

The Herald Of Christ's Kingdom

May/June 1993

EDITORS' JOURNAL

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee." -Psalm 122:6

May 14, 1993 will mark the forty fifth anniversary of the modern nation of Israel. It is both among the youngest of the nations of the world and among the oldest. Biblical antecedents for this state go back to 1813 B.C. when the twelve sons of Jacob, after the death of the patriarch, united to form Israel.

The 3805 years intervening have seen Israel pass through eight distinctive periods of their history. There were good times; there were also bad times. Reaching the zenith of their prosperity under the kingship of Solomon, they fell to the depths of despair during their Diaspora.

Bible students are as interested in the prophetic future of this nation as they are in its astounding past. The present is a period of transition for the bright prospects of a role they are destined to play in the outworking of the plan of God.

EIGHT PHASES OF ISRAELI HISTORY

1813 BC - 1575 BC	Government in Exile
1575 BC - 1119 BC	Governed by Judges
1119 BC - 606 BC	Monarchy
606 BC - 536 BC	Babylonian Captivity
536 BC - 135 AD	Semi-Autonomous Government
135 AD - 1878 AD	Diaspora
1878 AD - 1948 AD	Regathering
1948 AD - PRESENT	Statehood

Five articles in this forty-fifth Anniversary Edition highlight different aspects in the mercurial story of God's *chosen people* (Amos 3:2).

Israel provides an overview of the historic role this nation has played over the centuries, with a brief glimpse at future prophecies.

In *God's Witnesses and Servant* the scriptural basis is probed for the role Israel is to play in the Kingdom of God. The expression *the past is prologue* is especially appropriate for Israel, considering the historical preparations of the Jewish people for their future work.

Many great empires have risen and fallen throughout the past, but only of Israel can the order be reversed. *The Fall and Rise of Many in Israel* deals with this phenomenon and shows how accurately biblical prophecy predicted *the* fall as well as the rising again of Israel.

Today great debates are taking place over territorial claims in the land of Palestine. The Bible speaks directly to the issue of the promised boundaries of the promised land. *Israel and the Land* looks in depth at these scriptural passages.

The verse-by-verse Bible study for this issue also deals with the theme of Israel. *Comfort Ye My People* goes through the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, which shows the content of the comfort message now due to be given to God's ancient people.

Other Features

In *The Question Box* an answer is suggested to the question as to why the sample prayer given by Jesus to his disciples did not include words of thanksgiving.

Newly unearthed evidence on the origin of the Philistines is discussed in the feature column *Archaeology and the Bible*.

The *Voices from the Past* feature contains a condensation of a discourse by the late John Meggison on *The Melody of the Waters*, a discussion of the wells dug by the patriarch Abraham.

Facing our regular poetry page *And Finally* is a devotional meditation, *In My Solitude*, that deals with our inability to reach the high spiritual goals we would desire.

Our New Cover

You may have noticed our new look. The new cover is meant to connect with that which we have used for the past several years, but give THE HERALD a fresh look in keeping with our motto: *Continuity with freshness*.

The next three issues, covering the balance of 1993, will be in the same blue you see on this edition. Thereafter the covers will be color-coded for each year. A small black bar

crossing the spine will identify the individual issues. Thus it will simplify the task of keeping your files of THE HERALD in order.

A Request

Once again we would like to solicit the prayers of our readers to the end that this journal may reflect the will and the spirit of our heavenly Father. We will also appreciate your correspondence concerning the materials presented and your suggestions for improvements.

ISRAEL

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee." -Psalm 122: 6

There are several different meanings associated with the word "Israel" in the Scripture.
For example:

The literal meaning of the Hebrew word for "Israel," #3478 in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, is *he will rule as God or God rules*.

The name "Israel" was given to Jacob, one of Isaac's sons. *And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel* (Gen. 32:28).

The nation, formed of twelve tribes headed by Jacob's (Israel's) twelve sons, was called "Israel." *And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go* (Exod. 5:2)?

The ten-tribe northern kingdom (as contrasted with Judah, the two-tribe southern kingdom) was called "Israel" after the kingdom divided following the death of Solomon.

For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin.-2 Kings 17.21

All twelve tribes following the return of Jews from their exile in Babylon were referred to as "Israel." *Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this work.* (Ezra 10:5).

A spiritual "people of God" is called "Israel" in contrast to the natural people of Israel. *For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel . . .* (Rom. 9:6).

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.- Galatians 6:15, 16

The word "Israel" as applied to "spiritual Israel" raises questions as to the role that "natural" Israel plays in the outworking of God's plan. In Matthew 23:38 Jesus said to the descendants of Israel, *Your house is left unto you desolate*. Does this mean they have no place in God's plan? On the contrary! Romans 11:15 reveals Israel has an active role in God's plan: *For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*

Promises To Israel Prior To The Kingdom

One of the most important promises that Israel received from God has been fulfilled. They were promised to be reconstituted a nation and returned to the land from which they were driven:

The hand of the LORD . . . set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones . . . and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O LORD God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD . . . and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. - Ezekiel 37:1-6, 10, 11

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 they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God-Amos 9:14-15

As remarkable as this regathering is and even though it has fulfilled the wonderful promise that Israel will once again possess the land of their forefathers, there is one very dark cloud on the horizon. The phrase "Jacob's trouble" describes it, a phrase that occurs only once in scripture:

*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 . . . Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time **of Jacob's trouble**; but he shall be saved out of 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: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished . . . All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not; for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased -Jeremiah 30:3, 7, 11, 14*

Note that the Lord says he is going to make a full end of all the other nations. This strongly suggests that the arbitrary divisions into nation-states that has produced rivalry and distress will be dissolved. However, this will not include natural Israel; for there will be a continued awareness, even into the kingdom, of Israel's right to possess the land.

This scripture is not yet fulfilled. Israel still has some "lovers," notably the governments of Great Britain and the United States. This prophecy in Jeremiah says that a time will

come when these supporters will withdraw support and Israel will stand alone. Then, God will show his mighty hand and fight for Israel as he did in days of old:

And thou (Gog) 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,

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 And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: 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. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother. 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.-Ezekiel 38:11, 12, 15, 16, 21-23

Promises To Israel Into The Kingdom

God made the original law covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai. Even though Israel as a nation agreed to keep this covenant, she failed to fulfill this promise. The prophet Jeremiah tells of a new covenant made with the house of Israel.

Behold; the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the LORD, 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. -Jeremiah 31:31-33

In spite of this very clear statement, many Christians believe that the new covenant is made between God and believers in Christ. They "spiritualize" the word *Israel* (and overlook the word *Judah*). This is definitely not the correct thought. The Apostle Paul clarifies God's relationship with natural Israel.

Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles (definitely natural Israel, not spiritual); how much more their fullness? This is my covenant toward them, WHEN I SHALL TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS. Romans 11:12, 27 [Author's emphasis]

When does the new covenant go into effect? This scripture says when God takes away natural Israel's sins. He will take away their sins when the new covenant arrangement is inaugurated with a better mediator than Moses, The Christ, head and body.

Israel Receives Kingdom Blessings First

The Bible uses the word "Zion" and the word "Jerusalem" to talk about what is to happen in the Kingdom. The city of Jerusalem was built on several mountains, the highest of which was named Zion. Zion is used as a symbol of the heavenly phase of the kingdom. Jerusalem, however, describes the earthly phase.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.-Isaiah 2:2, 3

The "law" of the kingdom comes from on high-from Zion. It is broadcast to "all nations" from Jerusalem. This suggests that the earthly seat of government will be located in the literal city of Jerusalem.

Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.-Zechariah 8:22, 23

The number ten in scripture shows human perfection (or completion). Examples: ten camels carrying gifts for the bride of Isaac, ten commandments for God's chosen people, a ten-stringed harp, ten virgins, and ten servants to whom was delivered ten pounds. In the above Zechariah citation, "ten men" represents mankind (complete).

And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. - Zechariah 14:16, 17

An expectation exists that nations will come up against literal Jerusalem in the final phase of Jacob's trouble. If Jerusalem is literal in the first part of this scripture, then it follows that it would be literal in the second part of the scripture. Jerusalem is the place where the "word of the Lord" goes forth and where worship is appropriately rendered. Whether or not "rain" means literal rainfall is questionable. When drought seized the land of Palestine, the people suffered. Thus the lack of rain is an apt symbol of the lack of blessing.

Thus, the blessings of the kingdom flow to the world of mankind through the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel is the first to receive these blessings.

And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. -Zechariah 8:13

The word "blessing" [Strong's #1293] means benediction; implying prosperity. It has been translated blessing, liberal, pool, and present. The many scriptures that use this word clearly show the meaning to be the same as is common to the English word blessing.

In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land.-Isaiah 19:24

The contrast is between the state of Israel and Egypt/Assyria (who jointly picture the other nations of the earth). Notice that Israel is to be the blessing, not Egypt, and not Assyria. Following is a translation of the Hebrew by Knox:

There will be a high-road, then, between Egypt and the Assyrians; either shall visit the other, and Egypt under Assyria be at peace. And with these a third people shall be matched; who but Israel, source of the whole world's happiness? Such blessing the Lord of hosts has pronounced upon it, Blessed be my people in Egypt, and the home I have made for the Assyrian to dwell in; but Israel is the land of my choice.-Isaiah 19:23-25

The Septuagint renders this: *Israel, blessed in the land*. There is a tremendous difference in meaning between being blessed and being a blessing.

(God speaks to Jacob, not Isaac.) *And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.-Genesis 28:14*

All the families of the earth are to be blessed in Jacob and Jacob's seed. Isaac, pictures The Christ, head and body. Gal. 4:28 says that we, like Isaac, are the children of promise. The numberless "stars of heaven" picture the church and the Great company "which no man could number." That was God's promise to Isaac. The numberless "dust of the earth" is quite different. Jacob pictures the earthly phase of the kingdom. He himself pictures the ancient worthies. "His seed" pictures the literal nation of Israel, Jacob's literal descendants. This promise says that through Jacob and Jacob's seed-the Isaac seed is directing the blessing from heaven-all the families of the earth will be blessed. This is what makes Israel a blessing nation.

God regathers Israel to her land and fulfills the promise he made to Abraham to give him the land, a promise that had not been fulfilled when Abraham died. Nations come against Israel with the intent of wiping her off the face of the earth, and God fights for her so that his name may be glorified. Finally, the blessings flow first to Israel and through Israel to

all the families of the earth. The objective is that the entire world joins itself to Israel, becomes part of Israel, and constitutes the numberless earthly seed. All other nations disappear as nations. Only the nation of Israel remains. The idea that the Gentiles actually become Israelites is well supported in scripture:

For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. -Isaiah 14:1

One shall say, I am the LORD's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.-Isaiah 44:5

Ultimately, each individual will become an Israelite. The Apostle Paul used the analogy of taking branches out of a wild tree (Gentiles) and making them a part of a good olive tree (Israel's promises):

For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to [natural] Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all [natural] Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer [The Christ, head and body]] and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob [natural Israel].Romans 11:24-26

Why Israel?

Why has God designed his plan this way? Why should he work exclusively with this one nation instead of with all mankind collectively? One reason is because of his love for their forefathers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and his faithful prophets):

As concerning the gospel, they [natural Israel-the Jews] are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.-Romans 11:28

God's original relationship with Israel was not because they were so much better than others. In fact, the vast majority were unfaithful to him. They were stiff-necked. Israel became the instrumentality God used to deal with the wickedness of the other nations:

Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of the nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out

from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people. -Deuteronomy 9:5, 6

For over 3,000 years the Jews have maintained their uniqueness and their separateness based on their Law Covenant relationship with God. Even when Jews have attempted to conform to non-Jewish standards and behaviors, they have failed. They are a different people.

From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.-Numbers 23:9

Prejudices rage around the world: in Northern Ireland the Catholics hate the Protestants; Turks hate the Greeks; Serbs hate the Croats; Azerbaijanis hate the Armenians; but almost everyone hates or resents the Jews! Prejudice against the Jews exists even in the United States. One of the first lessons to be taught to all nations will be to confront and overcome their prejudice of the Jew. Initially some will not come up - they will not come to Jerusalem. Upon these there will be no rain. Eventually the lesson must be learned that there is no place in the perfected human heart for prejudice.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD 's hand double for all her sins. -Isaiah 40:1, 2

THE FALL AND RISE OF MANY IN ISRAEL

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. "-Luke 2:34

Reprinted from the Chicago Bible Students Newsletter

When the noted historian Charles Gibbons wrote his classic *The Fall and Decline of the Roman Empire*, he could have written similarly about many great dynasties. Kingdoms and empires do rise and fall. That is how the world runs. But only of Israel could one write of its fall *and rise*.

On May 14, 1993 Israel will celebrate the forty-fifth anniversary of its **rebirth**. Until that rebirth, over 2,500 years elapsed since the collapse of the monarchy of Judah, when Babylonian conquerors blinded their last king, Zedekiah, and carried him away captive. More than 1,900 years passed by since Jesus of Nazareth wept over Jerusalem with the words *Your house is left unto you desolate* (Matt. 23:38). And a parenthesis of 1,813 years elapsed between the final collapse of Jerusalem in the days of Bar Kokhba until Israel was re-established in 1948.

The intervening time has not been pretty either. Scorned as Christ-killers, confined to squalid ghettos, passed as pariahs from nation to nation, they became the scapegoats of history. But, united by their religion and bound by their culture, survive they did-maintaining a national identity even in the farthest flung hideouts of their Diaspora.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century their fortunes began to improve, only to collapse once more in a new wave of pogroms in Eastern Europe in the latter part of that century; finally, they sank into the abyss of the Nazi holocaust some fifty years ago. Still they survived and, like the fabled Phoenix, they arose from the pyre to assume an equal standing among the nations of the earth.

Politically, they suffer the same swings, caught in the eternal tug of war between left wing and right. Economically, high military budgets constantly threaten the populace with rising inflation. Religiously, they run the gamut from atheistic to rigid orthodox believers. Militarily, they have proved to be impressive fighters, defending their small bit of territory against overwhelming odds. Socially, they have amazed the world with their ability to absorb new citizenry by the tens and hundreds of thousands: greeting each wave with housing, education, and employment. Viewed on the whole, they are a typical twentieth-century state. Despite such an average ranking, the eyes of the whole world are riveted on Israel.

Forty-five years old . . . and counting. Hostile neighboring nations fuel the animosities of Palestinians within, creating a climate of constant tension. The threat of violence is omnipresent. Through the United Nations, the world community of nations puts on

constant pressure for Israel to compromise its position with their Arab neighbors. Peace factions within toy with the concept of *land for peace*, but such experiments in the past have proven illusory. What is it all leading to? Can Israel survive?

People Of The Book

It is not the oddity of a nation rising from the dust bins of the past that make Israel the remarkable they survived and, like the fabled identity that it is. Far more, it is the fact that this *rising again* was predicted even before the nation fell millennia ago. Prophecies of the Bible not only foresaw the collapse of God's *chosen people* but their resurrection as a nation some twenty centuries later.

Space will permit only a sampling of the scriptures which predicted the downfall of Israel:

But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate. -Zechariah 7:14

Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria bath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon, bath broken his bones. -Jeremiah 50:17

Even the reasons for their downfall were noted:

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, aØ ye clothe you with the wool; ye kill them that are fed, but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. -- Ezekiel 34:2-6

The prophecies foretold how the various nations would do the dispersing.

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.-Joel 3:2

Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns [the coming world empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome]. And I said unto the angel that talked with me,

What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. -Zechariah 1:18, 19

The prophets predicted that there would be a small remnant that would not be scattered. *Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries. (Ezek. 6:8)*

They further foresaw that the Jewish belief in God would provide a haven, a sanctuary, even among the nations of their dispersion.

Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.-Ezekiel 11:16

Finally, the same prophets show that this dispersion, this scattering, would be temporary.

Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.-Ezekiel 11:17

Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. -- Jeremiah 31:10

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. -- Jeremiah 30:11

The Reason For The Dispersion

This last text shows that the dispersion of Israel was a chastisement from the Lord to *correct thee in measure*. We must turn to the New Testament for further specifics concerning why Israel was cast off for a time.

When Jesus of Nazareth presented himself to Israel as their king, riding upon the traditional white donkey of a king, he was not accepted by his own people as their Messiah. In sadness he wept over this failure of Israel with these words:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. -- Matthew 23:37-39

Thus, it was for their failure to recognize the Messiah that Israel was cast off. But this was to be temporary. Note the words of the Apostle Paul:

I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid . . . there is a remnant according to the election of grace . . . For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. -- Romans 11:1, 5, 25-27

Paul speaks of both a *remnant according to the election of grace* and of a regathering and saving of *all Israel*. It is with Israel of this final regathering that Paul says God would make a *covenant to take away their sins*.

A New Covenant

This is the covenant, replacing their old Law Covenant, which was promised through the prophet Jeremiah:

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, 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 neighbour, 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: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.-Jeremiah 31:33, 34

Notice the breadth of this covenant-they shall all know me. This covenant is not for Israel alone but for all people, the Gentile as well as the Jew. Yet, it will be, as Paul says in Romans 2:10, *to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile*.

In fact it will be through the Jews that the Gentiles will gain access to this covenant favor.

Thus saith *the LORD of hosts*; In *those days* it shall *come to pass*, that *ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.-Zechariah 8:23*

And so we see, it is just as Simeon had said, Jesus was set for both the fall and the later rising of many in Israel. Notice that he does not say all in Israel, but many in Israel, because God's favor must be accepted on an individual basis, even though first offered nationally to the Jewish people.

Israel's Future Fall And Rise

Having looked at the large picture of, first, a fall, and then a rise in the fortunes of Israel, let us turn to another fulfillment of this prophecy in the future-in the near future, we believe.

The regathering of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland has been remarkable. A recent return of 14,200 Jews from Ethiopia in one 24-hour period well illustrates this, as does the absorption of Jews from Russia by the tens of thousands. But all who return do not share a common strong faith in the God of Israel. It can be said, as Paul said in his day, *They are not all Israel, who are of Israel.*

In one of the prophecies of the Jewish return from Diaspora, we find these words:

And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD. -Ezekiel 20:38

The reason for this purging is given by the in Zephaniah 3:11.

In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.

The method God will use to accomplish this purging is spelled out in greater detail in Ezekiel 38 and 39 than we have space to examine here. Briefly it describes a coalition of forces against Israel descending from *the north*. These forces will initially enjoy great success in their campaign, for we read of the results of this battle in Zechariah 14:2

*For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; **and the city shall be taken, and the houses riled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.** [Author's emphasis]*

But this defeat of Israel will be temporary. In the very next verse we read: *Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.*

When God fights for them, victory will be sure. And the result will not only be the rising again of many in *Israel* but the strengthening of their faith as well.

And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house, of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward. -Ezekiel 39:21, 22 (Read on to the end of the chapter.)

Then, truly, shall Israel rejoice, for it will have realized the potential for which God has been preparing it during all its past history.

Then all men may rejoice, for through the restoration of Israel God will inaugurate his long-promised kingdom of peace, love, and happiness upon the earth.

COMFORT YE, MY PEOPLE

"Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come."-Psalm 102:13

A verse by verse study in Isaiah 40

The book of Isaiah is a mirror of the entire Bible. As the Bible is divided into the Old and the New Testament, so the book of Isaiah is divided into two natural subdivisions. As the Old Testament is composed of 39 books, so the first section of Isaiah is composed of 39 chapters. As the New Testament has 27 books, so the second part of Isaiah (**chapters 40-66**) contains 27 chapters. As the subject matter of the Old Testament deals with history and judgment, so the first half of Isaiah. As the New Testament promises comfort and salvation, so we find the same is true in the latter portion of Isaiah

Even the symbolic names which Isaiah gives to his two sons emphasizes this theme-MaherShalal-Hash-Baz (Isa. 8:3), meaning speed the spoil, hasten the booty, referring to the judgments on

Old Testament Israel, and Shearjashub (Isa. 7:3), meaning a remnant shall return, highlighting the New Testament message of deliverance. Even Isaiah's own name, meaning God is salvation, emphasizes the hopeful note with which the book concludes.

While there is a body of scholarship which suggests two separate authors for these two sections, calling them First and Second Isaiah, there appears to be far greater reason to attribute both to the famous prophet Isaiah.

The book is written in the end of the eighth century B.C. when the Assyrian army had taken the northern kingdom of Israel and threatened Judah as well.

Here, then, at the opening of the second section of Isaiah lies the chapter to be considered in this article.

Comfort Ye, My People

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins (vs. 1, 2).

Comfort is a word with a wide breadth of meaning. We comfort the mourners by expressing our sorrow in their bereavement. We comfort them also by assuring them of better times coming. On the other hand, a mother comforts her child even in the act of disciplining it, assuring it of her love while insisting on the necessary correction.

The Hebrew word translated comfort is translated about equally repent. The concept of repentance and that of comfort appear at first to be poles apart. True repentance is accompanied by conversion, a change of action. It is just such a change of action which brings a renewed relationship with God. And it is this renewed relationship with God that is the truest of all comfort.

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, this word is translated with the Greek *paraklesis*. *Paraklesis*, in turn, is translated both comfort and exhortation. Note Heb. 12:5, where it is translated exhortation:

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.

Here the comfort, the exhortation, is to despise not the chastening *of* the Lord. This is a far different thought than we would usually append to the word comfort.

An interesting and informative use of this word is found in Acts 4:36

And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

The Authorized Version chose an appropriate word, interpreted, here for Barnabas does not mean son *of* consolation by translation. The translation of Barnabas would be the son *of* the prophet. Therefore a linkage is made between a comforter and a prophet.

The prophets of Israel were seldom seen as consolers, but served as the conscience of the nation. It is in this vein that the word is used in Isa. 40. The Lord is directing that a prophet be sent to Israel to correct them. Following that correction, God would change his dealings with them, and this would be their true comfort.

This theme is picked up in the second verse where the words translated "comfortably" are a phrase meaning literally "to the heart of" in the same sense that we use the expression, "that gets to the heart of the matter."

A Set Time Of Punishment

The heart, the gist, of this comfort message is that there was a time set aside by God to punish and correct the people he loved. It is this *set time* that is translated "warfare" in our text. Literally it means a time of conscription and is further defined in the verse as being a *double [or duplicate time] for all her sins*.

The nation of Israel occupied a peculiar relationship to God from their inception as a people in 1813 B.C. until, rejecting their Messiah, they were cast off in A.D. 33 (Matt. 23:37-39). This was a period of 1,845 years. The result of that rejection was entering a period of dispersion, Diaspora, for an equal period of 1845 years, lasting to A.D. 1878.

Since then it was time to give this comforting message that God was once again favoring Israel.

The reason is further stated: *her iniquity is pardoned*. Any guilt for the sin of rejecting their Messiah has been thoroughly paid for and removed. They have served their full sentence. Therefore they are to be comforted with this knowledge that God is once again working with them.

The Prophet In the Wilderness

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it (vs. 3-5).

These verses are applied to John the Baptist in Matt. 3:3. This seemingly breaks the context for John the Baptist did not live at the time when Israel had *received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins*. The harmony between these two contexts can be found in a principle enunciated in Matt. 11:14- *And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come*.

As John the Baptist was a prototype of Elias [Elijah], so he was also a prototype of *the voice crying in the wilderness*. To those who could receive it, he fulfilled the type, but to the rest a more complete type was to come-the church in the flesh turning the hearts of the children of Israel to their ancient fathers whose words are found in the Old Testament (Mal. 4:5, 6).

A Three-Fold Message

This message was threefold: (1) to make straight in the desert a highway for God; (2) to proclaim the leveling of the hills and valleys and (3) to predict a time when all flesh would see together the glory of the Lord.

In their Exodus the Israelites were directed to the promised land by a very circuitous path through the Wilderness of Sin. Symbolically this represented the course of all mankind through over 6,000 years of experience with sin and evil. Israel will be in a unique position to profit first from their experiences so that they can prepare a straight highway for all mankind. (Compare Isa. 11:16 with Isa. 35:8-10.)

Secondly, having experienced both the exalted heights of God's favor and the depths of his disfavor for like periods of time, they have seen how these contrasting lessons balance or level out the whole of human experience.

Finally the Scriptures predict of time when all flesh shall see God's glory. This is in a time still future when, with their back to the wall, Israel turns fully to their God and he

fighters for them as he fought for them in the days of old. (Compare Zech. 14:1-3 with Ezek. 39:21, 22.)

What Shall We Cry?

The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young (vs. 6-11).

In answer to the query of the *voice in the wilderness* as to the contents of its message, two objectives are given. First, to contrast the arm of flesh with the word of God; and, second, to demonstrate to Israel how their God is working with them.

The cause for Israel's final turmoil before entering into their future role of blessing in God's kingdom is repetitively given as the purging of the spirit of pride. (See Zeph. 3:11, 12; Ezek. 20:38; and Zech. 4:6 for a few examples.)

Here in Isaiah their strength is likened to the stability and permanence of withering grass. In contrast *the word of our God shall stand forever*. The lesson for Israel, then, is obvious: turn to your prophets, to the scriptures for your strength. Through them rely on your God, and not on your own might and strength.

The second half of this message is: *Behold your God! His is the strong hand*. But his working is not that obvious. It is not direct. *His arm shall rule for him*. The *arm of Jehovah* is a frequent prophetic allusion to Israel's Messiah.

And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.-Isaiah 59:16

A Reward And A Work

In recognizing their God and their Messiah Israel will discover that they are to receive *a reward*. Not only a personal and national deliverance, but they will be rewarded with a special work reserved for them alone (Jer. 50:8).

This *work is before them*, that is, it is a future activity for their nation. This work is described as the *feeding and gently leading of the flock of God*. This flock is brought back in *the arm of Jehovah*-once again alluding to the Messiah.

These lambs are *the one that was lost* (Luke 15:1-6). These are the sheep of the other fold, the world of mankind (John 10:16). Thus, under the leadership of the Great Shepherd, God, (of Psa. 23) and the Good Shepherd, Jesus, (of John 10), Israel assumes their position as under shepherds. This is the great work of restitution promised by the mouth of all God's holy prophets. (Acts 3:19-21)

The Omnipotent God

Who bath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who bath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor bath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity (vs. 12-17).

Once again the message takes a dramatic turn. From the lowly lost lambs on the hillside he directs the attention of the prophet to the high majesty of the heavens.

His point is to show, by contrast, that all nations are as nothing. Man does not teach God. Man is taught of God.

Isaiah 40 and the Book of Job

	ISAIAH 40	JOB
Job and His Friends	ch. 1-31	
The Message of Comfort	vs. 1-11	ch. 32-37
The Omnipotence of God	vs. 12-28	ch. 38-41
Restoration	vs. 29-31	ch. 42

The parallelism between this message of Isaiah and the book of Job is noteworthy. (See Box above) Job, in fact, is allegorical of the same truths taught in Isaiah 40. In one of the lessons *of Job*, that suffering character can be looked upon as picturing the humiliation and rise again of Israel. As God there used the majesty *of his physical creation* to give Job a proper perspective, so he does here through the message given to Isaiah.

The Incomparable God

*To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, **they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.** (vs. 18-25)*

Israel's repetitive sin in ancient times has always been idolatry. If it was not the Baals and the Dagon of the Old Testament, it was the equally pagan gods of self, security, and money of more modern times. The prophet's message is clear. Man does not make God. God makes man. The princes of men and judges of the earth are once again likened to withering grass. The whirlwind of anarchy, when it cleanses the earth in final preparation for God's kingdom of *the still small voice*, will blow these mighty ones away as *the chaff of the mountains* (1 Kings 19:12; Isa. 17:13).

The Unfathomable God

Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel; My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard; that the everlasting God; the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding (vs. 26-28).

As God begins to summarize his message through Isaiah, we see the purpose of the diversion into the heavens. He who can so operate a universe so that even the stars move in an orderly progression, can surely be trusted with the future of his peculiar people, Israel. Job also could not fathom the ways of God in his life, but his faith was that God knew the depths of what Job could not comprehend. *Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.* Job 23:8-10

The hymnist has phrased it well:

I know not what tomorrow holds, But I know who holds tomorrow, And I know he holds my hand.

The God Of The Faint Hearted

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (vs. 29-31).

In conclusion the chapter reverts to its main theme: comfort Israel by turning them to the God who *giveth power to the faint*.

In his closing remarks he contrasts the youths with those *that wait upon the LORD*. Youth is idealistic. Youth has strength. Youth tends to have confidence in its own ability. Therefore it is not in the nature of youth to *wait upon the LORD*. The prophet Jeremiah parallels these words with a dissertation to the youth of an earlier trouble period for Israel-the Babylonian captivity.

The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth, To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High, To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not.-Lamentations 3:25-36

Though youth may fall in its selfreliance, those who patiently wait for God *shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint*.

The sum of the whole matter is succinctly stated in Zech 4:6

Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

GOD'S WITNESSES AND SERVANT

*"And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD.
"-Micah 5: 7*

By Richard Evans

[Emphasis in all scriptural quotations in this article are the author's.]

In his letter to the Romans Paul wrote:

I say, then, have they [the Jews] stumbled that they should fall? God forbid.; but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles: how much more their fullness?-Romans 11:11, 12

Israel did fall. It did lose its position of favor (Amos 3:2). But, as Paul declared, the "diminishing" is not permanent. The Jews are to have a "fullness," a return to favor: . . . *that blindness in part is happened to **Israel**, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.-Romans 11:25*

The blindness that led to their diminishing will pass. When *the fullness of the Gentiles be come in*, when the Church, the Body of the Christ, is complete -- **then** their eyes will be opened and their ears unstopped (Rom. 11:8; Deut. 29:4; Isa. 6:9-13; Isa. 29:18; Isa. 35:5). God's favor will return to the Jew!

God's Unconditional Promise

The ultimate destiny of Israel is a theme that runs through much of the Bible. Many of God's spokesmen addressed Israel's appointed role in the divine plan for the ages. The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed:

For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. -Jeremiah 24:6

God has a purpose for Israel. It will be returned to its land never to be "pulled down," never to be "plucked up." Subsequent to this permanent return God has promised:

And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart. - Jeremiah 24:7

This unconditional promise of favor has yet to be fulfilled. In another prophecy of Jeremiah God explained:

Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel; for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. 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. - Jeremiah 30:10,11 (See also Jeremiah 46:27, 28.)

The heavenly Father saw Israel as a rebellious and disobedient nation. It was, therefore, destined to suffer divine punishment: but, there was also to be a salvation after the "correction."

And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof, they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall be no more pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God. - Amos 9:14, 15

Though Israel is now seeing the fulfillment of verse 14, it has not as yet experienced the permanence of verse 15. Ezekiel also wrote of this promised national "life after death."

Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.--Ezekiel 37:11, 12

Again, this is an unconditional promise by God to the nation.

In The Beginning

This promise by the heavenly Father was evident from the very beginning of his relationship with Israel:

For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people. -Deuteronomy 7:6, 7

Following that preliminary declaration, Moses asserted:

Wherefore it shall come to pass, if [because, Hebrew eqeb] ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers. - Deuteronomy 7:12 (Margin)

Unfortunately, the translators of the *KJV* perverted the thought. They made conditional a statement that is unconditional in the Hebrew. God declared through Moses that Israel will hear and will keep his commandments, and that he will keep his promise to their fathers. In some editions of the *KJV* the margin reflects the correct reading. The rendering by the *Englishmen's Hebrew-English Old Testament* makes the text clear:

And it shall come to pass, because you will hearken to these ordinances, and you will keep them, and you will do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep with thee the covenant and the kindness which he has sworn to thy fathers. - Deuteronomy 7:12 (Englishmen's Hebrew-English Old Testament.)

Among others, *Young's Literal Translation*, *Leeser's* translation and the *NASB*, agree with *Englishmen's*.

At the beginning of his relationship with Israel, God made an unconditional promise. There will be a time when Israel will keep his ordinances. Israel will be obedient. God decreed that Israel, as a nation, was predestined to be a "special people" (Deut. 7:6). This predestination does not apply to individuals. It applies only to the composite, to the whole. Israel as a nation will be God's servant (Jer. 30:10).

In his marvelous plan God predestinated the Church, the Body of the Christ, all of whose members will "conform to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29). The individuals that make up that Body, however, are not predestinated. The individual's free will takes precedence. So, with the Jews, the same principle applies. As individuals, each "son of Jacob" will be able to exercise his or her free will; but, as a group, they have been foreordained by God to exist as a nation, as a *holy people unto the Lord* (Deut. 7:6).

Deuteronomy 30:9, 10 is another unconditional text poorly treated by the *King James* translators:

*. . . for [Hebrew, ki] the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers. If [the same word as for in verse 9, ki] thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if [again, the same word] thou [shalt] turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. - Deuteronomy 30:9, 10 (See *Young's Literal Translation* and *NASB* margin.)*

As before, the difference lies in one word. The *xiv* reads *If thou shalt hearken*, while the Hebrew has *for you shalt hearken*. God foreordained that the nation will listen to his voice, and that his favor will return.

From the beginning, then, God's promise to Israel was irrevocable. As Jeremiah declared:

For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. -Jeremiah 32:42

God has spoken. It will be so!

Why Israel?

This is a marvelous promise; but, a question naturally follows an understanding of it. Why? After all the Jews have done, after all their continual failure to keep his Law, after their rejection of his Son, why will God again show his favor? If he is to make a "full end" to all other nations (Jer. 30:11), why not Israel? The Bible reveals at least three reasons.

REASON ONE: God's favor returns to Israel for the cause it was originally given. As Paul explained in Romans: . . . as *touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.* (Rom. 11:28)

The Jews are different from all other peoples. They are not different because of any ethnic, moral, or political quality on their part. They are different because God chose them as the means to fulfill his promise to their fathers. This beloved condition has existed since Israel was delivered from Egypt.

Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, didst thou go to possess their land; but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth swear unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people. -Deuteronomy 9:5, 6

REASON TWO: God's favor returns to Israel to remove the discredit brought upon his *holy name* by their exile.

But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned amongst the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the nations, whither ye went. -Ezekiel 36:21, 22

In order to *sanctify* (vs. 23) his great and holy name God will renew Israel's favored position.

And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it. -Ezekiel 36:35, 36

This promised restoration is unconditional. Israel is to be blessed regardless of its failings and evil ways.

REASON THREE: God's favor returns to Israel because he has a work for it to do. He will not resurrect the nation (Ezek. 37:11, 12), cleanse it, and put his spirit within it (Ezek. 36:25-27) and not have a purpose for it. God through Isaiah raised this very issue. Again, as with many of the texts dealing with Israel's destiny, the *KJV* fails to capture the meaning. The *ASV* provides a better reading.

And he said unto me, Thou art my servant; Israel, in whom I will be glorified Yea, he saith, It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Judah, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.-Isaiah 49:3, 6 ASV (See RSV, NIV and NEB)

It is too *light a thing* just to raise up the Jews. Israel's restoration is not the end-all of God's plan. God's salvation for the world of mankind must follow. As Paul declared: *But glory, honour and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. (Rom 2:10)*

Isaiah foretold this sequence in God's plan: *The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him. (Isa. 56:8)*

James, quoting from Amos, also indicated that the Gentile salvation was to be a sequel of the restoration of the Jew:

After this [after taking out of the Gentiles a people, the Church-vs. 14] I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the

Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.-Acts 15:16, 17

The "tent of David" (Israel - Zech. 12:7-13:1; Isa. 16:5) is to be restored so that the *residue of men might seek after the Lord*. Israel is to be an example that will bring all of d to God! Its return is to demonstrate God's mercy and benevolence to all.

I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen.-Ezekiel 20:41 (See also Ezekiel 28:25; 36:23; 37:28; 39:7.)

Israel's Future Role

It is in this third reason that the role of Israel in the divine plan is revealed. As Malachi prophesied:

*For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed
And all the nations shall call you blessed; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the
LORD of hosts.-Malachi 3:6, 12*

When the heavenly Father removes the blindness from the eyes of the sons of Jacob, when he puts his spirit within Israel, they will return to their God. He will bless them and they shall become a "delightsome land." That blessing will be a sign to all peoples of the earth, just as Israel was for many centuries an example to mankind of God's cursing, so they will become an example of his blessing.

And it shall come to pass, that as ye were [an example of] a curse among the heathen, O horse of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be [an example of] a blessing. -Zechariah 8:13

The spectacle of a restored Israel, the wonders of a "desolate land" that becomes "like the garden of Eden" (Ezek. 36:35), will have the desired consequence.

Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; in those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.-Zechariah 8:22, 23

The world of the Gentiles will be full of evil, misery, and suffering-a time of trouble such as never was (Dan. 12:1). They will look to Israel and see God's blessings being poured out upon the Jew. Then they will come to the Jew and ask how they too may enter into a relationship with God.

The attitude of the Gentiles when they come to the Jew will have undergone a significant change:

The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. -Isaiah 60:14

The world will be awestruck by the good that God will do for Israel. The transcendence of it will bring them to their knees, and they will come to Israel to learn of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

*And I will cleanse them [the Jews] from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it [Israel] shall be to me a name of joy, a praise, and an honour **before all the nations** of the earth which shall hear all the good that I do unto them [the Jews]: and they [the Gentiles] shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it [Israel].- Jeremiah 33:8, 9*

Is Israel's Favor Just?

Despite its grand purpose some God has foreordained that the may question the justness of this seed of Jacob will be his earthly return of favor to the Jew. The Apostle Paul anticipated just such a question and gave the answer:

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated What shall we say then? Is their unrighteousness with God? God forbid For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.-Romans 9:13-16

It is not for any of the creation to judge the Creator, to question him as to whom he may or may not show mercy.

The point to be remembered is that any special blessing God may give, whether it be to the Church or whether it be to Israel, does not take away from the blessings he has in store for others. It does not reduce in any way the provisions of the general salvation of mankind which God foresaw from the beginning of the world.

Israel's election does not imply the rejection of other peoples, but rather their inclusion. Israel was chosen, not for its own salvation but to lead the whole world to share in God's saving knowledge

Israel's Inheritance

The God of Jacob made a promise to his seed (Gen. 28:14). This promise was repeated time and time again by the Prophets and the Apostles. Perhaps it was put in the clearest terms by the prophet Isaiah:

Ye [Israel, vs. 1] are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen. . .-Isaiah 43:10

God has foreordained that the seed of Jacob will be his earthly witnesses and servant.

And for this cause he [Jesus Christ] is the mediator of the new [covenant], that by means of death for the redemption of transgressions that were under the first [Mosaic

covenant], they [the Jews] which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.-Hebrews 9:15

This is the "eternal inheritance" of God's "special people" (Deut. 7:6). This is the role the Jews have in God's divine plan. After their "correction" (Jer. 30:11) they are to be God's "witnesses and servant." They are to be a name of joy . . . before all the nations (Jer. 33:9). As the prophets foretold: He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. (Isa. 27:6)

Behold the days come, with the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man -Jeremiah 31:27

I will increase them [Israel] with men [the Gentiles] like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men; and they [all] shall know that I am the LORD. - Ezekiel 36:37, 38

Israel's witness will lead the world of mankind into covenant relationship with their merciful Creator. The "residue of men" will "seek after the Lord" (Acts 15:17). As Paul proclaimed:

For if their [Israel's] casting away [of Christ] is the reconciliation of the world, what shall be their reception (of Christ), if not life from the dead? - Romans 11:15, Literal Translation.

To that end all should: *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.* (Psalm 122:6)

ISRAEL AND THE LAND

"In that same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." - Genesis 15:18

Contributed

There is only one nation on earth that has its boundaries decreed in the Bible. That nation is Israel.

Genesis 15:18-21 declares that Israel's ultimate boundaries are from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates River. The exact territory designated is a study in itself and is not the function of this article. We will content ourselves here with identifying the minimum territory Israel will occupy before the "time of trouble" is over, and incidentally deal with the immigration of Russian Jews to the extent that that immigration is tied into the "land issue" scriptures.

Micah 7:11 NIV speaks of our time as "the day for extending your (Israel's) boundaries." Verses 13 through 17 describe the "time of trouble." Verse 14, sandwiched in this "time of trouble" setting, speaks of the Lord *feeding* (Hebrew, *ruling*) over Israel in a territory that includes Bashan (the Golan Heights-Deut. 3:3, 4; Num. 21:23-25; Josh. 21:27) and Gilead. Gilead is a part of the East Bank of the Jordan River. The current peace process in the Middle East is negotiating the status of the Golan Heights and the West Bank.

If Israel is forced to compromise land for peace, Micah 7 indicates that Israel will again acquire the Golan Heights, and not only the West Bank, but the East Bank as well, before the time of trouble is over.

Zechariah 10:10, 11 speaks of an immigration of Jews from Assyria and Egypt that is so large that it will fill the land of Gilead and Lebanon. Joshua 13:5, 6 reveals that at least southern Lebanon belongs to Israel by divine right. Israel already occupies a buffer zone in southern Lebanon. An immigration from Assyria and Egypt will be so numerically great that it will fill the land of Gilead (East Bank) and southern Lebanon. Literal Assyria is Iraq. There are fewer than a thousand Jews in Iraq and Egypt. This is hardly enough to fulfill Zech. 10:10. Micah 5:5-7 is an example that Assyria is symbolic in other prophecies concerning Israel. Here Assyria invades Israel just before Israel becomes a blessing nation (v. 7), and Assyria is repelled by *seven shepherds* (the glared church) and *eight princes of men* (the Ancient Worthies.) This is evidently a parallel account of Gog's invasion recorded in Ezek. 38 and 39. It is generally agreed that Gog and some of his associates mentioned in Ezek. 38:3-7 refers to Russia and the republics of the former Soviet Union. Therefore the massive immigration from Assyria may be a reference to the current wave of Jews from Russia and the other CIS [former Soviet Union] republics.

Ezek. 20:32-38 identifies the exodus from Egypt as a picture of the exodus of Jews from all nations back to Israel at the end of the Gospel age. In this picture Israel had to cross a sea and a river in order to enter the promised land. The sea and the river (Hebrew, not Euphrates) in Zech. 10:11 seem to be symbolic of removing the obstacles that prohibited the Jews from leaving the former Soviet Union. With the fall of communism the massive exodus began and thus far numbers 470,000.

Isaiah 11:14-16 also speaks of the smiting of a sea and a river (Hebrew, not Euphrates) in connection with a large immigration of Jews from Assyria to Israel. Verse 14 also mentions a war in which Israel gains a decisive victory over Edom, Moab, and Ammon. These nations occupied territories that are now within the Arab nation of Jordan on the East Bank of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. A war in which Israel defeats Jordan and occupies at least the Gilead, Ammon, Moab, and Edom portions of Jordan could spark a wave of anti-Semitism that could precipitate a further massive exodus from the CIS.

In **Ezekiel 38:14, 15** Gog is spoken of as coming from the "northern parts." Jer. 16:14, 15; 31:7, 8; 23:8 and 3:18 all speak of the regathering from all the nations, but additionally speak of an emigration "out of the land of the north," which seems to be the land of Gog, or the former Soviet republics. Jer. 3:14-18 reveals a trickle return which was true from 1878 to the fall of communism in 1990. Then there was a large exodus.

Remember Isaiah 11:14 showed that Israel would have a decisive victory over Edom, Moab and Ammon. Zeph. 2 has its setting during "the day of the Lord's anger" (v. 2). In Zeph. 2:8, 9 Moab and Ammon are made a "perpetual destruction" and "the remnant of my people (Israel) shall possess them."

In summary, certain scriptures indicate Israel will be in possession of the Golan Heights and the East Bank of Jordan before Gog's invasion. Other scriptures indicate a future war between Israel and the Arab nations, at least Jordan, in which the East Bank is taken by Israel. If Israel is forced to give up land in the present peace negotiations she will regain that land plus the East Bank in this future war. Further, there is to be such a massive exodus from symbolic Assyria (Russia and the CIS) and symbolic Egypt that it will fill southern Lebanon and part of the East Bank (land of Gilead.)

We have not identified symbolic Egypt because it is generally recognized as symbolizing the world. But what world? The Christian world. Where is the greatest concentration of Jews in the Christian world? In the United States-over five million.

Numerous scriptures do suggest that there will be a further exodus of Israelis to the Holy Land after the invasion of Gog and Magog, and perhaps many of these Western Jews will return at that time. However, the lands we speak of-the Golan Heights and the West Bank-are apparently returned before that prophetic invasion from the north

THE MELODY OF THE WATERS

Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well, sing ye unto it: The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves. And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah: and from Mattanah to Nahaliel; and from Nahaliel to Bamoth; and from Bamoth in the valley, that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looketh toward Jeshimon. - Numbers 21:17-20

Condensed from a discourse by J. A. Meggison.

Here, as is so often the case in the Word of God, the real message is hidden in the names given to the characters and places. In Num. 21:15 Moses gathered the people at the well of Beer, a well the Israelites dug in the wilderness and evidently at a time when the people thirsted for water. It was here at Beer that they sang the song in Num. 21, the *Song of the Well*, or *The Melody of the Waters*: "Spring up, O well, sing ye unto it." It is as though they had the promise from the Lord that if they would go and dig they would find water.

Ferrar Fenton's translation [see box, page 21] interprets the meaning of the place names and shows the course that the water, not the people, took. Water symbolizes truth and here depicts the course the message of God takes when it flows forth.

THE SONG OF THE WELL

Numbers 21:17-20 - Ferrar Fenton Translation

Spring up Well to refresh us;
Dug by rejoicing princes;
By the people's chiefs and rulers; --
A refreshing gift in the desert!
And a gift from the rivers of God,
From the rivers of God in the hills.
From the heights it passed to the valley;
To Moab's plain from the peak of Pisgah,
And clothed the face of the waste.

Where the Water Went

The names of the places where the water flowed in Num. 21 are significant.

MATTANAH means *a presence and a sacrificial offering*. When the gospel goes forth to those whose minds are right, it indicates to them a thankful attitude. In return they bring a thank offering, as expressed in Rom. 12:1. The effect of the truth is to bring them to the point of consecration.

beginnings of this river] *make glad the city of God*. Eventually these streams will grow to be a mighty river to refresh the world of mankind.

BAMOTH, meaning *an elevation, a high place* indicates a period of time. As you drink of the river of God, as you understand his purposes and plans, it lifts you up into the heights of enjoyment and you live above the world of mankind, seeing *the land that is very far off* (Isa. 33:17).

PISGAH, *that looketh toward Jeshimon, is* the termination of the river. Jeshimon is the desert. At the top of Pisgah looking toward the promised land, the waste places and the desert are behind and the rejoicing of the world of mankind in the promised land is in front. As Moses did, you realize that this is not for you, it is for the world. However, if faithful, you will be privileged to dispense the blessings to them. As the literal waters went forth to refresh the waste places and cause them to blossom, so the antitypical river of truth gives us a view of God's purposes and plans now and even into the ages beyond.

The Valley of Baca

The message of the melody of the waters is something that runs throughout the Bible. An example of this is found in Psa. 84:4-7

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house [God's people], they will be still [continually] praising thee. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them ['of them' is supplied and refers to God's ways], who passing through the valley of Baca, maketh it a well.

They make it a well. They do not find a well. The word Baca has reference to the abundant fruit of the mulberry tree that continually drops, a symbol of weeping. When God's people pass through sorrowful experiences, as indicated by this valley of Baca, they make it a well. Something in them enables them to turn their experiences into blessings and steppingstones whereby life is made worthwhile. They get a blessing even out of their troubles.

He says they make it a wellspring, and that *the rain also fills the pools* [it overflows and brings a blessing unto others]. *They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God* (Psa. 84:7). By the grace of God they make their calling and election sure. In addition to the joy, we realize that these experiences are necessary for us to round out our characters in preparation for our place in the kingdom. There is victory and blessing in willingly entering into the experiences that the Lord lays out for us.

Living Waters

Another example is found in John 7, which tells of an occasion where Jesus was at the Feast of Tabernacles. He stood observing the water ceremony that was held on the last day. At the conclusion of this ceremony the priest came out into the court and poured the water upon the brazen altar as a water offering. The thought was of a thanksgiving prayer to God for what he had done and prayers that he would continue their blessings in the future year.

Just when all eyes were upon the water being poured out, Jesus raised his voice and said, if *any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink*. This points out that if any man will drink of Jesus, then out of him would be a wellspring of living waters, springing up into everlasting life. These are the wellsprings referred to in Psa. 84. By their very training, the 144,000 followers of the Lamb also become wellsprings of living, flowing, waters. When these wellsprings are all gathered together in the first resurrection, they will form the origin and beginning of the great river of life which flows out to bless the world of mankind.

The River of Water of Life

In Rev. 22:1, 2 we see how this river will be used in the kingdom:

"He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal [pure, not mixed with human tradition, and easily understood] proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb [in the temple and coming out from it]. In the middle of the street [course of the river] of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life [the grove of life], which bare twelve manner of fruits and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

In Ezek. 47:1-9 more detail given considering this river of life:

"Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house [the temple] eastward:

In the Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple and Ezekiel's Temple, the opening of the door of the house was toward the east, looking towards the sunrise, from whence the kings of the east should come.

And the waters came out from under the right side of the house [looking east], and the south side of the altar.

The altar points to the ransom price and the blessings that will come from it.

Then brought he me out by way of the gate northward, and led me about by the way of the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and behold, there ran out waters on the right side [the south side]. "

These waters were then measured and gradually grew, representing the process of progressive development of character.

*Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he **unto me**, "These waters issue out toward the east country [toward the Dead Sea, the desert around Jordan and east of it], and go into the sea [the Dead Sea]: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed" [purified].*

At present the waters are too salty and nothing can live there.

Eventually they shall be healed, made sweet and fresh.

"And it shall come to pass that everything that liveth [that normally liveth], w h i c h moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and everything shall live whither the river cometh "

Jesus told the fishermen who became his disciples, *Follow me and I will make you fishers of men*. Men are likened unto fish-the world of mankind awakened from the dead to receive *the blessings* of the merit of Christ.

The Fountains of The Goat And Bullock

And it shall come to pass that the fishers [The Christ, who will teach the truth to mankind], shall stand upon it from Engedi [fountain of the goat] even unto Eneglaim [fountain of the calf or bullock]; they shall be a place to spread forth nets [organize ways and methods of bringing people back to the Lord]; their fish shall be according to their kinds [all nations] as the fish of the great sea [the Mediterranean Sea], exceeding many.-Ezekiel 47: 9

We are reminded of the sin offerings, the bullock and the goat. Between these two sin offerings the application of Christ's merit will bring salvation to the world of mankind. Even then there will be some who will not want to make any progress. We read in *Ezekiel 47:11-The miry places* [where the water is stagnant; not fit to drink; pools and miasmas breeding mosquitos, etc.] *thereof and the marshes* [classes of mankind who refuse to learn righteousness and come into harmony with the law of God].

This class is also referred to in Isa. 26:10, 11 where he tells us that in the land of uprightness, the Millennial age, there will be some who will not listen or learn. This is willful rejection and opposition to the Lord.

Lord, when thy hand is lifted up [when God's power is made manifest], they will not see [not want to obey], they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people [the Lord will make it so plain that no one can say, 'I don't understand']. Yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.

There will be some who will want to use everything for selfish purposes even if it means suffering to other people. *They shall be given to salt.* The first salt condition represented the Adamic death. Being returned to salt would mean a second death.

Ezek. 47:12 continues:

"And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade [everlasting, evergreen], neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: [it will not decay, but it will be for the use of the people] . . . their waters issue out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat [food], and the leaf for medicine [or, as Revelation puts it, "the healing of the nations"].

These trees or groves are connected with the river of life as mentioned in Isa. 61:3-*the trees of the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified.*

The Wells of Abraham

Another instance of the beauty and harmony of the *melody of the waters* is the story of Abraham's wells. In Genesis 26:15-33 we are told that Abraham dug certain wells and that he had some controversy over them with Abimelech, king of the Philistines. After Abraham's death the Philistines filled in the wells. Isaac dug them again and *called their names by the names which his father had called them.*

At Jesus' first advent he brought to light the truths that had been given in olden times by the word of God and which the Philistines, worldly minded, had filled in with human traditions (Luke 11:46).

The first well that Isaac dug was **ESEK**, *contention*. Even though the Philistines had not dug the well they claimed it. Antitypically this was also the case. After the Apostles fell asleep, the worldly minded took control of the church and the *kingdom suffered violence and the violent took it by force.*

He next dug the well **SITNEH**, Again the Philistines strove for that well. It represented the wellspring of truth that arose during the Reformation and the persecution that came upon it from the Papacy.

Again he dug another well and called it **REHOBOTH**, *enlargement*. The Philistines did not contend for that well. It represented the harvest message. They do not want that and they do not strive for it.

After that the Philistines began to realize that God was with Isaac. King Abimelech gathered the mighty of his kingdom and made a covenant with Isaac. Then Isaac dug the well **SHEBAH**, *covenant*, for which the city of Beersheba is named. That is the well of the New Covenant that will be made in the kingdom for a great abundance of water and blessing-the well of the oath, of the kingdom-Beersheba.

Thus we find in the scriptures the harmony of God's message as pictured in water flowing from the wellsprings, pools, rivers, or streams. We realize the many ways the Lord has pictured parts of his kingdom so that we might have a complete view of his plans and purposes-the beauty and harmony in the melody of the waters.

Archaeology & The Bible

Philistines Among Them

By Charles Ryba

One of the numerous groups that the Israelites encountered during their entry into the promised land was the Philistines. The Philistines were not native to the land of Canaan either. They were also foreigners. Modern scholars regard them as invaders from one or more Aegean sites, including Cyprus, Crete, Peloponnese, and western Anatolia. Their historic interactions in the region highlight the connected nature of early civilization in the eastern Mediterranean and Aegean sea coastlands.

The designation "sea peoples" by the Egyptians coincides well with the biblical statements referring to the "sea of the Philistines" (Exod. 23:31). The land they eventually settled was in the south of future Israel. Their presence contributed to the forty years of wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel (Exod. 13:17). The name of the area was later changed by the Romans to Palestine in memory of the Philistines (Gen. 21, 26; Josh. 13-19; Judg. 13-16; 1 Sam. 4, 5, 13, 17; Zeph. 2:4-7).

Gen. 10 lists the progenitors of the Philistines. They are the sons of Ham, mixed with some of the descendants of Japheth. They are associated with the coastlands of Kittim, Casluhim, and Cahhtorim.

*The sons of Japheth (were) . . . and the sons of Javan [were] Elishah and Tarshish, Kittinz (Cyprus) and Dodanim . . . From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations . . . And the sons of Ham [were] Cosh and **Mizraim** and Put and Canaan . . . And Mizraim became the father of . . . Pathrusim and *Casluhim (from which came the Philistines)* and Caphtorim [Crete] (Gen. 10:2-14). The *NASB* and *NIV* agree, while the *NRSV* changes the order to fit with Jer. 47:4.*

The following texts in Amos and Jeremiah suggest that Caphtor was the ancestor instead. This may be a geographical reckoning, making both statements correct.

Are you not the sons of Ethiopia to me, O sons of Israel? declares the Lord. Have I not brought you up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir (Amos 9:7 NASB)?

On account of the day that is coming to destroy all the Philistines, to cut off from Tyre and Sidon every ally that is left; for the Lord is going to destroy the Philistines, the remnant of the coastland of Caphtor [island of Crete?] (Jer. 47:4).

Abraham's encounter with Abimelech is our first introduction to the Philistines. The Bible mentions the Philistines often during the period of the Israelite conquest beginning with Joshua. The Philistines were usually enemies of Israel because of their occupation of

the land promised to Israel. However, on a few occasions at least, they entered into allied arrangements. (2 Sam. 8:18; 1 Sam. 21:10; 27:6).

Some of the excavated Philistine areas in modern Palestine like Ekron (Tel Mique-Ekron) and Ashdod provide substantial physical artifacts in the form of Mycenaean and Philistine pottery types, seals, Philistine coffin lids and destruction layers among the strata. (Archaeological strata are formed by layers of debris with new buildings erected on top of old dwellings.) Artifacts found in these layers correspond to contemporary inhabitants.

These artifacts can also be used in comparing sites of the same chronological period. Periods can then be determined linking cultural roots and products, military activities, and political rules. These stand alongside Egyptian records of the military adventures of both sides. Unfortunately excavated Philistine sites have not yet yielded any distinctive Philistine inscriptions (aside from some undeciphered seals) or documents that directly communicate their own background or culture. (See the listed references for further discussion of these topics.)

Egyptian records indicate severe conflicts with foreign nations, identifying them as "sea peoples." One record at Medinet Habu, near Thebes, Egypt, from the time of Rameses III records and portrays battle scenes from a military incursion into Egypt. The invaders include the Philistines (*Pe-ra-sa-ta / Peleset*) as one of five related peoples. The Philistines are regarded as a major factor in the decline of the Hittites and Amorites, as well as Carchemish and Cyprus. During the documented periods of Egyptian power, the Philistines were losers.

The principal god of the Philistines was Dagon, a corn god worshiped throughout the near east. The word means *grain* in Hebrew. In Sumerian tradition Dagon was the inventor of the plough. In later Babylonian and Assyrian beliefs he became one of the gods of the underworld, judging the dead.

The Philistines remained in the land, unconquered by Israel, showing domination during the periods of Samson, Saul, David, and others (Judg. 1:19; 3:1; 1 Sam. 9:16). They ceased to exist at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of the area. Jer. 25 and 47 indicate a double impact on the Philistines from Egyptian actions just preceding those of Babylon.

*For Gaza will be abandoned, and Ashkelon a desolation; Ashdod will be driven out at noon. And Ekron will be uprooted. Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast. The nation of the Cherethites! The word of the Lord is against you, O Canaan, land of the **Philistines**; and I will destroy you so that there will be no inhabitant; so the seacoast will be pastures, [with] caves for shepherds and folds for flocks. And the coast will be for the remnant of the house of Judah. They will pasture on it. In the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down at evening; for the Lord their God will take care of them and restore their fortune. (Zeph. 2:4-7)*

Today's news about the Israeli occupation of the Gaza strip looks at ancient Philistia, though not the original Philistines. Their legacy, *Palestine*, today still haunts the modern state of Israel in its efforts at national self definition and newly revived occupation of the land promised to their fathers.

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THE QUESTION BOX

Why, in the model prayer the Lord gave his disciples, is there no mention of thanksgiving?

Our Lord's prayer, as recorded in the sixth chapter of Matthew and the eleventh chapter of Luke, provides a sample form of expression which Jesus gave for his disciples **and all of the spirit** begotten to employ when addressing our heavenly Father during this Gospel age. It is a brief, direct petition which embodies such attitudes as reverence, faith, and humility on the part of the offerer, who enjoys the privilege of sonship, having been accepted in the Beloved.

Although we are not informed specifically why there was no mention of "thanksgiving" in the model prayer, Matt. 5:45 indicates that God causes the sun to rise on the evil as well as the good and sends rain on both the just and the unjust. Unquestionably mankind's original image has been marred greatly by the fall, but sinners to a greater or lesser degree still manifest an attitude of thankfulness for these and other common blessings of the present life.

In this country, for example, a national day of thanksgiving has been set aside to acknowledge various temporal favors which have been received. If such an attitude prevails in the hearts of the unregenerate, footstep followers of the Master who possess the spirit of love and a sound mind certainly would be prompted always to manifest a sense of appreciation for the wonderful privilege of discipleship even though no reference to gratitude is mentioned in the content of our Lord's words under consideration. The effect of their new standing with the heavenly Father and a recognition that they have been called out from darkness into this marvelous light should cause continuous expressions of joy, peace, praise, and thanksgiving to flow from their hearts.

bidding-matters about which all new creatures need to be educated. The rendering of gratitude, however, centers more upon our appreciative response for mercies received and thus was not included in the reply to the disciples' desire, *Lord, teach us to pray*.

Although there is a difference between prayer and thanksgiving, there is also a connection between the two in that the reality of our ever deepening relationship in the body of Christ will make even seeming vexations and earthly woes appear as light afflictions; and we will reach the point where the words of 1 Thess. 5:18 truly will be. Additionally the focus of the a way of life for us.

Lard's prayer seems to draw our attention to God's majesty and purpose, our relationship with others, plus the means by which we can be *strengthened in* our desire to do his

In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Homer Montague

CHRIST THE CENTER

. . . In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.-Psalm 19:4-6

As the sun is the center of our solar system, so Christ is the Christian's sun and center of desire. As gravitation holds the planets in their proper orbit, so love holds the trusting heart in the pathway of willing obedience. As in completing the solar circuit the earth receives the pleasing variety of seasons adapted to beauty and health, and to promote all organic life, so in our loving service of Christ there is a pleasing and useful variety of gracious and profitable experiences. Sometimes fierce storms sweep across our pathway to drive us into the shelter of his promised grace. Sometimes the cold repulsiveness of the world's unbelief and sin chills us like a winter's blast, driving us to the central, steady sunlight of a Saviour's constant love, causing springtime to burst forth in the Christian's heart, and bursting buds of developing faith and love to expand into the fruits of Christian grace. But there is no winter in the sun. And he who has the Sun of Righteousness in his heart will have constantly the springtime of his abiding love.

C. T. Russell

IN MY SOLITUDE

"The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice. My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. "-Song of Solomon 2:8-10

A Meditation by Tom Ruggirello

Sometimes I wonder why I do the things I do. I ask myself, "what is it all for?" "What good is my life really accomplishing?" The sacrifices I make often appear to me like whispering into an empty room. I struggle and no one sees. I fight and rarely seem to win. When I do win a victory I hear no one cheer.

I am finding that the war between the flesh and the spirit never ceases. One day I am soaring above the clouds, feeling the refreshing winds of life. The next day the flesh grabs me and pulls me into the darkness of despair. That condition brings with it such emptiness. It makes me feel so alone. I see how the flesh tries to control me, to create my feelings and to dictate my outlook. There are things that bring me down where I do not want to be. I have learned that my body does not like to be told what to do. It wants to enjoy only pleasant experiences.

In spite of these times however, I am slowly becoming more accustomed to soaring. I am beginning to understand the elevation that spiritual life brings. I find the Lord gently leading me to higher ground. It is hard to express in words, but sometimes my heart is so full of good things that it almost wants to burst.

Once I was spiritually soaring, and I saw something I never expected to see. By my standards, I was very high, but I was beginning to realize that I had barely gone into the foothills of where the Lord dwells. Far above me were mountain ranges that were simply spectacular. They were awesome, and I thought that those immense mountain tops could never be for me. I was just a child with so many upward and downward swings. I realized that I crawled through life more often than I soared.

As I dwelt at my low elevation I looked up to those white peaks and saw the forms of men standing shoulder to shoulder peering down at me. As I struggled to look at them I reached a little higher than before and I had to stop for rest. In the quiet and solitude of the wilderness I could faintly hear them in the distance. They were calling to me, cheering me on, telling me not to quit, not to get discouraged. With the Lord's help I could make it if I did not give up.

As I listened I tried to imagine what it must be like up on the mountain tops. Where I was resting was the most breathtaking spot I had ever been.

' What could it be like on those distant pinnacles if the mere foothills were so grand?

I wanted to go. I wanted with them, and yet I could not. There was an overpowering force pulling me downward. There were many things to learn before I could fly to those heights. What kept me back were my own imperfections, my own inability to love and to give, and to serve others. The Lord was showing me that the door to those wonderful high places was the door of his will. I had to abandon myself to him, to become his artwork, to be fashioned by his hand.

I began to see that to live at the heights of spirituality that I had begun to glimpse my selfishness had to be removed. The road ahead was a road of service, of love.

The path looks so long and hard, but now I know that there is a great brotherhood cheering us on. This is a path others have trod, a path that only the Lord's grace can lead us through. It is the journey that the Lord so desperately wants us to follow. It is the pathway to our Beloved.