

An Everlasting Possession

In Genesis 17 the Lord made a covenant with Abraham. In this covenant He made him a series of promises:

Genesis 17:4: “As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

Several important things happened in this covenant. We see that God changed Abram's name to Abraham, signifying that he would be the father of many nations (Abram means “exalted father” while Abraham means “father of a multitude”). He told Abraham that he would have many descendents, and his offspring would include nations and kings. He promised that He would be the God of Abraham's children. Finally – and this is what I want to focus on – He gave the land of Canaan to Abraham's offspring as an *everlasting possession*.

It is important to realize that God placed no conditions on this covenant. He required nothing of Abraham, nor did He say that Abraham's offspring had to do certain things in order to maintain the covenant. It is true that in the next verses He said this:

Genesis 17:11: “And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you.”

However, note that circumcision was a *token*, or sign of the covenant. Those who did not do this were “cut off” (verse 14), but it did *not* abrogate the covenant as a whole because *the covenant was unconditional*. No matter what happened, no matter what the Israelites did, “all the land of Canaan” was theirs “for an everlasting possession”. God swore that Israel would be His people forever, no matter what:

Jeremiah 31:35: “Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name:

36 If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

37 Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.”

God wanted to make it very clear that no matter what happened, God would never cast off His

people or allow the Israelites to be destroyed. They were His people forever and no one would ever be able to completely destroy them.

Now, it is true that later on God told the Israelites that if they disobeyed Him He would exile them from the land, and God did so on two occasions. However, each exile was temporary. The land still belonged to Israel, and God promised to bring them back to their land after the punishment was over. In Genesis 17:8 God solemnly swore to Abraham that the land of Israel would belong to the Israelites forever, no matter what they did, and that agreement still stands today. It was an everlasting covenant. We can see this in Leviticus:

Leviticus 26:42: "Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

43 The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes.

44 And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God.

45 But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD."

Notice that verse 42 states that God would remember the covenant He made with Abraham, and He would "remember the land". The Israelites would be exiled from it, but even then He would not "break my covenant", as it says in verse 44. He would bring them back.

The reason I mention this is because many Christians today have no idea that Israel has any significance to God. They think that after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD that God was finished with the Jews, and that from that point on the Church was God's people. They see no significance in the modern nation of Israel, nor do they believe that Israel still has a right to that plot of land in the Middle East.

As it turns out, however, the Bible actually prophesied when Israel would be reborn. This can be found in Ezekiel 4:

Ezekiel 4:1: "Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and portray upon it the city, even Jerusalem:

2 And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about.

3 Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel.

4 Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity.

5 For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.

6 And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear

the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.

7 Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it.

...

13 And the Lord said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them."

Here we find that God is using Ezekiel as an object lesson. The Lord was going to punish Israel for 430 years (390 years + 40 years) and to illustrate this God commanded Ezekiel to lie on his side for 430 days. This was done as a sign to the house of Israel, but the Israelites paid no attention to the warning. Instead of repenting they hardened their hearts, and God's judgment came upon them. As foretold, they were carried into captivity and spent the next 70 years in exile.

Even this, however, did not teach them anything. Since they did not repent the Lord allowed only a small remnant of the Jews to return to Israel in 536 BC. The rest of the nation remained scattered abroad, as the Lord had threatened in verse 13.

When the Jews returned home only 70 of the appointed 430 years had taken place, which still left 360 years. However, the fact that the Israelites did not learn their lesson during the first 70 years of punishment activated this provision of the Mosaic Law:

Leviticus 26:23: "And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me;

24 Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins."

This says that if God punished the Israelites and they refused to repent then God would multiply their punishment by seven. $360 \text{ years} \times 7 = 2520 \text{ years}$. Since the Bible uses 360-year days in its prophecies, that would equal 2,483.8 of our calendar years. (The math: $2520 \text{ years} \times 360 \text{ days} = 907,200 \text{ days}$. $907,200 \text{ days} / 365.25 \text{ days per year} = 2,483.8 \text{ years}$.) So, if you add 2,483.3 years to the spring of 536 BC (keeping into account there was no year 0, only 1 BC and then 1 AD), you get the spring of 1948. (Math: $1948 + 536 = 2484$.)

When did Israel become a nation again? On May 14, 1948. This time, however, more than just a small remnant has returned to the land; there are now millions of Jews living in Israel, and more continue to move there as time goes on. This process will only accelerate as the time of Christ's return draws near. The Lord is calling His people back to their promised land.

On top of this, Israel became a nation in a *single day*, just as the Lord had foretold through Isaiah:

Isaiah 66:7: "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.

8 Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

9 Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? Saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? Saith thy God."

It seemed an incredible thing that Israel would become a nation again in a single day, but that is

exactly what happened. The modern regathering of the Jews into Israel was not some random historical event; it was the fulfillment of prophecy. In fact, God said that He would disperse the Jews, but He would regather them a *second time*:

Isaiah 11:11: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.”

The Israelites have been dispersed twice: once when they were deported to Babylon, and once when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. In modern times they have been regathered. The first time they were regathered was after spending 70 years in Babylon. The modern nation of Israel, therefore, represents the *second time*. God promised to bring His people back to the land, and He has done so.

In fact, the Bible says that the nation of Israel will never be destroyed again:

Amos 9:15: “I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.”

The reason God has regathered them is to bring them back to Him, and He will accomplish that:

Hosea 3:4: “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim:

5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.”

Do you see what this is saying? Israel did “abide many days” without a king, or sacrifice, or even a country. Now they have returned “in the latter days”, as it says in verse 5. The phrase “David their king” refers to the Messiah; the passage is saying that when Israel is regathered they will seek the Lord, and ultimately the Messiah as well.

That, however, is a topic I've discussed elsewhere so I won't repeat it here.

What I want to focus on is that the land of Israel belongs to the Israelites. God made that promise to Abraham, and He later confirmed that promise to Jacob – thus making it clear that the land was being given to the Jews, not the Arabs:

Genesis 35:11: “And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;
12 And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.”

God was very specific when it came to the ownership of the land. The Arabs are the descendents of Abraham's son Ishmael, but the land was not given to them. The Palestinians are the descendents of Isaac's son Esau, but the land was not given to them. The land was given only to Jacob's offspring, the Jews. Even Jerusalem was given to the Jews:

Zechariah 8:7-8: “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.”

God gave one other promise to Abraham. We can find it in Genesis 12:

Genesis 12:3: “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

As Christians we know that Jesus was the descendent of Abraham that God used to bless the entire world. In Him all the families of the earth are blessed indeed. However, we often forget the first part of the verse. God was not just talking about Abraham; He would bless those that blessed the Jews, and He would curse those that cursed them. We know this because God has some very harsh words for those who would try to harm Israel:

Zechariah 2:8: “For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.”

Later in Zechariah God elaborates on this theme:

Zechariah 12:9: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

These verses are describing a time when the “house of David” will finally realize that Jesus is the Messiah and will repent as a nation. It says they will “look upon me whom they have pierced” – a reference to Jesus. We know this day is near because in verse 10 it says that the “house of David” possesses Jerusalem – which happened in 1967. Notice, however, that verse 9 states that when this happens God will seek to destroy “all the nations that come against Jerusalem”. God takes attacks on Israel *personally*.

God makes this even more clear in Joel:

Joel 3:1: “For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,

2 I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.”

Here God promises that when God has returned Israel to the land and given Jerusalem back to her, that He would gather all nations and judge them. Why is He angry with them? Because they have scattered the Jews among the nations and “parted my land”. In other words, God is incredibly angry with the world because they have *taken land away from Israel*.

The fulfillment of these verses is not far off. We have seen, in modern times, that God did “bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem”. Moreover, we have also seen that the nations of the world have been trying very hard to divide the nation of Israel, and take away her land in order to give it to others.

Zechariah expounds on this a little further, and points out something frightening:

Zechariah 14:2: “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.

3 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

4 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.”

In verse 2 we see the same language as in Joel 3:2. However, a very important detail is added: on the day the Lord gathers all nations to Jerusalem, the Lord will not only fight against them, but He will do so *in person*. Verse 4 says that “his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives”. We call this the Second Coming. When the Lord returns, Jerusalem will be under attack; the nations of the world will have gathered around it and captured the city. In response Jesus comes back, destroys those nations, and puts an end to all those that threatened Israel. To put it another way, in the Second Coming Jesus comes back *to defend Jerusalem on Israel's behalf*.

God makes one point very clear: the land of Israel belongs to the Jews, and God gets *very upset* when people try to take the land away from her. “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye”, the Lord said, and He meant it. In fact, the day will come when God will get so upset at what people are doing to Israel that He will return *in person*, with all of the armies of Heaven, to destroy all those that have come against her. (You *know* you have crossed the line in a big way when God comes out of Heaven to *personally* destroy you!)

The point I'm trying to make is that taking land away from Israel is a *really big deal* in God's sight. He hates it. He gave that land to Israel, and it belongs to them. Those who try to take it away from her do so at their peril.

This peril is not merely theoretical. I believe that God has actively pursued Genesis 12:3 in history: those nations that have blessed Israel have been blessed, and those nations that have cursed Israel (or have tried to take away her land) have been cursed. I recently came across a book entitled *As America Has Done To Israel*, by John P. McTernan. He documents a very interesting phenomenon: whenever a nation does something to Israel, either good or bad, something happens to that nation.

For example:

October 30, 1991: President Bush announced a new Middle East peace plan, in which Israel would be forced to surrender parts of its land in return for peace – including parts of Jerusalem.

October 30, 1991: A powerful storm suddenly developed off the coast of Nova Scotia, which quickly reached hurricane strength. The next day the storm (which by now was hundreds of miles wide) smashed into New England, then traveled down the East Coast into the Carolinas. It caused millions of dollars in damage and was nicknamed “The Perfect Storm”. (The storm was so significant that a book

and a movie were written about it, both named *The Perfect Storm*.)

President Bush owned a home in Kennebunkport, Maine, that was heavily damaged in the storm. The storm hit his home on the same day that the President initiated the Madrid Peace Conference, in which Israel was pressured to give up land.

August 24, 1992: The Madrid Peace Conference was moved to Washington, D.C., making it the first time that conference was held on American soil. Not only was Israel going to be pressured into giving up more land, but the Palestinians were going to be governing the lands that Israel would have to give up.

August 24, 1992: Hurricane Andrew hit Florida and became the worst natural disaster ever hit to America (up to that time). \$30 billion in damage was done. The hurricane struck just a few hours before the Madrid peace conference began.

September 13, 1993: In Washington, DC Israel signs an agreement with Yasser Arafat, surrendering Gaza, Jericho, and the West Bank to Palestinians.

September 13, 1993: Hurricane Emily hit North Carolina.

January 16, 1994: President Clinton met with Syria's dictator, President Hafez Assad. They talk about making peace with Israel, and the agreement they come up with includes Israel surrendering the Golan Heights to Syria.

January 17, 1994: A 6.8 magnitude earthquake hit Los Angeles, causing \$25 billion in damage. This happened less than 24 hours after Clinton pressured Israel to give up more land.

September 27, 1998: Secretary of State Madeline Albright met with Arafat in New York City, to finalize an agreement in which Israel would surrender 13% of its land in exchange for peace.

September 27, 1998: Hurricane Georges hit the Gulf Coast, doing extensive damage to Mississippi and Florida. The hurricane then stalled, causing severe flooding.

The book is hundreds of pages long and gives many more examples, but I'll give just one more. In April 2005 President Bush met with Israeli Prime Minister Sharon in order to set a timetable for Israel's withdrawal from 25 Jewish settlements. The process was started on August 16 and it was completed on August 23. Approximately ten thousand Jews were forcibly evicted from their land. The reason this happened is because President Bush put enormous pressure on Israel to evict them and give that land to the Palestinians. In fact, the United States offered to give Israel \$1.2 billion in order to relocate the settlers. (In other words, this country was paying the bill to make this happen.) This was the first step in evicting all Jews from Gaza in order to further Bush's plan to establish a Palestinian state.

The eviction of these settlers was not a minor task. Thousands of people lived there. The area

was a major agricultural center of Israel and produced about 15% of Israel's vegetables. It took 40,000 troops to force the settlers to leave. After they were evicted the army demolished their homes and destroyed their settlements. The last settler was removed on August 23, and on that date President Bush praised Prime Minister Sharon for his “courageous decision to withdraw from Gaza and parts of the West Bank.”

One might ask: what else happened on August 23, 2005? A tropical depression formed over the Bahamas, which grew into a tropical storm named Katrina. I don't think I have to tell you what happened when Hurricane Katrina hit the United States.

Some might say that it's just a coincidence that every time America forces Israel to give up her land, something terrible and extraordinary happens. If so, it's really quite an amazing string of coincidences! There are a great many more examples I could give; the book that documents all of this is hundreds of pages long.

Was it just a coincidence that when Japan announced on March 9, 2011 that they were sending the Palestinians millions of dollars so that they could create a state with Jerusalem as its capitol, that it was hit by a 9.0 magnitude earthquake just two days later – the worst it ever experienced in its history? Or what about April 2010, when Obama announced that, for the first time ever, the United States was going to use its veto power in the UN *against* Israel if it didn't comply with the “peace process” that involved giving away more land. After that statement the BP oil rig disaster happened, which was the worst oil spill to ever occur. Are all of these history-making disasters just coincidences?

Or take the recent shooting in Norway. We're all familiar with the fact that Anders Breivik traveled to an island in Norway that was home to a youth camp and opened fire, killing dozens of people. But did you know that the day *before* the shooting, the foreign minister traveled to that very same island in order to condemn Israel and announce Norway's support for a Palestinian state? He said that Norway wanted to be the first state to recognize it. The young people at the camp were very supportive and demanded that Israel be boycotted. The next day – on the very same island where the announcement had been made – Breivik opened fire on the very same young people who demanded that Israel be destroyed.

I believe that God is fulfilling His promise to trouble those who trouble Israel. He promised to judge those who divided Israel's land and I think He has done exactly that. As America and other nations continue to force Israel to give up her land, you can expect even more breathtaking disasters. God is not a respecter of persons.

Now, I am not saying that every natural disaster that happens is because of this; there are many things that happen simply because we live in a fallen world. However, God has been known to judge cities, nations, and people that have transgressed His laws (remember Sodom and Gomorrah?), and I believe He continues to do so today. After all, God does not change.

The real judgment, though, is still ahead of us. One day all the nations of the world will gather against Jerusalem in order to destroy her and her people. They will invade the city and they will sack it, but then Jesus will come back *in person* to destroy them all. He will put a final end to all those who seek to “trouble” His people.