

ISRAEL AND GOD'S PURPOSES

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL / THE HEBREW PEOPLE	BIBLE	SUMMARY COMMENTS AND KEY QUESTIONS
God's promise of an heir to Abram is immediately followed by the promise of land. This is God's covenant with Abram.	Gen 15: 7 & 18	Here God promises to Abram's descendants a specific land – bounded by the river of Egypt to the Euphrates; the existing 10 small tribes in possession are named. Sweep of land from Iraq to Egypt (?).
Abram becomes Abraham – the father of many nations	Gen 17:4	God promises to be the father of Abraham's descendants – for males the sign of circumcision is required. For the Church, circumcision no longer required – see Galatians 5: 2.
Through Abraham's offspring all nations will be blessed	Gen 22: 18	Generally understood to be via Jesus the Messiah and through His Church – the body of Christ
The Edomites were cursed because they rejoiced at the desolation of the 'inheritance' of Israel	Ezek 35: 15	Plainly the inheritance of Israel that was 'desolate' was the lands of Israel. Those who rejoice in Israel's woes seem to be paid back in kind. Is this still true?
Prophecies against Israel's neighbours	Ezek chapters 25 thru 30	Israel has always been under attack (why?). Is there a read-across to the woes of the modern enemies (neighbours) of Israel?
Exile followed by home-coming	Ezek 36:8 & 37:14	Prophecies often have a near term and a long term outworking. (Two audiences – the one for whom the prophecy was originally written, and for us – succeeding generations). There were 2 major exiles in OT times – to Assyria and to Babylonia. After a period of punishment the Israelites were allowed by God to return home.
Israel's geography	Ezek 47: 15 thru 23	This is a more granular description of Israel's inheritance.
The Psalmist remembers God's gift of the Holy Lands to Israel	Ps 78: 54	God brought the Israelites to their lands as an inheritance. He drove other tribes out before them. Did God have a "right" to do this?
God revealed His laws to Israel	Ps 147: 19	He has done so for no other nation – they do not know His laws
I will put Israel in her own land, never more to be uprooted	Amos 9: 15	When was this prophecy fulfilled? If it hasn't been fulfilled, when will it be? See also Jeremiah 16: 14-15.
Moses is Israel's accuser – says Jesus	John 5 : 45	God continued to work out His purposes in the Lord Jesus' time. The Lord Jesus recognised this.
The terms on which Israel may live there	Jer 7: 5	If you change your ways, deal justly, protect aliens, then I will let you live there forever and ever. What does forever and ever mean? Why the emphasis? Is this the same forever and ever as in Galatians 1:5?
Loss of lands because of sin	Dan 9: 4 ff	As throughout the OT, Israel's punishment is directly associated with her sin (e.g. verse 11). This is a consistent message throughout the OT.
Israel is the apple of God's eye	Zech2: 8	What happens to those who still attack the apple of God's eye – is this true today?
Can a Nation be born in a day?	Isa 66: 8	Some see this as a prophetic insight into 14 May 1948. Are they wrong to do so?

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Jerusalem will be "an immovable rock for all Nations"	Zech 12: 3	When in the past did this happen? What is the meaning of this prophecy if it yet lies in the future? Are we beginning to see this becoming true in our own day?
All nations will rise up against Israel	Zech 14: 2	Has this prophesy been fulfilled (especially verse 4)? If not when will it be?
God's help to Israel – Israel survives! God remembers His covenant – and will establish an everlasting covenant	Ps 124 Ezek 16: 60	But surely this is still true? But surely this is still true?
God's promise of peace to Israel	2 Sam 7: 10 Heb 3: 18 – 4: 1	No longer disturbed has this yet been fulfilled? The Jews were unable to 'enter' because of their unbelief – but will there come a time when they do believe and may therefore enter their rest?
God's plans remain forever	Ps 33: 10 - 11	The Lord thwarts the plans of men (and nations) but his plans stand forever. Can we apply this to the Jews?
Deliverance promised	Micah 2: 12 - 13	Is there a near term as well as far term outworking of this?
God promises to bring Israel back	Lev 26: 42 - 45	Is there a near term as well as far term outworking of this? In the light of other evidence, this underlines the all-time aspect of Israel's connection with the lands.
New covenant foretold	Jer 31: 31 - 34	When will this happen, if it has not <i>already</i> happened?!
God will bear his holy arm before all nations	Isaiah 52: 10	This cannot refer to Cyrus because Israel was redeemed from just one nation – not all nations. So when will this happen? Where does 1948 fit into this?
Future unprecedented peace for Israel?	Isaiah 63: 7	Jer 31:28, 31: 36, 32: 42, 32: 37 – 41, 33: 6 – 8. When did this happen if not in future?

Notes:

A recurrent theme through the OT is God's husband-like love for his people Israel, and their continual rebellion against him. The promise of a new covenant is explicit, but this does not negate the old covenant, it enlarges it. If God's covenant (contract) with Israel is said to be inherited by others (i.e. the Church) because of its repudiation by Israel, then surely God would have said this explicitly in the NT. If any modern contract was to be assigned from one party to another, a lawyer would express this explicitly – is God less diligent than a modern lawyer?!

These Bible verses, although random and arguably not set clearly in any context, never the less do appear to support the view that God's promises are made and kept for all time. The very fact of Israel's survival (or rather, the Jewish people's survival) through 4 millennia of attack suggests that God is indeed true to His promise, *unless you take the view that some other spiritual power has been protecting Israel.*

Why should we believe that Rome's enforced exile of the Israelites (actually the Judeans and Galileans) would have an outcome different to that already experienced by Israel after the Assyrian and the Babylonian experiences of exile? The Roman exile was longer and infinitely more painful, because the sin was the greatest of all (rejection of the Messiah). But in the same way we expect the return of the Messiah at the crisis in world history, should we not also expect a return of the Hebrews to their inheritance? And

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should we not expect that those who oppose this claiming of inheritance (i.e. actively oppose modern Israel's right to exist) to be themselves opposed by God, and to suffer the same sort of consequences suffered by Israel's ancient enemies?

God's unhesitating love for Israel is expressed beautifully in Jeremiah chapter 31 and leads straight into the prophecy of a new covenant (Jer 31: 31) understood to be a covenant through the Lord Jesus and with all people – the old Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants are enlarged by the new.

If God's "forever" promises to the Jews can be broken by God, then can we have confidence in His NT "forever" promises?

The Jews have certain obligations to 'aliens' in their midst, but by implication those aliens also have obligations to their hosts [e.g. Romans 13:1 and Jeremiah 29:7]. This may go some way to explain the present intractable issues between Israel and the 'Palestinians.' In this regard it should be noted that the use of the name 'Palaestina' (or in full *Syria Palaestina*) by the Romans at the close of the Bar Kokhba revolt (ended AD 136) was part of Roman policy of extinguishing the memory of Jews from their lands (what today we would call ethnic cleansing). 'Palaestina' was derived from ancient *Philistia* – the most intractable of Israel's ancient enemies – the Philistines. Classical scholars have used the name 'Palestine' ever since to describe the biblical lands, but note that 'Palestine' was not a political reality until (1919) when the British used it to title the lands ceded to British control by the League of Nations. It is an interesting fact that the name chosen, although scholarly, has certain theological - even spiritual - overtones.

If the OT promises and NT confirmations are taken at face value, then the widespread attempts to undermine modern Israel may also have theological and spiritual overtones.

Covenant theology: the promise of the covenant undergoes expansion (via the Church) but it never suffers abrogation. The NT does not *emphasise* a literal restoration of Israel. Why? Partly because the final out-workings of the Jewish War ending in AD70 and the Bar Kochba revolt of AD 132-136 had not yet happened, at the time the New Testament was written. So the question had not arisen (?). In any case, the Gentile church began to see itself as being the future of 'Israel'. But an argument from silence – i.e. the NT does emphasise the literal restoration – cannot be conclusive, especially when set against the other clear pointers that the Bible gives us, starting with the old Moses covenant. * see David Pawson "*Israel in the New Testament*". Whilst the NT does not emphasise the literal restoration, it certainly alludes to it in many places, and David Pawson's book is an excellent resource to pursue an in-depth exploration of God's purposes in this regard.