



Israel: *At War ~ At Peace*

Inside . . .

Israel: At War ~ At Peace

The Age of the Patriarch

Bible Question Box

Israel

At War — At Peace

*“For I will bring you back home again to the land of Israel. . . .
And you shall live in Israel, the land which I gave your
fathers long ago. And you shall be my people and I will
be your God” (Ezek. 36: 24, 28).*

*“I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they
shall rebuild their ruined cities, and live in them again, and
they shall plant vineyards and gardens and eat their crops and
drink their wine. I will firmly plant them there upon the land
that I have given them; they shall not be pulled up again,’
says the Lord your God” (Amos 9: 14, 15).*

*“In the last days Jerusalem and the Temple of the Lord will
become the world’s greatest attraction, and people from
many lands will flow there to worship the Lord.
‘Come,’ everyone will say, ‘let us go up the mountain of the
Lord, to the Temple of the God of Israel; there he will teach
us his laws, and we will obey them.’ For in those days the
world will be ruled from Jerusalem. The Lord will settle
international disputes; all the nations will convert their
weapons of war into implements of peace. Then at the
last all wars will stop and all military training will end.
O Israel, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord,
and be obedient to his laws!” (Isa. 2: 2-5).*

— The Living Bible —

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“Lift up a standard for the people” — Isa. 62: 10

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DESPITE CENTURIES OF PERSECUTION and attempts from many quarters to exterminate them, the landless Jews at last regained a land this month 54 years ago — May 14, 1948 — and the State of Israel became a reality.

Since then the history of the region has been marked by military, political, and ideological conflict. The news from the region over the past month has presented harrowing scenes and has significantly raised the fear of widespread war in the Middle East.

Though the superficial reason for the present conflict is the deep resentment felt against Israel because of that state's occupation of Palestinian territory, there are deeper, more ancient reasons. Much of this trouble has at its root a principle of hatred for Israel: the nation and its people. It is no secret that in many Arab capitals the presence of the Jewish state is an offense. This animosity can trace its roots to Biblical times, and the filial hostility between two distinct branches of Abraham's family: Isaac and Ishmael. Although the conflict at the present time is primarily between the Palestinian fighters and the Israeli state, it is too simple to view it only in those terms. Nor is it simply a battle between Muslim and Jew, for there are Palestinian Christians joining forces against what they regard as the occupying force. In addition, there are nations whose dislike of Israel springs from different cultural reasons, and whose heritage is Christian.

THE NATION OF ISRAEL: HATED AND LOVED

Small in geographic terms, powerful in its effect on the international psyche, Israel is now seen around the world as a perpetrator of terror. Has the nation which was saved from destruction in the Second World War now become an exterminator of the Palestinian people? Does the claim of the Jewish people to its home in Biblical lands, nullify a similar claim by the disenfranchised Palestinians? Are the Palestinians entitled to a sovereign state of their own? Can the two peoples live side by side, in peace?

The contrast in the quality of life between Israel and the Palestinian territories is quite stark. In an effort to buffer its state against suicide bombings and other dangerous attacks, the Jewish state has sanctioned the building of hundreds of Jewish settlements — outposts in a foreign land — which has had the effect of fragmenting the territories. Although the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) withdrew some months ago, the latest conflict has obliged them to re-occupy the area and they have penetrated the West Bank and Gaza Strip and severely curtailed the daily migration of workers in the territories. Lacking a means of income, and cut off from the proceeds of their trade, the Palestinians are living under economic hardship.

* The name, Muslim, signifies one surrendered to the will of God (Allah).

** We recognize that many Palestinians are Christian, many of whom are torn between their recognition of God's promises toward the Jewish people, and their *natural* adherence to their own people. See the "Of Interest" section on page 57.

ABRAHAM: A REVERED ANCESTOR

The father of the faithful, Abraham, is claimed by Jews, Muslims,* and Christians alike, each group holding him high as a righteous servant of the Most High. The Koran correctly identifies Abraham as neither a Jew nor a Christian (*The Koran*, Sura II, v. 134); he was in fact a Hebrew and the forerunner of the Semitic people, which includes both Jews (through Isaac) and Arabs (through Ishmael).** The discord between Sarah and Hagar provoked by Ishmael's disdain for Isaac, and the subsequent casting out of Hagar and her son, set the pattern for the centuries of hostility between the two branches of Abraham's offspring which followed (Gen. 21: 9-21).

The Scriptures record that Abraham was emotionally troubled by this quarrel between his wife and his concubine, because *he loved Ishmael*. It is important to keep this in mind when we view the present-day struggle between Jew and Palestinian. *God loves the Palestinian people*. He promised that the offspring of Ishmael would be a great people (verse 13 and 18). Indeed, under the Ottoman Empire, the Arab nations were among the most influential powers on earth. Through their culture and libraries they disseminated great wisdom and were the envy of the world. While western countries were mired in medieval darkness, Arab civilization was immersing itself in high learning and scholarship. The Christian response was to attack them in the less-than-holy Crusades. Though the Ottoman empire collapsed shortly after the First World War, when the time had come for Israel *to cast off the yoke of foreign oppressors*, a rich legacy of Arab culture remains.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE MODERN STATE

The modern history of the nation of Israel has its roots in ancient prophecy. During the first decade of its existence, Israel's chief source of income was from Germany in the form of war reparations and indemnity payments to individuals. In addition, the state received grants from the United States. These ended in 1959 and were followed by a series of loans.

Israel's population tripled during those years and by the end of 1957 stood at nearly 2,000,000 (including over 200,000 Arabs). Its proclamation of independence had declared: "The State of Israel will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersion." According to Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister, about 1,000,000 immigrants from 79 countries arrived in Israel in this first decade.

Ezekiel chapter 37, with its vision of reassembled and revitalized skeletons, is a wonderful portrayal of the Jewish people, under the influence of Zionism coming back to "life" after their centuries of homeless dispersion.

“Fishers and Hunters”

Since Jer. 16: 14-16 is one of the clearest Scripture passages describing Israel’s regathering to the Holy Land, we will examine it in this connection:

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

We understand that the “land of the north” was Russia, where at the end of the 19th century nearly one-half of the Hebrew race resided. “All the lands” seems to refer to the other countries in which were found large enclaves of Jews, such as Poland, Germany, Romania, and Hungary.

The “Fishers”

From about 1878, in harmony with His promise in Jer. 16: 16, God sent “fishers” to draw His scattered people back to their homeland. Their bait was Zionism (a philosophy much despised by many in and out of Israel today). Many statesmen — Jews and Christians — and other influential figures were involved in promoting the cause of Zionism, especially following the work of Theodore Herzl and the Zionist Congress of 1897. The message of Zionism appealed to many Jews and they came from afar to claim their ancient land. Others remained where they were until they were pursued by the “hunters.”

The “Hunters”

Probably the most frightful chapter of the modern age has been the vicious persecution and attempted extermination of the Jewish people by the Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler. Utterly cruel and single-minded in his determination to wipe the Jews off the face of the earth, his barbarism redefined the word “holocaust” and blotted western civilization with a stain that cannot be removed or forgotten.*

What the appeal of Zionism could not do, persecution accomplished, driving Jews by the thousands to Palestine and forcing the rest of the world to wake up to the claims and ancient rights of these people. The Holocaust gave a determination for survival and an identity to the Jewish people in a way that no other event in their history of dispersion has ever done.

The Six-Day War

Born in the tumult of war, when they were attacked by the allied Arab forces, the young state’s existence was again threatened in June 1967. The Arab world, led by Egypt’s President, Gamel-Abdul Nasser, renewed its war against Israel. Israel’s victory in that conflict resulted in her acquisition of more territory. In fact, the remarkably swift “six-day” war left her in control of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights. Most important, Israeli forces captured Old Jerusalem. Jews were again in control of King David’s city. These are the acquisitions which aggravate the dispute today. Though Israel has relinquished the Sinai Peninsula, it still occupies the Golan Heights (claimed by Syria) and now (April 2002) occupies parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Of Israel’s 5.6 million population, about 128,000 are Israeli settlers in the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem. Some refer to the West Bank as Judea and Samaria, the biblical names for the region.

Israel is mostly urban and the majority of Israeli citizens are Jewish. The term “Jewish” conveys the thought of nationality, ethnic origin, religion and culture. A Jew in Israel is Jewish by *religion and ethnicity* and *Israeli* by citizenship, but because they have come from all over the world, the Jewish population contains considerable racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity. More than half of Israeli Jews are Israel-born (*Sabras*), but their parents or grandparents came from more than 100 different countries, even as the Scriptures indicate when speaking of the regathering of the scattered people. (Deut. 30: 1-3; Jer. 32: 37). Bonding together an immigrant population of such diverse cultures, languages, and racial characteristics has been a tremendous challenge to the leaders of the new state, and their success may well be due in large part to the ever-present threat from without and from enemies within.

As complex as are the reasons for the plight of the stateless Palestinian people, it apparently suits the Arab countries to use their plight as a public rebuke to Israel. However, in the pursuit of peace between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs, both sides are urged to make painful compromises, and while there is no evidence of the latter’s making any concessions, Israel has repeatedly relinquished territories won in the various conflicts with her aggressors. The “Land for Peace” policy has so far proved to be a delusion, and it remains to be seen whether the political and security issues can be worked out successfully. The dreadful fear remains that *no matter what Israel does, no matter how much territory she concedes, she will still find herself unpopular and threatened with destruction by her neighbors*. The history of the Jewish people does not auger well for a future unattended by Providence.

* It is this experience which informs the fierce defensiveness of Israel today. We must keep in mind that Israel is fighting for her life. Any counsel for peace by the United States or any other entity must not ignore this reality.

The Present Situation

As noted, the gradual acquisition of territory through warfare has brought to Israel and her Palestinian neighbors the trouble that we see today. However, it is fair to note that Israel took territory as spoils of war — war which was forced upon her. The *intifada* — uprising — of the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been front-page news for over a year. The situation lately has dramatically worsened. In an attempt to stop the spate of suicide bombings which have claimed many Israeli lives over the past month, the IDF has re-occupied towns from which they had withdrawn months ago. The resulting conflict has caused the death of many Palestinians and has exacerbated an already dangerous situation. The growing resentment against Israel because of its perceived unjust retribution against the aggressors will most likely foster the development of more terrorists, more suicide bombers. There is a chorus of complaint against Israel from the United Nations, the European Union, and, more diplomatically, from the United States.

At the time of writing, President of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat, is confined to a small section of his devastated office compound and is hemmed in by Israeli tanks. The United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell, on a mission of mediation, attempted to persuade Mr. Arafat to rein in his violent supporters and at the same time urged the Israelis to withdraw from Palestinian territories. As of this date, he has had little success. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is determined to let his army crush the terrorist cells, eliminating the threat to Israel. He is not inclined to pay attention to the dictates of the White House. He understands what all Israelis understand: *Israel is fighting for its national existence*. We believe that most Palestinians would be willing to live side-by-side with Israel in peace. But there are many who hate Israel in principle, who disdain it as a “Zionist entity,” and who are fundamentally and hysterically opposed to the existence of a Jewish state and will never agree to peace.

ISRAEL, CHANNEL OF BLESSING

Israel has been revived and has become again an independent nation. We believe that the long-promised time of Israel's real exaltation as the channel of Messianic blessing to mankind is not too far off. What though there shall be another great spasm of tribulation as this Old World passes away and a New Order is generated? What though “the time of Jacob's trouble” has not yet run its full course and must do a further purifying work among God's people,

Israel (Jer. 30: 1-7; Isa. 2: 2-5)? These things shall not hinder the Lord's people from rejoicing in the New Heavens and the New Earth, which God declares He is to create — “Be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create” (Isa. 65: 17-19; 2 Pet. 3: 13).

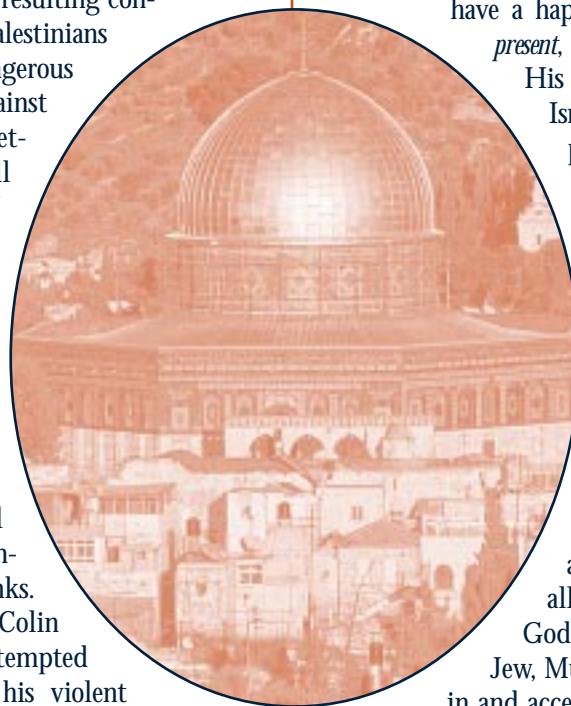
THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S PROMISES

God's promises are sure of fulfillment. This present evil world does not have the capacity to bless with the fullness of God's promises. God's promises will be realized to their greatest extent in His Kingdom which is to come, and the new world which follows. It is certain that the Palestinian people have a happy and settled future in store. *For the present*, God is working out His will through His chosen Israel. This is not to say that Israel is a paragon of virtue. Many of its people are secular and care little for the promises given to Abraham and their forefathers. We do not, therefore, expect them to behave in a righteous manner. But God's love for His people is not conditioned on *their righteousness*, but on *His promises*. The Apostle Paul makes it plain that Israel is beloved for the fathers' sakes (Rom. 11: 28, 29).

God loves His people Israel, though they are blinded to His plans and purposes for them. And so it is with all who pledge allegiance to Abraham's God. There is no perfection in self. All — Jew, Muslim, Gentile — must come to believe in and accept the son of God, the Messiah, Christ Jesus. For most Jews this is for the present an impossibility, for they trust the Law and their traditions. For most Muslims this is a hard thing to understand, for their scriptures teach that God (Allah) has no offspring. For the vast majority of the world, mired in materialism or the day-to-day grind of a self-filled existence, it is beyond their understanding that they are in need of salvation.

Just as Abraham's hand was stayed from killing his son, Isaac, so the enemies of Israel, be they Arab or Gentile, will be thwarted in their attempt to destroy the Jewish people. “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper” wrote Israel's prophet, Isaiah (54: 17). There is no suicide bomber, no missile, no fighter plane powerful enough to separate God's people of the land from the land which He has given them. Whether a Palestinian state becomes a reality remains to be seen, but the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will not permit it at the expense of Israel's existence.

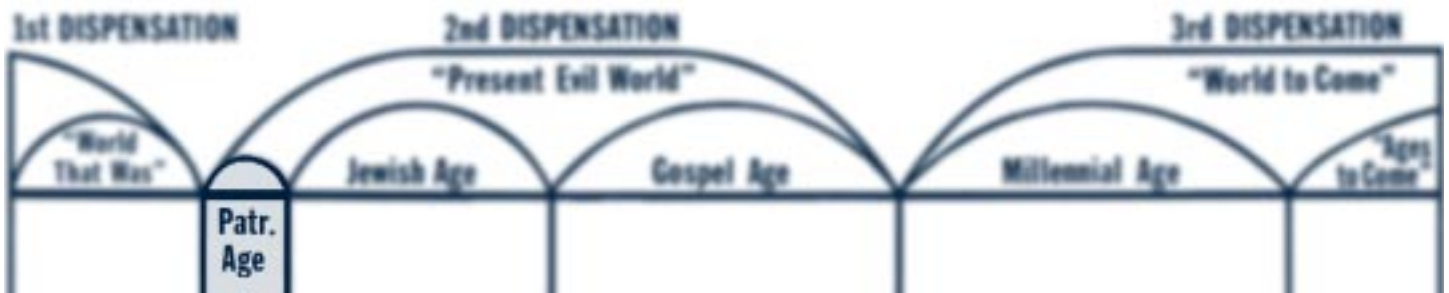
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THE AGE OF THE PATRIARCH

“Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers”

— ROMANS 15: 8 —



Part 5 in our series on Habakkuk 2: 2: “Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it”

IN OUR DIVINE PLAN SERIES so far this year, we have focused chiefly on the unfolding of God’s Plan in our own day, and on the imminent fulfillment of His promises for the blessing of the world of mankind. Should it be thought by any that this is a new revelation, or even an invention based on wishful thinking, we will now endeavor to show that the true understanding of God’s purposes is rooted firmly in the distant past. It is based on His Covenant promises to certain *individuals* among the remote ancestors of those who became known as God’s “chosen people.”

The period of the Patriarchs is the briefest of the Ages shown in our dispensational chart above. It lasted for only 659 years, but during that period significant advances were made in laying the foundations of faith, not only for God’s chosen nation Israel, but also for a people who would later be adopted as His *spiritual* sons and daughters.

The Scriptures speak of three worlds, or dispensations: the world that *was*, which perished in the flood; the heavens and earth which are *now*, otherwise known as the *present evil world*; and the world to *come*, the *new* heavens and earth, where righteousness prevails (2 Pet. 3: 5-7, 13). While the pre-flood ancestors of the human race may in a broad sense be regarded as Patriarchs, or first fathers, the term is used primarily in reference to the progenitors of the Hebrew race, or more specifically, of the Jewish people. The “fathers” are those from whom they inherit the promises of God, and for whose sakes they are beloved of God (Rom. 11: 26-30).

AFTER THE FLOOD

The Patriarchal Age, the first period of the world that now is, began at the end of the flood, when God made a special covenant with Noah and his descendants

never again to destroy the earth with a flood (Gen. 9: 8-17). In a specific sense, however, the light of God’s Plan of Salvation began to shine more brightly when God chose Abraham to be the recipient of those promises which are fundamental not only to the Jewish, but also to the Christian faith. The Covenant that God made with Abraham is thus the *essential feature* of the Patriarchal Age.

God did not deal on a covenant basis with every human being, nor did He extend the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant to everybody then living. He left the other nations to go their own sinful way for the time being, so that their experience with evil could do its work. He foresaw that fallen men and women would in due time heartily desire to be free from the conditions prevailing under the curse of death, and the covenant with Abraham made provision for their eventual deliverance. As God evidently did not intend at that time to save the whole world, what were His purposes during the Patriarchal Age?

GOD’S FIRST PATRIARCHAL AGE PURPOSE

This was to reveal in outline His glorious plan of salvation, and this He did in a very terse form to Abraham. “Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him” (Gen. 12: 1-4). Sarah, too, would be greatly privileged. “I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her” (Gen. 17: 16).

God did not select Abraham's father, or his brother, or his nephew. He chose *Abraham*, evidently seeing in him the character qualities necessary for the carrying of great responsibility, and such faith as would be exemplary for generations to follow, earning him an honorable reputation as "father of all them that believe" (Rom. 4: 8-11; Gal. 3: 6-9). Abraham's faith and obedience were demonstrated in his leaving his family home in thriving and prosperous Ur of the Chaldees, with his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot, and other relatives, with all their servants and their possessions. Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. The extended household would comprise a large number of souls and such a migration was a huge undertaking. The Apostle Paul commends Abraham's faith in Heb. 11: 8-10: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country . . . For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Isaac — The Seed of Promise

Aged 85, Abraham was still without children. How God would make of him a great nation was a matter of some perplexity, and as Sarah seemed unlikely to bear a child, she offered to Abraham her handmaid Hagar, and Ishmael was born. But the child of the bondmaid was not the seed of promise. Thirteen years later, God reaffirmed his covenant with Abraham and promised that a son would yet be born to Sarah. His name would be Isaac, and with him and his offspring God would establish His Covenant. Abraham pleaded that *Ishmael* might find favor with God, and the son of the bondmaid did indeed receive rich blessings, but he was not to inherit the Covenant promises. Though the natural reaction of the aged couple was to laugh at the mere possibility of having their own son, long experience had taught them complete trust, so that Abraham, and Sarah his wife, *believed* God, and in due time Isaac was born.

The supreme test of faith came when God called upon Abraham to offer Isaac, the beloved seed of promise, as a burnt-offering. Picturing the scene on Mount Moriah still stirs the heart, as Isaac asks "Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" And Abraham answers, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering" (Gen. 22: 7, 8). This evidence of utter, unquestioning faith was followed by a further reaffirmation of the Covenant with Abraham, given in greater detail, and sealed this time with God's oath.

The Covenant Confirmed to Isaac

Comparatively little is recorded in the Bible of Isaac's life and experiences. After his mother's death he

married Rebekah, granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother, and in due time twin sons were born to them — Esau and Jacob. The boys were no doubt a delight to grandfather Abraham, who lived until they were about 15 years old. His thoughts as to the possible heir of the Covenant promises after Isaac are not recorded, though the Divine intimation to Rebekah that "the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25: 23) may well have been discussed and pondered by the family. That Rebekah should receive a direct revelation from the Lord acknowledges her personal worth and places her, as one of the "matriarchs," in an honored position.

Isaac would of course be aware from his youth of the Divine circumstances surrounding his own birth, and fully conscious of the great honor and responsibility of being the Seed of promise. God's positive vesting of the Covenant in Isaac is recorded in Gen. 26: 1-5, in terms almost identical to those outlined to Abraham. The strange manner in which Isaac was caused to bestow this "birthright" blessing, not upon Esau, his firstborn, but upon Jacob the younger son, underlines the principle that God, in His foreknowledge, *chooses* those whose characters are best pleasing to Him, and who will by their faith and loyalty help to further the interests of the Divine Plan. While the Bible account is clear that Isaac himself favored Esau, Rebekah played a vitally important part in achieving God's purposes for her younger son.

Isaac lived to the age of 180, seeing his family — through both sons — multiply exceedingly, and in Jacob's 12 sons witnessed the beginnings of that "great nation" so important in God's Covenant to Abraham.

The Covenant Confirmed to Jacob

While some have felt that Jacob's behavior in the matter of the birthright suggests a less than honorable character, perhaps even a cunning streak that does not readily endear him to posterity, there is no doubt that God's overruling influence was at work. He knew before their birth the characters of Isaac's two sons: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated [loved less]" (Rom. 9: 13). Clearly, Esau had no great respect for the Divine calling vested in the family, and was willing enough to trade in his supposed inheritance for the gratification of a hasty meal (Gen. 25: 28-34).

Yet Esau's chagrin on realizing that he had lost the honors normally accorded to the firstborn, put his brother's life at risk, and Jacob took refuge with his uncle, Laban. Before his departure, Isaac blessed him, charged him to find a wife from among their own kin, and formally conferred upon Jacob the Abrahamic Covenant blessing: "God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee . . . and give thee

the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham” (Gen. 28: 3, 4).

During Jacob’s journey to Laban’s home in Padan-aram, God Himself confirmed the promises to Jacob: “Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad . . . and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 28: 13-15). Further assurances of God’s favor were given from time to time, and Jacob’s name was changed to Israel, his family becoming known thereafter as “the children of Israel” (Gen. 35: 10-12).

The Promised Blessings

In Gen. 22: 16-18 the expression “the stars of the heaven” is the first hint that Abraham’s offspring would include a spiritual, heavenly element, in contrast to “the sand which is upon the seashore,” which indicates others of an earthly nature. St. Paul calls these promises *the Gospel* (Gal. 3: 8).

They imply (1) that Abraham and his Seed would be greatly blessed; (2) that the promised Seed — earthly and heavenly — would overcome all their enemies (v. 17); and (3) that their work of blessing would include the *whole* human family. The Abrahamic Covenant is therefore seen to embody the entire Plan of Salvation, and since blessing is the opposite of cursing, the promise is inherent that the curse of sin and death will be removed through the agency of Abraham’s Seed. This Covenant, as St. Paul teaches, necessarily presupposes the *resurrection* of the dead (Acts 26: 6-8).

Later recorded in writing by Moses for the benefit of the faithful down through the Ages, we see God’s first Patriarchal Age purpose fulfilled: the revealing of His Plan in direct verbal terms to His friend, Abraham, and thus to all who are of Abraham’s seed, either by natural inheritance, or by virtue of sharing his faith and righteousness.

GOD’S SECOND PATRIARCHAL AGE PURPOSE

A rather more complex feature of this Age is its provision of many types or pictures, graphically illustrating the details of God’s Plan. The Apostle Paul explains in Gal. 4: 22-31 that the persons whose histories were recorded and preserved from ancient times were, so to speak, actors portraying in allegorical fashion the realities of God’s Plan of Salvation. Their performance was but the *shadow* of the reality to come.

Having the Divine revelation through St. Paul that Abraham’s two wives, Sarah and Hagar, represent two covenants, we may be assured that the other persons involved, and all the circumstances surrounding them, are significant for *antitypical* purposes. Hagar, being a

bond-servant, pictured the Mosaic (Law) Covenant, which was seen to hold in bondage the Jerusalem of Paul’s day, that city standing for the nation as a whole.

Evidently the Galatian Christians were under the misconception that they should be subject to the Jewish Law, but Paul urged them to “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5: 1). They were now children of the free woman (Sarah) — children of promise (Gal. 4: 26, 28, 31), antitypical Isaac, who pictured Christ, both Jesus, the Head, and the Church, His Body (Gal. 3: 16, 29). Abraham in various ways portrayed the activities of God Himself, and clearly his offering of Isaac as a sacrifice typed the Heavenly Father’s giving His only-begotten Son for the sins of the world (Heb. 11: 17-19).

It is evident, therefore, that through the narratives of events in the Patriarchal Age, God has furnished *typical* representations of a multitude of details in His Plan, which He only briefly outlined to Father Abraham.

GOD’S THIRD PATRIARCHAL AGE PURPOSE

Though the patriarchs and matriarchs, as we have seen, consciously by the spoken or written word, or unconsciously by their actions, were used by God to convey His intentions to later generations, their faith and obedience would also secure for them in due time a *personal* reward.

God’s redemptive plan centers in The Christ — Jesus and the Church, who are to be Kings and Priests during the Millennial Kingdom, directing the great work of restitution from their heavenly throne (Rev. 3: 21). But the Kingdom will also have its earthly representatives, working in close association with these heavenly ruling powers. Our Lord Jesus said that the world would *see* Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the Kingdom, and many would come from afar to take their places there (Luke 13: 28, 29). These faithful servants of God had not been called to a heavenly inheritance, but their share in the Kingdom work will be of a practical sort, putting into effect on earth the instructions from the heavenly Throne.

That Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are personally named by our Lord seems particularly fitting. Each of them received God’s Covenant promises, and the Kingdom soon to come is the time when the long-awaited blessing of “all families of the earth” is to be realized. These Patriarchs will surely rejoice in their privileges of administering those blessings under Christ, the true Seed.

Further witness is given by St. Paul, who recounts in Hebrews Chapter 11 the lives of many godly men and women of Old Testament times, whose faith was

accounted to them for righteousness (Gal. 3: 6). Some are named who lived before Abraham, indicating that the Covenant will operate retroactively also. Some are well-known Bible characters. Others are as yet anonymous, but most suffered extremities of persecution and rejection by their kinsmen — “that they might obtain a better resurrection” (Heb. 11: 35). And all manifested that faith without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11: 6). These elders — patriarchs and matriarchs — though they obtained a “good report through faith,” still await their reward. They “received not [the fulfillment of] the promise: God having provided some better thing for us [the elect church, the spiritual seed], that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb. 11: 39, 40).

In their resurrection, the perfect new life that the Patriarchs receive will come from the One named “The everlasting Father” (Isa. 9: 6), who is also — paradoxically — the Seed of Promise, their Messiah. Thus the Psalmist, speaking prophetically to our Lord, says: “*Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children.*” And their future honorable status is described: “Whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth” (Psa. 45: 16).

THE END OF THE AGE

The Patriarchal Age came to an end at the death of Jacob. From that time forward, God dealt on a

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He only briefly outlined
to Father Abraham.*

Covenant basis not with one Patriarch at a time, but with the entire nation of Israel. In a future article in this series, we shall trace God’s Covenant arrangements with His chosen people during the “Jewish Age” — the second period of “This present evil world.”

The subject matter of this article and related matters is dealt with in The Chart of God’s Plan, by Professor P.S.L. Johnson, available from us for \$5.00, postpaid. Please use the order form on the inside back page.

* * *

of interest . . .

A rarely considered factor in the dynamic of the Middle East crisis is the existence and plight of the Palestinian Christians. One might think this is an oxymoron. However, before Israel was established as a nation, Palestine was a place inhabited by Jews, Muslims, and Christians. In decades past the population of the West Bank and Gaza was made up of at least 15% Palestinian Christians. In recent years the Christian community has dwindled to 2%. It has been estimated that less than 150,000 Christians remain in Israel and the Palestinian territories. These Christians are predominantly Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic with smaller numbers of Protestants, Armenians, Copts, and others.

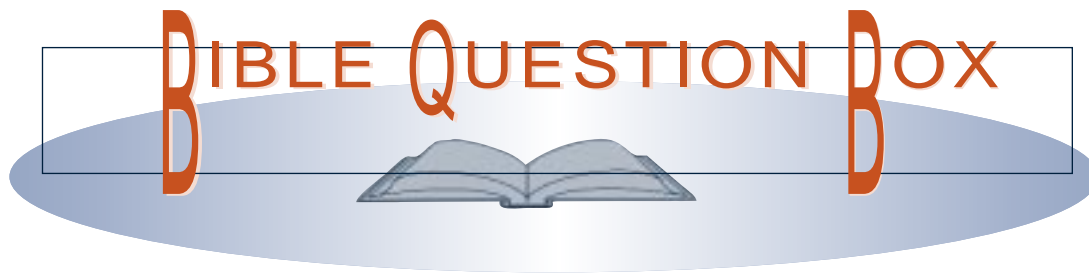
There are several reasons for the Christian exodus. In the main towns where they live — Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Ramallah — Christians are generally better educated and more prosperous than their Muslim neighbors. Many emigrate to get better jobs and a better life for their families. Many lose hope because of the continuing violence and the breakdown of the peace process and the prospect of raising children in an atmosphere of daily insecurity. The rise of Islamic militancy is also a factor, though one that is strongly disputed. Some Palestinian researchers flatly deny that Christians are leaving due to fear of Muslim extremism, as over the years Muslim-Christian relations have generally been good. But the growing power of Islamist groups such as Hamas has inevitably worried some Christians.

The decision to leave is often a painful one. Those who emigrate send money back to their towns and villages. They donate money to Palestinian universities, hospitals, and charities. Strong ties remain between the Christian diaspora and those who remain.

Christians, like Muslims, oppose the continuing Israeli occupation of large parts of the West Bank and Gaza. One of the best-known Palestinian Christians, Hanan Ashrawi, a frequently broadcast spokeswoman for the Palestinian cause, is respected by Muslims and Christians alike for her articulate defense of Palestinian rights.

— *British Broadcasting Corporation*

BIBLE QUESTION BOX



Q For years Israel has been on the defensive against potentially hostile forces in the Middle East and Palestine and currently is fighting a war against what it regards as terrorism. Is there any indication in prophecy as to the outcome of all this trouble?

A Israel has never experienced peace since becoming a nation-state in May of 1948. In Israel's current retaliation against terrorism and violent penetration of her borders, she is fighting for her national existence. The problems in the Middle East at the present time defy human solution. We sympathize with Israel in her plight, though undoubtedly there are injustices being committed by both sides in the conflict.

The ever-changing events in the region make it impossible to predict what the conditions will be in the following week, much less the coming months. Although the Bible does not appear to reveal what will happen in the short term, there are Scriptures that do reveal what will happen over the long run. For we can rest assured that no matter how bleak the present situation is, or becomes, Israel is in the land to stay (Amos 9: 14, 15).

Putting words into the mouth of Israel's enemies, Ezekiel 38: 11 says, "And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates."

While we cannot completely understand the full meaning of this passage at the present time, it seems to imply that the time will come when Israel will be at peace with her neighbors. It is hard to see how this can come about in light of the history of that region, especially in view of the present conflict, yet undoubtedly God will be able to shape affairs accordingly, as He did in creating the state of Israel from a widely dispersed people.

According to the context, that time will come shortly before "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30: 1-11; Ezek. 38 and 39; Zech. 12: 1-9; 14: 1-3). The first phase began in the late 1800s, with persecution directed toward Jewish communities then scattered abroad, especially in Russia. God's purpose for this trouble has been to harry the Jewish people back to their homeland preparatory to the

establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. This phase appears to be continuing and will lead ultimately to Israel's final chastisement because of their unbelief. The nations of that time will be stirred up to plunder Israel who, in desperation and fear of extermination, will call upon the Lord to deliver them. He will intervene in a miraculous fashion and defeat their enemies (Zech. 14: 3).

The purpose and result of this trouble will be to finally open their eyes to accept their Messiah. The last part of Zech. 12: 10 as translated by the Jewish Publication Society of America (*Leeser's* translation) reads: "and they shall look unto Me because they have thrust him through; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

That mourning will shortly afterward be turned to joy, for they shall have their sins forgiven, and the Lord will establish the New Covenant with them (Jer. 31: 31-34; Rom. 11: 25-27). Some time later, the Gentile nations, broken by the Time of Trouble, will learn of the beneficial arrangements that Israel will be enjoying, and will desire similar blessings for themselves (Isa. 2: 1-3; Zech. 8: 20-23). In response to their pleas for help, the Kingdom with its arrangements will be established in one nation after another until it becomes a universal empire (Dan. 2: 44; 7: 27). Israel will be privileged to convert and bless the Gentile world. With Jerusalem as the world's capital, Israel will form the earthly phase of the Kingdom.

As earth's inhabitants at that time make progress in the great work of restitution, the graves will give up their dead, and evil on the earth will begin to be eradicated (Isa. 25: 6-9; John 5: 28, 29; Acts 3: 19-21).

The problems in the Middle East with Israel in the center are chronic and often appear to be hopeless. However, we can depend on God's promise that Israel, the entire Middle East, and the whole world of mankind, both living and dead, have a bright, blessed, and peaceful future (Psa. 46: 8-11; Psa. 67).

* * *

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announcements

GENERAL CONVENTIONS FOR 2002

At-a-glance (in alphabetical order)

France: July 26-28 (*revised dates*); November 2, 3

Nigeria: *Umunkiri*, June 28-30; *Osusu Amukwa*, September 29;
Abia State, Aba, November 22-24; *Akwab Ibom State*,
Nduetong Oku, November 23-25

Poland: *Poznan*, May 3-5; *Lublin*, July 12-14; *Rzeszow*, July 15-
17; *Wroclaw* July 19-21; *Bydgoszcz*, July 22-24; *Katowice*,
August 16-18

United Kingdom: *Hyde*, August 2-4

United States: Michigan, May 25-27; Pennsylvania, July 4-7;
Ohio, August — *dates to be announced*; Illinois, October 4-6;
Tulsa, November 8-10

Details

United States

Michigan, May 25, 26, 27 (Sat.-Mon.): *Site:* Comfort Inn
Muskegon, U.S. Route 31 at Sherman Boulevard, Muskegon, MI
49444; tel.: (231) 739-9092 *Rates and Reservations:* For 1-2 people,
\$59.94 including tax at 11%; 3 people, \$65.49; 4 people, \$71.04
(tax of 11% included in all rates); children 18 and under stay free
with parents; Continental breakfast included (served in motel
lobby). **Please make your reservations with the hotel by April 24;**
be sure to tell the hotel you are with the LHMM to get the rates shown here;
ask for a confirmation number; each room must be individually guaranteed
three weeks in advance by credit card or check; you may cancel with 48 hours
notice; for further information you may contact Sr. (Mrs.) Carlla
Olson, Muskegon Class Secretary, by telephone at (231) 894-4131,
or by e-mail at colsoncjo@juno.com

Philadelphia Area (Lionville), July 4-7 (Thu.-Sun): *Site: Best*
Western, Route 100 (South of route 113), Lionville, PA 19353; tel.:
(610) 363-1100 *Rates and Reservations:* For 1-4 people, \$71.00 plus
\$4.26 tax; children under 18 sleep free. **Please make your reserva-**
tions for all four nights through our office; and make your check
payable to "LHMM." Our address is 1156 Saint Matthew's Road,
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requests at the end of each year so that we may plan ahead.

Bernard W. Hedman, General Editor

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7

John Davis, Associate General Editor

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7

Carl W. Seebald

Muskegon, Michigan Convention, May 25, 26, 27; Chicago,
June 22, 23; Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7

Ralph Herzig

Muskegon, Michigan Convention, May 25, 26, 27; Springfield,
Mass., June 2; Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7

Richard Blaine

Cleveland, Georgia, May 18; Marietta, Georgia, May 19; Muskegon,
Michigan Convention, May 25, 26, 27; Philadelphia Area
Convention, July 4-7; Largo, Florida, July 21

John Treble

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7

Robert Herzig

Boston, Mass., June 16; Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7

Jan Wojnar

New Haven, Connecticut, May 19; Pittsfield, Mass., June 9;
Philadelphia Area Convention, July 4-7

Leon Snyder

North Canton, Ohio, May 1; Muskegon, Michigan Convention,
May 25, 26, 27; Muskegon, Michigan, June 15; Philadelphia
Area Convention, July 4-7

Baron Duncan

Muskegon, Michigan Convention, May 25, 26, 27; Philadelphia
Area Convention, July 4-7

Evangelists' Services

Tom Cimbura, Colorado North, May 4, 5; Grand Rapids,
Michigan, July 20; Muskegon, Michigan, July 21

Robert Branconnier, Auburn, Massachusetts, May 12

Harry Hammer, Minneapolis, June 8, 9

Jon Hanning, Sand Ridge, West Virginia, May 11, 12; Louisville,
Kentucky, July 20; Cincinnati, Ohio, July 21

Harold Solomon, Boston, Massachusetts, May 26

Robert Steenrod, Beechgrove, Tennessee, June 8, 9

Jack Zilch, Minneapolis, July 13

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