

The Jews and The Land, Where Shall We Stand?

"And the LORD said unto Abram,...Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." Genesis 13:14-15

Struggles of Epic Proportion

Many Bible-believing Christians today see the handiwork of God in the regathering of the Jewish People to their reborn state—Israel. The news is filled with the great drama now going on there. Two peoples are locked in a struggle of epic proportions. To the worldly, not enlightened by the prophetic lamp of the scriptures, the struggle is merely political. It is not. At stake is the question, "Who is God?" Is He the mighty Yahweh of the Jews or Allah of the Muslim faith? The question is valid and vital.

Where we as Christians stand on this issue is of utmost importance. Are we supporting the Arab side of the land struggle? If so we may, unwittingly, be opposing our God. The prophet Ezekiel shows us God's perspective on the contested land and the embattled Jewish people. Speaking to the invading forces of Gog at the time of Israel's final battle, God warns, "And thou shalt come up against *my people* of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against *my land*, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes." Ezekiel 38:16

We emphasize the phrases *my people* and *my land*. God tells us in this verse that He considers the Jewish people and the Land of Israel *to be His*. Note that this occurs before the revealment of Messiah to the Jews as recorded in Zechariah 12:10. The land of Israel and the Jewish people are inseparable. This is by Divine decree. God promised the land to Abraham and his seed after him. That promise was passed from Abraham to Isaac, then to Jacob and on to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Simply put, if Allah's nation of Islam succeeds in wresting the land of Israel from the Jewish people—the prophecies of our Judeo-Christian Bible will have failed. The Bible would be invalidated and the Koran verified as the true word of God to men. We are full of faith that God's word will not return to Him void. The Jewish people will receive the Biblically promised land. They will do so even if the whole world opposes them—for God's will shall be done.

The Israeli-Arab conflict over the land seems epitomized in the current Hebron negotiations. Almost daily we hear of Hebron's little band of Jewish settlers and their

struggles to thrive as a community. We were there a few months ago and would like to share with you perspectives we gained. Consider. . .

A Brief History Lesson

Many are unaware of the modern history of the Jews in Hebron. Until 1929 there was a thriving Jewish community in Hebron. Jewish merchants and citizens lived in peaceful coexistence with their Arab neighbors. Civility characterized their interaction. More importantly, Jewish physicians and nurses ran the sole health clinic in Hebron. The amount of charitable care they provided the Arab community was large. They were the only source of health care for the Arabs.

Riots plagued Jerusalem prior to 1929, instigated by the Arab community. The result of these riots was murderous persecutions of Jews in the "City of Peace." Hebron remained quiet. Harmony between Jews and Arabs prevailed until Arabs from Jerusalem came to foment uprisings in Hebron. The quiescent way of coexistence there was soon to be shattered.

British officers, as eyewitnesses recall, told Hebron's Jewish community leaders that they were short on weapons. Due to this shortage they couldn't guarantee British protection of Hebron's Jews should the Arabs attack them. Unfortunately, the British also told the Arabs the same thing.

August 1929 in Hebron was a bloody month. Arabs began attacking Jews. Using knives, axes, machetes, picks—whatever they could find—indiscriminate attacks were unleashed. Not only were strong young Jewish men brutalized, but also women, the elderly and even tender young children. When Arab fury was, for the time being, satiated—69 of Hebron's Jews had been slaughtered. Photographs of the survivors keep the story fresh in our minds. Pictorial records of victims' wounds deeply jar our Christian sensibilities.

Having their fill of Jewish blood the rioters began to turn on the British, who were standing by to watch the melee. Seeing the advancing mob, an officer on horseback drew his pistol and fired two shots into the air. The riot stopped then and there. If only that man had fired his precious two bullets an hour or two earlier, much human suffering would have been averted.

The survivors were told that their safety could no longer be guaranteed. They had to leave their homes, synagogues, businesses and fields without any financial compensation. Imagine suffering such material loss in addition to their physical wounds. The Jewish community of Hebron faded and, after the 1948 War of Independence, was completely gone. Gone were benefactors of the Arabs. The medical clinic was closed. Jews were barred from Hebron by its Jordanian Army occupiers until after the '67 War.

In 1979, Jews finally began to return to their homes and synagogues left behind for a half century. What drew them there? What could impel them to move to such an inhospitable place—whose bloody past looms over the present? Quite simply and powerfully—the Word of God.

Scriptural Reasons

We heard an oft repeated refrain in our travels in Israel. Jerusalem is the heart of Israel and Hebron is the mother of Israel. Jewish roots here are deep—the result of a history that goes back more than three millennia! Abram dwelled in Mamre, which is in Hebron. Genesis 13:14-18 Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah in Hebron for 400 shekels of silver. Genesis 23:17-20 Joshua took Hebron as part of the promised land of Canaan. Joshua 14:6-14 Hebron was one of the six Cities of Refuge. Joshua 21:13 David began his reign over Judah in Hebron. 2 Samuel 2:1-4 In Hebron David was anointed king over all Israel. 2 Samuel 5:1-3 Conversely, Hebron is not mentioned at all in the Koran.

The Tomb of the Patriarchs holds the bones of the Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wives—the parents of the Jewish people. Is it any wonder that the Jews are compelled to live here beside their ancestors? Their deep faith yearns to be connected with the land and cities God gave to their fathers. Bible prophecy assures us that one day their hopes will be amply fulfilled.

Christian Beware

Some of our Christian friends support the concept of Replacement Theology. That is, Israel has been everlastingly superseded by the Christian Church. Supposedly, Israel's national role in God's plan is finished. (We do not agree. Limited space does not here permit a verse-by-verse consideration of Romans, Chapter 11. Read it carefully several times. It powerfully teaches Israel's continuing and future place in God's plan for mankind.)

Generally the traditional Christian churches tend to hold Replacement Theology's tenants. Not seeing Biblical promises to the land or people of Israel as existing any longer, these churches actively support the Muslim cause. They say that Israel should give up land. Recently (December 1996) they sponsored a full page advertisement in The New York Times calling for Israel to give up sole administration of Jerusalem. Ironically, in supporting Islam's aims, these Christians may be hurting the cause of Christ. Islam's goal is world domination. We quote from their fiery rhetoric, "The governments of the world should know that Islam cannot be defeated. Islam will be victorious in all the countries of the world, and Islam and the teachings of the Koran will prevail all over the world. Only then will their Jihad (Holy War) be complete." "We shall export our revolution to the whole world. Until the cry 'Allahu Akbar' resounds over the whole world, there will be struggle. There will be *jihad*." We note the burgeoning growth of mosques in the United States and Europe. (Interestingly, for the first time, in December 1996 Islam's half-crescent symbol was raised in New York's Grand Central Terminal alongside a Christmas tree and a Hanukah Menorah for the holiday season.)

PLO flags covered with Arabic script are displayed in public gatherings. The message, "First we will kill the Saturday people and then we'll kill the Sunday people." Internationally renowned Bishop Desmond Tutu recently addressed a snickering crowd of Arabs. He was standing under such a banner as he spoke.

As Christians we must support the message of our Bible. Israel, dwelling in its God given land as a blessed nation, is part of that message. The God of Israel, not Allah, shall reign over all the earth.

Concluding Thoughts

We have used Hebron as an example. The larger contest for possession of the land will greatly intensify when the issues of final redeployment and Jerusalem come to the bargaining table. The principles that apply to Hebron apply to the whole land issue. Remember *all* God's promises regarding the land and the people of Israel. As Christians, perceiving the role of the Jewish people in the plans of God, may our faith give us the courage to stand and to speak for what is right.

Christian leaders and governments of the so-called Christian world are exerting tremendous pressure on Israel to give up land. It seems incredible that Israel will possibly suffer a temporary land loss because Christians are siding with Allah and not the God of the Judeo-Christian Bible.