

THE JEW and THE WAR

REGATHERING OF ISRAEL

ISRAEL'S 'DOUBLE'

A NEW COVENANT

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THE prominence of the land of Egypt in the news of what some have called the 'war of survival,' is doubtless reminding millions of the part that Egypt played in ancient times in connection with God's chosen people of Israel. Egypt, the Red Sea, the ancient Arabian deserts beyond; then Palestine the 'Promised Land' all bear eloquent testimony to the accuracy of the geographical background of Biblical narratives and prophecies. The fact that these parts of the world are now again coming into such prominence should itself be stimulating to reflective thought; and especially so when we realize that according to the prophecies this was to be the case at the end of the age or, as the Bible puts it, the 'latter days,' the 'last days.' Ezekiel 38:8,16 Isaiah 2:2 Micah 4:1 2 Timothy 3:1.

Turning our minds back briefly to the days of Old Egypt, we recall that through a peculiar combination of circumstances the people of Israel found themselves enslaved in that country, and cruelly oppressed by Pharaoh, the king. The Israelites are not enslaved in the Egypt today, but they are enslaved and oppressed in other parts of the world, particularly in Europe. And now, even as then, this oppression has become so burdensome that unless relief is forthcoming from some quarter, the very existence of this ancient people is threatened. It has been reported that under the Nazi regime in Europe already two million Jews have been slaughtered. But, just as historically recorded, deliverance came to Israel as a result of divine intervention on their behalf; So now, the prophecies indicate divine intervention is to be the final solution of the Jewish problem. Note what the prophet says on this point. We quote:

'Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.' Jeremiah 16:14- 16.

That this foretold regathering of Israel could not refer to anything that has occurred in the past is apparent from the fact that the most prominent place from which they are said to be gathered is the 'land of the north.' This is the land north of Palestine, and refers to the countries of Europe, perhaps Russia in particular, where such large numbers of them are now domiciled. The Bible shows that on several occasions in ancient times the people of Israel were driven out of their land; but at no time was there such a world-wide scattering of the Jews, particularly into the 'north country,' until A.D. 70 and thereafter, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and the people dispersed.

It is important too, to know that time prophecies of the Bible have a vital bearing on the present experiences of the Jews. One of these prophecies pertains to a

period described by Jesus as the 'times of the Gentiles.' {Luke 21:24} Jesus said that during this period Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles. The Old Testament gives the length of punishment upon the Jews as being 'seven times.' {Leviticus 26:18,21, 24,28} Prophetically, a 'time' is a period of 360 years. Seven times, therefore, would be 2520 years. The Jewish nation began to be trodden down of the Gentiles in the year 606 B.C., when their last king, Zedekiah, was overthrown and taken captive to Babylon. Since then the Jews have had no national independence; the nearest thing to it being the privileges they have enjoyed in Palestine as a people since the First World War.

2,520 years from 606 B.C. brings us to the memorable date of 1914, the year when the first World War started. It will be recalled that in that war the British drove the Turks out of the Holy Land, and that at the peace table the Jews were given the right to return there under a protecting mandate later given to the British by the League of Nations. This outstanding development, following so quickly the expiration of the Gentile Times, should awaken us to a desire to investigate further the prophecies pertaining to the full restoration of Israel, and of world events associated therewith.

The treading down of the Jews by the Gentiles came officially to an end through the League of Nations' recognition of their right to occupy Palestine and to consider it their home country. This recognition came as a result of developments that began in 1914, which was the end of the gentile Times. The fact that the Jews are still persecuted does not argue against the fact that the time has come for them to receive God's favor, and to be restored as a people to the land of their fathers. Indeed, the very fact that they are now being so bitterly persecuted in Europe is very much in line with the prophecies which portray their lot in these 'latter days.'

In the prophecy of Jeremiah 16, already quoted, the Lord tells us that He would send 'fishers' and 'hunters among His people to induce their return to the Promised Land. The 'fisher' method of obtaining results is through the use of bait. For many years the World Zionist Movement has been offering inducements for the Jews to go to Palestine and make that country their home. This has accomplished some results. The latest reports indicate that 500,000 have already returned. And, in spite of the hazards of war, and the desire of the British not to openly offend the Arabs, Jewish Revelation still trickling back to Palestine.

But the 'fisher' method is not causing them to return in sufficient numbers, so the 'hunters' are used. The hunting method is usually one of force, and seems to well illustrate the severe persecution now upon that unhappy people throughout Europe. Certainly they are thereby being made to realize that Europe is no place for them. And while, just at present, they are not able to go to Palestine in any considerable numbers, it seems quite probable that a change will come about permitting them later to return there in numbers far exceeding anything we have yet witnessed. But the main point we wish to establish here is that prophetically further trouble was to come upon the Jews even after God's favor began to return to them. Another prophecy substantiating this fact is that of Jeremiah 3:3, 5, 11. We quote:

'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 thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace....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: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.'

It will be noticed from this prophecy that the very time when God would 'cause' the Jews to return to their own land, it would be for them a time of 'fear and trembling, and not of peace.' Evidently one reason for this is the manner in which they are caused to return. As we have seen, they were to be hunted; and do not hunters always cause fear and trembling on the part of the hunted? Another reason given by the Lord for the present trouble of the Jews is that thereby they are being corrected; and because they need this correction, the Lord says that He will not leave them altogether unpunished.

Another remarkable prophecy depicting the present experiences of the Jews, as they relate to present world events, is that of Joel 3:1,2,9- 12 . This prophecy reads as follows:

'For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for My people and for My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted My land....Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen [nations], and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen [nations] be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen [nations] round about.'"Leeser translates 'heathen,' 'nations,' both of which are the same in the original language, Hebrew and Chaldee.

The main point to notice in this prophecy is that when the time comes for the regathering of Israel to the Land of Promise, it would be associated with a war-like gathering of all the Gentile nations. The prophecy also shows that some of these nations would try to prevent Israel from holding possession of the land, and that because of this God would plead against them on behalf of His people. Later, we will call attention to prophecies which will show how and when this pleading is to be done.

That the present gathering and arming of the nations is fulfilling this prophecy there can be little doubt. Note the circumstances: It is said that the nations would beat their plowshares into swords, and their pruninghooks into spears. This, of course, is ancient language, but it is very descriptive, nevertheless, of the present efforts of all nations to convert all possible peace- time material and equipment into munitions of war. This is being done by all the nations on both sides of the world line- up. We mention it here merely to identify the fulfilment, of this prophecy. When we see this fulfilment, and see the foretold position of the Jews in connection with it, surely our confidence in the accuracy of prophecy should be greatly increased.

There are two other prophecies in the Bible concerning swords and plowshares, and both present a peaceful attitude of the nations. They are recorded in Micah 4:1- 4 and Isaiah 2:1- 4. They also pertain to the 'latter days,' or 'last days,' but take us a little way into the future from now, and describe conditions among the nations following the full restoration of Israel to the Promised Land, and their incorporation into the Kingdom of Christ now due to be established. Again we quote from Micah:

'In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.'

Thus does the Lord tell us about the final outcome of it all, but intervening are still many prophecies to be fulfilled; prophecies which, nevertheless, are reaching a fulfilment rapidly in the fast moving events of the present time. It will help us appreciate the prophetic picture more, if we now consider briefly another divine forecast pertaining to Bible chronology, or time as it relates to the plan of God. It has to do with Israel's long centuries of special favor from the Lord, and a foretold corresponding period of disfavor mentioned in the prophecies as a 'double.'

This 'double' period of punishment upon Israel is referred to three times in the prophecies. Jeremiah 16:18 speaks of it as a punishment that must 'first' be visited upon them before they could be restored permanently to their own land' Zechariah 9:9,12, in a prophecy concerning the time when Jesus rode into Jerusalem upon an ass, identifies the time when this double would begin to count; and Isaiah 40:2, tells of the time when the 'double' is completed. Isaiah's reference to the double is in connection with the prophecy of their restoration, and of the fact that the Lord would send 'fishers' and 'hunters' among them to cause them to return to their own land.

This time prophecy of the 'double' is a comparatively easy one to understand. Bible chronology indicates that from the time of Jacob's death when God began to deal with his children as a nation to the death of Jesus which Zechariah indicates to be the middle of the double period was a period of 1845 years. Counting that many years from A.D. 33 when Jesus was crucified, brings us to the year 1878. Someone may be quick to say that the Jews were not restored to their land in 1878, hence that this calculation must be wrong.

But we should remember the year A.D. 33 did not see the dispersion of Israel from the land of Palestine, either. What actually occurred at the time of Jesus' death is the clue as to what we should expect in 1878. What did occur there was the beginning of their downfall. Just five days before His death, Jesus said of the house of Israel, 'Your house is left unto you desolate.' {Matthew 23:38 Luke 13:35 John 12:1,12- 16} But it was actually 36 1/2 years after that pronouncement before Jerusalem was destroyed and the Israelites scattered. There was, then, this 36 1/2 year period of decline.

In keeping with this, the date of 1878 would seem to mark the beginning of God's returning favor to the Jews; and there is abundant evidence that this actually occurred; for it was in that very year, 1878, that Lord Beaconsfield, also known as Benjamin Disraeli, then Prime Minister of England himself a Jew presided over the Berlin Congress of Nations, and was able to obtain certain concession and favors for the Jews in Palestine, which they had been denied for centuries and as long as it was under the Turkish rule. And since that notable

instance of the return of favor to the Jew in connection with his homeland, through the years, the question of Palestine as a homeland for the Jews has become an issue of more and more prominence.

Since 1897, when it was organized by Theodore Herzl, the ZIONIST movement has grown in strength and purpose, and today it is employed in the task of developing the natural resources of Palestine, which conservative estimates indicate is capable of supporting from two to four million more inhabitants than are now there. The opportunity for the Jews to return in such large numbers and the rapid progress that has been made in the development there since, has all come about through the First World War, beginning in 1914; for it was the war that wrested the control of Palestine from the Turkish Government, making possible all the changes that have since taken place there. As there was a 36 1/2 year period during which favor was receding from Israel, So there has been this 36 1/2 year period when the sunshine of favor has been gradually more and more manifested toward them. Thirty- six and one half years from 1878 brings us to the year 1914; and as we have already seen, it was as a result of the war that began in that year, that Palestine was made available as a homeland for the Jews.

History indicates that even the year A.D. 70, which was the year marking the end of the 36 1/2 years of decline and in which, after a siege which lasted more than three years, beginning in 66 A.D., Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman army under Titus, did not mark the complete end of suffering and desolation that still awaited the distraught Jews. For it was not until A.D. 73 that all Judea was subjugated, according to the Jewish historian, Josephus. If we add these three years to 1914, it brings us to the year 1917, when the British army with its allies, the Arabs, wrested control of Palestine from the Turk; and in 1918, with the cessation of hostilities, and the subsequent treaty of Versailles, the Balfour Declaration on behalf of the Jews of Palestine actually went into effect. These correspondences surely are more than merely coincidental, for they disclose God's purpose in connection with the reestablishment of His ancient people in the land He promised them would some time in the future be theirs; and that time, it seems clear to the eye of faith, is now.

Naturally, it is of interest to determine from the prophecies as clearly as we can, what may be expected to occur among the Jews between now and the time that the Kingdom is fully established. Details of prophecies cannot be understood prior to their fulfilment, but the Bible does make it plain that the Jews are to experience a great deal more of severe trouble before their eyes are fully open to what God is doing for them, and that Jesus, whom they pierced more than nineteen centuries ago, is truly their Messiah. This final trouble upon them is prophetically described by Jeremiah as 'Jacob's trouble.' Jer. 30:7

Jeremiah's reference to 'Jacob's trouble,' associates it with the regathering of Israel to Palestine, and harmonizes with what we have already noted; namely that this regathering would be accompanied by much distress and persecution upon the Jews. The events of recent years are in full harmony with this prophetic pattern. But to our understanding 'Jacob's trouble' will mark the climax of these experiences. It is God's way of describing a final assault by aggressor nations that will be made against Israel regathered in Palestine, and dwelling there safely and prosperously.

Some of the details of 'Jacob's trouble' are outlined in Ezekiel 38. In verse 8, addressing the leaders of the aggression against restored Israel, the prophet says, '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.' Verse 11 continues: '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 walls, and having neither bars nor gates.'

While 500,000 Jews have already gone to Palestine, and large areas of that once 'waste' land have already been reclaimed, is yet it would seem from the foregoing preview of events that there is yet to be a much larger regathering of Israel, before the final phase of trouble will come upon them. The statement, 'in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword,' might indicate that in the present struggle of the nations much fighting maybe done in and around Palestine, yet it will not be Jacob's trouble. If this be true, and the land is 'brought back from the sword,' it would mean a short period of peace following the present World War, and that, at the peace table, an attempt will be made to solve the Jewish problem, by insisting that they all go to Palestine't hat is, all the Jews in the beleaguered countries; for it would be difficult to support the 15,000,000 or more Jews throughout the world in that small area of Palestine. Pastor Russell wrote, on page 554 of The Battle of Armageddon, 'Apparently some pressure will suddenly be brought to bear upon the nations which will result thus favorably to Israel, So fulfill the above prophecy of Ezekiel.'

In considering details of events yet future it is not wise to be dogmatic. The Prophet Ezekiel does, however, give quite a detailed description of how Jacob's trouble will develop against restored Israel. Commenting on Ezekiel 38:1- 13, Pastor Russell, years ago, wrote:

'In Ezekiel's prophecy (38:1- 13) the Lord names the chief actors in the struggle in Palestine; but we may not be too positive in our identifications. Magog, Meshech, Tubal, Gomar, Togomar, Javan and Tarshish were names of children of Noah's son Japheth'supposed to be the original settlers of Europe. Sheba and Dedan were descendants of Noah's son, Ham'supposed to be the original settlers of Northern Africa. Abraham and his posterity (Israel) were descendants of Noah's son, Shem, and are supposed to have settled Armenia 'Western Asia. {See Genesis 10:2- 7} This would seem to indicate in a general way that the attack will come from Europe'the 'north quarters'with allied mixed peoples.'"The Battle of Armageddon, page 556.

The various groups thus described by the Prophet Ezekiel as the ones who will be participants in 'Jacob's trouble,' are now actively participating in the present struggle of the nations, but it seems reasonable that there may be a lull in the present storm, during which Israel will occupy Palestine in greater numbers and will become even more prosperous there than they are now. But the hatred of the Jew now So manifest in Europe, and the lust for wealth and power on the part of the aggressors, impoverished by their vast expenditures in their war efforts, will still exist. This can easily lead later to the march against the holy land which will represent the final phase of Armageddon. It will be in this struggle that divine power will be manifested for the deliverance of Israel'not however, until they have been severely chastised.

Zechariah 14:1- 3 12- 15, indicates that the Jews will suffer greatly before divine intervention comes on their behalf. The city shall be taken, the women ravis hed and the houses rifled. There is to be great confusion among the attacking armies, and even 'Juda shall fight.' In the marginal translation it says that Judah shall

fight against Jerusalem, as though even the Jews themselves will become confused with the terror that shall come upon them. Leeser's translation also gives this thought. Whether the Jews fight for or against Jerusalem, this final trouble upon them will be severe.

But finally divine power will assert itself 'Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle.' {Zechariah 14:3} Joel 3:2 declares, as we have already noted, that God will plead with the nations on behalf of His people Israel. In Ezekiel 38:22, 23, the prophet tells us how this pleading will be done, and what the result will be. We quote: 'Ezek 38:22 'And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify Myself, and sanctify Myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord.'

All the prophecies dealing with this final phase of Armageddon, prophetically described as 'Jacob's trouble,' indicate that as a result of divine intervention at its close, the eyes of Israel, as well as the eyes of all nations, will be opened to behold the glory of the Lord. Zechariah 14:16- 21 shows that this divine intervention will result in the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, and that all nations including those which attacked Israel, will have to fall into line with the divine order, or else be deprived of the blessings of the Kingdom.

The blessings of that divine Kingdom will not, however be merely economic. Zechariah 14:8,9 declares that then 'living waters shall go out from Jerusalem,' and that in that day 'the Lord shall be King over all the earth.' These 'living waters' are mentioned in Revelation 22:1,2, and here we are told that the leaves of the tress which grow beside the river of life will be for 'the healing of the nations.' How much the nations will need healing; and how glad the people will then be that divine wisdom and power has solved the age- long problem of selfishness which they could not solve for themselves.

The life- giving blessings of the new Kingdom will not be meted out in any 'half measure' proportions. They will be all- inclusive. Even the dead are to be restored to life, meaning that the millions who have died in the Armageddon struggle, both Jews and Gentiles, will be brought back and given an opportunity to participate in the blessings purchased for them by the redemptive work of Jesus. {Ezekiel 16:55- 63} What a happy ending this will be to six thousand years of sin, suffering and death. Let us continue to pray for that divine Kingdom.

Another prophecy depicting the blessings of Messiah' Kingdom is that of Isaiah 29:23,2 18th verse read, 'And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.' By this symbolic language we are assured that the truth pertaining to God's plan and will for the people, both Jews and Gentiles, will be made plain, the 'book' of divine revelation will then be opened for all the read and understand.

The result of this opening of the 'book' is described in the prophecy of Zephaniah 3:9, where we are told that the Lord will turn to the people a pure language, under the influence of which they will all call upon His name to serve Him with one consent. Thus we see that the pagan religion of the Nazis, engendering race hatred, persecution, and aggression, will be destroyed, and all will learn to know and to worship Jehovah, the true and living God.

Verse 19 of Isaiah 29, reads, 'The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.' What a blessed promise! The 'meek' of the earth have usually been at a great disadvantage and have suffered at the hands of the arrogant and domineering. But how different it will be in 'that day.' Concerning it another prophet says, 'He [the Messiah] shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.' Psalm 72:4.

With the oppressors and persecutors of the earth set aside, the promise of Isaiah 29:22 and 23 will be fulfilled, to the great rejoicing of Israel and of the whole world. We quote: 'Therefore thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of Mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify My name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.'

This is a remarkable prophecy. It speaks both of the 'house of Jacob' and of 'Jacob.' It declares that 'Jacob' shall see his 'children' in his house. It is more, therefore, than a promise to restore and bless the present living generation of Israelites. In addition to this, it is an assurance that even Jacob himself will be raised from death, and mingle with his people and with them enjoy the blessings of Messiah's Kingdom.

It says of Jacob that his face shall not then 'wax pale.' This is another way of saying that when brought back from death, it will not be necessary for him to again grow old and die. This will be true, not only of Jacob, but of the whole house of Israel; yea, of all mankind. One of the main purposes of Messiah's Kingdom is to destroy sickness and death, hence of those who obey the divine laws of justice and righteousness will never die.' John 11:25, 26.

And there will then be no question as to what constitutes the divine will, for, as we have seen, the 'book' will be open. In Isaiah 35:8 we are told that the way will then be made so plain that the 'wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.' Isaiah 29:24 declares, 'They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.'

The extent to which the people, both Jews and Gentiles, have 'erred in spirit' is apparent when we think of the hundreds of conflicting opinions and interpretations of religion by which earth's multitudes are divided into as many opposing groups. But all this will be changed by the administration of Messiah's Kingdom, for then the knowledge of the Lord will be caused to fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.' Hab. 2:14.

And this true knowledge of God will become deep-rooted in the consciences of the people. In Jeremiah 31:31-34, we are told about it. Here the promise is that God will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Concerning it He says, 'I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their god, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them saith the Lord.'

In Ezekiel 16:60-63, there is another reference to the covenant the Lord will establish with the house of Israel, and in this prophecy is revealed the further fact that Gentile nations also are to share in its benefits. God's promise to Abraham was that through His seed 'all families of the earth' were to be blessed.

{Genesis 12:1- 3} The spiritual seed of Abraham is Christ and the church of this Gospel age. But there is a natural seed also, which will be the restored house of Israel, and God's covenant with them will be extended to include all the Gentiles who will then avail themselves of its provisions.

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