



# Issachar Comments Papers

Expounding biblical concepts on the world scene today

September 2013

## UNDERSTANDING ISRAEL

**There are some things you cannot perceive by logic or human deduction. However hard you try, you just can't get it. You either see it in a flash or however hard you try you just don't get it. This is what happens with really deep spiritual truths. They are only received by revelation.**

### Preparing the Disciples

This is what happened to the disciples of Jesus. Jesus had reached the point in his Ministry when he knew that the opposition of the authorities was reaching a dangerous level and he had to prepare his disciples for his departure. He took them to the springs of the River Jordan and then asked them what people were saying about him. Finally he put the question *"Who do you say I am?"* Simon Peter answered, *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*

You can almost hear the great sigh of relief and joy in the response of Jesus. Here was his dear friend and most outspoken disciple who had got it at last! *"Blessed are you Simon bar Jonah,"* Jesus replied, *"For this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."*

This is the only way anyone becomes a disciple of Jesus. You either perceive who and what he is, and receive him as your Lord and Saviour, or he's just another historical character of no great significance.

### Israel in the Purposes of God

It's like this with Israel and the purposes of God. You either see it, or you don't! If you do see it, it becomes a milestone in your spiritual life and development. Other things all fall into place. Suddenly, you begin to understand the meaning of 'covenant' and the way God makes promises of love which he will never break. Your own relationship with God becomes more intimate as you see the way he is working out his purposes with the people he chose to use in revealing himself to all human beings.

You begin to understand God's heartbreak which Hosea tried to express when his people turned away from him. *"When Israel was a child I loved him, but the more I called Israel the further they went from me... They did not realise that it was I who healed them, I led them with the cords of human kindness, with ties of love."* God even had to allow his people to suffer at the hands of cruel enemies and to go into slavery where they could discover that he was just as real in Babylon as in Jerusalem because he was the One and only God Creator of all things and he had chosen them to be 'a light for the Gentiles'.

### Revelation

Once you reach this point of revelation, your whole understanding of the way God is working out his purposes slots into place. You can then look at the evidence of history and begin to understand what God is doing today. Even the tragedy of the Holocaust in the Second World War takes new significance as part of the way human wickedness fights against the purposes of God. Then you realise why there is huge opposition to the Jewish people being allowed back into the land God had promised to them and why it is today that so many Jewish people are becoming believers in Jesus, *not by human evangelism, but by revelation.*

As Joseph, who had been rejected by his brothers, was sold into slavery in Egypt but became great among the Gentiles and then eventually revealed himself to his brothers; in the same way Jesus who had been rejected by his brothers and became great among the Gentiles is now, in the fullness of time, revealing himself to his brothers and sisters.

This is the first time in 2000 years that these things have begun to happen and God is beginning to slot everything into place for the fulfilment of his promises in Scripture. So we should not be surprised that conflict and violence surrounds the people of Israel and the land they historically occupied. Today we see the whole of the Middle East in turmoil as human beings fight against the purposes of God.

## **Palestine**

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, himself a renegade Jew, when he became President of Iran swore to wipe Israel off the map. He said, "Recognising the Palestinian state is not the ultimate goal. It is only one step forward towards liberating the whole of Palestine. A Palestinian state is only the first step in the destruction of Israel." This is still the intention of Hamas who control Gaza, and Mahmoud Abbas who leads the PLO and is striving to create an independent Palestinian state. He has stated clearly that he will not allow Jews on the land. He said, "I will never allow a single Israeli to live among us on Palestine's land." This contrasts vividly with the practice of Israel who not only allow Arabs to become citizens but also to elect Members of Parliament.

The hatred of the Arab peoples for Israel is centuries old and so deeply rooted that only a miracle of revelation can change it. But that is precisely what God has begun to do. Many Arabs as well as Jews are having visions of Jesus. The saddest and most irrational opposition to Israel comes from Christians following 2000 years of persecution by the church. From earliest times there has been conflict between Gentile and Jewish believers in Jesus. This was the major subject in Paul's letter to the Romans, and when the Emperor Constantine became a Christian his anti-Semitism was so powerful that it drove him to change the calendar so that Easter and Passover did not coincide. And at the Council of Nicaea, which Constantine called, there was not a single Hebrew speaker to enable the Council to understand the Hebraic roots of the faith. The Hellenistic takeover of Christianity was complete.

## **Anti-Semitism**

Today, anti-Semitism is on the increase, even among Christians. The Church of Scotland recently issued a highly biased report, "The inheritance of Abraham? A report on the 'Promised Land'" and last month a move to draw evangelicals into an anti-Israel alliance was launched at Greenbelt. This is all based upon sympathy for the Palestinians who are portrayed in the Western media as the victims of Israeli aggression and it ignores or distorts the historical facts leading to the promotion of lies and deception such as the statement in the Church of Scotland document - "The fact that the land is currently being taken by settlement expansion, the separation barrier, house clearance, theft and force makes it doubly wrong to seek biblical sanction for this."

## **Legitimacy of Israel**

But the legitimacy of Israel's position in the land does not rest upon a United Nations' Resolution of 1947 but upon the San Remo Resolution of 1920. In the words of international lawyer Dr C.D Wallace, "The truth is that the legal rights of the Jewish people and Israel as a nation find their foundations solidly embedded in international law well before the very existence of the United Nations, dating back to international legal instruments agreed by the Principal Allied Powers of World War I, meeting in San Remo in April 1920 as a follow-up to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference... This legal character was codified in a binding international legal instrument in the form of the San Remo Resolution of April 1920, as reconfirmed and strengthened in July 1922 by the adoption of the Mandate for Palestine by the League of Nations." (C.D.Wallace: *Foundations of the International Legal Rights of the Jewish People and the State of Israel*: Creation House, Lake Mary, Florida: 2012: page 50)

## **Jewish Homeland**

As Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill had stated, "It is manifestly right that the Jews who are scattered all over the world should have a national centre and a national home where some of them may be reunited. And where else could that be but in the land of Palestine, with which for more than 3000 years they have been intimately and profoundly associated? We think it will be good for the world, good for the Jews, good for the British Empire, but also good for the Arabs who dwell in Palestine." (David Fromkin: *A Peace To End All Peace*: Phoenix Press, London, 2003, page 519)

At that time the land envisaged as a "homeland for the Jews" was not the tiny piece of coastline around Tel Aviv which the first wave of post-mandate immigrants occupied in 1948 - but the whole land from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River. Initially, both Churchill and Lloyd George had regarded the whole land of Palestine, including Transjordan, as the potential homeland of the Jews; but three quarters of the land was given to the Palestinians (now Jordan) where Jews would not be allowed to settle. This was affirmed by King Hussein of Jordan in 1981 when he said, "The truth is that Jordan is Palestine and Palestine is Jordan". The rest of the land, west of the Jordan, was intended for the Jews and established in international law in 1922.

## British Cabinet

William Wilberforce was the first major British politician to call for a homeland for the Jews to be created in Palestine, but it was more than 100 years later that this was seriously debated as part of British foreign policy. In the midst of the First World War, in 1917, Prime Minister Lloyd George met Dr Chaim Weizmann and told him that he supported the Zionist aspirations for a homeland saying that this "was to him one of the really interesting parts of the war". He encouraged Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to issue a statement supporting the Zionists because he and the British Cabinet believed that the support of the millions of Jews in Russia was crucial to the war effort. They did not realise that the Jews who were already a persecuted minority under the Czars would soon be attacked by the Bolsheviks who would seek to wipe them out.

## Balfour Declaration

The Bolshevik Revolution was destabilising Czarist Russia who were an important ally in the war against Germany and they hoped that Russian Jews would be influential in resolving the power struggle in Russia. The Balfour Declaration was delayed by opposition within the Cabinet led by Edwin Montague, Secretary of State for India. He, along with his cousin Herbert Samuel, and Lord Reading, had been the first Jews to sit in the British Cabinet (Disraeli was a baptised Christian). They were rich and successful Jews and they feared that Zionism threatened their privileged position in British society. They did not wish to lose all that had been gained since 1290 when Jews had been expelled by a British King (Edward 1).

## Zionists

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica in 1910 there were 11 ½ million Jews worldwide, but at that time it was estimated that a mere 1% were Zionists looking for a homeland on the soil of ancient Israel. In fact it took the Nazi persecution and the horrors of the Holocaust in Central Europe in World War II to change the attitudes of most Jews and turn their hearts and minds towards the land of their forefathers and the great spiritual heritage of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The whole concept of a Jewish homeland became important during World War I although both the French and the Americans had reservations, both of whom suspected that the British motives were really to expand the British Empire. President Wilson said that he favoured a Jewish Palestine but not a British Palestine. He believed that the British simply wanted to block the way to India and preserve the Empire so he urged delay of issuing the Balfour Declaration although he later welcomed it. The director-general of the French Foreign Ministry gave a formal assurance of French Government sympathy with "Jewish colonisation in Palestine...the land from which the people of Israel were exiled so many centuries ago". He wrote, "The French Government, which entered this present war to defend people wrongly attacked, and which continues the struggle to assure the victory of right over might, cannot but feel sympathy for your cause, the triumph of which is bound up with that of the Allies."

## British Mandate

The Mandate under which Britain took responsibility for the whole of Palestine including Transjordan finally became part of international law on 29 September 1923 following approval by the League of Nations in July that year. From the end of the war the British Government struggled to get agreement with the Arabs in negotiations led by Churchill whose notes of the proceedings reveal his impatience at their total refusal to consider even the slightest concession to allow Jews into Palestine. At the same time, he discovered that members of the Arab delegation were actively selling their land to Jews at enormous profit.

At an Arab delegation in London August 1921 he said, "I have told you again and again that the Jews will not be allowed to come into the country except in so far as they build up the means for their livelihood. They cannot take any man's land. They cannot dispossess any man of his rights or his property. If they like to buy people's land and people like to sell it to them, and if they like to develop and cultivate regions now barren and make them fertile, then they have the right to do so." (Martin Gilbert: Winston S Churchill, Vol 4, 1916 - 1922, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1975, page 629)

## Churchill

The following year Churchill approved the concessions for a hydroelectric scheme in the Jordan River Valley designed by a Jewish Russian engineer. He was impressed by the scheme which would be financed on a non-commercial basis and would have great benefits for the farming of unproductive land. Churchill told the House of Commons that this was something the Arabs never done. "Left to themselves, the Arabs of Palestine would not in a thousand years have taken effect steps towards the irrigation and electrification of Palestine. They would have been quite content to dwell in the wasted sun-scorched plains." (Hansard)

## British Responsibility

But the British Government also struggled to get the co-operation of its own diplomatic and military officers in the Middle East. Many of them were more sympathetic to the Arabs and it was rumoured that they actually encouraged the Arabs to riot in 1920 and 1921. Throughout the interwar years the anti-Jewish attitudes of British officers in Palestine hindered efforts at integration and inter-ethnic peaceful settlement. The British were actually responsible for appointing one of the leading rioters as Mufti of Jerusalem, even raising his status to 'Grand Mufti'! In the end he did great harm to the Arab people by leading them into an alliance with Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany, which had grave consequences in World War II.

It is not part of the purpose of this paper to detail events since World War II and the establishment of the State of Israel. The purpose is primarily to establish the legality of Jewish occupation of the land. It is, however, relevant to make a brief note on the level of responsibility that the British carry for the present situation.

At the end of the Second World War many survivors of the Holocaust attempted to migrate to Israel but they were strongly opposed by the British who imposed strict limits which were contrary to the legal agreements under international law in 1922. At the Port of Haifa there is a maritime museum showing graphic evidence of the inhumanity of British action in turning away overcrowded ships, more than one of which sank in the Mediterranean. After all they had suffered at the hands of the Nazis, when they came seeking shelter in the land of their forefathers they were heartlessly drowned by the British.

## Israeli Wars

When the British army withdrew at the end of the Mandate to make way for the establishment of the new State of Israel a lot of their weapons fell into the hands of the Arabs and contributed to the first war faced by the fledgling State. The early settlers were attacked by an army supplied by Jordan, Egypt and Syria. An armistice was signed in 1949, but Israel was again attacked in what became known as the 'Six Day War' by a combined army from Jordan, Egypt and Syria with troops and weapons also coming from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq and Algeria.

The Arabs ordered their people to leave their homes and gather at refugee camps at Gaza and Jericho so that their armies could destroy the Israelis and clear them out of the land. Instead, Israel swiftly repelled the attack and drove the armies back across the borders into Egypt, Jordan and Syria. Instead of the Palestinians being settled in Jordan which had been allocated to the Palestinians under the Mandate or being offered settlement in other Arab states they have been kept in Gaza and the West Bank largely for political reasons intended to embarrass Israel, creating a grossly unjust human tragedy for the Palestinians who are pawns in an international game which stirs deep emotions and brings to the surface passion and prejudice and hatred.

## The Future

What does the future hold? With the whole of the Middle East now in a highly unstable condition with the Muslim Brotherhood and other radical elements of Islam seeking power, the uncertain peace that has held in Israel since the Second Lebanon War of 2006 seems unlikely to hold much longer. The prophecies in the Bible, of Israel being attacked by her neighbours which many thought were fulfilled in 1967, may still be in the future.

The one thing that is certain is God's continuing love for his people of the Old Covenant. Jeremiah foretold the establishment of a 'New Covenant' which God would make with the 'house of Israel' and the 'house of Judah'. Through the blood of the Lord Jesus this New Covenant was opened to the Gentiles; but this did not eliminate the Jews from the Covenant and its promises which include occupying the land which belongs to God and not to human beings. He only has the right to say who stays there!

## Truth Revealed

It is God's intention, as Paul rightly saw when writing to the Ephesians, to bring Jewish and Gentile people together through Jesus to abolish the old enmities and create 'one new man' in Christ. This is still his purpose and despite all the violent opposition and hatred of the evil forces that are arraigned against God, he will find a way of working out his purposes for the good, not only of those who call him Father, but of all humanity. The enemy tries hard to deceive and confuse even the elect. But this is why we need revelation to understand the purposes of God. You either see it or you don't! Without revelation you struggle blindly in a sea of confusion. But once the truth is revealed, the light dawns, you see God.

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