“Where once the existence of God guaranteed the existence of Israel, today the continued existence of the people Israel guarantees the existence of God.”
Emil Fackenheim

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“Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan.”

(Lev. 25:9-10)

In Hebrew the fiftieth year is called Yovel, a celebration year, jubilee. It is the year of the blowing of the ram’s horn. Thus Yovel got its name from the shofar announcing the beginning of the year. The sound of the Yovel declares the beginning of a new era, the era of God’s favour towards Israel. In Hebrew the word yovel can be read in two ways. Either “yovel”, which means a ram or a ram’s horn like a shofar, or in passive voice “yuval”, is led or was led, like in Isaiah 53: “he was led like a lamb to the slaughter... for the transgression of my people he was punished.”

Like a lamb which has a desire to follow its shepherd humbly, to be led, “yuval”.

The three names of the shofar are like a road signs on our salvation path: Keren, which is the name including the personal calling, rose up in smoke with the sacrificed ram instead of Isaac (Gen. 22:13). On Mount Sinai the Israelites heard the sound of that horn, Shofar, for the first time when it called the people to make the change, a turn a round, teshuva.

The nation learned the sound of the shofar when The Lord himself blew the horn (Ex. 19:16).

From that point on the Israelites were commanded to blow themselves on the shofar (Lev. 25:9), until The Sovereign Lord himself blows it, this time the shofar called Yovel (Zech. 9:14).

Then He will announce freedom, liberation, a jubilee to all nations, to all of those who will hear His voice.

Yeshua the Messiah, Jesus Christ, started his ministry in the synagogue declaring with the words of Isaiah 61:1-2 proclaiming good news to the poor, freedom for the captives, release from darkness for the prisoners and proclaiming the year of the Lord’s favor. Proclaiming the jubilee, which is The Messiah himself. In Him is the heritage restored, the one we lost in the garden of Eden. In Him is the essence of Yovel.

Markus Nurmesniemi

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Editorial

A Thorn in the Flesh to the World - the Apple of God´s Eye

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Picture this: a group of young boys has got hold of a magnifying glass and now they are doing their best to set on fire their chosen target – an ant, a ladybird, or a piece of paper. The rays of sunlight are directed to the target, and soon a delighted cry breaks the excited silence signalling that the target is on fire. If anyone has an ear, let him hear! "See how your enemies are astrr, how your foes rear their heads. With cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish. 'Come', they say, 'let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more'" (Psalm 83:2-4,NIV).

We all know this Psalm, but how many of us really stop and think about these words? Or many other lines of the Scriptures where Israel is threatened with annihilation? Do we see the signs of the time we are living in?

Have you really stopped to think how, for so many years, the religious, political, and military leaders of Iran have over and over again declared destruction to Israel and sworn that the very name of Israel and the land of Israel will be definitively wiped out of the map of the world? Just as the Psalm 83 says. Have you really stopped to think that in the founding documents of the Palestinian state it is written that the aim of the Palestinian state is to drive the Jewish state into the sea? This is an official statement in black and white, but the nations of the world couldn’t care less. This statement and many others of the same nature are never given even a smallest coverage in the media, not one line. This kind of criminal war waging suits the western civilization’s culture system. The western countries, Finland and other EU nations included, prefer not to react. Their concern about the provision of oil and other financial gains, and the fear of Islam cause them to bow towards the East. What is good, is declared bad, and what is bad, is declared good. Where are the headlines telling about those over 120,000 rockets Hezbollah (mostly provided by Iran) has in Lebanon, waiting to be launched to Israeli cities? Where are the headlines telling about the secret siding up of united troops of Iran and Russia in Syria close to the northern border of Israel?

Where are the reports of the terror tunnels that Hezbollah, Hamas, and company are constantly digging under Israeli soil? Where are reports revealing how Hamas directs the financial assistance it gets from abroad to weapons and arming in Gaza? Where are the reports showing how Hamas directs and blackmails Palestinian civilians to provoke controversies with the Israeli Defence Force? Where are the headlines screaming how various states, Finland included, finances the Palestinian campaign of hatred, disguised as official curriculum, which puts martyr terrorists on pedestal in the school books and teaches the children to hate the Jews from their early age?

Why does the media never tell about those thousands of Palestinians and Arabs who are employed by Israeli companies? Why don’t they write about how the Israeli troops take care of and provide for Palestinian civilians and children who Hamas forces to the front line to provoke confusion with sticks and stones? Not to mention the wounded soldiers and civilians on both sides of the Syrian civil war Israel is providing medical aid for. And why are there no reports on how the Israeli Defence Force without exception always warns beforehand the civilian population in the areas where there are terrorist quarters they are going to strike?

Israel is the only democracy in the Middle-East, and she has the right to defend herself. At the moment Israel has no nation in the world that would unanimously stand with her. You got it right. Not even one. Those nations that show her sympathy and provide some kind of support are themselves divided nationally in their opinions as regards to Israel.

This, too, has been revealed to us in God’s Word. The Prophet Zechariah, for instance, predicted how the Lord will make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling, and how all nations of the world will gather against her (Zech.12:2,3). We hear from the news how the UN time and time again condemns Israel and the recognition of Jerusalem as her capital city. Thus the nations will injure themselves badly and cause the judgement of the Lord to fall on them. Not only will the nations gather against Israel.

Zechariah tells us how all nations will eventually one day siege Judah and Jerusalem. We know, however, the outcome: Yeshua the Messiah will stand on the Mount of Olives, which will be split in two. Living water starts to flow from Jerusalem. The land south of Jerusalem will become a plain because of the earthquakes, and Jerusalem will be lifted high (Zech.14:4-11). Jerusalem will be the world capital and the Messiah will reign the whole world from there (Isa.2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3). Nations and individuals will be judged righteously, according to the Word God has spoken. On the national level what matters is how the nations have treated the Apple of God’s eye, Israel.

That age is called the Millennial Kingdom. Eternal eternity comes only after that thousand year period. What will we be doing before that? What does the Bride of the Messiah do in the age we are living in? Has she done enough? Indeed she hasn’t! A quick glance at denominations and congregations makes one shiver. Israel is not being blessed in words and deeds, only small home groups keep praying for her, and few are those who dare stand with her in public. It is obvious that Israel is not a nation of saints whose doings are only good and right all the time. There is no such nation on the earth. Israel, like all nations, needs badly genuine and living faith. There is a biblical principle of blessings: the more we bless Israel, the more will our nations be blessed.

We must pray for Israel and act for her more determinedly. The God of Israel has never rejected His people; He will stay with her till the end. That is exactly what God also awaits from us who believe in Yeshua. It is written in the Word of God. If you don’t believe, take your Bible and see for yourself. Who blesses Israel, will be blessed, but who curses Israel, will be cursed by God unless he repents (Genesis 12:2,3).

It is an eternal fact that Yeshua and Israel are inseparable. The Son of God and His Holy Scriptures have been given to the world through Israel, His firstborn people and the apple of His eye.

With blessings,
Markus Nurmesniemi, editor-in-chief
The Restoration of Israel
The Miracle of the Twentieth Century

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Written by:
Dr John Garr

“Can a nation be born in a single day?” God asked the incredulous prophet Isaiah. It must have seemed utterly impossible to almost everyone that when Zionism was birthed at the end of the nineteenth century, within a mere fifty years, the nation of Israel would rise from the dust of history to shine as one of the most peaceful and prosperous nations in the world. Yet, after nearly two millennia of the greatest and most enduring Diaspora of their history, on May 14, 1948, nation of the Jews was born when David Ben-Gurion, the Executive Head of the World Zionist Organization, became the first signatory to the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel.

In what has to be one of the most amazing miracles in history, The very fact that a Jewish state exists and grows stronger every day despite the unrelenting efforts of a host of enemies that have been committed to its destruction has to be one of the greatest miracles in human history. Right out of the ashes of the Holocaust, the miracle of life was manifest in the resurrection of the corporate body of world Jewry and their proclamation of the Jewish state in precisely the same geographical setting of God’s promise to Abraham 4,000 years ago. Since that time, Miracle of life upon miracle of life has been demonstrated in the more than sixty years of modern Israel’s existence. As David Ben-Gurion once said, “Anyone in Israel who does not believe in miracles is not a realist.”

When the Jewish people began to exercise their rightful claim to their nation and their land some two centuries earlier, the verve and vigor of the young Jews who eventually coalesced into the Zionist Movement were certainly the motive force behind the restoration. Jews would labor intensely and incessantly to bring into reality with all the determination steeled into the very fiber of their being by centuries of fire and pressure. The Zionist Movement, led by Theodore Herzl, became an irresistible force in the world.

Some two centuries before this time, the Jewish people had begun to make aliyah, “going up” to the Holy Land that God had deeded to their ancestors nearly four thousand years earlier. From its inception, the Zionist Movement encouraged Jewish migration into Palestine. Other amazing and even miraculous events began to occur in the international Jewish community. In 1922, the League of Nations unanimously created a Covenant for Palestine that mandated the formation of a Jewish state in Israel in all of the land west of the Jordan River. Most of these efforts were derailed by the most diabolical tragedy in human history, the Holocaust.

Eventually, however, Germany was defeated, and shortly thereafter serious efforts began for the full restoration of Israel. The newly organized United Nations took up the mantle of the League of Nations and on November 29, 1947, in its General Assembly Resolution 181 resolved to support the formation of the renewed nation of Israel. Immediately after this declaration, the new Jewish nation was attacked from all sides by nations that sought its destruction. The Israel Defense Forces, however, prevailed, and the land of Israel, was securely in Jewish control.

The nation of Israel continued to be buffeted by its neighbors. Threats and tensions rose until it was clear from the stated intentions of rulers of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and others that a war was soon to be launched that would evict the Jews from their land and drive them into the Mediterrane-
an Sea. Israel, however, had other ideas.

Despite centuries of efforts by an unending array of Gentile powers to evict them from the Promised Land, the passion of the Jewish people for the land could not be quenched, and at incredible risk to their lives, they insisted on returning to the land of their ancestors because they understood that this was the Holy Land that was consecrated by God himself and given to them, as he himself said, “forever.”

Amazingly, a significant number of Christians also supported this effort to reclaim the land of Israel for the Jewish people. From the sixteenth century forward, Christian Restorations called for the return of the Jews to Israel and the restoration of the Jewish nation of Israel. By the nineteenth century, the numbers of these Christian advocates for Israel had grown both in number and in influence in the halls of Western governments such as England, the United States, and France. These elements came to be known as Christian Zionists after the Jewish Zionist movement was formed near the turn of the twentieth century.

Israel, which had seemed long dead, would be resurrected from the dust and ashes of the Holocaust through the miraculous power of the Creator. 1) Mark Lindsay described the miracle poignantly in this way: “In religious rather than mythological terms, Israel’s re-birth was a ‘resurrection’, after the ‘crucifixion’ of the Jews in Auschwitz.” 1) What seemed like an utterly destroyed nation would rise again after being buried for nearly two thousand years in the dust of history. The dry bones of the long decimated Israeliite army would, indeed, live again. God’s nation would once more stand as a sovereign dominion among the diverse nations of the world. This was to be far more than what Paul Johnson described as Israel’s slipping “into existence through a fortuitous window of history.” 2) It was more, far more: this was a divinely orchestrated miracle.

When God asked the prophet, “Can a nation be born in a day?” he continued with the exclamatory rhetorical question: “Who has ever heard of such a thing?” The answer to the questions, however, was obvious, for the Lord God immediately said, “As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons.” 3) Israel’s rebirth was not, however, to be predicated solely on the ingenuity or strength of the Jewish people. This work of the Ruach HaKodesh was an outworking of the utter faithfulness of Israel’s God: “‘Shall I bring to the point of birth and not cause to bring forth?’ says the LORD. . . . ‘Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her.’ . . . For thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream.’” 4) God himself was the one who signed Israel’s birth certificate, guaranteeing the right of the Jewish people to corporate and national sovereignty, and God has never signed—nor will he ever sign—Israel’s death certificate! He who was the midwife who birthed Israel has been her constant protector and sustainer, and he will ever continue to be so forever.

After appearing to be in the grave of history for almost two millennia, Israel would be reborn in a resurrection, just as Ezekiel had witnessed in his prophetic vision concerning the revivified dry bones. Most of the Jewish people had surely concluded what the prophet had predicted, “Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.” 5) What looked like a hopeless bohneyard, the remnants of a long-since defeated army, was to become the site of a miracle of resurrection and restoration. God promised, “Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, my people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.” 6) God would summon his people from the four corners of the earth and bring them again out of exile to their own land: “I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ And to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth.” 7) Yes, the dead bones would live again, and they would “stand up a mighty army.” As Jon Levenson has pointed out, “The revitalization of the downtrodden and despised people is clearly patterned on the old legends of their having come into being against all odds, historical and natural.” 8) Declarations and Independence John Stuart Mill summed up basic principles of sociology and politics: “A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a Nationality, if they are united among themselves by common sympathies, which do not exist between them and any others which make them co-operate with each other more willingly than with other people, desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be government by themselves or a portion of themselves, exclusively.” 9) These principles that were descriptive of the ancient Israelites and their descendants through the centuries also defined the Jewish people in the twentieth century. The long-delayed League of Nations Covenant for Palestine, which had been enacted on July 24, 1922, and entrusted to the British government for its fulfillment was coming to a point of fulfillment. “The Jewish People were ripe for independence because, unlike the situation that existed at the start of the Mandate, it was now able to stand alone and exercise the powers of self-government . . . which was the only requirement for terminating the Mandate under Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations that was an integral part of the Mandate for Palestine.” 10) The excuse that Britain had used to continue its domination of all of Palestine and to deny the Jewish people the right of self-determination had become a moot issue, for at that time, “the consent of the League of Nations or the British Mandatory was not formally needed because declaring independence was not a ‘modification’ of the terms of the Mandate but the realization or fulfillment of its purpose for which it existed.” 12)
It should have come as no surprise that something powerfully spiritual and prophetic was taking place in the Holy Land. The British Mandate over Palestine had expired before Britain had notified the United Nations in 1947 of its intention to terminate its stewardship of its Mandate from the League of Nations Covenant for Palestine. On November 29, 1947, the United Nations passed Resolution 181 which included its plan to partition the territory of the Mandate for Palestine into two independent countries, one Arab, the other Jewish. 13)

On the very next day after the United Nations had passed its resolution for the creation of an Arab state in the Trans-Jordan and a Jewish state in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, the Arabs launched an uprising in an effort to negate the United Nations action. When the Jews defeated the Arabs, the Jordanian army counterattacked and occupied land west of the Jordan River, including areas in and around Jerusalem. Then, Jordanian King Abdullah brought 2,000 loyal Arabs to the West Bank, (14) initiating what was to be the birth of the “West-Bank” Palestinian myth. Abdullah was intent upon maintaining control of his own kingdom by precluding the formation of a Palestinian state on the east side of the Jordan River, (15) where its existence had been mandated by the international community of nations (the League of Nations) for some 26 years.

Despite the bellicosity of its neighbors, the state of Israel was emerging. Finally, on May 14, 1948, the very day that the British Mandate had expired at midnight, David Ben-Gurion became the first person to sign the Israeli Declaration of Independence, and then he formally proclaimed The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, which said, in part:

EREZ-ISRAEL was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the Book of Books. After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.

Impelled by this historical and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers, ma’apilim, (immigrants coming to Eretz-Israel in defiance of restrictive legislation) and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country’s inhabitants, and aspiring towards independence nationhood...

We, members of the People’s Council, representatives of the Jewish community of Eretz-Israel and of the Zionist movement, are here assembled on the day of the termination of the British Mandate over Eretz-Israel and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel... Placing our trust in the “Rock of Israel”, we affix our signatures to this proclamation at the session of the Provisional Council of State, on the soil of the homeland, in the city of Tel-Aviv, on this Sabbath eve, the 5th day of Iyar, 5708 (14th May, 1948). 16)

Within minutes of Ben-Gurion’s historic proclamation of the statehood of Israel, United States President Harry Truman “rejected the advice of his State Department and made the United States the first nation to recognize the new country.” 17)

This was another example of divine orchestration of world events, for Truman was a Baptist who “believed that the Jewish people and the Holy Land had distinct roles in God’s plan. And because of the great suffering that they had endured over two millennia as a dispersed people, he strongly identified with Jews’ quest for a homeland, especially in the aftermath of the Holocaust.” 18)

The fact that Truman was able to withstand the objections of the clearly antisemitic U.S. State Department is testimony to the strength of his personal convictions, but it is also a greater testimony to divine providence that positioned the right person at the right time to do the right thing in recognizing Israel, for with the endorsement of Israel by the United States, worldwide acceptance of Israel’s existence was a fait accompli.

What had been in the making for more than fifty years since the earliest Zionists (19) had been moved by their passion for the holy land to begin working toward creating a Jewish nation came to fruition on that day. The centuries-long struggle of individual Jews, a struggle to make aliyah by “going up” to the land of Israel—living there, purchasing land there, and praying there that God would one day completely fulfill his promise to their ancestors—was finally realized. Against all odds, Jews had begun to return to the land of the Bible. At first it had been a mere trickle, then a stream, then a torrent. After nineteen centuries in exile, the Jews were finding their way back home again. The legendary stereotypical “wandering Jew” would wander no more: Jews were going home. They were not to be in a remote and alien plot of ground assigned to them by other nations and people; they were home in the land contracted to them by their God, the God of the universe, in the eternal, irrevocable covenant that he had made with Abraham four millennia earlier!

Immediately after its rebirth, however, Israel was attacked by Muslim and Arab nations that had done everything possible to abort the Jewish nation before it could be born and were then intent on inflicting indiscriminate violence on the newly born nation. They were utterly determined to destroy forever what had suddenly and spontaneously come to life in their midst. Consequently, on the very next day after the Israeli Declaration of Independence had been signed and the proclamation of the formation of the State of Israel had been made, seven Arab nations—Egypt, Transjordan (now Jordan), Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon—along with the Arab Liberation Army, invaded Israel with what appeared to be an overwhelming force that would simply crush the newly born Jewish nation and eradicate the Jews once and for all from the land of Israel. 20)

The Arab forces sprang into action to fulfill the pre-World War II promise of the Arab Higher Committee: “Whenever the English remove their hands from this land, we will throw and chase all the Jews in a stampede into the sea!” 21)

As the Arab nations discovered, however, Israel was not nearly as easy a foe to defeat as they had thought. Finally, after ten months of intense warfare, the Israelis prevailed against their invaders, the Islamists nations were repelled, and an armistice agreement was signed, ending the hostilities—at least for the moment. A Jewish State Resurrected from the Ashes of the Holocaust

There is no direct connection either materially or spiritually between the Holocaust and the rebirth of the nation of Israel. The Holocaust was not some cosmic price that the Jews had to pay for the birth of Israel. “The State of Israel is not an atonement. It would be blasphemy to regard it as a compensation,” says Abrahm Heschel. 22)

The Holocaust was not a penalty exacted upon the Jewish people for some perceived evil or sin on their part. The evil—monstrous and unprecedented—emerged entirely from the hearts of the
Nazis and their antisemitic collaborators in Europe. The Holocaust was a wholly undeserved monstrosity imposed upon the Jews by evil personified in Hitler and his henchmen. In reality, the Holocaust did not precipitate the creation of the Nation of Israel, for the stage had already been set politically and practically for the formation of Israel by the continuing aliyah of the Jewish people that began in earnest in the nineteenth century and by the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations Covenant for Palestine of the early twentieth century.

The miracle of post-Holocaust Jewish existence stands as a memorial to the indomitable will of the Jewish people not only to survive but also to thrive. This is why Elie Wiesel has argued that any attempt to link the Holocaust and reborn Israel diminishes both because they are two different mysteries. 23)

At the same time, however, for Jews in the land of Israel, “the Holocaust-Israel motif of ‘death/rebirth’ became a central dogma of Jewish civil religion,” (24) says Byron Sherwin. He also argued that, quite amazingly, “this blatantly Christian motif of death and resurrection, death and salvation, proclaimed an indisputable nexus between the Holocaust and the State of Israel.” 25)

Irving Greenberg has rightly argued that “the lesson of the Holocaust is that powerlessness is immoral, because it is not compatible with survival.” 26) He also has pointed out that “the existence of the State of Israel validates continuing faith in God and constitutes a redeeming act, which matches the great catastrophe.” 27)

After the incredible numbers of deaths that were experienced by the Jewish people during the Holocaust, the rebirth of the nation of Israel has to be seen as a profound act of divine resurrection, the restoration of the nation and its people to the ancient land. Emmanuel Lévinas was entirely correct to assert that “the Shoah re-establishes the link—which up until then had been incomprehensibly hidden—between present-day Israel and the Israel of the Bible.” 28)

Abraham Heschel even saw the act of restoring the Nation of Israel as making the Holy Land even more holy: “No act is as holy as the act of saving human life. The Holy Land, having offered haven to more than two million Jews . . . has attained a new sanctity.” 29)

The corporate consciences of the nations of Western Europe and the United States were awakened by the Holocaust from an abyss of dark contempt for the Jewish people and of utter disdain for their right to their own Jewish state in the land of their ancestors. The Christian church likewise felt the imprint of nails driven by the Holy Spirit into its corporate consciousness that made eternal truth undeniable. 30)

For centuries, the church had been overwhelmed by the darkness of abject evil in its evaluation of and attitude toward the Jewish people and their inalienable right to their homeland. All Christians in history should have been deeply distressed by the condition in which Jewish believers in the same God that the church worshipped were subjected to unremitting and systematic persecution, torture, and death. Instead, the vast majority of Christians had fully experienced the condition that Paul had observed in the lives of many people who had far less evil intentions than many in later generations had against the Jewish people: “Such teachings come through hypocritical liars whose consciences have been seared as with a hot [branding] iron.” 31)

The corporate consciences of the nations of Europe and, for that matter, of the United States, were in worse shape than the conscience of the church. Perhaps it took something of the magnitude of the Holocaust to convict those nations of their arrogance and contempt toward the Jews and of their need to make restitution to the Chosen People by recognizing their rights to nationhood and homeland. God did not inflict the Holocaust upon the Jewish people for what some Christians viewed as obduracy and unbelief, nor did he make the Holocaust
a quid pro quo for the establishment of the nation of Israel. “There is no salvation to be extracted from the Holocaust,” says Michael Wyschogrod. “If there is hope after the Holocaust, it is because to those who believe, the voices of the Prophets speak more loudly than did Hitler, and because the divine promise sweeps over the crematoria and silences the voice of Auschwitz.”

The Holocaust was entirely the product of pure evil incarnated in the hearts of utterly conscienceless human beings. Here is what God did: he orchestrated the events before and after the Holocaust that brought about the rebirth of the nation of Israel in the Promised Land, thereby foiling the Nazi’s planned genocide of the Jewish people and forging their determination to fulfill Emil Fackenheim’s 614th commandment, which he said forbids the Jews from giving Hitler posthumous victories.

Ever since that time, the cry, “Never again!” has continued to resound across the landscape of Israel and to echo in the hearts of Jews around the world.

Renewal of the “Forever” Land Contract

If the Christian church at large had really believed the Scriptures on which it claimed that its faith was established, it would have known that it should have given unequivocal support for the establishment of the nation of Israel, for imbedded in the very fiber of its Bible is God’s irrevocable commitment that this specific land would be deeded to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob forever.

This land was conveyed by God to Abraham with no deed restrictions. There would never be a time when the ownership of the land would be revoked or permitted to go into foreclosure, and the law of adverse possession has never applied.

God’s covenant with Abraham and its land provisions were unilateral. God simply said, “I will give you this land,” no ifs, ands, or buts about it! Though God said that the land might, on occasion, actually “vomit out” the Israelites because of their disobedience and idolatry, he constantly assured his people that their title to the land could never be nullified or revoked because it was based on his own faithfulness, not on their performance.

From the time of Abraham, the Hebrews, the Israelites, and the Jewish people had been inextricably connected with the land of Israel. Whenever the people had been exiled from the land, they had cried out to God from the depths of their souls for restoration to their sacred space. And because they had the assurance that the land clause of their irrevocable covenant would never be abrogated, they never doubted that they or their descendants would be fully restored to the Promised Land and that the land would be restored to them. It was simply inevitable!

No wonder Emil Fackenheim attributed the restoration of the people of Israel in the land of Israel and in the state of Israel to the power and authority of the Hebrew Scriptures: “We must ask whether this ever happened that, after two millennia, a people was returned to its language, its state, its land. Without a Book—this Book—this return could not possibly have taken place. This is the shared astonishment behind all religio-secular diversities. This is the shared experience that makes possible a bond between all Israel and Torah.”

Fackenheim concluded his thoughts with this startling and challenging declaration: “Where once the existence of God guaranteed the existence of Israel, today the continued existence of the people Israel guarantees the existence of God.”

Miracle after Miracle: The Israeli Reality

In what has to be one of the most amazing miracles in history, a Jewish state exists and grows stronger every day despite the unrelenting efforts of a host of enemies that have been committed to the cause of destroying what God and the Jewish people have done. Right out of the ashes of the Holocaust, the miracle of life was manifest in the resurrection of the corporate body of world Jewry and their proclamation of the Jewish state in precisely the same geographical setting of God’s promise to Abraham 4,000 years ago. Miracle of life upon miracle of life has been demonstrated in the more than sixty years of modern Israel’s existence. As David Ben-Gurion once said, “Anyone in Israel who does not believe in miracles is not a realist.”

In reality, as George Steiner observed, Israel itself “is an indescribable miracle. . . . Its coming into being, its persistence against military, geopolitical odds, its civic achievement, defy reasoned expectation.”
The very survival of the Jewish people themselves is a miracle. The existence of the Jewish state is an even greater miracle. Karl Barth exclaimed that seeing the Jews being restored to their ancient homeland was “like seeing an ancient map come alive, like the bursting forth of a living nation and people, at once ancient and new.”

No greater living witness to the existence of God can be advanced than his utter faithfulness to his covenant with the Jewish people. If anyone wonders whether or not there is a God, he needs only to turn his eyes toward the Jewish nation and the Jewish people for incontrovertible evidence and proof. Both the Jewish people and the Jewish state are living testimonies to the utter faithfulness and dependability of the God who, as “the Father of lights” simply “does not change like shifting shadows.”

In defiance of all the norms of history for the assimilation of conquered peoples, still the Jewish people and their nation are clearly identifiable in person and on the world map. Barth well observed, “By all analogies of world history, the Jews as a race should no longer have existed after the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.” Instead, Am Yisrael chai!

The resurrection of the Jewish people from the death that the Holocaust imposed on six million of their global family has been the ultimate expression of the Israelite vision of redemption and restoration. Joseph Soloveichik had a convincing answer to the post-Holocaust argument that the death camps disproved God’s existence: “The reborn State of Israel supplies powerful evidence of God’s existence and His continued love affair with the Jewish people.”

Jon Levenson notes the results of God’s love for Israel: “There is perhaps nothing more characteristic of the ancient Israelite vision of redemption than renewed fertility and new life—fertility where there had been sterility, life where there had been death.”

The resurrection of the state of Israel after nearly nineteen centuries of sleeping in the dust of the earth is further testimony to the absolute faithfulness and utter dependability of the God of the Jews. The God of Scripture who created the entire universe ex nihilo demonstrated his same omnipotence when he created the nation of Israel ex nihilo, virtually out of nothing, but that is a testimony to the one who holds death and life in his hands, who sets up and takes down rulers, and who has promised to establish his Chosen People forever; they shall not only by sustaining the living but also by keeping faith with those who sleep in the dust of the earth and by being faithful to give life to the dead.

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REFERENCES:
1 Mark R. Lindsay, Barth, Israel, and Jesus: Karl Barth’s Theology of Israel (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2007), p. 60. Lindsay reports Richard Rubenstein’s observation that if the Holocaust and the establishment of Israel are not kept independent of each other, “one runs the risk of retrospectively imposing the Holocaust with positive significance.”
3 Isaiah 66:8, NIV, ESV, NASB paraphrased.
4 Isaiah 66:9, 10, 12, ESV.
5 Ezekiel 37:11, NIV.
6 Ezekiel 37:12.
7 Isaiah 43:6.
8 Levenson, p. 145.
12 Grief, p. 167.
13 In 1922, the second iteration of the original League of Nations Mandate for Palestine had assigned all the land west of the Jordan River to the Jewish state and the land east of the Jordan to the Arab state.
14 With the help of the British, Abdullah circumvented the allotment to the Arab (Palestinian) state and formed the “Hashemite” kingdom of Jordan, for which there was no legitimacy. Abdullah, who was an Arabian born in Mecca, not a “Jordanian,” exploited his relationship of support for the British during World War I in order to create his own “kingdom” out of thin air. This, in turn, produced the “West Bank” controversy that continues to this day. See Mary Christian Wilson, King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 179–181, 195.
15 William W. Haddad and Mary M. Hardy, “Jordan’s Alliance with Israel and its Effects on Jordanian-Arab Relations” in Israel, the Hashemites, and the Palestinians: The Fateful Triangle, Efraim Karsh and P. R. Kumaraswam, eds. (London, UK: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), pp. 31–48. Haddad and Hardy point out that when Israel retook the West Bank in 1957 nearly twenty years after Abdullah’s invasion, “they did not conquer the Palestinians; they made war with Jordan. Jordan had occupied the territory in 1948, and it was not their territory to begin with.” In reality, Israel was the liberator, not the occupier of the West Bank. This territory had been “occupied” by Jordan for nineteen years before it was liberated by the Israeli army in the Six-Day War. The West Bank, therefore, has not been “occupied territory” since the time when it was controlled.
by Jordan from 1948 until 1967. It has been, and continues to be, part of Israel.

16 The Official Gazette, No. 1 of the 5th, Iyar, 5708 (14th May, 1948).


19 In 1897, Theodor Herzl, the father of the movement that would eventually produce the Jewish State, convened the First Zionist Congress where the right of the Jewish people to a national rebirth in their own country was proclaimed.


23 Elie Wiesel noted in Berlin, p. 356.


25 Sherwin, p. 26. Sherwin apparently did not understand that the death and resurrection motif has never been blatantly or exclusively “Christian.” As a matter of fact, Christians inherited the entire resurrection idea and theme from the Jews and Judaism, particularly from the Pharisees, the progenitors of Rabbinic Judaism. Paul made this clear: “I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead” (Acts 23:6).

26 Irving Greenberg, paraphrased in Berlin, p. 356.

27 Greenberg, in Berlin, p. 356. Greenberg also observed that the “embrace of modernity was a profound blur, and Jews must learn to resist the absoluteness of the secular.” Indeed, it was the absolute secularity of modernity that denied the spiritual altogether and created the climate for the Holocaust.


29 Heschel, Israel, p. 113.

30 Ecclesiastes 12:11.

31 1 Timothy 4:2, NIV.

32 Some voices were raised during the time of the Holocaust; however, those raised by Christians and others were drowned out by the cacophony of self-serving arguments that were at bottom merely reiterations of ancient antisemitism. See Hubert G. Locke, Learning from History: A Black Christian’s Perspective on the Holocaust (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), p. 115. Locke is correct when he notes that “those who spoke out in the United States” against the Nazis and antisemitism “did so in a national climate of isolationism, racism, and antisemitism that made their views not only unpalpable but, in many circles, unpatriotic.” Even the outcry of some British churches against the unfolding atrocities of the time “ended in futility,” Locke says. The US State Department and the British Foreign Secrctariat were simply not nearly as concerned about the genocide of Europe’s Jews as they were with winning the war.

33 One of the things that troubled post-Holocaust Jewish and Christian children in the United States and in Germany was the Christian silence in the face of the atrocities of the Holocaust. See Björn Krondorfer, Remembrance and Reconciliation: Encounters Between Young Jews and Germans (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 105. In an analysis of the lack of response German response to the Holocaust, Krondorfer notes that “the American Jewish and Christian students were astounded by the ubiquity of the conspiracy of silence their German peers had experienced in their families; and the East and West German students came to realize how deeply they themselves were invested in that conspiracy.”

34 Michael Wyschogrod, Abraham’s Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004) p. 120.


36 The land provision of the covenant was first made to Abraham (Genesis 13:15). It was confirmed to Isaac (Genesis 17:21) and then to Jacob (Genesis 28:13: 35:9–15). In none of these cases did God attach deed restrictions to the promise or attach expiration clauses to the deed.

37 The law of adverse possession, so-called “squatters rights,” could never be applied to the land of Israel because the Jewish people never abandoned the land, nor did they leave it in a state of disrepair. They also never relinquished title to the land voluntarily. The eviction of the Jews from Israel was carried out time and time again by violent dispossession, and their God-given land was literally plundered from them by oppressors.


40 Rydelnik, p. 158.

41 Fackenheim, To Mend, p. 328.


44 George Steiner, Errata: An Examined Life (London, UK: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997), p. 54, author’s emphasis.


48 James 1:17, NIV.


50 Joseph Soloveitchik, noted in Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 381.

51 Levenson, p. 152.

52 These are the words of the Gevurot Berakah, the second benediction of the Amidah, the prayer par excellence in the synagogue which praises the God of Israel for his “powers”: “You are mighty forever, O Lord. You give life to the dead. You are great to save. You sustain life with lovingkindness. You give life to the dead with great mercy. You support the falling, and heal the sick, freeing the prisoners and keeping faith with those who sleep in the dust. Who is like you, master of powers, and who resembles you, king of death and of life, and the one who causes salvation to spring up! You are reliable and faithful to give life to the dead. Blessed are you, O Lord, giving life to the dead.”

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Jerusalem! The city of the Great King; the place where God chose to place his name. Jerusalem! The geographical center of the earth; the focal point of the world’s history and of the world’s future. Jerusalem! The joy of the whole earth, the very mention of its name brings joy and awe to all those who love and honor Yahweh, the eternal God of heaven and earth, whether they be Torah-observant Jews or Bible-believing Christians. Jerusalem! The City of Peace; the most prayed-for city in the history of the world, with thousands, yea millions of Jews and Christians interceding the city’s peace in obedience to the explicit word of God in Psalm 122:6. Jerusalem! The City of Peace; the most prayed-for city in the history of the world, with thousands, yea millions of Jews and Christians interceding the city’s peace in obedience to the explicit word of God in Psalm 122:6. Jerusalem! The City of Peace; the most prayed-for city in the history of the world, with thousands, yea millions of Jews and Christians interceding the city’s peace in obedience to the explicit word of God in Psalm 122:6.

Jerusalem! The city of the Scriptures, from which the Word of God goes forth (Isaiah 2:3), a city mentioned no less than 800 times in the Bible.

Because it has been identified as a piece of real estate that is chosen by the God of the universe himself, Jerusalem has been a focal point of the ongoing conflict between good and evil, between the angels of light and the angels of darkness, between God and Satan. Indeed, there have been more battles waged in the heavens themselves over this city than have shed human blood on the earth. The answer is simple: Satan hopes to foil God’s plan one day to make Jerusalem the capital of a world without sin and depravity, the capital of the Messianic kingdom. And, he has used and continues to use men and false religious hopes to breed continuing foment that stands against God’s ultimate determination for Jerusalem: to be the foundation of world peace (which is one of the possible meanings of the word Jerusalem).

Strategic Importance

Situated on the land bridge at the confluence of three continents, Jerusalem from ancient times was of considerable strategic importance to the empires around it. Control of Israel was necessary to insure the free flow of commerce to Asia, Europe, and Africa. For this reason alone, Jerusalem, though named the habitation of peace, has been the scene of much warfare.

The topography of Jerusalem also made it strategically important. This city was defensible and had an adequate water supply. The Gihon spring was a constant source of water. Since the ancient city of Jerusalem was actually south of the walled city that can be seen today, it was situated atop a ridge that was protected on three sizes by steep valleys, the Hinnom Valley on the south and west, the Tyropean on the west, and the Kidron on the east.

Israel and Jerusalem’s strategic importance is clearly understood when one considers the great amount of resources and energy that ancient empires expended to gain and maintain control of this area. Some of the great armies of history marched against the city and its people. Jerusalem has, indeed, been, and continues to be, a burdensome stone to the nations (Zechariah 12:3).

Earliest Religious History

Written by:
John D. Garr, Ph.D., Th.D.

A topographical map of the city of Jerusalem seems to confirm the assertion of some rabbinc sources that the name of God was placed literally in the topography of Jerusalem. The Hebrew letter shin, which stands for the name Shaddai, can be seen in the valleys that surround and divide the city of Jerusalem. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi
The religious significance of Jerusalem extends to the time of Abraham, a Babylonian by birth and an Assyrian by nationality, who at the age of seventy-five heard the God’s voice saying to him, Go for yourself from your land, and from your kindred, and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you. Immediately he left Haran of Assyria and crossed over the River Euphrates, entering into a covenant with Yahweh to become the first Hebrew (literally, ivri, from the word eber, which means to cross over).

Tradition has it that it was at the site of what was to become Jerusalem, possibly on the very stone on which the sacrifices of the later temple were offered, that Abraham made the most extreme manifestation of his absolute faith in the God who had called him. The sacrifice of Isaac (Aqedat Yitzhak), in which Abraham bound his son of promise to God, sanctified this place and established the principle in Hebrew religion of vicarious atonement. This foundational event for Judaism also prefigured the time two millennia later when God himself appeared to his only begotten Son in this same area as the substitutive sacrifice for the sins of the entire world.

**Centuries of Religious Fervor**

Since Abraham is revered as the progenitor of three great monotheistic world religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), it is only natural that the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem should have great significance to all three faiths. And, so it is. Judaism and the corporate body of the Jewish people recognize Jerusalem as their capital city. The Jewish people were given title to the land and to the city in the greatest real estate transaction of history when God covenanted with Abraham and said, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates...

(Genesis 15:18). The capital of Solomon’s kingdom, the site of two great temples, the cradle of rabbinic Judaism, Jerusalem for three thousand years has been and remains the world capital of Judaism and world Jewry.

Christians recognize Jerusalem as the site of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and the empowerment of the church on the day of Pentecost, the place where the Gospel was first preached and where the church was first established. It is the place where millions of Christians can visit the sepulchre in which tradition says Jesus was entombed and from which he resurrected. It is here that Christians can visit the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus prayed and the Mount of Olives from which he ascended into heaven. It is for this reason, as well as for its pre-Christian history as the city of God, that Jerusalem is sacred to Christians.

Islam, following Mohammed’s mistaken version of history, believes that Abraham offered Ishmael on the rock of Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. They also believe that it was from this very stone that Mohammed took flight into heaven, itself. For this reason, the Mosque of Omar that covers this rock is called the Dome of the Rock, and Jerusalem is the third holiest of all cities in the Moslem faith. The Dome of the Rock has remained essentially unaltered for over thirteen centuries. Because of the Moslem traditions about the city, Jerusalem has been the focus of repeated calls for jihad, holy war against both the Jews and the Christians who have controlled the land and the city.

The Muslims came to hate the Jews for their intransigent unwillingness to convert to the religion founded by Mohammed. The result was murder and mayhem, part of satan’s strategy to exterminate the Jews and thwart the prophetic purposes of God. In more recent times, Jerusalem has been marked with terrorism directed against the Jewish people by the Palestinians who also claim title to the city and the land. Again, as God has moved to favor Zion and his ancient people, the Jews, by bringing them to their own land in the fulfillment of his prophetic promises of old, Satan has incited the people of Islam to stand against God’s purposes, prevent the fulfillment of his Word, and postpone the Messianic Age.

**Jerusalem and Christian Ambivalence**

Historical Christianity, and particularly Christendom, has tended to define itself vis-à-vis Israel and Judaism rather than in the context of the ancient land and the ancient faith. It has emphasized the discontinuity of its New Testament in contradistinction to the Old Testament, when, in fact, the New Testament is merely a re-newed testament that extended the faith of God to all the nations of the world on the basis of the completed sacrifice in the person of Jesus Christ. Because the majority of Christianity has adopted a supersessionist view toward the Jews and Judaism, the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem have become subjects of great ambivalence among Christian leaders, clergy, and laity.

The Jews are no longer entitled to the land of Israel because God ended his covenant with them when they rejected Jesus as the Messiah, many Christians reason. Jerusalem should be taken from the control of the Jews and internationalized, says others. The Palestinians and the Moslems in general have as much right, perhaps more, to Palestine and Jerusalem as the Jews do, others argue.

But, what should the position of the church be toward the Jewish people, toward Judaism, toward Israel, and toward Jerusalem? In this time of international uncertainty and ambivalence, surely there is a clear rock of divine revelation on which believers can build a right and divinely-ordered perspective on the Middle East.

**Christians and Jews, a Shared History and A Shared Destiny**

When asked by Christians, What have you and we in common, the great Martin Buber replied, “book and an expectation”. To this assessment, perhaps we should now add, a land and a city. Israel and Jerusalem are not the exclusive province of the church and Christianity, as Medieval church leaders would have had it. They are uniquely titled to Abraham and his fleshly descendants. Christians have not been chosen in the economy of salvation to replace the Jews and to assume title to their God-given land and its eternal capital city, Jerusalem. They have been chosen (I Peter 2:9) to be grafted into the God’s family tree of salvation (Romans 11:17), to partake of the nourishing sap of the root of faith in that olive tree, and to become naturalized citizens by adoption (Galatians 4:5) in the commonwealth of Israel (Romans 2:12-16). Believers share, not by genetic birthright, but by spiritual rebirth, in the promises of God to Israel, including those of the land. In the Messianic Age, when the tent of David is fully restored (Amos 9:11, 12), the Gentiles will be full participants with Israel by coming up with acceptance on Yahweh’s altar (Isaiah 60:7, 10).

Christians, then, share in the responsibility to pray and work for the peace of Jerusalem. They are called upon by the Hebrew scriptures and by the apostolic writings to pray for the Jewish people, the land of promise, and the city where God has placed his name (Isaiah 40:2; Psalm 122:6).

**God’s Perspective on Jerusalem**

What does God himself think about Jerusalem? Here’s what his Word says: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. ... For Zion’s sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof...
go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. . . . behold, I create new heavens and a new earth . . . . I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people. . . . Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her . . . Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river... (Zechariah 1:14; Isaiah 62:1; 65:17, 18; 66:10, 12).

Jerusalem is the place where God chose to place his name, a name of which he is intensely jealous (II Kings 21:4). Some Jewish scholars have suggested that the topography of the city of Jerusalem actually bears the imprint of the name of God in that the three valleys which circumscribe and intersect the city of Jerusalem seem to form the Hebrew letter shaddai, the first letter of the Hebrew name for God, Shaddai.

In Zechariah 12:2, 3, God declares his intentions regarding Jerusalem in its relationship with the nations of the world: “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. What clearer or more definitive word could God give to the nations of the world? All people who assume a posture of opposition to God’s purposes with his people and his city will be cut into pieces.

Jerusalem and The Messianic Age

Teddy Kolleck, longtime mayor of the city of Jerusalem, once said, have the most difficult job in the world: preparing the capital city of the world for the coming of the Messiah. Then, he offered this aside: When the Messiah comes, I want to ask him the same question that I have asked many pilgrims to Jerusalem, “Is this your first time to be here, or have you been here before?”

This anecdote illustrates the expectation that Christians have shared with Jews for nearly two millennia. For centuries prior to the time of Jesus Christ, the Jewish people had long embraced expectations of an age of universal peace, the time of Messiah. Since that time, both Jews and Christians have shared the same expectation of the Messianic Age. Jews have patiently and longingly awaited the coming of the Messiah while Christians have continually expected the return of Messiah Jesus.

The expectation of Messiah’s coming to usher in an age of universal peace is as old as the Bible itself. Though the concept became more refined in much later times, Adam and Eve were promised the birth of a son who would bruise the serpent’s head. Those who truly believe in the God of the Bible and in his process of revelation in Holy Scripture must recognize the recurring theme of the Messianic Age from the apocalypticism of both Old and New Testaments. In contradiction to the view espoused by Greco-Romanism and Eastern monism that history is cyclical and causal (an unending chain of repetitive events which precipitate other events, ad infinitum), the faith of the Bible has always viewed history as being linear and covenantal (beginning somewhere [with creation], traveling along a direct path toward an ending [the Messianic Age], and determined solely by God’s unilateral covenants with his people).

The coming of the Messiah is an absolute requirement of the Jewish view of history, for everything that has happened and will happen only prepares the stage for that final event of history, when time will be no more (Revelation 10:6).

A Capital City for the Whole World

When Messiah comes, he will not establish the capital of the world in New York, London, Moscow, Zurich, Bejing, Tokyo, or Mecca. The word of prophecy is just as sure as ever on this issue: Then shall the Lord go forth . . . and his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east . . . and it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem, to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain (Zechariah 12:3, 4, 16, 17). The capital of the world for the Messianic Age will be Jerusalem, the city of the great king.

Where are the Christians today who will pray for the peace of Jerusalem and prosper for doing so? Where are the believers who when they perceive faults and failures in the Israeli government will weep over the city as did Jeremiah and Jesus? Where are the Christians who will claim their heritage in Judaism and with the Jewish people, a legacy of which they have been deprived for some eighteen centuries? Where are the Gentile Christians who will say to the Jewish people as did Ruth of old, “Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me” (Ruth 1:16, 17)?

Through the agency of the Holy Spirit, God is seeking righteous Gentiles who will make such an affirmation, confirming their identity with and among the ancient people of God and joining with them in awaiting and praying for the coming of the Messianic Age and the establishment of the seat of world government in God’s capital city, Jerusalem. In that day, . . . the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously (Isaiah 24:23).

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View of the modern day city center of Jerusalem in the spring of 2019. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi
The Place of Answered Prayer

God’s Call to Intercession

Written by:
Dr Clifford Denton

The Feast of Purim was celebrated in Jewish congregations a short while ago. The Feast recalls the deliverance of the Jews at the time of Esther. Esther is often used as an inspiration for intercessory prayer. She was called, prepared and dared to go into the presence of the King to intercede for her people who were facing destruction under the hand of Haman.

How appropriate it is, therefore, to consider our own call at this time. The people of the UK are seeking deliverance from the EU, and we are also entering a time in the entire world when the rise of anti-Christian powers are threatening the survival of both Christians and Jews. This, then, is a time when many of us will receive the call to draw near to God, in the UK and in every country where there are disciples of Yeshua.

In so doing, we will become intercessors on behalf of our people and become available to hear the prophetic word of understanding that can be shared with others. Indeed, this will be more and more so as the last things on this earth come onto our calendars.

God Looks at the Heart

This is a ministry that requires deep commitment and purity of lifestyle. The character of those whom God calls can be found in the scriptures. For example, in Isaiah 66:2, “on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word.” Such character is not made in a moment, but is often the result of a lifetime’s walk with God.

It is a costly walk which results in a broken heart for others, such as when Jeremiah wept at what was to befall his own people. The Jews were about to go into Babylonian captivity – “Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” (Jer 9:1).

This character in us reflects the character of the Lord Yeshua, who wept over Jerusalem because of what was coming upon it, and of whom it was said that “in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and was heard because of his godly fear…he is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 5:7, 7:25).

We live in a time when many of us will receive the call to draw near to God in intercession.

The Ministry of Intercession

The ministry of intercession was given to the Priests of the Old Covenant, who were called into the Holy Place of the Tabernacle and Temple to make intercession for the people, to hear from God and to go out to teach the people what God was saying. At the time of Ezekiel their ministry was corrupted (Ezek 22:26-31) and this had kindled God’s wrath. Regarding their role of intercession, God said, “I sought for a man among them who would make a wall and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it, but found no-one.”

This is how important the ministry of intercession is. It is a priestly calling that God expects to be taken up. For us, it is not the Levitical priesthood, but the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 2:9). Yeshua is our High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. As we read in Hebrews 7:1-4, this means that Yeshua HaMashiach, like the Priest Melchizedek in Genesis 14, was appointed by God directly and did not inherit his ministry by being from the Tribe of Levi, as with all the Priests of the Old Covenant.

It was Yeshua who answered the deepest call to be intercessor for his people: “He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore his own arm brought salvation for him; and his own righteousness, it sustained him” (Isa 59:15-17). The cry from the Cross, “Forgive them Father for they know not what they do”, is perhaps the most profound intercession ever uttered.

Called into God’s Presence

His call is now for us to join him in his intercessions for the people of this world. John 15:1-8 is a key passage, where we are called to abide in Yeshua. Or, using another metaphor, just as Yeshua clothed himself in his own salvation and righteousness, so we are to put on the full armour of Ephesians 6 and so put on Yeshua (Rom 13:14). In this place of abiding in him or wearing him, we receive the inspiration of God so that our prayers can be in accord with Yeshua’s own intercessions (verse 7).

It is in this place of inspired prayer that we can be sure that our prayers will be answered, not according to our human logic but according to the prompting of his Spirit. As such, our prayers are prophetic in nature. In the place of inspired and answered prayer, we will find the prompting of the Holy Spirit as to how to pray, sometimes in “groans that cannot be uttered” (Rom 8:26-27).

What a privilege to be called into the very heart of God to fulfil this calling so utterly needful in the world that is shaking about us more and more every day. Like Esther, we must prepare ourselves to enter into the King’s presence and so fulfil our priestly calling on behalf of our people. In Esther’s day the Jews were saved from destruction. After the Second World War, accompanied by more recent intercessions, Israel became a nation again. Now we move on to the final harvests from the world and to the final move of salvation among the Tribes of Israel to herald the time of Yeshua’s return.
One of the main teachings in the Bible deals with the temple of God. The temple of the Lord is the place where God’s glory dwells. However, a temple built of wood and stone is not God’s ultimate goal; He desires to abide inside people who believe in Him, and these people will form the final temple of the Lord. We will now study the history of God’s temple beginning with the earliest dwelling-place and coming to the final temple, the believing people. We begin with the Tabernacle.

Tabernacle in the Desert

"Then have them make a sanctuary (Hebrew mikdash) for me, and I will dwell among them (Hebrew betokham, inside them, in their innermost, among them)” (Exodus 25:8, NIV).

"They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: ‘See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain’” (Hebrews 8:5, NIV).

"Then God’s temple in heaven was opened and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm” (Revelation 11:19, NIV).

God commanded Moses that they should build Him a sanctuary, a tent of meeting, so that He could live in their innermost/among them (Ex.25-40). (The Apostle Paul understood this to mean that God’s express wish was to live in the heart of hearts of Israelites; 2 Cor.6:16; Ex.29:45.)

This sanctuary, which was built when Moses was leading the people through the desert, is called Tabernacle, dwelling place, and Tent of Meeting (Ex.25:9;30:26). The Tabernacle was a copy and shadow of the heavenly temple of God. On the mountain God showed Moses the pattern according to which they were to build it (Ex.25:40, Acts 7:44). Aaron and his descendants ministered as priests in the Tabernacle and the Levites served in various duties. The Tabernacle was the place of God’s presence during the Israelites’ journey in the desert, and even after that. In the Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Testimony (Torah), or the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, i.e. the tablets of the Covenant, the golden jar of manna, and Aaron’s staff that had budded (Heb.9:1-7).

The Atonement Cover on top of the Ark is a picture of Yeshua who is the Atonement Cover of the New Covenant (Ex.25:16-22; Rom.3:23-25). When the Taber-
Solomon’s Temple

“In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the Lord... The foundation of the temple of the Lord was laid in the fourth year, in the month of Ziv. In the eleventh year in the month of Bul, the eighth month, the temple was finished in all its details according to its specifications. He had spent seven years building it” (1 Kings 6:1, 37-38, NIV).

The first temple in Jerusalem was built by Solomon, son of David (972-932 BC). The temple was built on Mount Moriah on which David had built an altar on the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sam.24:18-25; 1 Chron.21:18-26). Hiram, king of Tyre, helped Solomon by giving him materials and workmen for the building of the temple (1 Kings 5; 2Chron.2).

When the temple was finished in the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar, during Yom Kippur, and the tabernacle with all its furnishings and the Ark of the Covenant were brought into the temple, the cloud of the glory of the Lord filled the temple, and the priests could not enter to perform their service (1Kings 8:1-13; 2 Chron.5:1-14, 7:1-10). Solomon’s temple was one of the biggest and most sumptuous buildings in the world. This first Jerusalem temple served up to 586 BC, the year in which the forces of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon conquered, demolished the temple and took all its treasures as spoils of war to Babylon, and carried the people into exile for 70 years (2 Chron.36:11-21). All this happened because of the sin of the people and its leaders.

Zerubbabel’s Temple

“In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: ‘This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem, in Judah. Anyone of his people among you—may the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up’” (2 Chronicles 36:22-23, NIV).

“But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. No-one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away” (Ezra 3:12-13, NIV).

“So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began work on the house of the Lord Almighty, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius” (Haggai 1:14-15, NIV).

When the foundation of the temple was laid, the old people who had seen the splendour of Solomon’s temple wept, because the beginning of this second temple seemed very modest. The younger generation, who had not seen the splendid temple of Solomon, rejoiced at the day of small beginnings. The enemies of the Jews threatened them trying to stop the building of this second temple in Jerusalem. Through their opposition they succeeded in delaying the completion of the temple by many years (Ezra 4-5).

When Darius became king, he ordered the temple to be built (Ezra 6). Zerubbabel, the governor, was the head of the building project, and that is why this second temple is often called Zerubbabel’s temple. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah as well as Joshua the high priest (Hebrew OT Ye-hoshua, i.e.Yeshua) encouraged the Israelites to keep on working (Ezra 6:14; Hag.1:14). The temple was completed and dedicated in the sixth year of king Darius (in 516 BC; Ezra 6:15). (The message of the book of Haggai covers the prophetic happenings of the end time.)

Herod’s Temple

“Then the Jews demanded of him, ‘What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’ The Jews replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?’ But the temple he had spoken of was his body” (John 2:18-21, NIV).

“This is what the Lord Almighty says: In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory’, says the Lord Almighty. ‘The silver is mine and the gold is mine’, declares the Lord Almighty. The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house’, says the Lord Almighty. ‘And in this place I will grant peace’, declares the Lord Almighty’ (Haggai 2:6-9, NIV).

Herod’s temple is called the third temple in Jerusalem. As a matter of fact, it is not the third temple, but an enlarged and improved version of the so-called Zerubbabel’s temple. When the people in Zerubbabel’s days thought the present temple very modest compared to Solomon’s temple, God gave them a word of encouragement: “The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house.” This promise came to pass in the days of King Herod the Great, who gave the order to begin extension and restoration works in the year 20 BC. The whole temp-
le area was enlarged and made twice as big. The temple itself was built of white marble, and it surpassed the temple of Solomon in magnificence; God’s word of the later glory of Zerubbabel’s modest temple became true. The disciples of Yeshua also admired this temple they had seen being built during 46 years in their time (Matt.24:1-2).

The believers of the early church came to pray and worship in this temple, and the Apostle Paul brought there the offering related to his vow, as James and other elders of the early church in Jerusalem had advised him to do (Gal.5:3; Acts 2:46-47; 3:1-11; Numbers 6; Acts 18:18; 21:17-26; 24:17-18). Herod’s temple was finished in 64 AD, but it was demolished already in 70 AD by the Roman army, and that put the end to sacrifices.

“And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:5-6, 20-24, KJV).

Jews rose in rebellion against the supremacy of Rome, and the Roman army sieged Jerusalem for three years. During a lull in the siege the disciples fled to Pella, obeying Yeshua’s words in Matthew 24:15-20. Finally the city was taken by the Romans in the year 70, and Herod’s Temple was demolished just as Yeshua had predicted. According to Flavius Josephus over a million Jews were killed during those days and the rest were taken as prisoners to Rome, where they were sold as slaves.

A huge part of the temple’s treasures were taken to Rome as spoils of war, and these treasures, and Jewish slaves, helped to build e.g. the Colosseum, where Christians were executed and thrown to wild animals to eat. It is presumed that some of these looted treasures may be found in Vatican. It was Jerusalem’s destiny to be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled. Israel took possession of the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967, but the Temple Mount is still being trampled by followers of Islam, and “the Islamic abominations that cause desolation”, Al Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock, stand on the Temple Mount.

Church of God – Temple of the Holy Spirit

“What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said:’I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people’” (2 Cor.6:16, NIV).

“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple” (1 Cor.3:16-17, NIV).

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own...” (1 Cor. 6:19, NIV).

“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Acts 17:24-25, KJV).

When God told Moses to build the tabernacle, He already brought forth His desire to live in the hearts of people. The Apostle Paul said to the judges and philosophers at Areopagus in Athens, Greece, that God does
not live in hand-made temples. King Solomon also declared that even the highest heavens could not contain the Lord (1 Kings 8:27). Instead, God wants to live in the hearts of people. In the new covenant, which has no external temple in Jerusalem since 70 AD, the body of a believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God, and this temple must not be made unclean by sin.

The Church of God in its entirety is the holy temple of God of the New Covenant, and through His Spirit He dwells in every believer, Jew and Gentile alike. In the temple in Jerusalem there were pillars; there are pillars also in the temple of God in the New Covenant—the apostles (John 10:22-23; Rev.3:12; Gal. 2:9). In the Old Covenant Aaron and his descendants ministered as high priests and priests. In the New Covenant Yeshua the Messiah is our High Priest and the believers are the holy priesthood (Heb.7:10-28;1 Peter2:4-10; Rev.5:5-10; 20:1-6). In the New Covenant God’s commandments (Torah) teaching, instructions are no longer in tablets of stone; they have been written on the hearts of believers. (Jer. 31:31-37).

“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 neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest” (Hebrews 8:10-11, KJV).

The Temple in Messiah’s Kingdom

“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee.

And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again” (Zechariah 2:10-12,KJV).

“The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 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. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4, KJV).

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed. And I saw thrones: and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:1-6, KJV).

After the judgements of the end time, the Messiah’s milennial Kingdom of Peace will be established, and Yeshua will reign with His resurrected saints (Isa.9:5-6; 13:9-13; Isa 11; Isa 24; Isa 65). The third temple will be built in Jerusalem, and nations will come up there to hear the teaching of God’s Torah and the Lord’s Word. The survivors of the nations will come up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and to bow down before the Lord of Hosts (Zech.14:16-19). The remnant of the people of Israel has accepted Yeshua as their Saviour in the tribulations of the end time, and they minister as a people of priests in Messiah’s Kingdom, in their original calling (Ex.19:1-6; Zech.12; Rom. 11:25-29; Isa.62:4-6).

In addition to Isaiah, Micah also speaks about the temple of Messiah’s Kingdom (Micah 4:1-4). Joel says that there will be a fountain flowing from the Lord’s house (Joel 3:18). Zechariah prophesies that these waters coming from under the threshold of the temple will flow towards the east, the Salt Sea, and towards the western sea, the Mediterranean (Zech.14:8). Ezekiel also says that from under the threshold of the Temple in Jerusalem flows water toward the east, and when it reaches the Salt Sea, i.e. the Dead Sea, the salty water of the sea will become fresh and the sea will be full of fish of many kinds to be caught (Ezekiel 47).

In the final chapters 40-48 of Ezekiel’s book, we read about the measuring of the different parts of the third temple in Jerusalem, the worship in the temple, and the division of the land of Israel among the tribes. The city will get a new name, “The Lord is there” (Eze.48:35). It will have this name because Yeshua the Messiah will live among His people in Zion, i.e. in Jerusalem, as Zechariah says. There are scholars who propose that the temple Ezekiel saw was not the temple of God, but the temple of Antichrist of the anti-Christian age, the abomination that causes desolation in a holy site. The temple Ezekiel saw cannot be this abomination, because it will not be built by Israelis but by Israel’s enemies who will attack Israel (Dan.9:26-27; 11:31). There is still another reason why the temple Ezekiel saw cannot be Antichrist’s temple—the glory of God fills the temple.

“Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east:And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house. And I heard him speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me. And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcases of their kings in their high places” (Ezekiel 43:1-7,KJV).

During the days of Judah’s exile, Ezekiel saw how the glory of the Lord left the city and the temple the way of the east because of the sins of the people and its leaders (Eze.11:1, 22-23).

The glory of the God of Israel, Yeshua the Messiah, entering the temple through the gate facing east, will fill the Temple of Messiah’s Millennial Kingdom in Jerusalem. Then this gate will remain closed, and no one is al-
lowed to enter the temple area through it (Eze.44:1-3). Some believe that the glory of the Messiah will enter the millennial temple in Jerusalem through the present eastern gate called the Golden Gate. In front of this gate there is a Muslim cemetery, and it is presumed that the Messiah couldn’t enter the temple through that gate because He would become unclean because of the cemetery; thus the Jewish Messiah’s return to the temple would be averted. However, it is very unlikely that the golden gate and the wall Ottomans built around the old city in the 16th century would still be erect when the Messiah’s glory enters the temple. According to biblical prophecies Jerusalem, Israel, and the entire world will undergo a huge geological turmoil in the end time, which makes it hardly probable for the present walls and gates to remain untouched.

“...This is what will happen in that day; When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused, declares the Sovereign Lord. In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground” (Ezekiel 38:18-20. NIV).

“Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found” (Revelation 16:20, NIV).

“How the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee” (Zechariah 14:1-5, KJV).

In the turmoil, wars, and judgements of the end time, in the days of the coming of the Messiah, enormous geological quake will hit Israel and the whole earth (Isa.13:9-13; Hag.2:21-22; Heb.12:26). When the Messiah’s feet touch the Mount of Olives, it will be split in two forming a large valley. The Muslim “abominations that cause desolation”, The Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa, will fall into the ravine and be destroyed (Dan.11:31; Matt.24:15), and will no longer be an obstacle for the building of the third temple in Jerusalem in Messiah’s Kingdom. The earthquake will also cause all the walls to fall down. This will not only happen in Israel, but the whole world will experience the falling down of all mountains, so that the earth will be rather flat (Isa. 40:4-5; 64:1-3; Hab.3:1-10; Rev.6:14).

Mount Zion in Jerusalem, in the Kingdom of the Messiah, will be the highest mountain on earth, and the nations will come up to the temple built on Mount Zion to hear the teaching of the Torah and the Word of God. In the Messiah’s Kingdom the city of Jerusalem will be on the southern side of the mountain (Eze.40:1-2). Because of the radical geological changes there will be place enough both to the city and to the temple.

Let us consider the popular interpretation of the Jerusalem temple of the anti-Christian age with its animal sacrifices of Old Covenant times, where the Antichrist enters, stops the sacrifice and offering, declares to be god, and breaks his seven year covenant with Israel. This understanding is mainly based in two Bible passages which I believe to be wrongly interpreted: Daniel 9:27 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-9.

Many commentators, especially Messianic commentators, have understood that Daniel’s prophecy came true, when the Messiah cut a new covenant through His death and blood shed on the cross, through which sacrifice animal sacrifices and other sacrifices lost their atoning purpose and function and ceased (Heb. 9:10).

As for the passage in the letter to the Thessalonians, it can be understood as having come true and coming true in the Roman Church, where the pope has been made Christ’s vicar in the church of God, that is, in the temple of God in the New Covenant. (Antichrist, according to the original Greek text, means Christ’s vicar or representative, and, at the same time, Christ’s opponent. The text in the pope’s tiara says “Vicarius Filii Dei”, which means: God’s Son’s vicar or representati- ve; 1 John 2:18-19.) It is, therefore, very unlikely that the temple will be built in Antichrist’s age, although there are in Jerusalem and Israel organizations, such as the Temple Institute, which work to make it happen. It is more probable that the third temple will not be built in Jerusalem until at the beginning of Messiah’s Kingdom.

What about the sacrifices in the temple of Jerusalem in Messiah’s Kingdom Ezekiel and Zechariah write about (Eze.45:46; Zech.14:20-21)? Is it possible, in the Kingdom of the Messiah, to offer animal sacrifices in compliance with the Old Covenant? Didn’t Yeshua annul them with His sacrifice on the cross (Heb.9:10)? Some people disregard Ezekiel’s description as untrue. But according to many respected Bible scholars the Bible must be taken literally as it is written also regarding this passage.

It is dangerous to invalidate the Word of God and make it suit our ways of thinking. As I understand it, there are two ways of interpreting the sacrifices. We can think that the descriptions of sacrifices are symbolic, and that the prophet is referring to Yeshua’s sacrifice. Or then we can take them as being actual sacrifices which do not have any redemptive or atoning value. In the Hebrew language there is the word “chet” which means both ‘sin’ and ‘sin offering’.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians that God made the Messiah who had no sin to be sin for us (2 Cor.5:21). I believe the translators have chosen here the wrong word for the word “chet”; instead of “was made to be sin for us” they should have translated “was made to be sin offering for us”. When we speak about the sin offerings in Ezekiel’s description of the temple, we can understand it to mean that the “sin offering” Messiah became on the cross at Calvary is presented for salvation for everyone who wants to believe in Yeshua and follow His teachings and commandments. Eventually we will know the meaning of those sacrifices. One thing is certain, though, the Bible will become true to the last letter, and this includes also what relates to the issue of the temple. Time will show us the details.

In the temple that Ezekiel saw, the Levites, righteous descendants of Zadok (Hebrew Tzadik = righteous), who have remained faithful to God, minister as priests (Eze.44:6-16). Those Levites who had not been faithful but had mislead the people were given other duties in the temple, but they had no right to minister as priests. By this we understand that descendants of the “Righteous” Yeshua, Messianic Levites, who believe in Him, may minister as priests. It seems as though
in them be combined Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Melchizedek of believers of the New Covenant (Heb. 7:9-28).

Isaiah lets us understand that believers of other nations will also minister as priests and Levites in Messiah’s Kingdom (Isa. 66:18-21).

Temple of a New Heaven and a New Earth

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:1-7, 22-27, KJV).

When the thousand years of Messiah’s Kingdom are over, Satan and his troops will be released from their imprisonment, and he will go out to stir up the nations, Gog and Magog, to the final rebellion against God, Jerusalem and the camp of the saints (Isa. 24:21-23; Rev. 20:7-15). Fire will fall from heaven and devour the enemies of God; it will be the end of this world as the old earth will pass away.

After the last judgment, where Yeshua is the judge and His saints “assist” Him, God will create a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness reigns (John 5:22, 27-29; 1 Cor. 6:1-7; 2 Pet. 3:10-14). The heavenly new Jerusalem will descend on the new earth, and it will be the eternal seat of government of God, the Lamb, and the saints. There will be no moon nor does it need the sun, because the glory of God will be its light and the Lamb will be its lamp (Ps. 72:7). There will be no temple in the new Jerusalem, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

That is when God’s salvation plan, known before the creation of the world, will have its ultimate and eternal fulfillment (1 Pet. 1:17-21; Rev. 13:8).

That is when God’s saints, those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, those who have received in faith the salvation in Yeshua the Messiah and followed Him obedient to His word and commandments, will live eternally in the new world, in the ultimate eternal Kingdom of God. It will be eternal righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, and full of love (Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 13:13; 1 John 4:8).

That is when we will live forever in the Temple of God, in the glorious presence of God and the Messiah. We are all invited to this glory of that new world through Yeshua the Messiah.
Prophetic Perspectives
Signs of the Coming of the Messiah - part V

Written by:
Keijo Lindeman

The faithful servant and the wicked servant

“For we know in part and we prophesy in part” (1 Cor. 13:9).

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time’ and he then begins to beat his fellow-servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’ (Matthew 24:42-51).

When Yeshua talked about his Coming, he admonished us to keep watch, because we do not know at what time of night the Son of Man comes. He also tells about a faithful servant, who takes care of His household giving them their food at the proper time. This faithful servant will be put in charge of all of his Lord’s possessions. But the wicked servant says in his heart: “My Lord will not come for a long time”, and he starts to beat his fellow-servants and eat and drink with drunkards. The wicked servant has not the stamina to wait patiently and faithfully for his Lord’s return nor follow His orders. This wicked servant will be caught unaware at the Coming of his Lord and he will end up in a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. We will consider now briefly these words Yeshua speaks about the faithful servant and the wicked servant.

The called, the chosen and the faithful

“For many are invited, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14).

“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers” (Revelation 17:12-14).

“So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful” (1 Cor.4:1-2).

“My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me” (Psalm 101:6).

Faithfulness is an extremely important quality in social and working life. An employee who cannot be trusted and who does his work and tasks indifferently and carelessly will not have his employer’s favour. An employee who is committed to his work seeks to perform the tasks given to him trustworthily, diligently, and carefully. He is the kind of employee one can trust, and normally he also rises to more responsible and important duties in his career.
The same applies to the Kingdom of God. Many have been called, but few have been chosen, for one reason or another. We could add that even fewer have been found faithful. Faithfulness is such a crucial quality in Kingdom ministry that the eyes of the Lord travel up and down the earth to find those who are faithful. Salvation comes to all people only by grace, by faith, but God would want us also to be faithful and wise servants. He can trust and use in His Kingdom’s business (Rom.3:23-24; Eph.2:8). Faithfulness is what is needed especially in the end times when the beast of Revelation 17, backed up by Babylon the harlot and Rome, seeks to deceive the world with his false gospel. That is the time the army of the Messiah needs those who preach the genuine, original Gospel of the truth of God’s Word in spite of persecuti on and opposition. 

Milk, solid food, and God’s secrets

“Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Peter 2:1-2).

“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mercenaries of Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, ‘I follow Paul’, and another, ‘I follow Apollos’, are you not mere men?” (1 Cor.3:1-4).

“Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her, rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her: For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts; you will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance” (Isaiah 66:10-11).

“The law (Hebrew torah= teaching, instructions, law) will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3).

“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil” (Hebrews 5:11-14).

“We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory in the end times when the beast of Revelation 17, backed up by Babylon the harlot and Rome, seeks to deceive the world with his false gospel. That is the time the army of the Messiah needs those who preach the genuine, original Gospel of the truth of God’s Word in spite of persecution and opposition.

The Holy Scriptures have been entrusted to Israel and to Messianic believers in particular (Ps.147:19-20; Rom.3:1-2). The genuine teaching and living in faith of the Apostolic Early Church, which started from Mount Zion and Jerusalem, is this pure spiritual milk of the Word we drink from mother Jerusalem’s breasts. No substitutes of Babylon the harlot have been mixed into it, nor any poisons, such as paganism or unbiblical traditions that undo the truth of God’s Word or corrupt it (Matt.15:1-14; Col.2:22-23). In the end times, as the faling away from God’s ways is increasing, people let go from the truth of God’s Word, and milk mixed by the poison of Babylon the great is given for people to drink (Rev.17:18).

Spiritual infants, like the believers of Corinth, need also milk. In the Corinthian church all spiritual gifts were working, but they were still worldly and spiritually under- age, because they were quarrelling and taking sides, and the spirit of division had overcome the church (1 Cor.1.7, 10-13). This was the reason they were not able to take in solid food of the Word, but only milk of elementary truths of the gospel (Heb.6:1-3). God’s Word’s solid food is for the spiritually mature who have been trained to discern good from evil, and can take the Word’s solid food without quarrel, battle, or desire for division.

God’s secret wisdom is spoken among the mature, those who are no longer tossed about by various winds of teaching and deception (1 Cor.2:6-7). They have attained spiritual fulness in Messiah. They are no longer bound by dogmatic quarrels, but they live by the truth of God’s Word in love. They will be tied by bonds of love to Messiah, the Head the one undivided body of believers, and to their fellow-believers, without fences. They are building one army of believers, one church, the body of Messiah, with no separating walls.

The faithful and wise servants of God will give food faithfully, at the right time and the right way, to the household of God’s Kingdom until the Coming of the Lord, and there will be no quarreling and no beating. They will not separate believers from one another, they do not build fenced-in areas nor will they beat nor despise other servants of God. They will feed with genuine Word of Truth all believers without distinction, doing this in love, admonishing them to keep watch and wait for the Lord’s Coming. The Lord’s Coming may come as a surprise even to the faithful servants, for “the Sun of man will come at an hour when you do not expect him”, but nothing bad will happen to them because they have been faithful and they are prepared. They are blessed because they will be put in charge of all
the possessions of the Lord according to their faithfulness.

The Coming of the Lord will surprise the wicked servants

“But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time’, and he then begins to beat his fellow-servants and to eat and drink with drunkards...’” (Matthew 24:48-49).

“For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night” (1 Tess. 5:2, 6-7).

“One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me: Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead: Mystery Babylon the great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth. I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus” (Revelation 17:1-2, 5-6).

Wicked servants say in their hearts that “my master is staying away a long time”. Their Christian life shrinks to the lukewarmness of the church in Laodicea (Rev.3:14-22). They eat and drink with drunkards. This may not refer just to those who get drunk with alcohol, but to the intoxicating teachings and distorted gospel of Babylon the great managed from Rome (2 Cor.11:1-4, 13-15; 4:1-4). Wicked servants start to beat and persecute other servants of the Lord who stay true and faithful to God’s Word. Modern social media and internet have become the battlefield of judgmental people who slander and throw dirt to fellow-Christians. Some consider themselves unfailible “popes”, the only ones with the right knowledge and interpretation of all things, although the Bible says that “we know in part and we prophesy in part” (1 Cor.13:9). The Lord’s Day and the Lord’s Coming will take these wicked servants by surprise, and their destiny will be horrible (Matt.13:41-42).

It is important that we do not start beating and slandering other servants of the Lord from wrong motives, even if we do not always agree in all issues and interpretations concerning the Word. (Heresies are a case apart, we have to warn people of them. But we had better not be engaged in futile disputes which do not build up nor honour the church of the Lord. Titus 3:9-11; 2 Tim.2:23-26). Every servant of God will stand or fall before his Lord, and the Lord Himself will discipline His servants (Rom.14:4; Luke 12:47-48; Heb.12).

We have no right to judge or despise other servants of the Lord (Jakob 4:12; 5:9). Let us seek to be faithful servants in order to get the reward of faithful servants.

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