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Running Commentary on the Echoes Bible, Volume III: Leviticus & Romans

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Introduction

Paul and his school are responsible for 13 of the 27 books in the New Testament canon. As a Roman citizen, he would have enjoyed a high level of education, and as a regarded scholar of the Pharisaic school, it may be assumed that he was a member of the Sanhedrin. In Acts 26:10, Paul states, "I cast my vote against them" (referring to Christians) when they were put to death. There can only be two options: either he was a member of the Sanhedrin, or he was aligned with Roman authorities—a view that has gained some traction, as in the closing verses of Romans 16 he sends greetings to Herodian (the youngest Herod). Either way, few could have been better prepared for his calling, being uniquely qualified to bring the message of salvation to both Jew and Greek.

Although trained in the Torah and a talmid (student) under Gamaliel, Paul spent about three years in Arabia and Damascus before meeting Peter and James for 15 days. During this time, he likely revisited the Torah, now seeking the Lord Jesus Christ within it. He began to see Christ throughout its pages and to understand God's plan, along with his own calling to bring the Gentiles to salvation.

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The Two Tents of Meeting

There are two "Tents of Meeting": the one that stood outside the camp (see, e.g., Exod 33:7) and the one that stood in the midst of the camp (Exod 40:2; Num 2:2ff), which served as the Lord's residence until the construction of the temple in the days of Solomon (Exod 27:21; 29:4; 1 Kgs 8:4; 2 Chr 5:5; cf. 2 Sam 7:6).

A tension here is that Exod 40:35 uses both מִשְׁכָּן. Mishkan - "tabernacle" and אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד *Ohel Moed* "tent of meeting" to refer to the same structure (tent). Tent of meeting tends to be used when they are on the move, and Tabernacle during more rested periods:

"Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."

It is clear that "tent of meeting" in Lev 1:1 refers to the "tabernacle." The latter term refers to the tent as a "residence," while the former refers to it as a divinely appointed place of "meeting" between God and man. The change of terms may be noted in Exod 40:35, where "tent of meeting" is used when referring to Moses' inability to enter the tent, but "tabernacle" when referring to the Lord taking up residence there in the form of the glory cloud. The quotation introduced here extends from Lev 1:2 through 3:17, and encompasses the burnt, grain, and peace offering regulations.

> **Echo Note:** Leviticus 1:9 may pair more naturally with Romans 15:16 than with its current placement.

Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17 ↔ Romans 15:16

- **Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17:** The burning of the sacrifice is described three times as a "sweet aroma" or "soothing aroma" to the LORD.
- **Romans 15:16:** Paul speaks of the offering of the Gentiles being made acceptable by the Holy Spirit.
- The sacrifice—both the animal in Leviticus and the lives of believers in Romans—is pleasing to God when offered in accordance with His will.

The North Side: Location of the Crucifixion

Modern scholarship places the Crucifixion on the Mount of Olives, which is on the eastern side of Jerusalem, not the north. It forms a mountain ridge that overlooks the Old City and is separated from it by the Kidron Valley. This view is based largely on arguments from the Book of Hebrews:

"We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach."

The traditional sites of the Crucifixion differ by tradition: Catholics regard the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; Protestants favor the adjacent Garden Tomb; other traditions locate it near the Arab bus depot.

Considerations

There were two altars in the Tabernacle and subsequently in the Temple: the incense altar in the Holy Place, and the altar of burnt offering from which the priests could eat certain parts of some of the offerings. There was, however, another altar from which the priests could not eat. This was an altar 'outside the camp' where the remains of the sin offerings were burnt and where the ashes from the burnt offerings in the temple were brought (Lev 4:12, 21; 6:11; 9:11; 16:27; Num 19:3, 9). For the sin offerings, the entire animal was sacrificed and the priests had no portion.

Ezekiel 43:21 refers to an altar located east of the Temple "without the sanctuary." Here the important sacrifice of the Red Heifer was performed. Jeremiah records that this altar was located near the southern summit of the Mount of Olives, directly "east of the Temple," outside the camp of Israel some 2,000 cubits (about 1,000 yards) east of the central part of the Temple.

Jesus' crucifixion on the Mount of Olives, and the rending of the veil of the Temple, can be seen as the fulfillment of the prophecy in Zechariah 14:4: "And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west."

Reiach Nichoach — The Soothing Aroma

The strongest connection between the two terms is found in the phrase *reiach nichoach* (רֵיחַ נִיחוֹחַ), frequently translated as a "soothing aroma" or "pleasing scent" in sacrificial contexts. The term occurs over 40 times in the Hebrew Bible, with a high concentration in the Book of Leviticus.

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Greek Term: στηριχθῆναι (Stērichthēnai)

στηριχθῆναι (*stērichthēnai*): "to be established / strengthened" — this should be noted as a strong term.

The Covenant of Salt

A covenant of salt was a cultural practice in the ancient world in which one party would form a covenant by eating the salt of the other. Eating someone else's salt was seen as equally significant to drinking their blood—a variation of the idea of blood brothers, in which two people symbolically share a common source of life by exchanging blood, as if the two lives had become one. The two parties were bound by this sacred rite to be loyal to each other for life, ensuring mutual protection and care for the other's interests.

The phrase "covenant of salt" (בְּרִית מֶלַח, *bərît melaḥ*) appears twice more in the Hebrew Bible: in Numbers, where God's priestly covenant with the Aaronic priesthood is described as a covenant of salt; and in 2 Chronicles, where God's covenant with the Davidic kings of Israel is likewise so described.

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Leviticus 4:1 — Intentional and Unintentional Sin

Rabbi Isaac Arama, who was domiciled in Spain in the 15th century prior to the expulsion, argues that the difference between an intentional and an unintentional sin is that in the former case both the body and the soul were at fault, whereas in the case of an unintentional sin only the body was at fault. Therefore, a physical sacrifice suffices, since it was only the physical act of the body that was in the wrong.

Ramban holds that this is the logic of the sin offering. All sins, even those committed inadvertently, have consequences. They each "leave a stain on the soul and constitute a blemish on it, and the soul is only fit to meet its Maker when it has been cleansed from all sin" (Ramban to Lev. 4:2).

Leviticus 4:8 — Hebrew vs. Graeco-Roman Culture

It is important at this juncture to mark the difference between Hebrew and Graeco-Roman culture. In Hebraic culture, man is made in the image of God; in Graeco-Roman religion, the gods were fashioned in the image of man. The ancient cultures of the Middle East and the Mediterranean Basin revered the bull in their pagan mythology—especially Mithras, the prominent god of the Roman army, whose followers were initiated by the Taurobolium: a baptism in the blood of a suspended animal, with the candidate drenched in the blood. The practice later became connected with the worship of Cybele, the Great Mother of the Gods.

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Leviticus 4:13 — Communal Sin

This is a difficult passage when rendered into English from the MT; the LXX possibly gives better understanding. Leviticus 4:13 addresses communal sin in Israel, stating that if the "whole congregation" unintentionally violates a commandment and later realizes their guilt, they must offer a young bull as a sin offering. It establishes that communal ignorance of a law does not excuse guilt, requiring atonement to restore fellowship with God.

Romans 1:25 ("… worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator") aligns with the theological framework of Leviticus 18:22, which forbids same-sex sexual acts as violations of the created order. Paul uses this as an example of idolatry (v. 25) to explain the cause of "shameful lusts" (vv. 26–27), drawing on Old Testament themes of reversing creation.

The bull is an admired creature of great financial value and is also the supreme symbol of apostasy (echo 3). The worship of the Golden Calf—which was lewd, licentious, and characterized by intoxication or mass hysteria—is probably being referenced here, especially in later redactions. The important point is that for deception to work it must at least resemble the real thing.

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Greek Term: καθήκω (Kathēkō)

The Greek verb *καθήκω* (*kathēkō*) appears 14 times in the Septuagint (LXX), often used to describe things that are proper, fitting, or required by duty. It is derived from *kata* (down) and *hēkō* (to come), literally meaning "to come down to"—and can be translated "should be allowed." Things that are "not *kathēkon*" are "not to be done."

Concerning the long list of sins in Romans 1:29–31: there is also an echo of this passage in the Pastorals (2 Tim 3:1–5).

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Leviticus 5 ↔ Romans 5: Trespass and Grace

Both passages deal with the concept of a "trespass" or "offense," though from markedly different angles.

Leviticus 5 deals with specific, ritual, and unintentional sins against the tabernacle or sanctuary, each requiring a specific sacrifice.

Romans 5 deals with the federal representation of humanity—how Adam's action affected all humanity and how Christ's action offers a superior, abundant gift of justification and life.

The main theological connection is that Romans 5 uses the result of Adam's sin (death) as the backdrop to show the superiority of God's grace, which covers many such trespasses.

p. 17

Hebrew Terms for "Anyone" / "Person"

Note that כֹּל אֶחָד (Kol Ehad) would be the more usual term for "anyone," or מִישֶׁהוּ (mishoo), depending on context. The principal Hebrew terms for "person" or "anyone" in the Torah are:

Ish (אִישׁ): Primarily means "man," but is frequently used to mean "a man," "any man," or "anyone" (e.g., in laws: "If any man…"). It appears hundreds of times in the Torah and is the most common term.

Adam (אָדָם): Means "person," "human," or "mankind." Frequently used in Leviticus regarding sacrifices (e.g., "When any man/person [adam] brings an offering…").

Nefesh (נֶפֶשׁ): Frequently translated as "soul," "being," or "person." Commonly used for "anyone" in phrases like "If any person/soul [nefesh] sins…" (e.g., Lev 4:2; 5:1).

Kol (כָּל): Meaning "all," "every," or "any." When paired with other words (e.g., kol adam — any person; kol ish — any man), it constitutes "anyone." It is among the most common words in the Torah.

Mi (מִי): "Who." Frequently used in the sense of "whoever" or "anyone."

A larger tension concerns the term “soul.” Is Paul thinking with his Hebrew mind or his Greek mind? The Hebrew notion of the soul is best understood as personal identity and quality. In Greek thought, along with the spirit, the soul is a disembodied element within the tripartite scheme of body, soul, and spirit. The question is whether Paul is simply writing to Greeks—but this seems unlikely, given that by his own words he is concerned with the priority of the message to “the Jew first” (Romans 1:16).

p. 18

Torah vs. Nomos: Instruction, Not Law

Torah is not a forensic term and does not mean “law”—it means “instruction.” The Greek *nomos* is the standard translation in the LXX, but rendering it as “teaching” or retaining *Torah* as a calque would have been a more faithful approach. It is a practice in translation that, regrettably, persists to this day.

p. 19

The Noahide Laws and Romans 2:14–15

“… who don’t have the law do by nature the things of the law, these, not having the law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience testifying with them, and their thoughts among themselves accusing or else excusing them.” (Romans 2:14–15)

It would be worth explaining exactly what Paul is referencing here, and it fits very well: namely, the Noahide laws, which are binding on all of mankind to ensure a just, civilized society. These are prohibitions against idolatry, blasphemy, murder, sexual immorality, theft, and eating flesh from a living animal, along with the positive obligation to establish courts of justice.

p. 22

Circumcision and the Noahide Referent

Notice once again the Noahide referent. Circumcision was established by God as an everlasting physical sign of the covenant between Himself and Abraham, representing a vow of holiness and separation.

p. 23

On λόγος (Logos) and Oracles

λόγος (λόγος, ὁ), the verbal noun of *λέγω*, carries the additional meaning of “keeping record.” It is said that Matthew’s Gospel was produced from a *logion* (a written record of sayings) kept by Matthew himself.

p. 28

“Law of Faith” — Romans 3:27

Concerning the “law of faith”: Paul neatly encapsulates the matter in verse 27, where the Greek text is more precisely rendered “principles of faith.”

p. 29

Romans 4:3–5 — Abraham, Faith, and the Works-Grace Tension

"For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Now to him who works, the reward is not counted as grace, but as something owed. But to him who doesn't work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness." (Romans 4:3–5; cf. Gen 15:1–7; Gal 3:1–9; Heb 11:8–19; Jas 2:14–26)

Verse 5 is very contentious if not read carefully. The end of the passage is particularly challenging: if read without discernment, it could suggest that righteousness is a reward God owes a person for their deeds. But this is clearly contradicted by the principle that God is not a man that He should lie and is no man's debtor (Num 23:19; cf. Matt 19:27–20:16). While some Jewish traditions (e.g., Pirkei Avot and early Rabbinic thought) emphasized Abraham's righteousness through acts of obedience (mitzvot), Paul argues that this framing would make righteousness a debt—wages—rather than grace, and more importantly, would undermine the covenantal dynamic.

Nevertheless, the exciting element of this passage is that we are beginning to see the groundwork being laid for the nascent works-versus-faith teaching.

p. 30

Mercy Greater Than Judgment — Romans 11:32

Is this actually mercy being greater than judgment? While the phrase "mercy triumphs over judgment" is stated explicitly in James 2:13, the concept is central to the theology of Romans: God's compassionate choice to withhold judgment allows for transformation. God has allowed all to fall into disobedience, but His intent was not to destroy them—rather, "that He might have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:32; cf. Rom 11:6). Mercy is by grace, not works.

p. 32

Hebrew Terms for "Abomination"

Three Hebrew words are employed to connote abomination:

תּוֹעֵבָה (toʿevah): The most important of the three. It appears in the Bible 116 times as a noun and 23 times as a verb, with a wide variety of applications: food prohibitions (Deut 14:3), idolatrous practices (Deut 12:31; 13:15), magic (Deut 18:12), sexual offenses (Lev 18:22ff.), and ethical wrongs (Deut 25:14–16; Prov 6:16–19).

שֶׁקֶץ / שִׁקּוּץ (sheqets / shiqqutz): Connotes ritual impurity or detestable things, particularly in the context of dietary laws and idolatrous objects.

פִּגּוּל (piggul): Refers specifically to a sacrifice that has become invalid or putrid through improper intent or handling.

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Mavet (מָוֶת) — Death

Mavet (מָוֶת): The noun for "death" implies not merely a cessation of breath but a departure of the soul from the body. All dead things, unless ritually slaughtered (*shechitah*), are considered *treif*—that is, ritually unclean. A dead body is also ritually unclean in various respects.

p. 42

Leviticus 14 ↔ Romans 6: Purity and Baptism

The thematic connections between the entirety of Romans 6 (not just verse 1) and the broader purity laws in Leviticus 11–15 concern the transition from impurity to holiness. Whilst not a direct echo, this is more properly understood as a continuity.

There is a marked difference in Paul's use of the term "baptism." In Judaism, the mikveh was used for cleansing from defilement. The Essenes, and therefore *ipso facto* John the Baptist, offered a baptism of repentance. The situation changes when Paul is approached by Ananias: Paul received the Holy Spirit and then was baptized—note, not the other way around. From this point onward, baptism became associated with salvation.

There was no cure or healing for leprosy at that time; the "cured leprosy" of the biblical text was almost certainly referring to some other skin condition that was not recognized as distinct. It was a defilement, not the disease itself—hence the reader must be careful with what is translated as "leprosy." In other cases it should properly be interpreted as a form of defilement. Nevertheless, defilement required the appropriate remedial measures.

The contexts of cleansing fall into five aspects: priestly ritual, individual purification after uncleanness, hospitality and daily hygiene, judicial symbolism, and prophetic or poetic metaphor—all five of which baptism in water embraces.

p. 43

Oil and Blood Anointings

The oil and blood anointings described in Leviticus 14 are similar to those used in priestly consecration and carry similar symbolic overtones.

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Leviticus 15 ↔ Romans 6:12: The Body and Holiness

Leviticus 15 serves as a type or foreshadow of the spiritual impurity caused by sin, which Paul addresses in Romans 6:12. Both chapters deal with managing the body in order to maintain holiness before God. While they both focus on "the body," they address different types of "uncleanness": one ceremonial and physical, the other moral and spiritual. These make for instructive pairings when presented in this way.

p. 51

Hebrew Terms: 'Esh and Zarah — Fire and the Unauthorized

ʿEsh (אֵשׁ): fire. *Zarah* (זָרָה): "to turn aside"—that is, unauthorized, or more precisely, profane. "Presumptuous" may also be an apt rendering.

The note on Aaron and his clothing is important, as the scriptures make clear that proper timing and proper procedure are of great importance. The warning to Aaron regarding correct procedure is reminiscent of zarah and is also a key pointer to where Paul is progressing.

We need to keep in mind that the word Torah or nomos — law — whenever it appears is not forensic; it is much more relational to HaShem than we typically realize.

p. 56

The Law of Sin and Death

"The law of sin and death" represents the inevitable moral reality and the compulsive pull toward sin that ultimately leads to spiritual separation from God. This concept may benefit from further development in connection with the Kabbalistic concept of the Sitra Achra — the "other side," representing the forces of impurity and evil that stand in opposition to holiness.

p. 57

The Noahide Covenant and the Prohibitions of Acts 15

The prohibitions of Acts 15 follow from the prohibitions of the Noahide Covenant, which is composed of seven foundational laws serving as the basic ethical framework required to maintain a just and harmonious society, proposed to all mankind. In Jewish tradition, the Jewish people are obligated to observe the entire Torah (613 commandments), while all non-Jews are considered to be associated with this covenant if they observe the following seven foundational laws, known as the Seven Laws of Noah:

- Do not worship false gods or idols.
- Do not curse or revile the Creator (later formalized as blasphemy).

Do not murder. Although generally understood as a prohibition on taking human life, two additional dimensions are significant: first, murder is a deed done in secret or darkness — that is, unsanctioned; second, the taking of one life prevents the procreation of generations, as illustrated in the case of Cain slaying Abel.

- Do not commit incest, adultery, or other forbidden sexual relations.

Do not steal, kidnap, or defraud others. This prohibition also encompasses *lashon hara* — the evil tongue — that is, stealing someone's good name. It is important to remember that names carried descriptions of character.

- Do not eat a limb or flesh torn from a living animal.
- Establish courts of law to provide a fair legal system, based upon Torah, to enforce these laws and ensure order.

Regarding the echo between "adoption" and "strangers who live as foreigners": in the Roman Empire, inheritance was not a matter of primogeniture. A Roman citizen could nominate anyone as their heir, and whoever was so designated received a public deed of adoption. This is a legitimizing element of this sectional pairing.

p. 59

Reflections on Leviticus 18:5

Several interconnected considerations bear on how Paul uses Leviticus 18:5:

- **First**, Paul associates Leviticus 18:5 with τὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ("the righteousness of the law") in Romans 10:5, quoting "the person who does these things will live by them" to contrast law-keeping with righteousness by faith.
- **Second**, Paul associates Leviticus 18:5 with works-based righteousness in Galatians 3:9–14.
- **Third**, this perspective best aligns with Ezekiel 20's and Nehemiah 9's usage of Leviticus 18:5.

Leviticus 18:5 et al. functioned as a negative synecdoche for the עשה/ שמר commands of Leviticus 17–27 and served as a promise of joyful land possession.

Additional echoes in this range include:

- Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13 in Romans 1:26–27: Paul's description of "degrading passions" and "shameless acts" alludes to the prohibitions against male same-sex intercourse in Leviticus 18 and 20.
- Leviticus 18:25–28 in Romans 8:22: Paul's talk of creation groaning is sometimes linked to the concept in Leviticus where the land becomes unclean and "vomits out" those who defile it.
- Leviticus 19:18 in Romans 13:9: Paul summarizes the moral requirements of the law by quoting the command to "love your neighbor as yourself," affirming it as a fulfillment of the commandments.

p. 61

Shekinah and the Divine Presence

Shekinah is actually a non-biblical term, generally understood as "the Glory." In the Hebrew text לִי־מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם (Exod 25:8), the critical term is וְשָׁכַנְתִּי (*washakanti*), referring to the active, indwelling presence of God — not merely his glory shining down, but his real, assumed presence. This usage appears 128 times in the Tanakh in this sense.

Regarding the term "saints": while it literally means "holy ones," the term "holy" is better conveyed as *having been set apart*.

p. 62a

Romans 8 and the Concept of Union

The reality of the Romans 8 passages relates to union. This state may only be fully realized when elements of the Sitra Achra have been eliminated or subdued and the Sitra ha-Tov — the "good side" — emerges after intense dedication. The Leviticus passage similarly reflects a time of peace and union following great conflict.

p. 62b

Paul's Three-Part Introduction in Romans 9:1

In Hebraic writing, something is said twice for double emphasis. Paul's use of three expressions in Romans 9:1 to affirm his sincerity therefore goes beyond double emphasis — it is a unique intensification, signaling that what follows is of the highest possible importance.

p. 63

The Younger Over the Elder in the Tanakh

The Tanakh frequently illustrates the younger being preferred over the elder. Several prominent examples include:

- **Jacob and Esau:** God explicitly told Rebekah that the older twin would serve the younger, a prophecy fulfilled when Jacob received the primary birthright and blessing.
- **Joseph and his brothers:** Despite being the second-to-youngest of twelve sons, Joseph received dreams of leadership and ultimately became the savior of his family during a severe famine.

- **Ephraim and Manasseh:** When Jacob blessed Joseph's sons, he intentionally crossed his hands to place his right hand — the primary blessing — on the younger Ephraim rather than the firstborn Manasseh.
- **David and his brothers:** When the prophet Samuel sought to anoint the next king of Israel, God passed over David's seven older, physically stronger brothers to choose David, the youngest, as the primary leader and spokesman for Israel.

A question worth raising: did Paul possibly view himself in this light?

p. 67

Torah and Nomos: Relational, Not Forensic

Once again it is important to recognize that the word "law" here should not be read in a forensic sense. It bears repeating that the word *Torah* or *nomos* — whenever it appears — is much more relational to God than we typically realize.

p. 68

Echoes 3 and 4: Augustinian Allegory

Concerning echoes 3 and 4: this is an Augustinian allegory and should be viewed as such.

p. 70

Echoes 2a and 2b: Divine Parallelism

The quotation in echo 2b repeats the information in echo 2a while expanding it for emphasis. What we see here is a divine parallelism.

p. 71

The Eye in Hebraic Thought

In Hebraic thought, the eye reflects the spiritual condition — hence the "good eye" and the "bad eye." Jesus uses this imagery primarily in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:22–23) and again in the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:15). When Jesus speaks of the "bad eye" or "evil eye," he is not invoking the ancient superstition of casting curses. He is using a well-known Hebrew idiom denoting greed, stinginess, or a selfish, begrudging attitude toward others.

p. 72

On Provoking Israel to Jealousy — Romans 11:11

A preliminary methodological note: the question here is whether we wish to examine this passage openly and critically, or whether we are responding to a set position. The following proceeds from a critical approach.

The Greek and Hebrew Terms

Commentary on Romans 11:11 typically draws from the Greek ζῆλος (*zelos*) and the Hebrew קִנְאָה (*qana*), both of which carry the dual meanings of negative jealousy and positive zeal. The most important element is that the underlying biblical concept is intensely relational — an impassioned, unyielding commitment to what rightfully belongs to you, or a desire to inspire eager emulation — not the petty resentment of modern usage.

Modern Usage vs. Biblical Intent

Jealousy as commonly understood is a complex emotion arising when a person perceives a threat to a valued relationship or status, involving anger, insecurity, fear of abandonment, and resentment. This is emphatically not what Paul intends. Linguistically, the aim of "provoking Israel to jealousy" is not to incite spite or hatred, but to stimulate emulation.

Contextual Considerations

Is Paul expressing a desire for his audience to exhibit the covenantal aspects of Judaism, with Yeshua as Messiah, in a way that fulfills the Torah? Could this nascent community exhibit the fruits of the dawn of the Messianic kingdom? In one sense, yes — but it seems unlikely in the extreme at this point in both the historical and theological process. If Paul is referring to certain social advantages, this would not apply either, as Christianity at that time was a religio illicita — an illegal religion. Furthermore, it is a gross misunderstanding of the numbers involved: the church at Corinth, for instance, numbered approximately 200 at the time of writing.

A more productive line of thought may be that martyrdom was becoming a nascent phenomenon gaining traction in the early church. Christians would exhibit their zeal by offering themselves for the most violent forms of death. Was Paul intimating that Christian suffering was a more dynamic witness to God [and Jesus as Messiah] than Torah observance — one that Jewish people should regard as exemplary?

The passage also connects to the broken branches motif: the newly grafted branch revivifies the tree, giving continuity to the theme of life from the dead.

The Song of Moses — First Exemplar

The Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:21 offers the first biblical exemplar, where God declares he will make Israel jealous and angry by blessing outsiders — "a no-people" or "a foolish nation." The aim is *emulation*, not resentment.

How Did the Church Do?

Linguistically and theologically, the Gentile church was called to stimulate emulation of covenant faithfulness. The record is as follows.

Observing Torah	**Failed**
Bringing reconciliation	**Failed**
Following the Noahide Laws	**Failed**
Being a light to the nations, according to the Prophets	**Failed**
Expressing the Messianic expectation	**Failed**
Working to establish the Kingdom of God on earth	**Failed**
Comforting God's people (Isaiah)	**Failed**
Speaking tenderly to Jerusalem, that their hard service has been accomplished	**Failed**
Exhibiting godliness and seeking tzaddik (righteousness)	**Failed**

Seeking first the Kingdom	**Failed**

If the above had been recognized as the proper remit of the church — rather than being overwhelmed by antisemitic readings, displacement theology, mistranslations, and related distortions — the results would have been very different. The matter requires revisiting from first principles rather than from entrenched theological assumptions.

In summary: the concept of jealousy here is that the Gentiles should be exemplars of God's covenantal relationship with the Jewish people — emulating and living by God's divine revelation as expressed in the Torah, the Prophets, and the Messiah. It is hardly surprising that antisemitic forces have worked overtime to obscure this. Nevertheless, *nil desperandum*: the Christian-sponsored Aliyah movement has been a shining exemplar after nearly two millennia of Jewish hatred, of which the work of Ezra International in the United Kingdom is one example.

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Being Cut Off vs. Being Broken Off

אֱמֹר אֲלֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם כָּל־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרַב מִכָּל־זַרְעֲכֶם אֶל־הַקֳּדָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר יַקְדִּישׁוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לַיהוָה וְטֻמְאָתוֹ עָלָיו וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מִלְּפָנַי אֲנִי יְהוָה

There is a critical distinction between being *cut off* and being *broken off*. A branch must be alive and vibrant in order to be cut off. A branch that is broken off, by contrast, implies something that is already drying out and in the process of decay. This is a most important point, illustrating the mercy of God.

p. 74

The Wild Olive Branch

If a domestic olive tree is dying, it can be revived by grafting in a wild olive branch to reinvigorate it. This is a wonderful picture of the dynamic Paul describes.

p. 85b

Lex Talionis

The legal term for "eye for an eye" is *lex talionis*. It found its way into both Babylonian and Roman law.

p. 88

The Jubilee in 56 CE

The final paragraph regarding the Jubilee in 56 CE is a well-made point.

p. 90

The Nations Streaming to Jerusalem

In the modern era, the fulfillment of the prophetic vision of the nations streaming to Jerusalem began in 1948 and accelerated on a larger scale in 1989 with the advent of worldwide Aliyah, increasing further from 2003 onwards.

p. 97

Dedicating Houses to the Work — Prisca and Aquila

This practice of dedicating houses to the work of God may connect back to Acts 18 in the sense of continuity and advancement. To strengthen this element, Prisca's name is frequently listed before Aquila's, which has led many scholars to suggest she may have been the more prominent teacher or leader in their ministry. There is little by way of record concerning leadership in the emergent church. We know women served as deacons and evangelists, and in some cases as apostles:

The Samaritan Woman: Disclosed by Jesus as the Messiah in John 4, she effectively became the first witness and evangelist to her town.

Mary Magdalene: A prominent follower of Jesus and the primary commissioned witness of the resurrection, tasked with announcing the event to the disciples. [1, 2, 3]

Priscilla: Named in Romans 16 and Acts 18, she served as a missionary, co-worker, house church host, and mentor who instructed the Jewish intellectual Apollos.

Junia: Recognized in Romans 16:7 by Paul as outstanding among the apostles.

Euodia and Syntyche: Described in Philippians 4:2–3 as women who labored side-by-side with Paul in the spread of the gospel.

Daughters of Philip: Four prophetic women from Caesarea mentioned in Acts 21:9.

Phoebe, a Deaconess (*diakonos*) of the church in Cenchreae (the port city of Corinth) and Paul's representative in Rome.

Hence there is no reason why the lady should not be presented in this manner.

p. 99

Aristarchus, Secundus, Tertius, and Quartus — Ordinal Names

Note that Aristarchus, Secundus, Tertius, and Quartus may not be forenames but are probably titular referents. There is a pattern with names like Secundus (mentioned elsewhere with Aristarchus), Tertius, and Quartus (Romans 16:23). These are Latin ordinal words:

- *Secundus* = "Second"
- *Tertius* = "Third"
- *Quartus* = "Fourth"

(Aristarchus is Greek and does not literally mean "First," though the sequence Aristarchus — Secundus — Tertius may suggest a parallel idea of ranking or order.)

In the Roman world, especially among slaves, freedmen, or lower classes, people were often given or took these ordinal names as designations rather than traditional personal forenames. They

could indicate birth order (e.g., the third son), sequence in a household or work group, or simple numerical labels common for people without high social status.

Tertius the scribe and Quartus “our brother” fit this pattern perfectly. They were probably not formal given names but functional or birth-order references — much like calling someone “Junior,” “Trey,” or “Quad” today. Secundus follows the same logic.

This is not unusual in the New Testament or Roman context. Many early Christians were from humble backgrounds, and these names underscore that the gospel reached ordinary people — slaves, officials, hosts, scribes — who played key roles in the early church.