

## **THE LAND OF ISRAEL IN TANAKH #4**

### **Second Temple Period**

#### I. A Miracle of History

- A. Total darkness at Hurban, most Jews thought it was the end of the God-Israel covenant. Yirmiyahu (29:4-10) and Yehezkel (37:11-12) lead the way to give prophetic vision beyond despair.
- B. After generations of exile, the nation experienced a shocking turn of events. Approximately seventy years after its inception, the seemingly invincible Babylonian Empire suddenly collapsed in the wake of the Persian onslaught under Cyrus the Great.
- C. Even more remarkably, in 538 Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to Israel and rebuild the Temple. All of a sudden, the once seemingly impossible prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel were being realized before the people's eyes.
  - 1. The Book of Ezra opens with a reference to Jeremiah's prophecies, celebrating this miracle of history (1:1-4).
  - 2. Eternal oath/gift of Land to Israel.

#### II. Success and Setbacks in the Rebuilding Process

- A. Ezra chapter 2 contains a lengthy list of the people who returned to Israel. The extensive coverage gives the initial impression that the Jewish response to Cyrus' permission to return was overwhelmingly positive.
- B. Impression diminished by fact that only 42,360 people returned (Ezra 2:64). Evidently, most Jews chose to remain in exile.

#### III. Zech 2:5-9 Third Vision: Wall of Fire Surrounding Jerusalem.

- A. Zechariah's vision challenged the public perception of the broken walls of Jerusalem as being necessarily negative (cf. Neh. 1:3; 2:17, *herpah*). Instead, the breached walls presented an opportunity to expand the borders of the city through a massive population increase. Instead of physical walls, God would serve as a wall of fire to protect His people.
- B. Zech 2:10-17 Prophetic Oracles, if want Jerusalem's population to explode, then exiles need to come to Israel!
- C. Zech 2:16 only time Israel is called holy land, אדמת הקודש.
1. God doesn't inhere in land, holiness emanates from covenant and bringing God's presence (like burning bush, Sinai, Yehoshua at Jericho—holy land because God is there, but afterwards not). Holy actions also are required to sanctify land, not defile.
  2. Jerusalem called עיר הקודש only in Isa 48:2; 52:1; Dan 9:24; Neh 11:1, 18.
  3. Relatively late references. Could support idea of חזקה making permanent state of holiness.
  4. Perhaps also linked to זרע קודש in Ezra 9:1-3, different from reference in Isa 6:13 about righteous remnant.
- D. Zechariah 3:9, purification of land from sinners and sin.
1. After two-step process in chapter 5, land purified. Sinners and sin removed. Shekhinah can return.
  2. In Torah, no ritual to purify land itself (unlike Mikdash)—must remove sinners. Now, God Himself purifies land, along with removing sinners from land.

3. God's Presence and people can return.
- E. Prophecies are state of potential, require human action for complete fulfillment.
    1. Malbim principle.
  - F. Unfortunately, most Jews ignored Zechariah's call and chose to remain in exile, and ideal vision never was fulfilled. In the final analysis, Jerusalem was better off with a wall. Approximately 75 years later, Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem (445 BCE). The city was so desolate that he decreed that one-tenth of the Jewish community had to resettle in Jerusalem so that it would remain a viable city (Neh. 11:1-2).
  - G. Within two generations, change from feeling rejected by God through exile-Hurban (Ps. 137:4) to being comfortable with exile. Diaspora life, rather than supreme curse of Torah.
    1. Back to discussion of Yaakov at Lavan's house, nothing wrong with making a living, but fell short of covenant.
  - H. Exile in Tanakh is *exclusively* a punishment for sin.
    1. *Kuzari* and other medieval writers found benefit to exile, influencing other people, etc. But that is making the most of a bad situation, rather than ideal state.
  - I. Berakhot 4a, Yoma 9b, *Kuzari* II:24: messianic potential lost because most Jews did not return. *Kuzari* quotes Zech 2:10.
  - J. Anti-despair: Mal 1:2-5, God's love still manifest in return to land. Not full redemption, but sign of eternal covenant.
  - K. Eternal positive hope: Neh 9:7-8, eternal covenant with Avraham.
- IV. Yehudah Elitzur (*Yisrael VehaMikra*, 2000, 261-279):

- A. Radak, R. Bahya: Even if exile, no other nation will settle there permanently. Land eternally belongs to Avraham's descendants, even when forfeit right to live there because of sins.
1. קיבוץ גלויות of today is necessary fulfillment of אחוזת עולם (Gen 17:8).
  2. It is up to Jews to live faithfully so that remain in land.
- B. General rule of history: Lands don't remain desolate when conquered. They are occupied by others.
1. Lev 26:32-33, ושממו עליה איביכם. Sifra: זו מידה טובה שבפורענות. Bad that destruction and exile, but good that land remains desolate so that Jews can return.
  2. Canaanites succeeded in exploiting natural resources of land (Num 13:28; Deut 6:11), but never formed nation. Yehoshua defeated 31 kings, city-states.
  3. No nation after Israel could even exploit resources, land remained totally desolate.
  4. Ramban (on Lev 26:16) saw desolation at end of his life, understood this as proof of God's promise that land eternally belongs to Jews, and God will return them one day.
  5. Mark Twain was shocked in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Never saw any other land so desolate, abandoned, primitive as Israel.
- C. Another rule of history: all other people when exiled, either assimilate into dominant culture of host nation, or they are dominant because they come in large groups and take over culture of the new land (e.g., British in America, Spanish in Argentina).

1. Jews didn't totally assimilate, and always were minority so could not take over any other land. Never could set up a lasting state elsewhere.
  2. If nobody persecuted Jews, we would have had hundreds of millions right now. If huge concentration in one land, could have set up permanent Jewish state.
  3. Curse to be scattered and downtrodden in exile (Lev 26) also is blessing, will always remain outsiders, small, can return one day.
- D. Jews and the land of Israel belong to each other, and *need* each other. When together, land and people flourish. When separate, Jews suffer and land lies desolate.
- E. Torah is everywhere, but ideal state is in land, place of fulfillment of covenant.
- F. Miracle of today: how it will play out is beyond our knowledge, need prophecy. But certainly a miracle, confirms biblical promises.
1. We must be grateful to God.
  2. Also a challenge to world Jewry to live up to God's covenant, and build land.

## THE LAND OF ISRAEL IN TANAKH #4

### Second Temple Period

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#### 1. ירמיהו כט:ד-י

(ד) כֹּה אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְכֻלְּהֶגְלוֹהָ אֲשֶׁר־הִגַּלְתִּי מִירוּשָׁלַם בְּבִלְהָ : (ה) בְּנֵי בְתוּלִים וְשִׁבּוּ וְנִטְעוּ גִּנּוֹת וְאָכְלוּ אֶת־פְּרִיָן : (ו) קָחוּ נָשִׁים וְהוֹלִידוּ בָנִים וּבָנוֹת וְקָחוּ לְבָנֵיכֶם נָשִׁים וְאֶת־בָּנוֹתֵיכֶם תָּנוּ לְאֲנָשִׁים וְתִלְדְּנָה בָנִים וּבָנוֹת וּרְבִישׁוּם וְאֶל־תִּמְעָטוּ : (ז) וְדַרְשׁוּ אֶת־שְׁלוֹם הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר הִגַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם שָׁמָּה וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ בַעֲדָהּ אֱלֹהֵי כִּי בִשְׁלוֹמָה יְהִיֶה לְכֶם שְׁלוֹם :... (ח) כִּי־כֹה אָמַר ה' כִּי לִפִּי מְלֵאת לְבַבְלָא שְׁבָעִים שָׁנָה אֶפְקֹד אֶתְכֶם וְהִקְמַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַטּוֹב לְהָשִׁיב אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הַמְּקוֹם הַזֶּה :

#### Jeremiah 29:4-10

<sup>4</sup>Thus said the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, to the whole community which I exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup>Build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit. <sup>6</sup>Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there, do not decrease. <sup>7</sup>And seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to the LORD in its behalf; for in its prosperity you shall prosper... <sup>10</sup>For thus said the LORD: When Babylon's seventy years are over, I will take note of you, and I will fulfill to you My promise of favor—to bring you back to this place.

#### 2. עזרא א:א-ד

(א) וּבִשְׁנַת אַחַת לְכוֹרֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶלְיָא פָּרַס לְכָל־דְּבָרֵיהֶּ מִפִּי יְרֵמְיָהּ הָעִיר ה' אֶת־רוּחַ כָּרֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ־פָּרַס וַיַּעֲבֹר־קוֹל בְּכָל־מַלְכוּתוֹ וַיִּגְדַּם־מִכְתָּב לְאֹמֶר : (ב) כֹּה אָמַר כָּרֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ־פָּרַס כָּל־מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ נָתַן לִי ה' אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהוּא־פָקֵד עָלַי לְבָנוֹתֶיךָ בֵּית בִּירוּשָׁלַם אֲשֶׁר בִּיהוּדָה : (ג) מִיִּבְכֶם מִכָּל־עַמּוֹ הֵי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם עֲמּוּ וַיַּעַל לִירוּשָׁלַם אֲשֶׁר בִּיהוּדָה וַיִּבְנוּ אֶת־בֵּית ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא הָאֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר בִּירוּשָׁלַם : (ד) וְכָל־הַנְּשָׂאִר מִכָּל־הַמְּקוֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר הוּא גָרִישׁ יִנְשְׂאוּהוּ אֲנָשֵׁי מְקוֹמוֹ בְּקִסְף וּבְזָהָב וּבְכֹשֶׁב וּבְבִהֶמָה עִם־הַנְּדָבָה לְבֵית הָאֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר בִּירוּשָׁלַם :

#### Ezra 1:1-4

<sup>1</sup>In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, when the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah was fulfilled, the LORD roused the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia to issue a proclamation throughout his realm by word of mouth and in writing as follows: <sup>2</sup>“Thus said King Cyrus of Persia: The LORD God of Heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and has charged me with building Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. <sup>3</sup>Anyone of you of all His people—may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem that is in Judah and build the House of the LORD God of Israel, the God that is in Jerusalem; <sup>4</sup>and all who stay behind, wherever he may be living, let the people of his place assist him with silver, gold, goods, and livestock, besides the freewill offering to the House of God that is in Jerusalem.”

#### 3. עזרא ב:סד

כָּל־הַקְהָל כְּאֶחָד אַרְבַּע רְבּוּא אֲלָפִים שְׁלֹשִׁמָאוֹת שָׁשִׁים :

#### Ezra 2:64

The sum of the entire community was 42,360.

4. זכריה ב:ה-טז

(ה) וְאָשָׂא עֵינָי וָאָרָא וְהִנֵּה אִישׁ וּבְיָדוֹ חֵבֶל מִדָּה : (ו) וַאֲמַר אָנָּה אֲנִי הַלֵּךְ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי לָמַד אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם לְרֵאוֹת כְּמֵה רְחֹבָהּ וְכֵמֵה אָרְכָּהּ : (ז) וְהִנֵּה הַמִּלְאָךְ הַדֹּבֵר בֵּי יָצֵא וּמִלְאָךְ הַדֹּבֵר בֵּי יָצֵא לְקִרְאָתוֹ : (ח) וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו רַחֵם אֶל־הַנֶּעֱרַר הַלֵּז לֵאמֹר פְּרֻזוֹת תֵּשֵׁב יְרוּשָׁלַם מֵרַב אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה בְּתוֹכָהּ : (ט) וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה־לָּהּ נְאֻם־ה' חוֹמַת אֵשׁ סָבִיב וּלְכַבֹּד אֶהְיֶה בְּתוֹכָהּ : (י) הוּא הוּא וְנָסוּ מֵאֶרֶץ צָפוֹן נְאֻם־ה' כִּי כָאֲרֻבַע רוּחוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם פִּרְשְׁתִּי אֶתְכֶם נְאֻם־ה' : (יא) הוּא צִיּוֹן הַמְּלֻטִי יוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּתִבְבֵּל... (טז) וְנָחַל ה' אֶת־יְהוּדָה חֶלְקוֹ עַל אֲדַמַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבָחַר עוֹד בִּירוּשָׁלַם :

Zechariah 2:5-16

<sup>5</sup>I looked up, and I saw a man holding a measuring line. <sup>6</sup>“Where are you going?” I asked. “To measure Jerusalem,” he replied, “to see how long and wide it is to be.” <sup>7</sup>But the angel who talked with me came forward, and another angel came forward to meet him. <sup>8</sup>The former said to him, “Run to that young man and tell him: “Jerusalem shall be peopled as a city without walls, so many shall be the men and cattle it contains. <sup>9</sup>And I Myself—declares the LORD—will be a wall of fire all around it, and I will be a glory inside it. <sup>10</sup>“Away, away! Flee from the land of the north—says the LORD—though I swept you [there] like the four winds of heaven—declares the LORD.” <sup>11</sup>Away, escape, O Zion, you who dwell in Fair Babylon!... <sup>16</sup>The LORD will take Judah to Himself as His portion in the Holy Land, and He will choose Jerusalem once more.

5. זכריה ג:ט

כִּי הִנֵּה הָאֲבֹן אֲשֶׁר נִתְּנִי לַפְּנֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ עַל־אֲבֹן אַחַת שְׁבַעָה עֵינָיִם הֲנִי מִפְתַּח פְּתֻחָה נְאֻם ה' צָב־אוֹת וּמִשְׁתֵּי אֶתְעוֹן הָאֶרֶץ־הַזֹּאת בְּיוֹם אֶחָד :

Zechariah 3:9

For mark well this stone which I place before Joshua, a single stone with seven eyes. I will execute its engraving—declares the LORD of Hosts—and I will remove that country's guilt in a single day.

6. תהלים קלז:ד

אֵיךְ נִשְׁיֵר אֶת־שִׁירֵהוּ עַל אֲדַמַת נֶגֶר :

Psalms 137:4

How can we sing a song of the LORD on alien soil?

7. ברכות ד

כַּדְתִּנְיָא : עַד יַעֲבֵר עִמָּךְ ה' עַד יַעֲבֵר עִמָּךְ ה' - זֹו בִּיאָה רֵאשׁוֹנָה, עַד יַעֲבֵר עִם זֹו קִנִּית - זֹו בִּיאָה שֵׁנִיָּה ; מִכֹּאֵן אִמְרוּ חֲכָמִים : רֵאוּם הִיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לִיעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם נֵס בִּימֵי עֲזָרָא כַּדְרָךְ שִׁנְעֵשָׂה לָהֶם בִּימֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נוּן, אֵלָא שְׂגָרָם הַחֲטָא.

Berakhot 4a

Similarly it has been taught: Till Thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over that Thou hast gotten. ‘Till Thy people pass over, O Lord’: this is the first entry [into the Land]. ‘Till the people pass over that Thou hast gotten’: this is the second entry. Hence the Sages say: The intention was to perform a miracle for Israel in the days of Ezra, even as it was performed for them in the days of Joshua bin Nun, but sin caused [the miracle to be withheld].

8. יומא ט

אִם חוֹמָה הִיא נִבְנָה עֲלֶיהָ טִירַת כֶּסֶף וְאִם דֶּלֶת הִיא נִצּוֹר עֲלֶיהָ לֹחַ אֲרֹז, אִם עֲשִׂיתֶם עִצְמֶכֶם כַּחוֹמָה וְעֲלִיתֶם כּוֹלֶכֶם בִּימֵי עֲזָרָא - נִמְשַׁלְתֶּם כַּכֶּסֶף, שְׂאִין רֻקֵּב שׁוֹלֵט בּוֹ, עֲכָשׁוּי שְׂעֲלִיתֶם כַּדֶּלֶתוֹת נִמְשַׁלְתֶּם כַּאֲרֹז שְׂהֻרְקֵב שׁוֹלֵט בּוֹ.

Yoma 9b

If she be a wall, we will build upon her a turret of silver; if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar. Had you made yourself like a wall and had all come up in the days of Ezra, you would have been compared to silver, which no rottenness can ever affect. Now that you have come up like doors, you are like cedarwood, which rottenness prevails over.

## 9. מלאכי א:ב-ה

(ב) אֶהְבֵּתִי אֶתְכֶם אָמַר ה' וְאִמְרֶתֶם בְּמָה אֶהְבֵּתֵנוּ הַלּוֹאֲאֵחַ עָשׂוּ לְיַעֲקֹב נְאֻם־ה' וְאֶהְבֵּתִי יַעֲקֹב : (ג) וְאֶתְעַשׂוּ שְׂנֵאתֵי וְאֲשִׁים אֶת־הָרִיו שְׂמֵמָה וְאֶת־נַחֲלָתוֹ לְתַנּוֹת מִדְּבָר : (ד) כִּי־תֹאמַר אָדוֹם רְשָׁשׁוֹ וְנִשּׁוּב וְנִבְנָה חֲרֻבוֹת כֹּה אָמַר ה' צָב־אוֹת הֵמָּה יִבְנוּ וְאֲנִי אֶהְרוֹס וְקָרְאוּ לָהֶם גְּבוּל רְשָׁעָה וְהָעַם אֲשֶׁר־זָעַם ה' עַד־עוֹלָם : (ה) וְעֵינֵיכֶם תִּרְאֶינָה וְאֶתֶם תֹּאמְרוּ יִגְדַּל ה' מֵעַל לְגְבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל :

Malachi 1:2-5

<sup>2</sup>I have shown you love, said the LORD. But you ask, “How have You shown us love?” After all—declares the LORD—Esau is Jacob’s brother; yet I have accepted Jacob <sup>3</sup>and have rejected Esau. I have made his hills a desolation, his territory a home for beasts of the desert. <sup>4</sup>If Edom thinks, “Though crushed, we can build the ruins again,” thus said the LORD of Hosts: They may build, but I will tear down. And so they shall be known as the region of wickedness, the people damned forever of the LORD. <sup>5</sup>Your eyes shall behold it, and you shall declare, “Great is the LORD beyond the borders of Israel!”

## 10. נחמיה ט:ו-ח

(ו) אֶתְהִי־הוּא ה' הָאֵל־לְקִים אֲשֶׁר בְּחַרְתָּ בְּאַבְרָם וְהוֹצֵאתוֹ מֵאוּר כַּשְׂדִּים וְשִׁמְתָּ שְׁמוֹ אַבְרָהָם : (ח) וּמִצָּאתָ אֶת־לִבְבוֹ נֶאֱמָן לְפָנַי וְכָרוֹת עָמוֹ הַבְּרִית לְתַת אֶת־אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי הַחֲתִי הָאֲמֹרִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי וְהַגְּרִגְשִׁי לְתַת לְזָרְעוֹ וְתִקֶּם אֶת־דְּבָרֶיךָ כִּי צַדִּיק אַתָּה :

Nehemiah 9:7-8

<sup>7</sup>You are the LORD God, who chose Abram, who brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and changed his name to Abraham. <sup>8</sup>Finding his heart true to You, You made a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite—to give it to his descendants. And You kept Your word, for You are righteous.

## 11. בראשית יז:ח

וְנִתַּתִּי לָךְ וּלְזָרְעֶךָ אֶת־אֶרֶץ אֶחְרִיד אֶת אֶרֶץ מִגְרִיד אֶת כְּלֵי־אֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן לְאַחֲזֹת עוֹלָם וְהִיִּיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים :

Genesis 17:8

I assign the land you sojourn in to you and your offspring to come, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting holding. I will be their God.”

## 12. ויקרא כו:לב-לג

(לב) וְהִשְׁמַתִּי אֲנִי אֶת־הָאֶרֶץ וְשָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיהָ אֵיבֵיכֶם הַיֹּשְׁבִים בָּהּ : (לג) וְאֶתְכֶם אֲזַרָה בְּגוֹיִם וְהִרִיקִתִּי אֶחְרִיכֶם חֲרָב וְהִיִּיתָה אֶרְצְכֶם שְׂמֵמָה וְעָרֵיכֶם יִהְיוּ חֲרָבָה :

Leviticus 26:32-33

<sup>32</sup>I will make the land desolate, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled by it. <sup>33</sup>And you I will scatter among the nations, and I will unsheath the sword against you. Your land shall become a desolation and your cities a ruin.

## 13. דברים ו:י-יא

(י) וְהִיָּה כִּי יְבִיאֲךָ ה' אֵל־לְקִיד אֶל־הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וְלְיַעֲקֹב לְתַת לָךְ עָרִים גְּדֹלֹת וְטֹבֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־בִנִּיתָ : (יא) וּבָתִּים מְלֵאִים כְּלִטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר לֹא־מִלֵּאתָ וּבְרֹת חֲצוּבִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־חֲצַבְתָּ כְּרָמִים וְזֵיתִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא נִטְעַתָּ וְאִכְלַתָּ וְשִׁבַּעְתָּ :

Deuteronomy 6:10-11

<sup>10</sup>When the LORD your God brings you into the land that He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to assign to you—great and flourishing cities that you did not build, <sup>11</sup>houses full of all good things that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and you eat your fill.