

The Herald Of Christ's Kingdom

May/June 1998

Israel at 50

Editors' Journal

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.—Isaiah 11:11

Israel has been called by many names. They are the "people of the book," "the people of the land," and "the people of the covenant." No less, especially in the last 50 years, they can truthfully be called "the people of the immigrant."

From war-torn Europe, from the pogroms of czarist Russia and the latest wave of Soviet emigres, from Yemen and Ethiopia, from the far-flung enclaves of India and South America, the Jew has been returning home. The assimilation of these millions of emigrants into a newly-emerging nation has been a challenge of great magnitude. It has been met with astounding success.

Surrounded and vastly outnumbered by hostile neighboring nations, the State of Israel has come under repetitive attacks. Yet it has survived, not only repulsing the invaders but through conquest enlarging its borders to near-biblical proportions.

Its agriculturists have turned desert wasteland into productive farms. Its scientists and technicians have been in the forefront of the modern technical revolution. Its medical community has produced world-renowned physicians and specialists. It has thrived in the arts and culture. Israel has been a modern miracle.

As Christians, we rejoice in the resurgence of ancient Israel. Behind this miracle, we see the hand of God. Israel is God's time-clock, where fulfilled prophecy portends the long-promised kingdom for which all Christians are taught to pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

In this issue of **THE HERALD**, we salute Israel on its first jubilee of statehood. The articles in this issue not only trace modern developments from the word of God, but we are reprinting selected articles from the last fifty years showing the intense interest we have always had in the remarkable resurgence of the Jewish people.

The opening article, appropriately entitled *Israel*, paints the Bible's portraits of the Israelites in broad strokes, outlining their past, present, and future as God's specially called people. This is followed by *The Future of Israel*, dealing more in detail with the troubled days that lie ahead as a prelude to a glorious future when Jerusalem shall be the capital of the world.

The function of Israel in the long-range plans and purposes of Jehovah is highlighted in *Gathering Out the Stones*. This treatise gives a short summary of the peculiar experiences of the people of Israel through each of the eight eras of their history, showing how each of these ages was a training grounds for a future work for this so often besieged people.

Following this discussion five articles from past issues of this journal are reprinted—one from each decade of Israel's history—under the general title: Israel for Fifty Years. As the opening statement of this series phrases it, "The eyes of the world are on Israel; even more so have been the eyes of the Christian." The editors of **THE HERALD** have always been among these observers. Scores of treatises have appeared on the pages of this magazine—including several special editions—as our writers and the Bible Student community have watched developments in the Middle East.

This series includes: *The Budding Fig Tree* from 1948, *Israel Today* from 1958, and another article by the same title in 1968, a poem entitled *The Rebuilding of Zion* from 1978, and *One Jerusalem: The Eternal City Reunited* from 1989.

Finally, with eyes fixed on the future, the verse by verse study in Acts 3 looks forward to *Israel's Grand Jubilee*. "The future," it is said, "is as bright as the promises of God." In few places do those promises shine more luminously than they do for Israel. Because they shine so brightly for the Jewish people, they indicate even greater promises for the entire human race—not just for those living today but every one who has ever lived. As is the future of Israel, even so will be the future of all peoples.

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!"

Declaration of Israel's Independence 1948

Issued at Tel Aviv on May 14, 1948 (5th of Iyar, 5708)

The land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed. Here they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance. Here they wrote and gave the Bible to the world.

Exiled from Palestine, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and the restoration of their national freedom.

Impelled by this historic association, Jews strove throughout the centuries to go back to the land of their fathers and regain their statehood. In recent decades they returned in masses. They reclaimed the wilderness, revived their language, built cities and villages and established a vigorous and ever-growing community with its own economic and cultural life. They sought peace yet were ever prepared to defend themselves. They brought the blessing of progress to all inhabitants of the country.

In the year 1897 the First Zionist Congress, inspired by Theodor Herzl's vision of the Jewish State, proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national revival in their own country.

This right was acknowledged by the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, and reaffirmed by the Mandate of the League of Nations, which gave explicit international recognition to the historic connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and their right to reconstitute their National Home.

The Nazi holocaust, which engulfed millions of Jews in Europe, proved anew the urgency of the re-establishment of the Jewish state, which would solve the problem of Jewish homelessness by opening the gates to all Jews and lifting the Jewish people to equality in the family of nations.

The survivors of the European catastrophe, as well as Jews from other lands, proclaiming their right to a life of dignity, freedom and labor, and undeterred by hazards, hardships, and obstacles have tried unceasingly to enter Palestine.

In the Second World War the Jewish people in Palestine made a full contribution in the struggle of the freedom-loving nations against the Nazi evil. The sacrifices of their soldiers and the efforts of their workers gained them title to rank with the peoples who founded the United Nations.

On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a Resolution for the establishment of an independent Jewish State in Palestine and called

upon the inhabitants of the country to take such steps as may be necessary on their part to put the plan into effect.

This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their independent State may not be revoked. It is, moreover, the self-evident right of the Jewish people to be a nation, as all other nations, in its own sovereign State.

ACCORDINGLY, WE, the members of the National Council, representing the Jewish people in Palestine and the Zionist movement of the world, met together in solemn assembly today, the day of the termination of the British mandate for Palestine, by virtue of the natural and historic right of the Jewish people and of the Resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations,

HEREBY PROCLAIM the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine, to be called **ISRAEL**.

WE HEREBY DECLARE that as from the termination of the Mandate at midnight, this night of the 14th and 15th May, 1948, and until the setting up of the duly elected bodies of the State in accordance with a Constitution, to be drawn up by a Constituent Assembly not later than the first day of October, 1948, the present National Council shall act as the provisional administration, shall constitute the Provisional Government of the State of Israel.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersion; will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on the precepts of liberty, justice and peace taught by the Hebrew Prophets; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of the shrines and Holy Places of all religions; and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be ready to cooperate with the organs and representatives of the United Nations in the implementation of the Resolution of the Assembly of November 29, 1947, and will take steps to bring about the Economic Union over the whole of Palestine.

We appeal to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building of its State and to admit Israel into the family of nations.

In the midst of wanton aggression, we yet call upon the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to return to the ways of peace and play their part in the development of the State, with full and equal citizenship and due representation in its bodies and institutions — provisional or permanent.

We offer peace and unity to all the neighboring states and their peoples, and invite them to cooperate with the independent Jewish nation for the common good of all.

Our call goes out to the Jewish people all over the world to rally to our side in the task of immigration and development and to stand by us in the great struggle for the fulfillment of the dream of generations — the redemption of Israel.

With trust in Almighty God, we set our hand to this Declaration, at this Session of the Provisional State Council, in the city of Tel Aviv, on this Sabbath eve, the fifth of Iyar, 5708, the fourteenth day of May, 1948.

Israel

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

Michael Nekora

The word "Israel" means many different things in scripture. We cite just a few of these:

1. The literal meaning of the Hebrew word #3478, is "he will rule as God" [Strong's] or "God rules" [Companion Bible].
 2. The name God gave to Jacob, one of Isaac's sons. "And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel" (Gen. 32:28).
 3. The nation formed of 12 tribes headed by Jacob's [Israel's] 12 sons. "And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?" (Exod. 5:2).
 4. The 10-tribe northern kingdom (as contrasted with Judah, the two-tribe southern kingdom) 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).
 5. All twelve tribes following the return of Jews from their exile in Babylon. "Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word" (Ezra 10:5).
- "Ye men of Israel [note: Peter did not say "ye men of Judah"] hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" (Acts 2:22).
6. A spiritual "people of God" (as contrasted to Israel). "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, 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."(Gal. 6:15, 16).

It is entirely appropriate that Bible students emphasize this particular use of the word "Israel." When God accepts our consecration, we become new creatures and are accepted as his sons. We become part of the "Israel of God" even though we may not necessarily be natural descendants of Jacob. But what about natural Israel? Jesus said unto them, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38). Does this mean they have no place in the outworking of God's plan? Of course not!

Promises to Israel PRIOR to the Kingdom

One of the most important promises that Israel received from God has been fulfilled within our lifetime. It is that they will 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 (Ezek. 37:1-6), . . . 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" (vs. 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).

But even though this regathering has fulfilled the wonderful promise that Israel will once again possess the land of their forefathers, there is one very dark cloud on their horizon. The phrase "Jacob's trouble" describes it, a phrase that occurs only once in the Bible, in Jeremiah chapter 30: "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 (v. 7). 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 (v. 11). 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" (v. 14).

Note that the Lord says he is going to make a "full end" of all the other nations. What does this mean? We suggest that it means the arbitrary divisions into nation-states that has produced such rivalry and distress will be dissolved. But interestingly enough, this dissolution is not directed at Israel. This text implies there will be a continued awareness even into the kingdom of those who are part of the nation of Israel.

This scripture is not yet fulfilled because Israel still has some "lovers," notably Great Britain and the United States. But this prophecy says that a time will come when these supporters will withdraw their support and Israel will stand alone. It is then that God is able to show his mighty hand and fight for them as he did in days of old as we read in Ezekiel 38:

"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. [vs. 11] . . . 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. [vs. 16] . . . 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" (vs. 21-23).

Promises to Israel In the Kingdom

The covenants are important to Bible students. We know about the original law covenant God made with Israel at Mount Sinai. Israel agreed to do certain things, but they failed. What about the new covenant? With whom is it made? The scripture is very clear: "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" (Jer. 31:31-33).

In spite of this very clear statement, many of our Christian friends believe that the new covenant is made between God and believers in Christ. They "spiritualize" the word "Israel" [and overlook the word "Judah"]. But that is definitely not the correct thought. It was not the apostle Paul's thought in Romans when he talked about Israel and the covenant to be made with them.

"Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles [definitely Israel,]; how much more their fulness? This is my covenant toward them, when I shall take away their sins" (Rom. 11:12, 27).

When does the new covenant go into effect? It happens when God takes away natural Israel's sins. Has he done that yet? No, he has not. But he will do it when the new covenant arrangement is inaugurated with a "better priesthood" than Aaron, The Christ, head and body.

Israel Receives Kingdom Blessings First

The Bible uses the word Zion and the word Jerusalem to describe 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" (Isa. 2:2, 3).

The "law" of the kingdom comes from on high—from Zion. It is broadcast to "all nations" from Jerusalem. Whether or not this means the earthly seat of government will be located in the literal city of Jerusalem or not is debatable, but it is hard to find a better place for it.

"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" (Zech. 8:22, 23).

The number ten in scripture shows human perfection or completion. Examples include the ten camels carrying gifts for the bride of Isaac, ten commandments for God's chosen people, a ten-stringed harp, ten virgins, ten servants to whom was delivered ten pounds. In this Zechariah text "ten men" represent humanity in the completed sense.

"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" (Zech. 14:16, 17).

Most Bible students expect 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. It is the place where the "word of the LORD" goes forth, where worship is appropriately rendered. Reasonable students may differ about whether "rain" means literal rainfall or not. Yet people everywhere are concerned about what the lack of rain can do to their economy and life style. When drought seized the land of Israel, the people suffered. Thus the lack of rain is an apt symbol of the lack of blessing. There is even a scripture that implies that Israel itself is this "wetness" from heaven: "Then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto

the children of Israel. And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass"(Micah 5:3, 7).

Thus we see that the blessings of the kingdom flow to the world of mankind through the nation of Israel. They are the first to receive kingdom blessings. Although there is no scripture that uses the phrase "blessed nation" to describe Israel's role in the kingdom, we believe that this is exactly the role Israel will have. Of course real earthly power will be vested in the leaders of restored Israel, the "princes in all the earth." Israel is shown favor so that it may flow to everyone else: "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" (Zech. 8:13).

The word translated "blessing" is Strong's #1293 and means benediction or prosperity. "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land" (Isa. 19:24).

This text contrasts the state of Israel and Egypt/Assyria (who jointly picture the other nations of the earth). But notice that it is Israel that is to be the blessing, not Egypt, not Assyria. Here is how Knox translates the Hebrew:

"There will be a high-road, then, between Egypt and the Assyrians; either shall visit 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."

In Genesis, God speaks to Jacob (not Isaac) and says: "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" (Gen. 28:14).

Notice that all the families of the earth are to be blessed in Jacob and Jacob's seed. Bible students generally agree that Isaac pictures The Christ, head and body. Whom does Jacob picture? He does not picture a heavenly seed as does Isaac. God's promise to Isaac was that his seed would be like the numberless "stars of heaven," a picture of the Church and the Great Company "which no man could number." But the numberless "dust of the earth" is different. Jacob pictures the earthly phase of the kingdom. He himself pictures the resurrected leaders of Israel; his "seed" pictures the nation of Israel itself, Jacob's literal descendants. This promise says that it will be through Jacob and Jacob's seed—the Isaac seed is of course, directing the blessing from heaven—that all the families of the earth will be blessed. This is what makes Israel a blessed nation.

God is regathering Israel to her land. He does this to fulfill the promise he made to Abraham—that he would give him the land—a promise that had not been fulfilled when Abraham died. Nations come against her with the intent of wiping her off the face of the earth and God fights for her so that his name may be glorified. Is that the end? Not at all.

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" (Isa. 14:1).

It should not be surprising that everyone must give up their own nationality and become an Israelite. That is, after all, exactly what has happened to Christians today. Paul used the analogy of taking branches out of a "wild" tree [referring to Gentiles] and making them a part of a "good" olive tree [Abraham'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 Israel, until the fulness 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 [The Christ, head and body], and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob [Israel]" (Rom. 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 his love for their forefathers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and the faithful prophets): "As concerning the gospel, they [Israel—the Jews] are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes" (Rom. 11:28).

His original relationship with Israel was not because they were so much better than others. We know from the record that most were unfaithful to him; they were "stiff-necked." But 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 these 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" (Deut. 9:5, 6).

For over 3000 years the Jews have maintained their uniqueness, their separateness based on their law covenant relationship with God. This is probably what non-Jews find so irritating. They want others to conform to their own standard, their personal mode of behavior. Even when Jews try to accommodate to this pressure, they have failed. They are different as Balaam predicted: "For 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" (Num. 23:9).

Think of the prejudice that rages around the world: in Northern Ireland the Catholics hate the Protestants; Turks hate the Greeks; Serbs hate the Croats; Azerbaijanis hate the Armenians; and almost everyone hates 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. It will be hard. Initially some will not conform, will not come to Jerusalem. And upon those, there will be no "rain." Eventually they will learn that prejudice has no place in a perfected human heart.

The Lord is developing the footstep followers of Jesus now, in advance of the world. There is no place for prejudice in such characters, whether it be prejudice of Jews or non-Jews, whether it be of anyone in the world or among Christian fellowship. If we see evidence of prejudice in our characters, let us cut it off. Otherwise it may keep us from reaching the prize for which we run.

"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" (Isa. 40:1, 2).

The Future of the Nation of Israel

For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.—Isaiah 2:3

Robert Seklemian

To the natural man, the situation in which the nation of Israel finds itself today is absolutely hopeless. It may be said that they have the bleakest prospects of any nation in the world, the least chance of survival. Ringed about and outnumbered a hundred to one by ferociously hostile nations—nations who have sworn not merely to defeat them militarily but to exterminate them from the face of the earth—it seems only a matter of a short time when Israel will be no more.

This is the way it seems to the natural man. But to the un-natural man, the spiritual man, the man whom God has enlightened with his truth, the prospects for Israel are the brightest and most glorious of any nation in the world. They are the heirs of earthly promises of such grandeur and scope as to almost stagger the imagination.

Of heavenly Zion it is said, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!" (Psa. 87:3). These things spoken of Christ and the church, the heavenly Israel, are surpassingly glorious. The things spoken of natural Israel, the prophecies yet to be fulfilled on behalf of that people, are also very glorious indeed.

First let us assure ourselves that when Jesus sorrowed over Jerusalem saying: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38; Luke 13:35), he did not mean that all their earthly promises had failed. How do we know? After these words, in the very next verse, he said that the time would come when they would "see" or recognize him and say of him, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Before declaring their house desolate, Jesus said:

"How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not."

He was here speaking of the special gathering of the high calling, the wonderful opportunity of becoming spiritual Israel, and their national rejection of it. We read: "He came unto his own [his own nation], and his own received him not. But as many as received him [individually], to them gave he power [or privilege] to become the sons of God [the church]." (John 1:11, 12).

This special privilege is what Israel had missed. Jesus was not speaking of their earthly promises which are still theirs. He did not cast off natural Israel for ever.

As proof let us consider the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 11. Some of the Gentiles in the church at Rome thought that God had indeed permanently cast off his

people Israel, that the promises were spiritual only and theirs only. Paul uses this entire chapter to disabuse their minds of such a foolish notion. We read: "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew" (Rom. 11:1, 2).

"What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (v. 7). "I say, then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid. But rather through their fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles [that is, the high calling was opened to the Gentiles]" (v. 11).

"But if their fall is the wealth of the world, and their failure the wealth of the Gentiles, how much more will their full acceptance be?" (v. 12 Diaglott). Note that there is to be a full acceptance, a full receiving back to favor, a full realization and obtaining of all the prophetic promises made to them. Verse 15 is really startling in its implications: "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world [that is, to permit the development of the church for the Messianic rule of the world], what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (v. 15).

Does this not teach that the resurrection of the dead and restitution will start with the nation of Israel when they have been received back into favor? I think it does.

Israel's Rejection Temporary

The apostle then likens the temporary rejection of Israel to the breaking off of the natural branches of an olive tree and the acceptance of the Gentiles to the high calling as the grafting in of wild olive branches. In verses 18 to 21 he admonishes the Gentiles not to boast, not be too proud of this fact, not to say to themselves that the nation of Israel was permanently rejected for their sakes and that all of Israel's earthly promises are forever lost. Do we need this admonition today? In verses 23 and 24 the apostle suggests that the natural olive branches shall be grafted in again when their unbelief is taken away, that they will return once again to full favor with God.

The apostle persists in his argument. He evidently considered the subject very important and that the church at Rome was making a serious mistake regarding the prospects and future role of the nation of Israel. He must have considered it a vital subject because he spent so much time on it. He no doubt foresaw that the time would come at the end of the age when other Gentiles—even some running for the prize of the high calling—would become similarly conceited with themselves, developing a contempt for Israel and God's promises to that nation. We continue the reading from the Diaglott:

"Brethren, that you may not be conceited with yourselves, I wish you not to be ignorant of this secret; that hardness in some measure has happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles may come in [that is to say, until the full number selected from the Gentiles for the high calling has been completed]. And then all Israel will be saved; as it has been written, The Deliverer [that is, Christ, head and body] shall come out of Zion, and shall

turn away ungodliness from Jacob. And this is the covenant with them from me [the New Covenant], when I shall take away their sins. In relation to the glad tidings [the high calling] indeed, they are enemies on your account; but in regard to the election, they are [still] beloved on account of the fathers, because the gracious gifts and calling of God are things not to be repented of [yes, they still have a calling; a role to play in the blessing of the world. God has not repented and changed his plan in this regard]. Besides, as you [Gentiles] were once disobedient to God, but have now obtained mercy by their disobedience; so also, now, these have disobeyed so that they may obtain mercy through your mercy [that is, at the hands of the glorified Church]"—Rom. 11:25–31 (Diaglott).

Starting with verse 33 to the end of the chapter, the apostle seems to go into ecstasy:

"O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen!"

Let us be similarly overwhelmed. Let us not be inclined to begrudge the Jews their precious promises because of their past imperfect performances. Let us remember that we were totally unworthy of the high calling, that it is only by the grace of God—his unmerited favor—that we have this glorious hope set before us.

Let us consider some of the unfulfilled promises to the nation of Israel that must shortly come to pass. These prophecies are very numerous and we cannot cover them all. In preparing this lesson I collected over 200 scriptures on the subject and there are many more.

God's Israel Not Today's Israel

First we should realize that the nation of Israel as presently constituted is not the nation of Israel that God will favor and use in his Messianic Kingdom. The present government of Israel is an interim government organized by men according to the best wisdom of this world. It was necessitated by the regathering of Israel to maintain order and discipline, to exercise police power, to permit an orderly and systematic repossession of the land in fulfillment of prophecy, and to plant and build up the country. It is not in its present form the promised throne of David. No! There is to be a glorious re-birth of the nation of Israel based upon a great conversion. The new government of Israel will not be parliamentary-based but will be a benevolently autocratic under the rule of The Christ.

Before this happens there must first be a great day, a time of special and intense trouble for Israel. We read: "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" (Jer. 30:7).

Gog and Magog

The prophet Ezekiel gives us more detail. In chapter 38 the chief of the forces that will attack Israel is identified as Gog. We read:

"In the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people; against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste; but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them [this has not yet been completely fulfilled]. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm. Thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou and all thy bands, and many people with thee. Thus saith the Lord God, It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought. And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages. I will go to them that are at rest; that dwell safely; all of them dwelling without 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. Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord God, In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses [the modern version of the horse in warfare is the tank], a great company and a mighty army. And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel as a cloud to cover the land [this suggests a cloud of war planes in the sky]. It shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen [or nations] may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes" (Ezek. 38:8–12,14–16).

When these forces attack Israel, the eyes of the world will be upon them. Every nation will be watching. With modern satellite communication which makes worldwide television possible, this can be literally true.

Ezekiel expresses it eloquently: "And it shall come to pass at the same time, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy, and in the fire of my wrath, have I spoken. Surely, in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel . . . And I will plead against him [Gog] 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" (Ezek. 38:18, 19, 22).

This is symbolic language. The prophet uses the words fury, jealousy, wrath, a great shaking, pestilence, blood, an overflowing rain, great hailstone, fire, and brimstone. These were the most destructive things men knew at that time. Today men consider atomic bombs and the rockets that propel them to be the ultimate in destructive force. Although Gog and his allies will be liberally equipped with these, they are puny things indeed compared with the power of God. So we do not know and cannot comprehend the exact form in which this tremendous power of God will be expressed against the enemies of Israel. But we do know that it will be demonstrated in a most spectacular manner and

that the whole world will witness it, will know that a most unusual thing has taken place—something that can be attributed only to God. What they see will convince them that it is indeed the Almighty God who is fighting for his people Israel.

Millions of atheists, agnostics and heathen the world over will be instantly converted to God. "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" (Ezek. 38:23).

This is confirmed two chapters earlier: "And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen [or nations] . . . And the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes" (Ezek. 36:23).

Most important of all, this great act in its defense will instantly convert the nation of Israel. Yes, they do need conversion. There are few really believing Israelites among them; they still rely upon their own strength. When it is suggested that the invaders might attack them, they say, "Let them come. We can handle them!" But when they have reached their extremity in Jacob's trouble, been humbled in defeat, and then see the great act by which God delivers them, they will be truly converted.

That will be a sincere and complete conversion. It is then that they will say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." At long last the prayers of Israel will be answered. For centuries they have prayed so fervently without response. Don't you think they prayed with all their hearts in Hitler's concentration camps? Don't you think they prayed desperately when led to the ovens? Six million Jews went to their deaths praying. But God did not seem to hear them. In God's kingdom it will be different! We read: "Then shall ye call upon me; and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you . . . And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:12, 13).

Of that time we read further, in Jeremiah 30:9, 21: "They shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king whom I will raise up unto them." Verse 21 refers to their supreme prince and ruler, the glorified Jesus Christ, who was born a Jew and who is now exalted to the presence of God. The Moffatt translation beautifully brings out this thought: "Their prince shall be one of themselves. Their ruler shall be native-born. I will grant him access to myself, and he shall enter my presence. For how else could one dare to enter my presence? says the Eternal."

As Ezekiel says: "So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel . . . And the heathen [or nations] shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One, in Israel . . . So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God, from that day and forward" (Ezek. 39:7, 22).

A New Covenant

The scriptures clearly teach that the New Covenant will be made with the chastened and converted nation of Israel. This is what Paul says: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when 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 when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant [that is, the Law Covenant], and I regarded them not, saith the Lord" (Heb. 8:8–12 [quoting from Jer. 31:31–34]).

It was the rank and file of Israel who were led out of Egypt and who broke the Law Covenant. The Law Covenant was made with them. The covenant instituted at Mount Sinai was not made with Moses but with the people of Israel. This is clearly shown in the account: "And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep them, and do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us; even us who are all of us alive here this day" (Deut. 5:1–3).

Notice how positively he emphasizes this fact, stating it in different ways. We continue the reading in Hebrews: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 8:10–12).

In Jeremiah regathered Israel is described as the ones with whom the New Covenant is to be made: "Behold, I will gather them out of all the countries whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath. And I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely" (Jer. 32:37).

Then the prophet says: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good. But I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me" (v. 40).

As further proof we cite the words of Ezekiel: "For thus saith the Lord God; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath, in breaking the covenant" (Ezek. 16:59).

This clearly describes unfaithful natural Israel. Then he goes on: "Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth [that is, the Law Covenant], and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord" (vs. 60, 62).

Thus the scriptures clearly indicate that under the New Covenant the benefits of the Messianic Kingdom will start with Israel and spread from them to the rest of the world. Israel will be the door to the highway of holiness. This is brought out by Jeremiah speaking definitely of Israel: "Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coast of the earth; and with them the blind and the lame . . . They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters [the same river of the water of life mentioned in Rev. 22:1] in a straight way [the highway of holiness mentioned in Isa. 35:8] wherein they shall not stumble" (Jer. 31:8, 9).

This harmonizes with Isaiah's words which indicate that Israel will be the gate to the highway of holiness. It was of Israel that he prophesied: "Go through, go through the gates, Prepare ye the way of the people. Cast up, cast up the highway, gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people" (Isa. 62:10).

And his words two chapters earlier: "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night, that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles [or nations]" (Isa. 60:11).

Resurrection of the Dead

The resurrection of the dead will start with Israel. Paul says, "What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:15) Also the words of Ezekiel: "Ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves" (Ezek. 37:13).

Physical healing will start with Israel. It was said of Israel, "Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them." (Jer. 33:6) Moral reform and restitution will start with Israel: "A new heart also will I give you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them" (Ezek. 36:26, 27).

"I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. And I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God" (Ezek. 11:19, 20).

The earth will begin to return to Edenic conditions first in Israel. Referring to the land of Israel Ezekiel says: "They shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the Garden of Eden." (Ezek. 36:35) And in the Psalms: "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us" (Psa. 67:6).

All these wonderful things the rest of the world will see and observe. As we read in Jeremiah: "It 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" (Jer. 33:9).

It is of such things that the world will hear. They will hear that in Israel the lame man leaps as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sings! They will hear that in Israel men are actually returning to the days of their youth, that their families separated by death, are being reunited, that the land of Israel is full of joy and praise to God.

A Showcase Nation

Thus Israel under the Ancient Worthies will be a showcase nation. It will be a most natural thing that the world will ask: "How can we share in these good things? How can we obtain the same benefits?" They will be in a hurry to act to obtain the same blessings. The scriptures tell us of this. There is no mistaking the clear import of these scriptures: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities. And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts. I will go also! 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" (Zech. 8:20–23).

"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 into 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 [the heavenly phase of the Kingdom] shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem [the earthly phase of the Kingdom]" (Isa. 2:2,3).

"In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths" (Micah 4:1,2).

"At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem" (Jer. 3:17).

Thus will be fulfilled the prophecy found in Acts: "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written: After this 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 [all the rest of mankind] might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:14–18).

Gathering Out the Stones

Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.—Isaiah 62:10-12

Carl Hagensick

John Thomson, in his *The Land and the Book*, notes that Middle Eastern farmers do not gather out the stones but do "gather up stones from their field and cast them into the highway," thus rendering the paths both uncomfortable and dangerous. In our text, however, it is not the preparation of a field for planting but the construction of a highway that is under consideration. As throughout Isaiah, this is the "highway of holiness" (Isa. 35:8-10) which is to bring man from a condition of sin to one of holiness and righteousness.

The context of Isaiah 62 seems clearly to refer to a work for the children of Israel. They are to be part of the construction crew for this new highway—a "super" highway indeed. As the hymn so aptly phrases it: And a highway shall there be cast up, And the stones shall be all gathered out; And errors no weak ones shall trip, And no lions of vice stalk about.

The Stones

The stones represent impediments in one's walk. If not removed, they become stumbling stones along the way. They may be incorrect thoughts or wrong patterns of life. In either case they impede progress. Our text assigns the removal of these hindrances to the children of Israel. Their entire life as a nation has prepared them for this grand task. Many of the faults of mankind have been experienced by this nation.

Far from being the most righteous of nations, the people of Israel often proved to be the most recalcitrant. Our attention is called to this fact in Deuteronomy 9:6, "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."

While stubbornness is a negative trait of character, the stubborn person who has learned his lesson often becomes one of strong positive will and greatly capable of teaching others a better way. Each era of Israel's experiences was an intensive course in the frailties common to the human race.

Egypt and the Exodus

Israel was born as a nation while in Egypt. There they soon learned the rigors of forced servitude. They felt the normal human emotions common to those under stern and unrelenting taskmasters. The lessons of that generation will match those of countless millions who, throughout history, have been likewise deprived of all rights, from the victims of the African slave trade to the subjects of totalitarian regimes.

Their next course was in learning to quell the rebelliousness of discontent. For forty years they murmured and complained over their lot as wilderness nomads. The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10:1-14, traces at least five of these experiences, adding that these were "for our [the church's] admonition" (v. 11). He implies further, in verse 13, that these were things such as were "common to man." That generation of wilderness wanderers will be particularly qualified to deal with the stones of human rebellion that lie in so many of the race.

In the Promised Land

Entering Canaan, the Jews found new experiences awaiting them. Now the commandment of the Lord was to drive out the inhabitants of the land and possess their inheritance. "Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out" (Josh. 17:13). Here was another human impediment—the temptation to compromise. They paid dearly for their lack of full obedience, for the enemies left in the land were not only hostile but an ever-present temptation for assimilation and inter-marriage. Consider the valuable lessons that these generations will have for the vast number of people who prefer compromise to full obedience!

Once the land was fully conquered, the nation entered a new set of experiences under the judges which were raised up to lead them for over four centuries. The lessons of this period are succinctly summarized in the last verse of the book of Judges. "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jud. 21:25). Left to their own devices, Israel became a divided nation, with each family and tribe more interested in their own welfare than in that of the nation. The lesson they learned, was phrased later by King Solomon in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Self-centeredness is another one of the stones which needs to be gathered out of that future "highway of holiness."

During the next era of their history, the period of the kings, their fortunes were, as before, checkered. Though they prospered under the reigns of good kings, they found they were more frequently chastened. The vast majority of their rulers followed not in the ways of Jehovah. During this time they learned God's blessings were totally dependent upon the quality of the king. This has been a lesson repeated time and time again to the human race. So often have human leaders ruled for their own benefit, the very word "politician" often conjures up the image of corruption. With such cynicism toward rulers, it will

surely take a while for the completely benign and beneficial rule of Christ and his church to win acceptance from disillusioned humanity. To this end, the experiences of Israel under their kings will provide invaluable lessons to be passed along to all the peoples of the earth.

A Nation Cast Out

From the overthrow of their hierarchy by the forces of Babylon until the permission to return by the Medo-Persian ruler Cyrus, Israel had to relearn the lessons of accepting God's chastisements. It has been said, "The mark of maturity is the ability to accept the consequences of your own actions." To a large measure, this lesson was well learned during the Babylonian captivity, for never again do we read of Israel entering into the worship of idolatry as did so many of their ancestors. However, the lessons of assimilation were still there, so much so that only a small portion of the Israelites who were taken into captivity returned during the favorable reigns of Cyrus and, later, Artaxerxes. Even those who did return began again to marry the women of the land (see Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 10).

During the harsh oppressions of the inter-testamental times, especially under Antiochus Epiphanes, Jewish religious nationalism rose under the leadership of the Levitical family of the Maccabees. Victoriously cleansing the temple and establishing a semi-autonomous government, Israel came under the leadership of the Hasmonean dynasty. Power struggles soon emerged spawning such diverse religious groups as the politically-compromising Sadducees and the ultra-religious Pharisees. While the Sadducees lost much of their faith in the Old Testament doctrines, the Pharisees, by their outward show of religiosity, became hypocritical. The religious polarization of these groups was matched by the political polarization of the Herodians and the Zealots—the former favoring coexistence with their Roman rulers and the latter advocating the violent overthrow of their oppressors. Such polarization, both in religious and political spheres, is another of the stones man will need to rid himself in order to walk the "highway of holiness."

The Diaspora

For nearly 2000 years Israel has been going through her Diaspora. Scattered amongst all the countries of the five continents, the Wandering Jew has been a people without a homeland. Enduring persecution and successive waves of anti-Semitism, the Hebrew people have remained a separated people—separated by their fierce and unmovable faith in their religion and its traditions.

The world-wide nature of her scattering has left the Israelite with a first-hand knowledge of all the cultures of the earth. There are few countries existing that have not had a Jewish enclave. They have felt the pathos of their neighbors while, at the same time, feeling the uniqueness of their heritage. This has placed them in a position of special knowledge of the stones and hindrances which all humanity will feel when they return from the grave

and traverse upward on that Millennial "highway" to the lofty plateau of full righteousness.

Lifting Up the Standard

In addition to gathering out the stones, Israel will also have a standard to lift up to the people. The Living Bible, with great interpretative freedom, translates this as "the flag of Israel." While that is a manifest interpretative gloss, it does not miss the mark too far.

The standard to which all men must rally is total righteousness. This will not be instantaneously attained, but learned over the thousand-year course of that road. Righteousness will not only be taught as a set of principles to be followed and obeyed, it will also be demonstrated.

Paul, in enunciating a principle of the heavenly calling, reiterates an eternal method of God's dealings—"to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile" (Rom. 2:9, 10). Having been under the special tutelage of Jehovah for some 4,000 years, Israel must take the leadership in showing what righteous living means and the reward of prosperity it brings. Then the surrounding nations will say, "We will go with you, for we have heard God is with you" (Zech. 8:23).

Of all the examples of righteousness that have ever been given, there is one example above all others. This is the Messiah of Israel. He alone is the one designated the ensign, or standard, which will be raised among the peoples. "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious" (Isa. 11:10).

When Israel has come to identify their Messiah, and identify him they will, they will discover that his life and his teachings are the full embodiment of righteousness. It is to this standard that all nations of the world must rally. Apostle Paul's conviction that Jesus of Nazareth filled this role led him to say to the assembled Athenian philosophers, "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

A Reward and a Work

When these things have fully come to pass and their chastisement is over, God's ancient people of Israel will find out what a great reward is in store for them. It will be not merely a reward of position but, more importantly, a reward of a work to do. It will be then, as that highway opens, that the lessons which Israel has learned from gathering out the stones in this life will be applied to all human beings as they climb upward to that perfection lost in Adam.

What a glorious future, then, is in reserve for the regathered people of God and what untold blessings it will hold, not only for them, but for the entire human race.

Israel for Fifty Years

LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.—Isaiah 26:12

The eyes of the world are on Israel; even more so the eyes of the Christian. No current event has excited the people of God more in the past century than the emergence of this ancient people from the dust bins of history to a prominent place in today's family of nations.

The "people of the past" have become firmly established as "the people of the present" and, according to the Bible, will become "the people of the future."

It has been a joy to the past and present editors of **THE HERALD** to help chronicle this modern miracle. From its inception in 1918, this journal has looked forward to just such events as we currently see in the Holy Land.

As part of our tribute to the people of Israel on their fiftieth anniversary as a state, we reprint just a small selection of these articles on the following pages. We have chosen one from the onset of each decade since their formal declaration as an independent state in 1948. During this same period, radio and television programs have been produced on this important theme. Many have been written by the Bible Student community, as well. One of these booklets, prepared in 1968 by the Pastoral Bible Institute, publishers of **THE HERALD**, is entitled "Israel and the Middle East." A complimentary copy of this booklet is enclosed with this issue of our magazine. Additional copies may be ordered using the booklet list on the back of the insert found in every issue of **THE HERALD**.

Let us all keep our eyes on Israel, for it is a microcosm of the world. Its future is a harbinger of the bright and better day for which all humankind has been waiting. Israel, as God's timeclock, will soon sound in the entrance of the promised era of peace for all the race. In full faith, let us maintain our hearts in the prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

1948

The Budding Fig Tree

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.—Mark 13:28, 29.

J. R. Hughes, The Herald, May, 1948, pages 67,68

Our Lord's words recorded here are manifestly intended to notify us of the fact that God had appointed the nation of Israel to serve as, among other things, a measuring rod or barometer for the Christian church. When certain things would take place for Israel, then the church would be able to determine how near it is to the fulfilment of its own glorious hopes.

Among students of the scriptures it is generally recognized that the fig tree is a symbol of the nation of Israel. Shortly before his utterance of the prophecy concerning the events which would attend his second advent, Jesus had pronounced a curse upon a fig tree in consequence of its failure to produce anything but leaves, whereupon the condemned tree at once began to wither, as narrated in Mark 11:13-20. It seems there was a deliberate intention on the part of our Lord to establish a connection between his cursing of the barren fig tree and his rejection of Israel, the nation symbolized by the fig tree, as prospective heirs of the promises.

The latter event, as narrated in Matthew 23:38, 39, came about because of the nation of Israel, like the barren fig tree, had produced nothing to reward Christ who came seeking the fruitage of their years of God's favor and blessing but the leaves of empty profession.

It is significant that coupled with Jesus' sentence of rejection pronounced upon the Israel of his day we find the declaration, "Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah" (Matt. 23:39). It seems reasonable then to conclude that when in accordance with the Lord's implied prediction the fig tree begins to show signs of renewed life, the event would not only be an evidence to the church of Christ that the hour of its deliverance was at hand, but would also be marked by some recognition on the part of a substantial portion of Jewry of the truth of the realization of their long awaited Messiah. Regarding that aspect of the implied prediction that concerns their awakening to awareness of their national solidarity, there can be no doubt at all of its fulfillment. The Zionist movement with its growing power, together with its struggle for political recognition and the fierce determination on the part of the displaced Jews to re-occupy the Holy Land, gives ample proof that the revitalization of the fig tree has commenced in earnest. The battle is one that is engaging the attention of every statesman in the world. In fact, so important has the issue become that it would be no exaggeration to affirm that upon the satisfactory settlement of the Jewish-Arab

problems depends the fate, not only of the Near East but actually that of the whole post-war world.

The question then naturally arises, Are there yet any signs which would indicate that the scales had at last fallen from the eyes of God's ancient people, or at least of a perceptible minority among them, which would give encouragement to the thought that the hour was at hand when Jewry would recognize Jesus, the Nazarene, as being in very truth the "King of the Jews," their promised Deliverer, and the one who should "come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:26)? Is Israel approaching at last the point when it shall declare joyously, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah"? Evidence is growing that the answer to this question is true. The present Jew-for-Christ movements are attracting some attention throughout Jewry and, though naturally to a somewhat smaller degree, in many parts of Christendom also, and signs are not wanting to show that ere long the influence of the Jewish-Christian will be felt in all matters relating to the future of the Jewish world.

To those Christians who, like their Master before them, find themselves outside the camp of organized religion, it is doubly gratifying to note that while many of these new converts are being absorbed by some of the sectarian divisions of "Great Babylon," a few are being led by the spirit into the light of "Present Truth." Words are inadequate things to describe our thankfulness to the great Author of the Plan of Salvation for this fresh evidence of the sure working out of his glorious purposes, "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?" (Rom. 11:15).

We believe that the appended selection of extracts, some from the Jewish Christian Press, may be of interest to our readers. Relative to the proposed division of Palestine, a clipping from "Jews in the News" reads:

"The partition recommendation made by the United Nations investigation committee on the Palestine problem calls to mind a charge the Lord makes against the nations of earth in Joel 3:2: '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.'

"A Jewish doctor in Tel Aviv told me fully two per cent of the people in Tel Aviv secretly believe in Jesus Christ."—From "Behind the Silken Curtain," by Bartly C. Crum.

"After the obvious proofs of divine guidance and divine protection in England, Switzerland, and wherever our work is taking root, there is no doubt that in Palestine God will also guide and protect our work—his work. We believe that there we approach a glorious future. The blessing which God gave to our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for their offspring will in all its fullness and overflowing (Mal. 3:10) come down upon us, the true Israel, the Israel of faith—if we but keep on the path of blessing in communion with the Son of God, our Messiah. We have to stand in faith and build the Temple, the Tabernacle of Christ in Israel. Neither the dead forces of the past nor the

destroying powers of the present can touch us; for . . . the future is ours. However satanic the present time may be, even this our age, works for us—against its will. The same floods which covered and destroyed the whole world, carried the Ark of Noah to the summit of Ararat, as a sign that there yet exists a God who is not to be mocked.

"This does not mean that our work, too, could not be drawn into the whirlpool of our time. It must be quite clear to us that particularly in Palestine the severest storms await us; battles internally and externally. We have to expect and endure them, yet with the certainty that the victory will be ours, because God fights for us. He will carry us over from the declining world into the new era, . . . of Christ. The Jewish Christian community is the bridge between the two eras, the first fruit on the fig tree (Matt. 24:32), the first natural branch grafted again into its own olive tree (Rom. 11:24), the first ray of Christ's grace on the Jewish people. We are his heralds and messengers preparing his way; we are his workmen. We have to build his sanctuary in the Holy Land, in Jerusalem and on the Mount of Olives—not in our own strength, but in his. He has called us to dig and to fill up, to bring together stones from all over the world, to lay foundations according to his plan, to the will of the greatest Architect, the builder of the universe. Thus it is he, and not we unskilled laborers, who lays the foundation and builds—not on sand but on a rock, the rock of eternity."—Abraham Poljak, in pamphlet, "Jerusalem."

Following is another extract taken from the same pamphlet, and signed by Theo. M. Seech: "Now has come the time for the 'rising again' of Israel. In the providence of God, that urgent message of the imminence of the Lord's return and of the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel under their King, the Messiah, once rejected, is again being proclaimed to the Jewish people by Jewish Christians, for 'God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew' (Rom. 11:2). This message now does not affect that nation alone, but the prospect of the blessing of all nations is involved. As divine favor now returns to Israel, the Kingdom is seen as being also the hope of the world, of all nations. The faithful devotion of Jewish Christians, calling all in the name of Christ to repentance should have the effect upon their fellow men of 'provoking them to jealousy.' Their failure to achieve the blessings claimed to be within the reach of Christendom should have caused them to have repented long ago and have prepared their hearts for the appearance of God's Kingdom, the theme of all the Hebrew prophets. Let prayers arise at this late hour that this may yet be so and that Armageddon might be averted. This is a Gentile Christian privilege and duty."

1958

Israel Today

"Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come!"—Psa. 102:13.

P. L. Read, The Herald, Aug-Sept, 1958, page 121

Together with related Scriptures, the text quoted above is discussed in our booklet, *The Place of Israel in the Plan of God*. [Editor's Note: This publication is now out of print.] There, in response to the question as to whether there is any way to ascertain when "the set time" would be, it is suggested that "what we should be on the lookout for is not a thunderbolt from the skies, but a noticeable change in the trend of events. We should be watching and intelligently reading the signs of the times, and noting how they are fitting in with the prophetic forecasts."

Nearly four years have passed since these words were written. It is, therefore, proper to inquire: Has there been a noticeable change in the trend of events? We reply: No competent observer could be found today who would question it.

Out of the maze of confusing and conflicting reports reaching us, two distinct trends are becoming increasingly evident. One relates to world powers—the other to developments within Israel itself.

World Powers

Before World War II, there were a number of "great powers"—the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Japan. From that conflict, however, only two emerged, namely, the United States (which became the leader of the Western Countries) and Russia.

Moreover, as recently as 1956, an event took place which may prove to be one of the important turning points of history. In that year, Russia became a major power in the Middle East. This was an accomplishment which Great Britain had struggled, for years, to prevent. Since that time, it is not too much to say that, humanly speaking, the fate of Europe and, indeed, of the whole world, has depended on American policies in the Middle East.

On January 5, 1957, President Eisenhower, speaking before a joint session of Congress, stated that the peace of the world was being endangered by subversive activity on the part of Soviet Russia, by sending its agents to incite trouble in the Middle East countries. He asked that the United States provide both military and economic aid to any nation that requested it. Two months later, his request was embodied in a joint resolution, known as the Eisenhower Middle East Doctrine.

It was not long before this doctrine was put to the test—first, in Jordan, in the spring, and second, in Syria, in the fall. By the end of the year it was plain that the real struggle was between the United States and Russia.

Another six months have passed. What is the situation today? Today's ominous headlines speak for themselves. Listen: "Pro-West Government of Iraq Ousted; Regime Backing Nasser Set Up." That was last Monday. The next day they read: "5,000 Marines Landing in Lebanon." Russia, of course, "Demands U.S. Recall Troops." Instead, "'U.S. Rushes Paratroops to Mid-East," and "British Paratroops Land in Jordan."

Israel

The trend here can be understood only by looking at modern Israel against the background of the old Zionism from which it sprang.

Zionism has always meant different things to different people. In this connection one is reminded of a saying attributed to the American humorist, Mark Twain: "First get the facts straight; then distort them all you please." The facts are that the Messianic concept with which the Zionist movement commenced under Theodore Herzl, that concept with which it was continued under Chaim Weizmann, and until recently under the leadership of Ben-Gurion, is today, to say the very least, being challenged.

This Messianic concept, while including the purpose of a national home in Palestine for the Jewish people, envisioned much more than that. It looked forward to the time the kingdom prophecies of the Hebrew prophets would be finding fulfillment;—when Israel, having itself returned to the faith of Abraham, would become the leader of other peoples in the ways of truth and righteousness—of justice and love.

When that time comes, as the Scriptures indeed assure us will one day be the case, Israel will have become a theocracy. But this will not come about until their great Messiah comes, not only to conquer their foes but to subdue their hearts.

Meantime Israel is operating as a democracy. Before Israel achieved political independence, it made no practical difference whether a Jew were a Zionist or not. Now the situation has changed.

As with Gentiles, so also with Jews, some believe in one form of religion, others in another, and some in none at all. The position of the Israeli Government is that, if it is to remain a democracy, church and state matters must be kept separate. Consequently, while making no attempt to interfere with orthodox Jews in the observance of their religious laws, it cannot grant their leaders the power to force observance of those laws on other Jews who do not subscribe to them. To quote from a recent speech of Ben-Gurion:

"The Israeli Declaration of Independence proclaimed freedom of religion and conscience. It does not say that the Jewish State is to be ruled by religious laws. On the contrary, it says that the State should not become a theocracy."

This question is not exactly academic. According to news dispatches which reached us only ten days ago, it brought about the resignation of two Cabinet members of Ben-Gurion's coalition government, namely, Moshe Shapiro and Joseph Burg. We are certain to hear more about it ere long.

The extent to which Modern Zionism has drifted from the Old Zionism is aptly told in the following paragraph, condensed from Time:

"Even though the old Zionist, Socialist and religious ideals still rule, their appeal begins to fade as Israel changes. . . . Half the newcomers of recent years are Oriental Jews who never shared the peculiar Zionist and Socialist vision of Ben-Gurion's generation. . . . The Sabras, the native-born Israelis, who led the Sinai war, show signs of wanting to look out for themselves, as their more communal-minded parents never did."

1968

Israel Today

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.—Jeremiah 30:7

The Herald, Nov-Dec 1968, pages 86 ,87

In our latest booklet, Israel and the Middle East, space limitations did not permit more than the briefest reference to Jacob's trouble. "What is it," we there asked, "that occasions this dark hour which threatens to fall on Israel in the nighttime of her sad history? It is nothing more nor less than a gathering of envious nations against her, graphically described in Ezekiel 38:1-13. In these verses the chief actors in this yet future struggle in Palestine are named. However, we may not be too sure of our identifications. But one thing is quite definite, the battle will not end in triumph for Israel's enemies. Does one ask: 'Why not?' I answer: Because it is the set time for Israel's deliverance. God himself, represented by Israel's great Messiah, will intervene. Of this there is no question, for after telling us it is the time of Jacob's trouble Jeremiah goes on to say: 'But he shall be saved out of it.' According to Zechariah 14:2, 3, God will go forth and fight against Israel's enemies as he fought in the day of battle. Isaiah, too, speaks in a similar vein (28:21)."

In view of the interest which our correspondents have shown in this feature of our subject, we had thought to submit a few additional paragraphs in amplification of the comments in our booklet. . . .

The Valley of Judgment

In the days of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, a great army consisting of Moabites, Ammonites and dwellers from mount Seir invaded the land of Judah from the southern end of the Dead Sea. This confederacy of hostile nations had penetrated about halfway along the western shore of the sea as far as Engedi before Jehoshaphat was informed of the threatened assault. He received the news with great consternation for he knew how totally unable he was to resist such a multitude of foes.

Jehoshaphat in faith and true wisdom looked to the Lord as his only refuge and proclaimed a fast throughout the whole land. His recorded prayer is remarkable as an impressive and earnest supplication to the God of his fathers and the God of his people for help against those who were making such an unprovoked and ungrateful attack on a people who had done them no injury. In simple and touching words we read, "All Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives and their children" (2 Chron. 20:13).

The Spirit of the Lord then came upon Jahaziel, a prophet not referred to elsewhere, who gave them instructions how they were to go out fearlessly to meet the enemy, with the

full assurance that they would not need to fight, for it was not their battle but God's. Upon hearing this the king and all the people offered thanks to God in faith for the promise of such a miraculous deliverance, while the Levites sang praises of triumph as though the victory was already an accomplished fact.

The next morning as the people were ready to set out, Jehoshaphat exhorted them to have no fear of the enemy but to exercise complete faith in the Lord in confident assurance of his promise that he would deliver them without any action whatever on their part. Having mutually arranged singers with musical instruments to lead the procession, the people went forward like an army returning in triumph rather than as one that was marching against the foe.

As soon as the Levites began to sing praises to the Lord and while they were yet some distance from the invaders, God caused discord and strife to break out in the ranks of the vast multitude of the opposing host so that they began to fight and to kill one another. This mutual work of destruction went on unhindered until they had all slain each other so that when the children of Judah arrived at the scene of slaughter the whole of this great army had perished. For three days Jehoshaphat and his people gathered the immense spoil left by their enemies and on the fourth day they assembled in a place which they called "The Valley of Blessing," ready to return again with rejoicing to Jerusalem. As a result of this judgment by the Lord against the enemies of Israel the fear of God fell upon all the surrounding nations.

The prophet Joel, speaking of the time when God would "bring again [or reverse] the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem" (Joel 3:1), referred to these latter days in which we are now living. He portrayed the gathering of all nations into the valley of Jehoshaphat where God would sit to judge all the nations round about. The name "Jehoshaphat" means "the judgment of Jehovah," and this judgment of the nations must surely be intended to have some typical allusion to the incident related in 2 Chronicles 20 which we have been considering.

It is commonly but mistakenly understood that the valley of Jehoshaphat in Joel 3 refers to the narrow glen now known by that name that runs between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. This name, however, has been applied to this valley only in comparatively modern times, for neither in scripture nor in any other ancient writings is it referred to other than as the valley of Kidron or Cedron. The prophet Joel, when speaking of a valley already well known under this description, would not have used a name that was yet to be coined many centuries afterwards.

In the historical records of scripture we need not look far to see that Joel was clearly referring to the account in 2 Chronicles 20 when he associated the name of Jehoshaphat with this valley and the final judgment of the nations. As we have already seen these earlier events did not take place in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem but on the shores of the Dead Sea—incidentally, at the border of "the bulge" which existed until recently between Israel and Jordan. The judgment of God upon the invading host from beyond the

sea was used as an appropriate symbol of a much greater judgment of the nations who would gather against Israel in the latter days.

To confirm that this valley of judgment was alongside the Dead Sea, we would point out that the burial ground in Ezekiel 39:11 will be "the valley where people pass over to the east of the sea, and it shall stop the passengers from passing" (Leeser). This has been the usual road taken by travelers for centuries past the low-lying Ghor of the Jordan valley on the east of the chain of mountains, and the self-same route used by the invading horde of Jehoshaphat's day. It should also be noted that the bloodstained warrior of Isaiah 63 who had been treading the winepress (as in Joel 3:13) came from Bozrah in Idumea, and therefore from the same direction as the earlier invaders.

The events of Joel 3, like those related in the prophecies of Obadiah, Micah, Zechariah, and Ezekiel, are now in the process of being fulfilled in our time. The nation of Israel, though lacking the absolute trust in God demonstrated by Jehoshaphat, are yet to be delivered miraculously by the power of the Lord, working in some respects in a similar way as he did in the days of Jehoshaphat.

"It shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour" (Zech. 14:13). "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" (Ezek. 38:21). In addition the Lord will smite with pestilence, rain, hail, lightning, and earthquake to discomfort and destroy all the people that fight against Jerusalem.

The unanimous intention among Israel's enemies to destroy her as a nation, displayed so vehemently in recent years, was vividly described in Psalm 83: "They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance." The judgment called for by the psalmist in reply was, "Do unto them as unto the Midianites." This was also effected in a similar way for "the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host" (Judg. 7:22).

We have witnessed the fulfillment of God's promise that just prior to the final climax in the affairs of Israel he would strengthen them so that they should tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in battle. As with Gideon and his army, however, God will ensure that the final victory is attributed to him alone. "The Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves saying, Mine own hand hath saved me" (Judg. 7:2).

Therefore Israel will yet be brought to realize their weakness and cease to trust in the arm of flesh. This is shown in Zechariah 14 and in Jeremiah 30 when, although restored in their own land, there will be heard "a voice of trembling" in the hour of their extremity in "Jacob's trouble." The hosts of Gog from the north shall cover the land like a cloud (Ezek. 38), Jerusalem shall be besieged and captured (Zech. 14), and an invading horde will have entered the land from the south (Joel 3). It is then that the Lord "shall roar out

of Zion and utter his voice from Jerusalem and the heavens and the earth shall shake, but the Lord will be the hope of his people and the strength of the children of Israel" (Joel 3:16).

There shall be great shaking throughout the whole land of Israel, causing great changes in the physical features of the country. The armies gathered at Jerusalem, many of whom will be in the valley of the Cedron, the assembled hosts on the shores of the Dead Sea, and the invaders throughout all the mountains of Israel shall be smitten by earthquake, pestilence, and the sword. Those who escape shall go to the nations afar off to declare the fame and majesty of the God of Israel, and he will be known in the eyes of all nations. He will set his glory among the nations and all the nations shall see the judgment that he has executed.

In the midst of this experience Israel shall look on him whom they pierced—their Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ the Redeemer from death and sin—and they shall mourn for him in true repentance. "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory." Jesus associated these events with the gathering of his elect in Matthew 24:30, 31, and he added the warning in Luke 21:28 regarding the same events: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

We have certainly seen these things begin, for already Israel has been miraculously strengthened by God in these last days against her enemies whom she has trampled down as foretold by her prophets. The military reputation Israel will have thus acquired in the eyes of the godless nations may explain the magnitude of the forces that as a result will be used eventually to attack her under the leadership of Gog. The sudden destruction that is to overwhelm this unjust and inhuman conspiracy will also be accompanied by a fire that will rage through the whole society of the present heavens and earth to make way for the new era of the kingdom of God. This sudden destruction is to follow a cry of "peace and safety" which is closely related to the coming of the Lord himself from heaven to gather his sleeping and living saints.

1978

The Rebuilding of Zion

Published in July-August 1978 Herald, page 57

*All his enemies, surprising,
From the dust the Jew is rising;
See him rising from the grave,
Keen, alert, for conflict brave;
A new spirit now has come
That will gather Israel back home.*

*In their land in deserts thorny,
Hands unused to toil, made horny;
Build and plant with sacred joy;
Busy at their loved employ.*

*In the valleys long neglected,
By disease germs long infected;
Many die, but others come,
Eager to reclaim their land.*

*While the latter rain from heaven
To the land once more is given,
Land, that looked like stoned to death;
Feeling now God's quickening breath.*

*Mother Zion, they are coming,
From their ghettos, from their roaming;
From their tossings on the sea
Of the Gentiles, back to thee!*

*What though Ishmael opposing
God's sure plan and settled choosing!
Not a word our God has spoken
Shall be canceled, shall be broken.*

*And the covenant will stand,
Signed and sealed by God's own hand,
To a thousand generations,
Midst the rise and fall of nations.*

*Like the stars on Mamre's plain,
Israel will still remain;*

*And the promised land be theirs,
Through the everlasting years*

Max I. Reich

1989

One Jerusalem: The Eternal City Reunited

Our feet shall stand within they gates, O Jerusalem!—Psalms 122:2

Harold Dart, The Herald, Sept-Oct. 1989, pages 13,14

On May 28, 1948 the Jewish quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem was taken by the Jordanian Arab Legion. In berserk wantonness an Arab mob burst in and wrecked shrines and synagogues without restraint. Abdallah El Tal, commander of the Arab Legion wrote in his memoirs, "The operations of calculated destruction were set in motion." Fifty eight synagogues and Jewish schools were pulverized and obliterated. Scrolls of the law were defiled and desecrated. Ritual appurtenances and prayer books were pillaged or devoured in the flames of Arab bonfires. Jewish tombstones on the Mount of Olives were deliberately destroyed and desecrated. Graves were ripped open and bones scattered. Thousands of tombstones were smashed or removed to build fortifications, foot paths, and latrines or were sold to building contractors. For 19 years following, from 1948 to 1967, Jews and Israeli Muslims were denied access to their holy places in the Old City of Jerusalem.

On June 7, 1967 an Israeli paratroop unit broke through the Lion's gate and took the old city by hand to hand fighting with no damage to the holy places. Israeli Defense Minister, Moshe Dayan, entered the old city and declared "We have unified Jerusalem, the divided capital of Israel, we have returned to the holiest of our holy places, never to depart from it again." During subsequent Israeli archaeological exploration a prophetic verse from Isaiah 66:14 was found engraved in one of the stones of the Western Wall by an anonymous Jew, perhaps a thousand years ago: "And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like young grass." Those who remember the sight of Jerusalem during those tragic 19 years when it was divided cannot help but rejoice to see the reborn city. In place of the ugly concrete wall that cut through the heart of it a garden now blooms. Yellow signs no longer block every east-west road with their skull and cross bones and their black letters "Halt" "Danger" "Frontier Ahead." New residences, gardens, and newly paved roads have been constructed. At night, lights decorate the ancient walls of the old city from which Arab Legion soldiers formerly trained gun sights on passing citizens. Arabs and Jews of Jerusalem mingle freely, pursuing their personal lives in a spirit of coexistence. Ever since the reunification of the city by Israel, access has been opened to all holy places for all religions and sects. Christians administer Christian holy places and Muslims administer their holy places. The Temple Mount, site of Solomon's Temple, is now occupied by the Muslim Dome of the Rock and the El Aksa Mosque. The police unit guarding the Temple Mount is commanded by a Muslim officer and manned by a mixed force of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian policemen. Pilgrims of all faiths visit the site freely.

Since June 7, 1967, Jewry's holiest site, the Western Wall of the temple compound, has not been deserted for a single moment, by day or by night, in striking contrast to Ottoman or British Mandate days, when the Jew approached it furtively in fear of his life or when under Jordanian rule access to it was completely denied him.

After re-unification, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel went to the Western Wall for the first time. He expressed his thoughts and feelings in his book, *Israel: An Echo of Eternity*.

"July 1967—I have discovered a new land, Israel is not the same as before. There is great astonishment. It is as if the prophets had risen from their graves. Their words ring in a new way. Jerusalem is everywhere; she hovers over the whole country.

"There is a new radiance, a new awe—I did not enter on my own the city of Jerusalem. Streams of endless craving, clinging, dreaming, humanity, flowing day and night. Midnights, years, decades, centuries, millennia, streams of tears, pledging, waiting from all over the world, from all the corners of the earth, carried us of this generation to the Wall. My ancestors could only dream of you. To my people in Auschwitz you were more remote than the moon, but I can touch your stones! Am I worthy? How shall I ever repay for these moments?—Jerusalem, I always try to see the inner force that emanates from you, enveloping and transcending all weariness and travail. In Jerusalem, past is present and heaven is almost here. All of our history is within reach—Jerusalem is a witness, an echo of eternity. Stand still and listen: Jerusalem was stopped in the middle of her speech. She is a voice interrupted. Let Jerusalem speak again to our people, to all people. She is the city where waiting for God was born, where the anticipation of everlasting peace came into being. Jerusalem is waiting for the prologue of redemption, for new beginning—It may happen any moment; a shoot may come forth out of the stock of Jesse, a twig may grow forth out of his roots. God has chosen Jerusalem and endowed her with the mystery of his presence; prophets, kings, sages, priests made her a place where God's calling was heard and accepted. Here lived the people who listened and preserved events in words, the scribes, the copyists. It was in Jerusalem where the prophet proclaimed:

‘And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken (Isaiah 25:7,8 RSV).’”

A Message of Restoration

Israel's Grand Jubilee

Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel.—Acts 1:6

A verse by verse study in Acts 3

This year is being celebrated in Israel as the jubilee, or fiftieth anniversary of statehood. Much progress—socially, politically, militarily, and economically—has been made by this fledgling nation in the past half century. This first jubilee, however, is but a prelude to far greater days ahead. The Bible has much to say about the resurgence of this ancient people and the effect of their regathering, not only for them as a people but for all the nations of the world.

The second apostolic sermon, recorded in the third chapter of Acts, has much to say about their restoration as a people and how it will affect the entire human race.

The Setting—Verses 1 to 3

Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

The persecution and death of Jesus by the Jewish religious hierarchy did not separate the followers of the Galilean from their observance of their national religious rites. In fact, throughout the period covered in the book of Acts, we see the growing group of Christians regularly attending synagogue services and temple rituals.

Three times a day was set aside for prayer—morning, noon, and evening (Psa. 55:17; Dan. 6:10). The morning and evening prayers (at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.) coincided with the morning and evening sacrifices while the noontime prayer was probably associated with the blessing of the mid-day meal (Acts 27:35). Since the main thrust of Peter's lesson was to call attention to the death of Jesus on the cross, it may be more than coincidental that this incident happened during the 3 p.m. prayer, for that was the hour of the death of the Messiah on the cross (Luke 23:44-46).

Not only was the time significant, so was the location. The holy spirit was given at Pentecost, not only for symbolic reasons but for a practical one as well. Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks, drew the Jewish populace from throughout the known world. Some sixteen nations are specifically listed as being present (Acts 2:9-11). While we do not know for sure how long after Pentecost the events of chapter three took place, it is

reasonable to assume that they were during the week of feasting associated with Pentecost. Large numbers of pilgrims would be present in Jerusalem.

According to the noted historian, Alfred Edersheim, the temple compound was divided into four sections: the court of the Gentiles surrounding the temple building, the court of the women occupied a high-walled area just west of the temple proper, which in turn was divided into the court of the Israelites and the court of the priests. The court of the women was so named, not because it was exclusively for women but because it was the closest they could approach the sanctuary. It was a place of general assembly for the worshippers and overlooked by four balconies at the four corners for the women. Alms boxes were scattered liberally throughout this enclosure.

The gate called "Beautiful," some forty feet tall and covered with Corinthian brass, was the eastern and main entrance into this court. As such, most temple worshippers would pass through this gate. It was, therefore, a logical place for the friends of the lame man to leave him in his quest for alms.

The Miracle—Verses 4 to 8

And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

While the lame man approached the two disciples in a general way, as part of the passing crowd Peter and John singled him out from the other beggars who would certainly have been there. There is no indication in this case of the lame man exhibiting unusual faith. Rather he was singled out to provide the basis for a lesson to the gathering crowd.

Instead of the anticipated alms, the disciples had a better gift—health. Yet it was not so much the healing but the name by whose authority it was performed that was the purpose of the miracle. By appending "of Nazareth," Peter was positively identifying the authority as the one despised by the scribes and Pharisees. By using the term "Christ," they were further identifying Jesus as the promised anointed one, the Messiah.

As he felt strength surging in those legs which had been useless for over forty years (Acts 4:22), he did not gingerly rise to test them out but leaped exultantly. Together the three passed through the Nicanor gate into the temple proper where the lame man obediently walked, then leaped for the joy of being healed, and praised not Peter and John for performing the miracle but God, whom he recognized as the ultimate source.

The Audience—Verses 9 to 11

And all the people saw him walking and praising God: And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

Apparently the man was well known for he was recognized immediately by the other worshippers. Exiting the temple proper and the court of the women, the scene of the story changes to Solomon's porch. This was so named because it was the only remaining part of the original temple of Solomon (The Temple, Alfred Edersheim, p. 36). This porch extended along the inside of the entire eastern wall of the temple complex and provided an ideal pulpit for the ensuing sermon to over 5000 worshippers (Acts 4:4). The size of the crowd also indicates that this miracle took place during the Pentecost week.

The Accusation—Verses 12 to 17

And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.

Peter begins his sermon by immediately calling attention to the one whose authority he invoked in performing the miracle. His words take on an accusatory tone as he contrasts the glorification of Jesus by Jehovah with the crucifixion by the Romans at the instigation of the Jewish religious hierarchy. Peter does not content himself to denounce the leaders of the Jews, but places the blame on the populace for their clamor, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" and their demand for the release of Barabbas, a murderer, instead of Jesus, the Just and Holy One. Although Peter partially excuses their act, attributing it to ignorance, the force of his words is nevertheless strong.

Nor were such healings as this through the mere incantation of the name of Jesus, but they must be mingled with true faith in the ability of that name to accomplish what was desired. The name of which Peter speaks is not merely the name Jesus, but Jesus Christ. The addition of the word Christ showed a recognition of Jesus as the Messiah. It is this recognition that was essential for it showed the value of his sufferings and death to release humanity from the original Adamic curse which included the dying process as well as death itself: "Dying, thou shalt die" (Gen. 2:17, literal Hebrew).

The Solution—Verses 18 to 21

But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Here Peter turns from the negative to the positive. The sufferings which they caused, he assures them, did not catch God by surprise. They had all been predicted by the prophets. Nevertheless, the guilt was theirs.

He points a way out of their guilt—through repentance and conversion. This dual action of sorrow for what they had done and a change of thinking and behavior would produce a natural reaction—their sins would be blotted out.

The Greek word here translated "blotted out" only occurs in one other place in the New Testament in relation to the removal of sin. That is in Colossians 2:14, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." We suggest that it is used by Peter to refer to the removal of the sins of Israel under the law covenant.

In such reliable translations as the New American Standard Version, the Revised Version, and the American Standard version the nineteenth verse contains two conditional clauses. We quote from the New American Standard, "Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." These translations not only making the blotting out of sins dependent upon repentance and conversion, they also make the "times of refreshing" dependent upon the blotting out of sins.

Further, the expression, "from the presence of the Lord," would be better translated "from the turned face of Jehovah." This phrase is not an allusion to the second presence of Christ but to a special favor from God himself.

Putting the above evidence together, the thought of this verse appears to be that if any in Peter's audience would repent and be converted the guilt against them under the law covenant would be removed. This removal of guilt would permit a special "refreshing" from the returned face of Jehovah.

A literal translation of the word "refreshing" implies what that blessing might be. The word literally means "a new breath." For the repentant listener, and there were 5000 of them that day, their repentance would result in the privilege of a new breath of life under the heavenly calling.

However there was still more in store. Peter tells of still another blessing—one that is introduced without a dependent clause. "And [in addition to the opportunity for a new breath] he [Jehovah] will send "the Christ, appointed for you (NAS)." This promise was unconditional. God promised to do this regardless of repentance on their part. This thus distinguishes the "times of restitution" from the "times of refreshing," which were dependent upon repentance.

This blessing of restitution, however, was not to be experienced immediately but when he, who had ascended into the heavens, was no longer retained by those heavens. The implication of the context is that this "restitution" was to be particularly to natural Israel—the people for whom the Messiah was appointed.

The word *apokastasis*, translated "restitution," contains the thought of a complete restoration to a former condition. It was used in ancient medical writings of a complete recovery.

This complete restoration, however, is not to be limited to Israel. It is of "all things, which God hath spoken of by all his holy prophets since the world began." Like so many of God's blessings, it is "to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile" (Rom. 2:9, 10).

What are some of these things to be restored? They include the return of God's favor to his covenant people, the regathering of them to their promised land, and the setting up of the spiritual theocracy which will eventually work through them to bless all the families of the earth.

Future blessings yet to come to this people will be the remarkable deliverance from their enemies (Zech. 14, Ezek. 38, 39) and the restoration of "their judges as at the first" (Isa. 1:26). In due time this restitution will include the restoration of all the dead who have ever lived and the "highway of holiness" by which these restored billions may learn the laws of God and live forever. From Israel, these blessings will flow forth to all mankind (Isa. 2:2, 3).

It is this work of restitution that was pictured by Israel's law of Jubilee (Lev. 25). Under that law, every man was to return to his possessions with equal opportunity to make a living. This will be the grander jubilee for not only the nation of Israel, now celebrating their 50th year of statehood, but a jubilee of restitution for all of Adam's race—both those dead and those living.

The Prophets—Verses 22 to 24

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

Although Peter assured his Jewish audience that all of God's prophets since the world began spoke of this time, he contents himself with furnishing but one example. He quotes Deuteronomy 18:15, where Moses predicted the rising up of a spiritual leader like unto, but greater than, himself. This leader all agree is Jesus of Nazareth and some, like the writer, feel it includes his church as his body. The return of Jesus, then, is the first evidence of restoration—the restoring of God's spiritual government upon this earth. Closely following that return is the raising of those who are his bride (1 Thess. 4:15, 16).

Children of the Prophets—Verses 25 and 26

Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

The natural seed of Abraham was given many titles. One among them is "children of the prophets." Consider Paul's words in Romans 3:1, 2: "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."

Israel is the inheritor of the promises of these prophets. They are also the recipients of a new covenant, similar and yet diverse from that made with Moses at Sinai. "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 . . . 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 neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:31-34).

This "new" covenant will be, in fact, the means by which God will carry out the blessings of the original covenant made with Abraham. That covenant promise is the one referred to in Genesis 22:17, 18: "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

The first step in the fulfillment of that covenant promise, Peter informed them, was the raising up of Jesus as their Messiah to bless them by turning them from their iniquities.

This remarkable sermon was perhaps the most effective of all the spoken messages recorded in the Bible. No less than 5000 believed. They did repent and were converted. They did receive the new breath of the holy spirit. And what of those who heard but did

not heed Peter's words? To them God will fulfill the balance of that promise—by the return of his son, their Messiah, will come that time promised by all God's holy prophets—"the times of restitution."

Already we see the beginning of that restoring work with the re-establishment of the nation of Israel. It is with this long-range view of the glories to be brought to all mankind that we most heartily join in wishing God's chosen people a blessed jubilee and urge them to anticipate with us that still grander jubilee which will completely fulfill the Abrahamic promise to bless all the families of the earth.

When the Day Breaks

*O'er Israel doth the sun arise,
Portending earth's Millennial day.
E'en now its light doth fill the skies,
And we can watch its healing ray.*

*Soon all shall hail its glorious light,
And see God's work with Israel,
For it will mean a future bright,
As peace for all it doth foretell.*

*From Zion shall God's Law go forth,
Jerusalem shall spread the word,
Of blessings rich for all the earth
When men shall know and praise the Lord.*

Israel's Call

*Not to the mount that might be touched,
Not to the flame that flared
Above its crest and o'er its breast
While heaven's power was bared;
Not to the earth that rended, quaked
O'er dark, tempestuous way;
But to the land that God hath planned
Move Zion's hosts today.*

*Not to the law that Moses wrote
On tabled stones of yore,
Giving each line of will divine
In moral code and lore;
But to prophetic time that now
Points to their rightful home,
From out the death-hued centuries
God's Israel has come.*

*Jerusalem awakes at length,
Her royal robes puts on,
And glories as of former strength
Shall clothe her as the sun;
And brighter shall her treasure grow,
And all the world shall see
That God hath brought her foes to naught
And sent her Jubilee.*

*Rich farming lands and orchards fair
Her wealth in store proclaim,
And men rejoice to hear the voice
That sounds abroad her name;
Each school in pride of learning stands,
Each home of beauty marks
Modern advancement in the land
Where dwelt the patriarchs.*

*God has his time to cause the morn
To spread its gold on high,
And for the diamonds of the night
To gem the vaulted sky;
So in the ages as they move
Past as on mighty wing,*

*The time is set for Harvest Home,
When Zion's hills shall sing.*

*The world moves on from dark to light,
The Plan of God is sure,
And all the fortresses of might
'Gainst justice can't endure.
Have courage then, O Israel,
And bear this fact in store,
Earth's Golden Age, your heritage
Of life forever more.*

The Foundation of Israel's Hopes

As the very foundation of Israel's every hope, the mainspring of that people's courage, the motive power of their energy, their perseverance and their pride, has been the Divine promise made to Abraham, their illustrious ancestor, "the friend of God." To Abraham, after certain tests of character—obedience, loyalty, faith—God made a Promise which constitutes the hope, both of Israel and the Gentiles. It reads, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 22:18.) Abraham's son Isaac was indicated by the Lord to be the channel through which this blessing should proceed. Later on, Isaac's son, Jacob, was indicated as a further channel. At Jacob's death the Divine blessing passed, by Divine direction, not to a single one of his posterity, but to them all as a whole nation.

Jacob's name was changed to Israel, which signifies a prince influential with God—in Divine favor. This name Israel, indicative of so much of honor and Divine favor, was subsequently applied to the whole nation of Jacob's descendants, who became known as Israelites, or Children of Israel. It was understood by that nation that they were the seed, the posterity mentioned in the promise made to Abraham—in whom "all the families of the earth should be blessed." They correctly understood that this would signify a great exaltation for their little nation. They had full confidence in that great Promise, because the Lord had secured it to them in a most remarkable manner—he made oath to it.

Overland Monthly, pages, 66, 67

A Visit to Where Israel Was Born

Allan Rabinowitz, The Jerusalem Post, October 30, 1997

The State of Israel was declared on May 14, 1948, in the simple yet elegant stucco building that then housed the Tel Aviv Art Museum. Outside that building, Rothschild Boulevard is full of traffic and garbage. But inside Independence Hall—as it is now called—you can be carried back in imagination to that moment Israel was created.

It is easy to forget today that despite the UN resolution of November 1947, calling for a Jewish state in partitioned Palestine, the creation of that state was far from certain. The term of the British Mandate ended in May 1948, and the Jewish state almost did not happen.

In the increasingly tense weeks preceding British withdrawal, many nations displayed little support for the very resolution that had passed. Undeclared war, raging sporadically since December, had become increasingly intense and open as the British began pulling out, with all-out war expected to explode as the Union Jack was lowered. The United States was spearheading an effort for a truce and possible UN trusteeship, though there were splits within the Truman administration over this.

On May 12, Jewish leaders gathered in Tel Aviv to face the question of whether to declare statehood two days later, when the British left, or to wait until some future date as the US was urging—indeed demanding—under the proposed truce plan. Faced with the specter of both military siege and possible diplomatic isolation, the Jewish leadership was hurled into a crisis.

The dilemma deeply split the National Council of Thirteen, the governing body under David Ben-Gurion. On the one hand, delay might offer a chance to strengthen Jewish defenses and, with an American-backed truce, defusing the threat of all-out Arab invasion. And the Jews had recently captured vital areas, including Tiberias, Haifa, Acre, Jaffa, and Safed. In Jerusalem, Arab forces had been driven from some suburbs.

Moreover, Jerusalem's 100,000 Jews remained under siege and were threatened with starvation, and the Etzion settlement bloc teetered on collapse (in the end, it fell before statehood was declared). The Jewish front had no depth, desert settlements were isolated, and the Judean hills were under Arab control. In addition the Jewish forces had no reserves and little weaponry or ammunition.

But Ben-Gurion insisted that the future political situation was volatile and unpredictable, that as a state they could more easily acquire weapons, that military victory was possible, and most vitally, that the window of opportunity might not recur.

So by a vote of six to four, the armistice proposal was rejected; Jewish statehood would be declared. Accompanying the excitement, the sense of destiny and history, was the dread of certain invasion.

With the die cast, less than 48 hours remained to prepare a ceremony. The ceremony was supposed to be secret—one well-placed bomb could wipe out the entire Jewish leadership of Palestine—and was held in an art museum because it was fairly small.

Interestingly, the city of Tel Aviv and the State of Israel thus shared a birthplace. In 1909, 66 families gathered on a sand dune to divide up the lots of what became Tel Aviv. Meir Dizengoff, the civic leader who later became the city's first mayor, built his home on that dune; and after the death of his wife he turned it into the city's art museum.

High drama was now laced with chaotic comedy. The 350 rapidly scribbled invitations were secretly dispatched, yet by the morning of the declaration, even a Japanese paper had announced the event.

Arrangements were as sparsely and hastily made as the bunting across the ceremonial table. A dusty portrait of Theodor Herzl was dragged up from the basement, and two huge Zionist flags were found but were so filthy they had to be laundered. The chairs were borrowed from cafes, the microphone from an appliance store, with its name attached and visible. Two thousand years of exile were ending with a bargain-basement celebration.

Squabbles then ensued over every aspect of the independence, such as whether to cite borders, the use of God's name, and the very name of the state. In Washington, Jewish Agency officials submitting a formal request for recognition of the new state did not know what name to use.

A parchment suitable for the historic document was found, with difficulty. But Ben-Gurion rewrote the entire text the night before the ceremony, and the final typed draft was approved with only two hours left—not enough time for the parchment to be inscribed.

The scrambling lasted until, at 4 p.m., Ben-Gurion banged his gavel to open the proceedings. Then the power of the event took over. A crowd surrounded the "secret" location. People around Palestine huddled around their radios, except in Jerusalem, where the daily bombardment of Jewish neighborhoods cut off the broadcast.

Today, in the main hall of the house—where Ben-Gurion sat backed by Herzl's portrait—you can hear the recording of his controlled monotone reading out the charter for the new state. You can picture the National Council on the dais (the table is a replica, but the chair behind it and the dais and the carpet are the originals), wondering with ecstasy, wonder, and dread what this gesture would bring upon the Jewish people. When the new Jewish state, "to be called the State of Israel," was proclaimed, the audience rose and burst into applause. The Sheheheyanu blessing was recited.

"My eyes filled with tears," Golda Meir later wrote, "and my hands shook. We had done it. . . . Whatever price any of us would have to pay for it, we had recreated the Jewish national home."

The council members solemnly signed the blank parchment scroll—the text had to be inscribed later. You can hear the taut emotion squeezed into every note of the recording of "Hatikva," as sung and played by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. When the last strains faded, Ben-Gurion said, "The State of Israel has arisen. This session is closed," and then banged the gavel.

The crowds outside broke into song and dance. The US stunned both Israel and the UN with its immediate recognition of the new state. By the next morning, Arab armies were invading and the Egyptian Air Force was bombing Tel Aviv.

A glance at current headlines might numb you into cynicism as Israel stumbles, bleeds, and argues its way to age 50. But a visit to Independence Hall will remind you how wondrous it was when it came into being at all.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Pastoral Bible Institute News

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Pastoral Bible Institute will take place at the University of Pittsburgh's beautiful facility at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, on Friday, July 24, 1998. The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. in the Living/Learning Center. All members and friends of the PBI are invited to attend.

The annual General Convention of Bible Students begins on Saturday, July 25, at this same location. Those attending the PBI annual meeting may find it convenient to stay for one or more days of the convention as well. Hotel-like accommodations in the Living/Learning Center are available for as many days as desired. The cost of a room [private bath] is \$30 for single occupancy or \$32 if the room is occupied by two people. Three meals cost \$18/day with discounts for those under the age of 18. Townhouse facilities for families are also available at the same price.

For more information or to make a reservation contact the Institute's secretary.

PBI Membership

Anyone who supports the goals and objectives of the Institute may become a member by paying a one-time fee of \$5. Members are expected to nominate other members to be directors and vote for directors from the slate of nominees who agree to serve if elected. For more information or to become a member, contact the Institute's secretary.

Letters

I have received with thanks your book The Revelation of Jesus Christ and have already started studying it. What a wonderful book. I am making notes from it to allow me to teach my members from it. The other day I made a survey in my church and few people have an interest in reading the book of Revelation because many said they don't very well understand the signs. Thank you very much for the book which was received at the right time.

Rev. B. T. Kofie, Ghana

The Herald of Christ's Kingdom is very useful in our ecclesia. "Moses' Mother" [Nov.-Dec. '96] and "The Light in the Evening" [July-Aug. '97] were translated into the Tamil language and printed in our monthly magazine "Bible Student" published by the Bible Students in India. [We send] our Christian greetings to all the family of faith.

J. Udhayakumar, South India

How can one thank you enough for republishing the book Daniel, the Beloved of Jehovah. Truly I could not put it down after having gotten it. What a treasure and with so many long hidden gems.

I showed it to a friend whose greatest pleasure is searching out God's truths. It was obvious that she did not want to give it up so I told her to keep it as a gift from the Lord. Of course I hurried to get myself another at our book table. Thank you for such a great gift.

Marjorie Theis, Oregon

Around the World

Israel

The threat of missiles aimed at Israel is the most significant since the War of Independence in 1948, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai warned recently. "They can hit our most vital asset, the civilian population we are supposed to be defending," he told an international conference in Tel Aviv. Speaking at the conference hosted by the Galili Center for Strategy and National Security, Mordechai reiterated his warning to Syria, Iran and other states that Israel would retaliate against any threat. He noted the difference between today and 1991, when Iraq launched SCUD missiles against Israel. "They can now cause greater harm, particularly if they are equipped with non-conventional warheads," he said.

Egyptian Defense Minister Mohammed Tantawi has warned that the Egyptian military must be prepared for a rapid transition from peace to war, because of the downward spiral in Mideast peace talks. Tantawi said Egypt is stepping up training, maintaining high levels of readiness, and perfecting its call-up of reserves. He insisted, however, that Cairo's strategy is based on peace between Egypt and Israel.

The government of Israel has lodged a protest with the Palestinian Authority over maps appearing on its Internet Web site which do not identify Israel. "This is the very manifestation that casts doubt on the Palestinian Authority's willingness to make peace with Israel," said David Bar-Illan, the prime minister's director of communications. "The fact that the word Israel does not appear on any map published by the Palestinian Authority or by any Arab state is an indication that the Arabs have not reconciled themselves to Israel's legitimacy," he said. Bar-Illan noted that identical maps are used in schools under the PA's jurisdiction, including those in Jerusalem.

The overall rate of growth of the Jewish population in Jerusalem is decreasing each year, and recent projections indicate that by the year 2010, the Arab population in the city will exceed 30 percent. The overall population in Jerusalem was 603,000 at the end of 1996, of which 70% were Jews. The overall population grew 139% since the Six Day War, with Jews increasing by 114%, Arabs by 163%. The average Jewish household has 3.6 people,

while the average Arab household contains 5.4 people. Jerusalem mayor Ehud Olmert said he is concerned with the growth rate of the city's Arab population. "There is a danger that the changing proportions of Jews and Arabs in this city will add to the already strained relations between the two groups, and this worries me," he said in a news conference.

Despite warnings by politicians and doctors of the medical system's impending financial collapse, Israel is the second healthiest country in the world, according to a statistical analysis compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit in London. Only Sweden came out ahead of Israel. The study considered health care indicators such as deaths from cancer, infections, heart and respiratory disease, the HIV infection rate, the number of doctors and nurses per 100,000 residents, immunization rates, and infant mortality. The report said that Israel has a very high rating "even though this particular state is a regular target for terrorist attacks."

Jerusalem Post

Footnote: Beginning with this issue, we will start the news from Israel using selected clips from various issues of the Jerusalem Post, Israel's leading English language newspaper. This newspaper provides a firsthand look at developments in Israel.

The debate over the status of the ultra-Orthodox in Israel is heating up. When the state of Israel was established 50 years ago, its first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, exempted ultra-Orthodox (yeshiva) students from military service. The idea was to reinvigorate a culture of Jewish scholarship that was largely eradicated by the Holocaust. There were 400 such students at the time. Today, 28,550 students a year receive exemption from the mandatory military service-nearly one of 13 Israelis of draft age. These yeshiva students receive housing subsidies and other stipends unavailable to other students. The issue is becoming increasingly contentious in the Knesset (the Israeli congress). A backlash against the very religious is taking on increasingly nasty overtones. At a rally in Tel Aviv last summer, demonstrators chanted a Yiddish slang meaning "freeloader." A recent survey by the Jerusalem Institute for Israeli Studies found that 58 percent of adult males within the ultra-orthodox community are not part of the workforce. The stakes in the debate were raised with the passage of the 1998 budget on January 5. Prime Minister Netanyahu added tens of millions of dollars in extra subsidies to yeshivas and religious boarding schools in order to enlist the support of religious parties in his coalition.

Washington Post, 1/16/98

Islam

Palestinian President Yassir Arafat has promised the Palestinians they will get their independent state by 1999. Speaking at a meeting ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the "Nakba" (catastrophe) of the founding of Israel in 1948, Arafat said that the Palestinians were fighting "the longest revolution in the world." He stated, "We are here to stay, and soon we will declare our Palestinian state. It will be declared in '99 on the Palestinian land. Those who do not like it can drink the Gaza sea water and the

Dea Sea water." Arafat told the audience that he sees the Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. The meeting in Ramallah was the first in a series of meetings to launch Palestinian activities marking the 50th anniversary of the 1948 war.

Deutsche Press Agentur (DPA), 2/12/98

Algeria's six-year conflict is attracting more international attention due to the recent killing of foreign oil workers. With the increase in violence, blamed by the government on Islamist extremists, oil groups' concerns over safety threaten to cut off the economic benefit created by the presence of the companies. Human rights and social issues have emerged in recent years as one of the trickiest problems facing international oil companies. Algeria derives virtually all of its foreign exchange revenues from oil and gas exports. It is becoming increasingly dependent on its income from supplying natural gas to southern Europe. Human rights groups have long campaigned against the atrocities of Islamist extremists and government repression. For some companies, controversial countries have proved particularly profitable. "The big money is in countries whose names end in `ia' and `stan' . . . places other people don't want to go to" said a senior executive of a U.S. oil engineering group active in Algeria. Despite the threats to the general population, the sensitivity of the economics of oil revenue have made such businesses "off limits" to the Islamic fundamentalists controlling the violence.

Financial Times, 1/6/98

The series of anti-Chinese riots that rocked Indonesia may have been in part provoked by conservative Islamic scholars urging believers to wage a holy war against financial speculators and commodity hoarders. The Indonesian Ulemas Council's (MUI) call for a jihad (holy war) as a means to solve the country's social and economic problems preceded violent unrest in Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi in which mobs, angered by rising food and commodity price rises, looted and torched Chinese shops. Indonesia, the world's largest Moslem nation, has a population of 202 million people, of whom only about five million are Chinese, mostly Christians or Buddhists. Masdar F. Mas'udi, the director of the Indonesian Society for Community Development, said that "the rich need to sacrifice part of their wealth for the needy to minimize the threat of violence in this time of crisis."

DPA, 2/20/98

Christendom

Poland President Aleksander Kwasniewski signed a treaty with the Vatican that governs relations between the state and the Roman Catholic Church. The pact includes a provision making church marriages legally binding and provides for religious classes already in kindergartens. The leftist coalition party, which lost last September's elections, says the treaty gives too much influence to the Roman Catholic Church-to which about 90 percent of the population at least nominally belong.

Reuters, 2/23/98

The Houses of Worship (HOW) Web site, whose goal is to link churches on the Internet, has signed on the 10,000th church. HOW is rapidly creating a vast network whose ultimate goal is to link the activities of more than 300,000 churches across the country for increased interdenominational dialogue and cooperation. More than 90 denominations are now represented. The site enables churches to exchange resources with other congregations; stimulate dialogue among church leaders; empower congregations to find new members and outlets; share information about their houses of worship.

Business Wire, 2/19/98

The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland is attempting to win back the trust of churchgoers disgruntled with the behavior of the clergy. It has used the name of a popular science fiction comedy as the slogan for 200,000 leaflets and giant-sized posters distributed throughout the country as part of massive public relations drives. "Who are the Men in Black" is the title of the campaign launched with the aim of restoring people's faith in the church. Some 92 per cent of Ireland's 3.5 million population are Catholics, but the number who attend church regularly is steadily declining. The country's leading newspaper, The Irish Times, has pointed out that the country's religious orders have amassed a vast amount of land and property, while there is an ever dwindling number of priests, monks and nuns living in monasteries and convents far too big for their needs. Professor Tom Garvin, a political analyst who closely monitors the role of the church in Ireland, says, "What we are experiencing in Ireland today is an acceleration of a process that began years ago in many countries in Europe. . . . The church has waited far too long to adapt to the changes taking place in our society. The way I see things, the Catholic church in Ireland is committing suicide in installments."

DPA, 1/30/98

A small political movement to put the U.S. into the business of fighting religious persecution of Christians around the globe is gathering momentum. The group is made up of both religious conservatives and liberal evangelicals, as well as the U.S. Catholic Conference. The goal of the movement is to unite behind legislation designed to punish countries that practice or condone persecution based on religious beliefs. Particularly in countries with radical Islamic movements, Christians have been the targets of some horrific persecution: imprisonment in China, beatings in Pakistan, even crucifixion and enslavement in Sudan. The provisions of the proposed legislation would block export-import financing for projects in these countries. If a country is found to engage in widespread religious persecution, non-humanitarian aid to the country would end, trade with government agencies would stop and the U.S. would be required to oppose loans to the country by international lending institutions.

Wall Street Journal, 2/4/98

[Economics](#)

The question of future exchange rate policy is the subject of a detailed discussion paper by the Centre for Economic Policy Research in London. The paper makes the point that European Monetary Union (EMU) will transform a group of small open economies into a large closed economy similar in some respects to that of the U.S. This will change the importance of the exchange rate for domestic policy. The paper argues that this will create a policy of "benign neglect" and could cause extreme economic uncertainties. Currently, when the dollar weakens against the D-mark, other European currencies also weaken against the D-mark. Under EMU, that buffer would no longer be there. "Extreme caution will be required to avoid trade friction from boiling over into political tensions on suspicions of beggar-thy-neighbor policies," said the authors. Policy cooperation would have to be voluntary to avoid crisis. To date relatively little attention has been paid by EU officials to how such policy cooperation would work in practice.

Financial Times, 1/6/98

China could be the next country to suffer the economic woes of devaluation. Growth in China has been slowing for the past five years. China has an export-led economy and most of its exports go to Asian countries. A sudden devaluation in China's currency could set off shock waves in global financial markets.

Investors' Business Daily, 1/19/98

Science

Scientists for the first time have apparently endowed healthy human cells growing in a dish with a quality that alchemists, explorers and mystics have vainly sought for ages: immortality. In the new research, due to be published in the Journal of Science, the scientists genetically altered cells, enabling them to keep dividing long past their allotted life span. The work opens a new path to the treatment of cancer and a variety of degenerative ailments, including heart disease and age-related vision loss. Such healthy human cells might also serve as biological factories for churning out genetically engineered drugs.

Los Angeles Times, 1/14/98

Just before Christmas, scientists in the UK and France completed the genome (genetic) sequence of the micro-organism that causes tuberculosis-a killer of about 3 million people annually. This has given drug designers the chemical key to all the genes within the organism that could be targeted by anti-bacterial agents. The screening or mapping out of the entire human genome-a much bigger worldwide research project which is due for completion in 2005-is yielding promising avenues for vaccine development by shedding light on the mechanisms of resistance and susceptibility. "Everything we need to know about the organism, from its biology to its behavior, is encrypted in its genome," says Stuart Cole of the Institut Pasteur in Paris.

Novartis [formerly Ciba] Foundation, 1/8/98

The results of a five year natural Environment Research Council program examined how biological molecules in archaeological and fossil materials change over time. The study established that there were severe limits to the amount of knowledge scientists could expect to gain from DNA fossil study. Professor Eglinton of the Research Council said that it is not possible to obtain DNA from samples more than 100,000 years old. There is no hope of extracting it from the fossils of dinosaurs, for example. Many of the ancient animals have been found to have played a key role in the development of oil source rocks, a prime source of energy reserves.

Financial Times, 1/20/98

Because of the warming of the Earth's atmosphere over the El Niño event in the Pacific Ocean, February's average global temperature was the hottest on record, according to researchers at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. The average global temperature was 0.95 degrees Fahrenheit above the 10-year average for February. The Northern Hemisphere was 1.21 degrees above the 10-year average, while the Southern Hemisphere was 0.68 degrees above it.

Los Angeles Times, 3/19/98