

**PALESTINE - WHOSE LAND?
JERUSALEM - WHOSE CITY?
ISRAEL'S OR ISLAM'S?**

By Barry C. Hodson

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According to the history of Israel as narrated in the Bible, Abraham, who lived around 2,000 B.C. was the progenitor or ancestor of the nation. He was a Semite (a descendant of Noah's son Shem), and he lived in a city called Ur, situated in southern Mesopotamia, which is southern Iraq today.

It is recorded in the book of Genesis that God wanted to create a new nation out of Abraham and intended it to be situated in the land then known as Canaan and Palestine due to being possessed by the Canaanites and Philistines, who were descendants of Noah's son Ham.

So God called Abraham out and away from Mesopotamia into Canaan and promised to give him and his descendants the land for an everlasting possession. Abraham was also promised that through one of his descendants in particular (Jesus) all nations would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-7. 13:14-18. 15:17-21. 17:1-8. Gal. 3:16).

The Canaanites occupied the land due to natural human processes of migration, but the land was divinely bequeathed to Abraham and his descendants. The nation of Israel is the only nation in history to have its land personally bequeathed by God.

So Abraham was obedient to the call of God and migrated to Canaan and lived there, waiting for the promises to be fulfilled. Due to his wife Sarah being barren, she asked Abraham to go in to their Egyptian slave girl Hagar, in order to have a child by proxy through her, and Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. Later, God promised Sarah that she would give birth to a son, even though she was barren and 90 years old and Abraham 99. Divine intervention was required for her to conceive and give birth, so the child born caused much rejoicing and laughter, for which reason he was called "Isaac" which means laughter. Due to the conception of Isaac resulting from divine promise and intervention, he is referred to as being a child of promise (Rom. 9:6-9. Gal. 4:28) and "born of the Spirit" (Gal. 4:29). And in Gen. 21:8 God told Abraham that it would be through Isaac that the promised nation would come.

Ishmael however was not born as the result of a promise from God because God did not promise him to Abraham. Ishmael was the result of Abraham and Sarah's own will, initiative and decision to have a child through Hagar the Egyptian slave girl. It was prompted by the flesh not the Spirit and therefore Ishmael is referred to as being "born after the flesh," not born after the Spirit. Ishmael was "the son of a slave woman" whereas Isaac was "the son of the free woman" (Gal. 4:28-31). Isaac's mother was Abraham's only and true wife - a "free woman." Ishmael's

mother was not Abraham's wife. Being a slave girl, she was a "bondwoman." So, in short, Isaac was promised by God but Ishmael was not.

A WILD ASS OF A MAN

Being born of the flesh, Ishmael was, as we read in Gen. 16:12 "a wild ass of a man who would be against every one and everyone against him."

Prior to Isaac being born, when God told Abraham that Sarah was going to give birth to a son who would be the promised heir, Abraham responded by appealing to God to let Ishmael be the heir (Gen. 17). Abraham clearly loved Ishmael and did not feel the need for another son. But God had other ideas. He told Abraham that his wife Sarah was going to have a son and his name was to be called Isaac. God also told him that He intended to establish His everlasting covenant with Isaac and his seed after him (Gen. 17:15-19).

Then in Gen. 17:20 God said: "As for Ishmael, I have heard you: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly: twelve princes shall he beget and I will make him a great nation."

Isaac became the ancestor of the twelve tribes of Israel and Ishmael who married an Egyptian (Gen. 21:21) became the ancestor of twelve Arab tribes.

When Isaac was weaned, and the customary feast was taking place, Ishmael was seen to be mocking Isaac (Gen. 21). Reference to this in Gal. 4:29 says Ishmael was "persecuting" Isaac. He was probably jealous and envious of all the attention Isaac was receiving and of the fact that Isaac was to be the heir of the promised land. Ishmael's persecution of Isaac was a sign of future hatred and animosity of Arabs against Israel. Ishmael's misbehaviour led to his expulsion from the land. When Sarah saw Ishmael mocking Isaac, she said to Abraham: "Cast out this slave woman and her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac" (Gen. 21:9-). Sarah perceived how incompatible Ishmael would be with Isaac and what a mistake it would be for them to share the promised land, because it would lead to conflict and division.

Sarah's proposal upset Abraham because Ishmael was his son and he loved him. Left to himself, Abraham may have refused to expel Ishmael and his mother from the land. But God intervened and told him not to be upset at Sarah's proposal but to hearken to her request. It was clearly not God's will for Ishmael and his Arab descendants to inherit and possess the promised land with Isaac and his descendants (Israel). In Gal. 4:30 the apostle Paul equates Sarah's proposal with Scripture, which is the inspired

word of God. This implies that her request to expel Ishmael was inspired by God - an inspired oracle.

ANCESTOR OF ARABS

However, God did reassure Abraham that because Ishmael was his offspring, He would make of him a great nation (Gen. 21:13-18). In Gen. 25:12-18 Ishmael's twelve sons are referred to by name and we are told that they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur. Havilah was in Arabia.

It is evident from the names of Ishmael's twelve sons listed in Gen. 25:12-16 that they migrated eastward into Arabia, and it is generally accepted that the Arabs descended from them. Mohammed, the founder of Islam, traced his lineage back to Ishmael through his first born son Nebajoth. Mohammed was born in Mecca Arabia and many Moslem Arabs today also claim to be descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham.

It is due to being physical descendants of Abraham that many Arabs claim the right to possess the land promised to Abraham. But as we have seen, their ancestor Ishmael was forbidden by God to inherit the land and was expelled. Being the physical descendant of Abraham did not qualify him for inheritance. As we have seen, he was not a "child of promise." God Promised Isaac the land not Ishmael (Rom. 9).

Some may point out that Abraham's grandson Esau, who was the twin brother of Jacob (Israel), married Ishmael's daughter Mahalath, who was the sister of Ishmael's first born son Nebajoth, from whom Mohammed claims to have descended, and argue on this basis that the Arabs have a right to possess the land (Gen. 28:9).

Esau however, even though unlike Ishmael was the son (twin son at that!) of his father Isaac's true wife, was also not allowed to inherit the land promised to Abraham. Why? Because as in the case of Ishmael, God did not promise it to him and the genetic connection through physical descent could not qualify him for inheritance (Rom. 9:10-13). Esau ended up occupying land south east of Israel which is in Jordan today and Arab tribes descended therefrom due to the connection with Ishmael, and intermarriage with other Arab tribes (Ps. 83:6). However, because Esau was Jacob's brother and worshipped the same God, his posterity were later allowed to enter Israel's congregation if they wanted to (Deu. 23:7-8).

The Arab descendants of Esau, Ishmael and Abraham's other sons through Keturah are referred to in the Bible as "the children of the east" and were "like locusts for multitude" (Judg. 7:12). On several occasions they invaded Israel but ended up being expelled.

Later, during Israel's history, Esau's descendants, the Edomites, invaded Israel but perished as a result of divine intervention (2 Chr. 20).

The Edomites also stood on the sideline rejoicing when the Babylonians destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple and forced the Jews into exile (Ps. 137). They took advantage of Israel's exile and moved into their land and occupied it, saying: "Aha, the ancient heights (of Israel) are now our possession" (Ezk. 36:1-7). As a result of Edom's anti-Israel attitude and attempt to take over their land, God pronounced judgement against them: (Lam. 4:21. Ezk. 25:12-14. Ch. 35. Amos 1:11. Obadiah).

Genesis chapter 25 also informs us that after Sarah's death, Abraham married Keturah and had six more sons through her. Verses 5-6 inform us that Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac and gave gifts to the other sons and sent them away from Isaac his son into the east country. And it is evident from the names of the sons that they ended up in the territories east of the Jordan river and beyond into Arabia. As in the case of Ishmael, Arab nations also came from these other sons of Abraham. And, as in the case of Ishmael's Arab descendants, God also did not want the Arab descendants of Abraham's other sons to occupy the promised land with Isaac. It was so important for Isaac to stay there that when he attempted to go down to Egypt due to a famine, God intervened and told him to stay in the land and promised to bless him, which He did! Isaac sowed seed and harvested an hundredfold (Gen. 26).

However, at a later date, Isaac's son Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, took his family down to Egypt due to famine, where their descendants ended up being enslaved there for several centuries. God allowed this because He had previously told Abraham that one day his descendants would be strangers in a foreign land where they would become slaves and treated cruelly. But God assured Abraham that He would punish the nation that enslaves them and deliver Israel and bring them back to their land (Gen. 15).

Around 1,500 B.C. the Exodus took place when Israel was led out of Egypt by Moses and headed for the promised land. The Israelites, not the Ishmaelites, were led by Joshua across the Jordan river to conquer the Canaanites and possess the land "from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates" (Gen. 15:18). The land was divided up into twelve territories for the twelve tribes and included the area called "the West Bank" today. Israel occupied the land for around 1,500 years and archaeological evidence confirms this occupation. They only lost possession of the land due to being forcefully evicted by the Romans and sent into exile.

ISRAEL'S PAST OCCUPATION OF PALESTINE CONFIRMED BY ARCHAEOLOGY

Some have disputed Israel's past occupation of Palestine as narrated in the Bible, and think that there is no physical evidence to prove it.

However archaeological evidence has proved it beyond all doubt. Take for example some of the following discoveries:

1. The victory stele of Pharaoh Merneptah, discovered in 1896 at Thebes and now housed in the Egyptian museum at Cairo. It gives an account of Merneptah's victories and includes a victory in Canaan over Israel. It reads: "Israel is devastated ...". This is proof positive that Israel was living in Canaan by at least the thirteenth century B.C. when Merneptah, the son of Rameses the Great reigned over Egypt.

2. In 1994 a stone slab was found on a mound in Israel known as "Tell Dan." An inscription was found on the stone which read: "The house of David" and "the king of Israel." It was written in the Hebrew script of the ninth century B.C. The inscription confirmed that Israel existed in the land and that David was king and had a dynasty ("house").

3. Pharaoh Shishak's victory relief on a temple wall at Thebes also confirms Israel's occupation of Canaan. Shishak reigned from 940 to 915 B.C. and his relief records how he invaded Israel, plundered treasure from the temple at Jerusalem (built previously by Solomon) and took captives from the cities of Israel. 156 of Israel's towns and localities are named on the relief, again confirming Israel's occupation of the land at the time.

4. The "Moabite Stone," discovered in 1868 at Dhiban in Jordan, and now in the Louvre Museum Paris, is inscribed with a record of the rebellion of Mesha, the king of Moab, against the king of Israel. This occurred around 850 B.C. and is referred to in the Bible in 2 Kings chapter 3. Reference on this stone to the king of Israel confirms Bible history concerning Israel's occupation of the land under a king

5. The black obelisk commissioned by the ancient Assyrian king Shalmaneser 111 was discovered in Nimrud, Iraq in 1846. It is inscribed with many scenes and inscriptions, commemorating the victories and deeds of the king who reigned 858-824 B.C. and is on display in the British Museum. One of the scenes on the obelisk refers to Israel in her land which he invaded and mentions the king of Israel, Jehu. Not only that, but there is actually a carving on one of the panels depicting Jehu on his knees offering tribute to the king of Assyria. This confirms references in the Bible to both Shalmaneser and Jehu: (2 Kng. 17:3. 18:9. 1 Kng. 16:1 etc).

6. Sennacherib's prism. This six-sided hexagonal prism was unearthed in 1830 at the ancient Assyrian capital of Nineveh, situated in Iraq today, and is now in the British Museum. It records the triumphs of the Assyrian king Sennacherib who reigned around 700 B.C. On the prism he refers to the Jews in the land of Canaan and mentions their king, Hezekiah, by name. This confirms the references in the Bible to Sennacherib and to Israel occupying the land with a king by the name of Hezekiah reigning from Jerusalem.

7. Reference is made in the Bible to king Hezekiah who, in the eighth century B.C. due to the threat of Assyrian invasion and siege by Senaacherib, commissioned the digging of a tunnel to divert water from a lower pool outside the city to a pool inside the city (2 Chr. 32. Isa. 9:11). Towards the end of the tunnel an inscription was found on the wall in 1880 describing the carving of the tunnel. This also confirmed another part of Bible history concerning Israel during her occupation of the land. Unfortunately someone cut the inscription out of the wall and it ended up in a Turkish Museum in Istanbul.

8. Added to this evidence could be numerous tablets, coins and seals bearing the names of Jewish kings who reigned at Jerusalem, along with other Israelites who lived in the land who are referred to in the Bible by name, not to mention the Dead Sea scrolls which authenticate the Hebrew Scriptures. But to do so would be too time consuming.

The Romans invaded and conquered Israel prior to the birth of Christ, and were an occupying power during his lifetime. But in A.D. 70, due to Jewish revolt, the Romans besieged and destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple, and massacred hundreds of thousands of Jews and sent the survivors into exile as slaves. In fulfilment of Bible prophecy they were dispersed among the nations for almost 1,900 years and suffered persecution by many.

It was also in fulfilment of Bible prophecy that the Jews eventually returned to their land en masse and became a nation again, and the Holocaust played a big part in this. (Send for free booklet: "The Remarkable Witness of the Jews to the Truth of Bible Prophecy").

But the problem is that during Israel's exile, as in times past, the Arabs moved into the land, and after living there for centuries, naturally regard it as their own, and see Israel as a trespasser.

The conflict that has arisen as a result of this, and the anti-Israel attitude of the countries surrounding Israel (not to mention others), was prophesied in the Bible as the precursor for the battle of Armageddon and the return of Christ, who alone can solve the conflict.

THE HISTORY OF JERUSALEM

The first reference to Jerusalem occurs quite early in the Bible in Gen. 14. This chapter refers to Abraham returning from a victorious battle against an invading force in order to rescue his nephew Lot. Verse 18 says Melchizedek king of Salem (Jerusalem: Ps. 76:2) and priest of the most high God went out to give Abraham bread and wine and blessed him.

There is more to this story than what meets the eye because Ps. 110:4 which is expounded in Heb. 5 reveals that Melchizedec the king-priest of Jerusalem was a type or foreshadow of Jesus, who also is a king-priest

who will ultimately rule the world from Jerusalem. (See free booklet: “Jerusalem - City of Remarkable History and Destiny”).

So then, from a very early period in history, before Ishmael and Isaac were born, a sign was given of a future connection between Jerusalem and a Jewish king, but not an Arab king.

The second reference in the Bible to Jerusalem also relates to the time of Abraham and it is recorded in Gen. 22. In this chapter we read that God told Abraham to take his son, his only son Isaac who he loved, to the land of Mount Moriah and offer him up as a sacrifice upon one of the mountains. Two points are of interest in this statement. Firstly, in spite of Abraham having other sons, Isaac is referred to as his “only” son because he was the only heir of Abraham and ancestor of Christ and the other sons had been removed. Secondly, Mount Moriah was at Jerusalem where Solomon eventually built Israel’s temple and altar where sacrifices were offered. It was also upon one of the “mountains” (hills) at Jerusalem where Jesus was offered as the antitypical sacrifice. The offering of Isaac as a sacrifice at Jerusalem was clearly a type and foreshadow of Christ’s sacrifice, and was another sign of a connection between Jerusalem and the Jewish Messiah, not an Arab Messiah or prophet!

Throughout the 4,000 years of Biblical history, there is no connection between Jerusalem and the Arabs. Archaeological excavation in Jerusalem has not revealed Arab history relating to that period.

“THE PLACE”

During the Exodus as Israel was journeying from Egypt to the promised land, God referred to “the place” that He would choose in the land to place His habitation to be a centre of worship for the twelve tribes (Deu. 12:5 etc). It is clear from this that Israel’s centre of worship would be chosen and appointed by God, not man.

When Israel finally entered the promised land under Joshua, they set up God’s sanctuary, the tabernacle, at Shiloh which was in the tribal territory of Ephraim, about 40 kilometres north of Jerusalem as the crow flies (Josh. 18:1. 1 Sam. 1:3). Shiloh became the centre of worship and base of operations, and the tabernacle with the ark of the covenant remained there until the time of Samuel.

During the time of Samuel the Philistines seized the ark during a battle with Israel and destroyed Shiloh and the tabernacle (1 Sam. 4. Jer. 7:12-15). But due to God’s affliction coming upon them, the Philistines sent the ark back after having it in their possession for seven months (1 Sam. 6:1). The ark was placed in the house of Abinadab in Gibeah which was not far to the west of Jerusalem. After being there for twenty years Samuel began his judgeship and inaugurated a reform (1 Sam. 7:1-2). But

the ark actually remained at Gibeah for a total of almost eighty years. Up until this time the Lord had not revealed “the place” He had appointed to be the centre of worship where the ark would be placed.

During this time the Jebusites, a branch of the Canaanites, occupied Jerusalem. Their king was slain by Joshua (Josh. 10:23-26) and Jerusalem was assigned to the tribe of Benjamin (Josh. 18:28). But later the city was taken by men of the tribe of Judah who set it on fire (Judg. 1:8).

Jerusalem was on the border of the tribe of Judah and Benjamin (Josh. 15:8). But apparently Jebusites survived and rebuilt the city, because we read in Josh. 15:63 and Judg. 1:21 that the men of Judah and Benjamin failed to drive the Jebusites out. They remained in occupation of the city of Jerusalem, dwelling with the children of Judah and Benjamin as strangers (Judg. 19:11).

The Jebusites still had control of Jerusalem when David came on the scene, but God revealed to him, even before he became king, that Jerusalem was “the place” divinely appointed to be the centre of worship and seat of kingly power.

And so, after David defeated the Philistine giant Goliath, he severed his head and took it to Jerusalem. He probably set it up on a pole outside the city wall. The Jebusites were in alliance with the Philistines and they would understand the meaning of this gesture - “Your turn next” (1 Sam. 17:54).

When David became king he wasted no time taking his army to attack the Jebusites and conquer Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:6-7). But numerous Scriptures make it clear that Jerusalem was God’s choice and David was the man chosen to secure it. In Psalm 132:13 David says: “For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation.” For this reason David says in Ps. 48:1 that Jerusalem is “the city of God.” Initially, David reigned in Hebron over the tribe of Judah for seven and a half years and then in Jerusalem for thirty three years over all twelve tribes (2 Sam. 5:1-5).

When David became king the ark of the covenant was still in the house of Abinadab, so David gathered all his people together to bring it up to Jerusalem. Unfortunately he went about doing this in a way contrary to the Lord’s instructions, by placing it on a cart drawn by oxen instead of the priests carrying it manually. The oxen stumbled and were it not for Uzzah, one of Abinadab’s sons reaching out to hold on to the ark, it would have crashed to the ground. But touching the ark was strictly forbidden by God and Uzzah was struck down dead. David was so displeased and fearful as a result of this, that he would not take the ark up to Jerusalem but took it to the house of a Levite, Obed-edom instead. It remained there for three months and Obed-edom and his household were blessed while it was there.

So David went and brought up the ark of God in the correct manner from the house of Obed-edom to Jerusalem with great joy and gladness leaping and dancing, and set it up in a tabernacle (tent) that he had pitched for it “in the city of David” (1 Chr. 15:1) and offered offerings to the Lord upon the altar (2 Sam. 6).

It was after this that God gave David the well known promise recorded in 2 Sam. 7:12-17, which assured him that one of his descendants would be a son of God and reign on the throne at Jerusalem forever. The angel Gabriel quoted these words to Mary after telling her that she was going to give birth to Jesus (Lk. 1:31-33). As all serious Bible scholars know, scores of verses could be quoted which refer to Messiah ultimately ruling from a throne in Jerusalem over all nations. Truly: “Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God” (Ps. 87:3).

David did not feel comfortable about living in a house (palace) of cedar while the ark of God dwelt in a tent. So he wanted to build a house (temple) for the ark (2 Sam. 7:1-3). However, it was not God’s will for David to build the temple; this task was reserved for David’s son Solomon.

MOUNT MORIAH

As has been pointed out: David installed the ark of God in a tent “in the city of David” (1 Chr. 15:1). The “city of David” was originally the Jebusite stronghold or fortress which stood on the ridge, south of Mount Moriah surrounded by valleys. It was called the city of David because he made it his royal residence (2 Sam. 5:6-9. 1 Chr. 11:5-7). Left to himself, David would probably have expected the temple to be built on this site where he pitched the tent for the ark. But it was not left to him to decide where to build the temple. It had been divinely chosen. God appointed the site and it was revealed to David under threatening circumstances, recorded in 1 Chr. 21.

David committed a serious sin by trusting in the numerical strength of his people instead of God. As a result an angel sent a pestilence resulting in many deaths. David saw the angel with a drawn sword standing on Mount Moriah (2 Chr. 3:1) and repented. The angel then commanded David to set up an altar on Mount Moriah. David knew from this that Mount Moriah was “the place” appointed by God to be the centre of worship - the site for His temple and altar. So David purchased the site and offered up sacrifices to the Lord.

Ultimately, Solomon built the temple on Mount Moriah (2 Chr. 3:1) and brought the ark of God up from the city of David to the holy mount and placed it in the temple (1 Kng. 8:1-). A lengthy prayer was offered by Solomon at the dedication of the temple in which he encouraged the

people to look towards the temple at Jerusalem when they prayed, because it represented the throne and presence of God on earth.

There can be no doubt whatsoever that Mount Moriah at Jerusalem was “the place” chosen and appointed by God to be the site of Israel’s temple. It would have been an outrageous abomination - a profane act of sacrilege for some other race or rival religion to replace it by erecting their own edifice on the same site, especially if they had numerous other sites elsewhere or in their own land to build it.

In spite of this, two Moslem mosques sit on the mount today. One has a golden dome and is known as the Mosque of Omar or Dome of the Rock, built in 691A.D. The other one with a silver dome is the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Solomon’s temple predated them by 1,600 years.

THREE TEMPLES

Altogether, the Israelites have had three temples on Mount Moriah. Solomon’s was the first and was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. due to the Jews in the southern kingdom becoming apostate. Many Jews were killed by the Babylonian invasion and the survivors were taken as captives to Babylon. In fulfilment of the Word of prophecy, the Jews were released from Babylon after seventy years captivity and allowed to return to their homeland and rebuild their temple in 537 B.C. (Ezra ch 1. 2 Chr. 36:21. Jer. 25:8-11. Isa. 44:24 to 45:1).

Prior to that the Assyrians invaded the northern kingdom of Israel and took most of the Israelites into captivity. According to 2 Kng. 17:24 the Assyrian king sent pagan captives from other countries to the land of Israel to replace the Israelites who had been deported and to denationalize the Israelites who remained. These pagans tried to incorporate aspects of Israel's religion with their own idolatrous religion and ended up with a hotch potch religion. Initially they inhabited the district of Samaria in central Palestine and therefore became known as “Samaritans.”

Well, when the Jews returned from Babylon and started rebuilding the temple, the Samaritans wanted to be involved in the rebuild but the Jews refused their request. In view of the fact that they had suffered seventy years exile in Babylon because of idolatrous practices, they would not allow an idolatrous element such as the Samaritans to get involved in their work.

The reason for mentioning this is to point out that although the Samaritans were living in the land while the Jews were captives in Babylon, and did not have a temple of their own, they were not cheeky or rude or presumptuous enough to take advantage of Israel's absence and build a temple of their own on Mount Moriah!

They did eventually build their own temple but not at Jerusalem.

They built it on Mount Gerizim on the southern side of Shechem, about 40 kilometres north of Jerusalem as the crow flies (Jn. 4:5, 20).

In 18 B.C. Herod pulled down the second Jewish temple at Jerusalem and built a third one on a grander scale. He enlarged the temple mount and the enclosure walls around the mount. It was still being built in the days of Jesus (Jn. 2:20). Construction was not finished until 64 A.D. 10,000 Herodian and pre-Herodian stones are still in place in the four walls surrounding the temple mount. Various features in what is left of the temple and its ruins confirm descriptions of the temple given by Josephus, the first century Jewish historian. It would be the height of ignorance to deny that a Jewish temple once existed on this site. Countless references are made in the New Testament to Jesus and the apostles and Jews visiting it. Yet, in spite of this, some countries belonging to the U.N.O. recently manifested their ignorance (or prejudice) by claiming that Israel had no historical connection with a temple on the Mount now occupied by Moslem Mosques!

According to the Mishnah (a collection of Jewish oral laws compiled and written down about 200 A.D.), the platform for Solomon's temple was 500 royal cubits. This would make it the same size and shape as the Jewish sanctuary referred to in Ezk. 45:2.

Extensive archaeological research has taken place in the past on the temple mount to locate Solomon's temple platform and some interesting discoveries have been made. Traces of the platform - rows of stones, wall remains, sections of pavement, rock cuttings, cisterns etc have been located. All these pieces of evidence when combined and put together, have been sufficient to locate Solomon's 500 cubit square platform on which he built the temple, proving that it really did exist!

JERUSALEM TRODDEN DOWN BY GENTILES UNTIL ...

Because of Jewish rebellion, Jesus issued a warning saying that the city of Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies resulting in many Jews falling by the sword and being led away captive into all nations. Furthermore, he said: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the gentiles (non Jews) until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24).

The word "until" defines a limit to the period of time that Jerusalem would be occupied and controlled by non Jewish nations and implies that the city would ultimately be restored to the control of Israel.

In A.D. 70 the Romans, under Titus besieged and partially destroyed the city of Jerusalem and broke down large sections of the walls of the temple, and exiled many of the Jews.

Under the emperor Hadrian the Romans commenced to rebuild and re-fortify Jerusalem as a gentile city in order to hold it against its former

Jewish inhabitants. This seems to have been one main reason for the Jewish revolt under Bar-Kokhba during 132 to 135 A.D. The Jewish revolt resulted in defeat and Jerusalem suffered almost complete destruction. The Romans resumed and completed the rebuilding of the city. The old name Jerusalem was discarded and it was called Colonia Elia Capitolina: Colonia to denote that it was a Roman colony; Elia in honour of Hadrian whose first name was Elius, and Capitolina because it was dedicated to the heathen god Jupiter Capitolinus. To this heathen deity a temple was dedicated on the Mount Moriah site where the Jewish temples had sat. The Jews were forbidden, on pain of death, to enter Jerusalem. The name Elia continued for several centuries.

In 306 A.D. Constantine was proclaimed emperor of Rome. As a result of seeing a vision of the cross he embraced the Christian faith and championed the cause of Christianity. He moved his capitol from Rome to Byzantium in 330 A.D. and made Christianity the state religion. (Byzantium was renamed Constantinople in honour of Constantine and later became Istanbul). He removed the prohibition against the Jews entering Jerusalem. In 326, Helena his mother, caused two churches to be built; one at Bethlehem and one on the Mount of Olives, and the emperor himself erected the first church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Though Constantine ruled over a united Roman empire it later divided into western and eastern sections and the two regions diverged greatly over the next several centuries. In 476 A.D. the barbarian Odoacer overthrew Rome's last emperor, Romulus Augustus, and Rome fell.

The eastern half known as the Byzantine empire was less vulnerable and was able to survive for centuries after the fall of Rome. The Byzantine emperor was head of both church and state. He became the spiritual leader of most eastern Christians.

During the seventh and eighth centuries, attacks by Persians and Slavs, combined with internal political instability, threatened the empire. In June 613 Jerusalem was taken by the Persians. Thousands of the inhabitants were massacred and other thousands were carried off prisoners to Persia, and the church of the Holy Sepulchre was burnt down.

In 628 Jerusalem was retaken by the Christians under the emperor Heraclius. But a new and more serious threat arose in the form of Islam, founded by the so-called prophet Mohammed in Mecca in 622. Mohammed, the prophet of Islam was born in Mecca in 570 and died in 632 and was said to ascend to heaven from a rock on Mount Moriah where the Jewish temple used to be. In 634, two years after Mohammed's death, Muslim armies began their assault on the Byzantine empire by storming into Syria. By the end of the century, Byzantium would lose Syria, the holy land, Egypt and North Africa (among other territories) to Islamic forces.

THE MOSQUE OF OMAR

In 637, five years after Mohammed's death, Jerusalem was taken by the Mohammedans under Omar, who then built a Mosque on the temple mount, Mount Moriah. According to Wikipedia under the heading "Siege of Jerusalem (636-637): Omar, during his stay in Jerusalem, was led by Sophronius (the former patriarch of Jerusalem who surrendered the city) to various holy sites, including the temple mount. Seeing the poor state of where the temple once stood, Omar ordered the area cleared of refuse and debris before having a wooden mosque built on the site. The earliest account of such a structure is given by Gallic bishop Arculf, who visited Jerusalem between 679 and 682, and describes a very primitive house of prayer able to accommodate up to 3,000 worshippers, constructed of wooden beams and boards over pre-existing ruins."

In 691, more than half a century after Mohammed's death and the capture of Jerusalem, the Umayyad Caliph ABD Al-Malik commissioned the construction of the Dome of the Rock over a large outcropping of bedrock on the temple mount. The tenth century historian Al-Muqaddasi wrote that ABD Al-Malik built the shrine in order to compete in grandeur with the city's Christian churches. Whatever the intention, the impressive splendour and scale of the shrine is seen as having helped significantly in solidifying the attachment of Jerusalem to the early Muslim faith.

THE MUSLIM CONNECTION TO JERUSALEM

Jerusalem is revered by the Moslems due to being the place where they claim Mohammed ascended to heaven. The place in Jerusalem where they believe this took place is the rock on Mount Moriah over which the golden domed Mosque sits, regarded as Islam's third most holy shrine, after Mecca and Medina.

Muslim tradition says Mohammed travelled to Jerusalem to the Mosque on his famous night journey, but there is no record that Mohammed had ever been there. There is certainly no reference to it in the Koran. There is not one single reference to Jerusalem in the Koran, but over 600 in the Hebrew Scriptures. Moreover, as already pointed out, Jerusalem was not taken by the Mohammedans until five years after Mohammed's death, and the golden domed Mosque at Jerusalem he is supposed to have visited wasn't built until sixty years after his death. So how could Mohammed's famous night journey have taken him to a Mosque in Jerusalem that did not exist?!

The Koran doesn't mention Jerusalem as the destination of Mohammed's night journey. It says that his flight took him to "Al Aqsa"

which means “the farthest place.” Early Islamic scholars interpreted this to mean a heavenly place, or the courtyard of Allah. But that all changed as Islam evolved into a political force. During the Crusades, the Muslim general Saladin changed Islamic tradition to strengthen the Muslim claim to Jerusalem. He stated that Mohammed’s flight took him not to heaven but to the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The Mosque was no doubt given this name to establish the theory. But, as has been pointed out: the Mosque did not exist while Mohammed was alive.

Muslims believe that once they claim a piece of land, it belongs to Islam forever. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Islamic leaders acknowledged the temple mount’s Jewish history. In 1924 Jerusalem’s supreme Moslem council published a tourist pamphlet on the temple mount, entitled: “ A Brief Guide to Al-Haran Al-Sha Jerusalem.” It stated that “the site’s identity with the site of Solomon’s temple was beyond dispute. This too is the spot, according to universal belief, on which David built an altar unto the Lord.”

NO EVIDENCE

There is simply no evidence that Mohammed’s physical body ever made a trip to Jerusalem, much as the Muslims demanding full control of Jerusalem want to believe it. The night journey he made was in a dream in the night, not in real life. There is ample evidence that Mohammed claimed to have had a dream about travelling there. It also came at a time when he was trying to convince the doubters around him that he belonged to the line of Jewish prophets. The story of him leading other prophets (Abraham, Moses and Jesus) in prayer at the Mosque in Jerusalem was highly convenient but obviously a complete fabrication - an outrageous lie!

Aisha, Mohammed’s favourite wife, later insisted that it was not a physical journey to Jerusalem that took place (1bn Ishaq/Hisham 265) and there has always been controversy within Islam about whether it was supposed to have been a physical or “spiritual” visit.

At the time, the Meccans mocked Mohammed for claiming to have visited Jerusalem in one night, since it was a one month journey to get there and back to Mecca. In fact, according to his biographer (1bn Ishaq/Hisham 265): “Many Muslims gave up their faith” when they heard this. Many Muslims fall back on the idea that Mohammed visited Jerusalem “in spirit” i.e. in his own mind in a vision or dream.

Those who believe Mohammed’s claim to have travelled to Jerusalem physically in body in one night rely on blind faith rather than common sense. He was also known to use the veil of sleep to make other grandiose claims about himself. Once he insisted that “while I was

sleeping, the keys to the treasures of the world were brought to me and put in my hand.” (Bukhari 52:220). Mohammed’s most faithful disciples pledge loyalty to whatever he says. Their attitude is: “If he says it, then it is true.” Once Mohammed told his people about a cow talking. The people responded: “Glorified be Allah! a cow speaks!” (Bukhari 56:677).

Even though Mohammed never travelled to Jerusalem before his “dream,” it is quite likely that he heard descriptions of the city from traders who had been there, particularly since he was known to seek out story tellers on his business trips.

Coming back to the Mosque erected on Israel’s temple site at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah: it is natural to wonder why the Muslims chose that particular site, knowing how holy it was to the Jews. There were, after all, countless other sites where the Mosque could be placed. The fact of the matter is that the Muslim claim to the city of Jerusalem is largely, if not entirely because of it being held sacred by the Jewish and Christian religion. From the time of Mohammed to the present day, Islam has always been a “me too” faith, attempting to ride the coat tails of other religions, even to the point of trying to duplicate the ascension of Jesus to heaven from Jerusalem by claiming Mohammed did the same.

If, as was suggested earlier, Islam built the grandiose Mosque with a golden dome to solidify attachment to Jerusalem and compete in grandeur with, and rival the Christian churches in Jerusalem; it would not be surprising if it was deliberately placed on the Mount Moriah site to rival Israel’s temple, and to make a statement like: “This is our land now.”

If the Mohammadans had followed Abraham’s instruction to live east of Canaan, and listened to the Hebrew prophets inspired by God who declared that Israel would return to their land, repossess Jerusalem and rebuild their temple; they would not have moved in to the land, laid claim to Jerusalem, and built Mosques on Mount Moriah, and they would have avoided much hatred, anger and violence as a result. As has often been the case: ignorance and rejection of the Word of God leads to conflict, division and death.

But erecting a Moslem Mosque on a particular site in a land that God never intended to be a Moslem country, does not make it a Moslem country. For example: erecting an American based church in England does not give America the right to claim possession of England!

Divine providence which has allowed Jerusalem to be trodden down by the Gentiles for a pre-determined time, has allowed Moslem Mosques to sit on Israel’s temple, but not forever. The Word of prophecy teaches that a Jewish temple will ultimately be rebuilt on the site before the return of Christ and the battle of Armageddon (send for booklet: “The End Time Jewish Temple in Bible Prophecy”).

This will probably require the removal of the Mosques. However,

they will have served a good purpose insofar as keeping the area clear of dwellings in preparation for the Jewish temple. Were it not for the Mosques being there, the area would be covered with Arab houses today. Divine providence can be seen in allowing the Mosques to be built there.

HISTORY OF THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT

Since A.D. 70, Jews have been dispersed throughout the world. By 1516, only a small community of 5,000 remained in Galilee. At that point, the first pre-modern aliyah (return) began, with Sephardic (Spanish speaking) victims of the Inquisition arriving in Israel with the approval of the Ottoman Empire. Together, these Jews formed a community called the Old Yishuv (settlement), and settled in Safed in Galilee. They were joined in the nineteenth century by Jewish religious movements from other parts of Europe, who settled in Jerusalem beginning in 1808. By 1810 they numbered 511 families.

In 1863 the population of Jerusalem was estimated at 5,000 Mohammedans, 3,606 Christians (Arabs) and 7,100 Jews, totalling 15,706. In 1892, Dr Selah Merrill, United States consul at Jerusalem, reported to his government that the Jews alone amounted to 25,322. Ten years later the Jews had increased in number to 40,000. In 1914 Palestine had a population of 657,000 Muslim Arabs, 81,000 Christian Arabs and 59,000 Jews.

The Jews called their homeland Eretz Israel, meaning the land of Israel, as opposed to the nation of Israel consisting of all Jews. The Ottoman Empire did not administer the land under any particular designation. The region was officially under the control of the provinces of Syria and Palestine/Lebanon, but the Ottoman government was weak (it was in decline) and day to day affairs were dictated by local leaders. Eventually, Jerusalem and Jaffa were given their own division.

Under Ottoman rule, only Muslims were allowed to hold land. The Ottomans also attempted to retard Jewish immigration with various local laws. In practise though, a well educated Jew could deal with Turkish officials to legally immigrate, and then establish a semi-legal hold on land by farming it. But the real problem for Jewish immigrants was encountering the overwhelming Arab majority as well as the established Jewish settlers.

Although the earliest Christians were tolerant of Jewish communities, anti-Semitism arose during several periods in the middle ages. In Germany the persecution of Jews was renewed in 1096 during the Crusades. Jews were expelled from England in 1291, from France in 1391, from Austria in 1421, and from Spain in 1492. Anti-Jewish laws such as the yellow badge were common place in most European countries,

and mob violence was common. Martin Luther, the leader of the Protestant reformation, also wrote a book entitled: “On the Jews and Their Lies,” which fuelled more anti-Semitism. The strongest retaliations occurred in the seventh century as mass expulsions and forced conversions occurred in many European countries.

The political motivation for a desire to resettle in Palestine began to form in the 1860s and 1870s and was known as Zionism. The first “Zion Society” formed in Germany in 1861. In 1870, the “Alliance Israelite Universelle” founded an agricultural school called Mikveh Israel near the city of Jaffa. The land for this school was granted by the Ottoman Sultan.

In 1882 Leon Pinsker, in “Auto-Emancipation” wrote these words: “If we already knew where to direct our steps, were we compelled to emigrate again, we would surely make a vast step forward. We must set vigorously to work to complete the great task of self-liberation. We must use all the resources which human intellect and human experience have devised, instead of leaving our national regeneration to blind chance. The territory to be acquired must be fertile, well situated and sufficiently extensive to allow the settlement of several millions. The land, as national property, must be inalienable.”

In the same year that Pinsker’s essay was published, the first Zionist Aliyah (return) occurred. Roughly 30,000 Jews left Eastern Europe to become farmers in the Ottoman Empire. While previous returns had been religious in nature, this one was purely political - an escape from anti-Semitism, with the goal of creating a sustainable Jewish community in the land of Israel. However, half of the settlers eventually left the country. Many of them came on a thirty day pilgrimage visa, and stayed past its expiry date. The Pasha (governor) of Jerusalem attempted to expel them from the empire, but was rebuked by foreign ambassadors. In 1889 he was replaced by a more liberal Pasha.

Ben Yehuda, who was a Hebrew newspaper editor and credited with reviving the Hebrew language, wrote these words in 1882:

“We have made it a rule not to say too much, except to those ... we trust ... the goal is to revive our nation on its land ... if only we succeed in increasing our numbers here until we are the majority ... There are now only 500,000 Arabs who are not very strong, and from whom we shall easily take away the country if only we do it through stratagems and without drawing upon us their hostility before we become the strong and populous ones.”

THEODOR HERZL

Those who were promoting Zionism were working at cross purposes. A schism was developing between the Zionist movement and

orthodox Judaism. The orthodox Jews behind religious Zionism were willing to co-operate with secularized Jews to the extent of sending people to Israel, but wanted simultaneously to teach them about their duties to God, and agitated for those living in the land of Israel to live under the rule of the Torah.

Theodor Herzl was an Austrian who entered into the Zionist movement at this time. He was born in Budapest Hungary in 1860 and died in 1904. His parents were secular Jews, originally from Serbia. Theodor was educated for the legal profession which he forsook for journalism. He was the visionary behind Zionism, known for his critical role in establishing the modern state of Israel as a Jewish homeland.

Influenced by anti-Semitic attitudes he published "The Jewish State" in 1896 which advocated a theory of Jewish nationalism which later led to a political movement whose objective was the establishment of a Jewish homeland. Its goal was the creation of a Jewish national state in Palestine, the territory defined as the historic homeland of Israel, roughly corresponding to ancient Canaan.

Zionists responded eagerly to Herzl's suggestions to meet and unify their diverse organizations. The first Zionist congress was convened in Basel Switzerland in August 1897. There were 200 delegates representing every aspect of Jewish religion, cultural philosophy and thought. The three day congress founded the World Zionist Organisation with Herzl as president. All agreed to seek to establish a home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

Herzl met with the Ottoman sultan and asked for a charter that would allow Jewish mass immigration to Palestine. This request was denied. Knowing the overwhelming support for a Jewish state in the land of Israel, he then met with Great Britain and discussed making Jewish settlement in Sinai peninsula, part of their client state of Egypt. This too failed, but the British suggested making room in "Uganda" (actually Kenya) instead. Herzl brought this idea to the Zionist congress in 1903. The debate over the Uganda option was so heated that the congress nearly split into two rival factions.

Between 1904 and 1914, when World War One began, there was a second return of Jews to the land consisting of mostly Russian Jews. Once again, half of the pioneers eventually left the land of Israel, but the second return had more successes than the first. The settlement of Tel Aviv was founded by political Zionists on a sand dune north of Jaffa, and its founding families built roads and a water system for themselves. They also founded a self-defence group called the Hashomer, built a high school, and they cast off the Yiddish language and began a revival of the Hebrew language.

But, in 1905, when Dr Abraham Kyper while Prime Minister of the

Netherlands visited Palestine, noting that Baron De Rothschild had assisted some Jewish settlers from Russia who were trying to redeem the land, he passed this comment: “The Jews have come on a vain mission. Here, in this land, where the voice of God has once been heard, His voice will never be heard again. Only God can check the blight of the in-rushing desert. Only a miracle can save the holy land.”

Dr Kyper obviously did not know or believe Bible prophecy which affirmed that the Jews would ultimately be regathered to their land, become a nation and restore the land to great fruitfulness. He would eat his words if he could see Israel today!

Yossef Baratz, founder of the first Kibbutz, knew that he and his fellow Jews could not maintain independent farms. The poor land conditions involving malarial swamps, sand dunes and rocky terrain due to misuse and abuse of the land by Gentile occupation, along with weak government, meant that settlers had to rely on each other. So Baratz and eleven of his companions established a communal farm called Degania at the southern end of the sea of Galilee and their community grew in the first Kibbutz. Despite the extremely hard work and seemingly insurmountable difficulties, resulting at times in half of the Kibbutz members being too tired or sick to report for work and, many leaving for easier lives elsewhere, Degania had 50 members by 1914. Other Kibbutzim were founded around the sea of Galilee and the nearby Jezreel valley.

BALFOUR DECLARATION

During World War 1, on November 2 1917, James Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary and a former British Prime Minister, sent a letter to Lionel Walter Rothschild, a leader of British Jewry, declaring the support of the British Government “To facilitate the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

GENERAL ALLENBY AND BRITISH MANDATE

A little over five weeks after the Balfour Declaration was made, on December 11, 1917, two days after the Turkish forces occupying Jerusalem raised the white flag, General Edmund Allenby, commander of the British Egyptian expeditionary force in Sinai and Palestine, dismounted his horse and modestly walked on foot into Jerusalem through the Jaffa gate. England’s prime minister Lloyd George described the capture of Jerusalem as “a Christmas present for the British people.”

Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the British assumed control of Palestine. In 1922, the league of nations granted Britain a

mandate over Palestine, making her a caretaker government. This involved, among other things, provisions calling for the establishment of a Jewish homeland, facilitating Jewish immigration and encouraging Jewish settlement on the land.

A third wave of Jews returning to their land occurred from 1919-1923 followed by a fourth wave (1924-1928) and a fifth (1933-1939) which was responsible for spectacular urban and industrial growth. In 1880, the total number of Jews in the country was 20,000-25,000, two thirds of whom were in Jerusalem. On the eve of independence in 1948 they numbered about 650,000 throughout the land.

The Arabs were opposed to Jewish immigration to Palestine seeing it as a Jewish invasion, and stepped up their attacks against the Jews virtually creating a civil war. Following an increase in Arab attacks, the British appointed a royal commission in 1936 to investigate the Palestine situation. The Peel Commission recommended the partition of the country between Arabs and Jews. The Arabs rejected the idea while the Jews accepted the principle of partition.

The British tried to put the brakes on Jewish immigration and expansion. In so doing they put themselves in opposition to God who plainly declared in the Word of prophecy that it was His will to regather the Jews to their land (Jer. 31:8-10. 33:23-26). At the end of the Second World War, during which six million Jews perished at the hands of the Nazis, and survivors were desperately seeking a safe homeland, the British persisted in their immigration restrictions. Jewish survivors of the Holocaust were violently turned away from the shores of Palestine, in order to patronize and placate the Arab world which was a great source of that liquid gold known as oil.

The Jews deeply resented the restraints and restrictions imposed by the British which stifled progress. The Jewish agency and the Haganah (a Jewish defence force, originally organized to deal with Arab attacks and revolts) continued to smuggle Jews in to Palestine. Underground cells of Jews engaged in open warfare against the British and their installations.

The British concluded that they could no longer manage Palestine so they withdrew, vacating their caretaker position. They handed the issue over to the United Nations. On November 29 1947, after much debate and discussion, the U.N. adopted resolution 181 which recommended the partition of Palestine into two states - one Jewish and one Arab, one section being controlled by Israel and the other by Jordan, which was later known as "the West Bank." The city of Jerusalem was to be a separate entity to be governed by a special international regime. The Jews accepted the U.N. resolution, even though it deprived them of a large portion of the land they originally possessed before they were forcefully evicted by the Romans. The Arabs rejected the U.N. resolution. They saw it as just more

European colonization. They regarded all the land as theirs and did not want to share it, and declared war on Israel the following year.

Meanwhile, since the time of the British mandate, the Jewish community in Palestine had been forming political, social and economic institutions that governed daily life in Palestine and served as a pre-state infrastructure. Zionist leader David Ben Gurion (1886-1973) served as head of the pre-state government.

The British mandate over Palestine officially terminated at midnight, May 14, 1948. Earlier in the day at 4pm, David Ben Gurion proclaimed the State of Israel and became its first Prime Minister. Long-time advocate of Zionism in Britain, Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952), became Israel's first president. On May 15, the United States recognized the State of Israel and the Soviet Union soon followed suit. Israel became recognized as a sovereign independent nation by the U.N.O. and the Israeli flag bearing the star of David took its place among the flags of all the other nations.

Following the Israeli Declaration of Independence, a coalition of Arab forces involving Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq entered Palestine and took control of the Arab areas and immediately attacked Israeli forces and several Jewish settlements. The ten months of fighting, interrupted by several truce periods, resulted in Israel losing 6,373 of its people (about 1% of its population at the time). About 4,000 were soldiers and the rest civilians. Around 2,000 were Holocaust survivors. The exact number of Arab casualties is unknown. One estimate places the death toll at around 7,000. The Israelis were outnumbered in men and munitions and it was quite miraculous that they were able to successfully resist the enemy.

ONE NATION

The Arabs clearly did not want Israel to be constituted a nation and did all they could to destroy the nation. But they were fighting, not against Israel, but God, because He had clearly prophesied that it was His will for Israel to not only be gathered back to their land, but also to become a nation again, as we read in Ezk. 37:21-22: "Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all sides, and bring them to their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; and they shall no longer be two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms."

In the past, Israel was divided into two nations: the northern kingdom consisting of ten tribes which had Samaria for its capital, and the southern kingdom which consisted of two tribes and which had Jerusalem for its capital. But it was not God's will for two nations to always co-exist in the promised land, so this duality ceased. According to the prophecy in Ezk.

37, God will not permit two nations to co-exist in the land as a result of Israel's return. Ezk. 37:21-22 clearly says there will only be one nation - the nation of Israel. God does not promise that there will be two nations in the land - not two nations of Israel and not two nations involving Israel and the Arabs. The so-called prophet Mohammed never gave any prophecies about a Moslem-Arab nation occupying Palestine or any other event of note for that matter, so it is a mystery as to why he is called a prophet at all. For a man to claim to be a prophet when he is not a prophet, makes him a false prophet whether he utters false prophecies or not!

As pointed out earlier, Arabs are descendants of Abraham's sons who he sent out east of the promised land into Arabia because he did not want them to inherit the promised land with Israel. Unfortunately they took advantage of Israel's forced exile and moved into the land, being ignorant of the messages of the true Biblical prophets that God was going to regather Israel to her land and make her a nation again.

The prophecy in Ezk. 37:21-22 refers to three major events that would take place:

1. The return of the Jews to their land.
2. The formation of the Jews into one nation - the nation of Israel.
3. One king reigning over them.

The king referred to in this prophecy is their Messiah, Jesus, and it implies his return to the land of Israel to reign over Israel (and all nations) from Jerusalem. For this reason he referred to Jerusalem as "the city of the great king" (Matt. 5:35).

Considerable time elapsed between stage one and stage two of the prophecy in Ezk. 37, and the same applies to the time involved between stage two and three. But all the signs indicate that we are living in the last lap of human history, well along the road to Armageddon.

The fledging state of Israel was faced with many challenges. While fighting the war of survival in 1948 with the Arab states, Israel had to absorb the shiploads of immigrants coming in to the Jewish homeland. Many were penniless refugees from Europe, broken in body and in spirit. They needed immediate health and social services in addition to adaptation to their new home and surroundings.

As a result of the 1948 war, the state of Israel took control of both the area that the U.N. General Assembly resolution 181 had recommended for the proposed Jewish state, as well as 60% of the area of the Arab state proposed by the partition plan. This included the Jaffa, Lydda and Ramie area, Galilee, some parts of the Negev, a wide strip along the Tel-Aviv - Jerusalem road, along with west Jerusalem and some territories in the West Bank.

During the peace negotiations a ceasefire line was drawn and became known as "the green line," with one section being controlled by Israel and

the other by Jordan who had taken control of it during the war. The Jordanians named this newly seized land “the West Bank” because it was west of the river Jordan. The Egyptian military took control of the Gaza Strip. At the Jericho conference on December 1 1948, 2,000 Palestinian delegates called for unification of Palestine and trans-Jordan as a step toward Arab unity, but no state was created for the Palestinian Arabs.

The 1948 conflict triggered significant demographic change throughout the Middle East. Around 70,000 Palestinian Arabs fled or were expelled from their homes in the area that became Israel, and they became Palestinian refugees in what they refer to as “Al-Nakba” (“The Catastrophe”). In the three years following the war, about 700,000 Jews immigrated to Israel with many of them having been expelled from Muslim countries in the Middle East.

THE SUEZ CRISIS 1956

The Suez crisis was the second Middle East crisis and began on 26 July 1956 when Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser (an extremely anti-Israel advocate who resented European domination) announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal company - the joint British French enterprise which had owned and operated the Suez Canal since its construction in 1869. The crisis was provoked by an American and British decision not to finance Egypt’s construction of the Aswan High Dam, as they had promised, in response to Egypt’s growing ties with Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. Nasser reacted to the American and British decision by declaring martial law in the canal zone and seizing control of the Suez Canal Company, predicting that the tolls collected from ships passing through the canal would pay for the dam’s construction within five years.

Britain and France feared that Nasser might close the canal and shut off shipments of petroleum flowing from the Persian Gulf to Western Europe. When diplomatic efforts to settle the crisis failed, Britain and France secretly prepared military action to regain control of the canal and, if possible, to depose Nasser.

They found a ready ally in Israel, whose hostility toward Egypt had been intensified by Nasser’s blockage of the straits of Tiran (at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba, preventing ships from entering and departing from Israel’s port), and the numerous raids by Egyptian-supported commandos into Israel during 1955-56.

On October 29, 1956, ten Israeli brigades invaded Egypt (to the detriment of Israel’s relationship with the U.S.A.) and advanced toward the canal, routing Egyptian forces. Britain and France, following their plan, demanded that Israeli and Egyptian troops withdraw from the canal,

and they announced that they would intervene to enforce a cease fire ordered by the U.N. On November 5 and 6, British and French forces landed at Port Said and Port Fuad and began occupying the canal zone. This move was soon met by growing opposition at home and by U.S. - sponsored resolutions in the U.N. (made in part to counter Russian threats of intervention). This quickly put a stop to the British-French action. On December 22 the U.N. evacuated British and French troops, and Israeli forces withdrew in March 1957.

Nasser emerged from the Suez crisis a victor and a hero for the cause of Arab and Egyptian nationalism. Israel did not win freedom to use the canal, but did gain shipping rights in the Straits of Tiran. Britain and France, less fortunate, were humiliated and lost most of their influence in the Middle East as a result of the crisis. Russia ended up building the Aswan Dam, but was expelled from Egypt in 1972 when Sadat was president.

THE SIX DAY WAR 1967

Relations between Israel and her Arab neighbours never fully recovered or normalised after the crisis in 1948 and 1956, and a third crisis occurred in June 1967. During the intervening years Israel kept growing, and tension and vicious border skirmishes increased between Arabs and Israelis. The Arabs wanted to eliminate Israel and erase the shame and humiliation of their defeat in 1948.

Increased tensions and skirmishes along Israel's northern border with Syria were the immediate cause of the third Arab-Israeli war. Syria intensified its bombardment of Israeli settlements across the border, and Israel struck back shooting down six Syrian Mig fighters. After Syria alleged in May 1967 that Israel was massing troops along the border, Egypt mobilized its forces and demanded the withdrawal of the U.N. Emergency force from the Israel-Egypt cease-fire lines of the 1956 conflict. The U.N. peace keepers left on May 19, and three days later Egypt closed the Strait of Tiran for the second time to Israeli shipping. On May 30, Jordan signed a mutual-defence treaty with Egypt and Syria, and other Arab states, including Iraq, Kuwait and Algeria, sent troops to join the Arab coalition against Israel.

With every sign of a pan-Arab attack, Israel's government on June 4 authorized its armed forces to launch a surprise pre-emptive strike. On June 5, a six-day war began with an Israeli assault on Arab air power. In a lightning attack, the Israeli air force swooped in under the radar, catching the formidable Egyptian air force on the ground and largely destroyed it - the Arab's most powerful weapon! The Israeli air force then turned against the lesser air forces of Jordan, Syria and Iraq, and by the end of the day had decisively won air superiority.

Beginning on June 5, Israel focussed the main effort of its ground forces against Egypt's Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula. In a lightning attack, the Israelis burst through the Egyptian lines and across the Sinai. The Egyptians were outflanked by the Israelis and decimated in lethal air attacks. By June 8, the Egyptian forces were defeated, and Israel held the Gaza Strip and the Sinai to the Suez Canal.

Meanwhile, to the east of Israel, Jordan began shelling Israel on June 5, provoking a rapid and overwhelming response from Israeli forces. Israel blew past the green cease-fire line of 1948 and seized the whole West Bank and on June 7 captured the old city of East Jerusalem. The chief chaplain of the Israeli defence forces blew a ram's horn at the western ("wailing") wall of the temple mount to announce the reunification of east Jerusalem with the Israeli-administered western sector. There was much jubilation, singing and dancing among the Jewish soldiers along the temple wall!

To the north, Israel bombarded Syria's fortified Golan Heights for two days before launching a tank and infantry assault on June 9. After a day of fierce fighting, the Syrians began a retreat from the Golan Heights on June 10 and Israeli forces reached as far as Damascus. On June 11, a U.N. brokered cease-fire took effect throughout the three combat zones, and the six day war was at an end, hailed by the press as "The Miracle Six Day war." As a result of this war, Israel more than doubled its size in the six days of fighting.

If the God of a nation has anything to do with the success of battles, one would have to conclude that Yahweh the God of Israel triumphed over Allah the God of the Moslems, which is not surprising considering He promised to re-establish Israel as a nation in her own land.

DIFFICULT DECISIONS

After the 1967 war, Israel had to decide whether to annex the West Bank to make it part of Israel, and give the 1,100,000 Arabs living there Israeli citizenship and voting rights; or give the land back to Jordan, or let the people create their own Palestinian state. This became a major debate in Israeli politics. Many Israelis saw the war they had won not just as a military victory, but a religious sign that the Jews were meant to return to the land where a tremendous amount of Jewish history had taken place, i.e. in the Samaria and Judea regions encompassed by the West Bank.

So while the Israeli government was debating what to do, Israeli civilians without any permission from the Israeli government, started moving into the area which had been vacated by many of the Arabs. The Israelis started setting up homes and a Jewish presence in the area.

Suddenly, any debate over what to do in this region had to take into account what to do with the growing numbers of Israelis living there. But the rest of the world did not approve of what was taking place.

The U.N. Security Council called on Israel to withdraw from all the occupied regions, but she refused, permanently annexing east Jerusalem and setting up military administrations in the occupied territories. Israel let it be known that Gaza, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai would be returned in exchange for Arab recognition of the right of Israel to exist, and guarantees against future attacks. Arab leaders stinging from their defeat, met in August to discuss the future of the middle East. They decided on a policy of no peace, no negotiations and no recognition of Israel's right to be a nation in the land. They made plans to zealously defend the rights of Palestinian Arabs in the occupied areas.

The U.N. issued a resolution saying that the Israeli settlements in the West Bank had no legal validity and that they constituted a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for the Middle East. They were basically saying that the settler activity of the Israelis was totally illegal. But in spite of international condemnation, the number of settlers in the West Bank grew.

Those who believed that the Hebrew Scriptures were the inspired Word of God, were fully persuaded that the land was theirs by divine right, and that Ishmael's descendants had no right to be there. Their divinely allocated territory was east of Canaan embracing trans Jordania and extending throughout the whole Arabian Peninsula - an area of land far greater in size than Israel's land in Canaan, with which they should have been content.

Over the next few decades after the 1967 war, more and more factions of the Israeli government began to support the settler movement, allocating public resources and granting permits for building. The Israeli housing ministry and military began developing plans on how to develop the West Bank. They began building roads throughout the entire region allowing easy access between the settlements and mainland Israel.

Palestinians naturally didn't like this encroachment. They began protesting, often with extreme violence. Coupled with the international opposition, the situation became unsustainable, and ultimately led to the Oslo Accords in the mid 1990s.

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES FULFILLED

As quoted earlier, Jesus prophesied that "Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24). And as was also pointed out, the word "until" defines a limit to Gentile (non Jewish) control of Jerusalem. Time clearly ran out for the

Gentiles in June 1967! After 1,900 years of control by many different Gentile nations, Jerusalem finally ended up in Israel's control. It was a momentous historic occasion and an amazing fulfilment of prophecy.

The prophecy given by Jesus was not an isolated reference to Israel regaining possession of Jerusalem. There are many prophecies that refer to Israel being back in possession of Jerusalem in the end time. In view of the Palestinian's claim to Jerusalem, ownership of the city has become a very controversial issue and a heavy burden to many nations - a major issue at the U.N. This was prophesied in Isa. 34:8 where reference is made to "the controversy of Zion" which results in "the day of the Lord's vengeance." It is also stated in Zech. 12:3 that Jerusalem was destined to become "a burdensome (heavy) stone for all nations," (i.e. for all nations who deny Israel's right to the city and who try to take it away from her) resulting in serious injury and terrible suffering.

The Jerusalem issue will be the catalyst for, and the vortex of Armageddon. Zech. 14:2 says all nations will be gathered against Jerusalem to battle. A coalition of anti-Israel armies will ultimately successfully invade Israel with the intention of destroying the nation and taking control of Jerusalem, causing much loss of life and great tribulation for Israel. But at the appointed time, Jesus will return and do battle with the enemy and destroy him and deliver Israel. This is what the battle of Armageddon is all about and could not happen unless the Jews returned to their land to become a nation again and repossess Jerusalem. See Ps. 83. Ezk. 38. Dan. 11:40-. Joel. Zech. 12:14.

A Palestinian leader has stated that if Jerusalem is not established as the capital of a Palestinian state, there cannot be a Palestinian state. It is very unsatisfactory to say the least for people who cannot become a state unless they take over the capital city that belongs to another state to attempt to do so!

But the so-called "Palestinians" were originally part of Jordan's state when she occupied the holy land, and should have remained part of that state.

THE ORIGINS OF THE PALESTINE ARABS

The area called Palestine used to include the territories of the present day Israel and Jordan. From 1517 to 1917 most of this area remained under the rule of the Ottoman empire. When Britain took control in 1917, she ended up in 1922 allocating nearly 80% of Palestine to trans Jordan including the West Bank. Thus Jordan covered the majority of the land of Palestine under British mandate. Jordan also included the majority of the Arabs who lived there. Since the Jews and Arabs all lived in the land designated "Palestine," they were all called "Palestinians." There was no

language known as Palestinian, or any Palestinian culture distinct from that of all the Arabs in the area. There was no separate and distinct portion of land known as Palestine governed by Palestinians. "Palestinians" were and still are Arabs indistinguishable from Arabs throughout the Middle East, sharing basically the same culture, language and religion. Most of them originally migrated from surrounding Arab countries.

It was only after the Jews reinhabited their historic homeland that the idea of a Palestinian state was conceived and marketed, in order to resist and counter and hopefully end Jewish occupation.

Although Jordan had control of Jerusalem, she never made it her capital city. Amman was and continues to be the capital. If the Palestinians did not become a separate entity from Jordan, they could regard Amman as their capital, and not try to take Jerusalem, the divinely appointed capital of Israel.

As we have seen, various Moslem nations and others have occupied Jerusalem since Israel was forcefully evicted by the Romans, but none of them made it their capital. Up until the Palestinian uprising, not a single nation over a period of 1,900 years tried to claim Jerusalem as their capital city, even though Israel did not exist as a nation during that time.

As mentioned earlier, there is not a single reference to Jerusalem in the Koran, but over 600 references in the Hebrew Bible. When the various Moslem nations who occupied Jerusalem in the past (not to mention the present) offered prayer, they turned their backs on Jerusalem and faced Mecca. But when Jews over the centuries prayed, they prayed for Jerusalem facing Jerusalem, sometimes three times a day!

The controversy between Jews and Arabs over ownership of Jerusalem has caused nations to not acknowledge Jerusalem as Israel's capital by putting their embassies in Tel-Aviv. But a law was passed by the U.S.A. in 1995 with overwhelming bipartisan support (Democrats and Republicans) to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital to put a stop to the fiction that it was not Israel's capital. Successive U.S. presidents have issued waivers to postpone moves to establish an Embassy in Jerusalem due to fear of the conflict and division it could cause. But on December 6 2017 President Trump took the bull by the horns and waded in and declared his intention to put the law into effect. This has caused outrage among many nations, especially the Moslem and pro-Palestinian nations, some of whom have made threats which could lead us further down the road to Christ's return and Armageddon. Ironically enough, the period of Christ's return is referred to in the Bible as "The last Trump!"

FOURTH CRISIS: 1973 YOM KIPPUR WAR

The six day war in 1967 was followed by years of sporadic fighting, which developed into another full scale war in 1973. On October 6, 1973, when Anwar Sadat was president of Egypt, hoping to win back territory lost to Israel during the 1967 war, Egyptian and Syrian forces launched a co-ordinated attack against Israel on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar of prayer and fasting. This is why it is called the Yom Kippur War and it was a war that took the Israeli forces by surprise as Israeli intelligence had failed to detect the months of secret preparations by Egypt and Syria. (Historians disagree about whether Egypt deliberately scheduled the attack for Israel's most sacred day).

During the first few days of the war, Egypt and Syria secured victories in the Sinai and the Golan. In the south, Egyptian forces crossed the Suez Canal and overran the Israeli military's extensive fortifications, forcing the Israelis back. The Israelis did not fare better in the Golan Heights. Israeli positions in the eastern Golan fell to the advancing Syrian army. With a lack of tanks and manpower, Israeli troops had to withdraw from many positions in the southern sector of the Golan Heights. Initially, it was looking bad for Israel, and some wondered if she was going to be defeated.

But by October 9, Israeli forces were able to contain the threat on both fronts. However, despite her successes, Israel could not take the offensive without the certainty of an adequate supply of military equipment. Russia supplied Egypt and Syria with advisers and equipment which largely accounted for their success, and Israel lacked equipment.

The United States therefore, after much deliberation, decided to intervene on behalf of Israel, and offered a full scale airlift of military equipment on October 10. This U.S. assistance served to replenish Israeli forces and Israel launched an offensive that retook most of its territorial losses and even gained some ground against both Egyptians and Syrians. Arab members of Opec responded to the U.S. airlift by organizing an oil embargo against the United States.

Israel's refusal to stop fighting after a United Nations' cease-fire was in place on October 22 nearly involved Russia in the military confrontation. On October 25 and 26, Russia threatened to send troops into Egypt to save the Egyptian third army which the Israeli troops had completely encircled. The United States went on nuclear alert and, fearing that the situation might escalate into global conflict, applied pressure on Israel to obey the cease fire. A cease-fire went into effect on October 25, just under three weeks after it started, and Israel's president, Golda Meir resigned.

ANWAR SADAT'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM

On November 20, 1977, Anwar Sadat, president of Egypt, landed at Israel's Ben-Gurion airport for a two day visit in Jerusalem, at the official invitation of Israel's prime minister Menachem Begin. The entire world held its breath. Here was the leader of the most populous Arab state, which had spear headed repeated pan-Arab attempts to destroy Israel, visiting the Arab world's greatest enemy in an apparent acceptance of the legitimacy of the Jewish state's existence and its right to peaceful co-existence with its Arab neighbours. Anwar had announced his willingness for peace with Israel - a stunning gesture, given that no other Arab nation was willing to acknowledge the existence of the nation of Israel. He addressed the Israeli parliament in what was considered a watershed moment in the Jewish state's history.

So profound was the general disbelief, that the Israeli chief of staff warned the government that the visit was an Egyptian deceptive ploy, on the heels of the Egyptian-Syrian surprise attack four years previously in October 1973.

As it turned out, the visit was genuine and proved to be the most important single political event in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It culminated in the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of March 1979, which shattered the Arab world's uniform rejection of Jewish statehood. It has weathered many regional crises (from the 1982 Lebanon war, to the "Al-Aksa Intifada," to the 2014 Gaza conflict). It also paved the way to the October 1994 Israel-Jordan peace treaty and the yet-to-be completed Israeli-Palestinian peace process launched with the September 1993 Oslo accord.

Predictably, Sadat's willingness to make peace with Israel got him and Egypt offside with many Egyptians and the Arab world, and he was assassinated at a military parade by an Islamist zealot in October 1981.

In 1982 the Sinai Peninsula was returned to Egypt in exchange for full diplomatic recognition of Israel. Egypt and Jordan later gave up their respective claims to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to the Palestinians, who, beginning in the 1990s opened "land for peace" talks with Israel. The East Bank territory has since been returned to Jordan. In 2005 Israel left the Gaza Strip. Still, a permanent Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement remains elusive, as does an agreement to return the Golan Heights to Syria.

P.L.O. AND HAMAS

The Palestine liberation Organization (P.L.O.) was created in 1964 during the Arab league summit in Cairo where leaders of thirteen Arab nations pledged to take a more active role for the removal of Jews from Palestine. The originally stated goal of the P.L.O. was "the liberation

of Palestine” through armed struggle while seeking to destroy the existence of Zionism, i.e. the state of Israel. It refused to accept the nation of Israel. This is what led to the 1967 six day war.

The P.L.O. became one of the most infamous terrorist organizations in the world. In later times Hamas became a de facto governing authority of the Gaza strip and was declared a terrorist organization by the European Court of Justice (E.C.J.). The court ruled that the group should remain on an E.U. blacklist. The Hamas rejects all peace agreements that were made later between the P.L.O. and Israel, and continues to conduct terror attacks against Israel. Hamas won the P.A. legislative elections in 2006 but most western countries put it on the terrorist list while many Asian countries believe it to be the legitimate government of the Gaza strip.

MODERN PHILISTINES AND CANAANITES

Israel’s air attacks against Palestinian terrorists, especially in the Gaza Strip, could be significant in the light of Bible Prophecy. Isa. 11:14 in the authorized version says: “They (Israel) shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines.”

In Biblical times the Philistines occupied the Gaza Strip and were an enemy of Israel. They were opposed to the nation of Israel and attacked it on a number of occasions with a view to destroying it. The prophecy in Isa. 11:14 indicated that a similar situation would exist in later times. This led students of the Word of prophecy to believe that when Israel occupied her land again, there would be people occupying the Gaza Strip who would have the same anti-Israel attitude as the ancient Philistines. Significantly enough, “Palestine” is derived from “Philistine.”

Another prophecy that indicated anti-Israel people would be occupying the land at the same time as Israel in the end time is in Zech. 14:21. The statement in this verse relates to the period after the battle of Armageddon when Israel’s enemies will have been removed. It says: “And there shall no longer be the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day.” This implies that prior to Armageddon, the Canaanites would live in the land of Israel. The Canaanites were the original occupants of the land who God wanted to be replaced by Israel. They too, like the Philistines, were opposed to Israel occupying the land and violently resisted Israel’s attempts to do so. The prophecy in Zech. 14:21 indicates that a similar situation would exist prior to Armageddon, and refers to those opposed to Israel’s occupation as “Canaanites” due to manifesting the same spirit as the ancient Canaanites. (The ancient Canaanites were descendants of Noah’s son Ham, as is also the case with the Egyptians and other Arab peoples).

The prophecy in Zech. 14:21 refers to the modern Canaanite being “in the house of the Lord.” This refers to Yahweh’s temple which sat on Mount Moriah which the Moslems occupy where they built a Mosque. Moslem worshippers are therefore on the holy ground of the house of the Lord. But according to the Word of prophecy, Israel’s temple will be restored on the Mount and probably involve the removal of the Mosque, and prior to Armageddon, Israel’s enemies will be granted a temporary victory over Israel and will literally enter the house of the Lord to desecrate it.

THE OSLO ACCORD

A Palestine mass uprising known as the Intifada that began in 1987 failed in its goal of ending Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but nonetheless proved to be a game changer. Images of teenagers throwing stones at tanks won international sympathy for the Palestinian cause and deepened many Israelis’ disquiet about the continued occupation. It also prompted P.L.O. chairman Yasser Arafat to shift P.L.O. strategy in November 1988. Instead of seeking to reverse and negate the creation of the state of Israel which took place in 1948 and resulted in the displacement of the Palestinians, he set out to seek the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip alongside the State of Israel.

The two state vision required Israel to stop rejecting Palestinian claims to national sovereignty, and Palestinians to accept that their claims for sovereignty would be limited to only a small part of the entire territory of historic Palestine which was occupied by the Arabs before the Jews returned in earnest to the land, and for which the P.L.O. had been fighting. The Palestinians were required to recognize Israel’s sovereignty over the rest of the land.

The hope was that limited Palestinian self-government and an increase of Israeli withdrawal would boost mutual trust that would empower leaders on both sides to negotiate final status agreements on the thorniest issues - including Jerusalem, the fate of Palestinian refugees and Israeli settlements, borders and security.

Talks between Israeli and P.L.O. officials were conducted in secret in Oslo, Norway’s capital, and by August, 1993 the two sides had agreed on a “declaration of principles.”

On September 9, 1993, Arafat sent Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin a letter in which he stated that the P.L.O. renounced armed resistance, vowed to amend the Palestine National Charter to remove its call for the destruction of Israel, and to uphold U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, which created a framework allowing for Palestinian

statehood in exchange for Israeli security.

Rabin responded by recognizing the P.L.O. as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and promising to negotiate peace with its leadership. Four days later, the two leaders met on the White House lawn with U.S.A. president Bill Clinton for a ceremonial signing of the Oslo Accords.

THE WEST BANK SPLIT INTO THREE SECTIONS

The parties agreed that the West Bank should be split into three sections. Area A which was about 18% of the West Bank gave Palestinians total control over security and government. Most of the Palestinian Population centres are in this area. This was a big deal because it gave Palestinians self rule for the first time.

Area B is about 22% of the West Bank and was designated for Palestinian government control while retaining Israeli security control, meaning the Israeli military remains very present there.

Area C remained completely under the Israeli military and government control. This is where all the Israeli settlements are and is about 60% of the West Bank.

One of the most difficult aspects of this carved up land situation is how it hinders Palestinians from being able to build an economy. Area C under Israeli control contains most of the West Bank's agricultural land as well as as the water and mineral resources. Palestinian companies are severely restricted in resourcing these, which takes a huge hit on their economy.

In 2005, something happened that ignited even more passion for the settler movement. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon decided to forcefully remove 8,500 Israeli settlers from the Gaza Strip which was another disputed area with many settlements. Seeing Israelis forcefully evicted and their homes demolished by their own government left a huge mark on the country, especially the settlers. It redoubled their effort to settle the West Bank. So the numbers continued to grow there. Most people who think about a solution to the conflict over the land propose a two state resolution which requires giving the Palestinians a state somewhere in the West Bank region. But the problem is that many Jewish settlers live there now, and they don't live in tents!

The agreement signed between Arafat and Rabin was controversial for many Israelis and Palestinians. Israelis on the right opposed dealing with the P.L.O. regarding it as a terrorist organization. Israeli settlers feared that Rabin's land-for-peace formula would result in their eviction from land such as the West Bank that they regarded as theirs by Biblical right, even if the U.N. had ruled their settlements were a violation of

international law.

Among Palestinians, supporters of Arafat's Fatah movement accepted Oslo as an unfortunate, but necessary, compromise. But rival groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (P.F.L.P.) refused to recognize Israel, and warned that a two state solution would betray the aspirations of Palestinian refugees to return to land inside Israel lost in 1948.

There were sceptics on both sides when the Oslo Accords were signed, and their number only grew as the process failed to deliver on its promise. There was no single moment when the Oslo Accords can be said to have broken down. Instead, they saw a steady process of decline as both sides accused one another of failing to implement key aspects of the agreements.

A 1994 massacre by an Israeli settler in Hebron fuelled Palestinian anger, and then, in 1995, a right wing Israeli gunman assassinated Rabin at a peace rally. The following year, after a series of Hamas bomb attacks on civilian targets had fuelled outrage in Israel, Rabin's successor Shimon Peres was beaten at the polls by Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, who had led opposition to the Oslo Accords.

Netanyahu was ousted in 1999 by Ehud Barak, but by then mutual distrust and hostility ran deep, and U.S.A. president Bill Clinton's effort to broker a final status agreement at Camp David in 2,000 ended in failure. The peace process was now eclipsed by an increasingly violent second Intifada that inflicted heavy casualties on both sides, and which shifted the international diplomatic tide against the Palestinians. The following year, Israel elected another Likud leader, Ariel Sharon, who vowed to end the Oslo Accords.

Yasser Arafat died on November 11, 2004 aged 75. He led the P.L.O. for three decades and won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Although Sharon forcefully removed 8,500 Jewish settlers from Gaza in 2005 and demolished their homes, he avoided a return to final status negotiations regarding a two state solution. Sporadic attempts to restart talks have produced no further progress towards a final status agreement.

Factors often cited for the failure to conclude the Oslo process include:

1. Imbalance of power between the two sides.
2. Failure of the United States to serve as a tough but impartial mediator. The announcement late in 2017 of U.S.A. president Trump's intention to regard Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, has disqualified the U.S.A. as a mediator in the view of the Palestinians.
3. Growing influence of hard-liners opposed to compromise - settlers on the Israeli side, Hamas on the Palestinian side.
4. The gulf between the maximum Israel has been willing to offer and

the minimum that Palestinians are willing to accept.

PROFOUND FRUSTRATION AND ANGER

Failure to conclude the Oslo process and form a Palestinian state has resulted in profound frustration and anger among the Palestinians. The Hamas terrorists have infiltrated Israel's streets, shooting and stabbing innocent Israeli citizens and suicide bombers have blown up buses, resulting in Israel building a border wall preventing free unmonitored access.

Since 2001 Hamas has fired thousands of rockets and mortars into populated areas of Israel, averaging over three rocket attacks per day. Israel has responded to these rocket attacks with air strikes, but usually suffer many rocket attacks before they launch an air strike. Israel has never taken the initiative to attack the Palestinians. It is always in response - a protracted and retaliatory response to repeated attacks by the Palestinians that Israel attacks. And Israel has dropped pamphlets over the areas she is going to strike to warn the civilians.

But the film footage shown on T.V. throughout the world tends to only show the Israeli planes attacking and the destruction it causes, without any reference to the repeated rocket attacks launched by the Palestinian terrorists which provoked the Israeli attack.

Palestinian schools and hospitals have been struck by Israeli jets, not because they deliberately target such places, but because the terrorists deliberately use them to launch their rockets. The pro-Palestine and anti-Israel news media make a great display of the damage done to these places to put Israel in a bad light, but never explain the true circumstances.

Hamas targets civilians, Israel targets terrorists. Israel seeks to minimize civilian casualties, Hamas seeks to maximize them even on their own side.

Hamas has also used ambulances to transport terrorists and have staged massacres of children which they blamed on Israeli air strikes. There is a word used to describe these staged massacres and it is "Paliwood" - a take-off of "Hollywood."

A SHAMEFUL RESOLUTION

In 1975 the U.N. adopted a shameful resolution, equating Zionism with racism, and it took sixteen years to be revoked. But the Arabs are the real racists. There used to be thousands of Jews in Middle East Arab countries, but where are they all today? They were forced to leave due to the anti-Israel racist attitude and threatening behaviour of the Arabs! But

Israel is a true democracy allowing freedom of religion to Moslems and Christians and Jews alike. Some Palestinian Arabs prefer to be under Israeli rule and maintain that a large portion of the Palestinian population would flock over to Israel to be under her rule if they could.

Not all Israelis are squeaky clean by any means and there have always been those hard-liners who have manifested bad attitudes and actions that have provoked violent reactions. But the nation as a whole does not deserve the one sided heavily biased anti-Israel reporting by the world press which results in an increasing spirit of anti-Semitism. In more recent times the tide of public opinion has been turning against Israel, mainly due to an unbalanced sympathy and favouritism towards the Palestinian cause, for which there is no easy solution due to the anti-Israel stand of the leaders.

What the Palestinian leaders tell the world and their own people are two quite different things, involving hypocrisy and deceit.

Here are some quotes of what they have told the world in more recent times:

1. "We are standing against international terrorism and we are fighting it."
2. "We have explored every avenue and exerted far reaching efforts to achieve peace with our Israeli neighbours."
3. "Our peaceful resistance."
4. "Peace for Palestine, Peace for Israel."

And now here are some quotes of what Palestinian leaders tell their people:

1. "We will not recognize Israel as a Jewish state."
2. "We welcome every drop of blood spilled in Jerusalem. This is pure blood, clean blood; blood on its way to Allah."
3. "We must return to the option of one Palestine from the Jordan river to the Mediterranean sea."
4. "We will never recognize Israel."
5. "We do not accept a Jewish state; we will never accept a Jewish state."

Palestinians have insisted that peace with Israel is dependant on Israel returning the land they took during the 1948 and 1967 wars. But the Palestinians were not at peace with Israel before she took over those territories prior to those wars! So how could Israel believe that returning them will make any difference?!

Israel has accepted at least six plans to divide the land of Israel for peace. The Palestinian leadership has rejected all of them. The Palestinian authority does not care about peace. If it did, it wouldn't name streets after terrorists and wouldn't build squares for terrorists, and would stop inciting their children against Israel and stop paying terrorists and their families.

Israel wants peace but it is impossible to attain with people who deny their right to exist in their own land. When Prime Minister Barak offered the Palestinians a state in 2,000, Israel was met with suicide bombers in buses and shootings in the streets. In 2005, Prime minister Sharon disengaged from Gaza. He removed every single Israeli home, resulting in no Israeli settlements or Jewish occupation in Gaza. Since then, Israel continued to be attacked again and again by rockets aimed at innocent civilians, and no censure was forthcoming from the U.N.O; mouths were gagged by pro-Palestinian prejudice. The U.N.O. has rightly been accused of hypocrisy.

THE SOLUTION

From a purely Biblical point of view there is an easy solution but from a human point of view it is exceedingly difficult - virtually impossible! The solution is by accepting that Palestine was promised by God to the Israelites not the Ishmaelites, and that He only wanted the one nation, one government and one religion of Israel in the land, but was willing to allow people from other nations to live in the land on the condition that they adopt the nation of Israel, submit to the government of Israel and embrace Yahweh, the God of Israel and His spiritual requirements.

From a Moslem Arab's point of view this is impossible and even impossible from some Israelis' point of view who are not pro-Judaism or who are atheists. But this is the Biblical solution. There will never be peace but only division in the land while occupants deny Israel's right to the land and seek to establish another separate state and religion in the land.

But what is impossible to man is not impossible to God, and He has a plan that will ultimately establish everlasting peace, not only in the Middle East, but the whole earth!

THE ULTIMATE OCCUPATION

As we have seen, God promised Canaan to Abraham and his seed, but it must now be pointed out that Israel's occupation of the land has never completely fulfilled the promise. The promised occupation yet to be completely fulfilled won't just involve Jews but also Arabs and all other nations. The reasons for believing this are as follows:

First reason: The terms of the promise to Abraham were that the land would be inherited by him and his seed as an everlasting inheritance. But the Jews in the past inherited the land under the terms of the law of

Moses, not under the terms of God's promise to Abraham. Their occupation of the land was therefore a conditional one - conditional upon keeping the law. And because they could not keep the law and sinned, they died. Being mortal, their occupation of the land was limited - temporary, not eternal. It was not and still cannot be an "everlasting" inheritance as promised to Abraham.

This is how it is put by the apostle Paul: "The promise that Abraham should be heir of the world was not through law, but through faith by which one is accepted as righteous by God. If those under the law are the heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, because the law incurs God's anger (due to failing to obey it) ... therefore the promise comes by faith, so that it might be by grace, in order that it might be sure to all of Abraham's seed ..." (Rom. 4:13-16).

Again in Gal. 3:17 Paul says: "The law introduced 430 years after Abraham cannot set aside the covenant previously established by God, and do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise. But God in His grace gave it to Abraham through a promise."

It is clear from these testimonies that Jewish occupation of the land up to our present time has not fulfilled the promise to Abraham of everlasting inheritance.

Second reason: Abraham himself, personally, was promised Palestine as an everlasting possession. This required him to receive the land as his own inheritance and to live in it forever. This was never fulfilled. He "died in faith, not having received the promises" (Heb. 11:13). "He received no inheritance in the land, no, not so much as to set his foot on, yet God promised that He would give it to him for a possession ..." (Acts 7:5). This is further confirmed in Acts 7:16 where it is pointed out that Abraham had to buy a burial site in the land from the native inhabitants. This would not have been necessary if he owned the land himself! At the time, Canaan was a heathen country not a heavenly country. Abraham was a "stranger and foreigner in the land" (Heb. 11:13).

Third reason: The promise to Abraham did not only apply to Abraham's natural descendants, i.e. the Israelites. It applied to individuals in all nations. God said to Abraham: "In you shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). Again in Gen. 22:18: "And in your seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." The apostle Paul comments on this in Gal. 3:8-9: "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations through faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying: In you shall all nations be blessed. So then, all who have faith and believe, are blessed with faithful Abraham."

Fourth reason: In Gal. 3:16 Paul says: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. God did not use the plural "seeds,"

meaning many people, but the singular, “seed,” meaning one person only, namely: Christ.”

This is a very important and significant statement! It tells us that the seed promised to Abraham who would inherit the land forever and through whom all nations would be blessed, was primarily Christ. But not only Christ, because Paul goes on to say that all (Jews and Gentiles) who believe in, and are baptized into Christ, belong to Christ and “are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (v27-29). This again is proof positive that the promises have not been fulfilled by Jewish occupation of the land up to our present time. The true seed of Abraham is not determined by genetic factors but spiritual!

It should be evident that no one can have an everlasting inheritance unless they live forever! And it should be equally evident that no one can live forever unless the cause of death is removed. Sin is the cause of death, and Jesus is the special seed of Abraham who conquered sin and death in order that the blessing of eternal life can be released upon those in all nations who believe in him and are baptized into his name. Being “the resurrection and life,” Jesus is able to fulfil the promises made to Abraham, and will do so when he returns to earth and immortalizes his followers and establishes his everlasting world-wide kingdom, over which he will reign from the new Jerusalem. The promised land will be the mother country of Christ’s universal kingdom, and will be occupied by Christian Jews, Christian Arabs and Christians from all other nations.

So then, Arabs in the final analysis along with members of all other nations can be heirs of the ultimate land promise made to Abraham, and can live eternally in peace in the land with fellow Jewish Christians! Many Jews and many Arabs who have lived in the land prior to Christ’s return will not qualify for the real inheritance - the eternal occupation, due to not accepting Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour. And many who have accepted Jesus who have not been able to live in the land will ultimately occupy it eternally! Make no mistake about it, there are many very fine and upstanding Christian Arabs in the Middle East and in the world - humble decent people, who are the true spiritual seed of Abraham, and the Lord knows who they are.

Isa. 60 refers to a multitude of camels coming from different parts of Arabia to Jerusalem when Jesus reigns as king, bearing gifts. Verse 6 says: “And they shall proclaim the praises of Yahweh.”

Isa. 19:18-25 says that in that day the Egyptians will turn to Yahweh the God of Israel. They shall know and acknowledge Him, set up an altar and offer sacrifice to Him and swear allegiance to Him. The prophecy also says that a highway will run through Israel, linking and uniting Egypt, Israel and Assyria (Iraq). And in that day the Lord will say: “Blessed be Egypt my people and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my

inheritance.” In that day, all will know the Lord from the least to the greatest, and every knee will bow to Jesus and every tongue will confess him as Lord to the glory of God. Then, and only then, will peace rule supreme between Jews and Arabs and all nations on earth.

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