

# END-TIMES ISSUES

**#14** Modern Israel – a fulfillment of prophecy? (1)

A  
N  
D  
  
B  
E  
Y  
O  
N  
D  
!

## >> What about modern-day Israel? <<

⇒ In the Old Testament, there are many prophecies that appear to relate to Israel's future:

- ✓ being exiled from the land (because of their sin),
- ✓ repentance and being brought back to the land;
- ✓ also, that this will be a permanent return.

**Our question is:**

### ★ IS MODERN-DAY ISRAEL A FULFILLMENT OF ANY OF THESE PROPHECIES? ★

There is a lot implied by this question, as well as a lot assumed.

➡ If we want to *accurately* evaluate this question, we need to first look at some background issues. ⬅

### First of all, what does the Bible say about Israel's future?

The best way to find out is to read what the Old Testament prophets say. See for yourself! We will look at a few randomly-selected passages that seem to say something about Israel's future; but many more exist!

**What does Moses say?**

⇒ In several passages, Moses describes:

- 1) **Blessings** for being loyal to the God of Israel;
- 2) **Curses** for abandoning the true God and turning to the gods of the surrounding nations. (In some passages, the consequences are described as *increasing* in horribleness, as the rebellion increases.)
- 3) **Destruction and exile** from the land, along with many horrible experiences during that exile.
- 4) **Repentance and return** to the land. This is associated with a *change* in the hearts of the people.

- **Moses' main emphasis** is: "Don't abandon the true God and go after the gods of the nations!" If Israel paid attention to this, there would be no need to focus on a "return from exile"!
- But he does mention a few things about a "return from exile."

⇒ **Deuteronomy 32** is the song that God gave Moses, as a testimony against Israel. Here, God gives a reason for *not* blotting them out of existence (the way he did with many other nations):

"I would have said that I would cut them to pieces and blot out their memory from mankind, if I had not dreaded the taunt of the enemy,\* **lest their adversaries misunderstand** and say: 'Our own hand has prevailed; it was not the LORD who did all this.'"

Deuteronomy 32:26-27 (BSB)

\* (Though spoken by God, this "dreading" is a poetic expression of the "cause and effect" that occurs on *our* level of existence, not on the level of God's sovereignty.)

❖ Later in the passage, God says: ① He will judge his adversaries, and ② he will "make atonement for" (or "cleanse") his land and people. But there are no further details about this "atonement" (or "cleansing").

"... I will take **vengeance on My adversaries** and repay those who hate Me."

Rejoice, O heavens, with Him, and let all God's angels worship Him.

Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for He will **avenge the blood of His children**.

He will take **vengeance on His adversaries** and **repay those who hate Him**; He will **cleanse His land and His people**.

Deuteronomy 32:41b, 43 (BSB)

⇒ An important issue to consider: Moses says these things *before* they have even entered the land! God knew what they would do; he wasn't surprised when they *did* have to be judged and exiled!

⇒ **Deuteronomy 30** has other details about their return to the land. **FIRST**, they will need a changed heart: *repentance*.

"In the future, when you experience all these blessings and curses I have listed for you, and when you are living among the nations to which the LORD your God has exiled you, **take to heart** all these instructions.

**If** at that time you and your children return to the LORD your God, and **if you obey with all your heart and all your soul** all the commands I have given you today, ..."

Deuteronomy 30:1-2 (NLT)

Note the concept of "heart" (which includes the "mind"). There is a human responsibility to this. At the same time, *God* will give them a change of heart – the sovereignty aspect.

"The LORD your **God will change your heart and the hearts of all your descendants**, so that **you will love him with all your heart and soul** and so you may live!"

Deuteronomy 30:6 (NLT)

❖ **SECOND**, if they repent, there will be *consequences*: a return to the *land*, and even greater *blessings* than before.

"... then the LORD your **God will restore your fortunes**. He will have mercy on you and **gather you back from all the nations** where he has scattered you. Even though you are banished to the ends of the earth, the LORD your God will **gather you from there** and **bring you back** again. The LORD your God will **return you to the land** that belonged to your ancestors, and **you will possess that land** again. Then he will **make you even more prosperous and numerous** than your ancestors!"

Deuteronomy 30:3-5 (NLT)

Even before entering the land, Israel had to make a choice. [See Deuteronomy 30:11-14.] They didn't have to search high and low to find out what it was. They *already* had an *awareness* of what they needed to do. The truth was in their mouths and hearts (minds). Unfortunately, their hearts weren't *receptive* to the truth they knew. *God* would have to change their hearts (v. 6).

➤ **Leviticus 26** connects this return (to the land) to the *promises* made to their *ancestors*.

- This passage describes what Israel was told just two years after they left Egypt. (The Deuteronomy passages came 38 years after this.)

❖ As in the Deuteronomy passage, *repentance and humility must come first*.

" 'But if they will **confess their sins** and the sins of their ancestors—their unfaithfulness and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies—then when their uncircumcised hearts are **humbled** and they **pay for their sin**, \* ...' "

Leviticus 26:40-41 (NIV)

\* (They must acknowledge that their punishment – "payment" – was righteous and just. They must admit they *deserved* the punishment they got.)

❖ The results of this repentance/humility? Two things. First, there was a *land issue*. This issue was related to the covenant God made with Israel's *ancestors*.

"... **I will remember my covenant with Jacob** and my covenant **with Isaac** and my covenant **with Abraham**, and **I will remember the land**. For the land will be deserted by them and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them." "

Leviticus 26:42-43a (NIV)

**The land sabbaths**: Every seventh year ("sabbath"), the people were supposed to let the land rest dormant, instead of planting crops. (God said he would provide for their food.) Apparently, they never did obey him in this matter. *But during their exile ...*

The land **enjoyed its sabbath rests**; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah.

2 Chronicles 36:21 (NIV); see Jeremiah 29:10.

❖ Second, there was a *people (sin) issue*. This issue was related to a *second covenant*: one made with Israel *after God brought them out of Egypt*.

- Even so, God made this *second covenant* with the nation *because of the covenant he made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*.

" **'They will pay for their sins** because they rejected my laws and abhorred my decrees. Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, **I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely**, breaking **my covenant with them**. I am the Lord their God. But for their sake **I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt** in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the Lord.' "

Leviticus 26:43b-45 (NIV)

**A comparison of these two covenants:** →

① **God's unconditional covenant** (promise) made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – the basis for God delivering the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt:

So God heard their groaning, and **He remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**. Furthermore, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and **I have remembered My covenant**.

Exodus 2:24; 6:5 (BSB)

- Israel *exists* because of this covenant. This promise *wasn't* given to them. After their return from exile, Nehemiah prayed ...

You found [Abraham's] heart faithful before You, and made **a covenant with him to give the land** of the Canaanites and Hittites, of the Amorites and Perizzites, of the Jebusites and Girgashites—to give it **to his descendants**. **You have kept Your promise, because You are righteous**.

Nehemiah 9:8 (BSB)

- The following verse is about events in *Northern Israel*, about 800 BC. But the account was written about 250 years later – when Northern Israel had already been in captivity for about 175 years.
- They *deserved* total destruction; but God had made a promise to their *ancestors* – *and he planned to keep it*.

Now King Hazael of Syria oppressed Israel throughout Jehoahaz's reign. But the LORD had mercy on them and felt pity for them. He extended his favor to them because of **the promise he had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**. He has been unwilling to destroy them or remove them from his presence **to this very day**.

2 Kings 13:22-23 (NET)

- By the time this was written, Judah (southern Israel) had also been sent into captivity. *God was still keeping his promise*.

- ② **God's conditional covenant** (promise) made to the nation of Israel, after they left Egypt:

"Now if you will indeed **obey My voice and keep My covenant**, you will be My treasured possession out of all the nations—for the whole earth is Mine. And unto Me you shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Exodus 19:5-6a (BSB)

- This promise was given to the **nation**. Israel would be **blessed or cursed** because of this covenant. Breaking *this* covenant is the reason they experienced the curses that Moses warned them about. What happened to northern Israel illustrates this:

The king of Assyria **exiled** the Israelites ... This happened because they did not listen to the voice of the LORD their God, **but violated His covenant—all that Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded—and would neither listen nor obey.**

2 Kings 18:11a, 12 (BSB)

13

### What about the rest of the Old Testament?

We have focused on what Moses wrote about, in order to show that, *even before the Israelites had entered the land, God knew their future failures.* Nothing happened by surprise. God didn't have to come up with a "Plan B," to replace a failed "Plan A"!

- The same issues.** They focused on the same issues that Moses mentioned – except in greater detail.
- Judgment and exile are coming.** The prophets warned the people that it was coming. They often pointed to events happening *at the time they were writing*, and told the people that it was a judgment from God.
- More details about the return from exile** (and everything else associated with it). Some of these details involved a future Messiah – who we now know is Jesus. (What they said about the Messiah did not indicate a clear distinction between Jesus' *first* coming and his *second* coming – things revealed more clearly in the *New Testament*.)

14

- ➔ **Daniel 9:** The book of Jeremiah tells us that Judah's captivity would last 70 years. When this time was nearly over, Daniel prayed a prayer of repentance for the nation. Here is part of what he prayed:

**All Israel has transgressed Your law** and turned away, **refusing to obey Your voice**; so **the oath and the curse** written in the Law of Moses the servant of God has been **poured out on us**, because **we have sinned against You** ...

Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this **disaster has come upon us**, yet **we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God** by turning from our iniquities and giving attention to Your truth.

Therefore the LORD has kept the **calamity** in store and brought it upon us. For **the LORD our God is righteous in all He does**; yet **we have not obeyed His voice.**

Daniel 9:11, 13-14 (BSB)

- ★ **Daniel acknowledged that God is righteous in his judgments.** ★

15

- ➔ **Other prophets** have much to say about Israel repenting of sin, returning to the land, and never again being destroyed in judgment. Some passages describe this as happening in the "last days."

Afterward the Israelites will **return and seek the Lord** their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings **in the last days.**

Hosea 3:5 (NIV)

Jerusalem will be **holy**. Foreigners will never invade it again.

Joel 3:17b (GW)

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will bring my people Israel and Judah **back from captivity**. I will bring them back **to the land that I gave their ancestors**, and they will take possession of it."

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when **the city** [= Jerusalem] **will be rebuilt for me** ... It will never be uprooted or torn down again."

Jeremiah 30:3; 31:38a, 40b (GW)

16

- ➔ **Jeremiah**, like many of the prophets, describes changes that will take place in the *hearts* of the Jews who return at this time. He describes it as a "new covenant"; but it's the *same* heart-change mentioned by Moses, in Deuteronomy 30:6 (which we already saw).

### ❖ **New Covenant, contrasted to the Old Covenant.**

- The Old Covenant, made with Israel when they left Egypt, was **conditional**. If they broke it, there would be horrible (and deserved) consequences,
- In contrast, the New Covenant is **unconditional**.

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make **a new covenant** with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.

**It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors** when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because **they broke my covenant**, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 31:31-32 (NIV)

17

### ❖ **Various aspects of this new, unconditional covenant.**

- It is heart-changing. The people will **want** to obey.
- People will no longer need to be exhorted to "know the Lord"; because knowing God is part of this covenant.
- Permanent forgiveness is also part of this covenant.
- It is also associated with Israel as a **nation**.

"This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord.

"I will put my law **in their minds** and write it **on their hearts**. **I will be their God, and they will be my people.**

No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because **they will all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord.

"For I **will forgive** their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Jeremiah 31:33-34 (NIV)

18

❖ This covenant has a connection to Israel as a nation.

- Israel will never cease to be a nation. They cannot cease to exist!
- The power of God that brought creation into existence and keeps it under his control is the same power that guarantees this about Israel.

This is what the Lord says,  
 he who appoints the sun  
 to shine by day,  
 who decrees the moon and stars  
 to shine by night,  
 who stirs up the sea  
 so that its waves roar—  
 the Lord Almighty is his name:  
 "Only if these decrees vanish from my sight,"  
 declares the Lord,  
 "will Israel ever cease  
 being a nation before me."  
 Jeremiah 31:35-36 (NIV)

19

❖ This covenant has a connection to Israel as a people.

- Israel's permanent existence is NOT determined by their conduct, but by God's faithfulness (though their conduct does change under this covenant).
- It would take us "forever" to comprehend all heaven and earth. It would take even longer for God to break this promise!

This is what the Lord says:  
 "Only if the heavens above can be measured  
 and the foundations of the earth below be searched out  
 will I reject all the descendants of Israel  
 because of all they have done,"  
 declares the Lord.  
 Jeremiah 31:37 (NIV)

(THIS REFERS TO THEIR SIN.)

- In the New Testament, we learn that Gentiles are also welcomed into this New Covenant.

20

What can we conclude (from these passages)?

There are so many more passages we could include, involving all sorts of details regarding Israel's future. You are encouraged to look for them.

⇒ From the passages we have looked at, we can see that three covenants are involved. They are as follows:

- The covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.**
  - ✓ Permanent and unconditional
  - ✓ NOT made with the nation, NOT influenced by their conduct. *They cannot break this covenant!*
  - ✓ This is the reason the people *exist*, and why God is unwilling to totally destroy them.
  - ✓ It also applies to the *land*.
  - ✓ God will keep this promise, *because he is righteous*.

21

- The covenant made with the nation (through Moses).**
  - ✓ Conditional; what happens depends on their conduct.
  - ✓ *It does not nullify or cancel the covenant made with Abraham.*
  - ✓ Perpetual disobedience brought judgment and exile. (The nations that destroyed Israel are also judged for their own sins.)
  - ✓ To return, they must humbly repent and have a changed heart. Then God will bring them back to the land and restore their fortunes. They will never again be destroyed.
  - ✓ This need for a changed heart points to the New Covenant.
- The new covenant made with the nation (through Christ).**
  - ✓ (Today, we know details that they didn't understand. We know it was through Christ. We also know that Gentiles are included.)
  - ✓ God will change their hearts; they will no longer rebel.
  - ✓ Knowing God and having complete forgiveness are included in this covenant.

We will finish this issue next time. Right now, we can focus on ...

22

★↻ Our MISSION! ↻★

Appreciate the value of these three covenants!

★ If we are saved, we have a connection to each of them! ★

- The covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob:**
  - ✓ If we have the same type of faith that Abraham had, then we are his children, and recipients of the promise (covenant) that God made with him (Romans 4 and Galatians 3).
- The covenant made with the nation (through Moses).**
  - ✓ Even though there are parts of this covenant that have no application to us, we learn from it the *moral* law, which is to guide us in the way we live.
- The new covenant made with the nation (through Christ).**
  - ✓ *Our* connection to the first two covenants is made possible because of the New Covenant changes that occur in our hearts.

23

## Credits

SCRIPTURE

- Scriptures marked "NLT" – Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.
- Scriptures marked "NIV" - Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. (www.biblica.com )
- Scriptures marked "GW" - Scripture is taken from GOD'S WORD®, Copyright 1995 God's Word to the Nations. Used by permission of Baker Publishing Group. All rights reserved.
- Scriptures marked "NET" - Scripture quoted by permission. Quotations designated (NET) are from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. http://netbible.com All rights reserved.
- Scriptures marked "BSB" – Taken from The Holy Bible, Berean Standard Bible, BSB, Public Domain (CC BY NC ND). https://bereanbible.com/

PICTURES (original sources; modifications may have been made)

- Brick wall – GDJ / CC0; via openclipart.org: https://openclipart.org/detail/227630/brick-texture
- Globe with lit fuse – GDJ / CC0; via openclipart.org: https://openclipart.org/detail/219655/political-map-earth-globe-bomb

Presentation – Dennis Hinks © 2024.

24