

# An Ancient People



## for Modern Times

### A Biblical Overview of Israel and the Jewish People

(Circa 1813BC - Kingdom Come)

## Israel in World History

### Of the Promises:

Prior even to the founding of Israel as a nation (Deut. 4:37), the patriarchs, beginning with Abraham, were brought into an everlasting and unconditional covenant relationship with God (Gen. 17:7-8, 19).



The promises given to Abraham were to make from him "a great nation", to give his descendants a land and through them to be a blessing to the whole earth (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:15-17). Scripture makes it clear that the covenant containing these promises was totally one-sided; instituted and maintained by God alone (Gen. 15:12-21).

This 'Abrahamic' Covenant was later confirmed to Isaac<sup>2</sup> (the son of Sarah, not the son of Hagar) (Gen. 28:3-4) and subsequently to his son Jacob (but not Esau) (Gen. 28:13-15).

Perhaps the most concise summary of the above is contained in the book of Psalms where the psalmist wrote:

*"He remembers His covenant for ever, the word He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant He made with Abraham, the oath He swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit." (Psalm 105: 8-11).*

So in the space of these four short verses, the psalmist speaks of God:

*"remembering ...for ever ... the word He commanded ... the covenant He made...the oath He swore... confirmed as a decree... as an everlasting covenant."*

*"If we cannot trust God to honour His ancient covenants to the Jews, then we cannot trust in the promise of the New Covenant for our salvation."*

### Of the Nation and the People:



The Jewish nation was formed through and out of the exile from Egypt. The word of God tells us that in their 'choosing' they were (and are) 'God's choice'; and thus so for no other reason (Deut. 7:7-8).

In relation to their numbers, the Jewish people have brought immeasurable benefits to the world as a whole with 22% of Nobel Prize winners coming from a people who represent a mere 0.6% of the world's population. But they are only 'special' because God has chosen them as a vehicle for His purposes, saying: "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God" (Deut. 14:2). God has chosen the Jews (1 Ch. 16:13) to "be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6).

### Of the Land:

Though God has promised and given it to them, the 'land' of Israel does not in fact belong to the Jews.

But neither does it belong to the Palestinians, nor the United Nations. God calls the land "My land" (1 Sam. 14:25; Joel 1:6). Indeed Scripture tells us that God has previously "spoken against the rest of the nations...for with glee and with malice in their hearts they made my land their own possession.." (Ezek. 38:5).

Furthermore the Almighty is going to bring further judgement on the nations "for they scattered My people among the nations and divided up My land" (Joel 3:2).

### Of the City:

Of Jerusalem (Yerushalayim) God said to King David and his son Solomon: "In this temple and in Jerusalem ... I will put My Name forever" (2 Chron. 33:7). In Middle-eastern culture one's name embodies the very character and essence of the person. And God has stated: "But now I have chosen Jerusalem for My Name to be there.." (2 Chron. 6:6).

King Darius decreed: "May God, who has caused His Name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to change this decree or to destroy this temple in Jerusalem." (Ezra 6:12).



Ezekiel declared God's word: "This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the centre of the nations, with countries all around her" (Ezek. 5:5).

### Of Israel's enemies:

Anti-Semitism is the world's oldest and most enduring form of racial hatred. It can only be really understood and explained from a spiritual standpoint.



**They say:** "Come...let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more."

(Psalm 83:4)

**But God has said:** "In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and ...I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land" (Joel 3:1-2).

### Of the Prophecies:

The Bible describes sixteen major prophecies concerning the whole history of the Jewish people<sup>3</sup>.

Twelve of these prophecies have been fulfilled: two are in the process of being fulfilled, and the final two will surely be fulfilled.

*The status – past, present and future – of the land of Israel and the Jewish people is determined by God and His Word as contained in the Bible – comprising the Old and New Testaments (Covenants).*

### Already fulfilled:

1. Enslavement in Egypt (Gen. 15:14)
2. Deliverance from Egypt (Gen. 15:14)
3. Possession of the land of Canaan (Gen. 15:18-20)
4. Turning to idolatry there (Deut. 32:15-21)
5. Centre of worship in Jerusalem - (Deut. 12:5-8; Ezra 6:12; Psalm 102:21; 132:13-14)
6. Assyrian captivity (Amos 5:27; 6:14; 7:17)
7. Babylonian captivity (Jer. 16:13; 21:10)
8. Destruction of the first temple (2 Chron. 7:19-22)
9. Return from Babylon (Isa. 6:11-13; Isa. 48:20)
10. Destruction of the 2nd temple - (Matt. 24:2; Luke 19:43-44)
11. Scattering among all nations - (Lev. 26:33-34; Ezek. 12:15)
12. Persecution/oppression among all nations - (Lev. 26:36-39)

### Being fulfilled:

13. Regathering from all nations - (Isa. 11:11-12; Ezek. 38:8; Zech. 10:9-10) and increasingly
14. All nations gathered against Jerusalem - (Zech. 12:2-3; 14:1-2; Joel 3:2)

### Yet to be fulfilled:

15. Supernatural revelation of Jesus the Messiah (Yeshua Ha Mashiach) (Jer. 31:34; Zech. 12:10-14; 13:1)
16. Jesus Christ comes in glory (Zech. 14:3-9; Rom 11:12, 28)

### Concerning the people and the land, the Bible tells us:



1. The ten northern tribes which were overrun and taken away into captivity in 722BC have not disappeared - (Isa. 11:12-13; Ezek 37:21-22; James 1:1).
2. The twelve-tribed nation still exists:
  - **spiritually** (Jer. 31:33; Jer. 32:39; Ezek 37:5),
  - **ethnically** (Hos. 1:11; James 1:1) and
  - **geo-politically** (Isa. 43:5-6; Jer. 32:37; Ezek. 37:12-14)
3. The return from the Babylonian captivity was not the later (second) and comprehensive re-gathering outlined in Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 11:11-12; 43:6).
4. All the promises to, and the prophecies regarding the Jewish people still stand (Num. 23:19; Rom. 11:29).
5. Every mention of Israel in the Old Testament is primarily addressed to Israel and the Jews.
6. Every mention of Israel in the New Testament refers to 'Israel' and not 'the church'.
7. God will yet be glorified amongst the nations through the Jewish people living in the land (Ezek. 36:23-28).

### End notes:

- (1) See also Genesis 9:16 for another example of an unconditional covenant.
- (2) In spite of Ishmael's birth, God referred to Isaac as him being Abraham's only son (Gen. 22:2).
- (3) The greatest of all prophecies are those foretelling the birth, death, resurrection and coming again of the Jewish Messiah - Yeshua ha Mashiach: the ultimate saviour of the Jewish remnant and the redeemed in the world (Gen. 3:15; Micah 5:2; Is. 9:6-7).

God, through His ancient prophets, foretold the complete history of the Jews as His 'Chosen People', and of Israel, which the Almighty calls "My Land".

The modern re-born nation of Israel and the Jewish people are at the epicentre of God's declared purposes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and accordingly a principal target of His arch enemy.



To understand – in any significant manner – God's purposes in today's church and in our modern world, requires a knowledge of the Bible with respect to the references and material in this modest publication.

JERUSALEM AT THE TIME OF THE SECOND TEMPLE

**"I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord.**

*I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land."*

Ezekiel 37:12-13

**"When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will show myself holy through them in the sight of many nations.**

*I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD."*

Ezekiel 39:27,29