

# The Mosaic

*Essential elements of Hebrew biblical hope*

## SHARDS OF DESTINY

### Seeds of hope

The vision of hope in the Hebrew scriptures is not fully focused, it is much more a mosaic of powerful ideas that interplay with each other in an eschatological medley or montage. To change the metaphor, each of these shards is like a fertile seed. These seeds of a biblical Christian hope have been present from the earliest days of God's dealings with Israel. From the beginning all the basic elements have been embedded within the concept. As time has progressed it is not that new features have been added, but that those, which have existed from the beginning, have germinated, deepened and expanded. Within the Hebrew scriptures the nature of the hope only slowly begins to emerge. Different strands are developed, and as with any embryonic form it is not always easy to see the relationship of one part to another, though the main features are becoming clear. As we shall see, throughout the Hebrew texts the understanding of the nature of the hope remains embryonic. Only in the person of Jesus are the strands drawn together and the multi-dimensional image begins to fully appear.

Promise gave birth to hope, and hope continued to be stimulated even as the promises appeared to be fulfilled. The people inherited the land and became a great nation and yet it is clear this was only a partial fulfillment. God continually told the Jews never to think of their present situation as the final act, 'Lift up your eyes', there is still more on the horizon and into the future.

In attempting to draw together the eschatological elements of the Hebrew scriptures we of course do so from the perspective of the new covenant. We are not presented with neatly developed themes and categories, instead ideas develop on different occasions in a variety of circumstances, often seeming to have little relationship to each other, yet they are all part of the whole emerging picture. What we present below is an attempt to identify the main themes; of necessity it is systematic and therefore artificial, but hopefully draws together the main elements of Israel's eschatological hope upon which we build.

## GENESIS FRAGMENTS

### Rest and re-creation

'God saw everything that he had made,  
and indeed, it was very good ...  
Thus the heavens and the earth were finished,  
and all their multitude.  
And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done,  
And he rested on the seventh day ...  
So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it ...'  
(Gen 1:31 – 2:3)

The 'seventh day' of this majestic creation meditation, which uses the image of the cycle of the week for its structure, is about 'rest'. It linked with God's covenant instruction to the Jews to 'rest' every one-day in seven – the 'Sabbath'; but it is much more than that. Here



we are pointed towards something greater still, open-ended celebration, enjoyment and re-creation. This 'final day' of the creation cycle is alive with ultimate hope! It looks towards an infinite future of unlimited possibilities (*no* 'evening and morning was the seventh day'; see also Heb 4:1-13).

### Trees and a test

'Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow  
every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food  
the tree of life also in the midst of the garden,  
and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ...  
"You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;  
but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,  
for the day that you eat of it you shall die ...  
But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die;  
For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened,  
And you will be like God knowing good and evil" ...  
"I will put enmity between you and the woman  
and between your offspring and hers:  
he will strike your head and you will strike his heel"  
(Gen 2:9,16-17; 3:3,15)

The 'Tree of Life', central within Eden, becomes a powerful biblical eschatological symbol. In the garden it is near to the 'Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil' with its forbidden fruit; this is because to feed on it would bring the experience of all knowledge that alone is destructive. 'Forbidden' calls for 'obedience', which in turn is the first step towards becoming like God, along with feeding on the 'Tree of Life'. The serpent's voice with its lie and temptation to disobey succeeds and the opportunity to share divine life is lost. But even in the midst of this trauma there is a spark of hope – the serpent is told Eve's offspring "will strike your head" and the tree of life is a presence that will not go away (see Rev 22:2, 19).

### Flood, ark, olive leaf and rainbow

'The flood ... and the waters increased,  
and bore up the ark and it rose high above the earth ...  
Only Noah was left and those that were with him in the ark ...  
And the dove came back to him in the evening  
And there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf ...  
This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you  
and every living creature that is with you,  
for all future generations.  
I have set my bow in the clouds ..."  
(Gen 7:17, 23; 8:11; 9:12-13)

Turbulent waters like a flood or the ocean represented chaos and the universe out of control to the Hebrew mind, and in this story it was understood to be the consequence of human wickedness. Yet in the face of this horror there are also glimpses of hope. The ark is a symbol of salvation, a refuge for a righteous family and representatives of the whole of

wild creation. As the waters subside we see the dove with the olive leaf (each powerful symbols of peace and *shalom*) point out the direction of the future. This is affirmed by the God-given covenant sign of the rainbow, which is yet another symbol of peace.

### **Babel and cultural diversity**

‘Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city,  
and a tower with its top in the heavens,  
and let us make a name for ourselves” ...  
And the Lord said ... “Come let us go down,  
and confuse their language there” ...  
Therefore it was called Babel,  
because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth:  
and from there the Lord scattered them over the face of all the earth’  
(Gen 11:4-5,9)

The city is the symbol of the world understood in terms of human civilization. The towering city of Babel is an artificial cosmic mountain built by humans to storm heaven and rival God. It is the expression of idolatry and human self-deification. Babel stands in opposition to everything God desires of human society – so it is halted by a God-infused confusion of language and breakdown in communication. This act is often spoken of a ‘curse’ but it is no such thing; it restrains human arrogance and pride while at the same time insisting on their fulfilling God’s very first command to humanity, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth ...” Now begins the emergence of diverse human culture, something God always wanted from the beginning, which finds its climax in the innumerable multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language (Rev 7:9) – infinite cultural diversity. This is hope indeed!

### **Abraham and global blessing**

‘Now the Lord said to Abram “Go ... to the land that I will show you  
... I will make you a great nation and I will bless you ...  
and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”  
(Gen 12:1-3)

Abraham began a nomadic journey in response to the call of God; it became a pilgrimage through history of a people carrying a hope that would affect the destiny of the whole of humanity. God gave to Abraham a threefold promise and a covenant that laid the foundations to a hope that keeps unfolding. Rootless migrants are promised land; the rabbis saw this fulfilled at the time of David’s monarchy, but it points to the new creation and new heaven and earth. A childless couple are told their descendants will become a great nation, thought to be fulfilled in Israel, but clearly includes the people’s beyond numbering embraced by God’s salvation in displaying the same faith as Abraham. Their obedience brought them blessing and blessing upon their descendents (when they were obedient), but ultimately upon the whole human race; an astonishing vision of hope!

## The *Shiloh* enigma

‘The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,  
until *Shiloh* comes;  
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.  
Binding his foal to the vine and his ass's colt to the choice vine,  
he washes his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes;  
his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk’  
(Gen 49: 10-12)

Jacob's blessing on his son Judah is tantalizing and the Hebrew presents different possibilities. The reference to a 'scepter', 'ruler's staff' and 'coming' plus 'vine', 'grapes' and 'wine' all suggest something of a possible 'messianic' sense. If 'Shiloh' is taken as a title then it would probably be translated something like 'the peace-giver'. However, 'Shiloh' is never a Messianic title and this passage is not referred to as a prophecy in the New Testament. However it is re-worked it has that sense of future hope (possibly about 'rule', 'kingdom' and *shalom*) about it that is interesting.

## EXODUS, COVENANT, TORAH

### Freedom and salvation

Israel's exodus from slavery in Egypt and the covenant making with Yahweh on Mount Sinai is the central event of the Hebrew scriptures. It is also the foundational and most frequently used biblical image for salvation.<sup>1</sup>

The Exodus is the moment of birth for the Jewish nation, the defining event in their history:

‘And now, O Lord our God,  
who brought your people out of the land of Egypt  
with a mighty hand  
and made your name renowned even to this day’  
(Dan 9:17)<sup>2</sup>

It would be referred back to time and time again. This is the demonstration of God's overwhelming and creative power, the 'mighty hand' of the divine bringing them into being and also sustaining them.

However, as history unfolds the nation turned it's back on God's astonishing grace and after repeated warnings by the prophets they were defeated and scattered, with the majority ending up in long-term exile in Babylon. The Jews eventual return home is seen as a second exodus, a nation reborn, a second demonstration of God's power, which also carries within it a theme of ultimate eschatological hope as well:

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<sup>1</sup> About 33% more often than any other biblical image or metaphor

<sup>2</sup> See also Ps 77:14-20; 78:12-55; 80:8; 106:7-12; 114; Hos 11:1; Jer 7:21-24 and many others



‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet  
of the messenger who announces peace,  
who brings good news, who announces salvation,  
who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’  
... for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. ...  
The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations;  
and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God’  
(Isa 52:7-10)

## Covenant choice

The events of the Exodus break the hold of Egyptian slavery, leading the people to the ‘mountain of God’ in the Sinai desert. Here the covenant making on Mount Sinai binds the people and God together, Yahweh making it clear that Israel’s privilege is a result of divine choice alone:

‘It was not because you were more in number than any other people  
that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you,  
for you were the fewest of all peoples;  
but it is because the Lord loves you,  
and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers’  
(Dt 7:7-8)

But there has to be a choice on the part of Israel in return. Will she choose to be obedient to the instructions (Heb: *torah*) of the covenant and its blessings or will she choose her own way regardless of the consequences? These are life or death decisions:<sup>3</sup>

‘I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse;  
therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live,  
loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him;  
for that means life to you and length of days’  
(Dt 30:19-20)

Each response is clearly spoken about, not only in terms of the present but also the future. Covenant choices have immediate and long-term consequences, and they also have eschatological perspectives.

Before the Exile the prophets<sup>4</sup> frequently refer back to the Sinai covenant. The nation would face the consequences of her disobedience if she did not change her ways. Israel stood on the edge of a potential catastrophe. She faced national annihilation at the ‘Day of the Lord’. Historically this happened at the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC and the end of statehood. Eschatologically it looks forward towards a day when all disobedience will be confronted and dealt with.

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<sup>3</sup> When blessing there is relationship with God (cf Dt 28:1-14) but not with disobedience (cf Dt 27:16-46)

<sup>4</sup> Especially Amos, Zephaniah and Ezekiel



## A 'remnant'

There is a profound biblical idea of hope, linked to covenant and relationship, found in the concept of the 'remnant'. The idea of a 'remnant' is what is left of a community in the aftermath of destruction. In most cases the term is used with a powerful sense of hope. The story of righteous Noah and his family (Gen 6:5-8:22) as sole survivors of the flood, promises a new beginning and is where the 'remnant' idea first begins.

Elijah, believing he was the only true worshipper of Yahweh, is told that that is not true and that following the inescapable catastrophe that was coming (at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 BC), there would be a remarkable 'remnant':

'Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel,  
all the knees that have not bowed to Baal,  
and every mouth that has not kissed him'  
(1Kg 19:18)

Here the idea of the 'remnant' is personified in those people who are 'the physical embodiment of the truth' (ie: living in harmony with their understanding of the character of God). Both Elijah and Elisha were to serve the 'remnant' and try to enlarge it before the disaster came.

Breaking the covenant led to catastrophe, like chopping down a tree leaving only the stump; but the root is still there and it begins to bud and branch into something glorious for the future – this is the true meaning of 'remnant hope':

'On that day the branch of the Lord  
shall be beautiful and glorious,  
and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory  
of the survivors of Israel'  
(Isa 4:2)

This idea continues to play an important role in early New Testament thinking.

## New covenant

Beyond the disaster of the broken covenant is the promise of a new renewed covenant that changes the very character of those it embraces:

'The days are surely coming, says the Lord,  
when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel ...  
I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts ...  
they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, ...'  
(Jer 31:31-34)

For Ezekiel (36:25-27) this was the work of the Spirit enabling people to keep God's torah (instructions) naturally and spontaneously. It is a vision of hope that becomes central to the New Testament.



## **'Light to the nations'**

Israel's faith was not for her alone, it was for the world. It was God's desire that many should pray the prayer of Ruth, 'Your people shall be my people, and your God my God' (1:16). That God's grace extends to the most heathen of nations is the fundamental message of Jonah. God's blessing upon Abraham is available to everyone who exercises the same faith (Gen 12:3). There are numerous passages that speak of Yahweh's kingly blessings flowing through Israel to the nations of the earth:

- 'In you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves' (Gen. 12:3)
- 'All the families of the nations shall worship before him' (Ps 22:27)
- 'I have given you as a covenant to the peoples, a light to the nations' (Isa 42: 6)
- 'Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth' (Isa 45:22)
- 'You are my witnesses, says the Lord' (Isa 43:10)
- 'I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach the end of the earth' (Isa 49: 6)
- 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples' (Isa 56: 7)
- 'They shall declare my glory among the nations' (Isa 66:19)

This is the most astonishing vision of God's covenant and *torah* (life-giving instructions) touching all the people and nations of the earth, bringing about a global exodus to salvation.

## **JERUSALEM: CITY AND TEMPLE**

### **'City of Yahweh'**

Biblically the image of 'the city' becomes a symbol of organized human society and civilization; its structure, its culture, its power, its spirituality and ultimately its identity and hope.

The biblical imagination sees Jerusalem representing ideal human society living in harmonious relationship with God, the place overshadowed by the divine presence. The city Jerusalem is unique because at its centre there is the Temple, at the centre of which is the Most Holy Place, in the middle of which was the 'Ark of the Covenant' whereupon the *shekinah* glory of God rested (cf Isa 4:2-6). The prophets and the psalms often refer to the temple city of Jerusalem as 'Zion' giving deliberate significance to this being the 'City of Yahweh' wherein dwell the 'people of God'.

In the light of this Jerusalem stands in contrast to all other cities of the world like, Babel, Nineveh, Babylon or Rome, which are seen as symbolizing anti-God arrogance, pride, greed and militaristic power.

### **Righteousness and peace**

We first touch the uniqueness of Jerusalem, and the ideas associated with it, in the strangely mythical encounter of Abram and Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20):



‘And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine;  
he was priest of God Most High He blessed him and said,  
‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High,  
maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High,  
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!’  
And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything’

The name ‘Melchizedek’ means ‘king of righteousness’. He is ‘king of Salem’, literally ‘king of peace’. ‘Salem’ is of course Jerusalem (lit: ‘the dwelling place of peace’). This story is set long before the time of David’s capture of the Jebusite stronghold Jerusalem and Solomon’s building of the Temple).

This strange figure<sup>5</sup>, ‘king of righteousness and peace’ and ‘priest of God Most High’ (clearly ‘Yahweh’), sets the scene for thinking about Jerusalem and the Temple in a way that has a profound *shalom* foundation in its moral and spiritual focus. That it becomes a symbol of hope appears to be obvious, even at this very early stage.

### **Dark hope**

Historically Jerusalem and the Temple demonstrated little righteousness and peace. Even under David and Solomon there was sin and corruption and beyond them it spiraled out of control. Prophet after prophet warned of impending doom if nothing changed. Isaiah offered king Hezekiah a stay of execution because of the Temple (2Kg 19:8-34), but a century later Jeremiah made it clear neither the city nor the Temple would be saved. In 587 BC the Babylonians reduced them all to rubble:

‘ ... they hiss and wag their heads at daughter Jerusalem;  
‘Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty,  
the joy of all the earth?’  
(Lam 2:15)

Yet even in the horrific cry of lamentation, or from the shame and confusion of exile, there is a persistent hope that from an attitude of repentance Jerusalem and Temple can once again be restored; and they are (cf Ezra 1:1-4; 6:15-16). However, only for the tragic cycle to repeat itself all over again at the hands of the Romans in 70 CE, and still hope for a future with a Jerusalem and a Temple at its centre continues!

### **Mountain of the Lord**

When you travel to Jerusalem you do ‘go up’ to the city, which stands in the hill-country with the Temple mount rising as the high point of the city. You could not, however, describe any of this as a ‘mountain’ in geographical terms.

In the ancient near east mountains were believed to be the places where you could actually meet the gods and in the flat plains of Mesopotamia they built artificial mountains called ‘ziggurats’ for this very purpose. To emphasize the central sacred importance of Jerusalem and the Temple in God’s ultimate purposes we hear the Hebrew prophets speaking of Jerusalem as a huge globally dominating mountain:

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<sup>5</sup> In later generations Jews will speculate whether Melchizedek was in fact an angel or messianic figure; see how the author of Hebrews (5:6; 6:20 and 7:17) works with the idea in relation to Jesus.



'In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house  
 shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
 and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it.  
 Many peoples 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 paths.'  
 For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,  
 and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem'  
 (Isa 2.2-3; Mic 4.1-2) <sup>6</sup>

Notice how Jerusalem becomes the centripetal<sup>7</sup> focus for the nations<sup>8</sup>, drawn to its truth, teaching and instruction found in the torah of Yahweh. The Temple will become a place of prayer for all nations and all those previously excluded for all manner of reasons would now be embraced.<sup>9</sup>

### River of life

Not only do the people and nations of the earth stream towards Jerusalem and the new Temple, in a complementary way, life and fertility flow in the form of a river into the whole earth bringing abundance everywhere:

'Then he brought me back to the door of the temple;  
 and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple ...  
 And on the banks, on both sides of the river,  
 there will grow all kinds of trees for food.  
 Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail,  
 but they will bear fresh fruit every month,  
 because the water for them flows from the sanctuary.  
 Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing'  
 (Ezk 47:1-8)<sup>10</sup>

The name 'Zion' may originally have meant 'dry' – Jerusalem has always suffered from a shortage of water, with the exception of the Gihon spring. This makes the eschatological hope expressed in this vision all the more powerful:

'I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys;  
 I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.  
 I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive;  
 I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together;  
 that people may see and know, may consider and understand together,  
 that the hand of the Lord has done this,  
 the Holy One of Israel has created it'  
 (Isa 41:18-20)

<sup>6</sup> Cf also Ps 48:1-2; 46:4; Isa 25:6; 27:13; 66:20; Ezk 40:2; 47:1-12; Zec 8:3; 14:8

<sup>7</sup> Centripetal means 'to seek' or 'to be drawn to the centre'

<sup>8</sup> See also Jer 3:17; Ezk 5:5; Zec 2:11; 8:2

<sup>9</sup> See Isa 56:1-8 also Mk 11:17

<sup>10</sup> See also Ps 46:4; Joel 3:18



## New Jerusalem

The new Jerusalem at the centre of the renewed creation becomes the dreamed of source of righteousness and peace:

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth ...  
for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy ...  
The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox;  
and dust shall be the serpent's food.  
They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord'  
(Isa 65:17-18,25)

In the new covenant it will no longer be seen to need a Temple as the presence of God is totally all pervading (Rev 21:22).

## Questions & Reflections

- 1: What do these ideas communicate to us about biblical hope? Are there any surprises or anything new?
- 2: Do these ideas connect with any other themes about biblical hope that you are familiar with?
- 3: What value is there in understanding that a biblical idea has developed in cultural and literary thinking over a period of time? What can we learn from this? How do any of the ideas and themes about biblical hope explored here connect with your personal experience and also the world at large?

## Reading and Resources

*Key books:*

R Bauckham & T Hart '**Hope Against Hope**' Darton, Longman & Todd 1999  
JB Green (Ed et al) '**Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels**' IVP 1992: article: 'Kingdom of God' / Heaven by CC Caragounis p 417-430  
G MacDonald '**The Evangelical Universalist**' SPCK 2008  
NT Wright '**New Heavens, New Earth: The Biblical Picture of the Christian Hope**' Grove Books 1999  
NT Wright '**The Resurrection of the Son of God**' SPCK 2003  
P Yoder '**Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice & Peace**' Life & Faith Press 1987

*Other useful book resources:*

J Alison '**Living in the End Times**' SPCK 1997  
CE Armerding & WW Gasque (Ed) '**Handbook of Biblical Prophecy**' Baker 1977  
W Barclay '**A Spiritual Autobiography**' Eerdmans Publishing Company 1977  
R Bauckham '**Jude & 2 Peter**' Word 1983  
R Bauckham '**The Theology of the Book of Revelation**' Cambridge 1993  
GR Beasley-Murray '**The Book of Revelation**' Eerdmans 1981



J Bonda **'The One Purpose of God'** Eerdmans 1993  
 W Brueggemann **'Peace: Understanding Biblical Themes'** Chalice Press 2001  
 F Carey (Ed) **'The Apocalypse and the Shape of Things to Come'** British Museum Press 1999  
 RG Close **'The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views'** IVP 1977  
 N Cohn **'The Pursuit of the Millennium'** Temple Smith 1970  
 DN Freedman (Ed) **'Anchor Bible Dictionary' Vol:3** Doubleday 1992 see article T Prendergast 'Hope' p 284  
 DN Freedman (Ed) **'Anchor Bible Dictionary' Vol:5** Doubleday 1992 see articles:
 

- Eschatology by DL Petersen p 575
- *Parousia* by Christopher Rowland p xxx

 JB Green [Ed et al] **'Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels'** IVP 1992: articles:
 

- Apocalyptic by DC Allison
- Eschatology by DC Allison Jr p 206-209
- Son of Man by IH Marshall p 775-781

 G Kittel (Ed) **'Theological Dictionary of the New Testament'** Eerdmans 1964: article *basileus* by KL Schmidt [et al] Vol 1: p 564-593  
 AT Lincoln **'Paradise Now and Not Yet'** Cambridge 1981  
 D Linn 'Good Goats – Healing our Image of God' Paultist Press  
 BD McLaren **'The Secret Message of Jesus'** Thomas Nelson 2006  
 RH Mounce **'The Book of Revelation'** Eerdmans 1977  
 R Parry & C Partridge (Eds) **'Universal Salvation?'** Paternoster 2003  
 A Richardson (Ed) **'A Theological Word Book of the Bible'** see article 'Hope' London SCM Press 1965 p 108-109  
 The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England, **'The Mystery of Salvation'** London, Church House Publishing, 1995  
 D Thompson **'The End of Time'** Minerva 1997  
 Walter Wink **'Engaging the Powers'** Fortress Press 1992  
 NT Wright **'The New Testament and the People of God'** SPCK 1992  
 NT Wright **'Jesus and the Victory of God'** SPCK 1996  
 NT Wright **'Surprised by Hope'** SPCK 2007  
 PB Yoder & WM Swartley (Ed) **'The Meaning of Peace'** (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed) IMS Eikhart 2001

For further reading and research resources for the themes explored in this 'mosaic' section we suggest that you consult reputable Bible dictionaries such as **'The Anchor Bible Dictionary'** Vol: 1-6 Editor: DN Freedman Doubleday 1992, theological word books and reputable critical commentaries on the biblical books that contain some of the key passages referred to.

