

END-TIMES ISSUES

#13 Israel, existing because of God's grace.

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>> Does Israel have a right to exist? <<

⇒ Many people today say "no."
(And the number of people saying this is increasing.)

★ BUT WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE TELL US? ★

The answer – whatever it may be – has many potential implications related to end-time prophecies, and what we can expect (now and then).

Our goal:

Attempt to understand the issues, so that our conclusion is not an expression of mere opinion, based on preconceived notions, or based on a few "proof texts" torn out of context.

↻ Our focus on Israel's past is a part of the "puzzle" that people often ignore. ↻

It was not Israel's idea to go to Canaan, destroy the people, and take over the land!

- They were slaves in Egypt, not capable of doing something like that!

Mr. Pharaoh king, would you mind if we take off for a few days, so we can go and kill some Canaanites?

- It was God's idea!

Then the LORD told [Moses], "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. ... So I **have come down to rescue them** from the power of the Egyptians and **lead them** out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live.

Exodus 3:7a, 8 (NLT)

⇒ Even if they had *wanted* to go to **Canaan**, and had tried to take over the land, their chance of success would have been **ZERO**.

WE (Israel)	THEY (Canaanites)
Weak	Strong
Typical height	Giants
Few	Many
Wandering tribes	Well-fortified cities
Etc.	Etc.

(We saw this last time.)

WE WILL WIN!

⇒ It would have been like grasshoppers trying to attack a truck windshield.

THEY'RE ABOUT TO LEARN THE MEANING OF THE WORD "SPLATTER"!

⇒ But it was no different than when they left **Egypt!** The chances of them winning against the entire Egyptian army was **ZERO**.

THE COMMON FACTOR IN EGYPT AND CANAAN:

- In both cases, Israel's chance of success was **ZERO**.

★ But when you add the "God factor," their chance of success zooms all the way up to **100%**!

⇒ What God did for Israel was totally unheard of, since the day of Creation!

- In Egypt, the Jews won without even fighting!

THIS IS WHAT WE WOULD HAVE EXPECTED.

COME AND WATCH

The Battle of the Century!!

PAYBACK TIME!

BLOODBATH at the RED SEA!!!

The entire Egyptian army fighting against A bunch of Jewish slaves

Watch with pleasure as the Egyptian army totally massacres the renegade Jewish slaves! No sympathy... just sweet revenge! Remember all the harm they've caused us!!

⇒ Israel's greatest sin was ignoring the "God factor"! When they did this, their chances of survival plummeted back down to ZERO.

⇒ With ZERO chance of survival, the thought of confronting the Canaanites brought panic. They even wanted to go back to slavery in Egypt!

"Why is the LORD taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn't it be better for us to return to Egypt?"

"Let's choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!"

Numbers 14:3, 4b (NLT)

- This was a complete distrust in the God who had miraculously led them out of Egypt and had taken care of them the entire time they were in the desert!

BACK TO EGYPT? WHAT A STUPID IDEA!

Do you think the Egyptians would have welcomed them back, without getting revenge for what happened to the Egyptian army, as well as for all the devastation and plagues, they experienced??

⇒ God had to punish them.
Even so...
 ⇒ God had called them to go to the land of Canaan, and he would not "un-call" them.

"Go to the hill country of the Amorites and to all the neighboring regions—the Jordan Valley, the hill country, the western foothills, the Negev, and the coastal plain. Go to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, and all the way to the great Euphrates River. Look, I am giving all this land to you! Go in and occupy it, for it is the land the LORD swore to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to all their descendants."
 Deuteronomy 1:7b-8 (NLT)

- This is what God originally told them.
- 38 years later (when they finally *did* trust and obey God), the calling was still the same! God never did "un-call" them!

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⇒ Many years later, the Apostle Paul – while explaining Israel's past, present and future – would say this about God and Israel:

Regarding the gospel, they are enemies on your account; but regarding election, they are loved on account of the patriarchs.
 Romans 11:28 (BSB)

- **From the perspective of the Good News:** They are "enemies" – but it is providing an opportunity for non-Jews to be saved.
Even so...
- **From the perspective of God's election/choosing:** They are "loved" – specifically because of the promises God had made to their ancestors (the "patriarchs"). **WHY?**

For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable.
 Romans 11:29 (BSB)

ABOUT GOD'S GIFTS AND CALL TO ISRAEL.

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For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable.
 Romans 11:29 (BSB)

- **GOD'S GIFTS:** Here are some of the gifts that Israel has received:

What, then, is the advantage of being a Jew? ... First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.
 Romans 3:1a, 2b (BSB)

They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's adopted children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them his law. He gave them the privilege of worshipping him and receiving his wonderful promises. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are their ancestors, and Christ himself was an Israelite as far as his human nature is concerned.
 Romans 9:4-5a (NLT)

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For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable.
 Romans 11:29 (BSB)

- **GOD'S CALL:** We've been looking at this issue. Here is Moses' description of it – and also the reason for it:

You are a holy people, who belong to the Lord your God. He chose you to be his own special possession out of all the nations on earth. The Lord set his heart on you and chose you, ... You were chosen because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors. So he used his mighty hand to bring you out. He freed you from slavery under Pharaoh (the king of Egypt).
 Deuteronomy 7:6-7a, 8 (GW)

>> **An often-repeated theme:** God chose to love them, because of the promise (oath) he had made to their ancestors.

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- **ALL THIS...** given to a nation that was in nearly constant rebellion against God, full of sin and idolatry. As Moses said:

I know how rebellious you are. You are impossible to deal with. While I am alive and still with you, you are rebelling against the Lord. How much more rebellious will you be after I die?
 Deuteronomy 31:27 (GW)

★★ This is an expression of GRACE! ★★

NOTE: Our focus here is on the nation. There have always been individuals who followed God – though the nation normally didn't. This is illustrated in 1 Kings 19:18, after Elijah has complained that he was the only one left who followed God:

"I still have 7000 people in Israel who have never bowed down to Baal or kissed that idol."
 1 Kings 19:18 (ERV)

(Also by grace.)

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★★ GRACE! ★★

- An expression of God's undeserved and unearned favor or kindness.
- We often find this word in the New Testament, but NOT very often in the Old Testament. This is because the Old Testament:
 - ✓ Has a different focus (= not about Jesus and what he has done).
 - ✓ Was written in a different language – and the "grace" concept tends to be translated as "kindness" or "favor," instead of "grace."
 - ✓ Even so...

★★ The concept of GRACE (if not the word itself) permeates much of the Old Testament! ★★

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There are so many ways that God's undeserved kindness can be seen in the Old Testament!

(There is no possible way we could include them all; but here are a few examples.)

❖ **GRACE – undeserved kindness – can be seen all the way back to Genesis 3 (if not even before that).**

- Instead of immediately *killing* Adam and Eve for their sin (*physically*, since they were already dead *spiritually*), God promises a future "seed of the woman," who would have victory over the serpent. (We learn, many centuries later, that the ultimate fulfillment of this promise was in Christ Jesus.)

"He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Genesis 3:15b (BSB)

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❖ **GRACE – undeserved kindness – can be seen in God's call of Abraham.**

- Abraham was from a land of *idol* worshippers! He didn't deserve the opportunity to trust God! Yet by grace he was given a promise that he didn't deserve.
- In Joshua 24, God reminds Israel of his *many* expressions of grace throughout their history. This is what he says about Abraham:

Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the Lord God of Israel says: Long ago your ancestors, Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor, lived on the other side of the Euphrates River and **served other gods**. But **I took your ancestor Abraham** from the other side of the Euphrates River. **I led him** through all of Canaan and gave him many descendants."

Joshua 24:2-3a (GW)

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- God made a promise to Abraham; Abraham trusted God, *without knowing all the details*. Yet it was *God* who took the initiative to make the offer. This is an expression of grace!

Then **the LORD said** to Abram, * "Leave your country, your kindred, and your father's household, and go to the land **I will** show you.

I will make you into a great nation, and **I will** bless you; **I will** make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you; and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you."

So Abram departed, as **the LORD had directed him**, ...

Genesis 12:1-4a (BSB)

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though **he did not know where he was going**.

Hebrews 11:8 (NIV)

* ("Abram" is Abraham's original name.)

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❖ **GRACE – undeserved kindness – can be seen throughout Israel's history... and even into the present (and future).**

- God did not give Israel the land of Canaan because they *deserved* it. (For example, see Deuteronomy 9:4-6.) Instead, it was for *other* reasons that God gave it to them, not because of *themselves*.

- ✓ One reason was the wickedness of the Canaanites.
- ✓ *The main reason*, emphasized in both Old and New Testaments, was the promise that God had made to Israel's ancestors.

- For the nation of Israel, this was an expression of grace.

① "... it is because of **the wickedness of the other nations** that he is pushing them out of your way. ...

② The LORD your God will drive these nations out ahead of you only because of their wickedness, and **to fulfill the oath he swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**."

Deuteronomy 9:4b, 5b (NLT)

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- Another example is **the New Covenant** that God has made with Israel, which changes people's hearts and minds. (So far, most Jews have refused it; so God has also offered it to non-Jews.)
- Moses foretold that this change in covenants would someday occur (Deuteronomy 30:6); Jeremiah (and other prophets) gave more details (Jeremiah 31:31-34); Jesus accomplished it (Hebrews chapters 8–10; Mark 14:24; etc.). This is an expression of grace!

For this is **the covenant I will make** with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put My laws in their minds and inscribe them on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they will be My people. ...

Hebrews 8:10 (BSB); quoting Jeremiah 31:33

[You have come] to Jesus the mediator of **a new covenant**, ...

Hebrews 12:24a (BSB)

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❖ **GRACE – undeserved kindness – can even be seen in God's judgment of the Canaanites!** (This includes the Amorites.)

- In Abraham's day, *they weren't wicked enough to deserve being destroyed*. God put off destroying them for as long as possible!

Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants ... will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years [= in Egypt]. ... In the fourth generation your descendants will return here [= Canaan], for **the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its limit**."

Genesis 15:13, 16 (NET)

From the time Abraham was told this, to the time Israel entered Canaan, it was over 600 years! [400 years in Egypt + the lifetimes of their ancestors, back to Abraham. Plus (as Israel was being judged for refusing to enter the land of Canaan) a "bonus" of 38 extra years, when they had a final opportunity to repent – which they didn't do.]

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What can we conclude?

❖ We – the saved in the "New Testament era" – aren't the only ones to experience God's grace!

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by **grace** you have been saved.

Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV); see also v. 8-10.

- God's grace is expressed in different ways to different people, in different circumstances. But it is *all* from the same God; and it is *all* equally undeserved!
- We can learn and be encouraged from God's kindness (*grace*) to Israel. Not only were *individuals* saved; but God's grace was seen in his mighty works for the *nation*. Some of those works (expressions of *grace*) have *no match in all of creation!*
- Consider what God said to Israel, about his works... →

CONSIDER GOD'S MIGHTY WORKS!

★ EXPRESSIONS OF GRACE! ★

NO other god can match what the God of Israel has done!

Search the distant past, long before your time. Start from the very day God created people on earth. **Search** from one end of heaven to the other. **Has anything as great as this ever happened before, or has anything like it ever been heard of?**

- ⇒ Have any {other} people ever heard God speak from a fire and lived? **You did!**
- ⇒ Or has any god ever tried to come and take one nation away from another for himself?

The Lord your God used his mighty hand and powerful arm to do this for you in Egypt. **He did** this using plagues, miraculous signs, amazing things, and war. **He did** his great and awe-inspiring deeds in front of you.

Deuteronomy 4:32-34 (GW)

WE CAN BE ENCOURAGED BY HIS WORKS OF GRACE; FOR HE DOES THEM FOR A MIGHTY PURPOSE!

It's NOT just to impress or entertain people!

You were shown these things so that you would know that the Lord is God. There is no other god.

He let you hear his voice from heaven **so that** he could instruct you. He showed you his great fire on earth, and you heard him speak from the column of fire. "So that" indicates **purpose**.

Because he loved your ancestors and chose their descendants, he was with you as he brought you out of Egypt by his great power.

He forced nations greater and stronger than you out of your way to bring you into their land and give it to you. This land is your own possession today.

Deuteronomy 4:35-38 (GW)

At this point in time, they possessed the land **east** of the Jordan River.

EVEN TODAY, HIS EXPRESSION OF GRACE IN OUR LIVES IS DONE FOR A MIGHTY PURPOSE!

For [God] chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—**to the praise of his glorious grace**, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Ephesians 1:4-6 (NIV)

Even when we are weak, God reminds us...

"My **grace is sufficient for you**, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

2 Corinthians 12:9b (NIV)

>> Does Israel have a right to exist? <<

⇒ **As long as God's promises and grace exist!**

★ **Israel exists...** ★

- **Because of** God's **grace** – his undeserved kindness.
- **Because of** God's **promises** – to their ancestors (not to them).
- **In spite of** the nation's ongoing sins and the people's rebellious hearts.

Under the New Covenant...

The hearts of many Jews are being changed. God has also opened the door of salvation (and changed hearts) for we who are *not* Jews!

OUR MISSION?

Reflect on God's expressions of *grace* throughout history, and realize that the *same powerful grace* is at work in our lives!

Credits

SCRIPTURE

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