to be fairly close or overlapping. When not used in parallel with נכרי or נכר the words used in the same context were usually terms for those antagonistic to Israel or the wicked like רע, רשע, עריץ.

Used around forty times to describe a person or people, the forms of the

¹⁰³For example, זר was used with תושב only one time.

adjective נכרי were not used in any phrase like “stranger who dwells among you.” Although a form of נכר was used solely in the context of foreign people nineteen times in eighteen verses, נכר was used in the phrase “any foreigner in the midst of the sons of Israel” once in Ezekiel 44:9.¹⁰⁴ Of note, in all nineteen times נכר was used to describe only people, it was used with a form of בן for a literal meaning of son(s) of a (the) foreigner. In Ezekiel 44:9, foreigners were to be excluded from the future sanctuary of the Lord if they were uncircumcised in either heart or flesh. However, this is not really a case where foreigners are to be treated differently from Israelites, for the understanding was that Israelites, too, should be circumcised in heart and flesh.¹⁰⁵ Still, overwhelmingly, the contexts surrounding the terms נכרי and נכר cast the people referenced by those terms in a negative light.

Based on how the terms were used together, by context, and words that were used with them, זר and נכר seem to refer most often to people affiliated tightly with other kingdoms, gods, or loyalties than with foreigners from other nations living long-term within the physical boundaries of Israel. Often a negative context exists with these words. In addition, little exists in the context of the passages to show any type of benevolent expectation for the relationships Israel was to have with them with the exception of Solomon’s prayer for foreigners and redemptive passages in Isaiah.¹⁰⁶

One of the least common Hebrew nouns used to describe a non-Israelite was the word תושב. Derivations of this noun occurred fourteen times in the Hebrew Scriptures. Out of all the uses, eight out of fourteen were paired with some form of noun

¹⁰⁴Both terms were paired most often with זר. Although נכרי was used in a verse with נר twice, it was not used in a parallel fashion (Exod 2:22; 18:3). In only one instance was a foreigner (נכרי) linked with same treatment as a sojourner (נר), in Deut 14:21.

¹⁰⁵Gen 17:10-14, 27; Exod 12:44, 48; Lev 12:2-3; Deut 10:16; 30:6; Josh 5:2-8; Jer 4:4; See also Jer 9:25-26, which indicated the importance of circumcision of the heart when it came to judgment.

¹⁰⁶For example, נכרי is used in 1 Kgs 8:41-43 and 2 Chr 6:32-33 and נכר is used in Isa 56:3 and 6.

גר, which indicated the very close connection in meaning between the two words for stranger/sojourner. Still, it has been suggested that the תושב was “less assimilated, socially and religiously (Exod 12:45; cf. Lev 22:10), less firmly rooted in the land and also less independent.”¹⁰⁷ In four cases, תושב was paired with the word for hired servant, שכיר. Once it appeared with זר. In four clear cases, the word described the status of Abraham, or one of his descendants. Three of those occurrences described the Israelites as they were before the Lord.

On the surface three cases highlighted how sojourners were to be treated differently than Israelites and three cases highlighted how they were to be treated the same. However, a close examination of the three cases where it appeared strangers were to be treated differently reveals that the expectations in two cases for strangers were really the same as for other Israelites. In Leviticus 22:10, the meaning is that no one outside the priesthood, including strangers and non-Levitical Israelites, would eat of the holy offering as clarified by Exodus 29:26-33, Leviticus 24:9, and Matthew 12:3-4. In Exodus 12:45, strangers were excluded from partaking of the Passover, however, this exclusion was waived if they would be circumcised like the Israelites. Israelites were expected to be circumcised and so the expectation was really the same for Israelites and non-Israelites.

Five cases in four separate verses existed where תושב was used in a construction like “stranger with you or dwelling with you.”¹⁰⁸ In three of those occurrences, it was paired with the noun, גר, and twice with the participle, גרים. Only one of these passages (Lev 25:45) highlighted a case where the stranger could be treated clearly differently from a native Israelite. In this verse, Israelites are permitted to buy

¹⁰⁷Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1961), 75-76.

¹⁰⁸Lev 25:6, 45, 47 (2x); Num 35:15. In all of these cases, the Greek root used to translate תושב was ἀλλογενής, meaning alien or stranger.

strangers and keep them permanently in bondage.¹⁰⁹

By far, most of the phrases that referenced the physical location of foreigners in the midst of Israel or with Israel used a form of גר. Overall, noun forms of גר were used ninety-two times in reference to sojourners, with thirty-nine of those occurrences in thirty-eight verses reflecting a phrase like strangers dwelling in your midst.¹¹⁰ Like תושב, גר was used in other cases to refer to Israel's status before God or to their sojourn in Egypt. Unlike תושב, and lending credence to the opinion that a גר was more settled within the Israelite community than a תושב, the word for גר was most often translated with the Greek word προσήλυτος, which came to have the meaning of 'proselyte.'

In the passages where גר was used with a phrase similar to "stranger who dwells among you," the context is overwhelmingly positive. Out of all of these passages, only one time was a word other than the Greek root προσήλυτος used to translate גר, Deuteronomy 14:21.¹¹¹ Notably, this passage was also one of the few examples out of all the other "stranger who dwells among" passages when strangers could be treated differently than native Israelites. Although the full context is not included in the one verse, Leviticus 25:47 referenced another case where a difference was made to allow Israelites to be redeemed early if they were sold to a גר. In other passages from the Torah that used גר in this construction, dominant features were the stress on the same treatment of natives and sojourners and the need for just treatment.

A survey of the primary words for foreigner or sojourner shows differences

¹⁰⁹See the preceding section, "Principles Found in Torah Legislation," n. 28.

¹¹⁰One occurrence of a noun form of גר meant 'chalk.'

¹¹¹In Deut 14:21 πρόουκος was used concerning giving that which died naturally to strangers. De Vaux seems to think this command contradicted Lev 17:15 because that passage required that if a native or a sojourner ate a creature that naturally died, they must ritually wash and be unclean until night. However, de Vaux's position does not seem merited because being allowed to do something and still having to be ritually cleansed as a result do not seem to be mutually exclusive acts (Lev 15:18 – Israelites were told to be fruitful and multiply but the act resulted in a state of uncleanness and required ritual cleansing). See de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 75.

existed with available texts concerning the treatment of sojourners as compared to people outside Israel. Very few specific commands or references regarding how relations should be pursued existed concerning those foreigners outside the borders of Israel. However, even with passages referring to foreigners outside of Israel, key passages highlighted a desire for those people to come to know the Lord (1 Kgs 8:41-43; 2 Chr 6:32-33; Isa 56:3, 6).

At the heart of the passages about strangers or sojourners within the boundaries of Israel, Israel was admonished to treat them with love and care because God cared for the strangers and the children of Israel too had once been strangers (Deut 10:17-19). Though this passage has been taken to mean solely that Israel was a stranger to Egyptians, in a sense it was also true that Israel was a stranger to God Himself before God had mercy, reached out to her, and made her His own. Within the exhortations about how to treat sojourners, implicit hope existed for the stranger, and a reminder existed for Israel, that if God would embrace Israel, He might also embrace others who sought Him. In addition, hope existed that if Israel embraced strangers and behaved toward them as God had to Israel, then the strangers would be blessed and led to understand who God was with the expectation that those strangers, too, would come to fear and obey the Lord.

“That You/They May Know that I Am the LORD”

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, 135 occurrences exist of variations of the formula “That/then X will/may know Y (something about Yahweh).”¹¹² God acted deliberately so that people could know Him and He often justified the rationale for His actions or Israel’s behavior so that He would become known to others. First used in Exodus 6:7, the phrase “you shall know that I *am* the LORD your God” has several

¹¹²See Appendix 1 for the complete list included in the count. Some passages that could convey a similar meaning but did not follow the format of the formula were excluded as, for example, 1 Sam 6:3, 2 Kgs 5:8, Jer 24:7.

variations.¹¹³ Close variations include phrases as “they shall know that I *am* the LORD,” “that you might know the LORD Himself *is* God,” and “then you/they will know I *am* the LORD.” Even more passages are present that refer to people coming to know some specific aspect of YHWH as in Exodus 9:29, which highlighted God’s ownership of the whole earth.¹¹⁴

Notably, similar clauses are found in every major section of the Hebrew Scriptures. Occurrences counted include 19 in the Torah, 111 in the Prophets (13 in the Former Prophets and 98 in the Latter Prophets), and 5 in the Writings. Ezekiel had 75 occurrences alone. In fact, 15 books out of the traditional Hebrew division of 24 books make use of a variation of the clause (19 out of 66 following the Christian divisions).

Repeatedly, God acted throughout Biblical history with the specific purpose (mission) that He would be known, not just by Israelites but also by people of all nations. As William G. Schweer noted, “He is clearly a God who desires to be known. This, alone, is a significant missionary impetus.”¹¹⁵ The desire of God to be known undergirds and supports a unifying theme in Scripture regarding the glorification of God, a subject that will be dealt with in the final section of this chapter.

Foundational Concepts

As the previous sections of this chapter illustrate, a survey of the applicable passages in Hebrew Scripture highlights several fundamental concepts that potentially influenced how the descendants of Israel understood their position in the world and responsibility before God. Three foundational concepts are of particular interest for this

¹¹³See, for example, Exod 6:7; 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:14; 10:2.

¹¹⁴A few other examples of aspects of God included His separation between Egypt and Israel (Exod 11:7), His deliverance of Israel (Exod 16:6), His rejection and judgment (Num 14:34), His mighty hand (Josh 4:24), and that God’s presence was in Israel (1 Sam 17:46).

¹¹⁵William G. Schweer, “The Missionary Mandate of God’s Nature,” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 97.

whole study: the concepts of universalism, election, and the glorification of God's name.¹¹⁶

Universalism

Few would argue that there are not at least some currents of universal outlook present in the Hebrew Scriptures. Even the quick survey of Hebrew Scriptures in this chapter highlighted a common theme found in the Torah and out of the Torah of the universal scope of God's intention that the whole world would come to acknowledge Him as Lord. Some elements that contributed to the universal theme included the consistent self-revelation of YHWH as one God over all, the presentation of His concern for all humanity, the invocations and proclamations for all to worship YHWH, and the incorporation of non-Israelites into God's people as presented in the past and as foretold for the future.

No one can deny the presence of universalistic themes in the psalms and various prophecies without doing injustice to the texts. With a unified voice, the psalms teach that the God of Israel is God over all the earth and deserves universal praise. Passages in Isaiah are known for their presentation of the universal rule of God. Closely tied to His universal rule is the teaching of His unique position and singularity among all others.¹¹⁷ As alluded to previously, strains of monotheistic thought contributed to a universal outlook.¹¹⁸

Admittedly, the level of missional expectation on the part of individual Israelites has been much more in question even given the acknowledged universalistic

¹¹⁶Admittedly, many other foundational concepts could also have been noted, like God's self-revelation, the concept of monotheism, or *Imitatio Dei*. However, due to the limitations of this work, the writer has limited the scope to four concepts that directly influenced Israel's interactions and were representative of other concepts.

¹¹⁷Multiple psalms testify to God's unique identity as God alone and the fact that He has no rival. See Pss 86:8, 10.

¹¹⁸Hicks, "Old Testament Foundations for Missions," 57-58.

themes. For example, Martin-Achard argued that the psalms were “designed to be used by the Jerusalemite community and concerned Israel and not the nations.”¹¹⁹ However, even if the psalms were kept only within Israel’s private worship, the universal aspect present in them and the obvious desire for global adoration of God prepared the people for the desire of and acceptance of converts. These same psalms conveyed the heartbeat of God to have all nations glorify His name and gave insight into God’s mission.¹²⁰

Election

While the concept of universalism is an inescapable feature of the Hebrew Scriptures, scholars have noted that it is paired with equally present passages on election, and most specifically, the election of Israel. As G. Ernest Wright noted, “Central to God’s action in history is His election, His choosing, His formation and commissioning of a new community.”¹²¹ Numerous passages, in addition to the fundamental passages of Genesis 12 and Exodus 19, describe the election of individuals and groups of people for the furtherance of God’s plan.¹²²

Among other scholars, Walter Kaiser Jr. has appropriately noted that election was not restricted to the nation of Israel alone. Kaiser observed, “even before New Testament times, the concept of the people of God encompassed both believing Israel and

¹¹⁹Robert Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1962), 58.

¹²⁰William O. Carver noted, “The origin of missions is ultimately to be found in the heart of God.” He further noted, “He is ever working towards the end that ‘they who have not heard’ may have ‘the glad tidings preached unto them.’” See William O. Carver, *Missions in the Plan of the Ages* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), 11-12.

¹²¹G. Ernest Wright, *OT Basis*, 23.

¹²²For example, as Carroll Stuhlmueller noted, “Even in Israel’s prehistory, as recounted in Genesis 1-11, a process of differentiation and separation was continuously at work: God chose Abel and then Seth instead of Cain . . . Shem instead of Noah’s other sons . . . Abram instead of Nahor, Haran, and Lot.” See Carroll Stuhlmueller, “The Foundations for Mission in the Old Testament,” in *The Biblical Foundations for Missions*, ed. Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 84.

believing Gentiles outside that nation.”¹²³ God was the One who initiated with those who did not know Him and called people to Himself for His purpose. Elements related to election that specifically impacted interactions of Israelites with non-Israelites include the overall purpose of God for electing Israel and the specific responsibilities of Israel because of their election.

God had a purpose any time He elected an individual or nation. Some scholars have unabashedly maintained that the sole reason for the election of Israel was for service to the nations.¹²⁴ Others have argued that service to the nations was one purpose of many that God had for Israel.¹²⁵ Although scholars differ regarding the primary aspect of God’s purpose, God’s purpose was an important missional element of the election of Israel. Ultimately, most would agree that a significant part of God’s purpose was that He might be glorified throughout all the earth and the responsibilities that He assigned to Israel were to serve that purpose.

Glorification of God’s Name

One of the most important concepts throughout Scripture that ties into the concept of God’s mission is the teaching that all should be done for the glorification of God’s name. Two aspects of this concept include God’s actions for the glorification of His name and His expectation of His people to act for the glorification of His name. Foundational to the concept of the glorification of God’s name is that God wished to be known to start with and revealed Himself accordingly with the desire that all would come to glorify His name.¹²⁶ As Grüneberg noted, “Old Testament prayers regularly offer God

¹²³Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible*, 115.

¹²⁴Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 127. For example, Peters identified the “mission to the nations” as the “calling and purpose of Israel.”

¹²⁵Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob*, 84-85. Kaminsky expressly stated, “I am concerned about a Christian tendency to reduce Israel’s election to her service to the larger world” (84).

¹²⁶As noted in various passages like Exod 9:14-16.

reasons why he should act in a particular way, for example to bring glory to himself (Ps 79:9) or to protect his reputation (Exod 32:12).”¹²⁷

In addition to the prayers, statements are plentiful throughout the Torah and other writings that indicate God’s desire for His name to be glorified throughout the whole earth and not just in Israel. As illustrated by the survey of the phrase, “That they may know that I am the Lord,” God’s activity or His expectation of Israelite behavior was often explained in the context of His desire that His name be glorified so that He might be known throughout the earth. God’s ultimate purpose was always for His glorification. As Schweer noted, “Knowing that God is a God of purpose, and knowing something of his purpose has tremendous implications for missions, perhaps the clearest mandate of all comes from this particular aspect of God’s nature.”¹²⁸

Because of God’s desire and purpose, Israelites were encouraged in all facets of life to glorify God and the prophets held the people accountable to that calling. G. Ernest Wright noted, “As God is righteous, so His people are to be righteous for the reason that people would know something of God by the actions of His people.”¹²⁹ One of the key reasons for righteous behavior on the part of His people was that God’s identity might be known and that people might fear and obey Him leading to His universal glorification.¹³⁰

Although Israelites were pointedly called to bring glory to God’s name by their behavior, often in their reality the converse was true; they led people to blaspheme God’s name. Andrew Walls observed that the prophetic writings “often show Israel worshiping

¹²⁷Grüneberg, *Abraham, Blessing and the Nations*, 70.

¹²⁸Schweer, “The Missionary Mandate of God’s Nature,” 112.

¹²⁹G. Ernest Wright, *OT Basis*, 25.

¹³⁰Closely connected to the concept of glorifying God’s name through behavior is the concept of *Imitatio Dei* or “imitating God.” For a good overview of that concept in the Old Testament, see Eryl W. Davies, “Walking in God’s Ways: The Concept of *Imitatio Dei* in the Old Testament,” in *In Search of True Wisdom*, ed. Edward Ball, JSOTSup 300 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 99-115.

gods other than Yahweh, setting up a society marked by opulence, extortion, injustice, and oppression of the poor, giving Israel's God a bad name among foreign nations (Isa 2:6-18; 5:6-13; Ezek 36:22)."¹³¹ Still, the expectation was that Israel should be a positive witness pointing to God's glory among the nations and not a source of ignominy.

Conclusion

Repeated themes found in the Hebrew Scriptures provide a basis for understanding Israelite interactions with non-Israelites. In addition, key phrases convey aspects of the purpose of God and the calling of Israel, teachings concerning the relations with Gentiles, or ideas connected with mission. All of these provide a background for an Israelite understanding of their calling and responsibilities with non-Israelites. Overall concepts present in the Hebrew Scriptures like universalism, election, and the glorification of God's name all contribute to the foundation for an understanding of God's ultimate mission and individual Israelite mission.

Were any of the elements or themes identified in chapter 2 discernible in real relationships between God's chosen people and Gentiles? How did God's people actually interact with Gentiles and what were the results? What can be learned from the narratives regarding how God's people behaved or should have behaved with Gentile acquaintances? Were there any implications for missions that could be gleaned from the narrative accounts of Israelite/Gentile interactions? In dealing with a selection of historical interactions between Israelites and non-Israelites, chapter 3 will attempt to address some of these questions.

¹³¹Andrew F. Walls, "Converts or Proselytes? The Crisis over Conversion in the Early Church," *IBMR* 28 (2004): 3. See also Isa 52:5.

CHAPTER 3

CASES OF ISRAELITE INTERACTIONS WITH GENTILES

As illustrated in chapter 2, principles for how Israelites were to relate with Gentiles are present in every part of the Hebrew Scriptures. God's initiation of missional activity also appears to be present. God's intent was that His name would be glorified by His people and that Gentiles would also come to glorify His name and the Lord chose to use the people of Israel to help facilitate His mission.¹ However, when the actual face-to-face relationships of God's people with non-Israelites are examined, at times reality appears to have fallen short of the ideal.

Case studies of actual interactions between Israelites and Gentiles will provide more insight into whether any Israelites linked the missional and relational concepts present in their writings to actual behavior. Five basic interactions will be studied. Missional observations in this chapter will concentrate on general principles relating to God's purposes or His people's relationships with others. In chapter 4, more will be observed regarding how later Jews may or may not have been missionally influenced by the witness of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Interactions

Following the guidelines expressed at the end of chapter 1, five relationships have been chosen to represent positive interactions. That is, interactions in which God's name was glorified or deference and honor were given to the Lord as a result. In some

¹Henry Blackaby summarized God's missional activity by observing, "Here's His strategy that He revealed to Moses: He has chosen to use a holy priesthood, a chosen people, who will represent Him to the nations and bring the people of those nations before His throne to worship Him throughout eternity." Henry Blackaby and Avery T. Willis, *On Mission with God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 71.

cases, interactions include multiple contacts between the participants. Cases will include Elijah's interactions with the widow of Sidonian Zarephath, the interaction between the servant girl and Naaman's wife, the encounters between Elisha and Naaman, the interactions between Jonah and the sailors on board the ship to Tarshish as well as his exchange with the Ninevites, and the interactions between Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar.

Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath

First of the stories for consideration is the encounter between the prophet Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. Elijah's encounter with the Gentile women occurred at some stage of the ministry of the prophet during the reign of King Ahab that can be dated from 874 to 853 BC² Whereas the primary passage for consideration is found in 1 Kings 17:8-24, clarifying comments made by Jesus about the encounter are documented in Luke 4:25-26.

Description of the encounter. During the three and a half years of the prophesied drought upon the land, Elijah was commanded to go out of Israel to a certain woman in Sidon.³ After Elijah testified to her the specific word of God concerning His

²According to 1 Kgs 16:29, Ahab reigned twenty-two years. His reign is documented extra-biblically in an inscription regarding the sixth year of Shalmaneser III that lists him as a participant in a battle dated to 853 BC by many scholars. See Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 264. See, James Pritchard, *ANET*, 279. See also Edwin Thiele's book on Old Testament chronology: Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1983), 94. Thiele's chronology will be followed although other possible chronologies exist. One of the latest chronologies with the largest discrepancy to Thiele's dating is that of M. Christine Tetley who adjusted all dates upward partly based on a re-dating of Assyrian events that corresponded to Biblical events. She placed the death of Ahab at 897 BC and all other dates were similarly adjusted. See M. Christine Tetley, *The Reconstructed Chronology of the Divided Kingdom* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005). 182. For the purpose of this work, the forty-four year variance is negligible.

³The Lord made specific reference to this encounter in Luke 4:24-26. He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, *in the region* of Sidon, to a woman *who was* a widow." This encounter was mentioned in context with the Elisha and Naaman encounter and seemed to stress the fact of the prophets' relations with Gentiles.

promise to provide, she acted in faith and found Elijah's word trustworthy concerning God's power to provide food. Later, when her son died, she turned to Elijah. After he interceded for her with God, the Lord healed her son, an event that caused her to make a statement about believing the words of Yahweh.

Analysis of key textual items. In 1 Kings 17:9, when God told Elijah to go to Zarephath, He indicated that He had “commanded” (צוה) a widow to provide for Elijah. However, the woman appeared to have been unprepared for Elijah's request for food. Since the woman was taken aback by Elijah's request, “commanded” probably means in the sense of “divinely appointed” or “ordained,” which falls within the appropriate semantic range of meaning for the Piel.⁴ God was aware of her situation, her openness, and specifically chose her to benefit from hosting His prophet and to encounter a greater revelation of Himself as mediated through His prophet and His power.

Using an oath formula, “as the LORD your God lives” (חַי־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ), the widow swore by Yahweh (יְהוָה), the personal God of the Israelites and specifically Elijah, that she had no prepared bread (1 Kgs 17:12).⁵ Scholars have pointed out that something in Elijah's speech, manner, or dress must have betrayed to her that he was from Israel where Yahweh was worshipped. By identifying Elijah's God and invoking the strongest method possible to explain she had nothing to offer, the widow possibly hoped to offset her obligation for providing customary Semitic hospitality.

Discussion of the cultural or social background. Zarephath was located in Phoenicia. Belonging to the greater city of Sidon, it was ruled by Ethbaal, the father of

⁴BDB, “צוה.”

⁵The same phrase occurs in 1 Kgs 18:10 but this time, apparently in the mouth of an Israelite faithful to God. So, the phrase cannot automatically be used to indicate that the widow of Zarephath did not fear the God of Israel in contrast to Elijah.

Jezebel, who had married Ahab, King of Israel.⁶ Alliance by marriage between the ruling houses of Sidon and Israel would have only increased the trade and interchange already present between the countries.

Phoenicians worshipped various Canaanite gods but the primary god of Zarephath was probably one of the Baals, likely Eshmun of Sidon or Melqart of Tyre.⁷ Several main festivals existed in Phoenicia including New Years, spring marriage/fertility rite, and the “rite of resurrection.”⁸ Such rites were tied to the worship of Baal as the one who brought forth fertility and who was thought to die during the summer dry season only to reemerge from death or the underworld to bring rain in the spring. Scholars note that the action of this passage seemed to be aimed at highlighting a comparison of the lack of Baal’s power as opposed to Yahweh’s absolute power.⁹

For social and legal reasons, the identification of the woman as a widow was significant. Though she was not in Israel, scholars note that the position of widows and orphans was similar across the Ancient Near East.¹⁰ Widows and orphans were the weakest and most marginalized of society, often dependent, hardly able to provide for themselves much less others.¹¹

⁶1 Kgs 16:31. Ironically, Elijah was sent to the heart of the land under the rule of the father of the woman who wanted him dead. Scripture notes, that Ahab had even sent people everywhere looking for Elijah and made the various nations swear that he was not in their kingdoms (1 Kgs 18:10).

⁷See William A. Ward, “Phoenicians,” in *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, ed. Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 202. For a discussion about the Baal in 1 Kgs 17-19, see F. C. Fenham, “A Few Observations on the Polarisation between Yahweh and Baal in 1 Kgs 17-19,” *ZAW* 92 (1980): 227-36. Baals were known as storm and fertility gods.

⁸Arthur F. Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 115.

⁹Fenham, “A Few Observations,” 234. The miracles attacked Baal’s control over fertility and death in his own land.

¹⁰F. C. Fenham, “Widow, Orphan, and the Poor in Ancient Near Eastern Legal and Wisdom Literature,” in *Essential Papers on Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Frederick E. Greenspahn (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 176.

¹¹Gary Inrig speculated that possibly the woman’s widowhood would have been recognizable

Evaluation of the interaction of the encounters. Two separate encounters exist between Elijah and the Sidonian widow. For the original meeting, God orchestrated the meeting by preparing the woman to receive Elijah and then by commanding Elijah to go.¹² In the second encounter, the woman sought out Elijah. She recognized him as a “man of God,” but bitterly laid blame for the death of her son upon the prophet because, through his presence, she felt God had taken notice of her to punish her (1 Kgs 17:18).¹³

With no sign of hesitation, Elijah willingly obeyed God’s directive and approached the woman God showed him. Elijah treated her with respect and politely asked for drink and food. When it came to the second interaction, instead of chiding her for her bitterness or offering empty words of comfort, Elijah immediately interceded with God for the life of the woman’s son. As a result of Elijah’s mediation, God graciously healed the child.

A few themes or passages in the Torah seem to have direct applications to encounters Elijah had with the widow. In general, as noted in chapter 2, many passages exist concerning care and concern for widows, orphans and resident aliens that might have had a general bearing upon the attitude of the prophet. Specifically, Israelites were to take special care to provide for the physical needs of widows, orphans, and resident aliens within their borders.¹⁴ Yet, the Lord and Elijah, by their interaction with and subsequent provision for the Gentile widow and her son, seem to demonstrate a concern for widows, orphans, and foreigners even outside the boundaries of Israel.

because of her clothing. See Gary Inrig, *Holman Old Testament Commentary: I & II Kings*, ed. Max Anders Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 134.

¹²Luke 4:26 repeats and stresses that Elijah was ‘sent’ to the widow in Sidon.

¹³Her words reflected a common understanding in the Ancient Near East. Common thoughts are expressed in Job and Psalms (for example, Ps 11:4-6; 39:13). As Wiseman noted, “She believed, as often in Old Testament thought, that death and sickness must be punishment for some hidden sin now brought ‘to the light’.” See Donald J. Wiseman, *I & 2 Kings*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 166.

¹⁴See comments in chap. 2 under “Principles Found in Torah Legislation.”

Another key theme of Torah evidenced, especially in the second encounter, is the concept of mediation or intercession.¹⁵ In a very pointed way, God positioned Elijah so that he would have the opportunity to intercede for the widow and her son. Ultimately, Elijah's intercession and the Lord's response validated the other words Elijah spoke as being from the Lord and as being true. As a result, the intercession Elijah made and God's response ended up providing further glorification of God and His words.

In addition to the theme of intercession, the theme of God's sovereignty and control over all lands and people, as taught in the Torah, is highlighted throughout these encounters. God ordained the situation and then sent Elijah to a foreign land. Acting in the supposed realm of the obviously impotent Sidonian deity, Yahweh ensured that provision continued for the widow, her son, and Elijah. In addition, God clearly provided healing for the widow's son, not Baal.

Some aspects of these encounters stand out as surprising. First, God was the clear initiator sending Elijah directly to foreign territory. Certainly, good Israelites still lived in Israel who could have provided for the prophet.¹⁶ Human reason would have dictated that Elijah should have been sent to a safer or better situation. Instead, the prophet was deliberately sent to an impoverished Gentile woman living in the land of his fiercest enemy, Jezebel.

Second, when God sent Elijah to the specific widow in Sidon, arguably the Lord's motivation seems more dependent upon His desire to interact with and provide for the widow and her son than out of any need to provide for Elijah. God had already provided for Elijah using nature, as 1 Kings 17:2-7 documented. Additionally, as mentioned above, people existed in Israel who would have provided for the prophet.

¹⁵Mediation themes supported by Gen 12:3 and Exod 19:6. Practical examples from the Torah include Abraham's intercession for the people of Sodom (Gen 18:23-33) and Abimelech (Gen 20:17).

¹⁶Obadiah provided for many prophets during the famine, for example (1 Kgs 18:4). Scripture indicates that there were still seven thousand faithful to God close to this period (1 Kgs 19:18).

However, for some reason, God sent Elijah to a widow who was herself in desperate need of provision. Although from the beginning God knew the widow had nothing, the Lord intended that provision for Elijah would come through her so that she, too, might be provided for and come to an understanding of the source of the provision.

Ultimately, through God's initiation and Elijah's mediation, the woman saw that even in the supposed territory of Baal, Yahweh was supreme. Baal could not overcome the drought and provide food for her; however, Yahweh could. Baal was powerless on his own turf to bring life; in contrast, Yahweh could. Thus, the outcome of these interactions was undeniably positive. Feasibly, the woman came to personal faith in the God of Elijah. In the end, the widow makes an expression of faith stating that she knew the word of Yahweh that Elijah had spoken was truth.

Missional observations regarding the encounters. First, God divinely had appointed Elijah's encounter with a widow woman of Sidon and had prepared her heart to respond.¹⁷ Clearly, God's plans affected even non-believers, whether or not the non-believer was aware of the plan. In the case of the woman of Sidon, in some way God had prepared her heart to respond even before the supplication of Elijah was made. Therefore, God's sovereignty was again highlighted. God's prophet was sent to one whom the Spirit had prepared ahead of time and Elijah trusted God's leading in spite of the outward appearance and circumstance of the person involved.

Second, by His command God asked His prophet to set aside prejudice in regards to race, culture, social designation, and economic status. In this case, Elijah was asked to go to the homeland of his own enemy and, by his faithful obedience, he was able to testify through his actions to the supremacy of Yahweh. God picked one of the poorest of the land to provide for Elijah, one who was not able to support even her own son. Yet

¹⁷Luke 4:24-26. Jesus also emphasized the sovereignty of God's hand in sending Elijah to the woman of Sidon. See above, p. 86 n. 3.

Elijah relied upon her hospitality rather than seeking out better accommodations.

Admirably, Elijah was willing to eat what was provided and sleep where she had room because he had been sent by God to her for a purpose.

Third, as these interactions illustrate, God sometimes required expressions of faith before filling a need. With the initial encounter, the widow woman was asked to act by faith before God provided abundance. In the final encounter, the widow was asked to surrender the body of her son to the administrations of the prophet. Parallels exist in how Jesus related to people needing healing.

Fourth, God used concrete examples of His power against the false gods. God allowed situations to arise so that His power could be contrasted to the ‘god’ of Sidon. Elijah was used to testify that Yahweh alone had power over fertility and even life and death. Sometimes in relations with non-Israelites, displays of God’s power and absolute authority were used to highlight His supremacy.

Fifth, Elijah’s relationship with the woman of Sidon led to an opportunity for intercession. If Elijah had not been obedient to God’s leading to go to the woman to start with, the prophet would not have been in the position to intercede. In addition, if Elijah had doubted God’s ability to provide or if he had failed to ask for God’s miraculous intervention when need arose, the prophet would have missed the given opportunity to allow God’s power to be displayed clearly over the false gods. In both cases, Elijah was shown to ‘cooperate’ with God, allowing God’s power to be manifested clearly.

Finally, God’s miraculous intervention in the widow’s life by the mediating actions of Elijah allowed the prophet’s words to be validated and facilitated the further glorification of God. In other words, God’s actions convinced the woman that the rest of Elijah’s words were from the living God and true.¹⁸ God’s actions gave Elijah a platform

¹⁸As Brueggemann observed regarding the final manifestation of power, “The purpose and gain of the latter ‘wonder’ is the credentialing of Elijah as a force from Yahweh in the life of Israel.” Walter Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 212.

for further ministry.

Servant Girl and Naaman's Wife

Next for consideration is the encounter between the unknown Israelite servant girl and the wife of Naaman, the Syrian Army Commander. This encounter and the following interactions between Elisha and Naaman occurred sometime during the ministry of the prophet Elisha, who was the successor to Elijah. Elisha's ministry began sometime around the middle of the ninth century BC.¹⁹ The current passage for examination is 2 Kings 5:1-5.

Description of the encounter. Although the interaction in question as presented in Scripture is brief, the outcome affected many. After a young Israelite girl had been taken captive, she was forced into the position of waiting upon the wife of her enemy's army commander. Somehow, during the course of the Israelite's service, the young maid learned of Naaman's skin disease. She then bore witness to Naaman's wife of the fact that the prophet in Israel could heal him.

Analysis of key textual items. At the outset of the presentation of the account of Naaman, Scripture records, "By him the LORD had given victory to Syria" (2 Kgs 5:1). Thus, from the very beginning, God was presented as being fully sovereign and in charge of Naaman's success and elevation in the eyes of the Syrian king. God's use of Naaman was significant because the success of the stricken commander opened the doors for him to make requests first to his king, then to Israel's king, and to undertake a journey into an enemy's territory in order to seek a cure.

A purposeful contrast seems to exist between Naaman and the young maid.

¹⁹Elisha served as a prophet from the reign of Jehoram (Joram) until the reign of Joash (Jehoash) in Israel (2 Kgs 3:6-14; 13:14). Thiele dates the reign of Jehoram's (Joram) of Israel from 852 to 841 BC and he dates the reign of Joash (Jehoash) of Israel from 798 to 782 BC. See Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 99 and 111. See also comments in Wiseman, *1 & 2 Kings*, 28.

Naaman was described as a great man (אִישׁ גָּדוֹל), while the girl was described as a young girl (נַעֲרָה קְטָנָה), helpless in many respects (2 Kgs 5:1-2). Naaman seemed to have everything but his complete health and she had little except her faith and knowledge of truth.

Although only a handful of words detail this encounter, the expression of the little maid seems to convey quite a lot about her attitude. In 2 Kings 5:3 she exclaimed, “If only (אֲחֻלִּי) my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria!” The word אֲחֻלִּי is rare, occurring only here and in Psalm 119:5. It is an interjection used to express a wish, as “Oh, that!” Such an expression seems to convey that, though enslaved, the young maid cared for the well-being of her captors. No hint of bitterness or anger on her part for her position is shown, only a selfless desire to see the best for her mistress and master.

Discussion of the cultural or social background. During the time of this encounter, the Syrians, or Aramaeans, had been ongoing antagonists of Israel. According to 1 Kings 22:29-40, the Syrians killed King Ahab in a battle at Ramoth Gilead. Hostilities described in 1 Kings 22 would have occurred before the incident with the servant girl and Naaman’s wife. As a military man of social prominence in Syria, the commander would have been likely feared and hated in Israel.²⁰

One central aspect of this story was the fact that 2 Kings 5:1 indicated that Naaman had leprosy (צִרְעָתָ). Scripture described different types or appearances of leprosy in the Law, although the Israelite laws did not specifically apply to Naaman since he was a foreigner.²¹ While the exact nature of Naaman’s skin disease cannot be

²⁰Rabbinical commentators identified Naaman as the archer who killed King Ahab (1 Kgs 22:34). See Allan L. Effa, “Prophet, Kings, Servants, and Lepers: A Missiological Reading of an Ancient Drama,” *Mis* 32 (2004): 466

²¹See the different appearances of leprosy described in Leviticus 13. Scholars also note that the term covered a range of skin diseases. See Gwilym H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1984), 414. See also Effa, “Prophet, Kings, Servants, and Lepers,” 466. Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 332. See also Inrig, *1 & 2 Kings*, 225.

ascertained, the point was that it was problematic for him and he was willing to go to great lengths for deliverance.²²

Evaluation of the interaction of the encounter. Although it is unknown how the interaction began, the young girl of Israel inserted hope into the conversation. As previously noted, she exhibited no evidence of bitterness or anger about her situation. In her interaction, her expression of concern seemed genuine and selfless. Even though it may have been natural for the Israelite to wish her captors, enemies of her nation, ill or to rejoice in their misfortune, the young girl apparently resisted such a tendency.²³

While no passages in the Torah explicitly addressed how Israelite captives were to behave, Israelites had the inspiring story of Joseph in Genesis 39-50 as a model. During his captivity, Joseph acted with honor and selflessness, trusting the Lord and serving his captors faithfully in the best and worst circumstances.

In addition, at least two overarching themes from the Torah are also present in this encounter. First, the young servant acted in a way to bring blessing upon the Gentiles. Second, by providing information about the presence of a true prophet of God, she acted as a bridge or mediator between her captors and God. Although nothing from the passage informs as to whether the young girl actively understood her role, she still fulfilled the expectations God had for the Israelites in those respects.

One of the most surprising elements of this interaction was the servant girl's concern for her captors. Clearly, the young Israelite could have chosen to keep her knowledge to herself. Naaman's wife would have been ignorant of any withheld information. However, in a surprising show of compassion, the young captive shared a

²² Kgs 5:13 seems to suggest that he would have been willing to do something great in order to be delivered.

²³ As Jesse Long noted, "Natural animosities and prejudices are subverted in her gesture of good will." Jesse C. Long Jr., *1 & 2 Kings*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 2002), 319.

glimpse of her faith and imparted hope to her mistress and ultimately to her master.

Simple testimony provided by the young Israelite girl to the presence of a prophet in Samaria who could heal was enough to set off a chain of events that led to the physical healing of Naaman and to his own spiritual transformation. Likely, this would have affected not just Naaman, but his other servants who witnessed the event and his wife, to whom the young girl initially spoke. Through her testimony, all had the opportunity to see evidence of the power of Yahweh over sickness.

Missional observations regarding the encounter. First, as mentioned previously, although nothing in the passage reveals whether the young girl recognized she had a responsibility to interact in a positive way with her captors in order to bring blessing into their lives, the fact remains that she did just that. God used a vulnerable and materially impoverished Israelite girl to point a non-Israelite to the source of truth and healing regardless of whether the girl understood her role or not. Despite the fact that the young maid had nothing, through her faith, she positively affected one of the most powerful men in Syria.

Second, the young Israelite's interaction with Naaman's wife led to an opportunity for the Israelite maid to provide a verbal testimony that pointed Naaman's wife (and thereby Naaman) to a solution that was dependent upon the God of Israel. To her credit, the young servant made full use of the opportunity. No indication exists that the young maid thought Naaman was any less deserving of intercession or healing than an Israelite.

Finally, simple compassion of the young Israelite for her enemies had a profoundly positive effect. Ultimately, because the young maid showed concern for her captor, the Syrian encountered the one true God of Israel. Instead of putting up barriers to his coming to know the power of Yahweh, the young girl's positive witness pushed him in the direction of Yahweh.

Elisha and Naaman

Third in the series of interactions for consideration are the encounters between the prophet Elisha and Naaman. Notably, the encounters between Elisha and Naaman were only made possible by the previous interaction of the servant girl and Naaman's wife. For Elisha and Naaman's interactions, the relevant passage is 2 Kings 5:8-19. As with the previous account, the time of the interaction occurred during the ministry of Elisha, which began sometime after Ahab's reign ended around 853 BC.

Description of the encounters. Based on the advice of the servant girl, Naaman went to Israel, seeking to be cured. Although Naaman went to the king first, the king did not know what to do until Elisha actively sent for Naaman to come to him. Elisha then told the Syrian commander by messenger what to do to be healed. After initially rejecting the advice as too simple, Naaman obeyed and was healed. Humbly, Naaman returned to express gratitude and a commitment to worship Yahweh alone. In addition, he sought advance forgiveness for future participation in civil responsibilities requiring him to bow before Rimmon and Elisha dismissed him in peace.

Analysis of key textual items. Naaman made a clear profession of faith that there was no God (אין אלהים) except in Israel and expressed a commitment to only worship Him in the future (2 Kgs 5:15). However, in 2 Kings 5:18 he asked, "may the Lord pardon" (יסלח יהוה), regarding an anticipated conflict. The root סלח meaning "pardon" or "forgive" occurs 46 times in the Old Testament but only in reference to the Lord.²⁴ Naaman recognized immediately that his new faith would create a tension in his relationships and obligations when returning home.

Apparently, Naaman seemed to recognize that the act of bowing down

²⁴Gerhard Lisowsky, *Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993), s.v. "סלח."

expressed by the root **רָחַם** could be taken as a contradiction to his new commitment (2 Kgs 5:18). Although the same root was used to express his master's worship or bowing down before Rimmon, Naaman had already expressed his commitment to worship no other god but Yahweh. As a result, the future bowing down in the house of Rimmon that Naaman described would be only an external action to fulfill social obligations, not real worship from Naaman's perspective.²⁵

Notably, Elijah dismissed Naaman "in peace" (**לְשָׁלוֹם**), which conveyed a sense of soundness or completeness (2 Kgs 5:19). Based on Elijah's parting, no indication exists that God's forgiveness would be withheld regarding Naaman's future social obligations.²⁶ However, no real perspective was related in this passage regarding how bowing down in the described context was viewed by either the prophet or the Lord.

Discussion of the cultural or social background. Naaman was clearly identified as a powerful leader of the Syrian (Aramean) army. He expected compliance and came bringing what he thought would secure cooperation, a letter from the king of Syria and money. Since the Syrians were enemies of Israel, the army commander's abrupt appearance and demand necessarily caused the unnamed king of Israel great consternation. However, the pomp of the Syrian did little to impress the prophet.

Naaman mentioned his need to continue to participate in certain activities regarding the civil religion of his country. In particular, Naaman was concerned with activities for Rimmon, a god of the Syrians identified as being the same as Hadad Rimmon or "Hadad the Thunderer," the "national deity of Aram Damascus."²⁷ Rimmon

²⁵See similar observations by Paul R. House in *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 273.

²⁶Donald Wiseman has suggested that the phrase "go in peace" implied that "the recipient is in covenant relation with the speaker and his god." See Wiseman, *1 & 2 Kings*, 208. However, this seems speculative.

²⁷Wayne T. Pitard, "Arameans," in *Peoples of the Old Testament*, ed. Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 226.

was a local storm god akin to Canaanite Baal. Significantly, for this study, epigraphical evidence suggests that Arameans worshipped multiple gods simultaneously.²⁸ Naaman's commitment to worship *only* Yahweh from the point of his healing forward is significant.

Evaluation of the interaction of the encounters. Elisha actually initiated the meeting between Naaman and himself, for the king of Israel seemed at a loss as to what to do. Throughout the interactions, Elisha acted in ways to give the most glory to God. He initiated the meeting in 2 Kings 5:8 so that Naaman “shall know that there is a prophet in Israel” and by inference, a God in Israel. Later the Lord Jesus pointedly noted in Luke 4:27 that “many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” Cast as they were in the greater context of God's sending, the Lord's comments would seem to suggest the very deliberate nature of God's intention behind the interaction of Elisha and Naaman. Just as Elijah was ‘sent’ to the widow, so Elisha was ‘sent’ to Naaman.

Several passages found in the Torah have bearing on Elisha's encounter with Naaman. First, various passages exist directing Israelites about how to handle issues of leprosy and skin diseases. In order for healing to be fully realized, the Law specified that certain steps had to be followed as outlined in Leviticus 13 and 14. Washing with water was a part of the process in pronouncing one clean but offering a sin offering was also a part of the process. In all cases in the Law, the priests were the ones who were to oversee the cleansing. In Naaman's case, Elisha oversaw his cleansing. Although the steps Naaman followed did not directly correspond to those in the Law, little can be made of the differences because the army commander was not under Israelite law.²⁹

²⁸A. Malamat, “The Aramaeans,” in *Peoples of Old Testament Times*, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 148.

²⁹Some scholars have suggested that there was symbolic significance to Naaman's actions. For example, Donald Wiseman suggested the symbolic reference to seven and the washing in the river “signified total obedience to the divine word and so ‘rebirth’” in Naaman's case. See Wiseman, *1 & 2 Kings*, 207. While Wiseman's observations specifically linking the times of washing to total obedience and

Second, the Torah taught that God expected His followers to have no other Gods before Him and to refrain from bowing down to any other deity (Exod 20:3, 5; Deut 5:7, 9). Over and over the Torah stressed that true followers of Yahweh would worship Him alone. Somehow, this truth had been conveyed to Naaman. Very deliberately, Naaman committed to worship Yahweh alone, as 2 Kings 5:17 indicated. In addition, the Syrian recognized that bowing before a false god, even when worship was not intended, still needed forgiveness, as 2 Kings 5:18 emphasized.

Third, the phrase “that you may know that I am the Lord” examined in chapter 2 seems to be reflected in Naaman’s comment in 2 Kings 5:15. In the Torah, the phrase was present 19 times and was generally connected with manifestations of power for the purpose that God would be known. Naaman clearly connected his healing to God’s power and His identity for Naaman exclaimed, “Now I know that *there is* no God in all the earth, except in Israel” (2 Kgs 5:15).³⁰

Some surprises in how Elisha behaved may be noted. Initially, going against what Naaman expected and what was likely politically correct, Elisha did not even come down to speak face to face with the Syrian at the beginning. He acted against what Naaman was accustomed to from people in general and from prophets or healers specifically. As Effa observed, it may be that Elisha “deliberately minimizes his own role in the healing so that God might receive the maximum glory.”³¹

In addition, once Naaman had been healed, Elisha denied payment. In doing so, he was pointedly acting in a way that was different from healers of the time. His refusal to act according to convention or to take payment for the healing kept the

rebirth seem speculative, some measure of symbolism may be present in Naaman’s case. That God healed the Syrian of a state of uncleanness may imply a healing of his spiritual state. Healing of unclean leprosy was required before an Israelite could come before the presence of the Lord in the camp. Healing of Naaman may imply God’s acceptance of him to draw near in worship.

³⁰See comments in chap. 2 under “That You/They May Know That I Am the Lord” on p. 78.

³¹Effa, “Prophet, Kings, Servants, and Lepers,” 468.

attention focused on what God had done rather than what Elisha the prophet had done. Once Gehazi's subsequent action of requesting money from Naaman endangered that objective, the servant was seriously rebuked.

When it came to the concessions that Naaman humbly requested regarding his duties when he returned home, Elisha displayed forbearance and sent him away "in peace" (2 Kgs 5:19). Naaman clearly evidenced a decision to trust in Yahweh alone. Scripture simply does not state what Elisha's inner thoughts were concerning Naaman's expressed desire to worship Yahweh. Regardless of what Elisha thought about Naaman or his final request, God used Elisha to bless Naaman both physically and spiritually. Elisha's parting words to Naaman, "go in peace," released Naaman from anxiety regarding the issue of his future actions before his king in the house of Rimmon (2 Kgs 5:19). Naaman seemed assured of God's forgiveness in some sense.

Missional observations regarding the encounters. First, as Effa pointed out, "God's grace is able to transform the heart of even the most violent enemy of the people of God."³² Naaman was not a friend of Israel but first the servant girl and then Elisha reached out to him in his need. As a result, the enemy of Israel came to acknowledge that the God of Israel was the only God.

Second, as with previous examples, Naaman's physical need prepared his heart to be touched by God. Although Naaman was a mighty Syrian commander, he was desperate enough to try the suggestion of a captive from a defeated enemy and then the words of the prophet.³³ Naaman's illness drove him to humble himself and receive God's healing on God's terms. Ultimately, the Syrian realized he was dependent on Elisha's God for the hope and then result of healing.

³²Effa, "Prophet, Kings, Servants, and Lepers," 471.

³³As Gary Inrig succinctly stated, "Desperately ill people are willing to do desperate things." See Inrig, *1 & 2 Kings*, 225.

Third, understanding of the finer points of theology is not always necessary for true conversion. Though Naaman's conversion seemed sincere, the Syrian clearly did not understand everything concerning Yahweh and proper worship. Naaman, in the flush of his excitement over committing himself to Yahweh, still fostered the prevalent concept that the God of Israel must be bound in some way to the land of Israel. Though Naaman acknowledged that there was "no God in all the earth, except in Israel," he felt the need to take the actual dirt of Israel back with him (2 Kgs 5:15, 17). Elisha does not appear to have questioned or tried to instruct him.

Fourth, along a similar vein, as Matthew Henry so beautifully stated, "Young converts must be tenderly dealt with."³⁴ Though even Naaman seemed to recognize Yahweh would not want him to bow down in the temple of Rimmon, Elisha put no immediate heavy burden upon him. Elisha did not comment one way or the other regarding Naaman's future actions, leaving the issue to the new believer's conscience and personal relationship with the Lord.³⁵

Finally, Elisha seemed to understand that how he interacted with the non-Israelite was important. He pointedly did not act as a healer was expected to act. Instead of drawing attention to himself as the facilitator of the healing, Elisha focused the attention on God. In fact, Elisha's rebuke and the Lord's evident rebuke of Gehazi's later mercenary actions illustrated that how Israelites behaved with non-Israelites was crucial.

Jonah and Gentiles

Next, interactions for study include the encounters between Jonah and the seamen aboard a ship to Tarshish as well as the encounter between Jonah and the people

³⁴ Matthew Henry, *Commentary*, in BibleWorks [CD-ROM] (Norfolk, VA: BibleWorks, LLC, 2003), 2 Kings 5:18.

³⁵ As Effa pointed out regarding new believers, "one should trust God to continue to lead that convert into greater truth about God and the details of what it means to be a follower." Effa, "Prophet, Kings, Servants, and Lepers," 472.

of Nineveh. Dating of these occurrences is bound to the time of the ministry of Jonah, the son of Amittai, who served some time before the conclusion of the reign of Jeroboam II in 753 BC.³⁶ The passage concerning the interaction between Jonah and the seamen is found in Jonah 1:3-16. Passages relating to Jonah and the people of Nineveh are found in Jonah 1:2 and 3:1-10.

Description of the encounters. Jonah was commanded to go and preach to the Ninevites. In rebellion, he fled in the opposite direction. His sinful resistance put those on the boat with him in danger as God sent a storm against him. When confronted with the dire consequences of his flight, Jonah confessed his sin and testified of Yahweh before the seamen so that ultimately they followed his directions to cast him overboard. God immediately calmed the storm and the seamen reflected fear and awe of Yahweh. Jonah was given a second chance to obey the initial command and heeded God's directive with the result that all Ninevites repented. Because of the Ninevites' repentance, God mercifully spared them.

Analysis of key textual items. In the first encounter between Jonah and the sailors, the prophet testified, "I fear the LORD," יהוה, the personal God of the Israelites, and he testified to the fact that Yahweh was the maker of both the land and the sea (Jonah 1:9). Jonah's testimony led to the pagan sailors understanding that it was Yahweh who controlled all things, not just one plot of land or one region. In addition, the testimony gave them the name of the supreme God, Yahweh, to whom they also turned in prayer and addressed by name in Jonah 1:14.

Also of interest is the prominent use of the root for fear (פָּרַח) in this passage

³⁶2 Kgs 14:25 notes that the prophet Jonah, son of Amittai, had made a prophecy concerning Jeroboam's military success. Jeroboam II reigned from 793-53 BC (co-regency and official reign). See Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 116. As Archer pointed out, Jonah must have served before those victories. See Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, new and rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 341.

(Jonah 1:5, 9, 10, and 16). Initially, the men feared the storm. Jonah testified he feared Yahweh. Then, the men literally “feared with a great fear” at the testimony of Jonah regarding a God who controlled all things, since they knew Jonah was running from this God (Jonah 1:10). Finally, in Jonah 1:16, once the sailors had tossed Jonah into the sea and the Lord had calmed the storm, the seamen literally “feared Yahweh with a great fear.” Thus, in progression, the misplaced fear of the seamen was redirected by the testimony of the prophet to the one true God.³⁷

In the encounter between Jonah and the Ninevites, two especially significant words occur. When the Ninevites heard Jonah’s message, Jonah 3:5 recorded they “believed God.” The root for “believed” is אָמַן, which conveys the concept of firm trust and “at the heart of the meaning of the root is the idea of certainty.”³⁸ Trust in the word of God by the Ninevites was evidenced through their external actions of deep mourning.

Furthermore, in Jonah 3:8, the king commanded, “let everyone turn from his evil way.” In Jonah 3:8, the root for “turn” is שׁוּב and the most frequent meaning involves a physical turning or returning to a person or place. שׁוּב takes on a special nuance when used regarding the relationship between God and people in the context of redemption. Linked with this use is the idea of repentance: a turning from sin and turning to God. Thus, the pagan king was calling on people to turn from their evil and to cry out to God (אֱלֹהִים) for mercy (Jonah 3:8). Though the personal name of Yahweh (יְהוָה) was not referenced by the pagan king, the result of the pleas of the Ninevites and their actions was clear. Yahweh saw the signs of their repentance and spared them.

Discussion of the cultural or social background. First, in regards to the men on the ship to Tarshish, it is unknown what their specific cultural backgrounds were.

³⁷Scripture teaches consistently, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov 9:10).

³⁸R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *TWOT* 1:51.

Many of the ships of the time and region were Phoenician. Often those of the same nationality also worshipped diverse gods. However, there could have been more than one nationality represented because in Jonah 1:5 they each “called out to their own god.” In their desperation, the sailors hoped that at least one god would or could help them.

Native inhabitants of Nineveh were Assyrian and the king of Nineveh was likely the king of Assyria living in residence there.³⁹ A dreaded enemy of Israel, Assyria was known across the Near East for cruelty.⁴⁰ Oppression of Israel by Shalmaneser III, the Assyrian king who forced King Jehu of Israel to pay tribute in 841 BC, is shown on the Black Obelisk.⁴¹ Assyria continued to plague Israel and Judah when occasion allowed for decades until finally the enemy nation destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. Conservative scholars have speculated whether Jonah knew through divine revelation concerning the future role Assyria was to play in devastating his homeland.⁴²

Evaluation of the interaction of the encounters. Again, God was the prime initiator who moved Jonah from Israel and brought him into contact with people of other nations. In the first encounter, Jonah approached the men on the ship with no obvious intent to testify of God to them but instead engaged them in a normal secular interaction. He purchased their services for a quick ticket away from his calling. However, God

³⁹Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 31 (Nashville: Thomas-Nelson Publishers, 1987), 442. He noted, “Nineveh had become an alternative royal residence to both Assur and Calah” (442).

⁴⁰See for example, William C. Gwaltney Jr., “Assyrians,” *Peoples of the Old Testament*, ed. Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 103. Gwaltney noted that studies of extant Assyrian writings have found contradictions of savagery and “a childlike trust and even tenderness in the prayers of the later rulers of the Assyrian Empire” (103).

⁴¹Pritchard, *ANET*, 281.

⁴²Billy K. Smith and Frank S Page, *Amos Obadiah Jonah*, New American Commentary, vol. 19a (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 228. For an excellent overview of the interpretations, see 210-19. Other scholars just assume Jonah was composed after the fall of Israel as, for instance, an allegory. Also, see overview by James Chukwuma Okoye, *Israel and the Nations* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), 81.

forced an encounter between Jonah and the men onboard by sending the storm that led to Jonah's revelation and confession to the sailors. In the second interaction, Jonah initiated contact with the Ninevites but only because God had told him a second time to go to them. Through each step, God's sovereignty and active involvement in the lives of the non-Israelites was stressed.

In both cases, Jonah's behavior was open to reproach. With the men on the ship to Tarshish, Jonah put them in danger because he was out of God's will. Worse, he failed to be aware of the danger they were in and was not initially interceding for them; he was asleep (paralleling his reality with the Ninevites). However, once he did awaken to the situation, Jonah was willing to die to save them. With honesty about his past, the prophet testified to the omnipotence of Yahweh. In regards to the Ninevites, Jonah's behavior toward them consisted of his preaching the terse message of judgment. However, his attitude may be discerned from Jonah, chapters 1 and 4. Jonah did not want to preach to them because he did not want them to have the chance to repent for he knew God would be merciful. Jonah did not love the people; God loved the people.

Initially few passages or themes from the Torah seem directly applicable, however, upon reflection principles do exist that seem relevant to Jonah's encounters. First, the Torah teaches that God alone created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1; 2:4; Exod 20:11; 31:17). When confronted by the sailors, Jonah bore testimony to the true God's identity as Creator. Along a similar vein, throughout the Torah, the Lord was shown in complete charge of the natural elements He created. God brought flood, famine, and numerous natural plagues upon mankind to accomplish His purposes. In the encounter with the sailors, God's hand in the storm was undeniable.

Second, the sailors seemed to understand that shedding innocent blood was forbidden, just as the Torah teaches.⁴³ Even after Jonah told them how to quell the storm,

⁴³Gen 9:5-6; Exod 23:7; Deut 5:17; 19:10-13; 21:7-9; 27:25.

the sailors were hesitant to shed innocent blood, attempting to save themselves without endangering his life. When left with no other option, they specifically prayed for God's mercy when it came to their actions toward Jonah (Jonah 1:14).

Third, Jonah understood the character of God as had been revealed in the Torah. The Torah taught that God was merciful and loving (Gen 19:16; Exod 20:6; 34:6-7; Deut 5:10; 7:9; 10:18). In addition, the prophet understood that repentance and resultant pardon was a possibility for the people of Nineveh. Since the Lord had modified stated outcomes in the Torah based on requests of His people or others, Jonah clearly suspected the Lord might alter the final fate of Nineveh.⁴⁴

Fourth, the wording of Jonah 1:2 seems deliberately reminiscent of the language of judgment concerning Sodom and Gomorrah. Based on Abraham's interaction with God over the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, clearly the Lord would have shown mercy to all had there been but ten righteous. Just as God's right to judge the fate of the cities of the plain was clear, so was His control over the fate of Nineveh.

Finally, connected with the previous thought, thematically the Torah emphasized the Lord's sovereignty over all peoples. For example, God's interaction in the Torah included the execution of judgment upon non-Israelites as with the Egyptians. In addition, passages exist in the Torah showing that God intervened to show mercy to non-Israelites as in the case of Abimelech. Similarly, events in the book of Jonah highlighted God's active and sovereign involvement in the lives of non-Israelites.

Several surprising elements may be observed in Jonah's encounters with non-Israelites. One surprising aspect was that the Gentiles seemed to show more fear of a

⁴⁴In the Torah, cases exist in which God stated one outcome but then the final outcome differed based upon further interaction with people. A clear precedent for Jonah to have considered was when God declared to Abimelech that he was dead since he had taken Sarah and then God spared Abimelech after further interaction with Abram (Gen 20:3-7). In no way does this mean that God is changeable. Neither is His foreknowledge in question. God simply chose to reveal outcomes of His permissive will at stages.

sovereign, omnipotent God than did Jonah.⁴⁵ In addition, in spite of everything, the Gentile sailors were willing to try to save Jonah; though, ironically, Jonah did not want to try to save the Ninevites. Another surprising element was the intensity of the repentance on behalf of the Ninevites. In a positive and decisive turn from their ways, they cried out to God. Clearly, God looked upon their repentance as sincere, for He spared them.

Although Jonah's actions were not the best, the outcomes of both interactions were positive. Regarding the outcome for the sailors, in some measure the fear Jonah had for Yahweh was transitioned to the sailors. As Gordon Christo maintained, "The flow of the story contrasts the disobedience of Jonah with the conversion of the sailors. In the heart of the structure is Jonah's confession to them. This confession tells them what they need and want to know."⁴⁶ After the seamen observed Yahweh's mighty power and then heard about Him, they worshipped Him.⁴⁷

Similarly, once the Ninevites heard of God's impending judgment, they "believed God" and humbled themselves before Him (Jonah 3:5). Even though Jonah appeared horrified by the outcome with the Ninevites, the outcome was clearly desirable for God, who expressed concern for those "who cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand" (Jonah 4:11). Repentance of the Ninevites in response to Jonah's preaching led to their forgiveness and preservation.⁴⁸ In both cases of Jonah's interaction with non-Israelites, God was glorified.

⁴⁵Smith and Page, *Amos Obadiah Jonah*, 235.

⁴⁶Gordon E. Christo, "Jonah's Confession: The Meaning and Significance of עֵבְרִי אֲנוֹכִי," in *Creation, Life, and Hope*, ed. Jiří Moskala (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2000), 82.

⁴⁷Some would deny any conversion or true worship of the seamen. For example, Page noted that though Midrash accounts indicate the sailors became proselytes, such a dramatic conversion to only Yahweh is not clear in Scripture. He also speculated that the sacrifices likely had to occur once the sailors returned to land. See Smith and Page, *Amos Obadiah Jonah*, 237-38.

⁴⁸The sincerity of the Ninevites' repentance was confirmed by comments of the Lord Jesus in Matt 12:41 and Luke 11:32.

Missional observations regarding the encounters. First, unquestionably Jonah recognized that God wanted to spare the people and that God wanted Jonah to participate by delivering His message. Jonah's primary reason to flee was so that the Ninevites would not have the opportunity to hear God's pronouncement of judgment and repent. Jonah displayed no desire to have the people come to know God. However, God's desire for the people to be spared was the impetus for the encounters. Even in the case of the sailors, God's involvement was clear. He could have waited to rebuke Jonah when he was alone. Instead, the Lord chose a situation in which the prophet could provide testimony to non-Israelites of Yahweh's power and identity. Hence, there are echoes of God's universal concern for all people.

Second, again it is clear that people are more open to submitting to the true God when they are in danger and see no other options. Regarding the situation with the shipmen heading to Tarshish, the seamen were open to hearing about the true God because of the terror of their situation. Facing death, everything else they had tried had failed; they were desperate. Similar desperation was seen in the actions of the Ninevites who were convinced beyond doubt of the truth of Jonah's message.

Third, Jonah put non-believers in eternal jeopardy when he acted in rebellion to God. Serious consequences come about when someone steps out of the revealed will of the Lord and those consequences are not always just limited to the person in rebellion. Jonah had inadvertently put the seamen's lives in danger through his willful sin. Had any or all of them perished at that time without trusting in Yahweh, Jonah would have been responsible.

Fourth, God turned Jonah's sinful choices into opportunities for witness. To remember that God can use all situations for good even when someone disobeys is very comforting. Though Jonah was in rebellion to a specific command of God, he still bore witness to the power and supremacy of Yahweh to the men on the ship. Even though it is easy to let sin interfere with willingness to speak of God, it is always important to give

account for what He has done and trust that He can bring good from the situation.

Fifth, God used obedience even when Jonah lacked personal enthusiasm for his assignment. In reference to the people of Nineveh, Jonah was specifically sent to foreign people, his enemies, with a particular message from God. Jonah, himself, was not sympathetic to the plight of Nineveh but ultimately, when he was obedient, God used him to initiate repentance among the people. Obedience to God's leading can bear fruit even if one's heart is not right. Such is the great mercy of the Lord.

Sixth, based on the Scriptures, Jonah's message was brief; he merely declared the word God had told him concerning the Ninevites' impending judgment. Although often people feel they must cover the whole gospel message as they witness, it is not always necessary. In the case of Jonah's message to the Ninevites, hope does not even appear to have been offered but God had already prepared the Ninevites' hearts to repent.

Finally, God again was shown to be completely sovereign and purposeful in His dealings to spare Gentiles. Clearly, God wanted the people to hear of His pending judgment in order that they would have the chance to repent.⁴⁹ God desired and elected to save specifically the Ninevites from their path to destruction. Mercifully, God gave Nineveh a second chance just as He gave Jonah a second chance.

Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar

Finally, the last interaction for this study is an encounter between Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar as related in Daniel 4:8-27 [HB 4:5-24]. Background information supplemental to Daniel's last documented encounter with Nebuchadnezzar is found in Daniel 2 and Daniel 4:1-7 [HB 3:31-33]. Further passages relevant to this encounter include Daniel 4:28-37 [HB 4:25-34] and 5:18-21. Overall, Daniel's interactions with

⁴⁹Similarly, prophetic books with oracles against the nations could have functioned the same way. The prophets were told to deliver messages of judgment. Still God could have intended the messages of judgment to drive certain members of the audience to repentance. Existence of the oracles of judgment illustrated God's concern for the surrounding nations, not just Israel.

Nebuchadnezzar occurred sometime during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar from around 605 to 562 BC.⁵⁰ Events in Daniel 4 likely took place toward the end of this period, perhaps around 571 BC.⁵¹

Description of the encounter. God sent Nebuchadnezzar a troubling dream. Upon waking, Nebuchadnezzar summoned his wise men to help interpret the dream. Eventually, Daniel gave Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation, even though it promised coming judgment from God. In addition, Daniel went beyond giving the interpretation and warned the king to repent and to do right in order to forestall the judgment. Everything Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about happened with the result that Nebuchadnezzar had a better understanding of God, gave lip service to God (at bare minimum), and witnessed to others about the Lord's supremacy.

Analysis of key textual items. Several textual items are important to consider for this study. First, an observation should be made about the author of this passage. If one takes the opening and closing of Daniel 4 [HB 3:31 ff.] literally, Nebuchadnezzar appears to have authored a substantial part, if not all, of the passage; although, some have suggested that Daniel served as the scribe. In Nebuchadnezzar's prologue and epilogue to the account he refers to God as אֱלֹהֵי עֶלְיָא, that is, "Most High God." His testimony served to show that God's ultimate purpose for interacting with the king was fully accomplished. By the time he wrote about his experience, Nebuchadnezzar knew and humbly acknowledged God was sovereign and the king ensured by the proclamation that

⁵⁰See Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 181 and 189. See also Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 18 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 56 and 128. Miller observed that the LXX comment placing the date of this encounter during 586 BC seems incorrect. Though the LXX version is noticeably longer than the Masoretic Text, Miller maintained that most scholars considered the Masoretic Text to be superior (128). More will be noted about the LXX translation of this passage in chapter 4 because of the apparent attitude of the intertestamental translator concerning Nebuchadnezzar's conversion.

⁵¹Miller, *Daniel*, 127.

others throughout the world would be acquainted with the same fact.

Second of relevance to this study is Nebuchadnezzar's description of Daniel, **די-שמה בלטשאצר כשם אלהי ודי רוח-אלהין קדישין בה** (Dan 4:8 [HB 4:5]). Two aspects of this description are of note: the king's use of "my god" and "spirit of the holy gods." Nebuchadnezzar indicated that Daniel was renamed after **אלהי** (my god).⁵² Scholars differ as to whether this comment meant the king still worshipped the Babylonian god even after his encounter with the Lord, whether he was referring back to his previous loyalties at the time, or whether it was just a general reference to the "gods of Nebuchadnezzar's country."⁵³

Also, in Nebuchadnezzar's description of Daniel, the plural form of "god" was used multiple times to describe the Spirit in Daniel as the **רוח-אלהין קדישין** (Dan 4:8, 9, 18 [HB 4:5, 6, 15]). Opinion about the meaning and importance of this reference is also split.⁵⁴ Since Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian conditioning included acceptance of the notion of multiple gods, his phrasing could have been simply reflecting the common perspective of his people.⁵⁵ However, attempts to follow the singular translation, as is found in Theodotion's text, might be justified based the existence of a similar Hebrew phrase describing Yahweh, as is found in Joshua 24:19 (**כי-אלהים קדשים הוא**).⁵⁶

⁵²Dan 4:8 [4:5]. Louis Hartman noted, "The chief god of Babylon was Marduk, whose title was Bel ('lord')." Louis F. Hartman, *The Book of Daniel*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 23 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1978), 171. Many point out that most people in the Babylonian administration would have known only Daniel's Babylonian name, which is probably why it was included. John Walvoord posited, "The king, in recognition of the fact that Daniel's God is the interpreter of the dream, calls Daniel by his Hebrew name, the last syllable of which refers to Elohim, the God of Israel." John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 100.

⁵³Miller, *Daniel*, 131.

⁵⁴For example, Ed Young indicated that the correct reading should have been the singular. See Edward Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), 99. Walvoord also agreed that "the philological evidence supports the singular." See Walvoord, *Daniel*, 100. Others like Stephen Miller understood the word as having a plural meaning. Miller, *Daniel*, 131.

⁵⁵Miller, *Daniel* 131.

⁵⁶John J. Collins, *Daniel*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Hermeneia, vol. 24 (Minneapolis: Fortress

Either way, not enough evidence is present to determine Nebuchadnezzar's view on the uniqueness of the God of the Hebrews.

Third, God's reason for intervention was expressed four times with variations (Dan 4:17, 25, 26, 32 [HB 4:14, 22, 23, 29]). As written, Daniel 4:17 [HB 4:14] stated, **די ינדעון חייא די-שליט עליא במלכות אנושא ולמן-די יצבא יתננה** (that the living should know that the Most High is ruler in the kingdom of men and to whom that He wills He gives it).⁵⁷ In the first reference, all living people were in view, as the subject and the 3rd person masculine plural verb signify. When Daniel repeated the reason to Nebuchadnezzar and in the final statement from the Lord, the 2nd person masculine singular suffix was used, referring specifically to the king.

Based on the verses noted above, God's overall intention was that universally all would know of His identity and sovereignty. In addition, on an individual level the Lord specifically wanted Nebuchadnezzar to know Him. When Nebuchadnezzar experienced and understood the knowledge of God's identity, his reaction was to bear testimony to all living through his record of the experience. In this way, God's purposes were accomplished. Notably, God's purpose for His intervention with Nebuchadnezzar fully accords with the related purpose emphasized in the Torah and throughout Scripture that the Lord's name might be known and that He might be glorified.⁵⁸

Finally, following Daniel's interpretation of the dream, the prophet pleaded with the king, **וְחַטִּיךָ [וְחַטְאֵךְ] בְּצַדִּיקָה פֶּרַק וְעוֹיְתֶךָ בְּמִזְחֵן עֲנִין**, literally rendered, "Your sin(s) by righteousness break off, and your iniquities, by showing favor to the poor" (Dan 4:27 [HB 4:24]). Daniel showed his sincere interest in the king's welfare by

Press, 1993), 222. See also Gen 41:38 for a similar expression used of Joseph. See also Hartman, *The Book of Daniel*, 171. Hartman agreed that the translation should be reflected as singular.

⁵⁷Several Kethibs and Qeres are found in this verse; however, they do not affect the base meaning.

⁵⁸See in chap. 2 the section "That You/They May Know That I Am the Lord" on p. 78 and see the section "Glorification of God's Name" on p. 82.

mediating God's desire for righteous behavior to Nebuchadnezzar. The prophet's self-initiated counsel was based on the Scriptures found in Torah and elsewhere that revealed God's desire that people should strive for righteousness and justice for the vulnerable. Principles in the Torah and elsewhere taught that righteous behavior would be rewarded by God's blessing while violation of justice and righteousness would cause perpetrators to fall under God's condemnation. In seeking to sway Nebuchadnezzar to behave righteously, Daniel was trying to help the king secure God's blessing.⁵⁹

Discussion of the cultural or social background. Daniel, an Israelite youth of high birth, had been taken as a prisoner to Babylon following Nebuchadnezzar's 605-04 BC siege of Jerusalem. At the time of the encounter between Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon was the dominant empire and Nebuchadnezzar, as king, would have been the most powerful human ruler of the known world. Much has been found archaeologically concerning the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, including the Babylonian Chronicles.⁶⁰ Since Nebuchadnezzar was known for his domination, pride, and cruelty, it took enormous courage for a captive like Daniel to confront the despot with his sin.

Babylonians, and specifically Nebuchadnezzar, would have worshipped Marduk along with a whole pantheon of other deities.⁶¹ 'Bel' was a title equivalent to 'lord' that could have been applied to any god; however, as the worship of Bel Marduk

⁵⁹Hartman maintained Daniel's advice was meant for Nebuchadnezzar to apply after he had endured the punishment from God and repented in order that "he give proof of his sincere repentance by performing good deeds . . . otherwise he will have a relapse into his insanity and will not have 'lasting happiness'." See Hartman, *The Book of Daniel*, 177. Donald Gowan stated, "Daniel adds some advice, suggesting the chastisement might be averted." See Donald E. Gowan, *Daniel*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 80. However, the context of the passage seems to support Coffman's insistence that "the thought here is not that the king's changing from his sins might avert the experience that had been decreed for him, but that the onset of it might be delayed." See James Burton Coffman, *Commentary on Daniel*, James Burton Coffman Commentaries: *The Major Prophets*, vol. 4 (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1989), 73.

⁶⁰See D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1956).

⁶¹Other prominent deities included Sin, Shamash, Ishtar, and Nebo.

became predominant, his identity merged with characteristics of previous gods and he was often just addressed as Bel.⁶² Even though Nebuchadnezzar would have naturally been prone to ascribe supremacy to Bel Marduk, after coming facing to face with the power and signs of the Most High God of Daniel, the king seems to have accepted that the Israelite God was indeed ‘Most High’ and unique in power and authority.⁶³

Like other ancient peoples, Babylonians placed great religious significance on the understanding of dreams. Since Daniel held an official role in the kingdom as the king’s chief diviner, he would have had specific responsibilities to the king for his interpretation. Some type of loyalty oath might have been applicable in Daniel’s situation given the Babylonian setting and his role in the pagan kingdom.⁶⁴ However, though Daniel may have been constrained by an oath to share the interpretation of a dream, his attempt to encourage Nebuchadnezzar to reform and do what would please the Lord feasibly fell outside the tasks of an interpreter.

Evaluation of the interaction of the encounters. Initiation for this interaction clearly came from God alone. As with the first dream of Nebuchadnezzar documented in Daniel 2, the dream detailed in chapter 4 came from God (Dan 4:17; 24-25 [HB 4:14; 21-22]). God was purposefully reaching out to the king and worked circumstances so that Daniel would also interact with the king. In addition, Daniel seemed to initiate with the

⁶²See n. 52 in this chapter. As W. G. Lambert stated, “Marduk (Hebrew: Merodach) became known as Bel, ‘the lord.’” See W. G. Lambert, “The Babylonians and Chaldeans,” in *Peoples of Old Testament Times*, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 185. See also Edward R. Dalglish, “Bel,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 652.

⁶³Note Nebuchadnezzar adopted the designation of Most High for Daniel’s God just as the angels and Daniel used (Dan 4:17, 25, and 32 [HB 4:14, 21, and 29]). Statements regarding the king’s acknowledgement of the dominion of the Most High flank the main section of the account (Dan 4:2-3 and 4:34-35 [HB 3:32-33 and 4:31-32]).

⁶⁴As Roberts observed, “Zimri-Lim’s diviners had to swear that they would reveal to the king whatever they saw in a divination; even if the message were unfavorable, they would not conceal it from him.” See Jim Roberts, “The Legal Basis for Saul’s Slaughter of the Priests of Nob (1 Samuel 21:22),” *JNSL* 25 (1999): 21.

king in a mediatorial way when he went beyond just interpreting the dream and offered wise counsel for the good of the king. While it cannot be determined if Daniel understood that God wanted him to mediate with or to try to bring blessing to the king, the prophet's behavior showed an embodiment of those concepts.

Based upon evidence of Scripture, all Daniel's interactions with Nebuchadnezzar were above reproach. Daniel always pointed Nebuchadnezzar to God and highlighted His sovereignty and almighty power. Though honesty could have placed his life in danger, Daniel bravely delivered God's message of coming judgment. Daniel gave clear testimony that God held the future in His hand. In addition, Daniel displayed compassion and concern for the well-being of the king. Though not explicitly stated in Scripture, likely Daniel interceded with God for the king during the events related in this passage. Certainly, the prophet's advice to the king, showed his desire to bring blessing instead of cursing into the king's life.

Various passages in the Torah have a bearing upon this account. Perhaps those passages most obviously connected are those that convey God's insistence for righteous and just behavior. Daniel's advice seemed to be prompted from an understanding of this basic desire and requirement from God for His people or those He would bless.⁶⁵

Whether or not Daniel consciously understood his role, he fulfilled the expectation expressed in Exodus 19:6 for the Israelites to function as a kingdom of priests. Daniel tried to help Nebuchadnezzar understand what God desired. As a mediator between the Lord and Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel first explained God's intention and then

⁶⁵Notably, righteousness and justice were emphasized at an early point with God's selection of and relationship with Abraham. In Gen 18:19, the Lord said concerning Abraham, "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." God's desire for his people to do righteousness and justice stems from His own righteous and just identity as Deut 32:4 emphasizes. Numerous passages exist in the Torah emphasizing the necessity of right behavior (Exod 15:26; Lev 19:15; Deut 6:18; 12:28). Other passages in the Torah emphasize God's desire for right behavior with regard to especially the most vulnerable, something Daniel seemed to emphasize (Deut 10:18-19; 16:19-20; 24:17; 27:19).

entreated the king to repent and act in a way to please the Lord.

Several key themes present in the Torah are also applicable to Daniel 4. God's sovereignty over the entire world even down to the affairs of individual men is strongly attested. Just as the Pharaoh Moses confronted in Egypt was subject to the hand of the Lord, so was Nebuchadnezzar. In both cases, the leaders were elected by God for His own purpose, one for destruction and the other, some would say, for redemption. Nebuchadnezzar was granted repentance and received restoration.

Corresponding with God's sovereignty, the theme of the universal scope of the Lord is present. Repeatedly in the Torah, God was shown to reign over all the kingdoms of men as interactions in Babel and Egypt, for example, illustrated. God demonstrated his universal concern by choosing to interact with Nebuchadnezzar, the world leader of the time, in a way that "the living" would know of God's ultimate control over the affairs of men (Dan 4:17 [HB 4:14]). Clearly, the theme found in the Torah of God acting so that His name might be known is directly relevant to Daniel's interaction with Nebuchadnezzar.⁶⁶ Everything God did with His interaction with Nebuchadnezzar was tied to His goal that others, including the king, would know of Him.

One of the most striking elements was that God initiated with Nebuchadnezzar in the first place and that He showed mercy and allowed the Babylonian a second chance instead of just destroying him. As in the case of the Ninevites, it seems that God allowed the message of judgment to be delivered so that Nebuchadnezzar would repent. In this way, the judgment was ultimately redemptive in nature. Another surprising facet of Daniel's last recorded encounter with Nebuchadnezzar was his commitment to speak God's judgment to the king. In this encounter, just as with Daniel's previous interaction (Dan 2:27-45), Daniel stressed that God was the one in charge. However, unique to this

⁶⁶For example, compare God's comments about Pharaoh and Egypt in Exod 7:3-5 with His statement of intent for Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 4:17.

passage was Daniel's personal plea for the king to change his behavior and act righteously.

Certainly, the outcome of Daniel's interaction with Nebuchadnezzar was positive. Nebuchadnezzar's statement of reverence for the Lord was so positive that scholars debate whether the Babylonian king became an actual convert.⁶⁷ While it is impossible to know for certain, one cannot deny the possibility. Elements in the king's testimony included an acknowledgement of his pride (confession of sin, as Calvin noted) and God's just actions as well as an affirmation that God was the Most High God.⁶⁸ Regardless of Nebuchadnezzar's final status before the Lord, the outcome clearly brought glory to God and accomplished His greater purpose of having His name exalted among Gentiles.

Missional observations regarding the encounters. First, God on occasion initiated interactions with Gentiles before one of His people was even involved with the person in question. In the case with Nebuchadnezzar, the only reason Daniel had to interact with the king was that God had sent Nebuchadnezzar a message in his dreams. Daniel cooperated with God, in the sense that he faithfully explained God's meaning and went beyond the basic interpretation to tell the king what type of behavior God desired. Therefore, though God initiated with the king, just as other cases mentioned previously, the Lord involved His emissary in verbally communicating truth to a Gentile.

⁶⁷For one of the most extensive surveys of the question of Nebuchadnezzar's salvation and a thoughtful argument for his true conversion, see Young, *Daniel*, 114. For similar reasoning, see also Harry Bultema, *Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988), 152-53. See also Miller, *Daniel*, 144. For an equally respected scholar who denied Nebuchadnezzar's conversion, see, for example, John Calvin, who noted, "Nebuchadnezzar does not here embrace the grace of God." See John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, trans. Thomas Myers, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), 304. Scholars oft cited for arguing against Nebuchadnezzar's conversion include Ernst W. Hengstenberg, Edward B. Pusey and Carl F. Keil. However, more recent scholars holding this position include Donald Gowan and Paul Redditt. See Gowan, *Daniel*, 83. See also Paul L. Redditt, *Daniel*, New Century Bible Commentary (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 76.

⁶⁸Calvin, *Daniel*, 302-03.

Second, being faithful to God and bearing witness to the pagan king was sometimes uncomfortable and put Daniel in difficult positions, if not outright danger. Previously in Daniel's experience with Nebuchadnezzar, he had to choose to disobey a direct order in order to stay true to God. In this encounter, Daniel had to deliver a harsh message of pending judgment in order to follow God's direction. Nebuchadnezzar could have reacted poorly to being rebuked by the prophet, yet Daniel chose to mediate truth to the king in the hope that he would reform. By speaking truthfully, regardless of how his own safety could have been jeopardized, Daniel put faithfulness to God and the well-being of the king first.

Third, extending the previous point, Daniel's plea to Nebuchadnezzar for repentance demonstrated compassion and empathy for an enemy. In contrast to Jonah, who showed no desire for the salvation of his enemies, Daniel seemed to sincerely desire Nebuchadnezzar's repentance so that the king would have a "lengthening" of "prosperity" (Dan 4:27 [HB 4:24]). Just as the servant girl who witnessed to Naaman about the true prophet of God, even though Daniel had been brought to Babylon as a captive, the prophet placed concern for his captor's well-being above his own.

Finally, when Nebuchadnezzar came to recognize the status of God, others were affected. Due to his importance, impact of his positive experience was expanded far beyond himself. Notably, the queen who informed Belshazzar of Daniel's ability to interpret dreams distinctly remembered some aspects of Nebuchadnezzar's and Daniel's interactions (Dan 5:11-12). Daniel clearly thought Belshazzar was without excuse for his behavior and asserted that Belshazzar knew what had occurred to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 5:22). Many others would have heard of Nebuchadnezzar's experience with the Most High God as well.

Conclusion

Scriptures do exist that illustrate that some Israelites appear to have acted

without concern for how their actions negatively affected non-Israelites.⁶⁹ In addition, it may be maintained that few seemed to have had any type of notion of a responsibility to introduce non-Israelites to Yahweh. However, based on the encounters surveyed, whether or not they understood it as their mission, some Israelites purposefully initiated with non-Israelites in surprisingly constructive ways that led to some Gentiles' acknowledgment of Yahweh as God.

Furthermore, throughout all the interactions, God's sovereignty in directing the actions of the Israelites (and even the non-Israelites) seems clear. In all encounters, the Lord was 'sending' Israelites into the path of non-Israelites or vice-versa. At times, His purposes were clearly redemptive, as with the Ninevites and Nebuchadnezzar. Explicitly, in several of the encounters, it may be argued that God's actions were missional in the sense of His reaching out to Gentiles and/or sending His people to non-Israelites so that His name would be glorified.

In addition, situations existed when Israelites apparently understood why God was sending them. For example, Jonah clearly expressed an understanding that he knew God desired to show mercy and was sending him so that the people might repent.⁷⁰ Daniel, too, understood his role in declaring judgment so that Nebuchadnezzar would have the framework to repent and acknowledge God. Daniel even delivered an unexpected invitation to Nebuchadnezzar to repent.

Though it may be conceded that overall few Israelites seemed to understand God's purposes at the time they were being sent, it may also be maintained that at least some Israelites did understand a calling to interact in a way to bring Gentiles to glorify

⁶⁹For example, see David's actions in relation to Uriah and the impact on Gentiles in 2 Sam 11 and 12 (especially God's accusation in 2 Sam 12:14) or Jonah's initial refusal to go to Nineveh documented in the book of Jonah (Jonah 1:2-3; 3:10-4:2).

⁷⁰Other cases not surveyed exist when God specifically told those He was sending what to do as in the intercession of Abraham for Abimelech. In those cases, the Israelites certainly understood at least some aspect of God's intentions.

God. In addition, in the Hebrew Scriptures, God's intentional activity to bring about repentance and restoration with certain Gentiles and the glorification of His name is also evident.

Yet, how did the intertestamental Jews view some of the Scriptural themes or encounters surveyed? Does any evidence exist in Judaic writings following the Israelite kingdom and exilic period to indicate that interpreters had an understanding of God's mission or a mission of the children of Israel? Did activities of the Jews following the exile provide any evidence that at least some of the Jews felt sent as ambassadors of God? In the following chapter, an endeavor will be made to explore some of these questions.

CHAPTER 4

IMPACT OF OT TEACHING ON MISSION AND INTERACTIONS WITH GENTILES AS EVIDENCED BY EARLY JEWS

As pointed out in chapter 1, various writings from the intertestamental and early rabbinic periods provide some insight into how early Jews understood and applied teachings in the Old Testament regarding interactions with Gentiles. In this chapter, writings of the Jews will be examined to see how early Jews generally viewed the themes relating to mission or interactions with Gentiles and how the Jews interpreted the actual interactions covered in chapter 3.

Jewish Perspectives concerning Mission and Interactions with Gentiles

What did the early Jews think about their interactions with Gentiles? Was there any understanding by any Jews that the people of Israel were to point Gentiles to the Most High God? Based on the survey presented in chapter 1, clearly many divergent opinions and perspectives exist. In order to control the scope of this chapter, the focus will be on determining whether any writings seemed to continue or expand upon missional or relational themes already discussed. Since the point of this work is to show that some Jews, not all, understood that the Jews bore a responsibility and calling to reach out to Gentiles and bring them to glorify God Most High, foremost attention will be given to works that support that premise.

For the purpose of this study, Jewish writings from the intertestamental and Tannaitic periods are the most important witness as to what the earliest Jews truly believed about what the Hebrew Scriptures taught. Writings examined will be those included in the Jewish Pseudepigrapha, the Apocrypha, the Jewish historians, the New

Testament, and rabbinic writings that seem to have roots in thought around AD 200.¹

First, a survey will be presented detailing what the writers expressed that may have connections with missional or relational themes as identified in chapter 2. Next, a survey will be presented showing how various Jews interpreted the passages related to the case studies as presented in chapter 3.

Themes of the Hebrew Scriptures Found in Early Jewish Writings

Chapter 2 surveyed various missional and relational themes that have been identified over the generations from the Old Testament. Some missional themes that will be sought in Jewish writings will include God's rightful lordship over all humanity, His concern as well as the concern of Jews for Gentiles, and acts of revelation about God so that He might be known. Other themes sought will include the concept of God's judgment on non-Israelites leading to repentance, restoration, and glorification of His name. In addition, specific attention will be given to examples of interactions that highlighted missional elements like intercession, the role of Jews as mediators of blessing, the teaching of the Law to Gentiles, and incorporation of Gentiles into the chosen people.

Writings in the Apocrypha. Various books at different times have been classified as part of the Apocrypha or simply categorized with other works of the Jewish

¹Some early Jewish writings have highly debated authorship and dating issues. Due to the lack of original documents and the nature of transmission passing through Jewish and Christian copyists, original content certainly may have undergone revision. As Louis Ginzberg noted, "The use of these Pseudepigrapha requires great caution. Nearly all of them are embellished with Christian interpolations, and in some cases the inserted portions have choked the original form so completely that it is impossible to determine at first sight whether a Jewish or a Christian legend is under examination." See Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin with index by Boaz Cohen (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), 1:xiii. For this study, only documents of the Pseudepigrapha with the scholarly consensus in favor of pre-second century AD Jewish origin will be cited. Later works are excluded as well as those works where the consensus is unclear or where reasonable doubts exist as to the Jewish origin. With Ginzberg's comments in mind, every attempt will be made to discriminate between likely original Jewish content and obvious Christian interpolations. Although they fall within the period surveyed, due to the space limitations, writings from Qumran were not fully surveyed.

Pseudepigrapha. For this section, books or additions found in the Septuagint that were not included in the Protestant canon will be considered apocryphal.² Due to the limitation of space, only a representative handful of writings will be analyzed that seem to show missional themes or activities. Books highlighted will be Tobit, Judith, and Sirach.³

With a setting supposedly during the eighth century BC, before the fall of Nineveh, Tobit is one of the apocryphal writings that seemed to clearly express the desire and expectation that ultimately some from the nations would come to acknowledge the God of Israel as God.⁴ Toward the beginning of the book, a clear expression of the involvement of God in the fate of the nations exists: “For none of the nations has understanding, but the Lord himself will give them good counsel; but if he chooses otherwise, he casts down to deepest Hades.”⁵ Arguably, the author understood that God could choose to open the understanding of people of the nations to save them from Hades, just as He could choose to allow others to go to their destruction.

However, beyond the comment in Tobit 4:19 that seemed to show an understanding that it is God who opens men’s understanding, throughout the book the call appeared to righteous Jews to exalt the name of the Lord before all people, including the Gentiles. At multiple points Jews were exhorted to witness to the identity and works of God. For example, in Tobit 12:6, the angel Raphael supposedly enjoined a couple, “Bless God and acknowledge him in the presence of all the living for the good things he

²Apocryphal books include 1 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, additions to Esther, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, Ps 151, Prayer of Manasseh, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Psalms of Solomon, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, and additions to Daniel (including The Prayer of Azarias, The Song of the Three Children, and Susanna and Bel and the Dragon).

³Other apocryphal works also have missional elements as the very brief survey in chap. 1 pointed out but some of the most intriguing elements are found in the three works highlighted.

⁴Since Tobit and all the apocryphal books are found in the Septuagint, the latest date of composition would have to fall before the completion of the Septuagint, sometime in the second century BC. Tobit’s Jewish character is pronounced, with much attention given to Jewish identity and ritual.

⁵Tob 4:19. Any quotations from the Apocrypha will be taken from the NRSV.

has done for you. Bless and sing praise to his name. With fitting honor, declare to all people the deeds of God. Do not be slow to acknowledge him.” Similarly, Tobit 13:3-4 exhorted, “Acknowledge him before the nations, O children of Israel; for he has scattered you among them. He has shown you his greatness even there. Exalt him in the presence of every living being, because he is our Lord and he is our God; he is our Father and he is God forever.”⁶

Not only were the Jews encouraged to share the truth about the greatness of God with all the nations, the character in the story faithfully expressed his praise of God before all. In Tobit 13:6, a call for repentance was recorded, “In the land of my exile, I acknowledge him, and show his power and majesty to a nation of sinners: ‘Turn back, you sinners, and do what is right before him; perhaps he may look with favor upon you and show you mercy.’”⁷ In addition, a strong expectation existed that, after the rebuilding of the temple, in the supposed future, converts would join with Israel to worship the true God. As was written, “Then the nations in the whole world will all be converted and worship God in truth. They will all abandon their idols, which deceitfully have led them into their error; and in righteousness they will praise the eternal God.”⁸

Therefore, in Tobit, the author appeared to have the understanding that God drew to Himself whom He willed (from the nations just as from Israel) but still expected

⁶Tob 12:11 also conveyed that God’s works should be shared and exalted among all. Kaufmann Kohler, a reformed Jewish scholar, noted that following the Messianic hopes present in the OT, “the religious hope for a universal kingdom of God took root even more deeply in the heart of the Jewish people. It created the conception of Israel’s mission and also the literature and activity of the Hellenistic propaganda, and it gave a new impetus to the making of proselytes among the heathen.” See Kaufmann Kohler, *Jewish Theology: Systematically and Historically Considered* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918), 334.

⁷Who was the nation of sinners he was addressing? He spoke in the land of his exile. Though it is true that he could have been only addressing the scattered ‘nation’ of Israel, his call for repentance was general enough to be taken by any hearing his praise. Certainly, he did not seem to exclude anyone from those he called to repentance. In reference to Tob 13:1-11 and *Sib. Or.* 3:47 and 76b, Kohler stated, “In the book of Tobit and the Sibylline Oracles also we find this universalistic conception of the Messianic age expressed.” See Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, 338.

⁸Tob 14:6-7a. See also Tob 13:10-18.

Jews to spread the truth about Him to everyone throughout all the nations. Not only was the character in the story accomplishing that feat, but by the direction of the author, the story itself was fulfilling the directive by pointing Gentiles to God's identity, the fact that there would be judgment for sinners, the fact that repentance could bring the mercy of God, and the fact that Gentiles would be welcomed. Depending on the date of composition, if it was after the rebuilding of the temple as many suppose, the unknown author could have expected the period for the restoration and ingathering of converts to have already begun.

Another work from the Apocrypha that seemed to contain some missional themes is Judith. Close to the beginning of the main action, the reader is introduced to an Ammonite leader, Achior, who knew enough of the history of Israel to report the wonders that God had done for them and knew something of the covenantal relationship.⁹ As he testified to Holofernes, "If there is any oversight in this people and they sin against their God and we find out their offense, then we can go up and defeat them. But if they are not a guilty nation, then let my lord pass them by; for their Lord and God will defend them, and we shall become the laughingstock of the whole world."¹⁰ At that time Achior was clearly not a follower of the Lord; however, he was shown to know something of the Lord based on his knowledge of how God had interacted with Israel.

Enraged by the Ammonite's counsel, Holofernes bound him and sent him to the Israelite city to suffer a shared fate of supposed annihilation. After describing Israel's pending destruction, Holofernes mocked Achior's belief: "You will not die until you perish along with them. If you really hope in your heart that they will not be taken, then

⁹Remarkably, the author chose an Ammonite as a representative of Gentiles who could be drawn to God. Based on Deut 23:3 [HB 23:4], Ammonites were among those excluded from the congregation until the 10th generation and some early rabbis extended that to say forever. The main point is that the author chose a Gentile from a nation traditionally hostile to Israel and placed him in a situation to come into the people of Israel as a convert.

¹⁰Jdt 5:20-21.

do not look downcast!”¹¹ After the Ammonite was taken into the Israelite city and told the people his story, the Israelites went out of their way to encourage him as was written, “Then they reassured Achior, and praised him highly.”¹² Thus, the attitude the author portrayed in regards to a Gentile open to the truth of Israel’s God was warm and encouraging. No barriers to interaction were shown.

Most significantly, once Judith had seen God’s deliverance from the enemy she took the unexpected and immediate step of sending for the Ammonite and sharing about God’s wondrous actions. Judith’s urgency to share about the deliverance by the hand of God overrode even the seemingly urgent act of preparing to repulse the rest of the army. She wanted the Ammonite to see God’s justice and participation in the deliverance and she verbally bore witness to what God had done, a theme also present in the Old Testament. Achior’s response was also significant: “When Achior saw all that the God of Israel had done, he believed firmly in God, and was circumcised, and joined the house of Israel, remaining so to this day.”¹³

Arguably, the author was trying to say something by framing Israel’s deliverance by the Lord with the experience of a Gentile who went from general knowledge of God to a life changing experiential knowledge of God mediated by the people of God.¹⁴ While the phrase, “That you may know that I am the Lord,” never

¹¹Jdt 6:8-9. ἐλπίζω, the root of the Greek work for “hope,” conveys the concept of expectation. Significantly, the same root was used in Judith’s testimony of God as a Savior of those without hope. Judith’s prayer before going down to the enemy camp was, “but you are the God of the lowly, helper of the oppressed, upholder of the weak, protector of the forsaken, savior of those without hope” (Jdt 9:11). In a way, Achior symbolized the one she was describing. Achior’s despondence in the face of the taunts of the enemy was implied and then offset by the later reassurance of the Israelites.

¹²Jdt 6:20. Holofernes had mocked Achior and seemed to observe a lack of his faith in the deliverance of Israel, or at least a fear that he and they would end up being destroyed. The Israelites ‘reassured’ Achior. What was their reassurance? Perhaps it was about the truth of his understanding of Israel’s relationship with God. Perhaps it was partially for this understanding that the Israelites praised him, as was documented by the verse.

¹³Jdt 14:10.

¹⁴Judith purposefully went out of her way to ‘witness’ to the Ammonite. Her witness of God’s

appeared in the book, the theme seemed present. God's great works for Israel needed to be shared so that all those hearing would know Israel's God as the true God.

Toward the end of the book, Judith expressed a desire that all people would serve God. She sang, "Let all your creatures serve you, for you spoke, and they were made. You sent forth your spirit, and it formed them; there is none that can resist your voice."¹⁵ Later she noted that those who would fear the Lord would receive mercy from God, while those who did not would suffer judgment. Judith's, and apparently the author's, desire and expectation was that there would be Gentiles who would be faithful converts if they came to understand the true reality of the Lord's relationship with Israel and if they adopted a proper fear of the Lord. Proclamation of God's works served to awaken understanding.

Finally, in regard to the apocryphal works, the prologue of Sirach and the main book of Sirach have passages that seemed to echo themes identified in chapter 2 as missional. Based upon the prologue, it seemed clear that some in Israel felt called to teach the truths of the Torah to others. As was written, "Now, those who read the scriptures must not only themselves understand them, but must also as lovers of learning be able through the spoken and written word to help the outsiders."¹⁶ Later the author clarified the 'help' was to enable people "to make even greater progress in living according to the law."¹⁷

power led to Achior's conversion.

¹⁵Jdt 16:14 ff. Judith noted that none could resist God's voice in connection with creatures coming to serve God. Perhaps this, too, expressed an understanding that God was the one who called specific creatures into His service, which in this case would have included the new Ammonite convert. Achior was an example of one who showed a fear of God and who received mercy and life from God in contrast to Holofernes who showed contempt and received just condemnation.

¹⁶Sip 1:1. τοῖς ἐκτὸς was the phrase used for "outsiders" and the exact phrase did not appear anywhere else in Scripture or the Apocrypha. ἀλλογενῆς was used when describing Israelite outsiders or those who were not priests (Exod 29:3; 30:33; Lev 22:10-13; Num 1:51; 3:10, 38; 16:40; 18:4, 7). In Sirach's Prologue, the term "outsiders" could feasibly have included any outside of Israel, especially since the content of Sirach seems to have had some universalistic aspects in its appeal.

¹⁷Sip 1:1.

At the beginning of Sirach, the unique identity of God was emphasized, along with the promise that “those who fear the Lord will have a happy end; on the day of their death they will be blessed.”¹⁸ Within the following passages of Sirach were teachings concerning the shared identity of all men as creations of God with the ability to obey or disobey and the shared culpability before God. After identifying God as the Creator of all, the writer argued, “Before a man are life and death, and whichever he chooses will be given to him. For great is the wisdom of the Lord; he is mighty in power and sees everything; his eyes are on those who fear him, and he knows every deed of man. He has not commanded anyone to be ungodly, and he has not given anyone permission to sin.”¹⁹

Beyond emphasizing the shared status of all people before God, the author highlighted God’s love for all people as he maintained, “The compassion of man is for his neighbor, but the compassion of the Lord is for all living beings. He rebukes and trains and teaches them, and turns them back, as a shepherd his flock.”²⁰ Therefore, the author displayed an understanding that God’s love was for all of humanity and that while men could choose right or wrong, God was also involved in teaching and turning men back when they went astray. In addition, the author taught that fear and trust of the Lord were required for pleasing Him and proper fear of the Lord was reflected through obedience to His laws.²¹ In contrast to the blessing promised to those who followed the laws of the Lord, judgment was described for those who would fail to fear the Lord.²²

In Sirach a prayer existed explicitly asking God to intercede so that the nations

¹⁸Sir 1:13.

¹⁹Sir 15:14-20.

²⁰Sir 18:13. God’s involvement in changing the hearts of the nations was a theme throughout the early Jewish writings. For example in the *Letter of Aristeas*, the writer commented, “Mankind is God’s creation and is changed and converted by him.” See “Aristeas to Philocrates,” trans. R. J. H. Shutt, in *TOTP* [1985] 2:13. See also Ps 65:4 [HB 65:5].

²¹Sir 2:6-8; 15-16.

²²Sir 41:8-10.

might know and fear Him when they observed His judgment on those who persecuted Israel. Sirach 36:2-5 recorded, “Put all the nations in fear of you. Lift up your hand against foreign nations and let them see your might. As you have used us to show your holiness to them, so use them to show your glory to us. Then they will know, as we have known that there is no God but you, O Lord.” Later the author continued, “Hear, O Lord, the prayer of your servants, according to your goodwill toward your people, and all who are on the earth will know that you are the Lord, the God of the ages.”²³

Based on the three works from the Apocrypha several observations about missional themes may be made. God was seen by some Jews as the one who drew non-Jews into the people of Israel. Some Jews understood that how one interacted with Gentiles was important and proclamation of God’s works to Gentiles was seen as an important duty of Jews. Intercession for Gentiles to come to know the Lord was practiced and conversion of Gentiles was expected and accepted. Both fear of the Lord and obedience to the Torah were important for anyone to be considered righteous and, as a result, the teaching of the Law was counted as a duty.

Writings in the Pseudepigrapha. Numerous works exist that have been identified as part of the Jewish Pseudepigrapha. Although, the scope of this paper does not allow for a full survey of all themes present in every work, three works with various themes representative of missional themes identified in chapter 2 have been chosen for review. Works surveyed in this section will include the *Sibylline Oracles*, *1 Enoch*, and the *Writings of Aristobulus*.

Classified with the Pseudepigrapha, several oracles within the *Sibylline Oracles* contain apparent universalistic themes carrying forward missional concepts taught in the Old Testament. Although some of the books within the *Oracles* have

²³Sir 36:17. Though the context for the nations to come to know the Lord involved judgment, such a theme was consistent with passages in Scripture outlined in chap. 2 regarding judgment so that people might know the Lord is God.

marked Christian edits, other parts of the *Oracles* have been classified as mainly Jewish, as in the case of Book 3.²⁴ Within the *Oracles* in Book 3, themes of a prophetic call to all people, pending judgment, and the possibility of salvation were present. In addition, much like passages in Isaiah, Book 3 contained sections teaching on the unique identity of God and the foolishness of idolatry. All men, including Gentiles were addressed and some passages pointedly addressed Gentiles with specific calls to repent.

Book 3 opened by revealing the characteristics of God to all men and pointing out the futility of idolatry. As stated, “There is one God, sole ruler, ineffable, who lives in the sky, self begotten, invisible, who himself sees all things. No sculptor’s handmade him, nor does a cast of gold or ivory reveal him, by the crafts of man, but he himself, eternal, revealed himself as existing now, and formerly and again in the future.”²⁵ In the context of the identity of God and His right to judge, all men were warned of pending judgment for their unrighteousness.

Beyond revealing the truth about God’s identity and coming judgment, the author of Book 3 confronted Gentiles with a call to revere Him: “To what purpose do you give vain gifts to the dead and sacrifice to idols? Who put error in your heart that you should abandon the face of the great God and do these things? Revere the name of the one who has begotten all, and do not forget it.”²⁶ Again, later the author entreated, “But you, devious mortal, do not tarry in hesitation but turn back, converted, and propitiate God . . . so that he may have pity for he alone is God and there is no other.”²⁷

²⁴*Sib. Or.* Book 1:1-323 and Book 3 are thought to be early and primarily Jewish. See J. J. Collins, trans. and introduction, “Sibylline Oracles,” *TOTP*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 1:322 and 355. Book 3 was dated from 163 to 145 BC.

²⁵*Sib. Or.* 3:11-16 (Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” *TOTP* 1:362).

²⁶*Sib. Or.* 3:547-50 (Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” *TOTP* 1:374).

²⁷*Sib. Or.* 3:624-29 (Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” *TOTP* 1:376). Some scholars, like Michael Bird, have insisted that Book 3 was intended primarily for Jews. See Michael Bird, *Crossing Over Land and Sea* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 119. Even if Michael Bird was correct, the attitude of the author, his openness to Gentiles converting, his presentation of the identity of God, and the intention

Through the judgment passages, the author seemed to have the understanding that God’s judgment would bring men to recognize who He was. As the author noted, “But when the wrath of the great God comes upon you, then indeed you will recognize the face of the great God.”²⁸ Any “devious mortal” who would turn to God before the judgment and do righteousness had the hope of avoiding “the wrath.”²⁹ Against the backdrop of coming judgment and a promise that in the future all would serve God, the Gentiles were encouraged in the moment to “serve the great God so that you may have a share in these things.”³⁰

Just as Isaiah presented a vision of all nations serving the Lord in the future, so did the author of Book 3 of the *Oracles*. In *Sibylline Oracles* Book 3, ultimately, “all islands and cities” would praise God and say, “Come, let us all fall on the ground and entreat the immortal king, the great eternal god. Let us send to the Temple, since he alone is sovereign and let us all ponder the Law of the Most High God.”³¹ Throughout the work was the understanding that God was over all men and would bring judgment. All men, and specifically Gentiles, were called to repent, worship God alone, and do righteous actions. Openness to having Gentiles join with the elect in serving God underscored the universalistic mindset.³² Hope was held out that any who served God might be spared the

for judgment showed a desire that Gentiles should come to glorify God. In addition, it showed an understanding that God wanted Gentiles to glorify Him and showed that Gentiles could come to serve God. As mentioned in this chapter previously in n. 7, Kaufmann Kohler, the reformed Jewish scholar, acknowledged the universal aspects present in *Sib. Or.* See Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, 338.

²⁸*Sib. Or.* 3:556-57 (Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” *TOTP* 1:374).

²⁹*Sib. Or.* 3:624-34 (Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” *TOTP* 1:376).

³⁰*Sib. Or.* 3:740 (Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” *TOTP* 1:378).

³¹*Sib. Or.* 3:710, 715-19 (Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” *TOTP* 1:378). See also *Sib. Or.* 3:767-73 (Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” *TOTP* 379).

³²In contrast to the expressions of universalism clearly present in works like those of Aristobulus, many other works exist with no or little indication of a universalistic outlook. For example, as Wright and Schwartz noted of the Psalms of Solomon, “the distinction between Israel and the nations is sharp. The writer is no universalist. Gentiles are lawless by nature and are rejected by God (2:2, 19-25; 7:1-3; 8:23; 17:13-15) No hope is offered for their conversion.” See R. B. Wright and V. Schwartz,

worst of His wrath and come to enjoy the blessings He had in store for His elect.

Another writing of the Pseudepigrapha with observable missional themes was *1 Enoch*.³³ As with Book 3 of *Sibylline Oracles*, strains of universalism were intermingled with themes of judgment, promises of reward for the righteous, and an expectation that some Gentiles would be included with the righteous. In the case of *1 Enoch*, the stated audience would be the righteous as well as the wicked and, notably, the righteous seemed to be encouraged to teach all people the way of righteousness.

God's universal rule was maintained in *1 Enoch* by the supposed praise of his angels who said, "For he is the Lord of lords, and the God of gods, and the King of kings Your name is holy, and blessed, and glorious throughout the whole world. You have made everything and with you is the authority for everything."³⁴ Just as in Book 3 of the *Oracles*, the author of *1 Enoch* taught that God would judge and destroy the wicked of the whole world.

However, through judgment some were expected to recognize God. In fact, God was described as having a role in causing others to be saved because of His mercy. As *1 Enoch* maintained of the Lord,

He heaped evil upon the sinners; but the righteous ones shall be victorious in the name of the Lord of the Spirits. He will cause the others to see this so that they may repent and forsake the deeds of their hands. There shall not be honor unto them in the name of the Lord of the Spirits. But through his name they shall be saved, and the Lord of the Spirits shall have mercy upon them, for his mercy is considerable.³⁵

Throughout the whole writing, indications existed that those eventually saved would

"Psalms of Solomon," in *TOTP*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:645. *Pss. Sol.* 7 indicated the psalmist thought God rejected Gentiles in vv. 2-3: "For you have rejected them, O God; do not let their feet trample your holy inheritance. Discipline us as you wish, but do not turn (us) over to the gentiles." See *Pss. Sol.* 7:2-3 (Wright, "Psalms of Solomon," *TOTP* 2:658).

³³E. Isaac identified the date of the writing from the second century BC to AD first century. See E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *TOTP*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 1:5.

³⁴*1 Enoch* 9:4-5 (Isaac, "1 Enoch," *TOTP* 1:17).

³⁵*1 Enoch* 50:2-3 (Isaac, "1 Enoch," *TOTP* 1:36).

include others in addition to the elect.³⁶

At the close of *1 Enoch*, two important observations were made. Enoch predicted, “To the righteous and the wise shall be given the Scriptures of joy, for truth and great wisdom. So to them shall be given the Scriptures; and they shall believe them and be glad in them; and all the righteous ones who learn from them the ways of truth shall rejoice.”³⁷ However, right after the passage about the giving of the Scriptures, Enoch encouraged the ones who received the Scriptures to pass on what they had received. He observed, “The Lord will be patient and cause the children of the earth to hear. Reveal it to them with your wisdom, for you are their guides; and (you are) a reward upon the whole earth.”³⁸ Though the righteous were to act as ‘guides,’ God was still the one to bring about the circumstances for the others to hear and respond.

Therefore, from Enoch’s perspective as narrated, it seems that a responsibility to pass on the truth of the Scriptures to others was understood, at least by the author himself.³⁹ One other point was that the author vividly described the fate of rulers who had been judged and found wicked. As condemned sinners, they gave expression to the plaintive wish, “Would that someone had given us a chance so that we should glorify, praise, and have faith before his glory!”⁴⁰ They went on to lament the fact that, once dead

³⁶Words describing those who would find a place in future blessing included the elect, the pious, the holy ones, and the righteous, in addition to the ‘others’ who would be brought in by the Lord. For example: *1 Enoch* 25:5; 38:2, 4, 6-7; 51:2; 58:1-4; 62:13 (Isaac, “1 Enoch,” *TOTP* 1:26, 30-31, 36, 39, 44). The dream visions 83-90 present a vision of converted Gentiles being among the righteous at the end. See *1 Enoch* 90:30 (Isaac, “1 Enoch,” *TOTP* 1:71).

³⁷*1 Enoch* 104:12-13 (Isaac, “1 Enoch,” *TOTP* 1:85-86).

³⁸*1 Enoch* 105:1-2 (Isaac, “1 Enoch,” *TOTP* 1:86). See *1 Enoch* 81:1-9 where Enoch was given a specific charge to write down and teach commandments to his descendants. Later, in *1 Enoch* 82:1-2, the task of teaching was expanded to include “the generations of the world” (Isaac, “1 Enoch,” *TOTP* 1:59-60).

³⁹Kohler observed that based on *1 Enoch* and *Sibylline Oracles*, both Enoch and Noah “became preachers of penitence, heralds of the pure monotheism from which the heathen world had departed.” See Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, 336. He seemed to recognize both pseudepigraphical works as signs of the rise of Jewish proselytism during the intertestamental period.

⁴⁰*1 Enoch* 63:4-5 (Isaac, “1 Enoch,” *TOTP* 1:44).

and judged, no hope for mercy existed.

Finally, several intriguing passages with potentially missional themes exist in writings of the second century BC Jewish philosopher, Aristobulus, whose works were preserved in part by their appearance in quotations of later writers, Eusebius and Clement.⁴¹ Based on the content and the stated recipients, Aristobulus' works were clearly apologetic.⁴² With attention to Hellenistic sensitivities and reasoning, the Jewish philosopher attempted to reveal the nature and identity of God to non-Israelites. Numerous missional themes present in the Old Testament surfaced in his works, including universalism, a concern for the non-Israelites, and a desire to reveal God so that He might be known more clearly.

Aristobulus taught from a universalistic perspective that God was over all. As the philosopher maintained, "For indeed God is over all things and all things have been subordinated (to him) and have received their 'standing' (from him)."⁴³ Based on the fragment of Aristobulus' work preserved in *Praeparatio Evangelica*, it appeared that Ptolemy had read or was familiar with descriptions of the Lord in the Torah and had questions about the language used. Aristobulus attempted to explain the language so that the king would know the Lord better. Aristobulus wrote, "And I wish to exhort you to receive the interpretations according to the laws of nature and to grasp the fitting conception of God and not to fall into the mythical and human way of thinking about God."⁴⁴ Within this passage, the Jewish philosopher appeared to show sincere concern

⁴¹A. Yarbro Collins, "Aristobulus," in *TOTP*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:831.

⁴²As Collins specifically stated, "The dedication of his work to Ptolemy, the direct address to the king in fragments 2 and 3, and the general tone of an address to outsiders indicate that the work has an apologetic intent." See Collins, "Aristobulus," *TOTP* 2:834.

⁴³Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 8.10.10 (Collins, "Aristobulus," *TOTP* 2:838). By 'fitting conception,' the philosopher meant one in concordance with a Jewish understanding of the characteristics of God and a proper way of understanding why the Scriptures described God using human characteristics.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 8.10.2 (Collins, "Aristobulus," *TOTP* 2:838).

that the Gentile king embrace a correct view of God. Such a view was clearly in concert with God's own desire expressed in Scripture to be known by all mankind.

In another case, Aristobulus attempted to connect the Greek concept of divinity in other writings mistakenly attributed to Zeus, to the identity of the Most High God. After explaining how Hebrew concepts of God could be found in Greek writings, Aristobulus noted, "I believe that it has been clearly shown how the power of God is throughout all things. And we have given the true sense, as one must, by removing the (name) Zeus throughout the verses. For their (the verses') intention refers to God, therefore it was so expressed by us."⁴⁵ In a way reminiscent of Paul's use of the Athenian altar to the unknown God, Aristobulus' apologetic seemed to be a deliberate effort by a Jew to make the Hebrew deity understandable and acceptable to a Gentile audience.⁴⁶

Aristobulus also chose segments of Greek writings to quote that lined up with correct description of God, as revealed in the Law. For example, he used a passage from Orpheus that related concerning God: "There is an ancient saying about him: 'He is one'—self-completing, and all things completed by him 'And there is no other.'"⁴⁷ Even though Aristobulus quoted from other writings, he always maintained the primacy of the Old Testament teachings and their admirable traits. As the philosopher asserted, "The whole constitution of our Law is arranged with reference to piety and justice and

⁴⁵Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 13.13.7 (Collins, "Aristobulus," *TOTP* 2:841). Notably the author of the *Letter of Aristeas* presents a similar argument. See *Letter of Aristeas* (Shutt, "Letter of Aristeas," *TOTP* 2:13).

⁴⁶Acts 17:22-23. Parallels could be drawn between Aristobulus' apologetic tactic and dialogue in the mission community today about whether to equate previously used names of God in a culture with the identity of the true God. For example, like using the word Allah for God (with an added Christian meaning) when dealing with Muslims or by using the Chinese word for the high God when dealing with Chinese speakers. Certainly, valid concerns exist about such a practice.

⁴⁷Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 13.13.5 (Collins, "Aristobulus," *TOTP* 2:840). In a way, Aristobulus' use of the writings of Greek writers' comments seems similar to the tactic today used by some missionaries who use passages in writings of other faiths to point to the ultimate truth about the one true God. For example, like Christians who use passages in the Koran to open dialogue about God with Muslims. Again, valid concerns exist concerning this practice.

temperance and the rest of the things that are truly good.”⁴⁸

Writings of the Jewish historians. As mentioned in chapter 1, the writings of the Jewish historians exhibited an attitude of openness, esteem, and desire for Gentile converts. Due to space limitations, only the comments of Josephus will be surveyed. However, Josephus’ comments alone provide important details about interactions between Jews and Gentiles.

As previously noted, In *Against Apion* Josephus observed that many Greeks had “come over to our laws.”⁴⁹ However, Josephus made an even more compelling comment in *Jewish Wars*. He noted of the Jews,

And, as the succeeding kings treated them after the same manner, they both multiplied to a great number, and adorned their temple gloriously by fine ornaments, and with great magnificence, in the use of what had been given them. They also made proselytes of a great many of the Greeks perpetually, and thereby, after a sort, brought them to be a portion of their own body.⁵⁰

In this passage, the Jewish historian clearly observed that some Jews made proselytes continuously with intent.⁵¹ Josephus’ comments also indicated that the converts were incorporated into the Jewish community in some measure. In addition, he seemed proud of the accomplishments.

Josephus recorded the warm attitude that the Jews appeared to have toward King Ptolemy after the monarch expressed the desire to have an interpretation of the

⁴⁸Ibid., 13.13.8 (Collins, “Aristobulus,” *TOTP* 2:841).

⁴⁹Flavius Josephus, *Flavius Josephus against Apion* 2.11.123, trans. William Whiston, in *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 801. See *Against Apion* 2.210, 282 (Whiston, *Works* 807, 811). Also, see Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 2.559-61 (Whiston, *Works* 633).

⁵⁰Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 7.45 (Whiston, *Works* 753).

⁵¹Josephus attributed missional inclinations to Abram. The historian noted in *Antiquities* that one of Abram’s motivations for going down to Egypt was either to learn of the Egyptians if their ways of worship were better or to convert them to his if his ways seemed best. See Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.161 (Whiston, *Works* 38). Kohler believed, “from occasional references in Josephus and the New Testament, as well as many inscriptions all over the lands of the Mediterranean, the number of heathen converts to the Synagogue was very large.” See Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, 413.

Hebrew Law written in Greek. In the response of Eleazar the High Priest to Ptolemy, prayers for the Gentile king's wellbeing were noted and the intended cooperation of the Jews with his effort to attain a Greek interpretation of the Law. In addition, the letter of Eleazar specifically indicated that the Jews hoped the Greek copy would be for the Gentile king's "advantage."⁵²

Inspection of Josephus' account of the conversion of the royal family of Adiabene provides much information about the relationships between some Jews and Gentiles. Josephus documented,

Now, during the time Izates abode at Charax-Spasini, a certain Jewish merchant, whose name was Ananias, got among the women that belonged to the king, and taught them to worship God according to the Jewish religion. He, moreover, by their means, became known to Izates, and persuaded him, in like manner, to embrace that religion; he also, at the earnest entreaty of Izates, accompanied him when he was sent for by his father to come to Adiabene; it also happened that Helena, about the same time, was instructed by a certain other Jew and went over to them.⁵³

As observable from the quote, Josephus' account showed from a positive perspective that some Jews did endeavor to teach Gentiles about the Law and about how to glorify God with the effect of sincere conversions.⁵⁴

Later the story of Helene and Izates highlighted that some Jews believed Gentiles could worship God truly without the final step of circumcision while others were concerned that Gentiles fully follow all the rituals if they wished to be full converts.⁵⁵ In

⁵²Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.55 (Whiston, *Works* 312).

⁵³*Ibid.*, 20.34-35 (Whiston, *Works* 527). Josephus also provided a negative example of false Jewish teachers who apparently used the mantle of teaching about the Law to deceive and rob Gentiles, as the case of Fulvia and the false teachers illustrated in *Antiquities* 18.81-83 (Whiston, *Works* 481). In the account of Helena and Izates, no less than three separate Jews were mentioned as teaching various Gentiles about the Jewish religion. At least one of the Jews, Ananias, was a merchant by trade, while still taking the time to teach non-Israelites about the true worship of God.

⁵⁴Josephus also documented cases of forced conversions for the purpose of marriage but these he showed to be insincere and often abandoned. See Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.139, 145-46 (Whiston, *Works* 533).

⁵⁵According to Josephus, Ananias and Eleazar held conflicting beliefs regarding the circumcision of Izates in *Antiquities* 20.38-45 (Whiston, *Works* 527).

addition, the account clearly illustrated that some Jews wanted Gentiles to glorify God by being obedient to the Law. Eleazar convinced Izates to comply fully with the Law after initiating a confrontation with the king regarding his perceived lack of commitment. By his unsolicited intervention, the Jew demonstrated that he was concerned about the king's lack of total obedience and desired that the king take all measure to follow the Law fully for the glory of God.

Writings of the New Testament. Jesus' comment in Matthew 23:15 remains one of the strongest testimonies in Scripture to the activities of the Jews to convert non-Jews. Matthew 23:15 recorded that the Lord said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves." Matthew's word for proselyte derived from the normal root for convert, προσήλυτος. As noted in chapter 1, some scholars argue that Jesus was referring to Jews proselytizing one Jew from one sect to another.⁵⁶

However, in every early rabbinic work and Jewish writing surveyed, it appeared that the normal understanding of the word proselyte, Hebrew גֵר or Greek προσήλυτος, meant a non-Jew who had become an adherent of the Jewish faith. Such an adherence included incorporation into the general religious life of Judaism, not a switch from one sect to another.⁵⁷ In addition, although passages existed in the early Jewish writings highlighting Jews interacting with non-Jews to bring about their conversion and

⁵⁶Köstenberger and O'Brien provided a summary of the arguments against the traditional interpretation that the Pharisees were seeking proselytes. See Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, ed. D. A. Carson. New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 63-64. However, Kohler was one of several Jewish scholars who clearly understood the meaning of the Matthew passage as referring to the proselytizing of the heathen by Jews. See Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, 413.

⁵⁷Main works read in the process of this study include all writings of the Apocrypha, the collection of *TOTP*, the Mishnah, both versions of the *Mekilta*, *Sifré to Numbers*, *Sifré to Deuteronomy*, *Sifré Zutta*, *Sifra*, *Seder Olam*, *Alphabet of Ben Sira*, *Genesis* and *Exodus Rabbah*, parts of the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud, and various minor tractates of the Talmud.

incorporation into Judaism, no passages existed in the works surveyed that seemed to indicate purposeful recruiting from one Jewish school of thought to another. Instead, interpretations of the divergent schools of thought often appeared side by side as equally possible. When the editors leaned toward one interpretation over another, no indication existed of an attempt to force the opposing school to adopt the preferred reading.

In addition to documenting the observation of the Lord regarding the actions of the Pharisees to make proselytes, the New Testament also provides evidence of the existence of many God-fearers and proselytes in existence at the time of the Lord.⁵⁸ Examples of noteworthy God-fearers include the centurion in Luke 7:2-5 who was evidently a God-fearer and highly esteemed by the Jewish elders of Capernaum. In addition, Gentiles are described as going to Jerusalem to worship, such as the Greeks who approached Philip in John 12:20 and the Ethiopian eunuch who had gone to Jerusalem to worship as described in Acts 8:27. Although these passages do not provide a rationale for interacting with Gentiles and proselytizing based on the Hebrew Scriptures, they illustrate Jewish openness to proselytes and the existence of proselytes.

Several of the New Testament writers also seemed to make the connection between the importance of Israel's call to be mediators and to live in a way that pointed others to God. Thus, as noted in chapter 1, Peter made the connection between the call of Israel to be holy, as found in Exodus 19, and the application for believer's lives to bring Gentiles to glorify God.⁵⁹ Paul also seemed to make such a connection between the Old Testament commands for righteous living and the results of Gentiles giving glory to God.

Therefore, the New Testament provides a witness of the Lord's use of *προσήλυτος* that conforms with the traditional meaning of a non-Jewish convert to Judaism based on the context of other extant writings before and after the writing of the

⁵⁸As noted in chap. 1, for example, Acts 2:10; 6:5; 10:1-2; 13:43; 16:14; 17:4, 17.

⁵⁹1 Pet 2:9-12.

book of Matthew. In addition, the New Testament documents the numerous examples, as noted in chapter 1 and above, of the existence of various Jewish proselytes and God-fearers before the establishment of the Christian church. Taken together, one should acknowledge that at least some Jews were participating in activities to draw non-Jews to worship the Most High God and to incorporate them into normative Jewish religious practice.

Writings of the Tannaim. Compiled around AD 220, the Mishnah documented early Jewish legal thought on a range of topics that became the structure for successive commentary. Throughout the Mishnah, assumptions were made that Jews would interact in daily settings with Gentiles: that Jews would potentially eat with Gentiles, work with them, buy, and sell from them.⁶⁰ Jews were expected to interact with Gentiles in ways to maintain peace. For example, as was stated, “And during the Sabbatical year one may assist gentiles [to do work which is forbidden to Israelites], but one may not assist Israelites [to do such work during the Sabbatical year]. And one greets them [gentiles], in the interest of peace.”⁶¹

Many of the clarifications of the law were to allow Gentiles to be exempted from obeying Jewish religious duties, as with the giving of heave offerings. However, passages exist that show that Gentiles were permitted to participate in some Jewish religious activities.⁶² Such activities would have allowed them to learn of Jewish beliefs

⁶⁰On eating with Gentiles, for example, comments existed about when blessings at meal times could or could not be requested by individuals, which indicated times could exist when both groups of people were present at a meal. See *m. Ber. 7:1* in *The Mishnah: A New Translation*, ed. and trans. Jacob Neusner (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 11. For a small sample of examples of daily interaction, see *m. Dem. 3:4; 5:9; 6:2* (Neusner, *Mishnah* 39, 43-44).

⁶¹*m. Šeb. 5:9* (Neusner, *Mishnah* 81). See also *m. Šeb. 4:3* and *m. Git. 5:8* (Neusner, *Mishnah* 77, 476).

⁶²*m. Ter. 3:9* (Neusner, *Mishnah* 100). In addition, *m. Hal. 5:14* implied that aliens could be present at a ceremony even though they could not recite a commonly recited confession because it did not apply to their circumstance. Why would they have been forbidden to recite the confession, if it had not been understood that some might attend the festival? (Neusner, *Mishnah*, 147).

and could have created the atmosphere for further inquiry into Judaism as a whole. Cases in which Israelites were forbidden to interact with or benefit from items from Gentiles had to do with situations that might cause the Israelites to break the law or to be tainted by association with practices that would break the law.⁶³ In a way, this selective behavior pointed to the law and brought Israelites into situations in which they might explain the reasoning of the law.

Within the teachings of the Mishnah many references pointed to the importance of studying and teaching the Torah. One of the most famous quotes regarding teaching the Torah to all people was attributed to Hillel, who supposedly taught, “Be disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people and drawing them near to the Torah.”⁶⁴ Hillel was known for his encouragement of all people, even Gentiles, in their understanding of the Law. In the opinion of the great sage, for those who grasped onto the Torah, “[If] he has gotten teachings of Torah, he has gotten himself life eternal.”⁶⁵

Openness to and expectation of converts was clear from the various scenarios the rabbis discussed concerning how the application of the Law differed for a Gentile and a Gentile who had converted. Since Gentiles were not obligated to many of the laws that bound Israelites, careful exclusions were made to highlight how situations should be handled before and after conversion. Though final opinions differed regarding specifics,

⁶³Close readings of the cases outlined in the ‘*Abod. Zar.* treatise of the Mishnah highlight that the focus was for the sanctification of the law. See, for example, *m. 'Abod. Zar.* 1:5; 1:9; 2:1; 2:5; 3:1.

⁶⁴*m. 'Abot* 1:12 (Neusner, *Mishnah* 674). See also *m. 'Abot* 1:1 (Neusner, *Mishnah* 672-73). As attributed to R. Eleazar, another reason listed to study Torah was that sages might “know what to reply to an Epicurean.” *m. 'Abot* 2:14 (Neusner, *Mishnah* 677).

⁶⁵*m. 'Abot* 2:7 (Neusner, *Mishnah* 676). Other quotations outside the Mishnah of early rabbis give indication that the Gentiles who would study the Torah were respected, such as the quote attributed to R. Meir who argued from the use of “human being” in Lev 18:5 “you have learned the fact that, even if it is a gentile, if he goes and takes up the study of the Torah as his occupation, he is equivalent to the high priest.” See *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 3a in *The Babylonian Talmud*, ed. and trans. Jacob Neusner, 22 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 17:5.

rabbis considered the converts as liable to Jewish law just as other average Jews.⁶⁶

According to the Mishnah in *Qiddushin* 4:1, converts were acknowledged as a distinct class of people who came up with Jews from the Exile in Babylon. In this passage, converts were accorded permission to marry with non-priestly Israelites.⁶⁷ Further positive statements about the involvement of converts in religious aspects of Jewish life included notable statements about King Monobases and his mother, Queen Helene.⁶⁸ In addition, a passage in *Sotah* regarding the reading of the Torah by King Agrippa was noteworthy,

Agrippa the King stood up and received it and read it standing up, and sages praised him on that account. And when he came to the verse, You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother (Dt. 17:15), his tears ran down from his eyes. They said to him, “Do not be afraid, Agrippa, you are our brother, you are our brother, you are our brother!”⁶⁹

Moreover, consideration was shown to the convert and generous behavior toward them was encouraged. For instance, the teaching was related, “One who borrows [money] from a convert whose children converted with him, need not repay [the debt] to his children. But if [the debtor] repaid [the children, for the debt owed to their father]—the sages are pleased with him.”⁷⁰ In addition, Israelites were enjoined concerning

⁶⁶*m. Pe’ a* 4:6 (Neusner, *Mishnah* 21). Two opinions were given about when a convert became bound to follow the law but the disagreement concerned when crops were designated for certain purposes, not about if a convert was liable. For similar passages, see *m. Hal.* 3:6 (Neusner, *Mishnah* 154). An example where proselytes were treated differently was mentioned in *m. Bik.* 1:4-5 (Neusner, *Mishnah* 167).

⁶⁷*m. Qidd.* 4:7 specified when the offspring of proselytes and Israelites were permitted to marry priests. As long as one parent was Israelite, the child could marry a priest. R. Yose even argued that the daughter of two proselytes could marry into the priesthood. (Neusner, *Mishnah* 486-97).

⁶⁸*m. Yoma* 3:10 favorably documented gifts made by the converts for use in Temple service (Neusner, *Mishnah* 269). *m. Nazir* 3:6 documented Helene’s duration keeping Nazirite vows and the interaction she had with Hillel concerning her vows. (Neusner, *Mishnah* 435).

⁶⁹*m. Soṭa* 7:8 (Neusner, *Mishnah* 459). The context was when the king was to read the Torah at the end of the first day of the Festival of Sukkot. See also *Sifré to Deuteronomy*, trans. Jacob Neusner, Brown Judaic Studies 98, 2 vols. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987). In *Sifré Deut* 157.3.1 the same story appears (Neusner, *Sifré Deuteronomy* 2:26).

⁷⁰*m. Šeb.* 10:9 (Neusner, *Mishnah* 92). Based on the context of this passage, when a Jew went beyond what is specified in the law, the sages were pleased.

children of proselytes: “If he was a child of proselytes, one may not say to him, ‘Remember what your folks used to do!’ For it is said, *And a proselyte you shall not wrong nor oppress* (Ex. 22:20).”⁷¹ Even when it came to admitting converts from less than admirable heritage into the congregation of Israel, judgments seemed to lean toward inclusiveness.⁷²

Classified as early works of the Tannaim, the *Mekilta* of Rabbi Ishmael and the *Mekhilta* of Rabbi Simeon bar Yoḥai provide some insight into Jewish attitudes toward interactions with Gentiles and converts.⁷³ Since both works provide commentary to the book of Exodus, much overlap exists. Primarily the content of Rabbi Ishmael will be surveyed with only differing or exceptional comments from Rabbi Simeon’s *Mekhilta* added as necessary.

According to the authors of the two *Mekilta* versions, although revelation from God was given previously at many locations, it was limited to Israel after Israel was chosen by God. Many passages in the *Mekilta* specifically stressed the unique status and primacy of Israel. Often passages in the *Mekilta* with respect to Gentiles clarified when a Gentile must follow the laws and when they were exempt. Additionally, some passages preserved a current of negative thought against Gentiles.⁷⁴ Still, as with other early

⁷¹*m. B. Mes.* 4:10 (Neusner, *Mishnah* 540). This was written in the context of committing fraud with spoken words. For similar thoughts, see *Sifra*, trans. Jacob Neusner, Brown Judaic Studies 138-40, 3 vols. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988). See *Sifra* Qedoshim 205.1.4, 251.1.2 (Neusner, *Sifra* 3:128, 315).

⁷²See for example *m. Yad.* 4:4 (Neusner, *Mishnah* 1129). In this example, the inclusion of an Ammonite proselyte into the assembly was recounted. After the discussion between the rabbis concerning the prohibition found in Deut 23:4, the final opinion fell in favor of admission.

⁷³See *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, trans. Jacob Z. Lauterbach, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1933-35). Allegedly, this work was based on sayings coming from R. Ishmael and his students but some indication exists that some parts go back to Rabbi Akiva. See *Mekhilta de-Shimon bar Yoḥai*, trans. W. David Nelson (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2006). Content of the *Mekhilta* of R. Simeon was built around that of the *Mekilta* of R. Ishmael, with separate comments and reasoning. Although the whole original is not extant, the basics have been reconstructed pulling from quotes of other later works like *Midrash ha-Gadol*.

⁷⁴Most notably, R. Simeon bar Yoḥai observed, “The nicest among the idolaters, - kill!” See *Mek. Ish.* Beshallah 2.194-95 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 1:201). Such expressions should be understood in the

Jewish writings, some contributors of the teaching preserved within the versions of the *Mekilta* saw proselytes as dearly beloved and being included within the injunctions to observe the rituals while non-proselyte resident aliens and foreigners were excluded.⁷⁵ Occasionally, comments were noted by some rabbis who also seemed to see larger purpose regarding the commands for the glorification of God.⁷⁶

Some of the most relevant missional themes in the *Mekilta* have to do with God's purpose for judgment, the place of revelation, and the responsibility of Israel to act in a way to cause the nations to glorify God. Commentary on Exodus 14:1-9, echoed the Scriptural truth that God's punishment allowed His name and identity to become known.⁷⁷ The Lord's actions with the nations for the purpose that they might know Him was linked to the future expectation of Isaiah 66:19; namely, that they would come to acknowledge the identity of God and His relationship with Israel. Revelation of God was understood as the first step towards right relationship. Besides the obvious eschatological understanding of the hope for Egypt to one day acknowledge and serve God, the rabbis recognized that God's revelation to Egypt before and during the period of the Exodus prompted some Gentiles to fear the Lord and even join Israel.

context of that rabbi's experience of suffering at the hands of Gentiles, as Cohen maintained, "His words expressed his personal feelings; but to quote them as illustrative of Talmudic ethics is grossly unjust." See Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1949), 66. Cohen's assessment seems true given the other positive statements concerning sharing the Torah and converts, as noted below, found within the *Mekilta* and in other rabbinic writings.

⁷⁵For example, the comments about when a Gentile was to keep Passover emphasize the special status of the proselyte. See *Mek. Ish. Pisha* 15.105-12 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 1:125-26). Passages in the *Mekilta* emphasized, "Scripture says: 'One law shall be to him that is home born, and unto the stranger.' This passage comes to declare the proselyte equal to the born Jew with respect to all the commandments of the Torah." *Mek. Ish. Pisha* 15.135-41 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 1:128). Notably, A. Cohen, an orthodox Jew, specifically cited a section from *Mek. Ish.*, *Nezikin* 18, as proof that "genuine converts were welcomed and highly esteemed." See A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, 64.

⁷⁶For example, the opinion posited by R. Isaac that the blood of the Passover lamb should be put on the outside rather than the inside of a door. He argued it was "so that Egyptians, seeing it, would be cut to the quick." See *Mek. Ish. Pisha* 6.13-15 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 1:44, 84).

⁷⁷*Mek. Ish. Beshallah* 2.76-89 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 1:193). See also a similar passage in *Mek. Ish. Shirata* 8.6-15 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 2:59-60).

In addition to God's part in revelation so that He would be known, the rabbis understood Israelites had a unique responsibility to do the will of God so that His name would be renowned by the nations. For example, in the *Mekilta*, Simeon b. Eleazar was quoted,

When the Israelites do the will of God His name becomes renowned in the world, as it is said: "And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites . . . heard," etc. (Josh. 5.1). And so also Rahab the harlot said to the messengers of Joshua: "For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you . . . And as soon as we had heard it, our hearts did melt," etc. (ibid. 2.10-11). But when the Israelites fail to do the will of God, His name becomes profaned in the world, as it is said: "And when they came unto the nations whither they came, they profaned My holy name," etc. (Ezek. 36.20).⁷⁸

How Israel behaved was therefore linked with how the Lord's name was viewed amongst the Gentiles and incidentally with how Gentiles would be drawn to God. For, later in the *Mekilta* much was made of the incorporation of Rahab and Jethro into the people of God as a result of their hearing about the glory of God.⁷⁹

Cooperation between the intent of God and the responsibility of Israelites to draw Gentiles was clearly highlighted in the commentary concerning Jethro,

R. Eliezer says: This was said to Moses by God: "I, I who said the word by which the world came into being, I am One who welcomes, not One who repels." As it is said: "Behold, I am a God that brings near, saith the Lord, and not a God that repels" (Jer. 23.23). "I am He that brought Jethro near, not keeping him at a distance. So also thou, when a man comes to you wishing to become a convert to Judaism, as long as he comes in the name of God for the sake of heaven, do thou, likewise, befriend him and do not repel him."⁸⁰

God was shown to "bring near" or draw people to Himself and the expectation was that Israelites were to actively participate in the process and most certainly not reject those God was drawing. When Moses' actions with Jethro were described, he was said to have taken Jethro to a tent: "In order to attract him and bring him near to the Torah."⁸¹ Moses'

⁷⁸*Mek. Ish.* Shirata 3.85-96 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 2:28-29)

⁷⁹*Mek. Ish.* Amalek 3.20-30; 171-222 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 2:163-64, 174-77).

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 3.153-61 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 2:172-73).

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 3.171-72 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 2:174).

outreach involved sharing about what God had done in the lives of the Israelites and sharing that the Torah had been given to them.

Not only was Moses' outreach and Jethro's conversion presented clearly and favorably but also the following actions of the new convert were lauded. Departing from Scripture, the composer of the *Mekilta* noted that the reason Jethro left Moses after being entreated to stay with the Israelites was so that he might proselytize his own people.

Jethro was quoted as explaining,

Is a lamp of any use except in a dark place? Of what use could a lamp be with the sun and the moon? You are the sun and Aaron is the moon. What should a lamp be doing where there are the sun and the moon? No! I shall go to my land and tell everybody and convert all the people of my country, leading them to the study of the Torah and bringing them nigh under the wings of the Shekinah.⁸²

Furthermore, the author approvingly provided evidence of Jethro's success in making converts in the following pages. Therefore, the *Mekilta* taught that God drew converts, that Israelites were to cooperate with God, and that actions taken to draw others to God were admirable.

Another early Jewish work is the *Sifré to Numbers*.⁸³ Most of the commentary on Numbers only mentioned non-Israelites in reference to when proselytes would or would not be included in following the same laws as the Israelites or how Israelites were to relate to proselytes. Notably, the compilers of this *Sifré* read גֵּר as "proselyte" and did not include unconverted non-Israelites in the context of passages using גֵּר alone. In most cases of law, the rabbis understood basic equality between the non-priestly Israelite and the proselyte. As *Sifré to Numbers* 9.14 concluded, "Scripture thus has come and declared equal the convert and the native in all religious duties imposed by the Torah."⁸⁴

⁸²Ibid., 4.103-08 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 2:185-86). See Targum Ps. Jonathan in Exod 18:27 for similar thought that Jethro returned home to make proselytes.

⁸³See *Sifré to Numbers*, trans. Jacob Neusner, Brown Judaic Studies 118-19, 2 vols. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986). *Sifré to Numbers* quoted various Tannaim and possibly was compiled by students of the schools of R. Ishmael or R. Akiva.

⁸⁴*Sifré Num.* 71.2 (Neusner, *Sifré Numbers* 2:36).

Furthermore, numerous passages highlighted that proselytes should be treated well, as was noted, “But the Omnipresent entrusted the commandment to Israel to do good to proselytes and to treat them with humility.”⁸⁵

Other passages in the *Sifré to Numbers* mentioning interactions with Gentiles included a section with comments about Jethro.⁸⁶ Clearly, the rabbis considered him as a true convert and admired him. Based on various names that the rabbis identified with him in Scripture, they saw traits of his character. For example, they noted, “He was called Hobab because he loved the Torah. For, we find in no other proselyte that someone cherished the Torah more than did Jethro.”⁸⁷ Further, the rabbis commented favorably on the fact that the descendants of Jethro went to study Torah and were willingly taught by Jabez.⁸⁸ In addition, the rabbis highlighted the faithfulness of Jethro’s descendants and the fact that his descendants even “took seats on the Sanhedrin and taught rulings of the Torah.”⁸⁹

In the same context of the proselytes being fully incorporated into the community of Israel, the rabbis observed that the people “who brought themselves near, were brought still closer by the Omnipresent.”⁹⁰ Rabbis applied the same concept with

⁸⁵Ibid., 78.5, 80.3 (Neusner, *Sifré Numbers* 2:60, 64)

⁸⁶Jethro served as the example for other proselytes. When dealing with Num 10:29-36, the rabbis also presented arguments hypothetically used to get Jethro to stay for the sake of future proselytes. He was encouraged to stay so no one would doubt his motivations or his dedication. His actions were taken to have direct impact on future proselytes. As the rabbis reasoned about how and why Jethro was urged to stay in the wilderness with Moses, they noted, “It is so that you should not lock the door in the face of proselytes that will enter in the time to come.” *Sifré Num* 80.1.2 (Neusner, *Sifré Numbers* 2:63).

⁸⁷*Sifré Num.* 78.1 (Neusner, *Sifré Numbers* 2:56).

⁸⁸Ibid. In *Sifré Deut.* 62.1, a similar observation is made (Neusner, *Sifré Deuteronomy* 1:192).

⁸⁹*Sifré Num.* 78.1 (Neusner, *Sifré Numbers* 2:57).

⁹⁰Ibid. In this passage, the rabbis concluded, “Israelites who carry out the Torah all the more so!” Though the closing comment stressed the unique status of natural born Israelites, it did not diminish the fact that the rabbis fully recognized that some Gentiles open to God were further drawn by God into the people of Israel, even allowing their descendants to become rulers, teachers, priests, and prophets.

Rahab and Ruth, arguing that their openness to the Lord and attempts to draw themselves to God, were matched by Him. Accordingly, God further drew them in and allowed them to be saved and incorporated into Israel, with the result that their descendants became priests, prophets, and even rulers.⁹¹

For the Israelites, the point of the fringes as outlined in Numbers 15:37-41 was to remind the people of the commands of God and their identity as His people. However, rabbinic commentary linked the faithful adherence of wearing the fringes to a positive witness to the Lord that led to a Gentile's conversion. Rabbinic commentary illustrating the religious duty of the fringes said a lot about the purpose for the fringes and the implications for those who wore them and allowed their conscience to be guided by the reminder of their God and His Law.⁹² In a story about an Israelite and a Gentile harlot, the fringes prevented an Israelite from acting in a way that would deny his identity. As a result of his actions that were contrary to what would be considered normal by heathen standards, the Gentile with whom he interacted was prompted to seek to become a proselyte. Emphasis was made that the right actions of the Jew, which incidentally led to a Gentile's conversion, were rewarded in this world.

Other Tannaitic works that contained random comments pertinent to missional themes or interaction with Gentiles include the *Sifré to Deuteronomy*, the *Sifra*, and *Seder Olam*.⁹³ Beyond many similar comments as noted from the previous works, a few statements stand out. One of the most striking assertions about reaching out to draw people appeared in the *Sifré to Deuteronomy* within the section on Deuteronomy 6:4,

Another explanation of the phrase, 'You shall love the Lord your God': Bring about love for him on the part of people, as did Abraham, your father. That is in line with

⁹¹Ibid. (Neusner, *Sifré Numbers* 2:57-58). Similarities are striking with Jas 4:8, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

⁹²*Sifré Num.* 115.5 (Neusner, *Sifré Numbers* 2:182-83).

⁹³See *Seder Olam: The Rabbinic View of Biblical Chronology*, trans. with commentary by Heinrich W. Guggenheimer (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998).

this statement: ‘The souls that they had made in Haran’ (Gen. 12:5). Now is it not the case that if everyone in the world got together to create a single gnat and to bring into it the breath of life, they could never do so? But the sense is that our father, Abraham, made converts and brought them under the wings of God’s presence.⁹⁴

In the passage above, clear expression existed of a need to draw all people to God as an act of love *for* God.⁹⁵ In addition, Genesis 12:5 was specifically interpreted in a missional sense by the rabbis who considered actions of Abraham in Haran as deliberate attempts to win converts.⁹⁶ In the same work, the Torah was compared to water with the sub points that water went on forever, cleansed, restored the soul, and was free to all.⁹⁷

Another missional theme clearly highlighted in *Sifré to Deuteronomy* was that God brought about situations with the children of Israel to perform His wonders so that Gentiles might be brought to glorify His name. For example, in a list of three similar cases highlighting God’s works through Israel, the rabbis noted,

And how on the basis of Scripture do we know that Daniel went down into the lions’ den only so that the Holy One, blessed be He, might have occasion to do wonders and acts of might, and so that his great name might be sanctified in the world? As it is said, “For the name of the Lord I proclaim; give glory to our God.” And Scripture says, “I make a decree, that in all the dominions of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.” (Dan. 6:27-28).⁹⁸

⁹⁴*Sifré Deut.* 32.2 (Neusner, *Sifré Deuteronomy* 1:86-87). Later comments were made about Israel’s election to teach Torah. See *Sifré Deut.* 40.3 (Neusner, *Sifré Deuteronomy*, 1:122). See also *Sifré Deut.* 306.23.1 (Neusner, *Sifré Deuteronomy* 2:310).

⁹⁵See also *Sifré Deut.* 47.2.7 (Neusner, *Sifré Deuteronomy* 1:153). In this passage, rabbis argued that people who brought others to love God were more important than those who just loved God.

⁹⁶According to Solomon Schechter, a conservative Jewish scholar, the passages in *Sifré Deut.* portray Abraham as “the first great missionary in the world, the friend of God, who makes him beloved by his creatures, and wins souls for him.” See Solomon Schechter, *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), 84. In addition, Kohler, the reformed Jewish scholar, also viewed the *Sifré Deut.* 313 commentary that referenced Gen 24:3 as suggestive of an understanding of the rabbis of Abraham’s missional activity. Kohler noted in relation to this *Sifré* that the rabbis held a new view of Abraham’s “missional activity.” He suggested that the rabbis had come to believe that the Gen 12:3 mandate to “be a blessing,” had “the higher meaning that Abraham with his descendants should become a source of blessing for mankind through his teachings and his conduct, so that all the families of men should attain blessing and salvation by following his doctrine and example. Thus, the idea of the Jewish mission was connected with Abraham.” See Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, 337.

⁹⁷*Sifré Deut.* 48.2.7 (Neusner, *Sifré Deuteronomy* 1:159).

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 306.30.4-6 (Neusner, *Sifré Deuteronomy* 2:315-16).

Thus, the passage showed that the rabbis understood that God wanted Gentiles to glorify Himself and deliberately used situations in the lives of the Israelites to bring about that glorification.

Within the *Sifra*, the commentary on Leviticus, a strong statement about the openness and desirability of Gentiles studying Torah and bringing certain sacrifices was found. In the course of commenting about the importance of keeping the laws, the efficacy of the law for Gentiles was highlighted,

R. Jeremiah says, “How do I know that even a gentile who keeps the Torah, lo, he is like the high priest? Scripture says, ‘by the pursuit of which man shall live.’ And so he says, “‘And this is the Torah of the priests, Levites, and Israelites,’ is not what is said here, but rather, ‘This is the Torah of the man, O Lord God’ (2 Sam 7:10).” And so he says, “‘open the gates and let priests, Levites, and Israelites enter it’ is not what is said, but rather, ‘Open the gates and let the righteous nation, who keeps faith, enter it’ (Is. 26:2).” And so he says, “‘This is the gate of the Lord. Priests, Levites, and Israelites . . .’ is not what is said, but rather, ‘the righteous shall enter into it’ (Ps. 118:20).” And so he says, “‘What is said is not, ‘Rejoice, priests, Levites, and Israelites,’ but rather, ‘Rejoice, O righteous, in the Lord’ (Ps. 33:1).” And so he says, “It is not, ‘Do good, O Lord, to the priests, Levites, and Israelites,’ but rather, ‘Do good, O Lord, to the good, to the upright in heart’ (Ps. 125:4).” Thus, even a gentile who keeps the Torah, lo, he is like the high priest.⁹⁹

Based on this passage, clearly some believed that Gentiles could and would keep the Torah and live, which seemed to imply that Gentiles should be taught the Torah by Jews.¹⁰⁰ In addition, in the process of commenting on Leviticus 22:17-21, rabbis clarified that Gentiles could also offer sacrifices to God like the Israelites for vows and freewill offerings.¹⁰¹

Seder Olam documented a supposed command to write out the Torah in

⁹⁹*Sifra* Aharé Mot 194.2.15 (Neusner, *Sifra* 3:80).

¹⁰⁰Cohen stated specifically of the quoted *Sifra* passage that “the universalistic scope of this doctrine is most impressive and contradicts the belief which prevails that the outlook of Rabbinic Judaism is essentially narrow and racial.” See Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud*, 63. Schechter also cited this passage as further proof of Israel’s, “spiritual imperialism with the necessary accompaniment of the doctrine of the ‘Open Door’ through which the whole of humanity might pass into the kingdom.” See Schechter, *Some Aspects*, 106. Furthermore, Schechter understood that the final goal of Israel’s acceptance of Torah was for universal influence and final conversion of Gentiles (133).

¹⁰¹*Sifra* Behar 223.1 (Neusner, *Sifra* 3:212).

seventy languages “well explained,” seemingly so that all peoples would have witness to its truths.¹⁰² In addition, *Seder Olam* indicated that following the miraculous deliverance from Sennacherib, Hezekiah released the Assyrian king’s prisoners, who then became converts.¹⁰³ Therefore, as in other Tannaitic works, *Seder Olam* witnessed an understanding that the Torah should be explained to all people and that interactions Israelites had with Gentiles could lead to conversions.

In addition to thought preserved in works specifically attributed to Tannaitic schools, some works after that period appear to preserve perspectives attributed to various Tannaim of the earlier periods. For example, the *Genesis Rabbah* documented that the souls gathered by Abraham in Genesis 12:5 were considered to have been converts and Abraham’s interactions were viewed as deliberate attempts to draw in others to worship the Lord. As was stated,

R. Leazar observed in the name of R. Jose b. Zimra: If all the nations assembled to create one insect they could not endow it with life, yet you say, AND THE SOULS THEY HAD MADE! It refers, however, to the proselytes [which they had made]. Then let it say, ‘THAT THEY HAD CONVERTED’; why THAT THEY HAD MADE? That is to teach you that he who brings a Gentile near [to God] is as though he had created him. Now let it say, ‘That *he* had made’; why THAT THEY HAD MADE? Said R. Hunia: Abraham converted the men and Sarah the women.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²S. ‘*Olam Rab.* 11 (Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam*, 109-10). Cohen cites similar passages in *b. Šabb.* 88b and *Genesis Rabbah* 49:2 to support his contention that Israel, “did not look upon the Torah as their exclusive possession. On the contrary, it was destined for all mankind, and happy the day when all nations accepted it.” See Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud*, 62.

¹⁰³Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam*, 202. Nothing more was said about Hezekiah’s role in leading the prisoners to convert. However, their conversion was understood as a fulfillment of Isa 19:18-19 and 45:14.

¹⁰⁴*Genesis*. trans. H. Freedman, vol. 1 of *Midrash Rabbah*, ed. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon (London: Soncino Press, 1951), 324. Although the Genesis Midrash was written from AD 400 to 600, well after the period under examination, R. Jose b. Zimra, to whom the thought was attributed, was a sixth generation Tanna. See a similar passage in *Sifré Deut.* 32, as noted above. Much more information exists in the Jewish writings written after AD 300 that pertains to the missional activity of the fathers of Israel. While some of what was written may be tied to an ancient witness, difficulty exists in identifying the actual origination of the accounts and, as a result, positive statements on missional activities of the Jews as are found in Ginzberg’s *Legends of the Jews* are for the most part excluded. See, for example, Ginzberg’s notes on Abraham’s missionary activity. Ginzberg, *LOJ* 5:215-16, 220. See especially the citations in n. 42, 45 and 61. Some of Ginzberg’s references are to works with their written origination in the Middle Ages, as with the *Yalkut* and *Zohar*. Several passages clearly portrayed Abraham as both preaching about God and

As noted in chapter 1, within the *Exodus Rabbah*, other early perspectives are preserved that conveyed a positive perspective on God’s interactions with Gentiles to draw them to Him. For example, the *Exodus Rabbah* recorded comments about Jethro positively highlighting God’s hand in drawing him to be incorporated as a proselyte. As the *Exodus Rabbah* noted, God “brought him near . . . for a godly purpose – to become a proselyte.”¹⁰⁵

In addition, sentiments are expressed by other early rabbis like one found in the Babylonian Talmud, which quoted R. Eleazar as saying, “The Holy One, blessed be he, exiled the Israelites among the nations only so that converts should join them.”¹⁰⁶ Other writings in the Talmud implied that Israelites bore some responsibility to mediate relations between God and non-Israelites. For example, one passage in *Nedarim* 32a documented early rabbinic thought that Abraham might have brought punishment upon himself because “he kept people from coming under the wings of the Presence of God.”¹⁰⁷ In the same passage, other rabbis maintained that Abraham did train the servants of his house in the Torah. Additionally, passages appeared in the Talmud supporting the teaching of early Tanna like Hillel who had advocated drawing Gentiles “near to the Torah” and who had acted in a way to encourage non-Israelites to pursue Torah study.¹⁰⁸

being responsible for leading others to become God-fearers. See, for example, *Genesis Rabbah* 39:14, 16; *Pesikta Rabbati* 43.4, 6; *Yalkut* 2.296 (on Jer 17); *Zohar* 1.79a; 2.147b, 198a; 3.168a. Regarding *Genesis Rabbah* 39, Kohler commented, “Abraham especially, the progenitor of Israel, was looked upon as a prototype of the wandering missionary people, converting the heathen.” See Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, 337.

¹⁰⁵*Exodus*. trans. S. M. Lehrman, vol. 3 of *Midrash Rabbah*, ed. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon (London: Soncino Press, 1951), 323. This train of thought was seemingly attributed to Tannaite R. Eleazar.

¹⁰⁶*b. Pesah* 87b (Neusner, *BT* 4:421). Other positive passages about proselytes will be highlighted in the following section on the case studies.

¹⁰⁷*b. Ned.* 32a (Neusner, *BT* 10:86).

¹⁰⁸*m. ’Abot* 1:12 (Neusner, *Mishnah* 674). For example, *b. Šabb.* 31a favorably documented a story of Hillel’s positive interaction with a Gentile concerning his pursuit of Torah study. Kohler seemed to view Hillel’s actions and statements reflected in *b. Šabb* 31a as conveying a consciousness of mission to Gentiles in reaction to the more closed Shammaite school. See Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, 335.

While a contingent existed who encouraged proselytes and supported teaching the Torah to non-Israelites, an opposing steam of thought also surfaced, especially in later works. On more than one occasion R. Helbo's opinion was related that "proselytes are as hard for Israel as a scab."¹⁰⁹ An even sharper statement appeared in *Sanhedrin* in the Talmud, which documented that early Amora R. Yohanan had stated, "An idolator who takes up study of the Torah incurs the death penalty. 'For it is said, "Moses commanded the Torah for us, an inheritance" (Deut. 33:4) – for us an inheritance, and not for them."¹¹⁰

However, even after such a negative statement was recorded, the opposing and apparently preferred statement was documented from Tanna R. Meir. According to the Talmud, R. Meir had argued, "For it is said, "[You shall therefore keep my statues and my judgments,] which, if a man do them, he shall live by them" (Lev. 18:5); priests, Levites, and Israelites are not specified, but only a man. From that formulation you learn that even an idolator, should he engage in the study of the Torah, is equivalent to a High Priest."¹¹¹

As a whole, comments from the early Tannaitic writings do seem to indicate that some early rabbis understood from the Old Testament witness that God drew converts to Himself and intended to use Israelites to help accomplish that purpose.

¹⁰⁹*b. Qidd. 70b* (Neusner, *BT* 12:342). R. Helbo was one of the Amoraim. For a similar expression, see also *b. Yeb. 47b*. Cohen suggested that the negative expressions, "originated from the experience of a time when they [proselytes] proved themselves a source of trouble and danger to the community." See Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, 64. Kohler cited the same example from R. Helbo and ascribed the primary reason for the animosity as the rise of the Christian Church. He contended that a decided shift in attitudes toward proselytism took place "as soon as the Christian Church girded herself with 'the sword of Esau.' From that time on proselytism became a peril and a source of evil to the Jew." See Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, 421.

¹¹⁰*b. Sanh. 59a* (Neusner, *BT* 16:309).

¹¹¹*Ibid.* See also *b. `Abod. Zar. 3a* (Neusner, *BT* 17:5). The same argument was preserved in the *Sifra* 194.2.15, as noted above. Of the negative statements present in rabbinic thought concerning teaching the Torah to Gentiles, in similarity with Kohler, Cohen observed, "In all probability such declarations as these were called forth by the rise of the Christian Church whose members also studied the Scriptures and claimed that the Divine Grace rested upon them." See Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, 63.

Activities that applied to living out the Torah and teaching the Torah's principles were considered religious duties. Additionally, in some measure, obediently fulfilling religious duties were linked with the success of bringing in converts.

Case Studies from the Hebrew Scriptures

Beyond the general missional themes or comments about Gentiles and converts present in Jewish writings, compositions surveyed over the identified period contained comments about each of the case studies examined. Although exhaustive commentary does not exist in early Jewish writings during the period of interest, some of the random comments scattered in early works do bear witness to attitudes about the interactions or outcomes. Pertinent comments will be noted for each case study individually and then general observations about all of the case studies will be drawn.

Elijah and the widow. Comments in the Pseudepigrapha relevant to the interaction between Elijah and the widow primarily concerned the identity of the widow or her son.¹¹² One passage in *The Lives of the Prophets* indicated a tradition that the widow was actually an Israelite living in Zarephath.¹¹³ Later in the same work the involvement of the Lord in the incident was stressed: "In Zarephath of Sidon through the word of the Lord he made the jar of the widow not to fail and the flask of oil not to diminish. Her son who had died God raised from the dead after (Elijah) prayed."¹¹⁴

Josephus mentioned the encounter without any statement as to the widow's identity. Josephus intimated that the healing of the boy was for the reputation of the prophet: "Accordingly, God took pity on the mother, and was willing to gratify the

¹¹²Nothing relevant appeared in the Apocrypha.

¹¹³*Lives of the Prophets* 10:5 (Hare, "The Lives of the Prophets," *TOTP* 2:392). In addition, the same account indicated that the widow's son was actually Jonah the prophet, as the account related, "And when her son died, God raised him again from the dead through Elijah, for he wanted to show him that it is not possible to run away from God." *Ibid.*, 10:6 (Hare, "The Lives of the Prophets," *TOTP* 2:392).

¹¹⁴*Lives of the Prophets* 21:6-7 (Hare, "The Lives of the Prophets," *TOTP* 2:396).

prophet, that he might not seem to have come to her to do her a mischief, and the child, beyond all expectation, came to life again. So the mother returned the prophet thanks, and said she was then clearly satisfied that God did converse with him.”¹¹⁵

In the Talmud, within *Sanhedrin* 113a, the commentators observed, “*When [God] saw that there was suffering in the world, it is written, ‘And the word of the Lord came to him saying, Arise, go to Zarephath’ (1 Kgs 17:8-9).*”¹¹⁶ Although the initiation of God in the encounter was emphasized, nothing further on the relationship between Elijah and the woman was recorded.¹¹⁷ Comments were also present in the Talmud that identified the widow of Zarephath as an Israelite of the tribe of Asher rather than a Gentile.¹¹⁸

Jewish tradition concerning the identity of the woman as an Israelite may be offset by the reference in Luke 4:26.¹¹⁹ As mentioned in chapter 3, contextually the comment of the Lord Jesus seemed to indicate that the woman was a non-Israelite. Therefore, extant early Jewish writings offered no further insight into the actual interaction between Elijah and a non-Israelite widow. However, the comments of the Lord seemed to have indicated that the prophet was specifically sent to minister to the needs of a Gentile and the comment in the Talmud witnessed God’s initiation of the interaction because of the suffering present in the greater world as a whole.

¹¹⁵Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.327 (Whiston, *Works* 237).

¹¹⁶*b. Sanh.* 113a (Neusner, *BT* 16:612). The rest of the passage dwelt upon the swap that Elijah made by his giving up the key to rain for the key to the resurrection of the dead. See a similar passage preserving later thought about the exchange of “keys” in *y. Ber.* 5.9b. See also *y. Ta’an.* 1.63d.

¹¹⁷Other early works provided little detail beyond what was already noted. See *Targum Jonathan* in *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets*, trans. and annotated by Daniel J. Harrington and Anthony J. Saldarini, *The Aramaic Bible*, vol. 10 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier 1987), 249-50.

¹¹⁸*y. Sukk.* 55a in *The Talmud of the Land of Israel*, trans. by Jacob Neusner, 28 vols. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 6:91. See also *y. Sukk.* 5.1 (Neusner, *JT* 47:155). See also Ginzberg, *LOJ* 6:318.

¹¹⁹Concerning the NT passage, even Ginzberg noted, “Emphasis is laid on the fact that this widow was not a Jewess.” See Ginzberg, *LOJ* 6:318.

Servant girl and Naaman's wife. One reference exists in the earliest extant Jewish writings concerning the little maid who served Naaman. In *Sifré Zutta*, explication about the request of the daughters of Zelophehad for inheritance in the Promised Land contrasted their act of faith against the lack of faith shown by Israelites who had just declared they wanted to return to Egypt. In the context of Zelophehad's daughters' faith, their dedication to Torah, and commitment to action for the Lord, the rabbis brought up a comparison with the faith of the little Israelite servant girl of Naaman's wife,

And so Scripture says, "Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little maid from the land of Israel and she waited on Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, Would that my Lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria, he would cure him of his leprosy" (2 Kgs. 5:2-3). This indicates that she said to her. "Thus and so purify the poor person, thus and so purify the rich person, as it is said, 'Thus and so spoke the maiden from the land of Israel'" (2 Kgs. 5:4). This indicates that she was interpreting the lection of Negaim This was to carry out that which is said, "It is a time to act for the Lord, they have unloosed your Torah." Don't read it that way but "they have released your Torah, it is time to act for the Lord." And so Hillel says, "When people are scattering, collect In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man."¹²⁰

In addition, a couple of comments about the maid exist in the Talmud. In *Sanhedrin*, the incident was briefly related. Though the comment may have gone back to an early tradition, no extra information was provided except the assumption that the maid knew and conveyed the exact name of the prophet directly to Naaman.¹²¹ In *Sotah*, the maid was again mentioned but only in reference to a semantic issue.¹²² Nothing further was provided to illuminate the interaction.

Based on *Sifré Zutta*, early Rabbis appeared to have lauded the maid's faith, her reliance upon Torah teachings, and her taking action based upon those principles for the glory of the Lord. Her pro-active intercession with Naaman's wife, and thereby

¹²⁰*Sifré Zutta*, Pinhas 27:1 (Neusner, *Sifré Zutta*, 220-21).

¹²¹*b. Sanh.* 107b (Neusner, *BT* 16:577).

¹²²*b. Sotā* 46b (Neusner, *BT* 11:237). At issue was why the modifier of "קטנה" was used in conjunction with "נערה", which already carried the understanding of young girl. Based on this passage, some rabbis considered the modifier to indicate the place she was from, not her size.

Naaman, (both non-Israelites) was seen as an action for the Lord. Such an indication shows that at least some early Jews valued actions that led to Gentiles glorifying God.

Elisha and Naaman. Although several comments exist in early Jewish writings about Elisha and Naaman, nothing relevant concerning their interaction appeared in the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, or Josephus.¹²³ However, one manuscript of *Targum Jonathan* included a relevant variation that attempted to clarify Elisha's parting response of peace.¹²⁴ Specifically, the variant of 2 Kings 5:19 recorded, "[And he said to him, 'go in peace]; for an altar before the Lord is not proper in a foreign country, only in the Land of Israel. If, however, it is your wish to send burnt offerings and holy sacrifices to offer up before the Lord year by year in the place where it is his wish to cause His divine presence to rest, we shall accept them for you.'"¹²⁵ Thus, Elisha was shown to have provided more instruction to Naaman about proper worship.

In the *Mekilta*, the compiler pointed out that Naaman's confession was even greater than Jethro's and Jethro was considered an ideal convert as noted previously. Jethro acknowledged that the Lord was greater than any other god but as the author of the *Mekilta* noted, "Naaman, however, knew better than Jethro. For it is said: 'Behold now I know that there is no god in all the earth, but in Israel.'"¹²⁶ Thus, the author of the

¹²³Some references were brief and contributed nothing to illumine Elisha's interaction with Naaman. For example, *The Lives of the Prophets* recorded that Elisha was used to cleanse Naaman of leprosy and that Gehazi was cursed because he went after Naaman and took gifts from him contrary to Elisha's wishes. *Lives of the Prophets* 22:12-13 (Hare, "The Lives of the Prophets," *TOTP* 2:398). Other references referred to background information with little bearing on the interaction in question. For example, see Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.414, which recorded that Naaman was the "young nobleman" who shot Ahab but gave no information about interactions with Elisha (Whiston, *Works* 243).

¹²⁴Harrington and Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan*, 274 n. 24. The Targum also translated the Qere of 2 Kgs 5:12 instead of following the Kethib of the MT.

¹²⁵Leivy Smolar, Moses Aberbach, and Pinkhos Churgin, *Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets and Targum Jonathan to the Prophets*. The Library of Biblical Studies (New York: KTAV Publishing, 1983), 18. See also Ginzberg, *LOJ* 6:347.

¹²⁶*Mek. Ish.* Amalek 3.209-10 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 2:176). See parallel passage in *Mek. Shm.* Amalek 46.3 (Nelson, *Mekhilta* 202).

Mekilta clearly believed Naaman had come to believe as a convert in no other God but the Lord.

Within the *Sifré to Deuteronomy* Elisha and Naaman's interaction was briefly mentioned on two separate occasions. First, Elisha's actions toward Naaman were applauded as a righteous example of one making an oath not to do wrong when the prophet swore not to take payment for the healing.¹²⁷ Second, in the context about God's promise to put fear and dread on Israel's enemies and to protect the land of Israel, Elisha's behavior with Naaman was again approved. As the author of the *Sifré* noted,

And so you find that when the Israelites carry out the will of the Omnipresent, what does Naaman say to Elisha? "If not, I ask, let there be given to your servant two mules' burden of earth" (2 Kgs. 5:17). Is it not an argument a fortiori: If the mere dirt of the land of Israel he feared to take without permission, how would one come and seize property and cattle.¹²⁸

In this passage, the clear implication was that the prophet had done the will of God through his interactions with Naaman because of Naaman's respectful response.

Several comments exist in the Talmud about Naaman that are attributed to early rabbis. Of the sayings, four main categories exist: statements about Naaman's status as a proselyte, remarks clarifying Naaman's request for pardon for bowing at the house of Rimmon, comments about the healing of the Syrian's leprosy, and incidental annotations in relation to Gehazi's sin after Elisha refused payment.

Of the comments, the most important to this study were those showing a clear example of the attitude concerning Naaman as a proselyte. In the context of listing notable Gentile converts, it was recorded, "A Tannaitic statement: Naaman was a resident proselyte. Nebuzaradan was a righteous proselyte. Grandsons of Haman studied Torah in Bene Beraq. Grandsons of Sisera taught children in Jerusalem. Grandsons of Sennacherib

¹²⁷*Sifré Deut.* 33 (Neusner, *Sifré Deuteronomy* 1:91). In the same passage, Gehazi's brazen act of taking payment from Naaman was used as an example of a wicked man swearing to do wrong.

¹²⁸*Sifré Deut.* 52 (Neusner, *Sifré Deuteronomy* 1:172).

taught Torah in public.”¹²⁹ Unquestionably, the rabbis believed Naaman’s conversion was sincere and approved of his connection with Israel. Based on the cascading context of the incorporation and involvement of other Gentiles, one could argue that the importance of making converts was being emphasized subtly since ultimately leading teachers were touted as examples of the faithful descendants of converts.

Second in importance were comments by rabbis interpreting the meaning of Elisha’s acceptance of Naaman’s request to be absolved for further bowing in the House of Rimmon. Two conclusions existed concerning this problem. First, rabbis concluded that Gentiles, as children of Noah, were not required to sanctify the name of the Lord, as were the children of Israel.¹³⁰ Second, the suggestion was made that Naaman’s request involved a private act as opposed to a public act, with the implication that the private act was permissible though a public act would have been condemned.¹³¹ In these ways, the rabbis created understandable ways for Elisha’s behavior (and Naaman’s) to have been above reproach. Notably, it appeared the rabbis would have considered it wrong had Elisha incorrectly instructed Naaman in the proper way of behaving before God.¹³²

Finally, the Lord Jesus mentioned the healing of Naaman in the context of His own mission and His rejection by the Jews in Luke 4:18-27. The Lord healed and taught

¹²⁹*b. Git.* 57b (Neusner, *BT* 11:249). Citing parallel passage *b. Sanh.* 96b, Kohler noted that rabbis viewed Naaman as a God worshipper, a type of “semi-proselyte.” See Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, 414.

¹³⁰*b. Sanh.* 74b-75a (Neusner, *BT* 16:393-94). See also *y. Sanh.* 3.21b and *y. Šeb.* 4.35a. Rabbis of the Amoraim were noted in relation to this thought; although, it is likely the teaching predates their time.

¹³¹*b. Sanh.* 75a (Neusner, *BT* 16:394).

¹³²Concerning Elisha’s parting of peace, rabbis noted, “Now if it were so [that a Noahide has to sanctify God’s name], he should not have said such a thing to him.” *b. Sanh.* 75a (Neusner, *BT* 16:394). Comments in the Talmud about Naaman from the last two categories were less relevant than those of the first two. In two cases, the healing of Naaman was interpreted as an example of a ‘resurrection.’ See *b. Sanh.* 47a and *b. Hul.* 7b. Three passages dealt with the Naaman and Gehazi incident. See *b. Sanh.* 107b, *b. Soṭa* 47a, and *y. Sanh.* 10.29. One positive early Amoraic comment linked the healing of Naaman to the good friends he possessed as an example of the type of friends a person would be blessed with if they dutifully visited the sick. See *b. Ned.* 40a. Generally, the main point of the passages above was that the rabbis believed Elisha behaved well with his interactions with Naaman. Some passages seemed to convey a positive attitude toward Naaman.

where he was accepted; He left when He was rejected. Implicitly, the Lord showed approval for Elisha's initiation and interaction to heal Naaman.

Jonah and non-Israelites. Jonah's interactions with God concerning his call and his interactions with the different Gentile groups received modest attention by the early Jewish writers. Only one reference to Jonah's experience occurs in the Apocrypha, but it adds no relevant information for the study.¹³³ Within the Pseudepigrapha, the only work that referenced Jonah and his interaction with non-Israelites was *The Lives of the Prophets*. Beyond the comment already noted above concerning Jonah's assumed identity as the son of the widow of Zarephath, a brief note was made about the prophet's actions following his reluctant ministry to Nineveh. After observing that Jonah later went to live in gentile lands, the account supposedly quoted Jonah as saying: "So shall I remove my reproach, for I spoke falsely in prophesying against the great city of Nineveh."¹³⁴

Several variants were present in the Targum related to Jonah.¹³⁵ Of the differences, only a few provided information about the interactions or the attitude of the translator. In several places, the Targum emphasized Jonah's resistance to God's mission for him by adding a phrase that Jonah fled, "*before he would prophesy in the name of the Lord.*"¹³⁶ In addition, the Targum appeared to reflect a favorable attitude to the sailors. In the Targum's rendition of Jonah 1:5, a comment was added that the sailors realized their

¹³³3 Macc 6:8 observed that God watched over the wayward prophet in the large fish and ultimately restored him. In 4 Esdr 1:38-40, Jonah just showed up in a list of leaders God gave to Israel.

¹³⁴*Lives of the Prophets* 10:3 (Hare, "The Lives of the Prophets," *TOTP* 2:392). In *TOTP* this is the only passage addressing the specific case of Jonah, his identity, and actions after Nineveh. However, elsewhere in *TOTP*, the themes of repentance being the doorway to salvation and the great mercy of God upon all people are present in a variety of works. See, for example, *The Prayer of Manasseh*, trans. by J. H. Charlesworth, *TOTP* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:634. For a note on Nahum's fulfilled prophecy against Nineveh, see *The Lives of the Prophets* 11:2 (Hare, "The Lives of the Prophets," *TOTP* 2:393).

¹³⁵*Targum of the Prophets in Targum of the Minor Prophets*, trans. and annotated by Kevin J. Cathcart and Robert P. Gordon, *The Aramaic Bible*, vol. 14 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989).

¹³⁶*Tg. Neb.* Jonah 1:3, 10 (Cathcart and Gordon, *Targum*, 105-06). Additions were italicized.

idols were useless. One notable change in the final actions of the sailors was also present. In the MT, the sailors appeared to have offered a sacrifice to God immediately. However, in the Targum, Jonah 1:16 noted, “And the men were afraid greatly *before* the Lord, and *they promised to offer a sacrifice before* the Lord and they made vows.”¹³⁷

Just as in the MT, the translator of the Targum presented the repentance of the Ninevites as sincere. Most notably, an expansion to the thought and words of the king was related: “*Whoever* knows that *there are sins on his conscience let him repent of them and we will be pitied before the Lord*, and he *will* turn back from the *vehemence* of his anger, and we will not perish.”¹³⁸ Therefore, the king was credited with understanding the importance of individual repentance before God and God’s openness to show mercy. Just as in the MT, both internal repentance and external deeds were emphasized.

Josephus referred to Jonah’s interactions with the seaman and with the Ninevites in *Antiquities*.¹³⁹ However, in both of the references, the historian’s concern was more devoted to the actions of Jonah than the reactions of the Gentiles. He did relate that Jonah witnessed to his identity as a prophet of the Almighty God to the seaman but he made no comment at all on their reaction after they threw Jonah into the sea and the storm calmed. Likewise, Josephus noted that Jonah repented from running from God’s command to proclaim judgment to the Ninevites and that the prophet did finally obey God but the historian made no comment about the response of the Ninevites.

Within the Mishnah, a relevant passage existed regarding the repentance of the Ninevites. Embedded in a context about proper fasting, the rabbis cited the example of the fasting in Nineveh as a model for proper fasting expressed by internal repentance and an external change in deeds. In the rabbis’ observation about how fasting was done

¹³⁷By incorporating a promise to make a sacrifice, the translator made the sailor’s actions more acceptable to the early Jewish perspective that sacrifices of the Gentiles were only permitted in Jerusalem.

¹³⁸*Tg. Neb.* Jonah 3:9 (Cathcart and Gordon, *Targum* 108).

¹³⁹Josephus, *Antiquities* 9.208-14 (Whiston, *Works* 259-60).

previously, the rabbis noted, “The eldest among them makes a speech of admonition: ‘Our brothers, concerning the people of Nineveh it is not said, “And God saw their sackcloth and their fasting,” but, And God saw their deeds, for they repented from their evil way (Jonah 3:10).”¹⁴⁰ Given that Israelite examples of repentance could have been used, like that of David or Josiah, it seems significant that the Jews would exhort their people using an example of gentile repentance. Certainly, the thought preserved in the Mishnah assumed that the repentance of the Ninevites was sincere. However, no comment was made about the interaction between Jonah and the Gentiles.¹⁴¹

Several passages concerning Jonah and his mission were referenced in the *Mekilta*, providing notable spin to the account by interpreting Jonah’s initial refusal to obey God in a somewhat positive light. Accordingly, the commentators theorized, “Jonah thought: I will go outside of the land where the Shekinah does not reveal itself. For since the Gentiles are more inclined to repent, I might be causing Israel to be condemned.”¹⁴² Thus, the perspective of the author of the *Mekilta* was that Jonah feared the greater responsiveness of the Gentiles might cause the Lord to be harsher with Israel. Implicitly, the author accepted that the Lord intended to spare the Gentiles from the start, knowing they would repent if warned of their danger.

Later the commentator observed that Jonah thought more of the “honor due to the son,” (to Israel) rather than “the honor due the Father.”¹⁴³ Such a point was not presented negatively at all but rather admiration seemed to be shown that Jonah was willing to die for the good of Israel. According to the *Mekilta*, R. Nathan said, “Jonah

¹⁴⁰*m. Ta’an. 2:1* (Neusner, *Mishnah*, 309). Later, in *m. Ta’an. 2:4*, Jonah’s prayer from within the fish was mentioned in connection with God’s ability to hear and answer prayers.

¹⁴¹Joel 2:13, a passage with parallel thought to Jonah 4:2, was quoted in the Mishnah, but no comment was made connecting the passage back to Jonah. See *m. ’Abot 2:13* (Neusner, *Mishnah* 677).

¹⁴²*Mek. Ish. Pisha 1.81-82* (Lauterbach, *Mekilta*1:7).

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, 1.100-01 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta*1:9).

made his voyage only in order to drown himself in the sea, for thus it is said: ‘And he said unto them: Take me up and cast me forth into the sea’ (Jonah 1.12).”¹⁴⁴ Therefore, as witnessed by the *Mekilta*, Jonah’s concern during the encounter with the Gentiles on the sea was not for the lives of the seamen at all but was just so that Israel would not be put to shame.¹⁴⁵ While God’s concern for the Ninevites was implied, the author of the *Mekilta* showed little concern for the Gentiles, treating Jonah’s acts of disobedience with more esteem than his eventual obedience.¹⁴⁶

In contrast to the positive spin present in the *Mekilta*, the only point of view concerning Jonah present in the *Sifré to Deuteronomy* seemed negative. Within this *Sifré* the commentators noted: “There are three who are put to death at the hand of Heaven [through extirpation]: one who holds back his prophecy, such as Jonah b. Amittai, one who adds to the words of a prophet, such as the associate of Micah, and a prophet who violates his own statement, such as Iddo.”¹⁴⁷ Jonah’s evasion of his mission was therefore clearly deemed as wrong and even punishable by heaven. No other relevant comments exist in the early Tannaitic writings.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 1.103-05 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta*1:10).

¹⁴⁵See *Mek. Ish.* Pisha 1.111-13 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 1:11). W. David Nelson provided a summary about how the *Mekilta* spun the information about Jonah, “By interpreting Jonah’s motives in this manner our text subtly defines his character as it is portrayed in the biblical narrative. In the biblical tale, Jonah’s stubborn refusal to obey God’s command is motivated presumably out of ego. He knows that if he travels to Nineveh and proclaims its impending destruction, the Ninevites will repent and subdue God’s anger, and he will appear to be a false prophet. The rabbinic representation of Jonah as displayed here in our text, depicts a prophet who acts out of blind love for his people, choosing even to disobey God’s imperative, rather than implicate his fellow Israelites. In this manner, our text manages to reinterpret Jonah as a heroic character, one who sacrifices his own wellbeing for the good of others.” See W. David Nelson, “Oral Orthography: Early Rabbinic Oral and Written Transmission of Parallel Midrashic Tradition in the Mekhilta of Rabbi Shimon B. Yohai and the Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael,” *AJS Review* 29 (2005): 27-28.

¹⁴⁶Of the remaining comments about Jonah in the *Mek. Ish.*, one referred only to his wife and one dealt with the depth Jonah sank to in the sea. See *Mek. Ish.* Pisha 17.162-163 and Shirata 5.14-38 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 1:154; 2:38). Nothing further was noted by the *Mek. Shm.* except that God spoke to prophets only by water, exemplified by Jonah. See *Mek. Shm.* Pisha 3.1 (Nelson, *Mekhilta*10).

¹⁴⁷*Sifré Deut.* 177 (Neusner, *Sifré Deuteronomy* 2:55).

¹⁴⁸Comments related to Jonah in *Sifré Zutta* and *Seder Olam* were limited to his identity as the

Various citations credited to early Jewish thought exist in the Talmud that reference Jonah or the Gentiles with whom he interacted. Contained in the comments, some evidence provides additional insight into how the early rabbis viewed the interactions. Generally, references in the Talmud concerning the account in Jonah may be placed into three broad categories: comments about Jonah personally (or his relatives), notations about the Ninevites, and remarks about incidental elements in Jonah used to explain other passages, concepts, or arguments.¹⁴⁹ Comments in the Talmud falling within the first two categories were the most relevant.

Within the category of comments in the Talmud concerning Jonah, a few relevant observations existed. In one citation, Jonah was given as an example of a prophet who withheld prophecy very similar to the passage in *Sifré to Deuteronomy* 177. Given the context of the passage, his action was viewed as a sin worthy of death, punishable by heaven.¹⁵⁰ In the Yerushalmi version of the same argument, Jonah was quoted as saying, “I know that Gentiles are close to repentance; if I would go and prophesy for them and they repented, the Holy One, praise to Him, would make Himself paid from the haters of Israel. What can I do? I must flee!”¹⁵¹ Even though the Yerushalmi passage also was in the context of sin worthy of death, the presentation of Jonah’s reason seemed to evoke a sense of admiration from the commentator much like was found in the *Mekilta*. In

prophet Elisha sent to anoint Jehu and the succeeding interaction he had with Jehu. See *Sifré Zutta* Shelah 14.34 (Neusner, *Sifré Zutta* 136). See *S. ‘Olam Rab.* 18-19 (Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam* 106-63).

¹⁴⁹Some overlap exists in categories. For texts about Jonah or his relations, see *y. Sukk.* 5.1 and *b. Sukk.* 55a (his parents); *b. ‘Erub.* 96a (his wife); *b. Ned.* 38a (his wealth); *y. Ber.* 9.13a, *b. Ned.* 51b, *b. Ta’an.* 17a, and *y. Ta’an.* 2.9 (his experience in the great fish); *b. Yebam.* 98a, *b. Sanh.* 89a-b, *y. Sanh.* 11.7 (his prophecy). For texts about the Ninevites, see *b. Ta’an.* 15a, 16a, and *y. Ta’an.* 2.1 (model repentance); *y. Ta’an.* 2.65b (deceitful repentance); *b. Roš Hoš.* 16b (change of character); *b. Yoma* 10a (great city). For texts about other concepts or passages, see *b. Šabb.* 21a (gourd bush); *b. ‘Erub.* 19a (belly of netherworld); *b. Tem.* 9a and *b. Yebam.* 61a (men and cattle/much cattle); *y. Ber.* 9.13c and *b. Giṭ.* 31b (wind); *b. Ker.* 6b (exclusion of beasts from men numbered); *b. Meg.* 31a (Jonah read on Yom Kippur).

¹⁵⁰*b. Sanh.* 89a (Neusner, *BT* 16:469). Dating is unclear.

¹⁵¹See *y. Sanh.* 11.30b in *The Jerusalem Talmud*, ed. and trans. by Heinrich W. Guggenheimer, *Studia Judaica* 18-21, 23, 29, 34, 51, 61, 4 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000-10), 4 [2010]: pt. 2:407.

addition, the comments showed that the commentators accepted Jonah's full comprehension of the intention of God to pardon the Ninevites if they repented.

Hints exist about the early Jews' viewpoint on God's perspective on the mission assigned to Jonah. In an observation concerning Jonah's prophecy coming twice from God, the commentator noted that "his attitude toward Nineveh turned from bad to good."¹⁵² Thus, God's initiation of the mission and His final positive attitude toward the Ninevites was illustrated. Another comment indicated that God's intention and message about the overturn of Nineveh was positive from the beginning. In a passage dealing with the Amos 3:7 standard that God would always reveal his plans ahead of time to the prophets, Jonah was brought up as a possible exception because of his message and a supposed change in the outcome. However, a possible interpretation was presented that the message was fulfilled because, as was stated, "To begin with, Jonah was told that Nineveh would be turned, but he was not informed whether it was for good or for bad."¹⁵³

Within the category concerning the Ninevites, two distinct Talmudic perspectives about the Ninevites were present. One group of comments emphasized the repentance of the Ninevites positively. For example, when Tanna R. Isaac listed four things that would cause a cancellation of judgment, he listed "change of character," and referred to the repentance of Ninevites.¹⁵⁴ In addition, a further expansion to the Mishnaic statement in *Ta'anit* 2:1 was present in the Talmud. As stated, "Our brethren, it is not the wearing of sackcloth and the fasting that makes the difference, but repentance and good

¹⁵²*b. Yebam.* 98a (Neusner, *BT* 8:521-22). Based on a statement made by Tanna R. Akiva referring to God's word coming a second time to Jonah, a later Amora observed that the change from bad to good in the case of Nineveh was compared to a similar change in Israel during the time of Jeroboam II.

¹⁵³*b. Sanh.* 89b (Neusner, *BT* 16:470). Yitzhak Peleg argued both types of overturning were intended. See Yitzhak Peleg, "'Yet Forty Days, and Nineveh shall be Overthrown' (Jonah 3.4): Two Readings (*Shtei Krie'ot*) of the Book of Jonah," in vol. 1 of *God's Word for Our World*, JSOTSup 388 (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 269.

¹⁵⁴*b. Roš Hoš.* 16b (Neusner, *BT* 6:41).

deeds make the difference. For so we find of the men of Nineveh.”¹⁵⁵

In contrast to the positive notations made about the reactions of the Ninevites to Jonah’s message, a couple of comments existed that evaluated the Ninevites’ reaction negatively. In several places in the writings of *Ta’anit*, the original positive renderings were reinterpreted by later rabbis with a negative twist. For example, an early Amora, R. Simeon b. Laqish claimed, “The repentance that the men of Nineveh carried out was deceitful.”¹⁵⁶ Another Amora explained that the Ninevites separated baby animals from their mothers to make them cry out in an attempt to manipulate God to show mercy. Later in the same passage, an early Amora implied that Ninevites’ actions of repentance were less than complete.¹⁵⁷ Therefore, in the Talmud, although God was portrayed as viewing the Ninevites repentance as sincere and a few Jews seemed to consider their repentance positively, others had more negative perspectives on both the mission and the outcome.

In Matthew 12:30-41, the Lord observed, “The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.” In the same context, in Luke 11:29-32, the Lord also noted that Jonah was “a sign to the Ninevites.”¹⁵⁸ Therefore, the Lord Jesus considered that Jonah had a mission to the Ninevites and was a means of facilitating their repentance. In addition, the Lord clearly understood the repentance to have been sincere.

Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar. More comments exist in early Jewish writings about Nebuchadnezzar than any other Gentile in the surveyed case studies. Many

¹⁵⁵*b. Ta’an.* 16a (Neusner, *BT* 7:79). The passage mentions Tannaite authority.

¹⁵⁶*y. Ta’an.* 2.65b (Neusner, *JT* 8:38). A similar thought is present in *b. Ta’an.* 16a with the inclusion of children being set alone to cry out.

¹⁵⁷Concerning the king’s decree in Jonah 3:8, R. Yohanan suggested, “What they had in their hands they gave back, but what they had hidden in chests, boxes, and cupboards, they did not give back.” See *y. Ta’an.* 2.65b (Neusner, *JT* 8:39).

¹⁵⁸Matt 12:39-40 and 16:4 also mention the sign of Jonah.

references had nothing to do with the interaction in question and often the king was labeled without qualification as wicked. However, several key passages exist that showed that some early Jews admired Daniel's interactions with the king and some even believed the king repented and worshipped God.

One of the most significant writings that informed about early perspectives on the interaction between Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar was the Old Greek version of the encounter. In the Greek, several sections were expanded. First, Daniel's directions to the king were more specific. Nebuchadnezzar was expressly indicted for his pride and deeds against the temple and he was encouraged to "supplicate him [God] concerning your sins and atone for all your injustice by almsgiving, so that clemency may be granted to you and you may be long-lived on the throne of your kingdom and not be destroyed."¹⁵⁹

Second, the actions of Nebuchadnezzar in the midst of his judgment and following were expanded. In the Old Greek account, Nebuchadnezzar was specifically shown to apply Daniel's advice to pray to God concerning his sins. As Nebuchadnezzar supposedly maintained, "After seven years I devoted myself to supplication, and I prayed before the Lord, the God of heaven concerning my sins, and I begged the great God of gods concerning my ignorance."¹⁶⁰ Daniel's advice seemed to be linked to Nebuchadnezzar's positive response to God's discipline and eventual repentance.

Third, more emphasis was placed on Nebuchadnezzar's ultimate commitment to God Most High after his deliverance. According to the Old Greek, after the king prayed, an angel from heaven commanded, "Nebuchadnezzar, serve the holy God of heaven and give glory to the Most High."¹⁶¹ While the MT emphasized the necessity of

¹⁵⁹See (O)G Dan 4:24 in John J. Collins, *Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 211. Many scholars see the Qumran text 4QPrNab as another witness to the incident recorded in Dan 4. However, based on the differences in the text, the fragment could have been describing a completely different event or could have been a later rendition based upon the core details of the Daniel account. It is unwarranted to consider the Biblical account as subordinate or inferior in detail to the Qumran story.

¹⁶⁰(O)G Dan 4:30a (Collins, *Daniel*, 213).

the king coming to know the sovereignty of God, the Old Greek went further by requiring that the king actually serve God. Beyond that, based on the reaction of Nebuchadnezzar, it appeared he made a life-long commitment to the Most High. As the king vowed,

I confess to the Most High and I praise the one who created the heavens and the earth and the seas and the rivers and everything in them. I confess and praise because he is God of gods and Lord of lords and Lord of kings Every day of my reign I will offer sacrifices to the Most High for my life, for a pleasing odor to the Lord and I will do what is pleasing before him.¹⁶²

Therefore, an emphasis was placed on the king's confession to God and his commitment to do righteous deeds. Thus, the king's response was viewed as sincere and complete.

Nebuchadnezzar was mentioned several times in the Apocrypha, but mainly in incidental side comments simply referring to Biblical facts.¹⁶³ Most notable of the references was a passage in Baruch. In Baruch, the author noted that the exiles had sent back money to Jerusalem so that sacrifices and prayers might be made for the wellbeing and life of Nebuchadnezzar and his son.¹⁶⁴ Although later in the work a clear expectation of judgment upon the enemies of Israel was expressed, still the presence of intercession for the king of Babylon was of note. Elsewhere, although comments existed about Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar individually, no mention was made in the Apocrypha concerning the interaction between Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar during the case in question.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹(O)G Dan 4:30c (Collins, *Daniel*, 213).

¹⁶²(O)G Dan 4:34-34a (Collins, *Daniel* 213).

¹⁶³For example, comments in 1 Esdr 1:40-41, 45, 48. Comments also exist in Judith concerning a ruler called "Nebuchadnezzar" but in this case the name of the Babylonian king was used for an event long after his rule. Choosing to use his name conveyed at least a negative opinion of the original king from the author's point of view but beyond that not much can be discerned.

¹⁶⁴See Bar 1:9-12. As Bar 2:21-25 later clarified, the exiles remembered they had earlier refused to follow God's command to serve the king of Babylon and the result had been judgment. Possibly, the allusion could have been to a Biblical passage like Jer 29:7, in which the Jews were commanded to pray for the city of their captivity (although specific prayer for the Babylonian king was not mentioned).

¹⁶⁵Notably, in *Bel and the Dragon*, Daniel was again cast as an Israelite through whom God's truth was mediated to a pagan king. In Bel 1:42, Daniel's interaction with Cyrus culminated in an expression of glorification of God from the mouth of the pagan king. After Daniel's life was spared, Cyrus was said to exclaim, "You are great, O Lord, the God of Daniel, and there is no other besides you!"

In the pseudepigraphical writing *The Lives of the Prophets*, Daniel's intercessory role was expanded and emphasized; for the author claimed, "He prayed much for Nebuchadnezzar."¹⁶⁶ Later, concerning the plight of the king, the report documented, "For many were going out of the city and gazing at him. Daniel alone did not wish to see him, because he was in prayer for him the whole time of his changed condition and he kept saying, 'He will become a man again,' and they did not believe him."¹⁶⁷ Daniel's intercession was also seen as effectual because the prophet was credited for shortening the time of punishment of the king from seven years to seven months.

Besides emphasizing Daniel's involvement, the summary highlighted the repentance and successive actions of Nebuchadnezzar. Regarding the king, the account documented, "He prostrated himself to the Lord and confessed his impiety, and after the forgiveness of his wickedness he restored to him the kingdom. He neither ate bread or meat nor drank wine as he made his confession, for Daniel had ordered him to appease the Lord with (a diet of) soaked pulse and greens."¹⁶⁸ Elsewhere, it was stated, "Nebuchadnezzar . . . used to weep and honor the Lord, praying forty times each day and night."¹⁶⁹ Therefore, the author seemed to portray Daniel in a more active role in mediating with the king than even Scripture indicated and the author's assessment of Daniel's behavior was positive. In addition, the repentance and actions of Nebuchadnezzar exceeded what was documented by the Biblical account.¹⁷⁰

Although Josephus' summary of Nebuchadnezzar's invasions and actions against Jerusalem showed a negative perspective, the Jewish historian's summary of the

¹⁶⁶*Lives of the Prophets* 4:4 (Hare, "The Lives of the Prophets," *TOTP* 2:390).

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 4:11-12 (Hare, "The Lives of the Prophets," *TOTP* 2:390).

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 4:13-14 (Hare, "The Lives of the Prophets," *TOTP* 2:390).

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 4:9 (Hare, "The Lives of the Prophets," *TOTP* 2:390)

¹⁷⁰Other notes in *TOTP* about Nebuchadnezzar mainly exhibited a negative viewpoint. For example, 2 Bar 67:7-8 and 4 Bar 7:25.

interaction between Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar provided positive comments about the last years of the king. As Josephus summarized the event recorded in Daniel 4, he noted of Nebuchadnezzar: “he prayed to God that he might recover his kingdom, and he returned to it.”¹⁷¹ Later in his summary of the writing on the wall incident, Josephus stated that Nebuchadnezzar “did thereupon praise God all the days of his life, as one of mighty power, and who takes care of mankind.”¹⁷² Nothing detailed about Daniel’s intercession or the interaction between Daniel and the king was provided but the grace of God was emphasized and Nebuchadnezzar’s actions of giving glory to God seemed to be represented as occurring for the rest of his life, much in line with the Old Greek witness.

Within the *Mekilta*, the rabbis’ portrayal of King Nebuchadnezzar was universally negative. Although his greatness as a king was acknowledged, much was made of his arrogance and personal ambition to be a god. While Daniel 4 was alluded to or quoted from several times, it was always in the context of just punishment and little indicated that the rabbis believed Nebuchadnezzar had repented after being disciplined.¹⁷³

Even though Daniel was praised in one *Mekilta* passage for being properly respectful of royalty, in the passage that cited Daniel 4 in reference to the prophet’s personal interaction with the king, Daniel’s effectiveness in helping the king seemed open to question.¹⁷⁴ R. Ishmael was quoted,

Come and see how merciful He by whose word the world came into being is to flesh and blood. For a man can redeem himself from the Heavenly judgment by paying money, as it is said “Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee,

¹⁷¹Josephus, *Antiquities* 10.217 (Whiston, *Works* 281).

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, 11.242 (Whiston, *Works* 283).

¹⁷³For citations of Nebuchadnezzar’s pride in connection with Isa 14:14-15 and the justness of his punishment, see *Mek. Ish. Shirata* 2.84-87; 8.31-32 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 2:18, 61). See also *Mek. Shm. Shirata* 28.1.10 (Nelson, *Mekhilta* 125). For a similar passage that directly referenced Daniel 4 and God’s just punishment of the king’s pride, see *Mek. Ish. Shirata* 6.49-58 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 2:46-47). On the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar, see *Mek. Ish. Beshallah* 2.134-35 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 1:197).

¹⁷⁴For the comment noting Daniel’s respect of royalty (specifically in reference to Darius), see *Mek. Ish. Pisha* 13.84-86 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 1:102).

and break off thy sins by almsgiving” (Dan. 4.24) So also in the future world there will be some for whom there will be redemption and there will be some for whom there will be no redemption. For the heathen nations there will be no redemption.¹⁷⁵

Thus, although it appeared R. Ishmael believed Nebuchadnezzar had been offered the chance for redemption mediated by Daniel, ultimately the rabbi believed that heathen nations as a whole would not be redeemed (by implication including the king).

Three comments in the *Sifré to Numbers* provided a little information bearing upon the interaction between Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar. Two of these passages quoted from the Biblical passage in question. Daniel 4:24-8 [HB 4:21-5] was referenced in a discussion about the efficacy of the bitter waters test for unfaithfulness and the possibility of merit affecting the results.¹⁷⁶ R. Ishmael argued that personal merit could delay negative judgment for a year based on precedence that the judgment pronounced on Nebuchadnezzar was delayed for twelve months. Had the king not had some merit, the inference was that he would have been judged immediately and completely. Since the judgment was delayed and then lifted, merit of the king seemed to be assumed.

Another reference in the *Sifré to Numbers* quoted Daniel 4:32 [HB 4:29], concerning the judgment that Nebuchadnezzar would “eat grass like an oxen.”¹⁷⁷ Based on the context of the passage, the rabbis understood that the judgment against the king fell, at least in part, because he had inflicted harm upon God’s special people and not merely because the king had become proud and exalted himself above God. In the last pertinent reference in the *Sifré to Numbers*, Daniel’s character was praised.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵*Mek. Ish. Nezikin* 10.158-81 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 3:86-88).

¹⁷⁶*Sifré Num.* 8.8 (Neusner, *Sifré Numbers* 1:95). R. Ishmael was a second generation Tanna. Parallel passages exist in Talmud. See *b. Soṭa* 20b-21a and *y. Soṭa* 3.18d.

¹⁷⁷*Sifré Num.* 84.4 (Neusner, *Sifré to Numbers* 2:73).

¹⁷⁸Daniel was called “gracious and merciful and compassionate.” See *Sifré Num.* 41.2 (Neusner, *Sifré to Numbers* 1:193). See a similar passage in *Sifré Zutta*, *Naso* 6.25 where it was clarified that Daniel and others were considered “gracious in the view of other people” (Neusner, *Sifré Zutta* 49). An additional irrelevant comment referred to time described by the year of Nebuchadnezzar in *Sifré Num.* 65.

Only one passage, *Sifré to Deuteronomy* 306, seemed to make any possible comment on the case in question.¹⁷⁹ However, chapter 306 was significant because it made the argument that Daniel, and other Israelites, acted consciously in cooperation with God in order to facilitate the exaltation of God's glory before the world. As stated,

And how on the basis of Scripture do we know that Daniel went down into the lions' den only so that the Holy One, blessed be He, might have occasion to do wonders and acts of might, and so that his great name might be sanctified in the world? As it is said, "For the name of the Lord I proclaim; give glory to our God." And Scripture says, "I make a decree, that in all the dominions of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel . . ." (Dan. 6:27-28). 'And how on the basis of Scripture do you maintain that Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah went into the fiery oven only so that the Holy One, blessed be He, might have occasion to do for them wonders and acts of might, and so that his great name might be sanctified in the world? As it is said, "It seems good to me to declare the signs and wonders that God Most High has done for me . . . how great are his signs, and how mighty are his wonders, his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom' (Dan. 3:32-33)."¹⁸⁰

In addition, the passage conveyed that God was glorified when Gentiles came to know and acknowledge Him after seeing what He did for and through individual Israelites.

Of two references in the *Sifra* that mentioned Nebuchadnezzar, one appeared negative and the other seemed positive. In the context of the Israelite call to holiness, it was written, "If you are separated from the nations, lo, you are for my Name, and if not, lo, you belong to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia, and his associates."¹⁸¹ Therefore, the commentators considered the king to have been wicked and opposed to God.

Later, Nebuchadnezzar's interaction with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah was mentioned in the context of another case when brothers from Laodicea were threatened by Marianos with death and taunted that their God should save them as He had the three

¹⁷⁹If Dan 4:1-3 [HB 3:31-33] is reckoned as part of the account of Nebuchadnezzar's judgment and restoration, it is relevant. Many have reckoned the passage to be related to the preceding account, as the MT suggests. However, reasons exist to consider it a part of the case in question. For example, the wording appeared to be included with the judgment story in the (O)G version, albeit the wording was at the conclusion rather than the opening. One other minor reference about the king was cited in *Sifré Deut.* 324 in the context of Deut. 32:35 but it only listed him as one who had received God's judgment.

¹⁸⁰*Sifré Deut.* 306.30.4-6 (Neusner, *Sifré Deuteronomy* 2:315-16).

¹⁸¹*Sifra Qedoshim* 207.2.11-12 (Neusner, *Sifra* 3:137).

Hebrews. Reportedly the brothers' response was, "Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were worthy men, and Nebuchadnezzar was a king worthy of having a miracle done on his account. But you are a wicked king [Marianos], and you are not worthy."¹⁸² Therefore, it appeared that the brothers respected Nebuchadnezzar and did not consider him wicked as they did Marianos. Why include Nebuchadnezzar when they could have mentioned only the merit of the three Hebrews? Something about Nebuchadnezzar was considered worthy for him to have witnessed the intercession and revelation of God. Thus, it appears that two strains of feeling were present in Jewish thought concerning the king.

Most comments in *Seder Olam* about Daniel or Nebuchadnezzar were simply neutral statements of historical record. One passage positively described the death of the king and the desecration of his body.¹⁸³ Although the writer's attitude appeared to be negative, he still acknowledged that God had appointed Nebuchadnezzar as king.¹⁸⁴

Within the Talmud the rabbis often referred to Nebuchadnezzar as wicked or evil; however, not every mention of the king was negative. Some attitudes seemed to be layered. Notably, a few passages seemed to reflect an undercurrent of respect, even in cases when negative traits were listed. Passages in the Talmud concerning Nebuchadnezzar or Daniel may be classified into four broad categories: passages using quotations from the specific interaction under investigation, observations that appear to reflect a positive undercurrent, remarks highlighting only the king's wickedness, and casual asides about Nebuchadnezzar with no discernable underlying attitude.

Passages with direct quotations that come from Daniel 4 are most relevant to this study; however, only a few passages with quotes provide an indication of early Jewish attitude toward the king based upon the context.¹⁸⁵ Two of the passages repeated

¹⁸²*Sifra* Emor 227.1.5 (Neusner, *Sifra* 3:231).

¹⁸³*S. 'Olam Rab.* 28 (Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam* 237). See also *S. 'Olam R.* 20, 25-27.

¹⁸⁴*S. 'Olam Rab.* 30 (Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam* 265).

the *Sifré to Numbers* 8 teaching about the length of time personal merit could forestall judgment based on Daniel's advice to the king and the eventual arrival of the threatened punishment.¹⁸⁶ Hints of a negative bias against the king were evident from comments in *Shebuot* 35b, in which rabbis wrestled with usage of the word "king" in the book of Daniel as being understood as secular or sacred based on Daniel 4:16 [HB 4:13].¹⁸⁷

However, the most telling comment concerning the interaction between Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar was in *Baba Batra* 4a. In this passage, on the authority of a first generation Amoraim, it was asserted that Daniel was punished for giving the king advice, as documented in Daniel 4:24 [HB 4:21]. Although views on the punishment differed, the rabbis in question agreed that Daniel should not have intervened to advise the Gentile.¹⁸⁸

With respect to the positive comments in the Talmud, the most important passage was similar to one noted in the *Sifra* Emor 227, which showed that some Jews considered Nebuchadnezzar worthy of God's revelation.¹⁸⁹ Curiously, a few passages had negative remarks about the king that seemed tempered with begrudging respect.¹⁹⁰ Still,

¹⁸⁵y. *Nazir* 51a quoted Dan 4:30 in the context of word substitutions implying a link between birds and long hair. b. *Šabb.* 150a presented the position that Dan 4:36 meant that the king rode a lion using snake reigns, showing his command of wild beasts. b. *Yoma* 20b quoted Dan 4:32 and compared the noise the sun makes to the noise of people. A quote in b. *Sanh.* 38b referenced the watchers of Dan 4:14.

¹⁸⁶b. *Soṭa* 20b-21a and y. *Soṭa* 3.18d. Probably the initial thought originated with R. Ishmael. In the Yerushalmi version, R. Yose seemed to suggest the Nebuchadnezzar spent the twelve months of his temporarily suspended sentence focused on charity, which was what caused the delay.

¹⁸⁷b. *Šebu.* 35b (Neusner, *BT* 18:160). An argument for the sacred meaning was based on Dan 4:16 [HB 4:13] and the fact that Israelites hated the Babylonian king and yet Daniel was cursing the enemies of the 'king' in question. Based on Tannaite authority, the compilers implied that the verse could be secular because Gentiles also hated the king and they would be the recipients of the curse

¹⁸⁸Rab suggested that Daniel's punishment was a demotion. Another rabbi wryly noted, "Well, it was sufficient punishment that he was thrown into the lions' den!" See b. *B. Bat.* 4a (Neusner, *BT* 15:11). A more positive assessment of Daniel and his possible status as a eunuch existed in b. *Sanh.* 93b.

¹⁸⁹See b. *Ta'an.* 18b, which stated, "Nebuchadnezzar was a worthy monarch and worthy of having a miracle done on his account." (Neusner, *BT* 7:94). For a positive note about the king as a servant of God, see b. *Sanh.* 105a. Comments also highlighted God's desire to have Nebuchadnezzar's descendants come under His care but the angels were said to have objected. See b. *Sanh.* 96b and b. *Git.* 57b.

¹⁹⁰b. *Sanh.* 96a recorded Nebuchadnezzar's rightful objection when he saw God had been listed

many remarks testified to an overwhelmingly negative view of the Babylonian.¹⁹¹

Based on the data, it appears that the earliest Jewish writings contained recognition of Daniel's intentional intercession for the king. In addition, the earliest writings seem to show an approval for Daniel's interaction for the good of Nebuchadnezzar that diminished in later writings. Earlier writings also seemed to dwell more on Nebuchadnezzar's repentance than later works.

Conclusion

While it may be true that some Jews had no understanding of a mission to convert Gentiles, a survey of the data seems to suggest that at least some Jews during the intertestamental and early Jewish period did understand that Israel had a 'religious duty' (a mission) to draw Gentiles to acknowledge Yahweh as God Most High. In addition, evidence exists that some felt compelled to teach non-Jews about the Law, by living it and by expounding it, with the hope (expectation) that some Gentiles would embrace it. Personal obedience to God's Torah was seen as vital for the Jews in order for such an event to happen and deeds were emphasized often more than spoken words. However, proclamation was also present and even valued by some, as for example, the works of Judith and Aristobulus so clearly illustrated.

Some early Jews also seemed to understand that God was the One who had to draw people to Himself. His initiation with certain Gentiles was accepted. In fact, an understanding of some level of cooperation existed concerning the movement of God toward a Gentile, a Gentile toward God, and the involvement of Jews in the process. For a Jew to fail to welcome those God was drawing was considered shameful. In addition, it

last in a letter to Hezekiah. In *b. Ned.* 64b the compiler seemed to acknowledge the justness of the king's reproach about a revoked vow. *b. Sanh.* 93a highlighted the king's understanding of Israel's God.

¹⁹¹For completely negative passages about Nebuchadnezzar's wickedness, see *y. Ber.* 12d; *b. Pesah.* 94a-b; *b. Pesah.* 117a; *b. Pesah.* 118a; *b. Hul.* 89a; *b. Meg.* 10b-11a; *b. Šabb.* 149b; *b. Hag.* 13a-b; *b. Sanh.* 92b-93a. For minor more neutral remarks, see *b. Mo'ed Qat.* 28b; *b. Ketub.* 111a; *b. Ker.* 5b; *b. Arak.* 12a-b; *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 3a; *b. Qidd.* 72b; *b. Soṭa* 46b; *b. Sanh.* 94b, 95b-96a, 103a; *b. Meg.* 11a-b.

was wrong for a Jew to act in ways that misled people about God's identity and expectations. In addition, for those who were commanded to go to Gentiles or to give a message to Gentiles, failure to comply with God's expectations was considered worthy of death, as comments about Jonah indicated.

Israelites and later Jews focused on the unique relationship that God had with Israel. However, they also clearly understood God's role over all other peoples. Both Scripture and external writings indicate that it was understood that non-Israelites could be righteous in their actions. Key to propagating righteous actions in non-Jews was the communication of what the one true God considered righteous. How could Gentiles know how to live righteously unless they were told? Clearly, at least some Jews felt obligated to cooperate with the Lord in spreading the truth of His standards so that Gentiles might know the Most High God and His Law.

At the core of the confusion about the call for the people of God to relate redemptively with others seems to be the meaning of God's mission and what He intended for Gentiles up until His incarnation. Part of the misunderstanding regarding whether Israelites and later Jews understood a call to mission seems to be linked to how the Israelites and Jews understood God's purpose for Israel and what it meant to them for other people to be in right relationship with God, as compared to what it came to mean for Christians. Even given some of the differences, much can still be learned from the manner in which the Israelites interacted with Gentiles and key points may be applied to current missional approaches. Chapter 5 will deal with these final considerations.

CHAPTER 5

SYNTHESIS

As the previous chapters have illustrated, principles for understanding how Israelites were to relate with Gentiles can be found in the Hebrew Scriptures. Moreover, chapter 4 provided an overview of how early Jews understood and applied those principles. In this chapter, the data from the Hebrew Scriptures and intertestamental witness will be synthesized and conclusions will be drawn about God's intention for Israel in relation to the Gentiles. In addition, observations will be made about Israel's application of the principles from the Hebrew Scriptures concerning their interactions with Gentiles. Finally, some implications stemming from the truths learned from the interactions will be suggested for current application.

God's Intention for Israel in Reference to Gentiles

From the beginning, the purpose of this paper was to explore Israel's relations with the nations as they were evidenced in selected Old Testament passages in order to discover possible observations that affected successive generations of the Jews and that could instruct missional practice today. As was briefly highlighted in chapter 1, some recent scholars have refocused attention on the fact that mission is the theme which binds all Scripture together. Scripture is evidence of God's mission to reconcile man to Himself.¹ In order to provide background for the final analysis of the passages that highlighted Israel's relations with Gentiles, it is important to address the question regarding what Israel's responsibility was concerning the nations in the Old Testament,

¹Christopher Wright, *Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 22.

and to address that question, the data suggests one must begin with God's mission.²

God's Mission

As chapters 2 and 3 highlighted, internal evidence does validate the premise that any concept of mission started with the initiation of God and that certain Jews recognized God as the primary initiator of mission. In fact, somewhat surprising was the number of times in reference to relations with Gentiles that God was overtly involved. For example, many times God initiated in dreams, as with various pharaohs and kings. In addition, He sent prophets to individual Gentiles or to groups of Gentiles, just as He sent Elijah to a specific widow and just as He sent Jonah to the Ninevites. In Jonah's case, the prophet also clearly understood that God's mission was to bring about repentance so that He might show mercy.

In addition, Scripture stressed that God's motivation to act in miraculous ways was so that He might be known. In the account concerning Nebuchadnezzar, God initiated with the king for the purpose that the king might know His identity as God Most High. Indeed, many times after God's intervention through miraculous means, the Gentile observers acknowledged Him as God Most High, as the cases of Naaman and Nebuchadnezzar clearly indicated.

Beyond God's involvement with initiating Gentile interactions as manifested by a plain reading of Scriptures was the fact that certain early Jews recognized God's initiation of relations with Gentiles. Intertestamental Jews recognized the Lord's actions of drawing people in Scriptures and they recognized that He continued to draw people to Himself during their time. For example, God's interest in Jethro was highlighted in

²Numerous works exist that clearly explain why mission finds its beginning with God. For example, see John-Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson, *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History and Strategies of World Missions* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 97-113. As Christopher Wright maintained, "All mission or missions which we initiate, or into which we invest our own vocation, gifts and energies, flow from the prior and larger reality of the mission of God." See Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God*, 531. Evidence from the Scriptures and early Jewish writings support the importance of beginning with God's mission.

multiple early rabbinic works.³ Naaman and other significant Gentiles from the OT were highlighted as being drawn as converts and the desire of God to draw others was acknowledged.⁴ Even God's desire to draw in the descendants of Nebuchadnezzar was stressed.⁵

Some early Jews went so far as to assert that God ordered significant events in the lives of Israelites in order to reach converts. Thus, the Talmud recorded Tanna R. Eleazar's perspective: "the Holy One, blessed be he, exiled the Israelites among the nations only so that converts should join them."⁶ In connection with the same concept of God's design to bring in converts through the exile, R. Yohanan, an early Amora, saw the use of Israel to bring in converts as a fulfillment of the Hosea 2:23 desire God expressed, "And I will have mercy upon her who has not obtained mercy." Such sentiments were not connected with a future eschatological influx of converts, for the exile was a point of the past; rather, these early Jews recognized the hand of God ordering events in order to put Israelites in contact with Gentiles for the purpose of glorifying Himself and bringing in converts.

In addition to the recognition that early Jews had about God's role in drawing people in the Hebrew Scriptures to Himself, some early Jews appeared to recognize God's ongoing universal care for all, His mercy, graciousness, and His own continuing agenda to draw people to Himself. Thus, passages exist as those noted previously in Sirach that stressed God's care for all and his involvement in turning people back to

³*Mek. Ish Amalek* 3.153-61 in *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, trans. Jacob Z. Lauterbach, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1933-35), 2:172-73. See also *Exodus*, trans. S. M. Lehrman, vol. 3 of *Midrash Rabbah*, ed. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon (London: Soncino Press, 1951), 323.

⁴For example, *b. Giṭ.* 57b in *The Babylonian Talmud*, ed. and trans. Jacob Neusner, 22 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 11:249.

⁵*b. Sanh.* 96b (Neusner, *BT* 16:516-17).

⁶*b. Pesah* 87b (Neusner, *BT* 4:421).

Himself.⁷ Likewise, as was pointed out in chapter 4, passages in *1 Enoch* stressed that God would cause some of the others to repent because of His great mercy.⁸ In addition, Aristeas plainly acknowledged, “Mankind is God’s creation and is changed and converted by him.”⁹ Therefore, based on the witness of Scripture and the understanding of early Jews, God was recognized as the initiator of mission and the reason that non-Israelites continued to be brought into saving relationship with Him.

God’s Chosen People

Accepting that the mission originated with God, some Old Testament scholars have also affirmed that Israel was elected for the primary purpose of service, which included being a witness, as well as a blessing, to the nations. Scholars have also maintained that the documented inclusion of various foreigners throughout the history of Abraham’s descendants was a testament to interactions and the ongoing possibility of incorporation of Gentiles into the people of blessing. Based upon a canonical view of scripture, scholars have argued that God’s mission has always been redemption of mankind and that His means was to use Abraham’s descendants to that end.¹⁰

As chapter 2 highlighted, the Old Testament taught that Israel had been chosen and that with that election came specific responsibilities and obligations. Having selected Israel for relationship and service, God gave the nation specific commands about how they were to behave. Scholars have noted that the laws were designed to show Israel’s distinctiveness and point to the holiness of the one true God. God’s expectation was righteous behavior that ultimately caused all people to know Him. In addition, the

⁷See p. 129 of this work and the comments concerning God’s love and involvement in turning people to Himself as highlighted in Sir 18:13.

⁸*1 Enoch* 50:2-3. See *1 Enoch*, trans. E. Isaac, *TOTP* 1 [1983]:36.

⁹*Aristeas to Philocrates*, trans. R. J. H. Shutt, *TOTP* 2 [1985]:13.

¹⁰David Filbeck, *Yes, God of the Gentiles Too: The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Billy Graham Center, 1994), 46.

Israelites were given very specific commands about how to relate to foreigners, at least regarding those foreigners who lived within Israel's borders.¹¹ On the other hand, as Greenberg noted, "Relations with external Gentiles are hardly alluded to in the Torah, leaving them, in effect, subject to custom and prudential arrangements."¹² Still, many specific interactions occurred between Israelites and Gentiles who lived beyond the borders of Israel, although less was prescribed in the law about how Israelites were to behave in these circumstances.

In many of the passages examined in chapters 2 and 3, God's specific election of individual Israelites for unique tasks requiring interaction with Gentiles was emphasized. Scripture clearly documented God's arrangement of situations to allow Israelites to intercede for Gentiles, as in the case of Abraham and Abimelech. Numerous cases in Scripture highlighted messages that prophets were given to deliver to people of the nations. Perhaps the purpose of the oracles against the nations was made explicit by the account of Jonah. In Jonah's case, details about God's mission for him, about the message to the Ninevites, and their following repentance underscored the positive redemptive purpose of God's message of judgment. In addition, in the Scriptures cases existed that highlighted certain Israelite's willingness to mediate God's truth to Gentiles. Thus, for example, Daniel appeared to recognize that he had a responsibility to mediate God's truth to Nebuchadnezzar and went beyond simple interpretation to give life-prolonging advice to the king.

In the Scriptural cases where God used Israelites, the people He used appeared to be aware that they had solutions to the problems of the Gentiles that they were in

¹¹For example, Exod 12:48-49; 20:10; 22:21; 23:9, 12; Lev 16:29; 17:12-15; 18:26; 19:10, 33-34; 23:22; 24:16, 22; 25:6, 35, 47-54; Num 9:14; 15:14-16, 26-31; 19:10; 35:15; Deut 1:16; 5:14; 10:18-19; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17, 19-21; 25:5; 26:11; 27:19; 29:11; 31:12. For a summary of the laws regarding resident aliens, see Moshe Greenberg, "Mankind, Israel and the Nations in the Hebraic Heritage," in *No man is Alien: Essays on the Unity of Mankind*, ed. J. Robert Nelson (London: Brill, 1971), 22-26.

¹²Greenberg, "Mankind, Israel and the Nations in the Hebraic Heritage," 31.

contact with and they purposefully acted in a way to point the Gentiles to the solutions, albeit some had to be forced to cooperate, as in the case of Jonah. So for example, even the little maid was aware that she had the answer for what Naaman needed. Jonah knew he had the message that would lead to repentance for the Ninevites. Daniel gave counsel to the king about what actions he should take.

Some intertestamental Jews appeared to recognize that God used people of the Old Testament to mediate with Gentiles and to facilitate their conversion. Such a perspective seems to be held by the translators of the Old Greek version of the Scriptures and the writer of the *Lives of the Prophets* who further developed the details concerning the intercession of Daniel for Nebuchadnezzar. Based on the extra details supplied by these early Jews, some apparently viewed the prophet's actions on behalf of Nebuchadnezzar as efficacious and credited him with facilitating the conversion of the king.¹³ Even though a later stream of thought did assess Daniel's role negatively, ironically because of those same reasons, clearly the earliest Jews seemed to view his efforts positively.

Beyond the acknowledgment that God used Israelites to mediate with Gentiles in the Scriptures, some Jews also explicitly expressed the belief that Israelites had responsibilities in the Scriptures to teach others about the Torah and God. Accordingly, some early Jews recognized that Moses had the duty to teach Jethro the Torah and they spoke approvingly of the efforts and results of the great prophet's labor.¹⁴ In another case, Jonah was criticized for failing to deliver immediately the message that God had given to him for the Ninevites.

Some intertestamental Jews also recognized that they, themselves, had a responsibility to behave a certain way with Gentiles for the glory of God. As was noted

¹³See the section about Daniel beginning on p. 167 of this work.

¹⁴*Mek. Ish.* Amalek 3.171-72 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* 2:174).

previously in chapter 4, the theme of the responsibility of the chosen to teach God's truth was found in intertestamental works like *I Enoch*. In addition, remarkably some connected right actions with the potential for Gentile conversion. Such a connection was underscored especially by the account of the duty of the fringes and the conversion of the Gentile harlot as previously recounted in chapter 4.¹⁵

Beyond the specific examples in the Hebrew Scriptures of Israelites who acted because they knew what Gentiles needed, the witness of certain early Jews reinforced that some Jews knew they had what others needed for a proper relationship with God. For example, Aristobulus took pains to correct improper understandings about the identity of God. Josephus documented the outreach of different Jews interacting with the royal family of Adiabene in a way to draw them closer into relationship with God. Josephus even documented the persistence of one Jew who stressed actions he considered necessary for King Izates to take in order to be acceptable before God.¹⁶

Finally, some early Jews clearly considered it wrong to try to thwart God's actions of revelation and drawing people to Himself. Thus, Jonah appeared on a list of prophets who deserved death for failing to obey God's call. In addition, multiple times in a variety of early Jewish writings it was stressed that seekers should not be turned away but rather drawn in. Thus, it does seem that at least some early Jews recognized they had a responsibility to cooperate with God's plans to draw in Gentiles.

God's Methods for Using Israel

Okoye observed that in regards to the Old Testament, "scholars operate with divergent ideas of mission."¹⁷ Missiologists have greatly debated whether God's mission

¹⁵See p. 149 of this work. *Sifré Num.* 115.5. See *Sifré to Numbers*, trans. Jacob Neusner, Brown Judaic Studies 118-19, 2 vols. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 2:182-83.

¹⁶Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 20.38-45, trans. William Whiston, in *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 527.

¹⁷James Chukwuma Okoye, *Israel and the Nations* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), 9.

through Israel in the Old Testament was merely “inward focused,” centripetal, or if it was also outward focused, or centrifugal, in orientation as well.¹⁸ As was mentioned in chapter 1, some scholars insist that there was only a centripetal expression of mission in the Old Testament.¹⁹ Many would echo an observation of Scobie, who noted, “The basically centripetal movement of the Old Testament is replaced by the centrifugal movement of the New Testament.”²⁰

However, others have argued that maintaining only a centripetal understanding of mission in the Old Testament fails to explain God’s full intent and Israel’s participation in mission. Kaiser disagreed with the assessment that “missions in the Old Testament are at best centripetal.”²¹ He argued that Israel was expected to go out and reach the nations. Likewise, David Filbeck argued that both centripetal and centrifugal examples exist and are held “in tension” in the Old Testament.²²

Even some modern Jewish scholars have acknowledged a mission imperative existed for Israel. For example, some Jewish scholars like Leo Baeck “derived even from this idea of witness a clear notion of mission, a sense of a task to bring all people to

¹⁸A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee. *Introducing World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 36. For detailed definitions, see Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 83.

¹⁹Even in Rowley’s work about the engrained missionary message to be found in the Old Testament, he maintained that Israel was more of a passive tool in the hand of God than they were actively going out to the nations. See H. H. Rowley, *The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (London: Carey Press, 1944), 36.

²⁰C. H. H. Scobie, “Israel and the Nations: An Essay in Biblical Theology,” *TynBul* 43 (1992): 302. Scobie echoed conclusions of earlier scholars. See also Peters, *Biblical Theology of Missions*, (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 21. See also Charles R. Taber, “Missiology and the Bible” *Mis* 11 (1983): 235. Christopher Wright actually maintained, “Israel was not mandated by God to send missionaries to the nations,” Wright, *The Mission of God*, 24. However, Wright did note that the prophet’s works encompassed “both centrifugal and centripetal dynamics” (331).

²¹Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 37. Kaiser noted the example of Jonah who was sent to Nineveh as evidence of centrifugal mission. Wright disagreed that the book Jonah was intended to spur Israel to “centrifugal missions to the nations.” Wright, *The Mission of God*, 502.

²²Filbeck, *Yes, God of the Gentiles Too*, 48. For example, he cited Rahab as centripetal and Jonah as centrifugal.

God.”²³ As Armida Veglio explained, “Israel’s mission, then, is to lead other peoples to monotheism, not to lead them to become Jews.”²⁴

In this work, the idea of the Old Testament mission is understood in relation to the concepts in Genesis 12:1-3 and Exodus 19:6 for the descendants of Abraham to be a blessing to the nations and mediators in such a way as to bring people of the nations to a point where they would receive God’s blessings and glorify Him. Lives of the Israelites were to witness to the reality and identity of Yahweh.²⁵ In addition, the Israelites were to be obedient to all that God asked of them including when it came to delivering His truth to Gentiles. God orchestrated interactions between Gentiles that He was drawing and Israelites so that ultimately some outsiders could be integrated into the people of God.

As has been maintained, mission in the Old Testament was bound to God’s work.²⁶ When one considers how God related with people in the Old Testament and how the Israelites and later early Jews responded, it does not seem adequate in all cases to say that interactions were at all times exclusively centripetal or centrifugal or that such methods applied with total uniformity to the nation as a whole. Rather, it seems more accurate to say that at times both methods had to function, in some respects, simultaneously and that many times God’s mission was carried out through very specific individuals that He sent with outward thrust.

God’s mission always seemed simultaneously inwardly and outwardly focused.

²³Armida Veglio, “The Sense of Mission in Judaism and Christianity,” in *Christian-Jewish Relations through the Centuries*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Brook W. R. Pearson, JSNTSup 192 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 19), 466.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵George Peters noted that Israel had two main tasks identified in Isaiah: to be Yahweh’s witnesses and His messengers. See George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 124.

²⁶As was observed by the publishers of *On Mission with God*, “mission is God’s activity; missions describes the activity of God’s people.” Henry T. Blackaby and Avery T. Willis Jr., *On Mission with God* (Nashville, Broadman & Holman, 2002), vii.

He used His own actions with Israel as well as the actions of individual Israelites to reach out to Gentiles, while He also had certain Gentiles drawn to Himself through their observation of His works through and in Israel and specific Israelites. Using both methods mediated through His people, God clearly arranged unique encounters with specific non-Israelites throughout the Old Testament in order to expose them to His glory, which then led to statements of faith by some. In most conversations about God's method of mission, more focus seems to be on the nation as a whole rather than upon individuals. Evidence of this study highlights the very individual nature of missional interactions in the Old Testament and seems to support that God's mission did occur, at least at an individual level, of which we have fragmentary yet compelling glimpses.

Based upon this understanding of God's mission, were *individual* Israelites faithful or cooperative in God's plan to bring Gentiles to glorify Himself? Did any early Jews follow through in trying to facilitate the glorification of God? Furthermore, what can God's people today learn from Old Testament experiences?

Israel's Response in Relating to Gentiles

As the survey of evidence in the previous chapters has suggested, differing levels of application existed during the Old Testament and intertestamental periods. During the Old Testament period, data does indicate that many Israelites seemed completely oblivious to any personal responsibility they might have had to Gentiles. So, for example, Abraham was shown to put Gentiles in danger by deliberate deception. Samson was shown to have little regard for the welfare of non-Israelites. Even David, a man known to be close to God, showed a shocking lack of concern for how his actions affected Uriah the Hittite and the observing nations. In addition, no evidence exists of a national 'program' to facilitate the glorification of God's name among the nations.

Still, as was shown in chapter 3, individual cases are scattered throughout the Hebrew Scripture highlighting the fact that some Israelites did seem to understand God's

concern for non-Israelites and the importance of proper interaction with them. Thus, one sees Elijah specifically relating in a redemptive fashion with a woman of Zarephath. Jonah clearly understood that God wanted to pardon the Ninevites, even though the prophet initially tried to disobey God's command to interrelate with them. Daniel, too, exhibited an understanding that God wanted something more of Nebuchadnezzar but, unlike Jonah, he seemed very willing to point the king to the glory of God alone.

Missional activities used by God to aid in the process of bringing Gentiles to glorify His name differed according to the circumstance. Thus, Elijah and Elisha performed miracles, the servant girl provided Naaman with hope that a prophet of a living God existed who could help him, Jonah delivered a verbal message of judgment, and Daniel interceded for Nebuchadnezzar and provided Godly advice.

In regard to the understanding of the early Jews about their responsibility to reach out actively to Gentiles, the same diversity existed. Certainly, many writings of the Jews during the intertestamental period appear devoid of any explicit understanding that they were called to reach out to the Gentiles in a way to point them to glorify the true God. However, according to the data assessed, it does appear that some Jews recognized a missional impetus in the Hebrew Scriptures and, furthermore, some reached out to Gentiles with the expectation and hope that some would come to glorify God.

For example, the account of Judith and the story about Aesnath showed that a Jewish contingent was open to the conversion of Gentiles. Aristobulus presented an excellent case of deliberate reasoning and teaching of the law to Gentiles so that they might better understand and glorify the one true God. As has been mentioned, according to the account concerning the royal family of Adiabene, multiple Jews were involved in teaching Gentiles about God and their efforts were shown to result in full conversions of various Gentiles.

In certain ways, the mission of God was carried out in the same way in the Hebrew Scriptures as in the New Testament era. God revealed Himself to people from

different backgrounds in a variety of situations, calling people to Himself using a diversity of means. God used ancient Israelites and intertestamental Jews just as He used people of the following centuries. In addition, some of the people he used seemed to be aware of the mission and some seemed to resist God's purpose.²⁷

Even though some Israelites understood their purpose in God's scheme and actively proclaimed God's salvation by their words and deeds, most probably did not. Some intertestamental Jews clearly felt they bore the responsibility of pointing all people to the Torah and God; most apparently did not. Likewise, today, some followers of Christ understand their purpose in God's plan and actively proclaim God's message of salvation through their words and deeds; unfortunately, most do not. Furthermore, of those who do understand a missional calling upon the followers of the Lord, few seem to follow through with specific and deliberate actions during their daily activities.

Implications for Mission Today

Given the teaching present in the Old Testament as well as the examples of actual Israelite interactions during the Old Testament period through the intertestamental time, can anything be applied to the pursuit of missions today? As was written in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Even a broad understanding of Paul's words suggests that applications from previous interactions might be drawn and properly applied to current situations to help in ongoing missional activity.

²⁷As Terrance Fretheim noted, "God is about the business of mission in our world, as God was in Israel's world. God uses ways and means that we might view as improbable or even inappropriate, and certainly often quite 'secular,' to get that word through." Terence E. Fretheim, "The Understanding of Mission in the Old Testament," *Bible and Mission: Biblical Foundation and Working Models for Congregational Ministry*, ed. Wayne Stumme, Mission in the U.S.A Series (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 20.

Differences between OT and NT Mission

Even though the core mission may be considered essentially the same, that is, the call to bring people to know and glorify the true God, certainly differences exist between the Old and the New Testament period. One of the most important areas of difference that affects missional application between the period of the Old and the New Testaments concerns revelation. Several overall differences may be noted.

First, in addition to and completing God's act of self-revelation in the Old Testament, God revealed Himself fully in the Lord Jesus as documented by the New Testament.²⁸ Chapter 2 highlighted that God's desire to be known was manifested many times in the Old Testament. Based on the survey of the phrase "That you/they may know that I am the Lord," 135 occurrences were noted where the emphasis was upon action that the Lord might be known. With the incarnation of Jesus, the Father made Himself fully known, as numerous passages in the New Testament explained.²⁹

Second, the followers of the Lord were told explicitly how salvation was accomplished, i.e., through belief in the person and work of the Jesus Christ. Followers of the Lord God during the Old Testament period had fewer specifics about the full plan of God's salvation. Although they had the general revelation about God's plan to bring restoration and salvation, they did not comprehend the full measure of His plan until the time came for the mystery to be revealed.³⁰ After the coming of Christ, believers claimed the assertion of Acts 4:12 concerning Jesus that, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Third, followers in the New Testament age were given explicit tasks to go, make disciples, baptize, and teach regarding the identity of the Lord Jesus and the

²⁸As Kaiser noted, "All the Old Testament prepares for is fulfilled in Christ." See Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Recovering the Unity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 217.

²⁹John 1:18; 14:6-11; Col. 1:15-20; 2:9; Heb 1:1-3.

³⁰Rom 16:25; Col. 1:26; 1 Pet 1:10-12.

provision of salvation. Such commands were distinct from God's commissions to the Hebrews.³¹ While Israelites had everything needed at the time to point people to worship the true God, less was made explicit about their role. God clearly sent specific Israelites to certain Gentiles and intertestamental Jews understood a general need to proclaim truth to Gentiles. However, in the New Testament activities were more defined in external actions for all Christians. In the New Testament era, the Great Commission may be likened to a general call upon the lives of all believers while fruitful personal interactions continue to be specific and individually directed by God.

Fourth, the great mystery of the church was fully explained in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, tension existed between a concept of Gentiles who seemed to come to believe in God Most High and of Gentiles who formally became Israelites through full alignment with the nation of Israel and submission to the Torah given to Israel. Such a tension continued through the intertestamental period as evidenced by the prevalence of both God-fearers and full proselytes.³² With the New Testament, God's full plan of redemption was clearly explained in detail and the mystery of the universal church comprising of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, Jews and Gentiles alike, was made clear.³³

Another difference affecting mission between the two periods was that believers from Pentecost forward experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in a different way than people did in the Old Testament. During the Old Testament period, the Holy Spirit fell temporarily on individuals to equip them to carry out specific tasks.³⁴ In

³¹Wright, *Mission of God*, 502. Wright pointed out that although the framework was in place for Israel to understand a need to act redemptively among the nations, the command to go was not made "explicit."

³²For example, the tension portrayed in Josephus' account of the Jewish interactions with the royal house of Adiabene, as previously surveyed.

³³Rom 16: 25-26; Eph 1:7-14; 2:1-3:12; 5:32; Col 1:25-27; 1 Tim 3:16.

³⁴For example, Exod 31:2-3; Num 11:25-26; Judg 3:9-10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6, 19. Even non-

the Old Testament, the Spirit could leave.³⁵ However, the New Testament testified to a new permanent sealing and continuous indwelling for believers in the Lord Jesus. Therefore, in the New Testament age, although a believer might sin and grieve the Holy Spirit, the promise was that the Spirit of God would never leave.³⁶ Since successful mission originates by the initiation of God, the continuous indwelling of His Spirit was and is surely a significant advantage for believers. As the Lord taught, the Holy Spirit further enabled the work of mission.³⁷

Similarities between OT and NT Mission

While the missional aspects between the two Testaments exhibit differences, several key marks of continuity exist that are sometimes overlooked or minimized. First, in both the Old and New Testaments God initiates the mission. As was shown by this study, the Hebrew Scriptures taught, and certain early Jews seemed to grasp, the concept that God initiated the process to draw people to Himself. In the New Testament, the theme was reinforced. As various New Testament writers noted numerous times, God still calls men to Himself.³⁸

Second, just as He did in the Old Testament and the intertestamental period, God continues to use those in a saving relationship with Him to reveal Himself to others. In the encounters surveyed from the Hebrew Scriptures, God's truth for the people He was drawing was mediated by an Israelite. God used someone who knew of Him to teach others about Himself. Similarly, in the New Testament the same reality is present. Thus,

Israelites who clearly resisted God could have His Spirit fall on them temporarily as, for example, happened with Balaam in Num 24:2.

³⁵Saul's life dramatically illustrated this reality. See 1 Sam 16:14. See also Judg 16:20.

³⁶Eph 4:30. In the new reality, the unrighteousness of believers is covered by the full sin payment of Christ's completed work and so the presence of the Lord is a constant guarantee of redemption, as noted in Eph 1:13-14.

³⁷John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:7-11.

³⁸For example, Rom 8:30; 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 2:14; 2 Tim 1:9.

for example, when God was working to draw Cornelius, he sent Peter to declare the fullness of His truth.³⁹ In connection with this point, in both Testaments, the spoken word mediated by believers was often critical to the communication of God's identity and expectations. Some scholars have stressed that verbal communication became the most important facet of New Testament mission.⁴⁰

Third, an inherent responsibility existed for Israelites, just as it exists for believers in the Lord Jesus, to obey the commands of the Lord as a living testimony to God's identity. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the behavior of Israelites was linked to how the nations would see God.⁴¹ Similarly, in the New Testament obedient and righteous behavior is linked to bringing others to glorify God.⁴²

Fourth, in both Testaments, man is saved in essentially the same way, by faith. Even in the Old Testament expressions existed highlighting the necessity of forgiveness and faith or trust in the Lord.⁴³ In the New Testament Paul argued in Romans that before the giving of the law Abraham was saved by faith, as were all those who followed who believed in God's promise to justify the ungodly.⁴⁴

Though differences in missional aspects do exist between the two Testaments, as noted above, several foundational elements remain constant. Therefore, even given some of the missional differences between the Old and New Testaments, because of the foundational similarities and the ongoing relevance of past Scriptures to present

³⁹Acts 10.

⁴⁰As Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller asserted, "The most important means of evangelization in the early church was direct proclamation." See Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, ed. Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 333. Other methods they identified included prophetic signs and personal living.

⁴¹Exod 19:5-6; Lev 19:2; Ezek 36:23; 39:7; Zech 6:15.

⁴²Matt 5:13-16; Phil 2:12-16; 1 Pet 2:11-12; 3:1-2.

⁴³Pss 32:1-2, 10; 125:1; Prov 3:5; Hab 2:4; Mic 6:6-8; 7:9, 18-19.

⁴⁴Rom 3:20-5:2; Gal 3:6-9; Heb 10:37-12:2.

experience, current applications are possible. In the following section, several general observations for current application will be drawn from the interactions previously studied.

Current Application for Missions

Although much can be said individually about each of the narratives surveyed in chapter 3, some significant overarching applications exist that can be drawn from multiple interactions. First, people may be especially open to God when they are hurting or in danger. The Sidonian widow experienced need for provision as well as a need for her son's restoration and was open to what God could do. Though Naaman had everything else, his physical need led him to Yahweh. Sailors aboard the ship to Tarshish were driven to Yahweh as the only one who could save them.

As Allan Effa astutely pointed out, "A strategically placed witness at a time of deeply felt need may open doors to belief even among people of the most powerful strata of society."⁴⁵ Believers need to be sensitive to the physical, emotional, material, and spiritual needs of the people with whom they interact. Once the more visible or tangible needs become apparent, the believer should interact to meet those while maintaining sensitivity to the greater spiritual need.

Second, people may need to see tangible exhibitions of God's practical power in their lives before they make a final commitment to follow Him.⁴⁶ In the interactions surveyed, God performed specific miracles to highlight His authority over famine, death, sickness, or nature. These signs caused openness among the respective Gentiles who witnessed them.

However, regarding the same point, it is important to note that in several of the

⁴⁵Allan L. Effa, "Prophet, Kings, Servants, and Lepers: A Missiological Reading of an Ancient Drama," *Mis* 32 (2004): 472.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

encounters discussed an expression of faith was necessary before deliverance occurred. For example, the promise of provision was given to the widow but she was asked to prepare food for Elijah first before making food for herself and her son. In Naaman's case, he was told he would be healed but he had to follow God's instructions first in order to receive the healing. When it came to the Ninevites, they showed signs of repentance acting in faith with the hope that God would relent.

God is still a God of miracles and believers should in no way limit how God might intervene to make Himself known. As believers seek for ways to engage the lost, they should be open to and willing to ask for what is humanly impossible so that God might act for His glory. However, in such a case, a proper relationship with Christ, sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and submission to the will of God is crucial.⁴⁷

Third, actions that contradict the innate human tendency toward sin and selfishness often create opportunities for witness. In each case surveyed, the follower of Yahweh was sent to or ministered to an enemy and behaved in contrast to what would have been expected. For example, in the case of the young servant girl, her surprising compassion led to the healing and salvation of her master.

Believers in the Lord are required to act in ways that sometimes defy natural feeling in order to follow His teachings. Followers are called to love their enemies, to do good to those who hurt them, and to be holy in an unholy world. When actions do not make sense as the world reckons, opportunities abound to explain the difference, lift up Jesus, and give glory to God.

Fourth, behavior in faithfulness to God's commands results in the glorification of the Lord just as the disregard for his commands causes His name to be dishonored. Furthermore, even the smallest violation of God's moral standards can lead to

⁴⁷See Matt 7:7-11; John 14:12-14; Jas 5:16b-18. While God delights in granting the requests of those who follow him, believers should never act in a way to test the Lord. See Matt 4:6-7.

compromising situations and can distort unbelievers' conceptions of the true God. When the moral behavior of the lost surpasses the moral behavior of God's people, the truth regarding God's character is seriously compromised. Believers need to be on guard for any of their personal behaviors that would contradict the character of God and undermine the truth of their message.

Fifth, regardless of someone's station in life or personal abilities, he can provide a positive witness for the glory of God. God used a variety of people and means when He intervened in the lives of non-believers. From the wealthy (like Abraham) to the poorest of the poor (like the servant girl serving Naaman's wife), God can use anyone to bring truth into the lives of non-believers. Since God is not constrained by the inherent limitations of the people He chooses to use, followers of the Lord need to be careful not to place false restrictions upon God's human mediators, either for themselves or for others the Lord may have called for a specific task.⁴⁸

Sixth, God may be working to draw any person one encounters into His kingdom, from the most unremarkable individual, like the poor widow of Zarephath, to a despised enemy, like Naaman, the Syrian commander. As a result, followers of the Lord must be sensitive to His leading and willing to reach out when the Holy Spirit affords an opportunity. No one is beyond His reach. Believers should consciously fight against personal antipathy or prejudice so that opportunities to participate in God's ministry of reconciliation would not be missed.

Seventh, full knowledge of all theological principles is not required for getting right with God. In many cases, repentance and conversion may occur after the basic information about man's need and God's identity as the one who can meet that need is revealed. Sometimes, only confronting the lost with their need of a Savior is enough to propel them to repentance and faith in God. In the case of Jonah, Scripture only testified

⁴⁸1 Cor 1:26-29; 2 Cor 12:9.

to the message of judgment and the desperate need of the Ninevites. God did the rest by prompting them to repent. Believers should be prepared to give a full presentation of the gospel but, when the Spirit leads, sometimes one simple action, word, or phrase is sufficient and anything more would only confuse the matter.

In addition, regarding knowledge, new converts will not understand or be aware of every major doctrine regarding God from the beginning. Initially, new converts may have some wrong tangential concepts; not all misconceptions have to be corrected immediately, as Elijah's interaction with Naaman seemed to imply. Believers need to be very sensitive to what is really necessary to correct in a new convert's walk and what should be left to the Holy Spirit to correct over time.

Eighth, God is still sovereign in all situations; nothing happens by accident. God reaches into the hearts of men to draw them before they even hear the spoken word. However, the importance of the spoken word and of the mediation between unbelievers and God is also clear. God put Israelites in the paths of specific Gentiles to allow the non-Israelites to hear the truth. God sometimes worked alone to reach out to non-Israelites as He did when He initiated with dreams in the Old Testament. Examples of His working in this way certainly still happen today. However, in every example where the Lord initiated with non-Israelites in the Hebrew Scriptures, He ultimately used one of His people to mediate with the non-Israelite, as in the case with Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel.

Believers should be very aware of the fact that God is still working today. Any chance encounter from a human perspective could instead be divinely arranged for the sole purpose of the glorification of God before a person whom the Lord intends to draw into His kingdom. Believers are still being sent and placed in the paths of people who need God and followers still have the responsibility to glorify God and lift up the Lord so that He might draw all men to Himself.

Suggestions for Further Study

More could be done to examine the relational aspects of Israelite and Gentiles in the Old Testament. One chief area of focus could be the interactions between Israelites and Gentiles that led to God's name being blasphemed or a curse being brought to the Gentile in question. For example, deeper studies could be done on the interactions between Abraham and Pharaoh or Abimelech, Samson and the Philistines, or David and Uriah. For the cases when Israelites acted negatively, several questions could be asked. Was there any observable reaction from God? What was the inferred opinion of the Israelite detailing the account? How did intertestamental Jews view those interactions?

Since one of the clear results of this study highlighted the central importance of God's initiation of relationship with non-Israelites, more study should be done to examine cases of God initiating such relationships with non-Israelites. For example, how did the Lord relate through dreams to various Pharaohs and kings? In addition, a study could be done on the Lord's intentional intervention to spare the life of one outside the chosen people, as with Hagar or Abimelech. Perhaps a study could be done focusing on the cases in Scripture when God placed Israelites in positions to intercede for non-Israelites. More study might also be done regarding God's mighty works against non-Israelites as in the case of the Pharaoh of the Exodus or Sennacherib.

Given that Scripture does document various non-Israelites who came to cleave to the Lord God, more study tracking their initial contact, relationships, and incorporation might prove enlightening. For example, what do the Scriptural records convey concerning Rahab, the Kenites, Ittai the Gittite, or Ebed-melech? How did the incorporation of certain Gentiles result in blessings for the people of Israel?

In addition, insight could be provided by doing a series of character studies on individual Israelites' complete witness to Gentiles during their lives. For example, a survey could be done of every Gentile contact made by Abraham, Moses, or David. By that means, cumulative information could be drawn and assessed about how an

individual's obedience or disobedience to God affected their overall witness and relationships with Gentiles.

Beyond examining the lives of individuals, more study could be done to study the relations of the political nations of Israel and Judah with other nations. How did Israel or Judah live up to the Biblical mandates of behavior in their interactions with other nations? What were the outcomes and consequences?

Due to the space limitations, little was examined from the writings of Qumran. Investigation of the writings of Qumran might have more to add to the overall picture of intertestamental relations with Israelites. Did the Qumran community differ substantially from other intertestamental witnesses in how they interpreted interactions with Gentiles?

Finally, a study contrasting the intertestamental witness with the writings occurring after the destruction of the temple might highlight how perspectives may or may not have changed regarding interactions with non-Israelites. For example, when comparing the data regarding Daniel's interaction with Nebuchadnezzar, it appeared that Talmudic materials were far more critical than earlier writings. Was that a unique case or was there a trend toward more negative views regarding interactions with Gentiles? By the time of the writings after the Talmud, were any specific attitudes toward Gentiles discernable?

While even more study might add further to the picture of God's and Israel's interactions with Gentiles, data from this work has illustrated that some Israelites cooperated to direct Gentiles to glorify God by faithfully going, acting, and proclaiming God's truth. Moreover, some intertestamental Jews recognized that God desired to draw some Gentiles into His people just as some early Jews saw the actions of certain Old Testament Elect as participating in mission to bring Gentiles to know God. In addition, some evidence does exist that individual early Jews worked to bring Gentiles to know and glorify God.

Conclusion

From the beginning, God was the one who initiated actions with humanity. Even in the Old Testament God was reaching out to create relationships with non-Israelites and He called on His chosen people to join Him in relating to the Gentiles. Israelites were generally to act in a way that brought blessing and pointed all men to glorify God. However, God also sent individual Israelites to specific Gentiles to reveal His identity and cause them to come to know Him.

Clearly, God's focus was always outward, whether or not His people fully comprehended or wanted to cooperate. With targeted intentionality, the Lord sent specific Israelites to Gentiles in order to testify of His glory and to influence the lives that they touched. Each of the surveyed examples of an Israelite's relationship with a Gentile or Gentiles resulted in specific blessings, whether physical or spiritual, and in the glorification of God's name. In addition, it mattered how the Israelites behaved just as it matters today how believers behave. Every action of the Israelites was important just as every action of believers today has implications. Even a simple act of concern may be used by God to affect a non-believer's eternal destiny just as a careless comment or thoughtless deed may be used to harden them against God's call.

Much controversy around the concept of mission in the Old Testament centers about whether Israelites were to go to others or just to be what God called them to be as a separate people dedicated to following His law. Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra suggested, "Mission is not primarily about *going*. Nor is mission primarily about *doing* anything. Mission is about *being*. It is about being a distinctive kind of people."⁴⁹ Although merit exists with the perspective that mission includes elements of living faithfully as a child of God, the necessity of verbal proclamation cannot be

⁴⁹Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission. The Glory of Christ in all Time and Place* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 123.

ignored. Even in examples when Israelites were merely acting in a way faithful to their calling as people of God, verbal proclamation had a part to play.

Since scripture taught that the way to be blessed was to fear the personal God of Israel, it followed that if Israel was to be a blessing to the people, she needed to bring knowledge of God to the nations so that those who would be righteous could know and fear the Lord. As documented in chapter 4, some early Jews did seem to make this connection.

Still, in some ways and speaking generally, many Jews did seem to focus more on obedient living instead of bold proclamation. In contrast, it seems at times some Christians seem to concentrate on bold proclamation with less emphasis of faithful living. However, God's purposes for all mankind to know that He is Lord require that both elements function simultaneously. Any attempt at pursuing the mission of God can be compromised when either facet is de-emphasized.

Kaiser maintained that scholars tended to look at the concept of Old Testament missions with an anachronistic New Testament understanding that causes them to overlook missional concepts actually present.⁵⁰ In some ways, he has a point. Marked differences exist between the two periods. To try to impose the new reality upon the original reality would be contrived. In addition, to try to find exactly the same types of missional evidences in the previous period that became the norm following the advent of Christ would be fruitless.

However, it would be equally a mistake to ignore the fact that God was moving in a missional way throughout history from the Old Testament period right up through today. As chapters 3 and 4 highlighted, God used Israelites and later Jews in His outreach. His human mediators used a variety of methods to bring Gentiles to glorify God. Some of His people even seemed to recognize that they were a part of God's

⁵⁰Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 37.

greater plan to reconcile Gentiles to Himself.

Although it may be true that those who did actively engage in deliberate outreach to Gentiles were in the minority, that fact does not invalidate the obvious data that bears witness to the few who did reach out through word and deed to bring Gentiles to glorify God. If anything, the situation of the intertestamental period might reflect the situation present in Christianity today where many professing the name of Christ feel no need to reach out because of the overemphasis today on tolerance of other beliefs and a lack of commitment to the truth explicit in Scripture that belief in Jesus is the only way to salvation. Yet, God retains a remnant of believers who hear the call and are willing to go and speak truth to non-believers for His glory. For these faithful, the lessons learned from those first mediators of God's blessing should prove instructive.

APPENDIX 1
 THAT YOU/THEY MAY KNOW
 THAT I AM THE LORD

Counted Occurrences

Exodus 6:7	1 Kings 8:60	Ezekiel 12:15
Exodus 7:5	2 Kings 19:19	Ezekiel 12:16
Exodus 7:17	2 Chronicles 6:33	Ezekiel 12:20
Exodus 8:10	Job 37:7	Ezekiel 13:14
Exodus 8:22	Psalms 109:27	Ezekiel 13:21
Exodus 9:14	Psalms 83:18	Ezekiel 13:23
Exodus 9:29	Isaiah 19:21	Ezekiel 13:9
Exodus 10:2	Isaiah 37:20	Ezekiel 14:23
Exodus 11:7	Isaiah 43:10	Ezekiel 14:8
Exodus 14:18	Isaiah 45:3	Ezekiel 15:7
Exodus 14:4	Isaiah 45:6	Ezekiel 16:62
Exodus 16:12	Isaiah 49:23	Ezekiel 17:21
Exodus 16:6	Isaiah 49:26	Ezekiel 17:24
Exodus 29:46	Isaiah 52:6	Ezekiel 20:12
Exodus 31:13	Isaiah 60:16	Ezekiel 20:20
Numbers 14:34	Jeremiah 9:24	Ezekiel 20:26
Numbers 16:28	Jeremiah 16:21	Ezekiel 20:38
Deuteronomy 4:35	Jeremiah 31:34	Ezekiel 20:42
Deuteronomy 29:6	Jeremiah 44:28	Ezekiel 20:44
Joshua 3:7	Jeremiah 44:29	Ezekiel 21:5
Joshua 3:10	Ezekiel 5:13	Ezekiel 22:16
Joshua 4:24	Ezekiel 6:10	Ezekiel 22:22
Judges 6:37	Ezekiel 6:13	Ezekiel 23:49
1 Samuel 17:46	Ezekiel 6:14	Ezekiel 24:24
1 Samuel 17:47	Ezekiel 6:7	Ezekiel 24:27
1 Samuel 6:9	Ezekiel 7:27	Ezekiel 25:11
1 Kings 18:37	Ezekiel 7:4	Ezekiel 25:14
1 Kings 20:13	Ezekiel 7:9	Ezekiel 25:17
1 Kings 20:28	Ezekiel 11:10	Ezekiel 25:5
1 Kings 8:43	Ezekiel 11:12	Ezekiel 25:7

Ezekiel 26:6
Ezekiel 28:22
Ezekiel 28:23
Ezekiel 28:24
Ezekiel 28:26
Ezekiel 29:16
Ezekiel 29:21
Ezekiel 29:6
Ezekiel 29:9
Ezekiel 30:19
Ezekiel 30:25
Ezekiel 30:26
Ezekiel 30:8
Ezekiel 32:15
Ezekiel 33:29
Ezekiel 34:27
Ezekiel 34:30
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Ezekiel 39:22
Ezekiel 39:28
Ezekiel 39:6
Ezekiel 39:7
Daniel 4:17
Hosea 2:20
Hosea 13:4
Joel 2:27
Joel 3:17
Micah 6:5

Zechariah 2:9
Zechariah 2:11
Zechariah 4:9
Zechariah 6:15

APPENDIX 2
SCRIPTURES REFERENCED

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ABSTRACT

ISRAELITE INTERACTIONS WITH GENTILES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE IMPLICATIONS REGARDING MISSIONS

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This dissertation examines the missional implications of teaching regarding Israelite interactions with Gentiles found in the Hebrew Scriptures. Chapter 1 defines what is meant in this study concerning mission and Israelite interactions with Gentiles. In addition, foundation is laid for the study by detailing presuppositions, history of perspectives on the topic, and the methodology.

Chapter 2 surveys the witness present in the Hebrew Scriptures concerning God's expectations for Israel's interactions with Gentiles. First, principles are highlighted for interactions from the Torah narratives and legislation. Next principles are identified in passages outside of the Torah. Finally, principles are outlined that are derived from key phrases and overall themes spanning the entire body of Hebrew Scriptures.

Chapter 3 studies specific examples of Israelite and Gentile interactions throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Analysis is provided of the interactions in view of the foundational principles identified in chapter 2.

Chapter 4 examines how the intertestamental Jews interpreted and applied teaching from the Hebrew Scriptures concerning their interactions with Gentiles. Primary attention is given to the Jewish writings of the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Josephus, and the Tannaim with references to NT opinion.

Chapter 5 synthesizes the data from the Hebrew Scriptures and intertestamental witness and draws conclusions about God's intention for Israel in

relation to the Gentiles. In addition, observations are made concerning Israel's application of principles from the Hebrew Scriptures concerning their interactions with Gentiles. Finally, implications of the study are drawn for current application.

This work maintains that although many Israelites in the Hebrew Scriptures were unaware of God's intention for mission to Gentiles, some existed who understood God's desire and cooperated with God's mission. In addition, during the intertestamental period while many Jews failed to understand and act on God's mission to have His name glorified by Gentiles, others felt called to intentionally interact with Gentiles and actively sought to bring Gentiles to know and worship Yahweh as God.

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