The majority of scholars specializing in Pauline studies maintain that the Apostle to the Gentiles conceived of his own call and ministry at least partially in the light of OT prophecy. Gal. i 15-16, for example, is thought to recall Isa. xlix 1 and Jer. i 5 1). Throughout his letters Paul quotes or alludes to the OT to show that the acceptable time, the day of salvation, is now 2), the period between Jesus' resurrection and his return, the parousia. This interim period, which Paul expects to be completed within his own lifetime 3), provides him who was “called to be an apostle” and “set apart for the gospel of God which [God] promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures” (Rom. i 1-2) 4), with the opportunity of converting Gentiles from “among all the nations” (Rom. i 5) to belief in the Lord Jesus as the Christ. Nowhere else in his letters does Paul base his argumentation more heavily on the OT than in Romans ix-xi, where he deals with the question

2) 2 Cor. vi 2, quoting Isa. xlix 8. Cf. 1 Cor. x 11, where Paul states that evil events recorded in the Pentateuch were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come.” For the Apostle, all the promises of God (in the OT) find their Yes in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. i 20), who is the end of the Law (Rom. x 4). See also the statement of R. Johanan (bar Nappaha), a second generation Palestinian Amora according to H. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) 121, in b. Sanh. 99a: “All the prophets prophesied only in respect to the Messianic era” (translation by H. Freedman in the Hebrew-English Edition of the Talmud. Sanhedrin [London: Soncino, 1969]).
3) Cf. 1 Thess. i 10; iv 15, 17; 1 Cor. vii 26, 29, 31; xv 51; xvi 22; Rom. xiii 11 (“salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed”); Phil. iv 5.
4) The translation is that of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, also employed elsewhere unless stated otherwise.
of unbelieving Israel's salvation\(^5\)). For this reason it is probable from the outset that there is also an OT background to, and perhaps an exegetical tradition behind, the Apostle's thinking about the “full number of the Gentiles” (πληρωμα τῶν ἔθνων) in Rom. xi 25, as a number of authors in the past and more recently have maintained \(^6\). Here Paul imparts to his readers a “mystery” \(^7\):

\(^5\) In addition to the Romans commentaries, cf. O. MICHEL, Paulus und seine Bibel (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1929), chart p. 74, where the exceptionally large number of OT quotations in Romans ix-xi can be noted. See also pp. 125-26 on Paul's use of Deutero-Isaiah in Romans to justify scripturally the mission to the Gentiles. L. GOPPELT in his Theologie des Neuen Testamentes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976) II.379 points out that while First Corinthians contains only 16 citations from the OT, Romans has 52, and 28 of these are in chapters ix-xi.

\(^6\) O. CULLMANN in his 1936 essay “Der eschatologische Charakter des Missionsauftrages und des apostolischen Selbstbewusstseins bei Paulus,” now in Vorträge und Aufsätze. 1925-62 (Tübingen: Mohr; Zurich: Zwingli, 1966) 305-36, had already connected Mark xiii to (before the parousia of Jesus “the gospel must first be preached to all nations”), the restraining force (κατέξεσθαι) of 2 Thess. ii 6, and Rom. xi 25. Only the preaching of the gospel to all the nations would achieve the “fullness of the Gentiles,” of which Paul speaks in Romans (328-30). Cullmann is followed here by J. MUSCK in Paul and the Salvation of Mankind (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox, 1959) 47-49, who also connects the “fulness” with Paul’s collection for Jerusalem and the OT motif of a pilgrimage of the Gentiles to Jerusalem in the final time (“Völkerwallfahrt”) (303-04). C. PLAG in Israels Wege zum Heil. Eine Untersuchung zu Römer 9-II (Arbeiten zur Theologie. I. Reihe, 49; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1969) 41-47, 65 attempts to show that Rom. xi 25-27 is a secondary insertion into the text; for him it is the remains of an additional Pauline letter. According to PLAG, one reason for this is that the verb εἰσήλθεν in vs. 25 is connected with the motif of the pilgrimage of the Gentiles to Jerusalem, for which he cites several Jewish references on p. 57. Since Paul does not refer to this pilgrimage elsewhere in this section of Romans, xi 25-27 are foreign to their context. In his essay “Zur Interpretation von Römer 11, 25-32” in Probleme biblischer Theologie. Festschrift von Rad (Munich: Kaiser, 1971), P. STUHLMACHER disagrees with PLAG’s insertion hypothesis, yet also advocates a Christian interpretation of the motif of a Gentile pilgrimage to Zion as the background of Rom. xi 25 (560). He believes that the motif behind the “fulness of the Gentiles” is older than that found in Mark xiii 10 (565-66). In his study Juden und Heiden in der Mission des Paulus. Studien zum Römerbrief (Forschung zur Bibel; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1973), D. ZELLER deals extensively with Rom. xi 25 ff. (245-58) and categorically denies a connection between the “fulness of the Gentiles,” Paul’s collection enterprise, and the eschatological pilgrimage of the Gentiles to Zion (282-84). For him the origin of xi 25 may lie in the thoughts of ix 2 and x i on Paul’s sorrow over the fate of Israel (253).