

# Israel in Bible Prophecy

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BIBLE ADVOCATE PRESS

A ministry of the  
Church of God (Seventh Day)



BIBLE ADVOCATE PRESS

Post Office Box 33677  
Denver, Colorado 80233

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The free literature program of the Church of God (Seventh Day) is supported by freewill offerings.

Bible Advocate Press  
P. O. Box 33677  
Denver, Colorado 80233  
U.S.A.

In Canada correspondence and contributions may be sent to: Church of God (Seventh Day), Box 305, Station G. Calgary, Alberta T3A 2G3.

## ISRAEL IN BIBLE PROPHECY

One of the most striking fulfillments of Bible prophecy in modern times occurred on May 14, 1948. On that date, Israel proclaimed her independence, and became a sovereign nation.

Ever since that time Israel and the Middle East have been a center of world attention, a special troubled area of the nations. The Arab nations surrounding Israel refused to make peace and plotted how they might destroy the infant nation. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed with just one purpose, that of eliminating the nation of Israel.

During the first twenty-five years of modern Israel as a nation, four wars were fought with the Arabs. Israel was victorious in all of these, but still there was no peace and no direct negotiations for a peace treaty. Finally this situation was changed when President Sadat of Egypt declared for peace and made his memorable journey to Jerusalem in November of 1977. Following this came the historic Camp David conference with President Carter, President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin which resulted in a basic plan for a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt.

By 1980 this action had progressed to the

extent that Israel and Egypt had exchanged ambassadors, and direct travel between the two countries was established. The status of the old city of Jerusalem continues to stir trouble. The nation of Jordan demands that the old city be returned to its rule but Israel has declared that Jerusalem will never again be divided and that the united city is the capital of Israel and must remain so.

The Arab nations have condemned Egypt for making peace with Israel and have cut off financial aid to Egypt. The Arabs, led by the PLO, continue to agitate for a separate sovereign state (nation) to occupy the West Bank lands. Iraq and Syria remain bitter enemies of Israel and have made a pact for the eventual "liberation of Palestine," meaning in plain words, the destruction of Israel. But Israel not only continues as a nation, she is actually expanding her presence in the occupied lands.

What does the future hold for Israel and her neighbors? In connection with the peace treaty with Egypt, Israel has returned most of the Sinai peninsula and there is a schedule for the return of all that area. Why does Israel give up the Sinai, but not the West Bank? The answer is to be found in the Bible, in the history of the people of Israel, the Jews and the Bible records of the promises of God to that people. The Sinai is not a part of that "promised land" but the West Bank is, and the Bible refers to that

area as Judaea and Samaria. How do all these events fit in with Bible prophecy? What does the Bible tell about why and how Israel became a modern nation, and what about its future? How are all these events important to Christians, as one of the great signs of the nearness of the second advent of Christ? Read the following pages and rejoice in the wonderful fulfillment of the Word of God.

### **The Beginning**

Israel's national history is much older than her existence as a modern state. The declaration of her independence in 1948 was the culmination of a movement which began in the nineteenth century to resettle Palestine after nearly two thousand years of Jewish exile. The much older segment of Israel's history is recorded in the Old Testament.

The movement toward independence was predicted by Old Testament prophets many centuries ago. Israel is God's great timepiece in Bible prophecy. God chose her to be a people with a special mission. Their land became the land of the Bible, and their relationship with God provides the foundation of Christianity.

Abram (Abraham), the forefather of Israel, was born in Ur of the Chaldees, south of Mesopotamia. He moved with his father and family to northern Mesopotamia. There he

received a call from God, as recorded in Genesis 12:1:

*Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.*

Abraham's obedience to this call began the formation of the Hebrew nation and the chain of events which will lead to the coming of the Son of God to earth to complete the plan of redemption.

### **The Promised Land**

After Abraham settled in Canaan, God made a special promise to him:

*I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession (Genesis 17:8).*

*Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates (Genesis 15:18).*

The land referred to in these verses is the land of Palestine, including the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and extends from the small river or brook of Egypt at the north edge of the Sinai, through the land of Syria to the river Euphrates. The promises to Abraham passed on to his son Isaac and then to Isaac's son, Jacob, to whom God gave the name of Israel.

Jacob and his family migrated from Canaan to Egypt because of a great famine. There were seventy persons in this move. Favorable conditions in Egypt induced the family to remain for many years. The Israelites (descendants of Jacob) prospered and increased enormously. Their imposing numbers came to be regarded as a threat to the national security of Egypt. They were enslaved and forced to do construction work.

In the fifteenth century B.C., God caused a great leader, Moses, to arise among the Israelites. Through the miraculous help of God, Moses was able to deliver them from their oppressive Egyptian taskmasters. He led them to the border of their "promised land." Joshua, the successor of Moses, led the children of Israel in taking possession of Canaan by defeating several nations occupying the land. The Bible books of Exodus and Joshua record these events as coming about by the direct guidance and commands of God.

### **Israel Becomes a Kingdom**

The Bible contains the record of the wars, victories, and defeats Israel experienced. It tells of extraordinary leaders this small nation produced to help her meet constant crises. With God's blessings, Israel prospered and eventually became a great kingdom.

David was the most famous of Israel's kings. During his reign, the kingdom was expanded to the borders of Egypt on the south and the Euphrates River on the north.<sup>1</sup> This was the first fulfillment of the promise that Abraham's seed would inherit this land.

Under David's son, Solomon, Israel reached the peak of her wealth and power. Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem — the city which his father made capital of Israel. The temple was the focal point of the worship of God. It also became the symbol which helped preserve national unity.

### **The Kingdom Is Divided**

National unity was short-lived after Solomon's death. The Israelites fought among themselves, and the nation was divided into two separate kingdoms. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin became the southern kingdom, known as Judah, with Jerusalem as her capital. The remaining tribes became the northern kingdom, known as Israel. In this divided condition, each of the kingdoms was under constant threat by neighboring nations.

Many of the people fell into idolatry and in other ways turned from God. Because of their sins, God decreed that their freedom would be lost. He permitted them to be overcome by foreign nations. In 721 B.C., the Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians. Many of the people were carried away into



captivity — most of whom were absorbed wherever they were transplanted. Others were absorbed by foreigners who settled in Israel and intermarried with the Israelites. A few descendants of the Israelite exiles maintained their identity and joined with the exiles of Judah many years later.<sup>2</sup>

Judah was besieged by the armies of Babylon from 606 B.C. to 586 B.C. Worship at Jerusalem was ended by the destruction of the magnificent temple of Solomon. The people of Judah suffered death or deportation to Babylon. Only the poor were allowed to remain.

### **The End of Babylonian Captivity**

Jeremiah was in Jerusalem during the last years of the Kingdom of Judah. Through him God gave the prophecy of the captivity and its duration:

*And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations [Israel and Judah], shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11).*

*For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place (Jeremiah 29:10).*

Toward the end of this seventy-year

period, Babylon was conquered by Cyrus, king of Persia, and the exiles from Judah had new rulers.

About 200 years earlier, through the prophet Isaiah,<sup>3</sup> God foretold that a king named Cyrus would permit the return of the exiles and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. One of King Cyrus' first acts was to decree that the enslaved exiles from Judah could return home! The Bible record of Cyrus' proclamation (II Chronicles 36:23; Ezra 1:2) shows that the Jews were given every encouragement and help to return to Judah and rebuild the temple at Jerusalem.

The Jews in Babylon did not all respond immediately to this offer. At first, about fifty thousand returned to Judah.<sup>4</sup> God stirred the spirits of the people with conviction and purpose. Those who remained in Babylon made contributions of cattle, silver, gold, and other precious materials to assist those who returned home to a desolate, hostile land.

The temple was rebuilt under the leadership of Zerubbabel — encouraged by the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. The foundation was laid in the second year of their return, but this building project faced much difficulty and was not completed until twenty years later in 516 B.C. Jerusalem was rebuilt under the leadership of Nehemiah, beginning in 444 B.C.

During the captivity, most of the Jews

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maintained their identity and their worship of the true God — receiving guidance and encouragement from Ezekiel. Their previous enforced abstinence from participation in the religious activities of the temple impressed upon them the spiritual significance of worshipping the true God and maintaining their distinction as His people. After their return to Jerusalem, the Jews had strong leadership under Zerubbabel, Haggai, and Zechariah. They never again indulged in idolatry.

**Remnants of all the House of Israel  
Took Part in the Restoration**

It is important to recognize that even though Judah and Israel were exiled during two different time periods, they were all carried to the Tigris-Euphrates Valley region. Israel was taken to the upper valley region and into Media by Assyria during 734-721 B.C.; and Judah was carried to the lower valley region by Babylon during 606-586 B.C. Nineveh and Babylon, the capitals of these two conquering empires, were only 300 miles apart. For almost 300 years, Babylon was subject to Assyria; but in 607 B.C., Babylon broke the power of Assyria and took her empire. In her westward sweep, she conquered Judah and Egypt. Seventy years later, in 536 B.C., the Babylonian Empire (including the entire Tigris-Euphrates Valley region), fell to the

new world empire, Persia.

This means that at the time of each captivity, and at the time of the return, the entire valley region was within the boundaries of the ruling power. Interestingly, Assyria brought some people from Babylon to Israel to replace those who were carried into exile (II Kings 17:24).

The people of Israel and Judah were never wholly absorbed by the communities in which they settled. Large numbers of the descendants of Jacob maintained their identity by the exercise of their distinctive worship of God throughout the period of captivity. During the Persian regime, some took advantage of the political tolerance that was afforded them and returned to Judah to rebuild the temple and the walls of Jerusalem, while others established flourishing Jewish communities at widely separated points throughout the empire.<sup>5</sup>

It is evident that descendants of all twelve sons of Jacob returned to Jerusalem at the end of the Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah foretold that the children of Israel would join the children of Judah in returning.

*In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go and seek the Lord their God.*

*They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come,*

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and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten (Jeremiah 50:4, 5).

The writings of Ezra, Nehemiah, and others confirm that descendants of the northern kingdom also returned.<sup>6</sup> Members of all tribes who returned to Judah were called either Israel or "Jew," a term derived from Judah.<sup>7</sup> Following the captivity, wherever the term "Jew" is used in the Bible, it comprehends the remnant of all Israel.

Further evidence of this usage of the term "Jew" may be found in New Testament writings. They offer added proof that remnants of all of Israel were identifiable at the time of and following the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ.<sup>8</sup>

Jesus identified His ministry to be "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matthew records two incidents demonstrating the mission. One poignant account is related in Matthew 15:21-28. A Gentile woman petitioned Jesus to heal her daughter. Jesus responded, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24).

On the other occasion Jesus instructed His disciples to minister only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:6). The apostles were literally restricted to that commission. This instruction from Jesus was directed to the apostles for that particular time and had nothing to do with

the commission to the church.

Several years later, James, one of the disciples instructed by Jesus to go only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," wrote a letter addressed to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad . . ." (James 1:1).

These three cases give evidence that the posterity of all twelve sons of Jacob could be identified.

### The Great Dispersion

Through Moses, God gave Israel a stern warning centuries before the Babylonian captivity. They were forewarned that if they turned away from God to worship idols and committed other sins, they would be dispersed over all the earth:

*And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me . . . I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste (Leviticus 26:27, 33).*

*But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God . . .*

*The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou . . . shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.*

*And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead*

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them (Deuteronomy 28:15, 25, 27).

After their return from captivity, the Jews again disobeyed, and the prophesied punishments were inflicted. First, they were conquered by the Greeks. At the beginning of this new servitude, the Jews surrendered peacefully. Later, they resisted strongly when the worship of Greek deities was forced on them by Antiochus Epiphanes, king of the Syrian division of the Grecian empire. The temple was desecrated, and the Jews were threatened with death unless they forsook their worship of God. After the period of warfare (led by Judas Maccabee), the Syrians withdrew. The temple was cleansed. True worship was restored. While the Jews were yet in Babylon, God revealed through Daniel that these events would happen.<sup>9</sup>

Years later, as the Roman Empire expanded, Palestine was made a Roman province. Under the Roman political system, some areas were ruled by officials who were given the title of king. Herod was the Roman king of Judea when Jesus was born. Jesus' birth was fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that through his seed, blessings would be made available to all nations and people.

*Now unto Abraham and his seed  
were the promises made. He saith not,  
And to seeds, as of many; but as of*

*one, and to thy seed, which is Christ*  
(Galatians 3:16).

Jesus said, "Salvation is of the Jews." Christianity is a continuation of the great plan of God in which Abraham and his descendants play a vital part. All who have "put on Christ" are also the "seed of Abraham."<sup>10</sup>

Although Christ was born among them, most of the Jews rejected Him and continued in their wicked ways. The decree of God that they must be driven from their homeland and scattered among all the nations was carried out. The Romans brought this about.

In 66 A.D., the Jews revolted against their Roman rulers. Thousands of Jews were killed and thousands more were driven from the land during the terrible siege which followed. In 70 A.D., under Emperor Titus, much of Jerusalem was destroyed and the temple was razed. Those Jews remaining in Palestine continued under Roman rule until the time of Hadrian. This emperor had other plans for Jerusalem: "He therefore decided to rebuild Jerusalem not as a Jewish center but as a Roman colony, to be called Aelia Capitolina. This caused fierce resentment . . . a new rebellion flared up. Its leader was Shimon bar Kozeba, a descendant of the family of David."<sup>11</sup>

This revolt took place from 132 to 135 A.D. Jerusalem was completely destroyed.



"All that remained was the Western Wall, the ancient retaining wall at the foot of Mount Moriah. Five hundred thousand Jews died or were sold as slaves in the final act of Roman oppression."<sup>12</sup> After this, Jews were not permitted to live in the land of Palestine. They went wherever they could — literally to all the nations of the earth. The greatest centers of Jewish population and culture were ultimately established in eastern European countries, such as Poland and Russia. The "Diaspora" or dispersion of the Jews was to the far corners of the world.

#### **New Testament Prophecy of the Dispersion of the Jews**

Not only did the prophets of old foretell of the Jews' dispersion, but Jesus also predicted it. The plunder of Titus in 70 A.D. and Hadrian in 135 are clearly referred to:

*And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.*

*Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let them that are in the countries enter thereinto.*

*For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.*

*But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in*

*those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.*

*And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21:20-24).*

This statement is significant because it describes the events which occurred. The Jews' beloved city, Jerusalem, had fallen. It was to remain in the hands of Gentile nations for nearly 1900 years.

Jesus referred to Daniel's prophecy<sup>13</sup> of the desolation and destruction of the temple at Jerusalem. He said:

*When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand):*

*Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains:.*

*Let him which is on the house top not come down to take any thing out of his house:*

*Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.*

*And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!*

*But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day:*

*For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be (Matthew 24:15-21).*

While Jesus prophesied of the dispersion of the Jews, He also foretold that they would return and retain the rule of the city of Jerusalem.

*And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21:24).*

The Turks and other Arab nations kept Jerusalem in an oppressed condition for many centuries and the Jews were scattered to all parts of the world and were captives there in the sense that the Gentile rulers of Jerusalem would not permit them to return. But Jesus said that eventually this situation would end and we shall see how this prophecy had a full and exact fulfillment in June of 1967.

#### **Other Prophecies of a Return**

Just as God revealed through His prophets that Israel and Judah would go into captivity to Babylon and return after seventy years, so He also revealed the great dis-

persion, and a return from that dispersion. It is remarkable that Jeremiah uttered both.

*For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.*

*For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee. . . .*

*Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth . . . a great company shall return thither (Jeremiah 30:3, 11; 31:8).*

The entire thirtieth chapter of Jeremiah tells of the return of the people of Israel in the last days from their great dispersion. The wording is very specific and shows clearly that the return here described is not the return from Babylon in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Back then those who returned had the blessing and protection of the king of Persia and their land became a Persian province.

In the prophecy of Jeremiah 30 Israel comes with great difficulty and trouble but she secures absolute, sovereign possession of the land. The former return was from Babylon, mostly east of Palestine, but in this

latter return the people come from "the north country," and from many other countries of the earth. This has been fulfilled literally as Jews have returned from all over the earth, with the largest number from Europe, directly north of Palestine.

The prophecy does not say that ALL the Jews would return, but a GREAT COMPANY. At this writing there are more than three million Jews in Israel — surely a large company. And the full text of the prophecy shows that they were to be an independent nation with their own government. The last verse of the chapter shows the certainty of fulfillment and that the time would be near the end of the age.

*The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it (Jeremiah 30:24).*

### **Dark Times for the Jews**

The Middle Ages, a period of nearly one thousand years, was a dark time for the Jews. They suffered much abuse. It became most pronounced in 1480 during the Inquisition. There were times when Jews arose to distinction and enjoyed peace, but these were the exception. Most Jews were forced to live in ghettos. Many were compelled to wear distinctive badges or dress so they could be identified easily. The prophecies

concerning their oppression certainly came to pass.

### **A Great Movement in the Latter Days**

Many Bible prophecies show that we are in the period of time referred to as the "last days," "latter days," or "time of the end" — near the second coming of Christ. Aforementioned prophecies predict a return of Israel to their homeland and the establishment of a Jewish nation during these latter days. We are living in that time! There has been a great return under the movement called *Zionism*.

The founder of the Zionist movement was a young Austrian-German Jew, Theodor Herzl. In 1896, he wrote *Der Judenstaat*, a declaration of the aims of Zionism. Herzl was not the first to talk of Zionism, but he was instrumental in creating an organized movement. He called for a world meeting, and the first Zionist Congress was held in Switzerland in 1897. At a second meeting held in 1898 Herzl declared his belief that within fifty years the Jews would have an independent nation in Palestine. His prophecy was exact. In 1948, Israel was established as a nation.

How did this come about? Palestine had passed into the hands of the Moslems in about 635 A.D. Moslem rule was oppressive. The Jews were literally "trodden down." The Moslem Turks were governing

Jerusalem and Palestine when World War I began in 1914. On December 11, 1917, British forces under the command of General Allenby captured Jerusalem, and the control of Palestine passed to England.

In 1919, the League of Nations gave England a temporary mandate over Palestine until a permanent political status could be determined. The British had issued the famous Balfour Declaration in 1917 which stated they favored establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

In an effort to please the Arabs who claimed Palestine, the British put a Jewish immigration system into effect which limited the number of Jews who could enter Palestine each year. The Jews bitterly resented this restriction. There was a great move of Jews to Palestine, especially from Europe — stimulated by persecutions in Russia and Germany. By the end of 1936, more than 370,000 had migrated to Palestine.

Arab objections became so imposing, the British government stopped immigration and issued a withdrawal of its support of Palestine as the Jewish national home. Jews continued to enter as "illegal" immigrants. Many were captured by the British and put into concentration camps on the island of Cyprus.

The threat of war in Europe made im-

migration to Palestine imperative. Jewry everywhere wondered, "What will happen to the Jews in Europe now that they can no longer migrate to Palestine?"

The answer was quick in coming. On September 3, 1939, Hitler attacked Poland, and World War II began. In defeated Poland and other European countries, millions of Jews were herded into concentration camps, locked into ghettos, and forced into death camps. Hitler's solution to what was labeled "the Jewish problem" was extermination. When the war ended in August, 1945, it was learned that six million Jews had been massacred.

In view of this, it seemed impossible that Jewish migration to Palestine should be prohibited. However, legal immigration was still denied the Jewish refugees of Europe.

The Israelis were not easily discouraged. The deadlock over immigration had to be broken, even if it had to be done illegally. The S. S. *Exodus*, sailing from France in July, 1947, with more than 4,500 people aboard (refugees headed for Palestine), caused an incident which ultimately led to the withdrawal of the British and to the sovereignty of Israel.

The British vowed to make an example of the *Exodus* and its load of refugees. Only 22 miles from Palestine, they sank the ship and returned the refugees to Europe aboard other vessels. This action cost Britain her



world support in regard to her efforts in Palestine.

In June, 1947, the United Nations sent a commission to Palestine to study the unsettled situation. The United Nations Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) released its report in August. It recommended the country be divided into two separate and sovereign states: one for the Arabs, and the other for Jews. On November 29, 1947, 33 of 57 UN member nations declared themselves in favor of partitioning Palestine. Jews around the world sighed in relief. Once again, they had at least part of their beloved Palestine.

The UN action led to the British announcement that the Palestine mandate of 1917 would be terminated on May 15, 1948. All British forces in Palestine would be withdrawn. This served notice to the Jews that they must make themselves ready to govern their home and be prepared to defend it.

On May 14, 1948, the British withdrew, and the Jews proclaimed the independent state of Israel. The Bible had predicted for thousands of years that Israel would eventually be reestablished in her own homeland.

*For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to*

*return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it (Jeremiah 30:3).*

*Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, wither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely (Jeremiah 32:37).*

*After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them (Ezekiel 38:8).*

### **The War of 1948**

When Israel declared her independence, neighboring Arab nations attacked from all sides. It looked like the infant state would be crushed. Israel not only survived the war, but she added one thousand square miles to the territory which she had been allotted under the partition plan. Israel did not have the old city of Jerusalem with the temple site, but she was established as a nation with her own government.

The Arab nations still were not reconciled to the existence of the State of Israel, and they vowed to destroy her. Harrassment by

Israel's neighbors was expected. The prophets had also foretold of these troubles.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Sinai Campaign**

War came again in October, 1956. Nassar of Egypt seized the Suez Canal and blockaded the gulf of Aqaba — cutting off Israel's port of Eilat. Egypt's boycott of Israel intensified and threatened her security. In a quick sweep, Israel's armies moved across the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula and routed the Egyptian armies. Israel won a great victory, but the United Nations forced her to withdraw to her former boundaries.

### **The Six Day War of 1967**

When Jesus prophesied the dispersion of the Jews, He also indicated that when they returned, they would inhabit Jerusalem:

*And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21:20).*

This foretells an end to Gentile rule. The Jews had not been fully sovereign in Jerusalem since its capture and destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.

The 1948 war left the old city of Jerusalem in the hands of the Arabs. The Jews built a new city just west of the old, and they called it Jerusalem. However, it was not the Jerusalem with the temple site.

It was not Zion! That was still in the hands of the "Gentiles."

By May, 1967, the Arabs had built up a fever pitch of hatred against Israel. They mobilized their armies and war equipment. Egypt was ready to invade Israel. Being well aware of this serious threat, Israel struck first, destroying the Egyptian air force on the ground. Israel's fierce war against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, lasted only six days. The Arab armies were completely defeated. The Old City of Jerusalem was recovered, and the Jewish soldiers worshiped and wept at the Western Wall (Wailing Wall). General Moshe Dayan summed up the feelings of all Israel when he said: "We have returned to our holiest of holy places. We shall never part with it again."

Israel also recovered Bethlehem, Hebron, all the west bank of the Jordan River, and the Golan Heights above the Sea of Galilee. They continue to hold this territory.

### **The Yom Kippur War of 1973**

On the Jewish Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), in October, 1973, Egypt attacked Israel from the south, and Syria from the north. Israel was caught by surprise. Egypt overran the Israeli fortifications on the east side of the Suez Canal and pushed about a third of the way across the Sinai Peninsula. It was a hard-fought war, but Israel turned the tide, crossed the Suez Canal, and cap-

tered 500 square miles of Egyptian territory on the west side of the canal. A large Egyptian army was surrounded and cut off from its supply lines. The Israelis were within 40 miles of Cairo. At this point, Russia — who had backed Egypt — demanded the war cease, and the United Nations forced a cease-fire.

On the northern front, the war with Syria continued a few days longer until a cease-fire was arranged by the U. S. Secretary of State. There, Israel had advanced to within a short distance of Damascus.

Eventually, Israel withdrew her troops to a line twenty miles east of the Suez Canal, where new fortifications were built. On the Syrian front, Israel withdrew to the 1967 boundaries of the Golan Heights. Since then, through further agreements, Israel has given up most of the Sinai Peninsula and will soon return the remainder of that area captured from Egypt.

Once again, the Lord had helped Israel retain her homeland. In each of the four wars Israel fought since her independence, she was vastly outnumbered by the large Arab population who remain her avowed enemies. Israel has a greater power on her side. The God who prophesied her return is also helping her to retain the land.

### **The Rebuilding and Restoration**

The prophecies of the return of Israel to

her homeland included descriptions of the rebuilding of the land:

*And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; and they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them (Amos 9:14).*

All the world has marvelled at what the Jews have accomplished in the restoration of Palestine to agricultural production. The land which was a desert for centuries is now irrigated, and the gardens and fields are flourishing. Israel exports large quantities of fruit and vegetables. Industries have also thrived in Israel. Vast building projects are constantly in progress to provide housing for immigrants who continue to come.

In the three years after Israel gained her independence, over six hundred thousand Jews returned to Palestine. From some Arab lands, such as Yemen, all the Jews have returned. The greatest migration has been from the "north country," as predicted in Jeremiah 31:8. Europe is directly north of Israel. Immigration continues from all parts of the world, but on a smaller scale. For a time Russia permitted about forty thousand Jews to leave the Soviet Union and return to Israel. This has been stopped, but from time

to time some Jews manage to escape from Russia.

### **President Sadat's Visit to Jerusalem**

After the 1973 war the efforts toward mideast peace were hindered because no Arab leader would negotiate directly with the Jews. United States Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, carried on "shuttle diplomacy," flying back and forth between Jerusalem and Arab capitals as an intermediary arranging peace terms. It was arranged for Israel to return the oil fields in the Sinai to Egypt and a schedule was arranged for the gradual return of all the Sinai. This is in line with Bible prophecy because the area of the Sinai peninsula is not a part of the "promised land," but was the site of Israel's wandering while on the way to their land of promise.

The policy of no Arab leader ever talking face to face with a Jew ended dramatically in November of 1977. President Sadat of Egypt went to Jerusalem and addressed the Israeli Knesset (parliament). Sadat was given a sincere welcome in Israel and he sat down and talked with Prime Minister Begin and with the former prime minister, Golda Meir. In his speeches Sadat repeated Arab calls for Israel to return to pre-1967 boundaries, including a return of east Jerusalem to Arab rule, and the establishment of an Arab state on the West Bank. In spite of this, the other

Arab nations denounced the visit. They continue to regard President Sadat as a traitor to the Arab cause.

### **The Camp David Meeting**

In an effort to get a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, President Carter arranged for Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat to meet with him at the presidential retreat, Camp David. The conference lasted for about two weeks during which Mr. Carter devoted almost all his time to the one goal.

An agreement was finally reached which would be the basis for the peace treaty. In the time since the Camp David meeting, a peace treaty has been worked out and signed. Israel and Egypt have exchanged ambassadors and instituted full diplomatic relations, including direct travel between the two countries. President Sadat has declared that there will never be another war between Egypt and Israel and several Bible prophecies indicate agreement with this stand.

Meanwhile there have been many meetings and conferences in an effort to solve the problems remaining. Israel insists there can be no Arab state on the West Bank. They are willing to grant local autonomy for Arab and Jewish settlements and they insist on the Jewish right to continue to establish colonies. Prime Minister Begin calls the West



Bank, "Judea and Samaria," and points to the Bible showing this area to be part of the "promised land." The same applies to the Golan Heights and the Gaza Strip. The fact that no progress has been made toward changing the status of these territories is in itself a fulfillment of Bible prophecy — the land remains in the control of Israel.

### **What of the Future?**

God's Word has been wonderfully fulfilled by events in Israel, such as the recovery of Old Jerusalem. However, the Arab nations still want to destroy Israel. The Palestinian refugees who fled from Israel in 1948 demand a separate state in the land of Palestine, but Israel will not negotiate with Arab terrorist leaders. Arab attacks continue, and Israel retaliates with destruction of Arab property and people.

Arab strength seems overwhelming. The situation is complicated by Arab oil power. Many are asking, "Will Israel survive?" The Bible says she will! Amos offers the following description of the prosperity of Israel:

*And I will plant them upon their own land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God (Amos 9:15).*

### **Until Armageddon**

A striking prophecy which deals with the

future of Israel is found in Ezekiel 38. This chapter describes events which will lead to a great future war between two great combines of nations. Israel, and the covetous design of her enemy from the north, are described in verses 3, 8-13:

*And say, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. . . .*

*After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.*

*Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee.*

*Thus saith the Lord God; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought:*

*And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely all of them dwelling without wall, and having neither bars nor gates,*

*To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate*

*places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.*

*Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?*

These verses refer to a time when Jews will have been gathered out of all nations. At the time of the fulfillment of this prophecy Israel will be enjoying a time of peace and security — quite different from their present situation. Then an evil power casts a covetous eye upon this tiny nation. This power is identified as “Gog” of the land of Magog. Her armies move swiftly against Israel.

An opposing force defends Israel in this conflict. This sympathizer is identified as coming from Sheba, Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish with their allies.

This is a fair description of a future war which the Bible says will take place in Israel just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. This war is known in the Bible as “Armageddon” (Revelation 16:13, 14, 16). Its name is derived from the valley in which the war is to

be centered. The principal participants are nations which are now generally aligned with the "western" or "free world" against those who are aligned with the "eastern" or "communist world."

Events in the Middle East during recent decades make this conclusion obvious. It is no secret that the United States and western Europe have sympathized with Israel in her struggle to maintain her sovereignty. On the other hand, Russia and her socialist allies are aligned with the Arabs who are Israel's arch enemies. Russia was responsible for giving encouragement and war materials to the Arabs to engage Israel in at least the last two wars. To help maintain the balance of power, the United States has supplied Israel her war materials.

Until the fall of 1973, the alliance between the western powers and Israel had little effect at home. The Arabs introduced a new dimension. They imposed an oil embargo on the western nations who had aided or openly sympathized with Israel in her most recent confrontation with the Arabs. This embargo, along with the higher prices the Arabs began charging for oil, caused the oil-hungry West great concern. It is evident that Israel plays an important role in whether or not her allies receive enough oil to meet their energy needs. She is a pawn in a struggle volatile enough to start Armageddon.

The fact that the allies of Israel are in trouble is in itself a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Zechariah predicted:

*Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling . . . And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces (Zechariah 12:2, 3).*

### **The Significance of Prophecies**

The restoration of Israel is an important prophecy to every Christian. The second coming of Jesus Christ is closely identified with this event. The Psalmist understood this as he wrote, "*When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory*" (Psalm 102:16).

The literal and personal return of Jesus Christ is imminent. The conditions existing in the political, economic, and religious world all point to its nearness. None of these signs gives more credence to the Christian's expectation of His soon return than the fulfillment of the prophecies pertaining to the reestablishment of Israel.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>II Samuel 8:1-6.
- <sup>2</sup>Abba Eban, *My People, the Story of the Jews*, 1968, pp. 42, 45.
- <sup>3</sup>Isaiah 44:26-28; 45:1, 13.
- <sup>4</sup>Ezra 2:64, 65.
- <sup>5</sup>C. H. Gordon, *Introduction to Old Testament*, p. 274; R. K. Harrison, *Old Testament Times*, p. 291.
- <sup>6</sup>Ezra 2:70; 6:16-22; 8:24, 25, 35; 10:25; Nehemiah 7:73; Jeremiah 50, 51; I Chronicles 9:1-3.
- <sup>7</sup>Ezra 4:12; 5:1; Nehemiah 4:1, 2.
- <sup>8</sup>Matthew 4:12-16; Luke 2:36; Philippians 3:5; Acts 2:22, 36; Acts 26:6, 7; Mark 15:26, 32; John 3:1, 10; Romans 3:1, 2, 9; Romans 9:30-33; Romans 11:7, 25-28.
- <sup>9</sup>Daniel 8.
- <sup>10</sup>Galatians 3:26-29.
- <sup>11</sup>Abba Eban, *My People, the Story of the Jews*, 1968, p. 97.
- <sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 109.
- <sup>13</sup>Daniel 9:26, 27; 12:11-13.
- <sup>14</sup>Obadiah.

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