

2 “Crisis!” Exile and Beyond: TEXTS

Covenant Texts

Genesis 17:1-8. The Covenant with Abraham

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. ² And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” ³ Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴ “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. ⁸ And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God.”

Exodus 19: 2-6. The Covenant at Sinai

And when they set out from Reph’idim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, they encamped in the wilderness; and there Israel encamped before the mountain. ³ And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴ You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

Deuteronomy 28:1- Covenant Blessings and Curses

“And if you obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments which I command you this day, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God. ³ Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. ⁴ Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your beasts, the increase of your cattle, and the young of your flock. ⁵ Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading-trough. ⁶ Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

⁷ “The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you; they shall come out against you one way, and flee before you seven ways. ⁸ The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns, and in all that you undertake; and he will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you. ⁹ The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and walk in his ways. ¹⁰ And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of you. ¹¹ And the LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your body, and in the fruit of your cattle, and in the fruit of your ground, within the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. ¹² The LORD will open to you his good treasury the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. ¹³ And the LORD will make you the head, and not the tail; and you shall tend upward only, and not downward; if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day, being careful to do them, ¹⁴ and if you do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

¹⁵ “But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day, then all these curses shall come upon you and

overtake you. ¹⁶ Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. ¹⁷ Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading-trough. ¹⁸ Cursed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your cattle, and the young of your flock. ¹⁹ Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.

²⁰ "The LORD will send upon you curses, confusion, and frustration, in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly, on account of the evil of your doings, because you have forsaken me. ²¹ The LORD will make the pestilence cleave to you until he has consumed you off the land which you are entering to take possession of it.

⁵⁸ "If you are not careful to do all the words of this law which are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awful name, the LORD your God, ⁵⁹ then the LORD will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting. ⁶⁰ And he will bring upon you again all the diseases of Egypt, which you were afraid of; and they shall cleave to you. ⁶¹ Every sickness also, and every affliction which is not recorded in the book of this law, the LORD will bring upon you, until you are destroyed. ⁶² Whereas you were as the stars of heaven for multitude, you shall be left few in number; because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God. ⁶³ And as the LORD took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the LORD will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you; and you shall be plucked off the land which you are entering to take possession of it. ⁶⁴ And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other; and there you shall serve other gods, of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. ⁶⁵ And among these nations you shall find no ease, and there shall be no rest for the sole of your foot; but the LORD will give you there a trembling heart, and failing eyes, and a languishing soul; ⁶⁶ your life shall hang in doubt before you; night and day you shall be in dread, and have no assurance of your life. ⁶⁷ In the morning you shall say, 'Would it were evening!' and at evening you shall say, 'Would it were morning!' because of the dread which your heart shall fear, and the sights which your eyes shall see. ⁶⁸ And the LORD will bring you back in ships to Egypt, a journey which I promised that you should never make again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no man will buy you."

The Centrality of the Exile

Matthew 1

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

² Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³ and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ and Ram the father of Ammin'adab, and Ammin'adab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ and Salmon the father of Bo'az by Rahab, and Bo'az the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uri'ah, ⁷ and Solomon the father of Rehobo'am, and Rehobo'am the father of Abi'jah, and Abi'jah the father of Asa, ⁸ and Asa the father of Jehosh'aphat, and Jehosh'aphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzzi'ah, ⁹ and Uzzi'ah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezeki'ah, ¹⁰ and Hezeki'ah the father of Manas'seh, and Manas'seh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josi'ah, ¹¹ and Josi'ah the father of Jechoni'ah and his brothers, at the time **of the deportation to Babylon.**

¹² And after **the deportation to Babylon:** Jechoni'ah was the father of She-al'ti-el, and She-al'ti-el the father of Zerub'babel, ¹³ and Zerub'babel the father of Abi'ud, and Abi'ud the father of Eli'akim, and Eli'akim the father of Azor, ¹⁴ and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eli'ud, ¹⁵ and Eli'ud the father of Elea'zar, and Elea'zar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to **the deportation to Babylon** fourteen generations, and from **the deportation to Babylon** to the Christ fourteen generations.

Jeremiah and the Davidic Kings: Tearing down and building up

Jeremiah 22:1-23:8

Thus says the LORD: Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, ² and say: Hear the word of the LORD, O King of Judah sitting on the throne of David—you, and your servants, and your people who enter these gates. ³ Thus says the LORD: Act with justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. ⁴ For if you will indeed obey this word, then through the gates of this house shall enter kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their servants, and their people. ⁵ But if you will not heed these words, I swear by myself, says the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.

⁶ For thus says the LORD concerning the house of the king of Judah:

You are like Gilead to me,
like the summit of Lebanon;
but I swear that I will make you a desert,
an uninhabited city.

⁷ I will prepare destroyers against you,
all with their weapons;
they shall cut down your choicest cedars
and cast them into the fire.

⁸ And many nations will pass by this city, and all of them will say one to another, 'Why has the LORD dealt in this way with that great city?' ⁹ And they will answer, 'Because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods and served them.'

¹⁰ Do not weep for him who is dead,
nor bemoan him;
weep rather for him who goes away,
for he shall return no more
to see his native land.

¹¹ For thus says the LORD concerning Shallum son of King Josiah of Judah, who succeeded his father Josiah, and who went away from this place: He shall return here no more, ¹² but in the place where they have carried him captive he shall die, and he shall never see this land again.

¹³ Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness,
and his upper rooms by injustice;
who makes his neighbours work for nothing,
and does not give them their wages;

¹⁴ who says, 'I will build myself a spacious house
with large upper rooms',
and who cuts out windows for it,
panelling it with cedar,
and painting it with vermilion.

¹⁵ Are you a king
because you compete in cedar?
Did not your father eat and drink
and do justice and righteousness?
Then it was well with him.

¹⁶ He judged the cause of the poor and needy;
then it was well.

Is not this to know me?
says the LORD.

¹⁷ But your eyes and heart
are only on your dishonest gain,
for shedding innocent blood,
and for practising oppression and violence.

¹⁸ Therefore thus says the LORD concerning King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah:
They shall not lament for him, saying,
'Alas, my brother!' or 'Alas, sister!'
They shall not lament for him, saying,
'Alas, lord!' or 'Alas, his majesty!'

¹⁹ With the burial of a donkey he shall be buried—
dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

²⁰ Go up to Lebanon, and cry out,
and lift up your voice in Bashan;
cry out from Abarim,
for all your lovers are crushed.

²¹ I spoke to you in your prosperity,
but you said, 'I will not listen.'
This has been your way from your youth,
for you have not obeyed my voice.

²² The wind shall shepherd all your shepherds,
and your lovers shall go into captivity;
then you will be ashamed and dismayed
because of all your wickedness.

²³ O inhabitant of Lebanon,
nested among the cedars,
how you will groan when pangs come upon you,
pain as of a woman in labour!

²⁴ As I live, says the LORD, even if King Coniah son of Jehoiakim of Judah were the signet ring on my right hand, even from there I would tear you off ²⁵ and give you into the hands of those who seek your life, into the hands of those of whom you are afraid, even into the hands of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon and into the hands of the Chaldeans. ²⁶ I will hurl you and the mother who bore you into another country, where you were not born, and there you shall die. ²⁷ But they shall not return to the land to which they long to return.

²⁸ Is this man Coniah a despised broken pot,
a vessel no one wants?
Why are he and his offspring hurled out
and cast away in a land that they do not know?

²⁹ O land, land, land,
hear the word of the LORD!

³⁰ Thus says the LORD:
Record this man as childless,
a man who shall not succeed in his days;
for none of his offspring shall succeed
in sitting on the throne of David,
and ruling again in Judah.

23 Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD.

² Therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my

people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD. ³ Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴ I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD.

⁵ The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'

⁷ Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt', ⁸ but 'As the LORD lives who brought out and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them.' Then they shall live in their own land.

The Exile

2 Kings 24:1-25:22

24 In his days King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up; Jehoiakim became his servant for three years; then he turned and rebelled against him. ² The LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldeans, bands of the Arameans, bands of the Moabites, and bands of the Ammonites; he sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by his servants the prophets.

³ Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the LORD, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, for all that he had committed, ⁴ and also for the innocent blood that he had shed; for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to pardon. ⁵ Now the rest of the deeds of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? ⁶ So Jehoiakim slept with his ancestors; then his son Jehoiachin succeeded him. ⁷ The king of Egypt did not come again out of his land, for the king of Babylon had taken over all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Wadi of Egypt to the River Euphrates.

⁸ Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign; he reigned for three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. ⁹ He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his father had done.

¹⁰ At that time the servants of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. ¹¹ King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to the city, while his servants were besieging it; ¹² King Jehoiachin of Judah gave himself up to the king of Babylon, himself, his mother, his servants, his officers, and his palace officials. The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign.

¹³ He carried off all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he cut in pieces all the vessels of gold in the temple of the LORD, which King Solomon of Israel had made, all this as the LORD had foretold. ¹⁴ He carried away all Jerusalem, all the officials, all the warriors, ten thousand captives, all the artisans and the smiths; no one remained, except the poorest people of the land. ¹⁵ He carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon; the king's mother, the king's wives, his officials, and the elite of the land, he took into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. ¹⁶ The king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon all the men of valour, seven thousand, the artisans and the smiths, one thousand, all of them strong and fit for war. ¹⁷ The king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

¹⁸ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned for eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. ¹⁹ He did what was evil

in the sight of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done. ²⁰ Indeed, Jerusalem and Judah so angered the LORD that he expelled them from his presence.

Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

²⁵ ¹ And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem, and laid siege to it; they built siege-works against it all round. ² So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.

³ On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine became so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. ⁴ Then a breach was made in the city wall; the king with all the soldiers fled ^[b] by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were all round the city. They went in the direction of the Arabah. ⁵ But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; all his army was scattered, deserting him. ⁶ Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, who passed sentence on him. ⁷ They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out the eyes of Zedekiah; they bound him in fetters and took him to Babylon.

⁸ In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ⁹ He burned the house of the LORD, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. ¹⁰ All the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. ¹¹ Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had defected to the king of Babylon—all the rest of the population. ¹² But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest people of the land to be vine-dressers and tillers of the soil.

¹³ The bronze pillars that were in the house of the LORD, as well as the stands and the bronze sea that were in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried the bronze to Babylon.

¹⁴ They took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the dishes for incense, and all the bronze vessels used in the temple service, ¹⁵ as well as the firepans and the basins. What was made of gold the captain of the guard took away for the gold, and what was made of silver, for the silver. ¹⁶ As for the two pillars, the one sea, and the stands, which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the bronze of all these vessels was beyond weighing. ¹⁷ The height of one pillar was eighteen cubits, and on it was a bronze capital; the height of the capital was three cubits; lattice-work and pomegranates, all of bronze, were on the capital all round. The second pillar had the same, with the lattice-work.

¹⁸ The captain of the guard took the chief priest Seraiah, the second priest Zephaniah, and the three guardians of the threshold; ¹⁹ from the city he took an officer who had been in command of the soldiers, and five men of the king's council who were found in the city; the secretary who was the commander of the army who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city. ²⁰ Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. ²¹ The king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah went into exile out of its land.

The Experience of Exile

Psalm 137

By the rivers of Babylon—
there we sat down and there we wept
when we remembered Zion.

² On the willows there
we hung up our harps.

³ For there our captors
asked us for songs,
and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,
'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!'

⁴ How could we sing the LORD's song
in a foreign land?
⁵ If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither!
⁶ Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy.
⁷ Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites
the day of Jerusalem's fall,
how they said, 'Tear it down! Tear it down!
Down to its foundations!'
⁸ O daughter Babylon, you devastator!
Happy shall they be who pay you back
what you have done to us!
⁹ Happy shall they be who take your little ones
and dash them against the rock!

Psalm 44

We have heard with our ears, O God,
our ancestors have told us,
what deeds you performed in their days,
in the days of old:
² you with your own hand drove out the nations,
but them you planted;
you afflicted the peoples,
but them you set free;
³ for not by their own sword did they win the land,
nor did their own arm give them victory;
but your right hand, and your arm,
and the light of your countenance,
for you delighted in them.
⁴ You are my King and my God;
you command victories for Jacob.
⁵ Through you we push down our foes;
through your name we tread down our assailants.
⁶ For not in my bow do I trust,
nor can my sword save me.
⁷ But you have saved us from our foes,
and have put to confusion those who hate us.
⁸ In God we have boasted continually,
and we will give thanks to your name for ever. *Selah*
⁹ Yet you have rejected us and abased us,
and have not gone out with our armies.
¹⁰ You made us turn back from the foe,
and our enemies have taken spoil for themselves.
¹¹ You have made us like sheep for slaughter,
and have scattered us among the nations.
¹² You have sold your people for a trifle,
demanding no high price for them.

¹³ You have made us the taunt of our neighbours,
the derision and scorn of those around us.
¹⁴ You have made us a byword among the nations,
a laughing-stock among the peoples.
¹⁵ All day long my disgrace is before me,
and shame has covered my face
¹⁶ at the words of the taunters and revilers,
at the sight of the enemy and the avenger.
¹⁷ All this has come upon us,
yet we have not forgotten you,
or been false to your covenant.
¹⁸ Our heart has not turned back,
nor have our steps departed from your way,
¹⁹ yet you have broken us in the haunt of jackals,
and covered us with deep darkness.
²⁰ If we had forgotten the name of our God,
or spread out our hands to a strange god,
²¹ would not God discover this?
For he knows the secrets of the heart.
²² Because of you we are being killed all day long,
and accounted as sheep for the slaughter.
²³ Rouse yourself! Why do you sleep, O Lord?
Awake, do not cast us off for ever!
²⁴ Why do you hide your face?
Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?
²⁵ For we sink down to the dust;
our bodies cling to the ground.
²⁶ Rise up, come to our help.
Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love.

The Persian Empire. A Psalm of Return

Psalm 126

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
² Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then it was said among the nations,
'The LORD has done great things for them.'
³ The LORD has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.
⁴ Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.
⁵ May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.
⁶ Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.