Biblical & Historical Analysis of Modern Claims to Land of Israel

Introduction

Many modern statements about Israel draw on nationalistic sentiments that do not align with the covenantal transition indicated in new testament scriptures. The phrase ***“rise like a lion of Judah”***, to be addressed later, is deeply rooted in scripture and has been invoked in modern times to symbolize the strength and resilience of the people of Israel.

The new covenant has redefined God’s chosen people as those in Christ, irrespective of ethnicity. The old covenant practices ceased in 70 AD, fulfilling Jesus’ prophecies.

So let’s now walk through step-by-step to observe what brings together historical, biblical, and theological points that align with a covenantal understanding of Israel, the old covenant, and the new covenant.

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1. The Names Judaea, Judea, and Yehudah

The terms **Judaea** (Latin/Greek) and **Judea** (English) both derive from the Hebrew **Yehudah (□□□□□□□□)**, which was originally the name of Jacob’s fourth son. Over time, Yehudah came to refer to the tribe of Judah, then to the southern kingdom of Judah after the division of the kingdom following Solomon’s reign.

After the Babylonian captivity, when a remnant returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, the territory became known

as **Judea**. This was primarily the region of the former southern kingdom since the northern kingdom (Israel) had already been conquered and dispersed by Assyria in approximately 722 BC.

2. The Northern Kingdom and the Lost Tribes

The northern kingdom of Israel, consisting of 10 tribes, was conquered by Assyria, and its people were scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire (2 Kings 17:6). These tribes never returned as a distinct, identifiable nation. Over time, they assimilated into various populations, fulfilling the prophetic judgment of their disobedience.

The southern kingdom of Judah, along with remnants of Benjamin and Levi, returned from Babylonian captivity and became the core of what was later known as the **Judeans (Jews)**. However, this represented only a fraction of the original twelve tribes.

This historical context is crucial because the modern State of Israel claims lineage and heritage from ancient Israel, but its origins are primarily connected to the tribe of Judah and those who returned from Babylon—not the broader collective of the twelve tribes.

3. The Old Covenant’s Termination and Temple Destruction

The destruction of the temple in 70 AD is a pivotal event that underscores the end of the old covenant sacrificial system. Jesus prophesied this destruction (Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 21:20-24), and when it occurred, the physical center of Judaism—along with its priesthood and sacrificial ordinances—was eradicated.

Theologically, Hebrews 8:13 affirms that the old covenant was “ready to vanish away,” and the destruction of the temple

finalized this transition.

- The Mosaic covenant required the temple, priesthood, and sacrifices.
- Without the temple, the core practices of the old covenant cannot be followed.
- The new covenant, as Jesus instituted, is based on His once-for-all sacrifice (Hebrews 10:12-14) and is no longer dependent on a physical temple or national identity.

Thus, modern religious practices in Israel that seek to replicate old covenant practices lack the necessary framework God established under Moses.

4. Today's Israel vs. Biblical Israel

The modern State of Israel, established in 1948, is often viewed politically as the "re-establishment" of ancient Israel. However, from a covenantal and theological perspective:

- **Biblical Israel** was a theocratic nation under God's direct covenantal governance.
- **Modern Israel** is a secular, political state recognized by international law and is not governed by the Mosaic covenant.

Jesus' statement aligns with this understanding in **Matthew 21:43** – *"Therefore say I unto you, **The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.***"

> *Here, Jesus addresses the religious leaders of Judea, indicating that God's covenantal kingdom would be transferred to a new group—a spiritual body of believers, both Jew and*

Gentile, united in Christ (Ephesians 2:14-16). This nation is not defined by geography or ethnicity but by faith.

5. The Kingdom is Spiritual, Not Earthly

Jesus clarified this in John 18:36: "Jesus answered, ***My kingdom is not of this world:*** *if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."*

This statement reflects the nature of the new covenant kingdom. Unlike the old covenant, which was tied to a physical land, temple, and ethnic lineage, the new covenant transcends these physical markers.

- God's chosen people are now defined by their faith in Christ (Galatians 3:28-29), not by their ancestry or national affiliation.
- The kingdom is global and spiritual, as seen in Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and Paul's explanation of the "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16).

Thus, the modern geopolitical entity of Israel is distinct from the biblical Israel under the Mosaic covenant.

6. Modern Zionism and Biblical Prophecy

Many supporters of modern Israel cite prophecies like Ezekiel 37 (the valley of dry bones) and Isaiah 66:8 ("a nation born in a day") as fulfillment of modern Zionism. However, from a covenantal perspective:

- Ezekiel 37 speaks of the spiritual restoration of God's people through Christ, not a political re-establishment of a national state.
- Isaiah 66 is understood by many as referring to the

birth of the church, the spiritual nation of God's people.

Paul addresses the redefinition of God's people in **Romans 9:6-8** –*"Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."*

This passage underscores the covenantal distinction between ethnic descendants and spiritual heirs of Abraham.

Conclusion

As asserted by scripture, the modern State of Israel is not the continuation of the old covenant nation of Israel. The destruction of the temple in 70 AD marked the definitive end of the Mosaic covenant practices, replaced by the new covenant, which centers on faith in Christ rather than national or ethnic identity.

The name "Israel" was chosen in 1948 for political and historical reasons, but biblically, the true "Israel of God" now consists of those who are in Christ, regardless of ethnicity. The kingdom is spiritual, and its inheritance is no longer tied to a physical land but to the eternal promises in Christ.

Implications for Modern

Interpretations

From a covenantal perspective, scriptures clearly demonstrate that God's plan was not to re-establish the old national identity of Israel but to usher in a spiritual kingdom based on faith in Christ.

When contemporary political leaders in Israel, along with various Jewish voices, proclaim that Israel will ***"rise like a lion of Judah,"*** it is essential to take a moment to examine biblical texts for a deeper understanding of such statements.

If such notions hold relevance today, we must first explore what the biblical and historical context reveals about these claims. Any assertion that pertains to the old covenant should first be evaluated for its applicability within the framework of the new covenant before being deemed accurate. Ultimately, scripture serves as the definitive authority on this issue.

As we'll see, scripture presents clear conditions for possession of the land, which do not align with the present-day claims. Furthermore, historical events have significantly altered the demographic and genealogical landscape of the region.

Biblical Origins

In the Hebrew Bible, the tribe of Judah is symbolized by a lion, representing courage and leadership. This imagery originates from Jacob's blessing to his son Judah: Genesis 49:9 – *"Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him up?"*

Additionally, the Book of Numbers portrays the people of Israel with lion-like vigor: Numbers 23:24 – *"Behold, the people rise like a lioness; they rouse themselves like a lion."*

The prophet Joel also uses the lion's roar to depict the Lord's power: Joel 3:16 – *"The Lord will roar like a lion from Jerusalem; his loud voice will thunder from that city, and the sky and the earth will shake."*

Modern Usage

In contemporary times, Israeli leaders have drawn upon this powerful symbolism to express national resilience. For instance, i**n a recent address**, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated: – *"The Bible says that the people of Israel shall rise like lions, and boy, did we rise. Today, the roar of the lion of Judah is heard loudly throughout the Middle East."*

This statement reflects a connection between ancient biblical metaphors and the modern state's sense of strength and determination.

Cultural Representations

The lion of Judah has also been immortalized in Israeli art and monuments. A notable example is the ***"Roaring Lion"*** statue by sculptor Avraham Melnikov, located at the Kfar Giladi–Tel Hai Cemetery. Erected in 1934, this monument commemorates the defenders of Tel Hai and serves as a symbol of courage and sacrifice.

In summary, the lion of Judah serves as a potent emblem of Israel's enduring spirit, bridging ancient scriptural themes with contemporary expressions of national identity and resilience.

Cost of Israel Rejecting Christ

The following scriptures–**Mat. 23:38**; **Mat. 24:34**, and **Mat. 21:43**–align with the covenantal interpretation of the transition from the old covenant to the new covenant,

culminating in the destruction of the temple in 70 AD.

Let’s break these scripture down:

- **Matthew 23:38** – *“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”*
  - This statement is made just before Jesus’ Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24.
  - The “house” here is often understood as the temple and, by extension, the old covenant system. Jesus pronounces judgment upon the religious leaders and the nation for their rejection of him.
  - The desolation refers to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, when the Roman army, under Titus, obliterated the temple, bringing an end to the sacrificial system.
  - This aligns with the prophecy of Daniel 9:26-27, where the destruction of the sanctuary is foretold. Jesus’ declaration of desolation signifies the official end of the old covenant system.

- **Matthew 24:34** – *“Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.”*
  - The phrase **“this generation”** is key. The covenantal perspective sees this as referring to the generation alive during Jesus’ earthly ministry, not a distant future group.
  - Within approximately 40 years of Jesus’ pronouncement, Jerusalem was indeed destroyed in 70 AD, confirming His words.
  - Dispensationalists often argue that this refers to a future generation; however, the context and consistency with other passages point to Jesus speaking to His immediate audience about the end

of the old covenant age.

- **Matthew 21:43** – *"Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."*
    - This statement was directed at the religious leaders, indicating that the authority and identity of being God's chosen people were no longer tied to ethnic lineage but to faith in Christ.
    - The "nation" here is understood to be the body of believers—Jew and Gentile alike—who accept Christ as Messiah.
    - This is consistent with Paul's teaching in **Rom. 2:28-29** and **Gal. 3:28-29**, which emphasize faith over ethnicity.
    - The covenantal interpretation understands this as the fulfillment of God's plan to extend the promise to all nations through Christ, ending the exclusive national identity of the old covenant and inaugurating the global, spiritual kingdom of the new covenant.

The Bigger Picture: The Transition of Covenants

- The destruction of the temple in 70 AD was not merely a historical event but a theological one. It marked the end of the old covenant sacrificial system (Hebrews 8:13), as sacrifices were no longer possible.
- Jesus' death established the new covenant (Luke 22:20), with His body serving as the ultimate sacrifice (Hebrews

10:12-14).
- Access to God was no longer through the temple but directly through Christ (John 4:21-24).

Implications for Modern Interpretations

Many modern statements about Israel ***"rising as the lion of Judah"*** draw on nationalistic sentiments that do not align with the covenantal transition indicated in these scriptures. The new covenant redefined God's chosen people as those in Christ, irrespective of ethnicity. The old covenant practices ceased in 70 AD, fulfilling Jesus' prophecies.

From the covenantal perspective, these scriptures clearly demonstrate that God's plan was not to re-establish the old national identity of Israel but to usher in a spiritual kingdom based on faith in Christ.

Today there are statements made or remarks by those of the modern state of Israel that suggest Israel will ***"rise like a lion of Judah."*** However, from both a biblical and historical perspective, this assertion requires careful examination. Scripture presents clear conditions for possession of the land, which do not align with the present-day claims. Furthermore, historical events have significantly altered the demographic and genealogical landscape of the region.

Next, as listed—#s 1. and 2.—these scripture were covered and cited above, however, it's important to emphasize again in expressing must needed remarks and add applicable comments.

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1. Jesus Christ’s Pronouncement of Desolation

During His earthly ministry, Jesus pronounced judgment on Jerusalem, foretelling its destruction:

- **“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”** *(Matthew 23:38, KJV)*
- **“Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.”** *(Matthew 24:34, KJV)*

Christ’s words were fulfilled in **A.D. 70** when Roman forces, under **Titus**, destroyed the Second Temple. This act left the city in ruins, fulfilling the prophecy of **Luke 21:20-24**. The temple, the central feature of Old Covenant worship, was permanently dismantled. The idea of a physical restoration of a theocratic Israel does not align with New Testament teachings, which emphasize a **spiritual kingdom** *(John 18:36)*.

2. The Kingdom Taken and Given to Another

Jesus declared:

- **“The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”** *(Matthew 21:43, KJV)*

This pronouncement indicates a **transfer of covenantal authority** from ethnic Israel to the **church of believers**, which includes both **Jews and Gentiles**. The apostle Paul confirmed this shift:

- **“For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.”** *(Romans 9:6, KJV)*
- **“There is neither Jew nor Greek…for ye are all one in**

Christ Jesus." *(Galatians 3:28-29, KJV)*

The **kingdom of God** is not a political state but a **spiritual reality** centered on faith in Christ *(Romans 11:17-21)*.

3. The Biblical Conditions for Possession of the Land

The Old Testament outlined **specific conditions** for Israel's occupation of the land. God granted the land **conditionally** based on **obedience, worship, and priestly order**:

A. Tribal Inheritance (Genealogical Integrity)

The land was apportioned by tribal inheritance:

- **"And Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying, This is the land which ye shall inherit by lot, which the LORD commanded to give unto the nine tribes, and to the half tribe."** *(Numbers 34:13, KJV)*

However:

- Tribal genealogies were destroyed after the **Bar Kokhba Revolt** *(132–135 A.D.)*.
- **Ezra 2:62 (KJV)** demonstrates the necessity of genealogical records: *"These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood."*
- **Josephus** (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XI) confirms that the **Levitical genealogical archives** were obliterated, making any legitimate claim to tribal inheritance impossible.

B. God’s Sanctuary (Temple Worship)

God commanded the establishment of **one central sanctuary**:

- **“But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose…to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek.”** *(Deuteronomy 12:5, KJV)*

However:

- The Second Temple was destroyed in **A.D. 70** by Titus.
- Jesus prophesied its destruction: **“There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”** *(Matthew 24:2, KJV)*
- The absence of the temple **invalidates** the Old Testament covenantal requirement for the land.

C. The Levitical Priesthood (Priestly Lineage)

The priesthood was essential to the land covenant:

- **“And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest’s office.”** *(Numbers 3:10, KJV)*

However:

- Genealogical records for the **Levitical priesthood** were destroyed along with the temple.
- **Ezra 2:62 (KJV)** records that without verifiable lineage, individuals were excluded from priestly functions.

Conclusion of the Biblical Conditions

These three foundational elements—tribal inheritance, temple worship, and priestly service—were irreversibly dismantled

after **A.D. 70** and the subsequent **Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–135 A.D.)**. Biblically, **modern Israel does not meet the scriptural requirements** for a divine claim to the land.

4. The Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–135 A.D.)

The **Bar Kokhba Revolt** was the third Jewish-Roman war, led by **Simon bar Kokhba**, declared the "messiah" by **Rabbi Akiva**. The rebellion arose in response to **Emperor Hadrian's** oppressive measures:

- **Banning of circumcision** *(brit milah)*.
- **Renaming Jerusalem** to **Aelia Capitolina** and constructing a **pagan temple to Jupiter** on the Temple Mount.
- **580,000 Jewish deaths**, as recorded by **Dio Cassius** (*Roman History*, Book LXIX).
- **Survivors** were **enslaved**, and **Judea** was left in ruins.

This revolt obliterated remaining tribal and priestly genealogical records, rendering modern claims to tribal identity historically unsubstantiated.

5. The Renaming of Judea to Palestine

In the aftermath of the revolt, **Emperor Hadrian** sought to erase Jewish connections to the land by:

- **Renaming Judea** as **Syria Palaestina**, invoking the ancient Philistines.
- **Jerusalem** was renamed **Aelia Capitolina**.

The term "Palestine" became the common designation during Roman and later Byzantine rule. **Eusebius of Caesarea** (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book IV) documented these changes, as did **Dio Cassius**.

6. Historical and Theological Implications

While modern political narratives assert divine entitlement to the land, Scripture clearly sets **spiritual conditions** for God’s covenantal promises:

- **Matthew 21:43 (KJV)**: *“The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”*
- **Galatians 3:29 (KJV)**: *“And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*
- **Romans 2:28-29 (KJV)**: *“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly…but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly.”*

Summation

The modern claim to the land of Israel lacks **biblical** and **historical support** when measured against the requirements of the **Old Covenant**. The **genealogical, temple, and priestly foundations** have been dismantled for nearly two millennia. Scripture reveals that God’s kingdom is not confined to geographic boundaries but resides in the hearts of believers through faith in Jesus Christ.

“My kingdom is not of this world.” (John 18:36, KJV
