

Chapter 6

However, some among us may wonder how it is possible that at the time of Jeremiah and then up to the advent of the Messiah the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob existed and remained under the tribe of Judah or the throne of David, even though only Judah remained whereas Israel was exiled. These persons must be informed that the kingdom of Israel was led into captivity and destroyed, that it never returned home and never will return home, but that Israel, or the seed of Israel, always continued to a certain extent under Judah, and that it was exiled with Judah and returned again with her. You may read about this in I Samuel, I Kings 10 [11] and 12, and II Chronicles 30 and 31. Here you will learn that the entire tribe of Benjamin thus a good part of Israel remained with Judah, as well as the whole tribe of Levi together with many members of the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, Asher, Isachar, and Zebulun who remained in the country after the destruction of the kingdom of Israel and who held to Hezekiah in Jerusalem and helped to purge the land of Israel of idols. Furthermore, many Israelites dwelt in the cities of Judah.

Since we find so many Israelites living under the rule of the son of David, Teremiah is not lying when he says that Levites and the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be found under the rule of David's house. All of these, or at least a number of them, were taken to Babylon and returned from it with Judah, as Ezra enumerates and recounts. Undoubtedly many more returned of those who were led away under Sennacherib, since the Assyrian or Median kingdom was brought under the Persian rule through Cyrus, so that Judah and Israel were very likely able to join and return together from Babylon to Jerusalem and the land of Canaan. For I know for certain that we find these words in Ezra 2:70: "And all Israel (or all who were there from Israel) lived in their towns." And how could they live there if they had not come back? In the days of Herod and of the Messiah the land was again full of Israelites; for in the seventy weeks of Daniel, that is, in four hundred and ninety years, they had assembled again. However, they did not again establish a kingdom.

Therefore the present-day Jews are very ignorant teachers and indolent pupils of Scripture when they allege that Israel

has not yet returned, as though all of Israel would have to return. Actually not all of Judah returned either, but only a small number, as we gather from Ezra's enumeration. The majority of them remained in Babylon, as did Daniel, Nehemiah, and Mordecai themselves. Similarly, the majority of the Israelites remained in Media, though they perhaps traveled to Jerusalem for the high festivals and then returned to their homes again, as Luke writes in the Acts of the Apostles [2:5 ff.]. God never promised that the kingdom or scepter of Israel would be restored like that of Judah. But he did promise this to Judah. The latter had to recover it by virtue of God's promise that he would establish David's house and throne forever and not let it die out. For as Jeremiah declares here, God will not tolerate that anyone slander him by saying that he had rejected Judah and Israel entirely, so that they should no longer be his people and that David's throne should come to an end, as if he had forgotten his promise, when he had promised and pledged to David an eternal house. Even though they would now have to sojourn in Babylon for a little while, still, he says, it will remain an eternal house and kingdom.

I am saying this to honor and to strengthen our faith and to shame the hardened unbelief of the blinded and stubborn Jews, for whom God must ever and eternally be a liar, as though he had let David's house die out and forgotten his covenant and his oath sworn to David. For if they would admit that God is truthful, they would have to confess that the Messiah came fifteen hundred years ago, so that David's house and throne should not be desolate for so long, as they suppose, just because Jerusalem has lain in ashes and has been devoid of David's throne and house so long. For if God kept his promise from the time of David to the Babylonian captivity and from then to the days of Herod when the scepter departed, he must also have kept it subsequently and forever after, or else David's house is not an eternal but a perishable house, which has ceased together with the scepter at the time of Herod.

But as we have already said, God will not tolerate this. No, David's house will be everlasting, like "day and night and the ordinances of heaven and earth," as Jeremiah puts it [Jer. 33:25]. However, since the scepter of Judah was lost at the time of Herod, it cannot be eternal unless the son of David,

the Messiah, has come, seated himself on David's throne, and become the Lord of the world. If the Jews are correct, then David's house must have been extinct for 1568 years, contrary to God's promise and oath. This it is impossible to believe. Now this is a thorough exposition of the matter, and no Jew can adduce anything to refute it. Outwardly he may pretend that he does not believe it, but his heart and his conscience are devoid of anything to contradict it.

And how could God have maintained the honor of his divine truthfulness, having promised David an eternal house and throne, if he then let it stand desolate longer than intact? Let us figure this out. In the opinion of the Jews, the time from David to Herod covers not quite a thousand years. David's house or throne stood for that length of time, inclusive of the seventy years spent in Babylon. (We would add over one hundred years to this total.) From Herod's time, or rather let us say for this is not far from correct from the destruction of Jerusalem, to the year 1542 there are 1,568 years, as stated above. According to this computation, David's house and throne has been empty four or five hundred years longer than it was occupied. Now inquire of stone and log whether such may be called an eternal house, especially constructed by God and preserved by his sublime faithfulness and truthfulness -- a house that stands for one thousand years and lies in ashes for fourteen or fifteen hundred years!

Though the Jews be as hard or harder than a diamond, the lightning and thunder of such clear and manifest truth should smash, or at least soften, them. But as I said before, our faith is cheered thereby, it is strengthened, it is made sure and certain that we do have the true Messiah, who surely came and appeared at the time when Herod took away the scepter of Judah and the saphra, so that David's house might be eternal and forever have a son upon his throne, as God said and swore to him and made a covenant with him.

Some crafty Jew might try to cast up to me my book against the Sabbatarians, in which I demonstrated that the word "eternally," le-olam, often means not really an eternity, but merely "a long time." Thus Moses says in Exodus 21:6 that the master shall take the slave who wants to stay with him and bore through his ear with an awl on the door, "and he shall serve him eternally." Here the word designates a human eternity, that is, a lifetime. But I also said in the same

treatise that when God uses the word "eternal," it is a truly divine eternity. And he commonly adds another phrase to the effect that it shall not be otherwise, as in Psalm 110:4, "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind." Similarly in Psalm 132:11: "The Lord swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back," etc. Wherever such a "not" is added, this means surely eternal and not otherwise. Thus we read in Isaiah 9:7, "Of peace there will be no end." And in Daniel 7:14, "His dominion is an everlasting dominion... and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." This is eternal not before men, who do not live eternally, but before God, who lives eternally.

The promise states that David's house and throne shall be eternal before God. He says: "Before me, before me," a son shall forever sit upon your throne. In Psalm 89:35-37 he also adds the little word "not": "Once for all I have sworn by my holiness, I will not lie to David. His line shall endure for ever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established for ever; it shall stand firm while the skies endure." The last words of David convey the same thought: "He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure." These words "ordered and secure" mean the same as firm, sure, eternal, never-failing. The same applies to the saying of Jacob in Genesis 49:10: "The scepter shall not depart." "Not depart" signifies eternally, until the Messiah comes; and that surely means eternally. For all the prophets assign to the Messiah an eternal kingdom, a kingdom without end.

But if we assume that this refers to a human or temporal eternity or an indefinite period of time (which is impossible), then the meaning would necessarily be as follows: Your house shall be eternal before me, that is, your house shall stand as long as it stands, or for your lifetime. This would pledge and promise David the equivalent of exactly nothing; for even in the absence of such an oath David's house would stand "eternally," that is, as long as it stands, or as long as he lives. But let us dismiss such nonsense from our minds, which would occur to none but a blinded rabbi. When Scripture glories in the fact that God did not want to destroy Judah because of the sins committed under Rehoboam, but that a lamp should remain to David, as God has promised him regarding his house

(II Kings 8:19), it shows that all understood the word "eternal" in its true sense.

Someone might also cite here the instance of the Maccabees. After Antiochus the Noble had ruthlessly ravaged the people and the country, so that the princes of the house of David became extinct, the Maccabees ruled, who were not of the house of David but of the tribe of the priests, which meant that the scepter had departed from Judah and that a son of David did not sit eternally on the throne of David. Thus the eternal house of David could not be really eternal. We reply: The Jews cannot disturb us with this argument, and we need not answer them; for none of this is found in Scripture, because Malachi is the last prophet and Nehemiah the last historian, who, as we can gather from his book, lived until the time of Alexander. Therefore both parties must rely, so far as this question is concerned, on Jeremiah's statement that a son of David was to occupy his throne or rule forever. For apart from Scripture, whoever wants to concern himself with this may regard it as an open question whether the Maccabees themselves ruled or whether they served the rulers. As to the reliability of the historians, we shall have some comments later on.

It seems to me, however, that the following incident recorded in Scripture should not be treated lightly. At the time of Queen Athaliah, for fully six years no son of David occupied his throne; she, Athaliah the tyrant, reigned alone. She had had all the male descendants of David slain, with the single exception of Joash, an infant a quarter or a half year old, who had been secretly removed, hidden in the temple, and reared by the excellent Jehosheba, the wife of the high priest Jehoiada, daughter of King Joram and sister of King Ahaziah, whom Jehu slew. Here the eternal covenant of God made with David was in great peril indeed, resting on one young lad in hiding, who was far from occupying the throne of David. At this time his house resembled a dark lantern in which the light is extinguished, since a foreign queen, a Gentile from Sidon, was sitting and reigning on David's throne. However, she burned her backside thoroughly on that throne!

Still, all of this did not mean that the scepter had departed or that God's eternal covenant was broken. For even if the light of David was not shining brightly at this time, it was still glimmering in that child Joash, who would again shine

brightly in the future and rule. He was already born as a son of David, and these six years were nothing but a tentatio, a temptation. God often gives the appearance that he is unmindful of his word and is failing us. This he did with Abraham when he commanded him to burn to ashes his dear son Isaac, in whom, after all, God's promise of the eternal seed was embodied. Likewise when he led the children of Israel from Egypt. In fact, he seemed to be leading them into death, with the sea before them, high cliffs on both sides, and the enemy at their back blocking their way of escape. But matters proceeded according to God's word and promises; the sea had to open, move, and make way for them. If the sea had not done this, then the cliffs would have had to split asunder and make a path for them, and they would have squeezed and squashed Pharaoh between them, just as the sea drowned the foe. For all creatures would rather have to perish a thousand thousand times than that God's word should fail and deceive, however strange things may appear. Thus Joash is king through and in God's word, and occupies the throne of David before God although he still lies in the cradle, yes, even if he lay dead and buried under the ground; for in spite of all he would have to rise, like Isaac, from the ashes.

In such a manner we might also account for that story of the Maccabees; but this is unnecessary, for it has an entirely different meaning. The Babylonian captivity might be viewed similarly; however, thanks to splendid prophets and miracles, the situation at that time was much brighter. But Joash posed a terrible temptation for the house of David, against the covenant and the oath of God, although the house and rule of David still flourished; it was only the ruler, or the head, that was suffering and that faltered in God's covenant. But this is the manner of his divine grace, that he sometimes plays and jokes with his own. He hides himself and disguises himself so that he may test us to see whether we will remain firm in faith and love toward him, just as a father sometimes does with his children. Such jesting of our heavenly Father pains us immeasurably, since we do not understand it. However, this is out of place here.

We have been speaking about a statement of Jeremiah. We will now turn our attention to one of the last prophets. In Haggai 2:6-9 we read: "For thus says the Lord of hosts: once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth

and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, so that the consolation of the Gentiles (*chemdath*) shall come, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts. The splendor of this latter house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the Lord of hosts."

This is another of those passages which pains the Jews intensely. They test it, twist it, interpret and distort almost every word, just as they do the statement of Jacob in Genesis 49. But it does not help them. Their conscience pales before this passage; it senses that their glosses are null and void. Lyra does well when he plies them hard with the phrase *adhuc modicum*, "in a little while." They cannot elude him, as we shall see. "In a little while," he says, cannot possibly mean a long period of time. Lyra is surely right here; no one can deny it, not even a Jew, try as hard as he may. In a little while, he says, the Consolation of the Gentiles will come, after this temple is built -- that is, he will come when this temple is still standing. And the splendor of this latter temple will be greater than that of the former. And this will happen shortly, i.e., "in a little while."

For it is easily understood that if the consolation of the Gentiles, whom the ancients interpret as the Messiah, did not come while that temple was still standing, but is still to come (the Jews have been waiting 1568 years already since the destruction of that temple, and this cannot be termed "a little while," especially since they cannot foresee the end of this long time), then he will never come, for he neglected to come in this little, short time, and now has entered upon the great, long time, which will never result in anything. For the prophet speaks of a short, not a long time.

But they extricate themselves from this difficulty as follows. Since they cannot ignore the words "in a little while," they take up and crucify the expression "consolation of the Gentiles," in Hebrew *chemdath*, just as they did earlier with the words *shebet* and *shiloh* in the saying of Jacob. They insist that this term does not refer to the Messiah, but that it designates the gold and silver of all the Gentiles. Grammatically, the word *chemdath* really means desire or pleasure; thus it would mean that the Gentiles have a desire for or take pleasure and delight in something. So the text

must read thus: In a short time the desire of all Gentiles will appear. And what does this mean? What do the Gentiles desire? Gold, silver, gems! You may ask why the Jews make this kind of gloss here. I will tell you. Their breath stinks with lust for the Gentiles' gold and silver; for no nation under the sun is greedier than they were, still are, and always will be, as is evident from their accursed usury. So they comfort themselves that when the Messiah comes he will take the gold and silver of the whole world and divide it among them. Therefore, wherever they can quote Scripture to satisfy their insatiable greed, they do so outrageously. One is led to believe that God and his prophets knew of nothing else to prophesy than of ways and means to satisfy the bottomless greed of the accursed Jews with the Gentiles' gold and silver.

However, the prophet has not chosen his words properly to accord with this greedy understanding. He should have said: In a little while the desire of the Jews shall come. For the Jews are the ones who desire gold and silver more avidly than any other nation on earth. In view of that, the text should more properly speak of the desire of the Jews than of the Gentiles. For although the Gentiles do desire gold and silver, nevertheless here are the Jews who desire and covet this desire of the Gentiles, who desire that it be brought to them so that they may devour it and leave nothing for the Gentiles. Why? Because they are the noble blood, the circumcised saints who have God's commandments and do not keep them, but are stiff-necked, disobedient, prophet-murderers, arrogant, users, and filled with every vice, as the whole of Scripture and their present conduct bear out. Such saints, of course, are properly entitled to the Gentiles' gold and silver. They honestly and honorably deserve it for such behavior -- just as the devil deserves paradise and heaven.

Further, how does it happen that such very intelligent teachers and wise, holy prophets do not also apply the word "desire" (chemdath) to all the other desires of the Gentiles? For the Gentiles desire not only gold and silver but also pretty girls, and the women desire handsome young men. Wherever we find among the Gentiles anything other than Jews (I almost said "misers"), who will not bestow any good on their bodies, they desire also beautiful houses, gardens, cattle, and property, as well as good times, clothes, food, drink, dancing,

playing, and all sorts of enjoyment. Why, then, do the Jews not interpret this verse of the prophet to mean that such desires of all the Gentiles also will shortly come to Jerusalem, so that the Jews alone might fill their bellies and feast on the world's joys? For such a mode of life Muhammad promises his Saracens. In that respect he is a genuine Jew, and the Jews are genuine Saracens according to this interpretation.

The Gentiles have another desire. How could these wise, clever interpreters overlook it? I am surprised at it. The Gentiles die, and they are afflicted with much sickness, poverty, and all kinds of distress and fear. There is not one of them who does not most ardently wish that he did not have to die, that he could avoid need, misery, and sickness, or be quickly freed from them and secure against them. This desire is so pronounced that they would gladly surrender all others for its fulfillment, as experience shows daily. Why, then, do the Jews not explain that such desire of all the Gentiles will also come to the temple in Jerusalem in a little while? Shame on you, here, there, or wherever you may be, you damned Jews, that you dare to apply this earnest, glorious, comforting word of God so despicably to your mortal, greedy belly, which is doomed to decay, and that you are not ashamed to display your greed so openly. You are not worthy of looking at the outside of the Bible, much less of reading it. You should read only the bible that is found under the sow's tail, and eat and drink the letters that drop from there. That would be a bible for such prophets, who root about like sows and tear apart like pigs the words of the divine Majesty, which should be heard with all honor, awe, and joy.

Furthermore, when the prophet says that "the splendor of this latter house shall be greater than the former," let us listen to the noble and filthy (I meant to say, circumcised) saints and wise prophets who want to make Jews of us Christians. The greater splendor of the latter temple compared to the former consists [they say] in this: that it (that is, the temple of Haggai) stood ten years longer than the temple of Solomon, etc. Alas, if they had only had a good astronomer who could have worked out the time a little more precisely. Perhaps he would have found the difference between the two to be three months, two weeks, five days, seven hours, twelve minutes, and ten half-minutes over and above the ten years. If there were a store anywhere that offered blushes for sale, I might

give the Jews a few florins to go and buy a pound of them to smear over their forehead, eyes, and cheeks, if they would refuse to cover their impudent heart and tongue with them. Or do these ignorant, stupid asses suppose that they are talking to sticks and blocks like themselves?

There were many old, gray men and women, very likely also beggars and villains in Jerusalem when Solomon, a young man of twenty years, became a glorious king. Should these, for that reason, be more glorious than Solomon? Perhaps David's mule, on which Solomon became king, was older than Solomon. Should he by reason of that be greater than Solomon? But thus those will bump their heads, stumble, and fall who incessantly give God the lie and claim that they are in the right. They deserve no better fate than to compose such glosses on the Bible, such foolishness and ignominy. This they indeed do most diligently. Therefore, dear Christian, be on your guard against the Jews, who, as you discover here, are consigned by the wrath of God to the devil, who has not only robbed them of a proper understanding of Scripture, but also of ordinary human reason, shame, and sense, and only works mischief with Holy Scripture through them. Therefore they cannot be trusted and believed in any other matter either, even though a truthful word may drop from their lips occasionally. For anyone who dares to juggle the awesome word of God so frivolously and shamefully as you see it done here, and as you also noted earlier with regard to the words of Jacob, cannot have a good spirit dwelling in him. Therefore, wherever you see a genuine Jew, you may with a good conscience cross yourself and bluntly say: "There goes a devil incarnate."

These impious scoundrels know very well that their ancient predecessors applied this verse of Haggai to the Messiah, as Lyra, Burgensis, and others testify. [97] And still they wantonly depart from this and compose their own Bible out of their own mad heads, so that they hold their wretched Jews with them in their error, in violation of their conscience and to our vexation. They think that in this way they are hurting us greatly, and that God will reward them wherever for his sake (as they imagine) they have opposed us Gentiles even in open, evident truth. But what happens, as you have seen, is that they disgrace themselves and do not harm us, and further, forfeit God and his Scripture.

Thus the verse reads: "Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land (these are the islands of the sea) and the *chemdath* of all Gentiles shall come"—that is, the Messiah, the Desire of all Gentiles, which we translated into German with the word *Trost* ["consolation"]. The word "desire" does not fully express this thought, since in German it reflects the inward delight and desire of the heart (active). But here the word designates the external thing (passive) which a heart longs for. It would surely not be wrong to translate it with "the joy and delight of all Gentiles." In brief, it is the Messiah, who would be the object of displeasure, disgust, and abomination for the unbelieving and hardened Jews, as Isaiah 53 prophesies. The Gentiles, on the other hand, would bid him welcome as their heart's joy, delight, and every wish and desire. For he brings them deliverance from sin, death, devil, hell, and every evil, eternally. This is indeed, the Gentiles' desire, their heart's delight, joy, and comfort.

This agrees with the saying of Jacob in Genesis 49:10, "And to Shiloh (or the Messiah) shall be the obedience of the peoples." That is to say, they will receive him gladly, hear his word and be come his people, without coercion, without the sword. It is as if he wished to say: The ignoble, uncircumcised Gentiles will do this, but my noble rascals, my circumcised, lost children will not do it, but will rather rave and rant against it. Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1] also agree with this: "It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it (doubtless voluntarily, motivated by desire and joy) and many people shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his path.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Thus the prophets speak throughout of the kingdom of the Messiah established among the Gentiles.

Yes, this is it, this is the bone of contention, that is the source of the trouble, that makes the Jews so angry and foolish and spurs them to arrive at such an accursed meaning, forcing them to pervert all the statements of Scripture so shamefully: namely, they do not want, they cannot endure

that we Gentiles should be their equal before God and that the Messiah should be our comfort and joy as well as theirs. I say, before they would have us Gentiles whom they incessantly mock, curse, damn, defame, and revile share the Messiah with them, and be called their co-heirs and brethren, they would crucify ten more Messiahs and kill God himself if this were possible, together with all angels and all creatures, even at the risk of incurring thereby the penalty of a thousand hells instead of one. Such an incomprehensibly stubborn pride dwells in the noble blood of the fathers and circumcised saints. They alone want to have the Messiah and be masters of the world. The accursed Goyim must be servants, give their desire (that is, their gold and silver) to the Jews, and let themselves be slaughtered like wretched cattle. They would rather remain lost consciously and eternally than give up this view.