

THE BOOK OF ROMANS
"The Indestructible Nation – Israel"
Romans 11:1-6

Introduction

1. Anti-Semitism is on the rise everywhere. What was perpetrated by Egypt as national policy about 1550 B.C. persists today. Embittered people claim "the Jews" are responsible for the Iraq war. Russian politicians blame "the Jews" for their economic problems. Around the world Jewish people are targeted for harassment, attacks, and violence. It is all a sinister echo of the pre-Holocaust 1930s.

2. In the light of this chronicle of horror, how significant that modern Jewry recently celebrated Rosh Hashanah, Days of Repentance, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot. Moreover, the nation Israel is locked in a death struggle for their land to this hour.

3. Yet the latest Statistical Abstract of the Central Bureau of Statistics, issued before Rosh Hashanah states that at the end of 2002, 6,631 million people lived in Israel. Jews made up 76.8 percent of the total. Israel is now as crowded as India with about 300 people per square kilometer.

4. Is there a future for Israel as a nation? For Islam, "there is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad." Whether Hamas, Hezbollah, PFLP, or Fatah, the aim of these organizations is the same: 1) Completely eradicate Israel through violence and 2) establish an Islamic Palestinian State that encompasses all the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The PLO (Arafat) supports these goals.

5. In amazing contrast, God made a promise and He, as God, always keeps His promises. Read it for yourself (Gen. 13:15; 15:18). This was repeated to Abraham (Gen. 17:8), to Jacob (Gen. 48:4) and to Jacob's children (Psa. 105:6, 7, 8, 11; Isa. 62:4; Jer. 7:7; Ezek. 37:25). Do not forget that "the grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God shall stand forever" (Isa. 40:8).

6. The national position and blessing of Israel will yet be realized (Ro. 11), despite the lament of the Lord (Ro. 10:21). Moreover, the nation has not been eliminated in God's program because of the New Testament Body of Christ (Church). Replacement theology is unbiblical.

7. Therefore, considering anti-Semitism, the avowed intent of Islam, replacement theology, and God's longsuffering for the Nation, the New Testament Scripture boldly addresses the issue of Israel's indestructibility? Consider these aspects of the matter:

1. THE QUESTION ASKED v. 1

a. It is Stated

The conjunction (οὖν oun) is an inference contextually from the previous chapter (10:19-21). Further, the question is personalized by Paul – "I say." The verb "cast away" means to reject, repudiate, or drive from oneself (ἀποθᾶω apotheo).

b. It is Answered

A definite "no" is indicated in two ways: 1) The negative used (μή me) requires a negative answer. 2) Paul's familiar phrase "God forbid" assures the "no" (cf. 6:3, 15).

2. THE ANSWER DETAILED vv. 1a – 5.

a. Personally v. 1

Using himself as part of the answer, Paul affirms three facts about himself:

1) I am an Israelite His use of the emphatic "I" (ἐγώ ego) controls all Paul states here. Note Paul employs "Israel," not "Jacob" (cf. Gen. 37:23).

2) I am of the seed of Abraham Preposition (ἐκ ek) links Paul to the covenant of promise (Gen. 12:1-3).

3) I am of the tribe of Benjamin By this Paul shows he came from a tribe which did not rebel. Therefore, Paul's pedigree denotes there is no absolute rejection of the nation.

Lesson: God has not rejected Israel.

b. Historically vv. 2 – 4

1) Stated v. 2a Here it is bluntly recorded: God did not reject (same verb as v. 1) His people whom He foreknew. Review the magnificent account in Amos of judgment on nations (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6) and God's love for Israel (3:1, 2).

2) It is Illustrated vv. 2b – 3

The case of Elijah is presented (literally "in Elijah" cf. "in bush," Mk 12:16). "Wot" means "don't you know" or "you must admit this or be ignorant of Scripture" (1 Kings 18, 19). What did Elijah do? He made intercession or pled with God against Israel (ἐντυγχάνει entugchanei). Elijah had four considerations against Israel: 1) Israel had killed Thy (God's) prophets (1 Kings 19:10). 2) Israel had demolished (κατέσκαψαν kateskapsan) Thy (God's) altars. 3) Israel sought to kill Elijah ("my soul"). 4) I am only survivor (ὕπελείφθην hupeleifthen).

3) It is Answered v. 4. This is the divine response (χρηματισμός chrematismos) to Elijah. God had left for Himself (i.e. as His own possession and service) 7000 men who were of such character as not to bend the knee to Baal. The feminine article with "Baal" suggests this deity was androgynous (both sexes). To worship Baal (sun-god) was Israel's greatest apostasy.

Lesson: God has not rejected Israel.

c. Presently v. 5

"Even so then" or "thus therefore" (οὕτως οὖν houtos oun) there has surfaced (γέγονεν gegonen) in this "now" time (period of time) a remnant (λείμμα leimma, only here in N.T.). The present number of Israel believers (like Paul and the 7000 in Elijah's day) are "elect according to grace." Grace is the only way by which the remnant obtains salvation or existence.

Lesson: God has not rejected Israel.

Conclusion The "if" (v. 6) takes up v. 5 and states: let us understand what this involves. Succinctly it is this: Grace and works are two separate principles. To confuse them is to suggest that the two (grace and works) would "become" (γίνεται ginetai) what in their essence they are not. Briefly: grace excludes works and works excludes grace. The lesson of all lessons is that grace has prevailed for Israel. God has not rejected Israel as a nation. Hallelujah!