

# PALESTINE is COMING

The Revival of Ancient Philistia



PALESTINE  
IS  
COMING

**BOOKS BY KERMIT ZARLEY**

The Gospel

The Gospels Interwoven

**FORTHCOMING**

Babylon Is Coming

Christ Is Coming

**PALESTINE**  
**IS**  
**COMING**

The Revival of  
Ancient Philistia

Kermit Zarley

Hannibal Books  
Hannibal, Missouri

**PALESTINE IS COMING  
THE REVIVAL OF ANCIENT PHILISTIA**

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## **Preface**

The troubled Middle East has been a powder keg ready to explode for decades. Looming in the forefront of Middle East turmoil is the prolonged Palestinian-Israeli conflict. How amazing it is that only a few million people and a tiny piece of real estate have been able to threaten the peace of the whole world. But then, the Jews are no ordinary people and the land under question is no ordinary land.

*Palestine Is Coming* is about land theology, one of the most neglected subjects in Rabbinic and Christian doctrine.<sup>1</sup> The concept of God's choosing a particular people and promising them a particular land is a primary theme of the Bible. Accordingly, this book defends the Israeli Jews' right to a portion of the land of Palestine. However, on the bases of the Jews' history and their own scriptures, it challenges Israeli leaders' repeated assertion that the Jews are entitled to all of Palestine.

This book presents more than a proposal for resolving the Palestinian problem; it is also a prediction of its outcome. From my study of biblical prophecy, in 1981 I discovered that ancient Philistia would someday be revived. It appeared to me that a revival of Philistia could be the solution to the present Palestinian problem. This led to detailed studies not only of the scriptures (Chapters 11-14), but also of the histories of the land of Palestine (Chapters 1-4) and of the Palestinian problem (Chapters 5-9). Knowing the historical background of this complex problem is essential to an adequate understanding of

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<sup>1</sup> W.D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 4-5.

## **Palestine Is Coming**

it. Chapter 10, the proposed solution to the problem, is the highlight of the book.

I realize that countless statesmen have expended much effort toward resolving this dispute. My chief qualification for writing this book is that I have been a student of Bible prophecy for over thirty years. I want to share what I believe the Bible says about this subject. I am much indebted to my wife Marilyn, who collaborated with me and did extensive editing on this work.

Like so many writers on this conflict, I hope that *Palestine Is Coming* will make a positive contribution to the ongoing discussion of the Palestinian problem and to its resolution. I also hope that my viewpoint will be perceived as pro-Jewish, pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian.

Finally, it is my prayer that this book will influence spiritually uncommitted readers to seek to know the loving, just and foreknowing God of the Bible.

Kermit Zarley

Friendswood, Texas, USA

# **Part I**

## **THE ANCIENT PAST**



## Chapter 1

# THE PROMISED LAND

*“To your descendants I will give this land” (Gen 12.7).*

Every nation is entitled to a land of its own. The Jews regained theirs in 1948. The Palestinians are still waiting. Their land was seized by the Jews.

That the Palestinians have developed a national entity is now an indisputable fact. Like the Jews, they also deserve their own independent state. But the big question is, “Where should it be?”

Israeli leaders claim all of Palestine as the land of their forefathers. This is a mistake. The Hebrew Bible makes it clear: ancient Israel never really possessed the land of the Philistines. It is here, in ancient Philistia, where the Palestinian state should be located. Indeed, the word “Palestine” derives from “Philistine.”

Moreover, the biblical prophets imply that the Palestinian state will be located in the Plain of Philistia as a revival of ancient Philistia.

But all of this is getting ahead of our story. To understand God’s plan for nations like Philistia (Palestine), and especially for His chosen nation of Israel, we’ve got to go back to the beginning.

### **Nations as God’s Will**

Nations have always been God’s plan for man. In the beginning God told man to “fill [populate] the earth, and subdue it” (Gen

1.28; 9.1). To accomplish this, God “made” the nations (Deut 26.19; Ps 86.9). Even in the Messianic kingdom, “nations” will come to Jerusalem to worship God (e.g., Isa 2.2; Zech 14.16). The concept of nations, however, does not justify the belligerent nationalism which sparks wars of conquest.

It has never been God’s will for mankind to unite as one nation and one people on the earth. Soon after Noah and the flood, mankind tried to do this very thing. Noah’s descendants journeyed from the region of Mount Ararat, in present eastern Turkey, and settled on the broad plain of present central Iraq. On the Euphrates River they began to build the famous city of Babylon with its Tower of Babel. They wanted its top to reach high into the sky, to “make for ourselves a name; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth” (Gen 11.4). They were thwarting God’s design to populate the earth and to establish nations.

Until then everyone spoke one language. “The Lord said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. . . . and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them’” (11.6). God had earlier said, “the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (8.21). The implication is that with one language and one nation, people would be able to accomplish every evil imaginable.

To restrain their bent toward evil, God confused their language and diverse human languages were born. By this means, “the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city” (11.8). Thus, God overthrew their designs; he forced them to spread out, populate the earth and subdue it.

Consequently, nations were formed according to families and languages. The oldest genealogical record in existence appears in Genesis 10. Called the “Table of Nations,” it lists the

nations according to the heads of families. Thus, the descendants of Noah spread out and settled “according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations” (Gen 10.20, 31).

Moses recorded the first biblical testimony of the fundamental principle of the United Nations, that each nation is entitled to exercise sovereign control over its own land within specified borders. “When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of man [by confusing their language], He set the boundaries of the peoples” (Deut 32.8). **It is therefore God’s will that each nation have its own land.**

Yet the Bible warns that God may take a land away from its people if they persist in gross disobedience to Him. This is exactly what happened to the Canaanites, and later to that nation which overthrew them—Israel.

### **Curse on Canaan**

Soon after the flood, Noah got drunk, shed his clothes and fell asleep. Ham “saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers” (Gen 9.22), who came and covered their father’s nakedness. Without any further explanation, the Bible relates that when Noah awoke, he pronounced a curse on Ham’s son, Canaan. Then Noah pronounced a blessing on Shem and Japheth for their part in covering his nakedness. Noah proclaimed what later came to pass,

Blessed be the Lord,  
The God of Shem;  
And let Canaan be his servant (Gen 9.26).

Noah’s prophecy was fulfilled in the history of the Canaanites and the Hebrews (Israelites). The Hebrews were descendants of Shem (Semitic). Centuries after the Canaanites

became established in their land; the Israelites arrived, destroyed many of them and possessed their land. The remaining Canaanites became Shem's servants when the Israelites made them forced laborers (Josh 16.10; 17.13; Jud 1.17- 35). But again, this is getting ahead of our story.

## **Where the Nations Settled**

Noah's ark had landed in "the mountains of Ararat" (Gen 8.4). These are believed to be in eastern Turkey, where there is a very large Mount Ararat overlooking the Soviet border. From here Noah's offspring spread out and settled in the lands which came to bear their names (Gen 10).

The descendants of Japheth resided in present Turkey, then spread throughout most of the earth.

The descendants of Ham migrated southward, into Africa. On the way, Canaan and his descendants settled the important land bridge joining Africa with Europe and Asia. It included parts of present Syria and Lebanon, and all of Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

This "land of Canaan" was a good land, "flowing with milk and honey" (e.g., Ex 3.8). It was somewhat rectangular in shape, about 170 miles long and 50 miles wide. Its length was bordered by the Mediterranean Sea on the west and the Jordan depression on the east. Going north to south, the "territory of the Canaanite extended from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza" (Gen 10.19). Vital trade routes were located there. Due to its position uniting three continents, this parcel has

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<sup>1</sup> The terms "Palestine" and "Mandate Palestine" are used in this book synonymously, to designate that territory located between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan depression, and between Lebanon and the Sinai Peninsula. These boundaries for Mandate Palestine were established in 1920 under the League of Nations' mandate system. Palestine is used in a future sense on the front cover of this book.

always been the most strategic geo-political region in the world.

The descendants of Shem traveled east and south from Mount Ararat to what is now Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Iran and the Arabian Peninsula. In this region lies a large fertile basin called Mesopotamia. Watered by two great rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, it became known as “the cradle of civilization” and “the breadbasket of the world.” Together with the land bridge, the whole region is shaped in the form of the moon’s crescent and called “the fertile crescent.”

### **God Calls Abram**

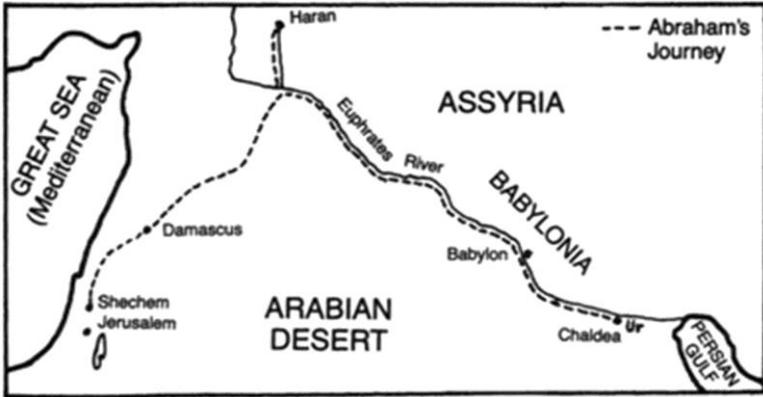
In 2,000 B.C., present southern Iraq was known as Chaldea. The prosperous city of Ur of Chaldea became a Semitic center for polytheism and idolatry. Here God called a man named Abram out of his father’s house of idolatry (Gen 11.31; Ac 7.2-4):

“Go forth from your country, . . .  
To the land which I will show you;  
And I will make you a great nation,  
And I will bless you,  
And make your name great;  
And so you shall be a blessing;  
And I will bless those who bless you,  
And the one who curses you I will curse.  
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”  
(Gen 12.1-3).

### **A People and a Land**

Obedient Abram took his family and left Chaldea. He apparently did not know his final destination (Heb 11.8). After a long stopover in Haran, the family arrived in central Canaan at Shechem (present Nablus). It was here that “the Lord

appeared to Abram and said, ‘to your descendants I will give this land’” (Gen 12.7). It became known as “the Promised Land.”



**Map 1: Abraham's Journey**

God confirmed this promise to Abram at nearby Bethel. As Abram looked around, God said, “All the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever” (Gen 13.15). To the north there was Mount Carmel, the fertile Plain of Jezreel and the Galilee. Eastward lay the lush, green Jordan Valley and the land beyond. To the south was the Judean hill country and the Negev wilderness. Abram glanced west, where a long, fertile plain nestled alongside the calm, blue Mediterranean Sea. The southwestern portion was shaped like a rectangle, about 50 miles long and 15 miles wide, extending in a north-south direction. This corner of the Promised Land later became known as “the land of the Philistines.” This piece of land is the major focus of this book.

God spoke to Abram on a third occasion and promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky (Gen 15.5). He later changed the patriarch’s name to Abraham, meaning “father of a multitude of nations” (Gen 17.5). Thus, God promised to give Abram both a land and a people.

The first time God specified the northern and southern borders of the Promised Land appears in Gen 15.18: “On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.” Biblical scholars have differed on whether the southern border, the “river of Egypt,” is the Nile River or the Wadi el Arish. Throughout much of antiquity the Wadi el Arish was recognized as the northeastern border of Egypt. Later biblical descriptions have “the brook of Egypt,” which unquestionably identifies the wadi. It is a seasonal stream located about twenty-five miles south of the present Gaza Strip. Most scholars believe that Gen 15.18 refers to the Wadi el Arish as the southern border of the Promised Land.

### **Conditional or Unconditional Covenant?**

Understanding one fundamental principle is paramount in formulating a right attitude toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and to supporting a just resolution of it: **the Abrahamic covenant was conditional for each person.** The biblical record of God’s covenant with Abraham is a gradually unfolding revelation. While the actual institution of the covenant does not stipulate any conditions to be met, later revelation does.

God instituted His covenant with Abraham according to a Chaldean custom (Gen 21.27). Abraham cut animal carcasses in half and placed them on the ground opposite each other. According to custom, two men would make a pact, recite predetermined oaths and walk together between the carcasses. The walk symbolized their unity and probably sealed it with the tacit confession, “let me be as these animal carcasses if I fail to keep my part of the agreement” (Jer 34.18 RSV). In God’s covenant with Abraham, as darkness

descended, the Lord signified His presence when “there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces” (Gen 15.17). But here there seems to have been a departure from the custom. Where was Abraham when the lights went out? Was the patriarch still asleep (v. 12)? Did he not pass between the carcasses? This detail is not made clear.

A very important question arises if Abraham did not walk between the carcasses. That is, will God keep His promise to give Abraham a people and a land without requiring either him or his descendants to fulfill any condition(s) whatsoever? Not so. Even if Abraham did not walk between the carcasses, this did not preclude him from the requirement of being faithful in order to receive the promise. In later encounters with the patriarchs, God explicitly affirms His covenant with Abraham as conditional.

Some biblical expositors think God’s covenant with Abraham and his descendants is unconditional.<sup>2</sup> Focusing on the formal institution of the covenant in Gen 15, they deny that later revelation is a part it.

Relating the covenant to the present, does an unconditional Abrahamic covenant give the modern State of Israel a holy mandate for expanding its borders into southern Lebanon and/or Jordan in order to obtain more of the Promised Land? Put another way, have Israeli Jews been issued a divine edict to take the Promised Land by force at this time? This is what some Gentile Christian Zionists and hard-line religious Israelis either advocate or would approve today because they believe the covenant was unconditional.

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<sup>2</sup> E.g., John F. Walvoord in *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*, J. Dwight Pentecost (1958; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), 75; Hal Lindsey, *The Rapture: Truth or Consequences* (New York: Bantam, 1983), 29-30.

For God to make an unconditional covenant with sinful man raises serious questions. What if either Abraham or his descendants would turn away from God and His commandments and act very wickedly? Indeed, succeeding generations of the nation Israel did just that. Is God still obligated by His oath to bless the Israelites and give them the land?

Although it was not expressly stated at the time of its institution, God's covenant with Abraham depended on the patriarch's faithfulness and obedience.<sup>3</sup> This is evident even before the covenant was instituted. The reason God chose to make the covenant with Abraham in the first place was that He foreknew the patriarch's faithfulness. Ezra prayed concerning Abraham, "And Thou didst find his heart faithful before Thee, and didst make a covenant with him" (Neh 9.8). This view is quite prominent in ancient rabbinical literature, as well as in the Hebrew Bible.

Abraham's faith was evident from the beginning. At considerable sacrifice, and despite possible danger, God's model servant left his native land, took his family and went to a faraway, unspecified destination (Gen 12.1; Heb 11.8).

Soon after God instituted His covenant with Abraham, He appeared to the patriarch and declared, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly" (Gen 17.1-2). There should be no doubt that God here adds a stipulation to His covenant with Abraham. God would only accomplish His covenant if Abraham remained "blameless," which does not mean the same as "sinless" (cf. Job 1.8; 2.3 and Lk 1.6 with Eccl 7.20).

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<sup>3</sup> E.g., see Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* [1945] (n.p.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977), 32-36.

God tested Abraham by commanding him to slay his son Isaac as a sacrificial offering. Abraham followed instructions and God stopped his hand at the last moment. Then God reaffirmed His promise to Abraham, explaining that He did so “because you have obeyed My voice” by offering Isaac (Gen 22.18). It must be concluded that if God, in His foreknowledge, had known that Abraham would refuse to offer Isaac, He would not have chosen Abraham with whom to make the covenant.

God later confirmed the covenant with Abraham’s promised son, Isaac. God said He would multiply Isaac’s descendants and give them the Promised Land, “because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws” (Gen 26.3-5).

God made clear His purpose for choosing the Israelites. Through Moses, He said they were to “be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19.6; cf. Deut 14.2). God required His Chosen People to “obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples” (v. 5). Moses further explained that God “keeps His covenant and His loving kindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them” (Deut 7.6, 9).

More particularly, Moses instructed the Israelites that their initial possession of the Promised Land depended on their keeping the Torah (essentially, the Law of Moses). Keeping the Law of God means respect for His commandments, which is reflected in the life. It does not signify absolute perfection. Moses commanded the Israelites to “do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers” (Deut 6.17-18; 4.1; 11.22-23; 27.3).

Joshua later affirmed, “If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us” (Num 14.8).

The promise of the Land came before the giving of the Law. This sequence should not be construed to mean that the covenant had nothing to do with Israel’s adherence to the Law. It is not as though there were no moral law of God before Sinai; it was simply further revealed and codified there. The Jews always connected the Torah with the covenant. **Nothing is more clear in the Hebrew Bible than this: the Jews’ continued possession of their historic homeland has always been dependent on their adherence to the Law of God delivered to Moses at Mount Sinai.**

In his famous pronouncement of the blessing and the curse, Moses clearly warned Israel of their possible dispossession of the land (Lev 26; Deut 28). If the Israelites kept God’s commandments, they would be greatly blessed. The nations would know it and fear Israel. God’s primary method of manifesting Himself to the nations was by His treatment of the Jews (e.g., Gen 21.22; 26.28-29; Deut 29.22-28; Jer 22.8-9). But if the Israelites did not obey their God, He would send upon them the most frightful curses, resulting in much misery. Finally, they would be dispossessed and scattered throughout the nations of the earth. Moses’ dreadful predictions have been repeatedly fulfilled in Jewish history:

If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law. . . . The Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other. . . . And among those nations you shall find no rest, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you shall be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life (Deut 28.58, 64-66).

The history of Israel's exiles from the land testify that God's covenant with Abraham is conditional. While God had obligated Himself to keep His oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He nonetheless did not keep it with certain wicked generations of Israelites, whom He judged severely. The Northern Kingdom was carried away in 722 B.C. by the Assyrians and the Southern Kingdom in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians. The Romans completed the Jewish Diaspora in the 2nd century A.D.

Nevertheless, even though the covenant is conditional with each generation, God also promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants "forever," for an "everlasting possession" (Gen 13.15; 17.8; 48.4). The covenant is therefore both conditional and eternal. That is, it will be fulfilled when Israel repents nationally at the end of this age and turns to God. Then God will make a new covenant with Israel, a covenant which it will never break (Jer 31.31). How this is to be accomplished will be seen in the closing chapters of this book.

### **The Covenant Promise Through Isaac, Not Ishmael**

Abraham's wife Sarah had been barren. Due to her unbelief, she insisted that Abraham bear a child by her maid, Hagar. Ishmael was born.

Years later God added the requirement of circumcision as a sign of his covenant with Abraham (Gen 17.10-13). Failing to circumcise would break the covenant: further evidence of its conditionality (v. 14). Abraham circumcised himself and his thirteen-year old son, Ishmael (Gen 17.25-26). When Isaac was born later to Abraham and Sarah, he was circumcised as well.

Some Muslim writers assert that, because of Ishmael's circumcision today's Palestinians are included in the covenant and therefore just as entitled to the Promised Land as the

Israelis.<sup>4</sup> This view, however, is based on the popular but erroneous supposition that Arabs are descendants of Ishmael. (See Appendix B: Who are the Arabs?)

Furthermore, the covenant also required that Abraham circumcise the hundreds of male servants and slaves in his camp, which he did (Gen 14.14; 17.23). Then there were Abraham's six sons by his concubine, Keturah (Gen 25.1-6). Abraham's circumcising of them did not indicate they, like Isaac, were the "seed of promise" too.

Other Muslim writers even allege that Ishmael was the rightful heir because he was Abraham's firstborn son. But Ishmael was not born to Abraham's wife. Abraham did ask God to bless Ishmael (Gen 17.17-18). God replied, "As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, . . . and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you" (vv. 20-21).

Thus, the covenant promise was clearly through Isaac, not Ishmael. Abraham's actions in later life affirmed Isaac as the rightful heir. Abraham "gave gifts" to the sons of his concubines—to Ishmael and to Keturah's sons—but he "gave all that he had to Isaac" (Gen 25.5-6). God later repeated his covenant to Isaac (Gen 26.3-4) and to Isaac's son, Jacob (Gen 28.13-14), whom God renamed "Israel."

## **Moses and the Exodus**

God did not give the Promised Land to Abraham's seed immediately. In the fourth generation, a famine forced the Hebrews (a term designating Abraham's descendants through Isaac and Jacob) to go to Egypt for food. They stayed there for

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<sup>4</sup> E.g., Alfred Guillaume, "Zionists and the Bible," *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948*, ed. Walid Khalidi (Beirut, Lebanon: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971), 26-27.

some 400 years, were “fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty” (Ex 1.7).

During their sojourn in Egypt, God was fulfilling the first part of His covenant, to multiply His people Israel. At the time of the exodus, the Israelites numbered at least 2.5 million, based on Ex 12.37. The next part of God’s covenant was to give them a land.

To do this, God chose Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Surprisingly, they did not take the shortcut. “God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, ‘Lest the people change their minds when they see war, and they return to Egypt.’ Hence God led the people around by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea” (Ex 13.17-18).

God, or Yahweh, as He was known by name to the Israelites (Ex 6.3), performed many miracles in the sight of His Chosen People. The ten plagues in Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea are well known. Then Moses received the Law at Mount Sinai amidst awesome divine revelation and power.

When the Israelites next drew near the land of the Canaan, God had told them to enter and take the land. But the congregation believed the spies’ “bad report” (Num 13.32), and they refused to take the land. Yahweh punished the Israelites for this lack of faith by making them wander in the wilderness for 40 years. Except for the two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, God caused all the men of that generation to die without entering the Promised Land. **Here is more evidence that the promise to possess the land depends on Israel’s obeying God.**

As the 40 years transpired, the Israelites came up the east side of the Dead Sea toward the Promised Land. God told them, “This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the

peoples everywhere” (Deut 2.25). The inhabitants of the non-Canaanite lands of Gilead and Bashan (western Jordan) would not let them pass. So the Israelites defeated them and took their land. Upon their request, Moses gave these lands to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh (Deut 3.12-17). These lands will be included in the future Promised Land.

Finally, after 40 years, the Israelites arrived in the plains of Moab, near the southern extremity of the Jordan River, opposite Jericho. The time had come for them to cross the Jordan and dispossess the Canaanites. But earlier, Moses had committed a seemingly slight disobedience. For striking a rock in unbelief, God prevented Him from bringing the Israelites into Canaan (Num 20.8-12). **Again, God requires obedience to inherit the land.**

### **“Drive Them Out” or “Destroy”**

Just before Moses died, God gave explicit instructions and warnings about taking the land of the Canaanites:

If you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you let remain of them will become as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land in which you live. And it shall come about that as I plan to do to them, so I will do to you (Num 33.55-56).

The Israelites were to drive out or exterminate all the Canaanites because of their gross wickedness. Compared to other surrounding peoples (e.g., Deut 20.10-18), the Canaanites were the worst of sinners.

When God had promised Abraham this land, He had explained that “the iniquity of the Amorite [a prominent Canaanite nation] is not yet complete” (Gen 15.16). Not until

their sins “reached up to heaven,” over 400 years later, would God send Abraham’s descendants to conquer the Canaanite nations and take possession of their land. Both archaeology and Scripture reveal that, by then, the Canaanites practiced idolatry, witchcraft, and every kind of sexual perversion, including homosexuality, incest, bestiality and cultic prostitution (Lev 18.21-27; 20.2-23; Deut 18.9-14). Moses said of them, “For every abominable act which the Lord hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods” (Deut 12.31).

Moses warned the Israelites not to intermarry or make any covenants with the surrounding nations. They were to drive out or destroy all the Canaanites and destroy their idols and places of worship (e.g., Deut 7.1-8; 9.4).

Because of the vile wickedness and impenitence of the Canaanites, God was going to harden their hearts just as He had done to Pharaoh. They would resist the Israelites rather than flee from them (Josh 11.19-20). Whichever Canaanite cities resisted were to be “under the ban” for Yahweh. This meant that Israel was to annihilate all of the inhabitants of that city and not take any booty. The spoils were to be “devoted to God,” i.e., utterly destroyed.

Many people are offended that the Israelites killed many thousands of Canaanites, including women and children. If so, they must also be offended at God’s other judgments. Except for one family in each case, He drowned the entire earth’s population with a flood and later burned up everyone in Sodom and Gomorrah. The only difference now with the Canaanites was that God would destroy them by means of His Chosen People. God’s design was that the Israelites take their place in the land as “a holy people” and “His own possession” (Deut 7.6).

But how could the Israelites be sure that God told them to destroy the Canaanites? There could be no doubt. Back in Egypt and in the wilderness, God had performed many signs and miracles which authenticated His word through Moses. Now, God confirmed His word through Joshua to destroy the Canaanites by stopping the waters of the Jordan and tumbling the walls of Jericho.

Today, there are Israelis who compare the Palestinians to the Canaanites, claiming that they, too, should be driven out of Israel. It is absurd to compare the Palestinians to the wicked Canaanites. Many unbiased observers today would argue that the Palestinians are no worse sinners than Israeli Jews. In fact, many Palestinians are professing believers in the God of Israel and in Jesus of Nazareth as His Messiah. Even Palestinian Muslims accept much of the Hebrew Bible as divinely inspired. Moreover, God has not raised up prophets to tell the Israelis to drive out the Palestinians, confirming such a message with genuine miracles as of old.

### **What Is the Promised Land?**

Before Israel entered the land of Canaan, God designated the boundaries of the land that each tribe would inherit. Some of the place names and geography remain uncertain. Even the borders of the territories to be inherited by each of the twelve tribes cannot be accurately fixed.

The Hebrew Bible provides varying descriptions of the Promised Land. Greater Israel is the name often applied to the entire Promised Land described to Abraham. It extends “from the river of Egypt as far as . . . the river Euphrates” (Gen 15.18; cf. Ex 23.31; Josh 1.4). Canaan identified the major portion of Greater Israel. “All the land of Canaan (Gen 17.8; cf. Ex 6.4) . . . extended from Sidon . . . as far as Gaza” (Gen 10.19). **The Tribal Inheritance** included Canaan plus land east of the

Jordan River where the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh had settled (Num 34.1-15; Josh 13.8—19.48).

Jews have never decisively designated the borders of *Eretz Yisrael* (Hebrew for “land of Israel”). Throughout their scriptures and ancient rabbinic literature, Eretz Israel “was never defined with geographical precision.”<sup>5</sup> This condition remains today. When an Israeli leader asked U.S. President Johnson to recognize Israel’s acquisition of the occupied territories, he retorted, “You are asking me to recognize your borders? You have never defined the borders of Israel.”<sup>6</sup> Indeed, “the definition of what constituted the confines of Eretz Israel is one of the thorniest problems in Jewish literature.”<sup>7</sup>

Jewish sources generally give three different designations of boundaries for Eretz Israel.<sup>8</sup> **Greater Israel**, again, refers to the larger, “ideal” territory promised to Abraham in Gen 15. **The First Commonwealth** identifies Israel’s possession of land between the time of the conquest and the Babylonian exile. Its widest extent was during Solomon’s kingdom. **The Second Commonwealth** describes the Jews’ possession of a smaller land following the exile (537 B.C.), essentially a reduced Judah. Centuries later, however, during the Hasmonean era, it was much enlarged. Jews disagree on which territory can legitimately be claimed as that of the Second Commonwealth. This will be discussed in Chapter Two. In the

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<sup>5</sup> W.D. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), xv.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics: Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War* (Wesport, CN: Lawrence Hill, 1986), 150.

<sup>7</sup> Yehuda Elizur, “The Borders of Eretz Israel in Jewish Tradition,” *Whose Homeland: Eretz Israel: Roots of the Jewish Claim*, ed. Avner Tomaschoff (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1978), 42.

<sup>8</sup> Encyclopaedia Judaica, 16 vols. (Macmillan: Jerusalem, 1972), 9:112.

last two designations, the term “Eretz Israel” is defined in a historical context.

Apparently, Israel’s tribal inheritance is to be distinguished from Greater Israel. The northern border of the inheritance is usually given as a line extending from the vicinity of Sidon eastward toward Damascus. Yet according to Gen 15, the northern border of Greater Israel extends about 125 miles farther, to the Euphrates River.

There is a difference in the eastern border as well. We have just seen that the Torah included land east of the Jordan River as the Jews’ ancient tribal inheritance. Several prophets confirm that Israel will indeed possess territory across the Jordan during the promised kingdom age. But Ezekiel expressly declares that the eastern border of Israel’s tribal inheritance during the Messianic kingdom will be the Jordan River/Dead Sea (Eze 47.18). Yet concerning the same time, Ezekiel designates land east of the Dead Sea as “in Israel” (Eze 39.11). Will Israel’s tribal inheritance during the Messianic kingdom be restricted to land west of the Jordan River/Dead Sea while land east will still be reckoned “in Israel”?

There is no problem with the western border of the Promised Land; it is always given as the Mediterranean Sea. Although Canaan extended from the vicinity of Sidon southward to the Gaza and its environs, many passages include the additional territory from Gaza to the Wadi el Arish in the Promised Land. **Therefore, all of the coastland, including Philistia and Phoenicia (present western Lebanon), were included in the Promised Land.**

During the patriarchs’ sojournings, God specifically identified Philistia and included it in the Promised Land. When a famine occurred in Canaan, “Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines” (Gen 26.1). God instructed

Isaac, “Do not go down to Egypt; . . . Sojourn in this land . . . for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands” (vv. 2-3). Later, Joshua allotted the Philistine cities and their territories, including the area extending to the Wadi el Arish, to the tribe of Judah (Josh 15.45-47). **Yet neither Judah nor the whole nation of Israel ever fully obtained Philistia.** And Phoenicia never came into Jewish hands.

### **Joshua Takes the Promised Land**

Under Joshua’s leadership, the sons of Israel obeyed Yahweh in dispossessing the Canaanites and taking much land. No king or any man was able to defeat Joshua in battle (Josh 1.5).

So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. . . . no one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass (Josh 21.43-45; cf. 11.23; 23.14).

The above passage and its parallels do not mean that Joshua took all of the Promised Land. The author of Joshua here affirms a major theme, which begins his book (Josh 1.3-5). It is Moses’ earlier pronouncement, that “every place on which the sole of your foot shall tread shall be yours; . . . There shall no man be able to stand before you” (Deut 11.24-25; cf. Josh 14.9). In other words, during Joshua’s lifetime God gave the Israelites all the land that they entered to possess.

### **The Unpossessed Land**

Like Moses, just before Joshua died he exhorted the leaders of Israel to obey the Lord. His warning reveals they still did not possess all of their inheritance and that their attaining of it depended on their obedience:

So take diligent heed to yourselves to love the Lord your God. For if you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations, these which remain among you, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, know with certainty that the Lord your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they shall be a snare and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the Lord your God has given you (Josh 23.11-13).

The unconquered territory included the southwestern portion of the Promised Land—"the land of the Philistines." The Israelites had entered Canaan from the east. They had kept largely to the hill country and away from the trade route along the coast, probably due to their lack of chariots.<sup>9</sup> As Joshua's career came to a close, "the Lord said to him, 'You are old and advanced in years, and very much of the land remains to be possessed. **This is the land that remains: all the regions of the Philistines . . . and all of Lebanon, . . .** I will drive them out from before the sons of Israel'" (Josh 13.1-2, 5-6; emphasis added).

Thus, when Joshua died, it was chiefly Philistia and Lebanon that remained to be taken for the tribal inheritance. And God intended to give them this land.

God had not promised to drive out all the inhabitants of the Promised Land at once. He spoke through Moses: "I will not drive them out before you in a single year, that the land may not become desolate, and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. I will drive them out before you little by

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<sup>9</sup> *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Bruce K. Waltke, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 2:847.

little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land” (Ex 23.29-30; cf. Deut 7.22-23).

### **Philistia and Lebanon Withheld**

After Joshua died, the sons of Israel grew strong and took more Promised Land. But did Israel or Judah ever take possession of the land of the Philistines? Here is a very important question relating to the present Israeli-Palestinian problem. It has thus far not received much attention. The subject first appears in the Bible in Jud 1.18-19, with mention of three of the five Philistine city-states:

And Judah took Gaza with its territory and Ashkelon with its territory and Ekron with its territory. Now the Lord was with Judah, and they took possession of the hill country; but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley [or “plain”] because they had iron chariots.

English versions reveal manuscript variance in these two verses. The above NASB translates the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT). Most contemporary biblical scholars, however, agree with the Septuagint (LXX: Greek translation of the OT), which states that Judah did not take possession of these three major Philistine cities and their territories at this time.<sup>10</sup> Even if

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<sup>10</sup> J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges: A Commentary in The Old Testament Library*, tr. John Bowden (1979; rep., Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 23. Soggin claims all major contemporary commentators, except one, regard “not” as the correct reading in Jud 1.18. This view also correlates with vv. 19, 21, 27, 29-35 (“did not drive out,” “did not take possession” or the like.)

As regards the word “valley,” most authorities believe it refers to the Shephelah with its east-west valleys connecting to the coastal plain. The RSV, JB and NIV read “plain” instead of “valley.” “Plain” makes better sense because chariots were only suited to relatively flat land. The Israelites, confined to the rugged hill country, had no use for chariots. If “plain” is the correct reading in v. 19, then “did not take” must also be correct in v. 18. Otherwise, the two verses would contradict. Accordingly, Judah did not take possession of any Philistine territory at this time.

Judah did take possession then, Jud 3.1-3 reveals that it was very short-lived: **“Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to test Israel by them . . . the five lords of the Philistines” and those nations in Lebanon** (emphasis mine).

The first failing of Israel was that when the tribes took additional territory, “they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely” (Josh 17.13; cf. Jud 1.27-35). Contrary to God’s command, they permitted them to live in their midst.

The angel of the Lord had guarded the Israelites during their journey to, and conquest of, the Promised Land (Ex 23.20-23; 33.2). **Now he appeared to Israel’s leaders and announced: “I will not drive out [the nations] before you; but they shall become as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you” (Jud 2.2-3)** (emphasis mine).

As Moses had predicted, the Israelites and Canaanites intermarried. “Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals, and they forsook the Lord, . . . and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the Lord to anger” (Jud 2.10-12).

Consequently, God gave His Chosen People into the hands of their enemies. During this period of the judges, the Israelites would repent of their sins, cry out to God and He would raise up a judge to deliver them. But when the judge died, they acted more corruptly than before (e.g., Jud 2.14-19). Thus, Yahweh swore in His anger,

“I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, in order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk in it as their fathers did, or not. . . . **And they were for testing Israel, to find out if they would obey the**

**commandments of the Lord**” (Jud 2.21-22; 3.4; emphasis added).

Like the Philistines of old, today’s Palestinians are testing Israel.

Many Israeli leaders, such as prime ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, have claimed that modern Israel is entitled to its present land plus the occupied territories because the Jews’ forefathers possessed all of this in antiquity. It is surprising that this false assertion has gone unchallenged. When Begin campaigned for prime minister in 1977, he opposed the Labor Party’s Shimon Peres, who advocated trading part of the occupied territories for peace. Begin’s Likud platform included the following statement: “The right of the Jewish people to the land of Israel is eternal and indisputable. . . . Judaea and Samaria will not be handed to any foreign administration; between the [Mediterranean] sea and Jordan [River] there will only be Israeli sovereignty.” Begin has always included the entire Plain of Philistia in his designation, “land of Israel.”

Ever since its beginning in 1948, modern Israel has included the major portion of the Plain of Philistia. The Gaza Strip represents a small portion of the Plain. **But ancient Israel’s possession of the Plain of Philistia was so brief and partial, that this history does not warrant present Israeli claims to this land. To this history we now turn.**

## Chapter 2

# LAND OF THE PHILISTINES

*“Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor . . . ?” (Amos 9.7)*

The present Palestinian-Israeli conflict is basically a dispute over land. The Jews’ primary argument for their claim to Mandate Palestine is one of historical precedent. They wish to reclaim the land their forefathers first possessed nearly 3,500 years ago, an occupancy which lasted for about 1,500 years. Contrary to some Israeli and Christian claims and assumptions, the ancient Israelites never possessed the entire Plain of Philistia, and what part they did occupy was for only very brief periods. Certain passages in some English translations of the Bible seem to indicate otherwise. It is therefore necessary to examine these passages, as well as the overall history of the possession of Palestine. A related question will be addressed: Do the present Palestinians have any ethnic connection to the ancient Philistines?

### **“Philistine” and “Palestine”**

The word “Philistine(s)” appears 283 times in the Hebrew Bible, “Philistia” occurs eight times. “Philistia” always refers to the southwestern coastal plain of what we call Palestine today. Philistia was often called “the land of the Philistines.”

The term “Palestine” derives from “Philistine.” Herodotus was the first known writer to apply the variant for Philistine—*Palaestina*—to the much wider region now called Palestine. Writing in the 5th century B.C., he was merely following usage

by the Greek merchants and sailors who traded with the Philistines. By that time, during the Jews' exile to Babylon, both the term "land of Israel" and "land of Judah" had lost their significance.

No doubt the Philistines had expanded into the former Judean hill country, perhaps more so than Judah's other neighbors. If so, it would have become even more appropriate to apply the word *Palaestina*, as Herodotus did, beyond the historical borders of Philistia to include the former Judean hill country.

Later writers included present western Jordan, and even Lebanon, in their designation, *Palaestina*. Both Greek geographer Strabo and Roman scholar Pliny, who lived in the first century A.D., called the territory of Gaza and the Judean hill country northward through present Lebanon, *Palaestina*. Pliny included land east of the Jordan River in this designation.<sup>1</sup>

The Romans adopted this Greek usage. Later, land east of the Jordan River came to be called Eastern Palestine, and that west of the river was Western Palestine. Sometimes this entire area, along with Lebanon, was controlled by Syria and called Greater Syria. Not until the British Mandate in 1920 was the term "Palestine" restricted to land west of the Jordan River and south of Lebanon.

Confusion has recently emerged regarding the word Palestine, a word which the modern State of Israel refuses to use to identify any of its territory. In late 1988 the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its legislative body, the Palestine National Council (PNC), officially declared the existence of the State of Palestine—a state, however, without a

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<sup>1</sup> Strabo, *Works*, XVI. iv, 18; Pliny, *Natural History*, V, xiii, 1.

land. For most people this creates confusion because the word “Palestine” is now used to refer both to a state and a geographic area, the two being unrelated. **If the word Palestine were applied according to its derivation, as in the Bible, it would identify only the Plain of Philistia, the coastal plain south of Tel Aviv through the Gaza Strip.**

### **Origin of the Philistines**

In the past century, historians and archaeologists have devoted much attention to uncovering the origin of the Philistines and their material culture. Strangely, much remains hidden. No Philistine documents or monuments with writing have so far been found. The Philistines had their own language (cf. Neh 13.23-24), but apparently they did not commit it to written form.

The word Philistine means “migrant,” signifying that the Philistines migrated to the southwestern coast of Palestine. There is uncertainty regarding both the place of their origin and the time of their migration. Most historians and archaeologists now maintain that the Philistines originated in the region of the Aegean Sea, where Greece and Turkey are located. The predominant theory is that the Philistines, called “Sea Peoples,” migrated from the mainland to the Mediterranean island of Crete. From there it is believed that they attacked Egypt by sea, were repulsed and settled for the first time in southwestern Palestine. However, some experts maintain that some, if not all, of the Philistines travelled by land from Turkey down the Mediterranean coast to settle in Palestine and later attack Egypt. Both views regard the Genesis accounts of the Philistines and their land as anachronisms. (See Appendix A: Early History of the Philistines.)

## Philistines: A Geographic Designation

During their major attack on Egypt in the early 12th century B.C., the Philistines consisted of five different groups of people. In time these five groups apparently incorporated. Gleason Archer observes of the Philistines, that “biblical references show that they were a heterogeneous people including several distinct groups such as the Kaphtorim, the Keftim, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites.”<sup>2</sup> Most scholars believe “Pelethites” was another term for Philistines.

“Cherethites,” a name which may derive from Cretans, are mentioned ten times in the Hebrew Bible. In all of these passages “Cherethites” are either associated with “Pelethites” or used interchangeably with “Philistines.” At first the Cherethites lived next to the Philistines, to the south. It is believed they eventually were subsumed by the Philistines.

Yohanan Aharoni claims the Philistines “enforced their rule upon the local Canaanite populace,” and “their residents were absorbed by the Philistines with the passage of time.”<sup>3</sup> Hanna Kassis alleges that excavation of Philistine cities confirms that although the Philistines conquered the Canaanites in southwestern Palestine,

the culture of Philistia remained Canaanite and eventually subsumed that of the Philistines. The question that arises at this stage is: What does the Bible refer to when speaking of the “Philistines”? We shall argue that this reference is geographic rather than ethnic, and that the biblical term

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<sup>2</sup> Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1974), 278. Some of the more prominent biblical references are: Gen 10.14; Deut 2.23; 1 Chron 1.12; Jer 47.4; Eze 25.16; Zeph 2.5; Amos 9.7.

<sup>3</sup> Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, tr. A.G. Rainey (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 251.

“Philistines” does not necessarily include ethnic or cultural implications.<sup>4</sup>

In conclusion, **many authorities support the contention that the term “Philistines” should not be reckoned as an ethnic (racial) group but only as a geographic designation. That is, they were Philistines because they lived in Philistia.**<sup>5</sup> (Again, see Appendix A: Early History of the Philistines.)

### **The Boundaries of Philistia**

The early Philistines settled in the narrow Mediterranean coastal plain of southwestern Canaan. It is usually identified on Bible maps as the Plain of Philistia, Philistia or Land of the Philistines.

By the time the Israelites became established in their land, Philistia was somewhat rectangular in shape. Its width was 15 miles, extending from the Mediterranean Sea inland to the Shephelah (“lowlands”). The Shephelah was a strip of rising lowlands which separated the Philistine Plain from the Judean hill country to the east. Today, the Shephelah still has some towns and archaeological sites bearing Philistine names. These attest that the Philistines sometimes occupied valleys penetrating into the Shephelah.

During Israel’s early history, Philistine territory reached farther northward to include Joppa. At that time its northern border was the Nahal Yarkon, just north of present Tel Aviv.<sup>6</sup> Throughout most of Israel’s history, however, Philistia’s

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<sup>4</sup> Hanna E. Kassis, “Gath and the Structure of the ‘Philistine’ Society,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 84 (1965), 266-67.

<sup>5</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 4:767.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 247, 251.

northern border was farther south, at the Nahal Sorek, a seasonal stream which empties into the Mediterranean Sea. The mouth of the Sorek is located nine miles south of the center of present Tel Aviv.



**Map 2: Land of the Philistines (Philistia)**

From the Nahal Sorek, Philistia stretched at least 50 miles southward to include the present Gaza Strip. Philistia's occupation often extended an extra 25 miles southward to the Wadi el Arish, the seasonal stream which represented Egypt's ancient northeastern border. Respected Israeli scholar Mordechai Gichon alleges, "From a geographical-historical

point of view, the [Gaza] strip extends from El-Arish” northward.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, due to the Judean hills receding in the south, southern Philistia bulged eastward and farther inland, deeper into the Negev and the Sinai Peninsula.

During the early history of Israel, Philistia was known mostly for its pentapolis: the five well-administered city-states of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath and Ekron. Gaza, Ashkelon and Ashdod were former Canaanite cities of early antiquity. Prior to the 12th century B.C., they were sometimes controlled by the Egyptians. The inland cities of Gath and Ekron were founded later, apparently by the Philistines.<sup>8</sup>

### **God-Given Land**

As seen in Chapter 1, “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of men, he fixed the bounds of the peoples” (Deut 32.8 NIV). In other words, it was God’s plan for nations to have their own land.

In later times God gave other nations specific lands. For example, the Almighty destroyed the previous inhabitants of present western Jordan and gave these lands to relatives of Abraham—the Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites (Deut 2.9-22).

How did the Philistines get the southern coastal plain? It is written that “as for the Avvim, who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorim who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and lived in their place” (Deut 2.23). The Philistines are called Caphtorim because they came from Caphtor, which many

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<sup>7</sup> Mordechai Gichon, “The History of the Gaza Strip: A Geo-political and Geostrategic Perspective,” *The Jerusalem Cathedral*, ed. Lee I. Levine, 3 vols. (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 2:283.

<sup>8</sup> Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 250-51.

believe was Crete. Note the following comparison God made, “Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?” (Amos 9.7). As He did with the Israelites and others, God gave the Philistines their land.

### **Rivalry Between the Israelites and the Philistines**

Chapter 1 revealed that God withheld the lands of Philistia and Lebanon from the Israelites because they disobeyed Him in not driving out all of the Canaanites. He did this despite the fact that Joshua had previously allotted the entire Philistine territory to the tribe of Judah (Josh 15.45-47). Yahweh left the Philistines and Lebanese “for testing Israel, to find out if they would obey the commandments of the Lord” (Jud 3.4).

From Joshua’s time until the monarchy, Israel waged a long and arduous struggle with its chief enemy—the Philistines. Some of the most vivid and memorable stories in the Old Testament (OT) concern the rivalry between the Israelites and the Philistines. Take the story of Samson, who in his great strength repeatedly overcame the Philistines. They finally deceived him through the temptress, Delilah. Then there was David, who slew Goliath, the giant of the Philistines.

During the period of the judges (c. 1200-1020 B.C.), Israel existed as a loosely-knit tribal confederacy without a king. The Philistines frequently spread into Judean territory, “ruling over Israel” (e.g., Jud 14.4; cf. 10.7; 13.1; 1 Sam 4.10). Throughout this period of rivalry, the Philistines dominated the Israelites more than vice versa. For a while they even placed their own governors over Israel’s southern tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin and exacted oppressive tribute. By establishing fortresses in the north, the Philistines controlled Megiddo and the Valley of Jezreel, as well as Geba of Benjamin (1 Sam 10.5; 13.3). They even extended their presence into the

Jordan valley.<sup>9</sup> The Israelites suffered a severe psychological setback in the mid-11th century B.C., when the Philistines destroyed Shiloh, captured the Ark of the Covenant and removed it to Ashdod.

Until the time of David (late 11th century B.C.), the Philistines were the only opponents of Israel to remain unconquered.<sup>10</sup> The Israelites had not ventured into the Philistine plain. “South of Jaffa [later, Tel Aviv] the entire Coastal Plain remained the domain of the Philistines, who threatened to encroach on the territory held by the Israelites.”<sup>11</sup>

It is frequently observed that this rivalry with the Philistines welded the tribes of Israel into a cohesive fighting force and nation. Today’s Arab Palestinians have served the same function for modern Israel. This is one of many similarities between the warlike ancient Philistines and the Palestinians.

### **King Saul**

Saul became Israel’s first king in the late 11th century B.C. He spent most of his life fighting the Philistines, and that is how he died. “War against the Philistines was severe all the days of Saul” (1 Sam 14.52). He delivered Israel from its enemies, so that the Philistines retreated “to their own place” (1 Sam 14.46-48). Yet **King Saul never possessed any Philistine soil.**

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<sup>9</sup> E.g., John Bright, *The History of Israel*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), 176.

<sup>10</sup> Tenney, *Zondervan Pictorial*, 4:771-72.

<sup>11</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 9:115.

## King David

After David (reign: 1,011-971 B.C.) captured the strong fortress of Zion and Jebus (former Jerusalem), his fame as a warrior spread quickly among the Philistines. Twice they “spread themselves out in the valley of Rephaim” (2 Sam 5.17), near western Jerusalem, to challenge David and his forces. Both times he struck them down, the second time driving them all the way to Gezer, just outside the northeastern border of Philistia (v. 25).

Thus, King David defeated the Philistines, but not in their own territory. The effect of these victories was that David discouraged the Philistines from mounting further assaults upon Israel.<sup>12</sup>

Did David ever possess Philistine territory? Some Bible translations render 2 Sam 8.1 as if he did. For example, the NASB gives the following summary of the two battles: “Now after this it came about that David defeated the Philistines and subdued them; and David took control of the chief city from the hand of the Philistines.” The Hebrew words, here translated “the chief city,” are *metheg ammah*. The KJV, RSV and NIV do not translate, but render them as a placename, which is unknown. A footnote in the NASB provides the literal translation, “the bridle of the mother city.” Most likely, *metheg ammah* should be translated “authority of the mother city,”<sup>13</sup> indicating that David exercised a general leadership there.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> John Mauchline, ed., *New Century Bible: 1 and 2 Samuel* (Greenwood, S.C.: Attic Press, 1971), 233.

<sup>13</sup> William Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), 52; Francis Brown, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979), 607.

<sup>14</sup> Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *1 and 2 Samuel: A Commentary*, tr. J.S. Bowden (London: SCM, 1964), 290.

The parallel passage in 1 Chron 18.1 reads, “David defeated the Philistines and subdued them and took Gath and its towns from the hand of the Philistines.” The chronicler is surely not contradicting 2 Sam 8.1, written earlier, but clarifying its ambiguity. Both passages probably indicate the same accomplishment: David removed Gath and its territory from Philistine domination. Gath then served as a buffer zone between Israel and the Philistines.<sup>15</sup>

Scripture never indicates that David made the Philistines his servants or placed garrisons in their land. He only received silver and gold as tribute money when he initially subdued them (2 Sam 8.11-12; 1 Chron 18.11). In contrast, he made the Moabites and Edomites of present Jordan, as well as the Arameans of Damascus, his servants, putting garrisons in their land and regularly exacting tribute from them (2 Sam 8.2, 6, 14; 1 Chron 18.2, 6, 13).

The writer of 2 Sam 8.1 probably means that David pushed the Philistines back to their former territory of the coastal plain.<sup>16</sup> It is most unlikely that David would have attacked one of the three major Philistine cities of Gaza, Ashkelon and Ashdod without its mention in the Bible. Noted historian John Bright claims, “There is no evidence that [David] reduced the coastal cities of Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza.”<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, some scholars believe that David avoided incursions into the Philistine plain because a newly-strengthened Egypt had by then regained control over the plain.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Kassis, “Gath and Philistine Society,” 269.

<sup>16</sup> Peter R. Ackroyd, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary: The Second Book of Samuel* (Cambridge: University, 1977), 86.

<sup>17</sup> Bright, *History of Israel*, 199.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in Bright, *History of Israel*, 199n.

In conclusion, although he extended his dominion all the way to the Euphrates River and beyond the Jordan, **King David did not rule over Philistia**, much less populate it with Israelites.<sup>19</sup>

### **King Solomon**

But what about Solomon's reign? Surely he ruled the Philistines during Israel's Golden Age!

Under King Solomon (reign: 971-931 B.C.) Israel enjoyed unprecedented peace, prosperity and dominion never again achieved. "Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River [ Euphrates] to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life" (1 Kgs 4.21).

In 1 Kgs 4.21 the first preposition, "to," appears in italics in the NASB. This indicates it is not in the Hebrew text (MT), raising the question of whether Solomon ruled up **to** Philistia or **over** it. The parallel passage in 2 Chron 9.26 includes the preposition in the MT. The LXX includes it in both passages. The view that Solomon ruled **to** and not **over** the land of the Philistines is held by many biblical scholars. Solomon's dominion extended over vassal states all the way to the Euphrates River. Yet the Israelites continued to dwell within previous bounds. Only four verses later we read, "So Judah and Israel lived in safety, every man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon" (v. 25; cf. Jud 20.1; 1 Sam 3.20). Dan was then a small region located just inside present southeastern Lebanon. Beersheba was located just east of Philistia. This expression says nothing about

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<sup>19</sup> K.A. Kitchen, "The Philistines," *Peoples of the Old Testament*, ed. D.J. Wiseman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 64.

Israel's borders east and west. Israel was still bounded on the southwest by Philistia.

The Bible repeatedly mentions war between the Philistines and the Israelites in the days of Saul and David, but not Solomon. "Solomon conducted no serious military operations [anywhere,] that we know of."<sup>20</sup> Surprisingly, the Bible does not even mention the Philistines during Solomon's reign, which indicates peace with them, probably due to Egypt's dominion over the Philistines at this time. Indeed, Pharaoh Siamun and his forces had to pass through all of Philistia to conquer the Canaanite city of Gezer, which Solomon obtained through a marriage alliance (1 Kgs 3.1; 9.16). This indicates both that Solomon did not control Philistia and that Egypt had reasserted dominance over it.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike his father, Solomon did not even control Gath. Two of Solomon's servants sought refuge from their master and "ran away to Achish . . . king of Gath," (1 Kgs 2.39).

The Scriptures do not include the Philistines among those nations which "brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life" (1 Kgs 4.21). Neither are they included among the list of peoples whom Solomon used as forced laborers for his ambitious building programs (1 Kgs 9:15, 17-21). The only possible conclusion from both secular and biblical evidence is that Solomon never ruled over the Philistines.

### **King Uzziah of Judah**

As far as is known, Judah's King Uzziah was the first king of either Israel or Judah to possess any Philistine territory and place any Israelites in it. About 760 B.C. his powerful army invaded Philistia and broke down the thick casement walls of

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<sup>20</sup> Bright, *History of Israel*, 212.

<sup>21</sup> Yohanan Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 272, 275.

the Philistine cities of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod. Jabneh and Gath were located near what was then Philistia's border. Uzziah afterwards "built cities in the area of Ashdod and among the Philistines" (2 Chron 26.6). This indicates that he did not capture Ashdod, only some of its territory. Israeli scholars Aharoni and Avi-Yonah remark, "It is difficult to assume that Uzziah ruled over Ashdod proper after this campaign, though he did reduce its borders, securing his conquests by building cities on lands formerly belonging to Ashdod."<sup>22</sup>

**Thus, during King Uzziah's reign Judah occupied a small portion of the land of the Philistines, but for only a few years.**

### **King Ahaz of Judah**

At other times the Philistines sometimes penetrated and temporarily possessed Israelite territory. This happened under King Ahaz of Judah (reign: 743-727 B.C.). Because he "did not do right in the sight of the Lord" (2 Chron 28.1), "the Philistines also had invaded the cities of the [Shephelah] and of the Negev of Judah" and some in Judah itself (v. 18).

### **Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser III**

In the second half of the 8th century B.C., the Assyrians waged several military campaigns in Palestine. In 734 B.C. Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser III came down the coastal plain, took all of Philistia and "afflicted" King Ahaz of Judah (2 Chron 28.20). The Philistine population, however, was left virtually intact. Philistia thus became a buffer between now powerful Assyria and Egypt.

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<sup>22</sup> Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 90.

## **King Hezekiah of Judah**

The son of idolatrous King Ahaz of Judah was good King Hezekiah (reign: 715-687 B.C.). Hezekiah “defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city” (2 Kgs 18.8). Watchtowers were outlying territorial posts. “From watchtower to fortified city” may be an idiom meaning “everywhere.” Or it could refer strictly to outlying Philistine towns and villages, excluding the fortified (walled) cities of the Philistine pentapolis.

Assyrian King Sargon II (reign: 721-705 B.C.) invaded and controlled Philistia in the late 8th century B.C. Thus, it is generally thought that Hezekiah did not vanquish the Philistines until after the Assyrian king’s death in 705 B.C.<sup>23</sup> If so, Hezekiah may have dominated Philistia for about three years, until the Assyrians invaded the region again.

## **Assyrian King Sennacherib**

Sargon II’s son, Sennacherib, ascended the Assyrian throne. In 701 B.C. he waged a major military campaign in Palestine. For the first time, a foreign king “came against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them” (2 Kgs 18.13), 46 in all according to Sennacherib’s annals. After that, Philistine cities fell to him like dominos. Sennacherib threatened Israel’s good King Hezekiah in Jerusalem because he had rebelled against Assyria by refusing to pay tribute and earlier attacking the Philistines (2 Kgs 18.7). Philistia had been controlled by the Assyrians. Sennacherib records concerning Hezekiah, “His towns which I had plundered, I took away from his country and gave them (over) to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Sillibel, king of Gaza. Thus I reduced his country,

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<sup>23</sup> T.R. Hobbs, 2 Kings in *Word Biblical Commentary*, 51 vols. (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 13:253.

but I still increased the tribute.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, Philistine kings temporarily ruled over part of Judah.

The Assyrians never annexed Philistia. It remained a buffer between Assyria and Egypt. **In the 7th century B.C. control of Philistia went back and forth between Assyria and Egypt; Israel was no longer a contender.**

### **Post-Assyrian Philistine Existence**

Some writers have incorrectly claimed that the Philistines ceased to exist after Sennacherib supposedly deported them en masse to Assyria. Actually, Sennacherib seems to have left the Philistine population quite undisturbed.

Whenever military conquerors made deportations of the local population, their purpose was to remove possible elements of rebellion.

Deportations therefore usually consisted of royalty and officials who might instigate an uprising. The large majority of the population was customarily left to cultivate the land and pay tribute. Even when a besieged city was conquered and its citizens deported, rural residents usually repopulated the city. Very rarely were wholesale deportations of cities or regions carried out. When they were, it nearly always resulted from an extraordinary rebellion or firm resistance. Sennacherib did not encounter such a situation with the Philistines.

There is abundant evidence that Philistines still inhabited Philistia centuries after the Assyrian conquests. In the mid-5th century B.C., Nehemiah returned from the Babylonian exile to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. He discovered that many Jews who had escaped the exile “had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab; and half of their children spoke the

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<sup>24</sup> James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Related to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: University Press, 1955), 288.

language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah” (Neh 13.24 RSV). The Philistine tongue was still spoken in Ashdod and beyond. Ashdod had become the chief Philistine city; its name probably identified all of Philistia.<sup>25</sup> The “women of Ashdod” were “Philistine women in general.”<sup>26</sup>

As mentioned previously, during this period the Greeks called the entire region between the Mediterranean and the Jordan Depression, “Palaestina.” This indicates that the Philistines not only still existed in their land following the Assyrian conquests, but had spread eastward and populated part of former Judah and perhaps Samaria.

### **Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar**

In the late 7th century B.C., Pharaoh Necho of Egypt controlled and exacted tribute from Philistia, Judah, Samaria and Lebanon. But when Nebuchadnezzar (reign: 605-562 B.C.) became king of Babylon he attacked and defeated Necho’s forces at Carchemish on the Euphrates River, driving all the way to the border of Egypt. Thereafter, the Babylonians controlled all of Palestine until Cyrus.

### **Persian and Hellenistic Periods**

Babylon fell to the Persian King Cyrus in 539 B.C. For the next century, Persia dominated both Philistia and Judah.

The ascendancy of Greece brought another change of power. In 332 B.C. Alexander the Great besieged Gaza for two months and destroyed it. Though he purportedly killed 10,000 of its male citizens, this did not spell the demise of the

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<sup>25</sup> Aharoni and Avi-Yonah, *Macmillan Bible Atlas*, 109.

<sup>26</sup> Gichon, “History of the Gaza Strip,” 2:293.

Philistines in Gaza. “The city was soon repopulated with people from the neighboring areas.”<sup>27</sup>

Following the death of Alexander, both Philistia and Judah came under the control of the Ptolemies of Egypt from 323 to 198 B.C.

The Seleucids of Syria controlled this territory throughout most of the period from 198 to 63 B.C.

### **Philistia During the Maccabean Era**

Philistia did lose much of its significance as a nation after the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests. Nevertheless, although the Philistines absorbed Greeks, Nabatean Arabs and Egyptians over the centuries, they continued as a recognizable people. For example, writing in the 2nd century B.C., the author of 1 Maccabees refers to “the country of the Philistines,” “Philistine territory,” or the like, five times (1 Macc 3.25, 42; 4.22; 5.66, 68). He further relates that Philistia was **not** a possession of Judea (Greco-Roman name for Judah). Philistine temples, like those of Dagon at Ashdod and Marna at Gaza (1 Macc 10.83-84; 11.4), still existed at that time, substantiating the survival of the Philistines’ religion. All of this reveals that in the mid-2nd century B.C., the southwestern coast of Palestine was still regarded as the land of the Philistines.

First century historian Josephus mentions Philistine cities several times. Although he does not call the inhabitants of these cities Philistines, he consistently refers to them as “people of Ashdod,” “people of Gaza,” etc., indicating non-Jews. Both Josephus and the authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees provide abundant evidence that Philistine cities were populated by

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<sup>27</sup> Aharoni and Avi-Yonah, *Macmillan Bible Atlas*, 111.

non-Jews, and that the Jews did not possess them until the turn of the century.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Maccabees and the Hasmonean Kingdom**

For a moment, let us leap forward in time to the 20th century. Following WWI the Jews presented the Allies with a proposal to establish their National Home in Palestine. They claimed the right to all of Palestine, southern Lebanon and western Jordan, citing for major support the occupation of this land by the Hasmonean Kingdom. Expansionists like Likud politician Ariel Sharon still claim this additional territory. Due to such claims, it is necessary to consider in some detail the Jews' land acquisitions during the Hasmonean era.

In 167 B.C. Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes sought to rid Judea of its religion and culture and to Hellenize all of Palestine. He abolished the Jews' sacrificial system of worship, stopped their observance of the Sabbath and burned many copies of their scriptures. To the pious Jews, Antiochus' most heinous act was a two-fold desecration: he had an altar of Zeus placed upon the sacrificial altar in the temple at Jerusalem, and there he offered swine's flesh as an affront to the Jews.

Three years later, Mattathias, an elderly Jewish priest, courageously led a revolt against Antiochus and removed the Syrian yoke. His five sons, "the Maccabees," reestablished Israel under what came to be called the Hasmonean Kingdom. It lasted for a century.

Both Judas and Jonathan Maccabaeus expanded Judah. Although they made military incursions into the Philistine plain, destroying a few villages and temples and once even burning Ashdod, they always withdrew from the plain. Then in 147 B.C. Macedonian King Alexander Balas awarded Jonathan

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<sup>28</sup> E.g., Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIII, iv.4; xii.4; xiii.3.

“proprietary rights over Ekron with all its lands” (1 Macc 10.89). This control of Ekron, the northeastern most region of Philistia, was the beginning of Maccabean expansion into Philistia. Simon Maccabaeus and John Hyrcanus led separate expeditions farther into the plain but withdrew (1 Macc 12.33; 16.10).

Both Michael Avi-Yonah and Yohanan Aharoni are distinguished Israeli Jewish scholars of archaeology and history of biblical lands. In all of their numerous and thorough maps in *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, Philistia appears as a separate entity from Israel throughout Israel’s entire ancient history until the reign of Alexander Jannaeus (reign: 102-76 B.C.).<sup>29</sup>

### **Alexander Jannaeus**

Hasmonean King Alexander Jannaeus extended the kingdom of Israel to its farthest extent since the days of Solomon. He achieved considerable military success, mostly with foreign mercenaries.<sup>30</sup> In what is today’s Gaza Strip, he besieged and took Raphia, the Greek-built city of Anthedon and Gaza. Gaza, the last to fall, was reduced to ruins in 96 B.C. following a one-year siege. Many inhabitants committed suicide rather than submit to their ruthless conqueror. Alexander Jannaeus “treated the [surviving] inhabitants of Gaza cruelly. He sold them into slavery and repopulated the city with people from the surrounding countryside.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, Gaza was repopulated with Philistines from its own environs.

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<sup>29</sup> Aharoni and Avi-Yonah, *Macmillan Bible Atlas*, 133.

<sup>30</sup> Solomon Zeitlin, *The Rise and Fall of the Judean State: A Political, Social and Religious History of the Second Commonwealth*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962), 1:322, 326-27.

<sup>31</sup> Aryeh Kasher, “Gaza During the Graeco-Roman Era” *Jerusalem Cathedral*, 2:65.

By this time Ashkelon had a reputation for conciliation and for making wise alliances. In the following centuries, Ashkelon was able to remain independent from both the Hasmonean Kingdom and the Roman Empire.

Except for an enlarged district of Ashkelon, which was allied with Egypt, Alexander Jannaeus subjugated the rest of the Plain of Philistia for the next twenty years. He also controlled the main caravan route from Gaza south to Rhinocoloura (modern El-Arish), on Egypt's northern border. **In all, Alexander Jannaeus subjugated southern Lebanon, southern Syria, western Jordan (which he later lost) and all of Palestine west of the Jordan River, including Philistia except for the enlarged Ashkelon district.**

The Jewish people, however, did not profit from the Hasmonean territorial expansion.<sup>32</sup> Even more than with Antiochus Epiphanes, the Jews suffered drastically under the rule of their own king, Alexander Jannaeus.<sup>33</sup> Taking a Greek name signified his affinity for Hellenization, which he attempted to force on the populace. He was “autocratic, self-seeking and widely despised” among his own people.<sup>34</sup>

Alexander committed numerous atrocities against his own people. For example, while participating in the Feast of Tabernacles at the temple in 90 B.C, Alexander Jannaeus broke an important religious custom involving sacrifices. The pious Hasidim, forerunners of the Pharisees, expressed their displeasure by pelting the king with citrus from branches carried during the celebration. He promptly had 6,000 of them

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<sup>32</sup> Tenney, *Zondervan Pictorial*, 3:42.

<sup>33</sup> *Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed., 12 vols. (Cambridge: University, 1954), 8:533.

<sup>34</sup> Zeitlin, *Judean State*, 1:317.

executed. This act started a civil war which lasted from 90 to 85 B.C. and resulted in 50,000 more killed.

Even more than his predecessors, Alexander Jannaeus continued the practice of forcing circumcision and other Jewish religious rites on Gentiles in his kingdom. Those who resisted, such as all the citizens of Pella, Alexander utterly destroyed.<sup>35</sup>

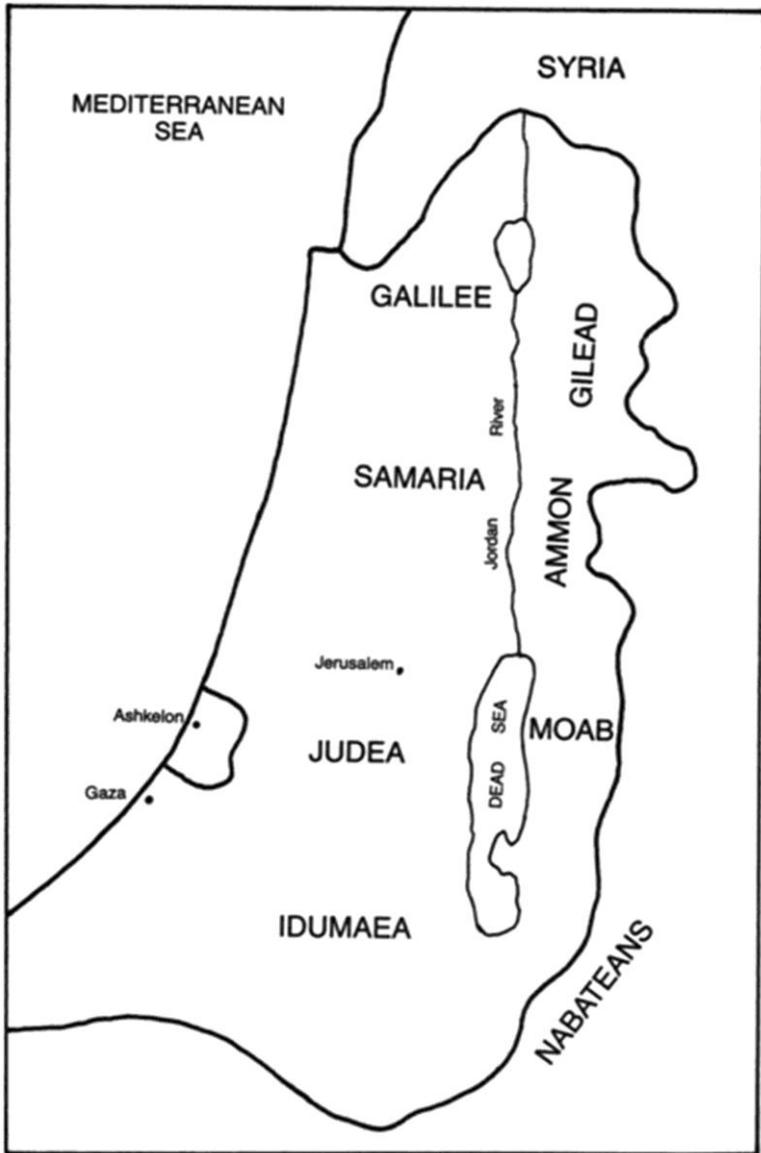
Power seemed to have corrupted the formerly popular Hasmonean leadership. The same was true of the priestly aristocracy called "Sadducees." They controlled the temple at Jerusalem and therefore Israel's religious life. The Sadducees supported King-Priest Alexander Jannaeus. On the other hand, the *Hasidim* gained in popularity. The friction between these two parties long outlasted the Hasmonean Kingdom, up to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70.

In 88 B.C. the *Hasidim* got help from the Syrians in overthrowing Alexander and expelling him to the mountains. But when the Syrians returned home, Alexander regained control of his kingdom. Seeking revenge, he had 800 Jews, mostly Hasidim, crucified together. He celebrated the event by conducting a banquet, carousing with his friends and concubines on the terrace of his palace in full view of the crucified. Before the victims expired, the king had their wives and children slain in their presence, an unheard-of cruelty.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Josephus, *Ant.*, XIII, xv, 4.

<sup>36</sup> Josephus, *Ant.*, XIII, xiv, 2.



Map 3: Alexander Jannaeus' Hasmonean Kingdom

Surely today's pious Jews would agree with the early Pharisees, who refused to recognize the cruel and ungodly Alexander Jannaeus as an instrument in the hand of God for securing possession of Eretz Israel. Interestingly, W.D. Davies observes that early in the Maccabean revolt, "the absence of an appeal to The Land is striking . . . Later on, territorial considerations did enter into the Maccabean movement, but these were motivated more by political ambition than by religious concern with the promise."<sup>37</sup>

More than any other Jewish kingdom, Alexander Jannaeus' dominion is compared to that of David and Solomon. He possessed more of the Plain of Philistia than any of Israel's previous kings. His possession, from 96 to 76 B.C., probably exceeded all of Israel's previous combined years of occupation of any Philistine territory. **Throughout Israel's more than 1,100 year presence in Palestine, does Alexander Jannaeus' short twenty-year possession of most of the Plain of Philistia constitute sufficient evidence for the Jews' present claim to that land? Hardly!**

Afflicted with alcoholism, Alexander Jannaeus contracted malarial fever and died in 76 B.C. His widow, Salome Alexandra (reign: 76-67 B.C.), succeeded him. Queen Salome feared for her life and that of her children due to her husband's many enemies within his kingdom. In contrast to her husband, she ruled with a benevolent hand. Since her brother was a leading Pharisee, she extended kindness to them, granting Pharisees power in her realm. Nevertheless, civil war continued between the Pharisees and Sadducees. After her death, Salome's two sons fought over the kingdom its last four years.

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<sup>37</sup> W.D. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 62-63.

## Roman Empire

The Hasmonean Kingdom ended when the Roman general Pompey took Jerusalem and all of Palestine in 63 B.C. Pompey completely freed the coastal cities from Judean domination. He restored them, along with Jamnia, Ashdod and Gaza in the Philistine Plain, “to their own inhabitants.”<sup>38</sup> They had been largely populated by non-Judeans,<sup>39</sup> which included a significant number of Greeks.

The Romans soon rebuilt many demolished cities in both Judea and the Plain of Philistia. These included the Philistine cities of Gaza, Anthedon, Raphia and Ashdod. Mark Antony completed the construction in 57 B.C., making them “securely inhabited” by the local population.<sup>40</sup> Julius Caesar later returned control of Joppa to the Jews.

Except for the district of Ashkelon, Pompey joined all of Palestine to Syria, then a Roman province. Ashkelon did not lose its independent status until it was made a Roman colony in the 4th century A.D.<sup>41</sup> Judea remained a Roman tributary, contained within its historical boundaries.

Rome always kept Judea and the Plain of Philistia separate. The Plain of Philistia was usually divided into three parts, with Rome awarding control of the parcels to various rulers.

Following the Hasmonean Kingdom, the Jews never possessed any of the Plain of Philistia again until the

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<sup>38</sup> Josephus, *Ant.*, XIV, iv, 4.

<sup>39</sup> Zeitlin, *Judean State*, 1:354.

<sup>40</sup> Josephus, *Ant.*, XIV, v, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Emil Schurer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)* [1885-1924], rev. ed., Geza Vermes, et al., 3 vols. in 4 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973), 2:94, 107.

establishment of the modern State of Israel, in A.D. 1948—over 2,000 years later.

## **Conclusion**

Three major points are to be gleaned from these first two chapters concerning the Israelites, the Philistines and their respective lands.

First, as He did with the Israelites, **God gave the Philistines their land.**

Second, **although the Promised Land includes the Plain of Philistia, God withheld it from the Israelites because of their disobedience.** Instead, He said He left the Philistines to test Israel (Jud 2.21-23; 3.3-4), a statement God has never given any indication of retracting.

Third, **throughout their entire ancient history, the Israelites possessed only a portion of the land of the Philistines and for only a very short period of time.**<sup>42</sup> Surely Israel's short-lived occupation of the Plain of Philistia does not justify its current claim to that land. On the other hand, throughout their long rivalry, the Philistines occupied more of the land of Judah, and for longer periods of time, than the Israelites ever occupied Philistine territory. What must be concluded from both history and the Hebrew Scriptures is this: **Modern Israel now occupies the Plain of Philistia apart from historical precedent and apart from the express will of God.**

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<sup>42</sup> E.g., Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 12 vols. (London: Oxford, 1954),8:309.

## **Part II**

# **THE MODERN PRESENT**







[Chapters 3-9 are omitted in this free, shortened, e-book edition. They are about the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Scripture Index, Author Index, and Subject Index are also omitted. Pagination herein does not correspond to the printed book. Buy it at this website or [wipfandstock.com](http://wipfandstock.com). The full e-book can be purchased at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). Since this book was published, in 1990, Kermit has written several articles that can be viewed at this website. They are updates of historical events which reveal that this book's proposal for solving the conflict has become increasingly more plausible.]



## Chapter 10

# A NEW PROPOSAL

How can anyone hope to propose a meaningful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict when so many able statesmen have tried so hard yet failed to achieve peace? The proposal in this chapter is not original with this author. It was discovered as a by-product of the author's lifelong study of Bible prophecy.

Some of the Hebrew prophets seem to imply the existence of a Palestinian state in their predictions of endtime events. The last four chapters of this book deal with these scriptures in detail. But for now, let us not appeal to the prophets but to history and to reason for a solution.

### **Historical Precedent**

The claim that Jews are divinely entitled to the entire land of Palestine is obviously unacceptable to a secular world. Besides, most Zionists are irreligious. Therefore, in attempting to establish their right to Palestine, the Zionists' primary argument has been ancient historical precedent: their forefathers possessed the land nearly 3,500 years ago.

On the other hand, the Palestinians' primary claim to the land is based on more recent property ownership. In contrast to the Jews, many Palestinian families owned deeded land in Palestine, some for hundreds of years prior to their dispossessions in 1948 and 1967.

Palestinians also assert a claim to historical precedent. Their claim, however, is usually considered to date back only 1250-1750 years, to either the Arabian conquest (A.D. 638) or

to the Romans' expulsion of the Jews (A.D. 135). Yet we saw in Chapter 5 that Palestinians have some connection to Palestine farther back in history.

We have also seen that the Jews' claim to historical precedent in the land of Palestine was recognized by both the League of Nations and the United Nations. However, the League of Nations, like the previous Balfour Declaration, only recognized the Jews' right to a national home in Palestine. And the UN's decision was to divide Palestine into two separate states.

### **West Bank and Gaza Strip?**

Most of the proposals thus far offered for resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have focused on giving the Palestinians the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Why these particular territories? Slightly enlarged versions of these were suggested in the UN Partition Plan of 1947 because the Arab population was concentrated mostly there. From 1948 to 1967, most parties in the Middle East recognized the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as the Palestinians' land, even though it was controlled by Jordan and Egypt, respectively.

It should be remembered that the UN Partition Plan's division of the land of Palestine was only a suggestion. It was intended as a starting point for negotiations between the Jews and Palestinians in determining the final borders of the two states.

A Palestinian state in two separate parcels of land is impractical. The continuing focus on giving the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to the Palestinians should be abandoned.

Besides such a state being unfeasible, most Israeli Jews reject the idea of relinquishing the West Bank to the Palestinians. **For many Jews, forfeiting Judea and Samaria**

**(the West Bank) would be like cutting the heart out of ancient Israel. Indeed, giving the Palestinians the West Bank would not be in accord with ancient historical precedent.**

### **Philistia for the Palestinians**

As was made clear in Chapter 2, throughout its ancient history Israel never decisively possessed the Plain of Philistia. The very few years during which the ancient Israelites occupied and settled part of the Plain of Philistia do not support modern Jewish claims to that area.

**The conflict might be resolved by dividing the land of Palestine into two separate parcels for the two states on the basis of historical precedent.** Indeed, if historical precedent were followed for all of the land of Palestine, the Plain of Philistia would have to be severed from Israel. Who is more deserving of its possession than the Palestinians? Since the Palestinians have some connection to the ancient Philistines by more than name, as seen in Chapter 5, they deserve consideration as having ancient historical precedent in the land as well.

If the land of Palestine were divided according to historical precedent, a fairly straight line of demarcation would separate the two countries into two relatively elongated areas, lying side by side. This would greatly simplify the border differentiation between the two countries. The Jews would keep the Galilee, the Haifa District, the coastal plains of Sharon and Dor, Samaria and Judea (the West Bank) and most all of the Negev; **the Palestinians would obtain the entire Plain of Philistia.** The State of Israel would thus be restricted to that territory which its ancestors possessed throughout most of their ancient history.

Some might say of this simple division of the land, “Why hasn’t this been thought of before?” In all of this author’s research, he has discovered only one writer who has suggested this specific division of the land for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Wesley G. Pippert was the senior correspondent in the Middle East for United Press International (UPI) in 1983-1986. In his book, *Land of Promise, Land of Strife* (1988), Pippert provides this interesting remark:

I often have shocked audiences—of either Israeli or Palestinian sympathizers; it doesn’t matter—by proposing my own somewhat jocular solution to the Middle East controversy. We must pay attention to ancient claims, I say. Thus, the West Bank, because it contains so many Jewish holy sites—Hebron, Nablus, and even Bethlehem—clearly goes to Israel, the Jewish state. This satisfies many Israeli sympathizers. The territory of the five ancient Philistine cities and the rich farmland and coastal plain south of Tel Aviv, go to the Palestinians. This outrages the Israeli sympathizers!<sup>1</sup>

Maybe Pippert’s solution will one day not be such a joke after all. This will become evident when the writings of the Hebrew prophets are examined in the closing chapters of this book.

### **“Palestinians Are Not Philistines!”**

Some will object that the Palestinians are not descendants of the ancient Philistines. Indeed, the Palestinians do not originate solely from the ancient Philistines. However, it cannot be denied that there is some genetic link between today’s Palestinians and the ancient Philistines. It seems that following the Jews’ exile to Babylon, many Philistines spread

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<sup>1</sup> Pippert, *Land of Promise*, 176.

east to settle in Judah, and this is partly why the whole area was called *Palaestina* by the Greeks.

The Romans kept Philistia separate from Judah, indicating that its people were distinguished from the Jews. Some historians as late as the Roman period still identified the inhabitants of the Plain of Philistia as Philistines. These points suggest that some Philistine ancestry may well be prevalent among Palestinians today.

Nevertheless, the ancient Philistines themselves should not be reckoned as a racial group, but as a geographic people. **Since the word “Palestinian” is derived from a geographic designation, the Palestinians should be reckoned in the same manner as the ancient Philistines—people of a land and a common culture, not necessarily of common ancestry.** The Palestinians are Arabs only culturally, not genetically.

### **Jews Not a Genetically Pure Race**

If it is argued that the Palestinians are not pure Philistines, it must be recognized that neither are the Jews pure Hebrews, although the Palestinians are certainly a more racially-mixed group than today’s Israeli Jews. Throughout history there was continual intermarriage of Jews with Gentiles. The following are a few examples:

1. From earliest times, some of the immediate sons of Israel (Jacob) married Gentile women. Judah married “Bath-shua the Canaanitess,” with whom he had three of his five sons (1 Chron 2.3; cf. Gen 38.2-5). Joseph’s Egyptian wife, Asenath (Gen 41.50-52), was the mother of Manasseh and Ephraim. These two largest tribes of Israel were genetically half Jew and half Egyptian.

2. “A mixed multitude” of Gentiles chose to join the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt (Ex 12.38; cf. 9.20). They must have eventually been absorbed into the Jewish population.

3. The Torah provides for Gentile converts to live in the land of Israel and be included in the Jewish religious community. Such a policy must have resulted in some intermarriage.

4. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Jews failed to drive out the Canaanite nations as instructed. Their intermarriage with the Canaanites eventually resulted in God’s judgments in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

5. The Assyrians left more of the ten tribes than is commonly thought, especially the women. Assyrian soldiers married these Jewish women and resettled the region between the Galilee and Judea, called “Samaria.” Their descendants, half Jew and half Gentile, were called “Samaritans.” The Samaritans were known for practicing an altered form of Judaism which considerably pre-dated the Assyrian conquest. Some small sects remain in Samaria today, tracing their lineage back to the ancient Samaritans.<sup>2</sup>

Mostly because of their mixed breeding, Judeans hated the Samaritans and did not regard them as Jews. Ironically, by modern Israel’s definition of a Jew—one born of a Jewish mother—most of the Samaritans must be regarded as Jews.

6. Upon their return from the Babylonian exile, both Ezra and Nehemiah separately condemned the widespread practice in Judea of Jewish men—descendants of those who had remained behind following the exile—marrying foreign women (Ezra 9.2; 10.44; Neh 13.23-30).

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<sup>2</sup> Tenney, *Zondervan Pictorial*, 5:247.

7. It was inevitable that the more than 1800 years of the Jewish Diaspora would result in considerable intermarriage of the Jews with the native Gentiles of their host countries. This was especially true of those Jews who advocated assimilation as a means of escaping the scourge of anti-Semitism. Orthodox Jews continued to denounce intermarriage of Jews with Gentiles, but they constituted only a minority. Reformed and Conservative Judaism, which allows for intermarriage with Gentiles, is more prevalent in the U.S. Secular Jews have always made up the majority of Jewry.

The genetic effect of the Jews' intermarriage with Gentiles during the Diaspora is readily witnessed by viewing Jewish immigrants to Israel. They often exhibit racial features corresponding to the peoples of the nations from which they emigrate. A recent and classic example is the Ethiopian Jews, called "Falashas." At the end of 1984 the Israelis began secretly to fly out these 7,500 starving Jews from drought and famine-stricken Ethiopia. Their origin had long been disputed. They are indeed Jewish. But over two millennia of intermarriage with the Ethiopians have made the Falashas look more Ethiopian than Jewish: dark-skinned, tall and slender.

To conclude, God has certainly kept his promise thus far, that Abraham's physical seed would be perpetuated. Yet God never predicted that the chosen nation of Israel, which was to be His witness to the other nations, would remain separate from them and thus keep genetically pure.

### **Advantages of the "New Philistia" Proposal**

There are numerous advantages to be gained by dividing the land of Palestine into two separate states having the same borders as those of ancient Philistia and Israel. Such a state will be referred to herein as "New Philistia," since it seeks to approximate the extent of ancient Philistia.

**The proposed borders would be in accordance with historical precedent.** That is, they would be those boundaries which Israel and Philistia maintained throughout most of their rivalry. The trend in international law is to award national rights to land on the basis of historical precedent.

The stated goal of the Palestinian Charter is to regain all of Palestine. Indeed, any settlement which would give the Palestinians a portion of Mandate Palestine is still regarded by some PLO leaders as only a first step toward recovering the remainder of Palestine. This is perhaps the greatest fear of Israelis in permitting a Palestinian state. But settling the dispute according to historical precedent might help persuade the Palestinians against designs of further expansion.

**The proposed borders would be much more simple, natural and recognizable** than the border separating Israel from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Philistia was somewhat rectangular, running in a north-south direction parallel to the Mediterranean coast. One problem with the proposed West Bank/Gaza entity is that it has no natural boundaries separating it from Israel. On the other hand, ancient Philistia was divided from Israel by the easily-recognized Shephelah. Meaning “lowlands” in Hebrew, the Shephelah ascends from the eastern edge of the Philistine plain to connect with the elevated Judean hill country to the east. All of Philistia was located in the southwestern coastal flatland, whereas Judah usually included the Shephelah. Except for the early centuries, Judah also included the plain to the north of the Sorek valley. The Sorek also served as a natural northern border between the two countries.

**The Palestinian state would simply consist of a considerably expanded Gaza Strip.** This additional land would provide relief from the overcrowded conditions in the miniscule Gaza Strip, which measures only 25 miles long and

4-6 miles wide. **The Palestinian area would be extended north of the Gaza Strip another 25 miles to the Sorek Valley, not much farther than was proposed under the UN Partition Plan.** From about the time of the monarchy, the Nahal Sorek was the usual northern border of ancient Philistia.

**Eastward, the Gaza Strip would be widened from its 4-6 mile width to include all of the Plain of Philistia, about 15 miles in width.** The eastern Shephelah would probably remain with Israel as the border between the two countries, just as it was between Judah and Philistia in antiquity. More on this later.

From the current southern border of the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian state would therefore extend northward approximately 50 miles in length and stretch from the Mediterranean Sea eastward to about 15 miles in width. The Gaza Strip would therefore be increased six-fold, from its present 140 square miles to about 840 square miles. Israel would give up the Gaza Strip, as well as 700 square miles of its own territory, in exchange for receiving the 2,000 square miles of the entire West Bank. Israel would receive a net gain of nearly 1,200 square miles.

A Palestinian state in only 840 square miles may be insufficient to accommodate an estimated high figure of 3.5 to 4 million Palestinians. Of course, not all of the Palestinians would transfer to the new state of Palestine. One study, recognized by the U.S. government, projected an estimated additional inflow into a West Bank/Gaza entity for the first five years of only 1.25 million Palestinians.<sup>3</sup> However, if the state of Palestine were located in the more developed Plain of Philistia, this territory would probably attract more Palestinians than

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<sup>3</sup> Cited by the Congressional Research Service in *The West Bank-Gaza Economy: Problems and Prospects* (Washington: U.S. Government, 1980), 46.

would the West Bank. An inadequate size of territory could be the biggest drawback to this proposed solution.

**But there is ample evidence that ancient Philistia extended farther south, about twenty-five miles beyond the Gaza Strip to the Wadi el Arish.** The Wadi el Arish usually served as Egypt's northeastern border. According to a literal understanding of the Genesis record, the Philistines occupied at least a part of this additional territory as early as the period of the patriarchs, in 1950-1750 B.C. (See Appendix A: Early History of the Philistines.)

During Israel's early history, this territory between the present Gaza Strip and the Wadi el Arish seems to have been occupied by the Cherethites. The Cherethites are mentioned ten times in the Hebrew Bible, usually in association with the Pelethites, believed to be the Philistines. It is generally thought that the Cherethites were incorporated into the Philistine nation, so that their territory came to be included in Philistia.

In addition, Joshua implied that this small portion of the Sinai was Philistine land when he allotted the Promised Land to the tribes of Israel. After specifying that Judah would receive the Philistine region that included Ekron, Ashdod and Gaza, he added, "as far as the brook of Egypt," the Wadi el Arish (Josh 15.47).

The Camp David Accords provide that "Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the representatives of the Palestinian people should participate in negotiations on the resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects." Perhaps both Egypt and Jordan could contribute toward a solution.

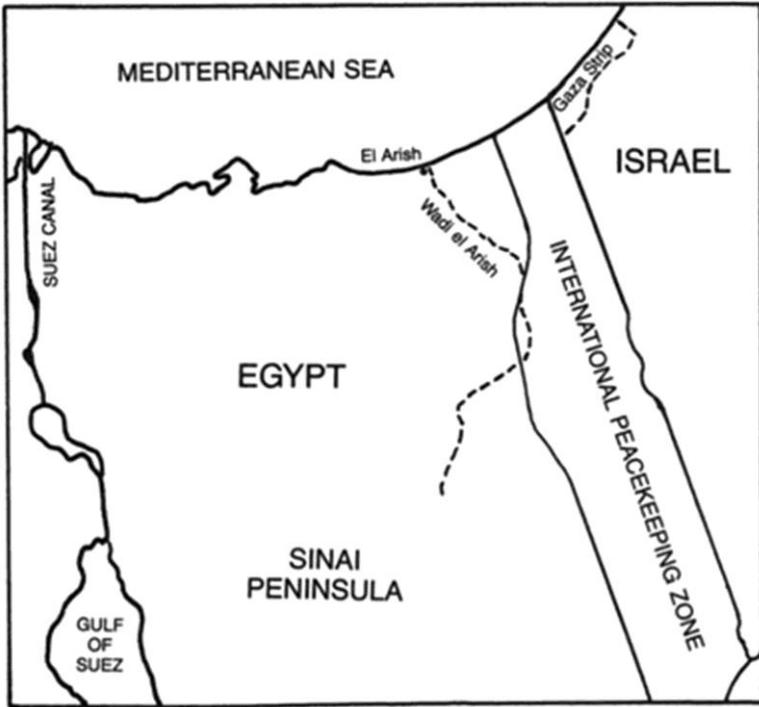
Egyptian President Mubarak is intent on finding a solution to the Palestinian problem, especially since the Arab world has so heavily criticized Egypt for its treaty with Israel. He might agree to relinquish this small, unused portion of the

northeastern Sinai to the Palestinian state. An international peacekeeping zone, approximately 25-40 miles in width, runs along the south side of the entire Israel-Egypt border, in the Sinai. In the northeastern Sinai, it encompasses over half of this territory between the Gaza Strip and the city of El Arish. El Arish, the only city in the region, is located adjacent to the Wadi el Arish, but on the west side. The zone is patrolled by an international peacekeeping force and by Egyptian police. If Egypt were to relinquish this territory to the Palestinians, it would comprise about one-third of the Palestinian state proposed herein.

Although the northeastern Sinai is arable, sparse rainfall makes it agriculturally undesirable. Only a few Arab villages exist in the region, along the coast. Yet Israel was in the process of successfully settling the northwestern portion of the area until its 1982 withdrawal. It had eight settlements near the Gaza border. During this time the Kinneret-Negev Conduit (National Water Carrier)—Israel's underground agricultural lifeline—was extended to these Sinai settlements. After the settlements were dismantled, the region reverted to desert. A renewed extension of the conduit, but farther into the Sinai, could make this region blossom like a rose for the Palestinians.

As its contribution to resolving the dispute, perhaps Jordan would agree to allow extra water to be diverted from the Jordan River, passing through the conduit to this corner of the Sinai. Indeed, diverting a large volume of irrigation water from the Jordan River has already been considered. Though never implemented, Jordan's 1964 plan to divert Jordan River waters for itself was a factor that led to the 1967 War. Such an agreement would seem to be in the best interests of Jordan. It would relieve the Hashemite Kingdom of much of the

Palestinian population in Jordan, where many live in refugee camps.



Map 4: International Peacekeeping Zone

Such agreements with Jordan and Egypt would represent a comprehensive regional settlement, which is the yet unachieved goal of the Camp David Accords, as well as that of many proposed settlements.

**Another possibility would be to enlarge the Gaza Strip even farther eastward into the Negev, beyond the suggested fifteen mile range.** Indeed, Philistia often extended inland in its southern extremity, where the Shephelah ends and the Judean hill country becomes less pronounced. We have already seen that the UN Partition Plan included an L-shaped portion of territory for the Palestinians

which extended well into the Negev. The current Gaza Strip represented the major part of the vertical leg of the L, and the horizontal leg extended from the southern end of the Gaza Strip southeast along the present border between Israel and the Sinai.

Such arrangements would add needed territory to the Palestinian state, making this proposal more viable. This expanded territory would give the Palestinians almost as much land as that of the West Bank/Gaza.

**Israel's requirements for secure and defensible borders would be adequately met** by this proposal, perhaps more than by any other conceivable division of the land of Palestine. Certainly, a Palestinian state in the West Bank/Gaza area, or in the division of land proposed by either the Peel Plan or UN Partition Plan, would pose grave security risks for Israel. Israel's populous narrow coastland is very vulnerable to attack from the West Bank. Its military authorities therefore cringe at the prospect of giving up any part of the West Bank. The fact remains that Israel cannot give up the West Bank and maintain secure and defensible borders, as provided for in UN Security Resolutions 242 and 338.

This New Philistia proposal accommodates Israel's security needs for the following reasons:

1. Israel would retain all of the West Bank, most of which Israeli military experts regard as essential to Israel's security.

2. Israel would give up a slender portion of land on its southwest, which is bordered on the other side by the Mediterranean Sea rather than an Arab state. Thus, Israel would be meeting an important requirement for its security: not permitting the Palestinian state to be positioned between Israel and another Arab state.



Map 5: Kinneret-Negev Conduit

3. Israel would possess the more defensible rocky highlands of Judea and the Shephelah, in contrast to the open flatland of the lower Philistine plain. In addition, wide stretches of sand dunes along the Palestinians' coast would impede or prevent an amphibious landing by forces with tanks to assist the Palestinians in assaulting Israel. For this reason, as well as because of the lack of natural harbors, no power ever attacked ancient Israel from the Mediterranean Sea.

**A Palestinian state in the Plain of Philistia would be more defensible than one located in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.** Analysts have long maintained that if a Palestinian state were located in the West Bank/Gaza that it would be absolutely necessary to link these two separated territories with a travel corridor. The minimum distance between the two territories is twenty-one miles. In the event of war between the two countries, Israel might easily take control of the very narrow corridor. Also, the major portion of the Palestinian state—the West Bank—would be largely surrounded by Israel.

What about UN peacekeeping forces? Couldn't they protect the Palestinian state? Hardly! Although the region's 10,000-man international peacekeeping force was awarded the 1988 Nobel Peace Prize, UNFIL could not prevent Israel's incursions into Lebanon in 1978 or 1982. Any resolution of the conflict should not require a significant increase in UN peacekeeping forces in the region. It does not seem that this could be avoided if the Palestinian state is located in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, with its lengthy, separated borders.

Could a settlement require that the Palestinian state be disarmed and protected by UN peacekeeping forces? This would require that a neutral zone be created around its entire border contiguous with Israel, fully guarded by UN peacekeeping forces. Surely this is impossible and

preposterous. The UN is not capable of such guarantees. Besides, the Palestinians would not likely agree to such an arrangement unless Israel is also disarmed.

**The length of contiguous border between the two states would be considerably shorter under this New Philistia plan** than that of a West Bank/Gaza entity. A West Bank/Gaza border, contiguous with Israel, would measure about 210 miles. In addition, it would be extremely irregular and difficult to defend. On the other hand, if the Palestinian state were located in the Plain of Philistia, the total length of border contiguous with Israel would be no more than 80 miles. Thus, the West Bank/Gaza contiguous border with Israel would be 2.6 times longer than a Philistine Plain border.

Furthermore, the New Philistia border would follow the natural topography of the region. It would begin at the mouth of the Nahal Sorek in the north, follow it to the Shephelah and turn south, continue in a fairly straight line running along the western edge of the Shephelah and down to the Sinai at the present Egypt-Israel border. This line of demarcation would be more defensible for both states and presumably limit border incidents.

Another reason Israelis have rejected a Palestinian state in Palestine has been fear that the Soviets could become allied with it and therefore destabilize the region. This is recently becoming less likely due to the social and political changes occurring in the Soviet Union, its weakening economy and its decreasing military commitments in foreign lands.

**Israel would be better off without the volatile Gaza Strip.** The over-populated and turbulent Gaza Strip is peopled almost entirely by Palestinians, and mostly impoverished, embittered ones at that. As with the present *intifada*, Palestinian hostilities have always begun in the Gaza Strip.

When Israel first seized the Gaza District from Egypt in 1956, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion insightfully warned, "Gaza as part of Israel could be like a cancer. . . . To take a small territory with a vast Arab population would be the worst possible exchange."<sup>4</sup> Israel soon withdrew.

**A Palestinian state located on the Plain of Philistia would be more economically viable than one in the West Bank/Gaza region.** The Ashqelon/Ashdod sector to the north of Gaza, which Israel would relinquish to the Palestinians under this plan, is already quite developed and includes industry. Admittedly, Israel would not be eager to surrender this territory.

The entire proposed area for the Palestinians would not require huge amounts of investment capital as would the less-developed West Bank. This would enable the Palestinian nation to become self-reliant more quickly.

Economists predict that a Palestinian entity in the separated territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, joined by a necessary travel corridor, would be "no economist's dream."<sup>5</sup> Economist Don Peretz claims, "A Gaza component in an Arab West Bank entity would not be an economic asset."<sup>6</sup> Indeed, it would create administrative problems and prove costly for transportation and commerce. U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz visited the region in early 1988 and announced, "We don't think an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank makes sense."<sup>7</sup> It would

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Mitchell Bard, "Can Israel Withdraw," *Commentary*, Vol. 85 (April 1988), 31.

<sup>5</sup> Ward, et al., *The Palestine State*, ix.

<sup>6</sup> Don Peretz, "Forms and Projections of a Palestine Entity," *The Palestine State*, 84.

<sup>7</sup> *The Houston Post*, April 6, 1988.

require more border patrols and passport and security checks. The corridor might be as difficult to manage as the Allenby Bridge.

The Allenby Bridge, near Jericho, is one of only two bridges crossing the Jordan River. By far the busiest, it is an annoyance to the Palestinians. They frequently charge that Israeli authorities purposely hassle them there. Long delays are commonplace, sometimes causing loss of Palestinian farmers' perishable goods. Such problems would be avoided with a unified territory.

**The Palestinians would gain the second most fertile land in Mandate Palestine.** The Jews would still retain the most fertile and agriculturally-productive land in Palestine: the Valley of Jezreel in northern Israel. The sandy loam soil of the coastal plain is much more fertile than West Bank soil. It is also more tillable because it is relatively flat, whereas the West Bank is hilly, with much rocky outcropping. The warm, temperate climate of the coastal region provides high yields of citrus fruits and winter vegetables. These are important reasons why the entire coastal plain is more populated than the West Bank. The West Bank will therefore require large amounts of investment capital and take longer to develop, a burden that the Palestinians would avoid.

The present underground Kinneret-Negev Conduit would provide the necessary irrigation for the southwestern coastal region to realize its rich agricultural potential. Some agreement guaranteeing an uninterrupted water supply through the conduit would have to be worked out. The UN Partition Plan provided for "joint economic development [between the two states], especially in respect of irrigation."

**The Palestinians would obtain the modern port at Ashdod, the second largest port in present Israel,**

something they would not have with the West Bank/Gaza alternative. Being spread along the Mediterranean coast would provide good access for the Palestinians to the lucrative European winter markets for fruits and vegetables. The additional Mediterranean beachfront, with its tourist and recreational opportunities, should also aid the Palestinian economy.

The cost of resettling approximately 1.5 million Palestinians from the West Bank and other places in Israel to the New Philistia would no doubt be high. It is a drawback to this solution. Under UN administration, the major portion of this expense might be borne by the oil-rich Arab states and perhaps the industrial nations as well, as a necessary price for achieving a measure of peace in the region. Persian Gulf states are already committed financially to the Palestinian cause.

**Israel's thoroughly-planned West Bank settlements program will accommodate the necessary transfer of Jews** from the Ashqelon/ Ashdod area. Israel's ambitious plan for resettling the West Bank underscores its intent to keep that territory. This plan will accelerate settlement of the West Bank, one of Israel's primary goals. The Israeli government would no longer have to offer financial and other incentives to attract settlers to the West Bank. The cost of this Jewish resettlement program should not be excessive, since it does not affect a large number of people. The West Bank would also accommodate the estimated 500,000 Russian Jews expected over the next 3-5 years.

As provided in the UN Partition Plan, the state of Palestine could allow Jews, and Israel could permit Palestinians, to remain as citizens if they so desire. Arafat stated in his 1974 UN speech that the PLO's goal for a democratic Palestinian state would include "all Jews living in Palestine today and

willing to live together with us without discrimination on Palestinian territory.”

**An enlarged Gaza Strip would solve its problem of overpopulation.** Of course, the Palestinians would assume ownership of abandoned Jewish houses in the surrounding territory. The transfer of Jewish houses and industry in the Ashqelon/Ashdod area to the Palestinians would possibly be regarded as part of Israel’s necessary compensation to the dispossessed Palestinians, a debt long overdue.

**Zionist Jews would get what they want: secure borders, Judea and Samaria and a completely Jewish state.** More than any other portion of Mandate Palestine, the Jews are historically and emotionally connected to Judea, the very heartland of ancient Israel. The continuing growth of Israeli right-wing political and religious parties makes it increasingly unlikely that Israel will ever give up the West Bank. Polls reveal that half or more of Israeli Jews prefer that Israel keep the West Bank rather than give it to the Palestinians in exchange for peace.<sup>8</sup> **It would seem that if the Israelis were faced with the two alternatives, they would much prefer to give the Palestinians the territory of ancient Philistia than to give them the West Bank.**

If the “land of Israel” were more clearly defined according to history, under this plan Israeli Jews would get the “ancestral land” they claim in their Proclamation of Independence. (See Appendix C.) This document obviously identifies Eretz Yisrael generally as the land of their forefathers, a land which clearly did not include the Plain of Philistia. In fact, it is most ironic that the Proclamation was signed in Tel Aviv, which was the

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<sup>8</sup> See the twelve surveys of Louis Guttman, taken in Israel between 1973 and 1978, cited by Sandler and Frisch (Israel, *the Palestinians and the West Bank*, 129).

capital of Israel for the next thirty-four years. Yet in the early centuries of Israel's existence in Canaan, the territory of present Tel Aviv was part of northernmost Philistia.

What about Jerusalem? If historical precedent were the guide for it too, the entire city would remain with the Jews. Some arrangement would no doubt have to be worked out to insure protection of, and free access to, the holy places and shrines. (The issue of Jerusalem is a full subject in itself, one which the author plans to address from the perspective of biblical prophecy in a forthcoming volume.)

**Israel would fulfill *halakhic* requirements to retain Eretz Israel.** Judaism requires that Jews be bound to *halakhah*—the complete body of religious, civil and legal laws of rabbinic tradition. It is generally accepted that Jews of every generation, including those of the Jewish state, must adhere to *Mitzvat Yishuv Eretz Yisrael*—the divine command to settle the land of Israel (e.g., Num 33.52-53). The territory involved is generally recognized as historical Israel, which includes the West Bank. So this *mitzvat* (Hebrew for “command”) religiously obligates today's Jews to settle that land.

Furthermore, Jews are supposedly prohibited from irrevocably transferring any portion of Eretz Israel to Gentiles, a *mitzvat* called *Lo Tohennem* in Hebrew. However, some Jewish authorities argue that *Lo Tohennem* does not apply because King Solomon gave King Hiram of Tyre twenty cities in the Galilee as payment for supplying Solomon with building materials with which he constructed the temple at Jerusalem (1 Kgs 9.11). The retort to this is that those cities were inhabited by Canaanites (cf. 2 Sam 24.7), the cities displeased Hiram (v. 12), and he gave them right back (2 Chron 8.2).

Another problem over which rabbinical scholars disagree is whether *pikuah nefesh* (Hebrew for “the saving of human life”)

takes precedence over both *Mitzvat Yishuv Eretz Israel* and *Lo Tohennem*. That is why several members of Israel's Labor Party propose trading some West Bank land for peace. They claim that, in the long run, it would save lives by avoiding war.

This religious dilemma could be resolved if Israel relinquished the Ashdod/Ashqelon/Gaza region to the Palestinians and in turn incorporated the West Bank into Israel. As we have seen, the Plain of Philistia cannot be considered as historical Israel and therefore should not be subject to *halakhah*.

**The Palestinians would realize their aspirations of having their own independent, sovereign state in Palestine.** The Palestinian National Charter demands all of the land of Palestine for the Palestinians. If the word "Palestine" were redefined according to its ancient use, this proposal would also provide the Palestinians with what they claim: all of Palestine, which means Philistia.

Menachem Begin once warned an Israeli Jewish audience against conceding that Israel is Palestine. "If this is Palestine," Begin asserted, "then it belongs to a people who lived here before you came."<sup>9</sup> Exactly! If the word "Palestine" designated only the Plain of Philistia, it would belong to the Palestinians because some of their ancestors lived there before the Hebrews came.

### **Population Transfers in Modern Times**

Can population transfers really work? In ancient times, population transfers were practiced frequently by conquering nations in order to guard against rebellion. There is precedent for population transfers in modern times as well.

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted by Said, *A Profile of the Palestinian People*, 4.

World War II left the majority of Europeans embittered against the Germans. Many Germans resided in other European countries before the war broke out. Under the 1945 post-war Potsdam Conference agreement, entitled “Orderly Transfers of German Populations,” a total of 11.5 million Germans were expelled from mostly eastern European countries and transferred to Germany. They were forced to give up their homes without compensation from the host countries. Later, they received financial assistance under the U.S. Marshall Plan.

About the same time, the British were reluctant to grant independence to Gandhi’s India. They feared increased strife between its approximately 68% Hindu and 22% Muslim populations. Indeed, following India’s independence, massacres became widespread. Consequently, in the late ’40s, there was a voluntary exchange of about 18 million Hindus and Muslims between India and its neighbor, the predominantly Muslim Pakistan.<sup>10</sup>

**Thus, history reveals that it should be possible to resettle Palestinians in a significantly enlarged Gaza Strip.**

## **Conclusion**

It now appears inevitable that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will only be resolved by establishing two independent states in the land of Palestine. A Palestinian state in the two separated territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is economically unfeasible and would render both countries indefensible. International focus on this prolonged land dispute should shift to restoring boundaries in the region according to ancient historical precedent. **That is, let the Jews have the historical land of Israel, which includes the West Bank, and give the**

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<sup>10</sup> Indebted to Kahane, *They Must Go*, 233-38.

**Palestinians the Plain of Philistia in which to establish their independent, sovereign state.**

# **Part III**

## **THE NEAR FUTURE**



# Chapter 11

## REESTABLISHMENT OF PHILISTIA

*“And they will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west” (Isa 11.14).*

Now we turn to the major concern of this book: a detailed discussion of certain biblical prophecies related to the New Philistia proposal in Chapter 10. For Bible students, it is essential that interpretations herein interact with opposing views held by biblical commentators.

**Just as the Bible predicted the modern reestablishment of Israel, it also indicates the revival of other ancient countries in the Middle East, one of these being Philistia.** Perhaps as many as seven prophetic scriptures in the Hebrew Bible indicate a rebirth of Israel’s ancient arch rival—Philistia. Two passages which clearly signify the reestablishment of Philistia are Isaiah 11.14 and Zechariah 9.5-8. Others that can be put forward with varying degrees of certainty are Joel 3.4-8, Obadiah 19, Zephaniah 2.4-7 and Psalms 60 and 108.

### **Interpretation of Biblical Prophecy**

There are two kinds of Bible prophecies. There is prophecy which communicates God’s message to people, called preaching or **forthtelling**. And there is prophecy which predicts the future, called **foretelling**. Old Testament prophets did both.

There are two kinds of predictive prophecy in Scripture: fulfilled prophecy, which has already happened, and unfulfilled prophecy, which has not yet occurred. The remaining chapters of this book will concern mostly unfulfilled predictive

prophecy, to which the words “prophecy” and “prophecies” will henceforth refer.

There are at least four crucial principles to which the prophetic student must adhere in order to understand biblical prophecies:

1. Consider the context in order to establish the time of the event being prophesied.

2. Interpret prophecies literally unless there is clear evidence indicating otherwise.

3. Compare Scripture with Scripture.

4. Accept the possibility of multiple fulfillments, usually dual fulfillments, i.e., a partial fulfillment in a time near the prophet and a more complete fulfillment in the far, distant future.<sup>1</sup>

The context often reveals if a fulfilled prophecy has a more complete fulfillment yet to be accomplished. Careful analysis and interpretation are required. With regard to Messianic prophecies, the apostle Peter claims that the scriptural prophets themselves “made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow” (1 Pt 1.10-11).

Unfulfilled prophecies are the most difficult portions of the Bible to interpret. Indeed, an appeal to various biblical commentaries on **unfulfilled** prophecies often presents a bewildering myriad of conflicting interpretations. There are three primary reasons for this:

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (1958; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), 46-47; against J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy: The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 121-26.

1. Some historical-critical scholars reject the supernatural and therefore the predictive element in prophetic writings.

2. Most Christian commentators have tended to suppose an exaggerated significance of the church in prophecy. They consequently regard many OT prophecies concerning Israel as non-literal and symbolically identifying the NT church.

3. Many students of prophecy attach undue importance to contemporary times and thus sometimes err in interpreting prophecies according to current events.<sup>2</sup>

Over the past century, there have arisen a growing number of biblical scholars who either do not accept the supernatural or accept it very sparingly. One way or another, they dismiss prediction as impossible. Many therefore assign the time of authorship of a book like Daniel to a date later than has been held traditionally. Thus, they regard the text as history when written rather than prediction of the future. This procedure is especially typical of radical form and redaction critics, who hold liberal views of the inspiration of Scripture.

In addition, throughout church history there have been many very capable, conservative biblical scholars who interpreted the Bible literally except when it came to prophecy. To appeal to any of these, or especially to either form or redaction critics, for their interpretation of the passages about to be considered will prove of little value to those who accept the supernatural inspiration and predominantly literal interpretation of the scriptures.

Even if the above principles are followed, there will be differences of interpretation among the best of teachers on the prophetic scriptures. In addition, the student will be well-guided in attempting to distinguish between those biblical

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<sup>2</sup> Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, 139.

prophecies whose interpretations are more clearly discernible and those which remain obscure. Students ought to seek to be tentative with their opinions regarding the latter.

### **History of Prophetic Interpretations**

We saw in Chapter 8 that the church was predominantly premillennial in belief during the first three centuries. Later, Roman Catholic and most Protestant scholars dismissed the literal interpretation of OT prophecies indicating Israel's future triumph. Instead, they interpreted these allegorically as signifying the church's general victory over evil.

The results of allegorizing prophecy have sometimes proved tragic. One example was the "Holy Crusades" of medieval times. One reason for the Crusades was that it was thought that the church needed to regain the Holy Land, especially Jerusalem, in order to fulfill OT prophecies of "Israel's" worldwide rule through the church.

Throughout church history, two practices have brought biblical prophecies into disrepute: (1) predicting the exact time of the second coming of Jesus, which was clearly forbidden by Jesus Himself (Mt 24.36) and (2) both amillennialists and postmillennialists interpreting Israel in the OT allegorically.

### **Literal Method of Interpreting Prophecy**

In contrast to Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars, premillennialists have always agreed with past eminent Jewish commentators on many points of prophecy, especially the reemergence of a literal nation of Israel in its former homeland before Messiah's coming in glory. (Of course, they do not agree on the crucial subject of the identity of Messiah.) In fact, post- and amillennialists often referred disparagingly to premillennialism as the "Jewish theory." But the mid-20th

century establishment of the State of Israel proved this “theory” correct. Here is solid evidence that premillennialists, and often Orthodox Jews, are more reliable interpreters of OT prophecies regarding Israel than either amillennialists or postmillennialists.

Thus, it is best to interpret prophecy literally, according to the historical-grammatical method of interpretation. Unless **clear** evidence indicates otherwise, names of historical persons, tribes, nations, cities and other geographical locations, along with numbers, do not constitute symbols but are to be understood literally.

The interpreter of biblical prophecy is wise to consider how prophecy has been quite literally fulfilled in the past. The following are some examples:

1. It was foretold that the kingdom of Israel would be divided in two. One division would consist of two tribes (1 Kgs 11.11-13) and the other division of ten tribes (vv. 29-31).

2. Judah was prophesied to go into captivity in Babylon for 70 years (Jer 25.11; Dan 9.2; 2 Chron 36.21; Ezra 1.1).

3. Moses predicted the Diaspora, in which, because of their sins, God would remove the Jews from their land and scatter them throughout the nations of the world (Deut 4.26-27; 28.64; 30.1).

4. Hosea foresaw the Diaspora, predicting that “the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, and without ephod or household idols” (Hos 3.4).

5. Ezekiel envisioned modern Israel when he predicted that “in the latter years” many Jews would return from the Diaspora to the land of Israel, “which had been a continual waste” (Eze 38.8).

6. The NT interprets many OT Messianic prophecies as being literally fulfilled in Jesus: He was born in Bethlehem (Mic 5.2), rode into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zech 9.9), was rejected by the Jews (Isa 53.3), was sold for 30 pieces of silver, with which they bought the potter's field (Zech 11.12-13), died by crucifixion with casting of lots for His clothing (Ps 22.14-18; Zech 12.10) and rose from the grave (Ps 16.10).

7. In A.D. 30 Jesus predicted that Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed within a generation. It happened in A.D. 70., exactly one generation later.

The list could go on. The evidence is overwhelming that most prophecy is to be understood literally.

### **Introduction to Isaiah 11**

The prophet Isaiah predicted more about the promised Messiah and His kingdom than any of the other writing Hebrew prophets. Most of his writings concern the time when Messiah will come to deliver Israel, destroy its enemies and establish His worldwide kingdom on earth, with its center at Jerusalem.

The eleventh chapter of Isaiah is one of the primary Messianic passages in the Hebrew Bible (OT). The majority of Jewish commentators regard its entire contents as Messianic.<sup>3</sup> The chapter concerns Messiah's deliverance of Israel and the establishment of His kingdom. In Isa 11.14 the prophet Isaiah provides the clearest indication in Scripture that at the time of the coming of the conquering Messiah, an adversary of Israel will exist in the southwestern coastal plain of Palestine. This adversary is called "the Philistines." Most commentators, however, interpret the passage figuratively and/or regard it as

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<sup>3</sup> M. Friedlander, *The Commentary of Ibn Ezra on Isaiah*, 2 vols. in 1 (New York: Philip Feldheim, 1873), 1:59.

already completely fulfilled in history. Thus, they neglect the prospect that a people whom the prophet called the Philistines (Palestinians) might yet be reestablished in “the land of the Philistines.”

It must first be established, however, that the context of Isa 11.14 concerns the yet future Messianic destruction of Israel’s neighbors, the Philistines (Palestinians) and the Jordanians.

## **Isaiah 11**

**1** Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

**2** And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

**3** And He will delight in the fear of the Lord, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear;

**4** But with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

**5** Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist.

**6** And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them.

**7** Also the cow and the bear will graze; their young will lie down together; and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

**8** And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper’s den.

**9** They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

**10** Then it will come about in that day that the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious.

**11** Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

**12** And He will lift up a standard for the nations, and will assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

**13** Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, and those who harass Judah will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, and Judah will not harass Ephraim.

**14** **And they will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west; together they will plunder the sons of the east; they will possess Edom and Moab; and the sons of Ammon will be subject to them.**

**15** And the Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt; and He will wave His hand over the River with His scorching wind; and He will strike it into seven streams, and make men walk over dry-shod.

**16** And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant of His people who will be left, just as there was for Israel in the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt (emphasis added).

## **Israel's Promised Messiah**

Isaiah begins his chapter eleven by announcing that “a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse.” Jesse was King David’s father. Jewish and Christian commentators unanimously concur that this phrase identifies the Messiah’s physical line of descent. The Hebrew prophets frequently predicted that Messiah would descend from the tribe of Judah, the tribe to which Jesse and David belonged, and that He would sit on David’s throne as King of Israel. That is why He was called “the son of David.”

Next, Isaiah describes how “the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him” (v. 2). This suggests that either there would be a greater measure of the Spirit on Messiah than on anyone before (cf. Col 1.19: “fullness”) or that the Spirit would rest on Him permanently, or both. Jesus identified Himself as the One Whom Isaiah here presents (Lk 4.17-21; cf. Isa 61.1-2). (See also Isa 42.1; cf. Mt 12.18.)

It could only be the Messiah that is in view here. In the remainder of our consideration of Isaiah 11, our purpose will be to discover the time to which the prophet refers. Upon establishing this context, we will then be able to see clearly the time of fulfillment of the reference to the Philistines in v. 14, the ultimate focus of this chapter.

## **Messiah and His Glorious Kingdom**

In vv. 3-4 Isaiah reveals that Messiah will judge the poor with fairness and will destroy the wicked. Following the Messianic destruction depicted in v. 4 (“He will strike the earth . . . and . . . slay the wicked”), the prophet pens one of the most beautiful and beloved passages in all of Scripture. It describes peace on earth among the animals and implies the same among men (cf. vv. 6-9 with 9.6-7). Such universal peace and knowledge of the Lord can only identify the future Messianic (millennial)

kingdom (cf. 2.2-4). For Christian believers, this means the second coming of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Isaiah writes in v. 10 a pivotal phrase which identifies the time period prophesied. The words, “Then it will come about in that day,” refer both to the time when Messiah initially comes to judge (v. 4) and when Edenic conditions are restored to earth (vv. 6-9). Consequently, “that day” cannot be reckoned as a twenty-four-hour period of time. “That day,” like the phrase “the day of the Lord,” translates technical words frequently used by the Hebrew prophets. It can refer to any period of judgment by Yahweh. But it usually identifies that final “day of the Lord” when Messiah comes in His kingdom and apparently includes the time period of His subsequent reign. Herein, that final day of the Lord is distinguished by capitalizing it, e.g., “the Day,” “the Day of the Lord,” or “the Day of Yahweh.”

### **Final Return of Jews to Eretz Israel**

Isaiah reveals that the nations will come to worship Messiah, who will sit on His glorious throne (v. 10). At the same time, Yahweh will gather the surviving Jews “the second time” to the land of Israel (vv. 11-12). This second ingathering points to God’s regathering of the Jews at the coming of Messiah to deliver Israel. So far, God has taken the Jews to Palestine twice: at the initial conquest following the exodus and at their return from the Babylonian exile. But God has only “recovered” (v. 7) the Jews to their land once: the return from Babylon in 537 B.C. God’s second promised regathering awaits the coming of Messiah in power and great glory.

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<sup>4</sup> In 2 Thes 2.8 the apostle Paul strongly alludes to Isa 11.4 as Messianic. While Isaiah gives a general description that Messiah “will slay the wicked,” Paul individually identifies “the wicked” as “that lawless one”—the final Antichrist—whom Jesus will destroy at His coming in glory.

Some more liberal commentators interpret that Isaiah's regathering in v. 11 does not refer to the Messianic age but only the post-exilic return.<sup>5</sup> This passage shows three evidences against this view:

1. This regathering will occur "on that day," i.e., the final Day. Only then will all the conditions in vv. 3-10 transpire, including universal justice and peace.

2. This regathering is not from one particular region, as was the return from Babylonia. Instead, Isaiah names many other lands from which Jews will return (v. 11), as well as "the four corners of the earth" (v. 12). This expression, which denotes the earth's four continental land masses with Israel as the center, indicates a worldwide regathering.

3. This regathering is not partial. The return from Babylonia consisted of only a minority of Jews from the tribe of Judah. In contrast, this final regathering includes both divisions of the kingdom: Israel (Ephraim) and Judah (vv. 12-13).

In addition, Isaiah repeats these two themes—the complete recovery of the Diaspora and the conversion of the Gentile nations—in other parts of his book within a Messianic kingdom context (e.g., 2.2-3; 27.13). He even relates these events to each other, showing that the Gentile nations will come to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh, bringing the dispersed Jews with them (42.2; 43.5-6; 49.22-23; 60.4, 9; 66.20). Such a dramatic event can occur only in the Messianic kingdom.

Isaiah next reveals in v. 13 that following this regathering of the Jews, "Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, and Judah will not harass Ephraim." Ephraim was one of the two sons of

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<sup>5</sup> The more reliable MT has "again" while the LXX retains only "the second time." Together, as in the NASB, they are redundant. This variance has caused some critical scholars to reject the contention that Isaiah here predicts a future Messianic regathering.

Joseph. His tribe later became the most powerful of the ten tribes of the northern kingdom. Following the monarchy, either “Ephraim” or “Israel” were frequently used to identify the northern kingdom. “Judah” stood for the southern kingdom, which consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Will the distinction, and perhaps some of the strife, that existed between the two divisions of ancient Israel someday recur in Israel (cf. Eze 37.15-28)?

Isaiah adds that at this time “those who harass Judah will be cut off.” This apparently refers to the defeat of the nations at the end of the age, when they gather to destroy Judah and Jerusalem (Isa 29.7-8; Joel 3.2, 12; Zech 12.2-9; 14.2).

**Thus, throughout vv. 3-13 Isaiah prophesies of a time that can only be understood as the coming of Messiah at the end of this age to destroy the wicked, to gather dispersed Jews worldwide and to unite them in a glorious kingdom of peace on earth.**

For a moment, let us skip the focus of our study, v. 14, and consider the time depicted in the remaining verses of Isa 11.

In v. 15 the prophet reveals that Yahweh will destroy the “tongue of the Sea of Egypt,” probably the Gulf of Suez but maybe the Suez Canal. About the same time, God will strike the Euphrates River with a scorching wind. Seven shallow streams will remain, enabling men to cross over dryshod. These acts are reminiscent of Yahweh’s parting of the waters of the Red Sea. The purpose of these wonders is either to provide Israel with a route of attack on its southern and northern neighbors (cf. 27.12) or to make a passage for the Jews of the Diaspora to return to Israel, or perhaps both. There is no evidence in Israel’s history that anything like this has ever happened to these waters. Surely this prophecy refers to no other time than the coming of Messiah in victory.

In v. 16 Isaiah indicates that some Jews of the Diaspora will return via an elevated highway extending from Assyria to Israel. This, too, can only be fulfilled during the millennial kingdom (cf. 19.23; 35.8; 40.3; 62.10).

Many contemporary writers rightly regard Isa 12 as a hymn of thanksgiving which anticipates the Messianic age, the ultimate time of thanksgiving, comfort and joy.

To sum up, except for v. 14, it has been established that Isa 11.3—12.6 pertains exclusively to the coming of Messiah to deliver Israel from its enemies and establish the promised kingdom. **Because of this context, Isa 11.14 can refer to no other time than the Messianic age.**

### **Messianic Destruction of Philistia and Jordan**

Now we turn to Isa 11.14, which reads, “And they will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west; together they will plunder the sons of the east; they will possess Edom and Moab; and the sons of Ammon will be subject to them.” The Hebrew word translated “swoop” is usually used to depict a bird of prey swooping down upon its victim. (See Hab 1.8.) The Hebrew word rendered “slopes” is literally “shoulder.” It signifies the sloping Shephelah (“lowland”), which connects the elevated Judean hill country with the relatively flat, Philistine coastal plain.

In v. 14 Isaiah continues with his previous theme, that of Ephraim and Judah being united. Together, these Israelites will make a surprise attack on a people dwelling on their west. Like a bird of prey, they will swoop down upon the shoulder (Shephelah) of their victim. They presumably continue their assault upon the inhabitants of the coastal plain.<sup>6</sup> This is

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<sup>6</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 288. Oswalt, however, views Israel as taking only the slopes of Philistia.

implied in the remainder of the verse, in which the Israelis are seen plundering and subjugating their eastern adversary. These eastern ancient place names of Edom, Moab and Ammon comprise modern western Jordan. It must be concluded that the Israelis would not attack those dwelling to the west if they themselves possessed that territory.

**The language of Isa 11.14 therefore requires that Israel will not possess the ancient land of the Philistines in the last days preceding the Messianic kingdom.**

Isaiah does not specifically identify Israel's western enemy in Isa 11.14. Yet the language, "slopes of the Philistines," implies that the Philistines (Palestinians) will then possess the coastal plain and perhaps part of the Shephelah. (See, however, remarks on Obad 19 in Chapter 13.)

Thus, according to Isa 11.14, the Philistines will become reestablished on the southwestern coastal plain of Palestine. **This requires that Israel will someday release the Gaza Strip, either voluntarily or involuntarily, as well as adjacent land eastward and northward.**

### **Synthesis of the Last Days**

A synthesis of the Hebrew prophecies concerning the last days provides the following scenario:

1. At the end of this age the nations' armies will converge on Israel to annihilate it (Isa 29.7; Eze 38-39; Joel 3.2, 12; Mic 4.11—5.1; Zech 12.3, 9; 14.2).

2. A Jewish remnant will gather at the temple in Jerusalem to repent of their sins and pray to God for deliverance (2 Chron 6.24-25; Joel 2.12-17).

3. Messiah will come in glory to deliver the surviving remnant in Jerusalem and throughout all of Israel (Isa 59.19-20; Zech 9.14-16; 14.3-5).

4. Physically strengthened and united, these Israelites will join Messiah in destroying the nations' armies in their land (Isa 11.13; 41.11-16; Mic 5.7-9; Zech 9.13-15; 10.3-7; 12.6-8; 14.14).

5. The Israelites will expand their conquest by destroying neighboring nations (Isa 11.14; 19.16; 34.5-6; 63.1; Zeph 2.4-5).

6. Gentiles who survive a worldwide earthquake, fire and other calamities attending the Day of the Lord will bring all remaining Jews of the Diaspora to Israel. There they will bow down and worship Yahweh and His Messiah (Isa 14.2; 49.22-23; 60.3-4).

7. The earth's curse will be removed and the earth will be restored to pre-Fall, Edenic conditions (Isa 35; 65.17-25).

8. Israel will be glorified as head of the nations and a blessing to all Gentiles (Deut 28.13; Zech 8.13).

## **Objections**

Some Christian and Jewish commentators who interpret Israel literally in Isa 11.13-14 regard the entire chapter as chronologically arranged. They maintain that an attack by Israel on its neighbors in v. 14 cannot follow either the kingdom of peace, described in vv. 6-9, or the conversion of Gentiles and the final regathering of the dispersed Jews, in vv. 10-12. Consequently, they usually interpret v. 14 as a literal

Israel in spiritual supremacy over the Gentiles during the Messianic kingdom.<sup>7</sup>

However, Isaiah, like many biblical prophets, here employs the typical pattern of skipping back and forth in time in order to elaborate on themes mentioned previously. The prophets were like artists, who first sketch an outline on canvas and afterwards fill in the colors. Thus, in v. 14 Isaiah returns to the theme he first presented in v. 4, showing that the Israelites will accompany Messiah in defeating the nations' armies gathered against Jerusalem and Judea (Zech 10.3-7; 12.3-9; 14.3-4; Joel 3.2, 12) and afterwards in destroying their surrounding neighbors. Throughout vv. 3-16, however, Isaiah remains within the timeframe of "that day," i.e., the Day of the Lord.

Most Christian commentators dismiss altogether a literal interpretation of Isa 11.13-14. This is typical of non-premillennarians, who usually interpret allegorically those OT prophecies regarding Israel's final destruction of its enemies and the promised kingdom. For example, John Calvin provides the traditional allegorical interpretation that "Israel is regarded as the church and the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites as enemies of the church."<sup>8</sup> Thus, Israel attacking its enemies is interpreted to be the church spiritually triumphing over its enemies through the preaching of the gospel.

J.A. Alexander, whose father founded Princeton Theological Seminary, was one of the leading Presbyterian scholars of America. He observed that both the Jewish Targum (Aramaic

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<sup>7</sup> E.g., Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT*, 7:291; Solomon B. Freehof, *Book of Isaiah* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1972), 78.

<sup>8</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, tr. William Pringle, 4 vols. (rep.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 1:393. See also Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT*, 7:291.

translation/paraphrase of the OT) and most Jewish commentators have regarded the eleventh chapter of Isaiah as Messianic. He wrote concerning v. 14:

the Jews explain this as a literal prediction having respect to the countries formerly possessed by the races here enumerated. Most Christian writers understand it spiritually of the conquests to be achieved by the true religion, and suppose the nations here named to be simply put for enemies in general, or for the heathen world.<sup>9</sup>

The same kind of thing is alleged about other verses. One notable Christian commentator on Isaiah takes vv. 15-16 to mean that God will bring His people out of the prison house of spiritual bondage and sin to the “highway from Assyria,” which represents Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14.6).<sup>10</sup> This is an example of how non-premillennial commentators strain to apply prophetic scripture to the Christian life and thereby lose the true meaning of the text. All Scripture does not apply to every circumstance or time in history. It is better to let the words stand as to their normal meaning and derive life applications from more appropriate texts.

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Addison Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* [1846], 2 vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 1:261.

<sup>10</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, 3 vols, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 1:401. Young says of v. 14, “What Isaiah is here describing cannot, of course, be understood in a literal sense . . . to take place in Palestine” (p. 399). Young gives no reasons for this dismissal. Such outright rejection of a literal interpretation of Israel in OT prophecies is more excusable of earlier expositors than one in 1965, after modern Israel had been a state for eighteen years.

## Reestablishment of Philistia

Like the Jews, many premillennial commentators have not only interpreted from the Bible that Israel will be reestablished before the triumphant coming of Messiah, but that Israel's ancient neighbors will reemerge as well.

Premillennialist William Kelley was the close associate of J.N. Darby, the "father of dispensationalism."<sup>11</sup> In 1871 Kelley expounded on Isa 11.14, maintaining that Israel's neighbors in antiquity would in the future become reestablished in their respective lands:

As for [Israel's] plotting neighbors, they may reappear. . . . It is a favourite infidel argument against the literal accomplishment . . . that the people mentioned in verse 14 have disappeared from the stage of history, and therefore that neither the restoration of Israel nor the events growing out of it can be so understood. But this is sheer unbelief of the power of God and of the reliability of scripture. **The God Who will bring His hidden ones of Ephraim out of the darkness that still veils them will disclose the descendants of their old adversaries in due time, and among these of their neighbours (emphasis added).**<sup>12</sup>

Thus, Kelley foresaw the reestablishment of Israel, Jordan and Philistia. This successor to the father of dispensationalism

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<sup>11</sup> J.N. Darby, one of the early Plymouth Brethren teachers, and C.I. Scofield contributed more than any others to the rise of premillennialism over the past 150 years. Their "dispensational premillennialism" includes a pretribulational "rapture" of the church, seven years before Jesus' second coming to the earth. This view is to be distinguished from "historic premillennialism," believed by its adherents to be the position of the early church, in which all events concerning Jesus' return, including the rapture, are placed at the end of the Tribulation.

<sup>12</sup> William Kelley, *An Exposition of the Book of Isaiah* [1871], 4th ed. (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1979), 149-50.

cannot therefore be regarded as a Christian Zionist, as are some dispensationalists today.

After affirming that Isa 11.4 refers to Christ's coming in judgment, premillennialist W.E. Vine (author of *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*) claims that "the rest of this chapter depicts millennial conditions." Concerning vv. 14-15, he explains that the Jews "will subdue surrounding foes."<sup>13</sup>

E.H. Plumptre provides a summary of the entire chapter as it relates to v. 14:

The seer has had revealed to him the glory of the Messianic kingdom as a restored Eden, full of the knowledge of Jehovah, the Gentiles seeking light and salvation from it. Suddenly, he blends this with anticipations that belong to the feelings and complications of his own time. He sees Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, in that far future. They will be then as they were in his own times, the persistent foes of Israel (comp. Zeph. ii. 7-9), but will be, at last, subdued.<sup>14</sup>

In more recent times, J. Barton Payne has authored the most useful English resource for prophetic students. In his *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (1973), Payne interprets Isa 11.14 literally, that at the second coming of Christ, "Israel will despoil the territories of Philistia, Edom, Moab . . . and Ammon."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> W.E. Vine, *Isaiah: Prophecies, Promises, Warnings* (rep.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 49-50.

<sup>14</sup> E.H. Plumptre, "Isaiah," *A Biblical Commentary for English Readers: Job to Isaiah*, ed. Charles John Ellicott (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., n.d.), 455.

<sup>15</sup> Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, 295. Cf. p. 664.

Thus, these men had not only foreseen from Scripture that Israel would become a nation again, but that Philistia would as well. **It must be concluded from Isa 11.14 that the ancient land of Philistia will in the future become reestablished. What else can it be but the Palestinian state?**

## Chapter 12

### RETRIBUTION UPON THE PHILISTINES

*“All the regions of Philistia. . . I will return your recompense on your head” (Joel 3.4).*

The Hebrew prophet Joel wrote about that grand theme of Holy Scripture—“the day of the Lord,” or “the day of Yahweh.” In that final Day, Yahweh will manifest His awesome power by destroying the nations that come against Israel and consummating His plan not only for Israel, but for all mankind.

**In Joel 3 the prophet implies that Philistia will exist as a separate entity from Israel at the end of this age.** As in Isa 11, this can only be determined by analyzing the context.

#### **Israel’s Repentance**

Joel begins his little book by depicting an unprecedented invasion of locusts (grasshoppers) over the land of Israel (1.4). To this pestilence are added drought, fire and famine. The prophet exhorts Israel to follow King Solomon’s instruction to assemble at the temple during such times of distress and pray to Yahweh for deliverance (1.13-14; cf. 1 Kgs 8.23-61). Joel himself interprets this invasion of insects as a harbinger of a future military invasion of the land of Israel. “A great and mighty people” will attack Israel from the north (2.2, 20) as divine punishment for Israel’s sins.

To what army and time does the prophet refer? If the book of Joel was written before King Hezekiah’s time, as conservative scholars generally believe, part of Joel 2 was no doubt fulfilled by Assyrian King Sennacherib’s assault on Judah in 701 B.C. (2 Kgs 18-19). Because good King Hezekiah prayed

at the temple, Jerusalem was delivered when “the angel of the Lord” destroyed 185,000 Assyrian troops. Yet some parts of Joel 2 can refer only to that future invasion of the land of Israel by all the nations’ armies at the end of the Tribulation,<sup>1</sup> as depicted in Joel 3. For instance, after the invasion from the north (2.1-9), the gathering of the Israelites at the temple to repent (vv. 12-17) and the removal of the enemy (v. 20), God says:

**19** . . . I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.

**26** . . . Then My people will never be put to shame.

**27** . . . And My people will never be put to shame.

When will God remove forever the reproach of the Jews? It will not be until the coming of the Messianic kingdom (Isa 25.8). Thereafter, Jews will never be put to shame (Isa 45.17; Eze 39.26).<sup>2</sup> **Joel 2.1-27 must therefore be presenting a dual prophecy which, in addition to predicting the Assyrian invasion, anticipates the future Messianic deliverance.**

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<sup>1</sup> Tribulation often refers in Scripture to Satan-inflicted persecution of God’s people. The term, “the Tribulation,” appears herein to distinguish it from all previous periods of tribulation, which have been less severe and/or less widespread. That is why it is called in the NT, “the great tribulation” (Mt 24.15; Rev 7.14). In the OT the same period is called “the time of Jacob’s distress” (Jer 30.7; cf. Dan 12.1). The Tribulation lasts three and a half years. It begins with an act in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, when the regular sacrifice is removed and replaced by “the abomination of desolation.” The Tribulation ends at the coming of Messiah in glory (Dan 9.27; 11.31-33; 12.11; Mt 24.15). Dispensationalists arbitrarily designate Daniel’s entire 70th week, which lasts seven years, as the Tribulation and distinguish its latter half as “the great tribulation” (Dan 9.25-27; Rev 7.14). But Jesus used both terms interchangeably (Mt 24.21, 29), showing that they identify the same time.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, 408. Cf. p. 104.

## Outpouring of the Spirit and Heavenly Signs

**Joel 2.28-32 is further evidence that all of Joel 2 refers to the latter days, as the following verses attest:**

**28** And it will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind.

**31** The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood.

The Spirit of God has never been poured out on all mankind. This will not happen until the Messianic kingdom comes.<sup>3</sup> The words “after this,” in Joel 2.28, indicate that the outpouring will occur just after the time previously described, when the invading army will have been removed (v. 20).

The prophet Joel is increasingly concerned with the subject of the last days, especially the Day of Yahweh. The same events recorded in Joel 2.10-11 and 30-32 are further delineated in Joel 3 in a context which indisputably concerns that final Day (3.14). While Joel 2.1-27 seems to continue the theme presented in the previous chapter—the invasion of locusts—the language appears figurative, pointing to an invasion of the nations in the last days. Indeed, an invasion of Israel by its enemies is definitely the theme of Joel 3.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Isa 32.15; Eze 39.29; Zech 12.10, which depict Messianic conditions. In Ac 2.17-21 the apostle Peter quotes Joel 2.28-32 and reckons its fulfillment to be on that day of Pentecost. Luke does not say that the heavenly signs occurred, an omission strongly suggesting that they did not. Also, the Spirit’s outpouring was selective, coming only upon those few disciples, not all mankind. Thus, that day of Pentecost was only a partial fulfillment of Joel 2.28-32. The universal outpouring still awaits the inauguration of the Messianic kingdom. Then, Moses’ wish will come true, “that all the Lord’s people [would become] prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!” (Num 11.29).

<sup>4</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Bible Handbook: An Essential Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 404. Unger regards the entire contents of Joel 2-3 as referring to the latter days.

Cataclysmic disturbances in the sun and moon in Joel 2.10 and 30-31 are mentioned again in Joel 3.15 (cf. Isa 13.9-10; Mt 24.29; Rev 6.12). These astronomical signs have never yet occurred. In that Day Yahweh will utter His voice before His army (2.11; cf. Isa 42.13; 1 Th 4.16) from Mount Zion in Jerusalem (3.16). Those who call upon Yahweh will be delivered and escape the final onslaught (2.32). They are the same ones who find refuge in Him in Joel 3.16.

### **Joel 3.1-8**

**1 “For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,**

**2 I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; and they have divided up My land.**

**3 They have also cast lots for My people, traded a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine that they may drink.**

**4 Moreover, what are you to Me, O Tyre, Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you rendering Me a recompense? But if you do recompense Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your recompense on your head.**

**5 Since you have taken My silver and My gold, brought My precious treasures to your temples,**

**6 and sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their territory,**

**7 behold, I am going to arouse them from the place where you have sold them, and return your recompense on your head.**

**8 Also I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a distant nation,” for the Lord has spoken** (Joel 3.1-8; emphasis added).

### **Valley of Jehoshaphat**

The words in Joel 3.1, “in those days and at that time,” refer to the time period last referred to in Joel 2. It is the time immediately preceding and including the “day of the Lord.” Joel maintains that God will draw all the nations’ armies to the land of Israel. Their purpose will be to exterminate all the Jews (Joel 3.2; cf. Isa 29.7; 34.2; Zech 12.3; 14.2). Instead, God will gather them into the “valley of Jehoshaphat” (meaning “Yahweh judges;” 3.2, 12). There, Yahweh will destroy the nations for assaulting Israel, dividing its land and selling Jews into slavery (3.2-3, 12).

Since the 4th century A.D., the Valley of Jehoshaphat has been identified as the Kidron Valley, located just outside Jerusalem on the east, between the temple grounds and the Mount of Olives. It is called a “winepress” or “wine trough” in the Bible because this is where Messiah will trample the nations’ armies as men trample grapes in a winepress (Joel 3.13; Isa 63.1-6; Rev 14.18-20; 19.15).

Gentile nations have a long history of possessing and dividing Yahweh’s land. Although God has used the nations in disciplining Israel, He will nevertheless hold them responsible for what they have done to His people. On account of the crimes mentioned by Joel, Yahweh says to Tyre, Sidon and Philistia, “I will return your recompense on your head” (3.4, 7).

With this mention of Philistia we have arrived at the critical passage relating to our theme.

### **Future of Tyre, Sidon and Philistia**

Most biblical commentators regard Joel 3.4-8 as having been fulfilled in Israel's past, with no future fulfillment remaining, yet they admit that the surrounding context clearly concerns the last days.<sup>5</sup> There has probably been some fulfillment of Joel 3.4-8 in Israel's history, though most evidence offered for it is weak. The following reasons suggest that Joel 3.4-8 also awaits a future fulfillment:

1. Tyre, Sidon and Philistia seem to be included among the nations which attack Israel in the last days. Tyre and Sidon were the foremost cities of the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians and Philistines were infamous slave traders in antiquity.<sup>6</sup> The word "They," which begins v. 3, suggests that many of the nations to be gathered into the valley, not just Phoenicia and Philistia, sold and scattered the Jews and divided their land. History affirms this. The word "They" also seems to disallow severing vv. 4-8 from the context of the last days and restricting these verses to a past fulfillment.<sup>7</sup> A.C. Gaebelein, while admitting a possible past fulfillment of vv. 4-8, remarks on vv. 7-8, "But the words must also have their final fulfillment when the nations are in the valley of Jehoshaphat."<sup>8</sup>

2. It is doubtful that the prophet would interrupt the flow of this important prophetic chapter, which otherwise describes

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<sup>5</sup> E.g., Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, 410.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., 1 Macc 3.41; 2 Macc 8.11, 25; Josephus, *Ant.*, XII, vii, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Chisholm, "Joel," *Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, John F. Walvoord and Roy Zuck, gen. eds. (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 1422.

<sup>8</sup> A.C. Gaebelein, *The Prophet Joel: An Exposition* (New York: "Our Hope," 1909), 150-51.

exclusively the last days, with vv. 4-8 if they refer only to events long past.

3. For those who would argue that the Philistines will not exist in the last days, v. 4 only specifies “all the regions of Philistia,” i.e., the geographic area, and does not identify the Philistines themselves. **Note that the future Philistia will encompass all of its former territory, not just the Gaza Strip. Here is evidence that Egypt will relinquish its northeastern corner of the Sinai, between the Gaza Strip and the Wadi el Arish.**

Following the depiction of the Messianic destruction, God’s retribution on Tyre, Sidon and Philistia is described. The Philistines and others took God’s silver and gold from Jerusalem (Joel 3.5; cf. 2 Chron 21.16-17; 36.10). Now they will honor the Jews with gifts of silver, gold and other wealth (Isa 60.6, 9, 11, 17). With these, the fourth (millennial) temple will be built (Zech 6.12-15; cf. Isa 60.10), just as the tabernacle in the wilderness was constructed with gold from Egypt (Ex 12.35-36; 30.12-16).

Joel 3.4-8 is no doubt the most difficult Philistia passage to fit into a yet future scenario. Yet it is certain that it cannot refer to the Babylonian exile because of v. 6, which portrays Jews being sold as slaves to the Greeks.

Because of their selling Jews as slaves, God says to Tyre, Sidon and Philistia, “I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans” (v. 8). Selling slaves at the beginning of the Messianic kingdom may seem preposterous, but a characteristic of Messiah’s government is justice. As the nations did to Israel, so at this time will Israel do to the nations (Obad 15).

Isaiah provides further insight into how this justice will be meted out during the Messianic kingdom. Like Joel, he foresees the Jews enslaving some Gentiles. Gentiles will gather the remaining Jews of the Diaspora, “take them along and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them [those Gentiles] as an inheritance in the land of the Lord as male servants and female servants; and they [the Jews] will take their captors captive, and will rule over their oppressors” (Isa 14.1-2; cf. 49.22-23).

This prophecy by Isaiah can be fulfilled only in the Messianic kingdom. It was not fulfilled by the returning exiles from Babylonia. The Persian forces that escorted the Jewish exiles from Babylon to their former homeland did not include women. Neither did the Persians remain to become the Jews’ servants (Ezra 8.22; Neh 2.9). The returning exiles never took their captors—the Babylonians—captive nor ruled over them.

Moreover, this prophecy by Isaiah refers to a time when Yahweh’s hand will be stretched out against all the nations and a king of Assyria will be trampled on the mountains of Israel (Isa 14.25-26). This cannot refer to any other time than the Day of Yahweh. That is when He will destroy the Antichrist, an Assyrian (Isa 10.12, 24; 14.25; Mic 5.5-6), by the hand of Christ.

It is conceivable that God will bring this retribution of Joel 3 on the inhabitants of Tyre, Sidon and Philistia on Judgment Day, which immediately follows the Messianic destruction. Perhaps it is then when the Israelis will sell some of their former enemies to the Sabeans, who were ancient traders. The Sabeans were inhabitants of Sheba, located on the southwestern coast of the Arabian peninsula in present South Yemen. Maybe the Sabeans will be spared enslavement because they will not participate with the nations in the final attack on Israel (Eze 38.13).

The prophet Zephaniah writes of a time when all the nations will bow down to Yahweh (Zeph 2.11). This can only refer to the time of the Messianic kingdom. Just before this, the prophet relates concerning Israel's neighboring foes, Moab and Ammon, "The remnant of My people will plunder them, and the remainder of My nation will inherit them" (2.9). Thus, the Messianic victory will result in Israel's acquiring some citizens of both Philistia and present western Jordan as their servants.

Yet God is not only just, but merciful. Assuming that the Mosaic civil law prevails throughout the Messianic kingdom, perhaps these Philistine servants and others will be loosed in the 50th year, the Year of Jubilee (Lev 25.10). That is when all slaves were freed under the Levitical law.

In Israel's early history, no people "divided up" Israel's territory by possessing it more than did the Philistines. The implication of Joel 3.2-8 is that, in turn, God will give the land of the Philistines to Israel as a portion of the Promised Land. Indeed He will, a subject which the prophet Zephaniah addresses, and to which we now turn.



## Chapter 13

### ANNEXATION OF PHILISTIA TO JUDEA

*“And the coast will be for the remnant of the house of Judah”*  
(Zeph 2.7).

Like Joel, Zephaniah is a prophet of the “day of the Lord.” The two books are similar and should be compared. Because of its indefiniteness, however, the small book of Zephaniah has been regarded as one of the most difficult prophetic books in the Bible to interpret.<sup>1</sup> Zephaniah provides a sweeping general summary of the future.

Many biblical commentators think that Zephaniah’s “day of the Lord” in his first two chapters does not refer to any specific time-period, but can be applied to various times of calamity future to the prophet. Most regard the end of the book, Zeph 3.8-20, as depicting yet future conditions at the final Day of the Lord, when Messiah comes in glory. However, some material in the first two chapters of Zephaniah directly corresponds to Zeph 3.8-20, as well as endtime material in other prophetic books. This suggests that much of Zephaniah’s book concerns the last days as well.

Our interest in Zephaniah centers on the prophet’s mention of the Philistines in Zeph 2.4-7. What time is the prophet writing about? An analysis of the preceding verses is necessary in order to grasp the context of Zeph 2.4-7.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* [1951] (Chicago: Moody, 1976), 221.

## Zephaniah 1

In the first chapter of Zephaniah, the prophet describes in vv. 2-3 and 14-18 a worldwide destruction. If understood literally, these events can only describe the end of the world, on the eschatological Day of the Lord.<sup>2</sup> Note the following examples from Zeph 1, with direct parallels to other endtime passages added in brackets:

**2** I will completely remove all things from the face of the earth. [Cf. Isa 24.3.]

**3** I will remove man and beast; I will remove the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea, . . . and I will cut off man from the face of the earth. [Cf. Isa 24.6b.]

**14** Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly. . . .

**18** And all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy, for He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth. [Cf. Zeph 3.8; Mic 7.13.]

Zephaniah 1.4-13 portrays God judging sinful Judah and Jerusalem. These verses have no doubt had some remarkable literal fulfillment in the assaults on Jerusalem by Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar and Rome's General Titus. Nevertheless, because vv. 2-3 and 14-18 were not fulfilled during those times, Zeph 1 must await a final and complete fulfillment in the endtime.

### The Great Day of the Lord

In Zeph 1.14 the prophet adds a qualifying word to the expression, "the day of the Lord." He specifies "the great day of

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<sup>2</sup> Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 225.

the Lord.” Like “the great tribulation,” “the great day of the Lord” distinguishes it from any previous “day of Yahweh.” On all of those days Yahweh exercised His power in judgment, yet always with restraint. In contrast, on “the great day,” the Almighty will pour out **all** His wrath without holding back. It must be concluded that that great day will be “near,” as Zephaniah says in v. 14, when Judah and Jerusalem will be assaulted by the nations at the end of the age.

### **Israel’s Call to Repent**

When the nations attack Jerusalem, Zephaniah exhorts sinful Israel to gather at the temple, humble itself and repent (cf. Joel 2.12-17). If the Israelites do this, they may escape the onslaught and be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger (cf. Joel 2.32; Zech 14.5).

### **Zephaniah 2.1-3**

**1** Gather yourselves together, yes, gather, O nation without shame,

**2** Before the decree takes effect—the day passes like the chaff— before the burning anger of the Lord comes upon you, before the day of the Lord’s anger comes upon you.

**3** Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances; seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger.

Zephaniah 2.1-3 cannot apply to the Babylonian conquest in the 6th century B.C. Despite the greatest reforms in Israel’s history under King Josiah, which occurred immediately beforehand, God said he would still remove the Southern Kingdom as He had the Northern Kingdom (2 Kgs 23.25-27). Long before the Babylonian advance, God’s decree of judgment

on those Judeans was irrevocable. Zephaniah's call to repentance here clearly refers to the time of Israel's destruction at the end of the yet future Tribulation.<sup>3</sup>

Neither was Zeph 2.1-3 fulfilled by the Romans' destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. All of those Jews closed up inside became victims of the siege and final onslaught. Many erroneously thought they could "be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger" (v. 3). Josephus witnessed it all. He reports that Jerusalem's citizens hid themselves "in the caves and caverns underground; whither, . . . they did not expect to be searched for; but endeavoured that, after the whole city should be destroyed, and the Romans gone away, they might come out again, and escape from them. This was no better than a dream of theirs; for they were not able to lie hid either from God or from the Romans."<sup>4</sup>

### **Hiding Place**

How appropriate that God would choose Zephaniah to write about His hiding place on the Day of the Lord! Zephaniah means "Yahweh hides." Sometimes God has a hiding place for the humble who seek Him. The final Day of the Lord is one of those times. This theme in Zeph 2.3 is repeated in 3.12, "I will leave among you a humble and lowly people, and they will take refuge in the name of the Lord." The context of this verse exclusively concerns the endtime. The repentant Jews will be hidden from the awesome wrath that Yahweh will pour out on the earth at the end of the Tribulation (cf. Zech 14.4-5).

With this context established, we now turn to the focus of our study.

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<sup>3</sup> Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, 428.

<sup>4</sup> Josephus, *Wars*, VI, 7, 3.

## **Zephaniah 2.4\*7**

**4** For Gaza will be abandoned, and Ashkelon a desolation; Ashdod will be driven out at noon, and Ekron will be uprooted.

**5** Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethites! The word of the Lord is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; and I will destroy you, so that there will be no inhabitant.

**6** So the seacoast will be pastures, with caves for shepherds and folds for flocks.

**7** And the coast will be for the remnant of the house of Judah, they will pasture on it. In the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down at evening; for the Lord their God will care for them and restore their fortune.

## **Messianic Destruction of Philistia**

Following the predicted invasion of Judah and Jerusalem and the exhortation to repent, in Zeph 2.4-5 the prophet describes an invasion and destruction of Philistia on the Day of the Lord (cf. v. 2). Only four cities of the Philistine pentapolis are mentioned. By Zephaniah's time, Gath had declined (cf. 2 Chron 26.6). The Cherethites of v. 5 lived just south of the Philistines, on the coastal plain toward Egypt. As mentioned in Chapter 2, they are probably to be regarded as a branch of the Philistines.

As in Zeph 1, the destroying power is not specifically identified. Could it be the aforementioned Jews at Jerusalem, who will have escaped destruction on account of their repentance? Indeed, this becomes evident in the verses which follow, and it corresponds with other prophets.

In Zeph 2.4-15 it is not only the nation of Philistia that Yahweh will destroy, but also Moab and Ammon (present Jordan), Ethiopia and Assyria. These are Israel's enemies according to the four directions of the compass.

Concerning the inhabitants of the land presently known as Jordan, Zephaniah proclaims: "The remnant of My people will plunder them, and the remainder of My nation will inherit them" (v. 9). It is therefore the Jews who will destroy Jordan. They are likely, then, the same power who will overtake Philistia. But could these predicted destructions of Philistia and Jordan have already been completely fulfilled in the Hasmonean era, under Alexander Jannaeus, and therefore require no further fulfillment? Not at all!<sup>5</sup>

Following Jordan's destruction, Zephaniah claims "all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him [Yahweh], everyone from his own place" (v. 11; cf. Isa 45.23; Rom 14.11; Phil 2.10-11). This is unmistakably the universal worship of Yahweh during the Messianic kingdom. Therefore, all these judgments will most likely occur at the same endtime. H.A. Ironside regards all of Zeph 2 as

a picture of the time of the end. Judah then will be much in the position she occupied in Zephaniah's day—in the land, surrounded by enemies, a feeble remnant, crying "How long, O Lord?" the mass, apostate and swayed by Antichrist. . . . and their enemies who have glorified over their helplessness shall become the objects of [the Lord's] avenging wrath, preparatory to the ushering in of the world-kingdom of our God and His Christ.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> E.g., Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT*, 10:144.

<sup>6</sup> H.A. Ironside, *Notes on the Minor Prophets* (New York: Loizeaux Bros., n.d.), 299. Ironside interprets Philistia, in vv. 4-7, allegorically as corrupt Christianity. But he adds, "a more complete fulfillment will take place in the last days."

## Coastland for Judah

The Hebrew word *chebel*, which appears three times in vv. 5-7, is translated “seacoast” and “coast.” It means “a measuring cord,” and here it denotes a “country” or “region.”<sup>7</sup> The district of the Philistines is intended, with its four cities bound together as one whole.<sup>8</sup> Thus, prior to the Messianic destruction, the entire Philistine coastal plain will designate a region separate from Judea, a nation of the Philistines.

Verse 7, “the coast will be for the remnant of the house of Judah” implies that this region is not possessed by the Judeans immediately prior to the Day of the Lord. Only after Philistia is conquered on that Day will it belong to the remnant of Judah forever. This passage cannot be regarded as completely fulfilled during Israel’s past. Even during the Hasmonean occupation of most of the Plain of Philistia, the Jews never retained the enlarged district of Ashkelon.

Furthermore, Zechariah relates concerning the Jews, that “in the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down at evening” (v. 7). Israel’s physical security and financial blessing, indicated in v. 7, is so complete that it cannot pertain to either the post-exilic return or modern Israel, but only to the Messianic kingdom. The “lying down” is also mentioned in Zeph 3.13 in an exclusively Messianic context. Only at that time “Israel will do no wrong and tell no lies,” and there will be “no one to make them tremble.” Verse 7 is echoed at the end of Zephaniah: “I will give you renown and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes” (3.20). The contexts of these verses, as well as their similarities to

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<sup>7</sup> *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. Harris et al., 1:258.

<sup>8</sup> John D.W. Watts, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah in The Cambridge Bible Commentary: New English Bible* (India: CUP, 1975), 167-68; Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT*, 10:141.

Zeph 2.7, suggest that Zeph 2.7, indeed, all of Zeph 2.1-7, awaits an endtime fulfillment.

### **Annexation of All the Promised Land**

The prophet Isaiah prophesied concerning the annexation of the remaining Promised Land in the early days of the glorious Messianic kingdom:

**26.1** In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:..

..

**26.15** “Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord,

Thou hast increased the nation,

Thou art glorified;

**Thou hast extended all the borders of the land.”**

**54.3** **For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left. And your descendants will possess nations,** and they will resettle the desolate cities (emphasis added).

The Messianic destruction will encompass the entire Promised Land. “The Lord will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt” (Isa 27.12; cf. 9.4-5).

The Messianic destruction will be immediately followed by the promised ingathering. He will “multiply the nation” (Isa 9.3), gathering all Jews remaining from the Diaspora (Isa 27.13). Upon their arrival they will say, “The place is too cramped for me; make room for me that I may live here” (Isa 49.20).

Then Yahweh will extend the borders of Israel to include all of the Promised Land (Mic 7.11). He will settle Jews east and north, in “the land of Gilead and Lebanon, until no room can be found for them” (Zech 10.10). They will “feed in Bashan and

Gilead [present northwestern Jordan] as in days of old” (Mic 7.14), when the two and a half tribes lived east of the Jordan River. But Israel will not only annex territory to the east.

Isaiah says the Israelites will spread both right and left, meaning east and west (Isa 54.3). Although the entire western border of land which modern Israel now controls is the Mediterranean Sea, this cannot mean that the present return fulfills Isa 54.3. Isaiah 54 clearly portrays the Messianic kingdom. Only then will Israel no more feel humiliated or disgraced (v. 4), or will Israel’s sons be taught the Lord and be far from oppression and fear (vv. 13-14).

Israel cannot spread to the left if its western border is the Mediterranean Sea, as it is presently. Therefore, **between now and the coming of the Messianic kingdom, a portion of the Mediterranean coast will be severed from the State of Israel, presumably to form the Palestinian state (Philistia).**

Thus, when Messiah comes to establish His glorious kingdom, Israel will be extended in every direction. The following lands will be annexed: the Sinai in the south, western Jordan to the east, Lebanon and much of Syria in the north and Philistia on the west.

Zephaniah 2.4-7, combined with Isa 54.3 and 26.15, makes it certain that **the State of Israel will not possess the Philistine Plain in the endtimes preceding the Messianic kingdom. Yet Israel will thereafter be enlarged by the Lord to include all of Philistia.**

### **Psalms 60 and 108: Defeat of the Philistines**

The book of Psalms was the Hebrews’ hymnal. It consisted of 150 poems set to music. King David composed many of them out of his own experiences. God sometimes spoke through

David as He did through the prophets. Accordingly, some of these psalms go beyond David's life to predict the sufferings and triumphs of Messiah.

A subtitle appended to Psalm 60 reveals that it was occasioned by the most notable victory in David's military career. This battle against the Mesopotamians in Syria may prefigure Messiah's "battle on the great day of God Almighty" (Rev 16.14 NIV; cf. 19.11-21), known popularly as Armageddon.

Psalms 60.6-12 and 108.7-13 are almost identical. They celebrate military victories by the Jews over their neighbors. Verses from Ps 60, also in Ps 108.7-9, read as follows in the RSV:

**2** Thou hast made the land to quake, thou hast rent it open; repair its breaches, for it totters.

**6** God has spoken in his sanctuary: "With exultation I will divide up Shechem and portion out the Vale of Succoth.

**7** Gilead is mine; Manas'seh is mine; E'phraim is my helmet; Judah is my scepter.

**8** Moab is my washbasin; upon Edom I cast my shoe; **over Philistia I shout in triumph**" (emphasis added).

Such victories by Israel over its neighbors have never occurred. In v. 8, "casting the shoe" is an idiom signifying possession. Israel will indeed conquer and possess Edom (southwestern Jordan) when the Messianic age begins (cf. Isa 34.5-17; 63.1; Joel 3.19; Obad 18-19). Likewise, shouting over Philistia indicates God's victory, accomplished through a united Ephraim and Judah (vv. 7,9-12), over the inhabitants of the Plain of Philistia. And we have already seen that during the Messianic age, Israel will possess Gilead, Bashan, Ammon and Moab (northwestern and central western Jordan).

Psalm 60.2 identifies the time of this psalm. It pictures a great earthquake that causes huge cracks in the earth's surface. This bears striking similarity to cataclysmic disturbances depicted in other apocalyptic scriptures (e.g., Isa 24.18-20; Rev 6.12; 16.18). These suggest that Ps 60 pertains to the endtime as well. In that case, Yahweh will accomplish these victories in vv. 6-8 by Messiah's leading Israel in battle on the final Day of the Lord.

**If Ps 60 and 108 refer to Messianic victories, they indicate that Philistia will exist in the latter days as a country separate from Israel. As with the other conquered neighbors, it too will be annexed to Israel.**

### **Obadiah 15-21: Israel Will Possess Philistia**

Obadiah 15-21 depicts Yahweh's judgment at the end of this age. Portions of this passage appear below.

**15** For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations.

**16** Because just as you drank on My holy mountain, all the nations will drink and swallow, and become as if they had never existed.

**17** But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape, and it will be holy. And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions. **19** Then those of the Negev will possess the mountain of Esau, and those of the Shephelah the Philistine plain; . . .

**21** . . . And the kingdom will be the Lord's (emphasis added).

Near the end of the Tribulation, all the nations' armies will gather at Armageddon to attack Israel (Rev 16.16). What they won't know is that God will be gathering them there and into the Kidron Valley to destroy them (Joel 3.14). Upon taking

Jerusalem, the nations' leaders will celebrate with a toast on Mount Zion (Obad 16). But the tide will turn. At the coming of Messiah in glory, Mount Zion will become the rallying place for Israelis who survive the nations' slaughter. Following the Messianic destruction of the nations' armies, Israelis will possess the spoil (Zech 14.1, 14; Eze 39.10). Only then can it be said that Zion "will be holy" (Obad 17).

Obadiah 19-21 means that Israelis living in southern Israel ("those of the Negev") will take possession of their neighbors' lands to the east and west. Was this scripture fulfilled by the Hasmonean Kingdom in the early 1st century B.C.? That was certainly not a time in which it could be said, "Mount Zion . . . will be holy" or "the kingdom will be the Lord's" (vv. 17, 21). We saw in Chapter 2 how Hasmonean King Alexander Jannaeus, who accomplished much land expansion, was a cruel and godless tyrant. Instead, this passage more aptly describes the Messianic era, as is generally maintained by Jewish commentators.<sup>9</sup> Only then will the kingdom of Israel truly belong to Yahweh. Even non-premillennialist C.F. Keil concludes concerning Obadiah, "the fulfillment of vv. 17-21 can only belong to the Messianic times, . . . in a complete fulfillment at the second coming of our Lord."<sup>10</sup>

Obadiah 19 indicates that the Israelis will already possess both the Negev and the Shephelah near the end of the Tribulation, but not southwestern Jordan or the Philistine Plain. Messianic victories, however, will result in Israel's annexing both of these territories as part of the Promised Land.

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<sup>9</sup> E.g., Rav Uzi Kelcheim, "Our Moral Title to the Land of Israel—in the Writings of Ramban (Nahmanidus)," *Whose Homeland*, ed. Tomaschoff, 60.

<sup>10</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on OT*, 10:378.

Turning to the present Israeli-Palestinian conflict, **Obadiah 19 is the only biblical passage which expressly identifies the future border between Israel and the Palestinian state as the western edge of the Shephelah**, their common border in ancient times. Here is additional evidence that the land dispute between the Israelis and the Palestinians will be resolved according to historical precedent.

### **Conclusion**

On the final Day of Yahweh, Messiah will come to lead the Israelis in conquering their enemies. Neighboring lands, including Philistia, will afterwards be annexed to Israel. Then all Jews will realize that neither they nor their forefathers could obtain the Promised Land by their own shrewdness and strength. **Instead, the Jews will know that Yahweh, their Sovereign God, gives them all the land He promised, including the Plain of Philistia. But it will only happen according to His timing and plan, when they repent and turn to Him.**



## Chapter 14

### CONVERSION OF THE PHILISTINES

*“I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. . . . Then they also will  
be a remnant for our God” (Zech 9.6-7).*

The tears and sorrow are not over yet. Much suffering remains to be experienced by the people of the Blessed Land. But incredible as it may seem, the prophets of Yahweh have foreseen a “happily ever after” ending to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. These seers not only predicted the reestablishment of Philistia, followed by its conquest and annexation to Israel; they also predicted a glorious reconciliation of the Philistines (Palestinians) with the Israelis and with God. This is clearly seen in the ninth chapter of the book of Zechariah.

Zechariah provides more information than any other prophet about the nations’ future invasion of Israel immediately before the Jews’ final deliverance. As the Gentiles will be slaughtering a multitude of Jews in their worst suffering ever, it will seem that God has forgotten His Chosen People. Yet, as Israel repents, “Yahweh remembers”—the very meaning of Zechariah’s name.

Although much, if not all, of Zech 9-14 concerns the endtime, some of it has already seen fulfillment. For example, most commentators regard all of Zech 9.1-8 as having been thoroughly fulfilled during the 4th century B.C. in the military campaigns of Alexander the Great. Indeed, it is amazing how Alexander’s movements correspond in precise detail to much of this prophecy. But there are some important aspects in this passage which clearly cannot be reconciled with the exploits of Alexander.

What we want to know from Zech 9 is this: Were vv. 1-8 completely fulfilled in the past? Or do they require a yet future revival of the ancient country of Philistia, first nationally, then spiritually?

### **Zechariah 9.1-8**

**1** The burden of the word of the Lord is against the land of Hadrach, with Damascus as its resting place (for the eyes of men, especially of all the tribes of Israel, are toward the Lord),

**2** And Hamath also, which borders on it; Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise.

**3** For Tyre built herself a fortress and piled up silver like dust, and gold like the mire of the streets.

**4** Behold, the Lord will dispossess her and cast her wealth into the sea; and she will be consumed with fire.

**5 Ashkelon will see it and be afraid. Gaza too will writhe in great pain; also Ekron, for her expectation has been confounded. Moreover, the king will perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon will not be inhabited.**

**6 And a mongrel race will dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.**

**7 And I will remove their blood from their mouth, and their detestable things from between their teeth. Then they also will be a remnant for our God, and be like a clan in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite.**

**8** But I will camp around My house because of an army, because of him who passes by and returns; and no oppressor will pass over them anymore, for now I have seen with My eyes (emphasis added).

Zechariah begins chapter 9 with a pronouncement called, “a burden of the word of the Lord.” It is a judgment proclaimed against the cities of Damascus and Hamath in Syria (vv. 1-2); Tyre, Sidon and Hadrach in Lebanon (vv. 2-4) and Gaza, Ekron, Ashkelon and Ashdod in Philistia (vv. 5-8).

Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) of Macedonia was the greatest military conqueror in history. The Hebrew biblical prophets, all of whom lived before Alexander, predicted much about him and his kingdom. One of Alexander’s notable feats was his siege and destruction of the wealthy Phoenician city of Tyre, in present Lebanon. It certainly seems that Zechariah’s prophecy against Tyre was fulfilled by Alexander, when he burned it with fire and thoroughly destroyed it.

After destroying Tyre, Alexander continued his march south along the Mediterranean coast. We would expect Zechariah to have listed these four Philistine cities as they appeared geographically in the conqueror’s path. Instead, they are arranged in a different order: Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and Ashdod. This variation is the first hint that Alexander’s expedition against Philistia only partially fulfilled Zech 9.5-8. This order may indicate that during the Messianic destruction of Israel’s neighbors, from the east Judah will first attack the cities of Ashkelon and Gaza because these will be the most developed and/or militarily strategic.

It seems that the people living in these Philistine cities braced themselves for Alexander’s advance and that Zechariah’s words then came true, “Ashkelon will see it and be afraid.” All but Gaza surrendered to Alexander. Zechariah portrays the inhabitants of Gaza as squirming in great pain, an accurate picture of the suffering resulting from their resistance.

Alexander wanted to establish a world empire. To accomplish this, he tried to create mixed populations in many of his conquered territories. His purpose was to extinguish nationalism and thereby prevent rebellion. Verse 6 seems to indicate this policy, since “a mongrel race will dwell in Ashdod.” The Septuagint renders it “a mixed population.”

Such a population in Ashdod may, however, depict the heterogeneous Palestinians living there in the last days, since the context which follows requires a futuristic interpretation.

### **Conversion of the Philistines to Yahweh**

After implying the assault on the four Philistine cities, the prophet summarizes on behalf of Yahweh, “I will cut off the pride of the Philistines” (v. 6). Following this Philistine downfall, Zechariah adds that “they also will be a remnant for our God” (v. 7). That is, the Philistines will worship Yahweh, the God of Israel. Zechariah’s inclusion of the Philistines as the people of God echoes his theme elsewhere of the nations’ universal worship of God during the Messianic kingdom (2.11; 8.20-23; 14.16).<sup>1</sup>

To be sure, the Philistines never converted to faith in Yahweh during the days of Alexander, nor at any other time in their history. They were devotees of Dagon and other pagan deities. Therefore, Zech 2.5-7 was not completely fulfilled by Alexander; it still requires a future fulfillment. Jewish Christian expositors David Baron and Charles Feinberg claim that vv. 7-8 require a future, literal fulfillment at the second coming of

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<sup>1</sup> Many scholars suppose multiple authorship of Zechariah because chs. 1-8 and 9-14 differ in content and style. Zechariah is considered herein as a literary unit, providing maximum value in comparing its sections.

Christ.<sup>2</sup> C.F. Keil lists the exploits of Alexander, then explains that

Koehler has already replied . . . that the prophecy in ver. 7 was not fulfilled by the deeds of Alexander, since neither the remnant of the Phoenicians nor the other heathen dwelling in the midst of Israel were converted to Jehovah through the calamities connected with Alexander's expedition; and on this ground he merely regards the conquests of Alexander as the commencement of the fulfillment, . . . But we must go a step further and say that the commencement has not yet reached its end.<sup>3</sup>

**In order for Philistines (Palestinians) living in the Plain of Philistia to be conquered and converted to Yahweh at the coming of Messiah in glory, they must first become reestablished there.**

### **Incorporation of the Philistines into Israel**

The remainder of Zech 9.7 refers exclusively to the Messianic kingdom. Then the Philistines will "be like a clan in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite." The Jebusites were the residents of Jerusalem (Jebus) before David conquered that city. They were afterwards assimilated into the Hebrew population. Apparently, the same will be true of the Philistines at Ekron, situated near the border with Judah.

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<sup>2</sup> David Baron, *The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1918), 297-99; Charles Lee Feinberg, *God Remembers: A Study of the Book of Zechariah* (New York: American Board of Missions to the Jews, 1965), 160, 163; Frederick A. Tatford, *The Prophet of the Myrtle Grove: An Exposition of the Prophecy of Zechariah* (London: Henry E. Walter, Ltd., 1971), 101.

<sup>3</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT*, 10:331-32. Although Keil interprets a future fulfillment of much of this passage, in accordance with his allegorizing method, he finds that fulfillment in the church rather than in a literal, earthly Israel.

**The Philistine Plain will thus be annexed to Judea in the Messianic kingdom, and the Philistine (Palestinian) remnant will be incorporated into the Jewish population.** Being “like a clan in Judah,” they will enjoy a greater status than the alien or sojourner did in ancient Israel (e.g., Ex 12.45; 20.11; Lev 25.35). Philistine (Palestinian) sons will be like native-born Jews in Israel.

The prophet Ezekiel claims that during the Messianic kingdom, aliens will receive an inheritance of land in Israel, just as the Jews will;

So you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. And it will come about that you shall divide it by lot for an inheritance among yourselves and among the aliens who stay in your midst, who bring forth sons in your midst. And they shall be to you as the native-born among the sons of Israel; they shall be allotted an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And it will come about that in the tribe with which the alien stays, there you shall give him his inheritance (Eze 47.21-23).

Thus, each surviving Palestinian family will be allotted its inheritance of land in expanded Eretz Israel. Palestinians will probably be allotted land in their homeland of Philistia. Thereafter, Yahweh will no longer permit Israelis to buy and keep Palestinian land, as they have done in the 20th century. Instead, every 50th year, during the Year of Jubilee, everything, including real estate, will revert to its original owner (Lev 25.10).

### **“I Will Camp Around My House”**

Zech 9.8 offers overwhelming evidence that this prophecy regarding the Philistines has never been completely fulfilled in history. Nonetheless, Alexander’s activities remarkably fit this verse.

Josephus provides a fascinating account of Alexander the Great. When he was about to destroy Tyre, the Macedonian king sent messengers to Jerusalem requesting provisions for his army and promising reward. Jaddua, the honorable high priest, refused on account of his previous oath to Persian King Darius.

Alexander became enraged. He swore he would do to Jerusalem what he was about to do to Tyre and in this way teach all men to whom they ought to perform their oaths.<sup>4</sup> After destroying Tyre, however, he passed by Jerusalem on his way south along the Philistine coast to Gaza.

Except for Gaza, all of the Philistine cities surrendered to Alexander. Gaza, which means “strong,” had a history like that of Tyre, of surviving long sieges. Yet after a two-month siege, Alexander’s troops stormed Gaza. In v. 5 Zechariah had predicted that “the king will perish from Gaza.” In a brutal display of triumph, Alexander dragged the king of Gaza behind his chariot throughout the city.

After destroying Gaza, Alexander headed hastily northeast to fulfill his threat against Jerusalem. Josephus explains that when Alexander approached Jerusalem, he saw the high priest in his priestly attire coming out to meet him. Alexander’s troops thought him mad when he dismounted and bowed down to the high priest.

Josephus relates that when Alexander had earlier been contemplating how he might overtake Asia, he had had a dream. In it someone in priestly garments and headdress, exactly like this priest, assured the warrior that God had given him Asia. Thus, the priest appeared to Alexander as a divine

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<sup>4</sup> Josephus, *Ant.*, XI, viii, 5.

portent, and the warrior changed his mind about destroying Jerusalem.

Whether or not Josephus' account is accurate, history verifies that Alexander befriended the Jews and did no harm to Jerusalem.

Alexander's movements in relation to Jerusalem appear to fulfill remarkably the first half of Zech 9.8, "but I will camp around My house because of an army, because of him who passes by and returns."

Most commentators think "My house" refers to the temple at Jerusalem or to the city itself. God did indeed "camp around [His] house" when Alexander passed by and returned.

The Jewish Targum, however, maintains that Zech 9.8a is an amplification of the security of Jerusalem during the Messianic kingdom, described earlier in Zech 2.4-5, 10.<sup>5</sup> In these verses an angel assures Zechariah: "Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls, because of the multitude of men and cattle within it. 'For I,' declares the Lord, 'will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst'" (cf. Eze 39.26). Zechariah 2.11 also depicts the same conversion of the nations during the Messianic kingdom as described in Isa 2.3 and Mic 4.1-2. Kimchi, eminent medieval Jewish commentator, comments on the entirety of Zech 2, "It is certain that this vision is of the future, referring to the days of Messiah."<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, the similarity of Zech 2.4-5 to 9.8a suggests that the latter describes the Messianic kingdom as well. Unger and

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<sup>5</sup> Rex Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi in The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible* (Cambridge: University, 1977), 87.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by Feinberg, *God Remembers*, 46.

Tatford regard all of Zech 9.8 as being fulfilled exclusively in the endtime.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Antichrist: Israel's Last Oppressor**

The one who “passes by and returns” in v. 8 not only refers to Alexander the Great but also to Israel’s last and worst oppressor—the final Antichrist. The Antichrist will one day make a seven-year covenant with Israel but break it with three and a half years left (Dan 9.26-27). Near the end of this period, the Antichrist will pass through “the Beautiful Land” of Israel on his way to subdue Egypt, then return (Dan 11.40-45). Then he will lead all the nations in an effort to destroy helpless Israel. Suddenly, Messiah will appear and destroy the great oppressor—the Antichrist. Henceforth, Yahweh will “camp around His house” forever.

### **No More Oppressors**

The second half of Zech 9.8 certainly never came to pass following Alexander’s visit to Jerusalem. It reads, “and no oppressor will pass over them anymore.” The Jews continued to suffer under various Gentile oppressors, even some of their own, like Alexander Jannaeus.

Furthermore, if Zechariah meant for his prophecy in v. 8b to refer to any period other than the endtime, he would be contradicting himself in Zech 12.3 and 14.2. There, the prophet relates that all the Gentile nations will besiege Jerusalem and Judah in the endtime, destroying two-thirds of the population (13.9). Then Messiah will come to deliver the surviving Jewish remnant (14.4-5). Until then it cannot be said that “no oppressor will pass over them anymore.”

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<sup>7</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah's Glory* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 159; Tatford, *Prophet of the Myrtle Grove*, 101.

For a long time God “hid His face” from Israel (Deut 32.20; Isa 8.17; Hos 5.15), turning the sinful nation over to domination by the Gentiles. God no longer “shined His face” upon Israel, a Hebrew idiom indicating divine blessing and protection. Thus, the Messianic deliverance of Israel is immediately preceded by Yahweh turning His face back upon Israel to view with compassion the suffering, penitent nation (Eze 39.23, 29). This is the meaning of Yahweh’s words, “For now I have seen with My eyes” (Zech 9.8b).

### **Reestablishment of the Philistines**

The least that can be said of Zech 9.1 -8 is that, despite some fulfillment in Alexander’s career, vv. 7-8 still await a future, complete consummation. In sum, three things prophesied in Zech 9.7-8 have not yet happened:

1. The conversion of the Philistines to the God of Israel.
2. The assimilation of the Philistines into the Jewish population.
3. God’s establishment of perfect and everlasting security for the nation of Israel.

These points suggest that not only vv. 7-8, but the entire section of vv. 1-8 awaits a complete fulfillment at the end of this age. Accordingly, a people called the Philistines must again become a recognizable people dwelling in their ancient homeland.

Indeed, this is the interpretation provided by perhaps the preeminent American premillennial expositor of the early 20th century. A.C. Gaebelien claimed not only that Israel would someday be reestablished in its ancient homeland, but that Israel’s ancient neighbors would reemerge in their lands as well. Gaebelien wrote about Zech 9.1-8:

This puts before us again the final deliverance of Jerusalem and Israel's land . . . A final destructive visitation will be upon the enemies of Israel and Jerusalem; **in fact, many of the ancient foes of Israel are seen revived in prophecy in the latter days**, then to be swept away, while Jerusalem will again be miraculously saved (emphasis added).<sup>8</sup>

Premillennialist H.A. Ironside agreed substantially with Gaebelein's comment on Zech 9.1-8. He remarked that these verses "evidently have a double application, setting forth, as they do, the past overthrow of the kingdoms ere the first coming of the Lord . . . as well as the future doom of the powers which will be in those lands when comes the final triumph of the King of kings."<sup>9</sup>

Premillennialist Charles Feinberg concurs concerning all of Zech 9.1-8: "The section before us has a double application: it sets forth the past judgment upon the kingdoms surrounding Israel as well as the future punishment that awaits the enemies of God's people which will be living in lands contiguous to Palestine."<sup>10</sup>

## Israel's Destruction of Philistia

Much of Zech 9.9-17 relates to the same period of time as that of vv. 1-8.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, these two sections of Zech 9 should not be separated from one another, as is frequently done by commentators. The Hebrew prophets often wrote thematically rather than chronologically. They would fade in and out

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<sup>8</sup> A.C. Gaebelein, *Studies in Zechariah*, 8th ed. (New York: "Our Hope," 1911), 83. Gaebelein held the distinction of being the only contributing editor for both the "old" and "new" *Scofield Reference Bible*.

<sup>9</sup> Ironside, *Minor Prophets*, 380.

<sup>10</sup> Feinberg, *God Remembers*, 153.

<sup>11</sup> See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT*, 10:325.

between a near and a far-distant future event. Such is the case with Zech 9.7-17.

The Messianic destruction is depicted in vv. 7-8. In v. 9 the prophet presents Messiah riding in humility into Jerusalem on a donkey, a prediction which Christians believe was fulfilled by Jesus. In vv. 10-17 Zechariah returns to the time-frame of vv. 7-8, when the Jews will take possession of all of the Promised Land and Messiah's "dominion will be from sea to sea" (v. 10).

Most interpreters, even some premillennialists,<sup>12</sup> exclusively restrict fulfillment of Zech 9.11-17 to the Maccabean era in the 2nd century B.C. However, the Scofield Bible, both the old and new editions, correctly notes that "after the King is introduced in v. 9, the following verses look forward to the end time and the kingdom."<sup>13</sup> Zechariah 9.11-15 no doubt finds some fulfillment in the wars of the Maccabees. Yet vv. 13-17 bear such striking resemblance to chapters 12 and 14 that they must also depict the Messianic victory in which the Jews will participate.<sup>14</sup>

It therefore seems that nearly all of Zech 9-14 applies to the last days. A chronological scenario of the events of these chapters appears to be as follows:

1. The nations will attack Israel in the last days (12.2-3,9; 14.2,16).
2. Yahweh will deliver the remnant of Israel through His Messiah (9.9-10; 10.11; 14.4).

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<sup>12</sup> E.g., Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation* (Chicago: Moody, 1976), 1423.

<sup>13</sup> *New Scofield Bible*, 971; also Feinberg, *God Remembers*, 169, 172; Ironside, *Minor Prophets*, 394.

<sup>14</sup> Feinberg, *God Remembers*, 172.

3. Messiah will lead the invigorated Israelis in a crushing defeat of their neighbors (9.10-15; 10.3-7; 12.5-9; 14.14).

4. Israel will take possession of the entire Promised Land (9.5-7; 10.10).

## **Conclusion**

The Hebrew prophets predict that in the end of this age the land of Philistia will belong to non-Jews, sometimes called "Philistines." It appears that today's Palestinians will fulfill the prophecy of those people designated Philistines, and that they will have their independent state in the Philistine Plain. When the State of Palestine becomes established in its land it will be one more sure evidence that Almighty God has spoken through His prophets. Only He knows and controls the future.

A Day is coming when God will remember the Jews. In the midst of their greatest suffering ever, He will turn to them with compassion, sending His Messiah to deliver them from their enemies and to bring the glorious kingdom to earth. God will finally give Israel all of the Promised Land, including the Philistine Plain. Eretz Israel will stretch from the Euphrates River to the Wadi el Arish and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Arabian Desert.

But Yahweh is not only the God of the Jews; He is the God over all the earth. When His kingdom comes, He will remember not only Israel **but** all who have ever bowed before His authority and put their trust in Him. They will all be rewarded in that Day.

**In those days of universal peace and glory, Palestinians and Jews will live together as brothers and sisters in the Promised Land. Palestinians will be full citizens of Israel. They will be like a cherished clan in Jerusalem. And the Chosen People—the Jews—will fulfill their destiny to be a**

**blessing to the Palestinians and to all the peoples of the earth forevermore.**

## Appendix A

### EARLY HISTORY OF THE PHILISTINES

The Palestinians derive their name from the Philistines. The contention of this book is that the Palestinians ought to be granted the land of the ancient Philistines in which to establish their independent state. An objection to this proposal might be, “But the Palestinians aren’t the Philistines. They’re Arabs,” a response based on presumptions about ethnic origins. Appendix B reveals that the word “Arab” is not properly used as an ethnic term, but only as a cultural and linguistic one.

This excursus attempts to trace the early history of the Philistines. **Its two primary purposes are to establish that the Philistines were not a single ethnic people, but a heterogeneous group, and that their entrance into southwestern Palestine and the Sinai predates the Hebrews’ entrance into Canaan.** These two points affect the Palestinians’ claim to a portion of the land of Palestine.

#### The Origin of the Philistines

The origin of the Philistines remains uncertain. Their first mention in ancient literature or inscriptions is found in the early genealogical records of the Bible, in Gen 10.14 and 1 Chron 1.12. These two slightly ambiguous passages name the Philistines and the Caphtorim in a list of the descendants of Ham, one of Noah’s three sons. Most English versions render these two passages as if the Philistines came from the Casluhim. Such a reading contradicts two passages which expressly identify the Philistines as former Caphtorites: “the Philistines, the remnant of the coastland of Caphtor” (Jer 47.4)

and “the Philistines from Caphtor” (Amos 9.7). In addition, “the Avvites who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorites coming out from Caphtor destroyed them and settled in their place” (Deut 2.23 NIV). The description, “as far as Gaza,” apparently refers to that territory south of Gaza,<sup>1</sup> between Egypt and Canaan. This is evidence that the Philistines first lived south of Gaza.

Four divergent theories have emerged among biblical and secular scholars and archaeologists.

Some conservative biblical commentators allege that the Philistines are descendants of Ham because they are referred to in the list of Ham’s descendants (Gen 10.14). The Philistines are therefore reckoned as originally migrating from Egypt to Crete and then to Palestine. However, there is uncertainty whether these passages mean that the Philistines were descendants of the Hamitic Casluhites (supposedly of Egypt), or only that they migrated from their land. Moreover, this view is totally unsupported from secular historical records and archaeology, and many lines of evidence are against it.

Some scholars suppose that the Philistines were Semitic and originated in Mesopotamia. This theory is based mostly on the fact that the Philistines used many Semitic place-names. But archaeology continually reveals that upon settling in Palestine, the Philistines assumed the more highly-developed Canaanite culture and presumably adopted Semitic names then common to the region.

Many have thought that the Philistines originated solely from the island of Crete, widely regarded as the biblical Caphtor. They claim that the present texts in Gen 10.14 and 1 Chron 1.12 are glosses. That is, these have been altered from

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<sup>1</sup> Aharoni and Avi-Yonah (*The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, 51) place the Avvites between Gaza and the Wadi el Arish.

their original, which portrayed the Philistines as migrating from Caphtor, not Casluh. For example, the Jerusalem Bible translates both passages: “Caphtor, from which the Philistines came.” In this way these texts are harmonized with Jer 47.4, Amos 9.7 and Deut 2.23. But does this really settle the matter? The eminent 19th century geographer of Palestine, George Adam Smith, cautioned that “to have traced the Philistines to Crete is not to have cleared up their origin, for early Crete was full of tribes from both east and west.”<sup>2</sup>

Modifications of this last view are now widely held. Primarily on the basis of Mycenaean pottery artifacts found at Philistine sites, archaeologists and **most historians allege that the Philistines originated from the region of the Aegean Sea, migrated to Crete and from there to Palestine. Recent mounting evidence, however, has led others to conclude that most of the Philistines traveled overland from the area now known as western Turkey to Palestine.** Some think “Caphtor,” where the Bible says the Philistines came from, refers to ancient Cappadocia in central Turkey. Indeed, while the Masoretic Text has “Caphtor” in Amos 9.7 and Deut 2.23, the Septuagint, produced 1,000 years earlier, has “Cappadocia.”

Cappadocia is where the Hittite Empire was centered. There is considerable evidence that later Philistines attacked Egypt in the early 12th century B.C. after having conquered the Hittites in central Turkey. It was from the Hittites that the Philistines learned the secret of how to forge iron, a technology which later made them formidable foes against the Israelites.

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<sup>2</sup> George Adam Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, 26th ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1894), 169.

## **The Philistines: An Anachronism?**

Perhaps the biggest problem to resolve concerning the time of the migration of the Philistines is whether or not they appear as an anachronism in the Genesis account.

Most secular historians and archaeologists, as well as many biblical commentators, maintain that **the Philistines did not migrate to Palestine until the 12th century B.C., when Rameses III of Egypt recorded an invasion from the north. The Bible, however, narrates that the Philistines lived there 600-700 years earlier, during the time of Abraham and Isaac** (e.g., Gen 21.32, 34; 26.1,8,14-15,18; Exo 13.17; 15.14; 23.31). Most interpreters regard these Genesis accounts as anachronisms, i.e., references to that land or its people by the name of later inhabitants.

There are other examples of anachronisms in Genesis, where a later place name is employed in an earlier account. When this occurs in the Bible, both place-names are often given. An example is the city of Luz, which was changed to Bethel (Gen 12.8; 28.19; 35.6). But there is little or no evidence in the Bible of an anachronism being used for the actual people of a place, as “the Philistines.” In this case, the supposed anachronism in Genesis regards not only the identification of the land as “the land of the Philistines” (Gen 21.32, 34), but it also refers to “the Philistines” themselves (Gen 26.14-15, 18). In addition, Abimelech is twice called “the king of the Philistines” (Gen 26.1, 8). Moreover, not only are the Philistines mentioned, but three times they are said to have interacted with Abraham and Isaac. For example, the Philistines stopped up their wells in the 18th and 19th centuries B.C., long before secular authorities claim the Philistines migrated to Palestine.

To conclude that the people dwelling in the land at that time were not really Philistines appears to many Bible readers as an error in the text. For them, this would deny the divine inspiration and historical accuracy of the Scriptures. Some conservative expositors are not willing to make this concession to historians.

### **Gerar: Center of the Early Philistines**

The land of Canaan took its name from the descendants of Canaan who dwelt there. The word “Canaanites” often stands in the Hebrew Bible for the six or seven nations which derived their names from the descendants of Canaan. (See Gen 10.15-18.)

The Philistines are never included in any biblical lists of the Canaanite nations. This is because they were not descendants of Canaan and for a long time did not live in the land of Canaan.

It may be safely assumed that the writer of Genesis defines the general region of Canaan as it existed in the time of the patriarchs, c. 2,000-1,700 B.C. If mention in Genesis of the Philistines and their land is not an anachronism, it becomes apparent that at this early era the Philistines lived in a different part of the coastal plain, separate from Canaan, than in later centuries. Indeed, during the time of the patriarchs, “the territory of the Canaanite extended from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza” (Gen 10.19). The words, “as you go toward Gerar,” refer to the main caravan route southward from Sidon. At that time Gerar was probably a more notable city than Gaza in that region. Yet Canaan only extended to Gaza, not beyond, to Gerar. Thus, the Philistines could have lived only south of Gaza. This is implied in the Song of Moses, in which “the inhabitants of Philistia” are distinguished from “the inhabitants of Canaan” (Ex 15.14-15).

Gerar was a city located about eight miles southeast of Gaza. Abraham moved about in the region of Gerar in search of pasture for his herds. He came in contact with the Philistine “Abimelech king of Gerar” (Gen 20.2). (Scholars regard “Abimelech” as a kingly title, like “Pharaoh” or “Caesar.”) Abimelech invited Abraham to settle in “my land . . . wherever you please” (v. 15). Abraham accepted (Gen 21.22-34). Abimelech and Abraham soon consummated a peace pact in neutral territory, to the east in Beersheba.

Thus, neither Gaza nor Beersheba were Philistine cities during this period. After the pact, Abimelech “returned to the land of the Philistines” (v. 32). Then “Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days” (v. 34). Apparently, Abraham pastured his herds a long time in this Philistine territory between Gerar and Beersheba.

So, during the period of the patriarchs, the Philistines were located south of Gaza and west of Beersheba, with Gerar likely their chief city.<sup>3</sup> If the Genesis accounts of the Philistines are not anachronisms, it must be concluded that at least **during the period of the patriarchs, the land of the Philistines was smaller and farther south on the coastal plain than in later times.** It probably stretched from just south of Gaza to the usual border of Egypt—the Wadi el Arish.

Thus, Philistia would not have originally included the three major coastal city-states of Gaza, Ashkelon and Ashdod. While archaeology reveals that these three existed first as Canaanite cities, this evidence does not prevent the Philistines from having dwelt just to the south.

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<sup>3</sup> E.g., Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, 172.

## Sea Peoples?

Since the rise of archaeology in the last century, the subject of the origin of the Philistines has received much attention.

Near the end of the 13th century B.C., a great upheaval of civilization began in the Mediterranean world which continued into the 12th century. Vast disruptions of population occurred in the region of the Aegean Sea, including the Dorian invasion of the Greek mainland and the sudden collapse of the Hittite Empire, located in modern Turkey and Syria.

In the eighth year of Pharaoh Rameses III (reign: c. 1197-1158 B.C.), there was a notable hostile invasion by foreigners into the northern frontier of Egypt. To repel the assault, “the Egyptians exhausted their strength completely.”<sup>4</sup>

According to numerous inscriptions on the famed Mortuary Temple walls in Medina Habu, Upper (southern) Egypt, the invasion “consisted of five groups: p-r-s-t (Philistines), t-k-r (Sikel?), s-k-r-s, d-n-n and w-s-s. Suggested names for these groups of people are, respectively, Peleset or Philistine, Tjeker, Shekelesh, Denyen, and Weshesh.”<sup>5</sup> The groups other than the Philistines remain unknown. It is believed that because the Philistines were the larger of the five groups, the others became identified by that name after settling with them in the southwestern coastal plain of Palestine.

The Medina Habu inscriptions were first deciphered and published in 1881. The confederated attackers were called “Sea Peoples” because it was supposed that they crossed the Mediterranean Sea by boats and first invaded Egypt’s Mediterranean shoreline.

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<sup>4</sup> Aharoni, *The Land*, 246.

<sup>5</sup> Aharoni and Avi-Yonah, *Macmillan Bible Atlas*, 49.

Archaeologist Alassandra Nibbi claims that the designation Sea Peoples was premature. She maintains that close scrutiny of these inscriptions reveals that *ym* and “the Great Green” were mistaken for “the Great Sea.” The Great Sea was the common name for the Mediterranean Sea in antiquity.

### **Egypt’s Delta**

Instead, Nibbi convincingly argues that these references identify the marshland of Egypt’s Delta.<sup>6</sup> She claims that at that time Egypt’s northern frontier was the Delta, not the Mediterranean coast, making Egypt an inland country. When the Nile rose in season, the entire Delta flooded except for the settlements of the foreigners living on natural hills and artificial mounds. Viewed from a distance, they would have resembled islands.<sup>7</sup> Nibbi claims the “islands of the Great Green do not refer to islands in the Mediterranean or Aegean Sea, from which it is supposed that the Philistines came, but to those small isles in the Delta marshland.”<sup>8</sup>

These foreigners who lived in the Delta are often referred to in Egyptian inscriptions and documents as “Asiatics,” a general term for people from present Turkey. On the other hand, the Egyptians’ term “Northland” did not refer to Asia but to Lower (northern) Egypt, primarily the Delta.

Nibbi and others conclude that a confederation of people who came to be known as the Philistines settled in the less desirable Northland of the Delta, and from there they attacked the kingdom of Egypt.

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<sup>6</sup> Alassandra Nibbi, *The Sea Peoples and Egypt* (Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes Press, 1975), 3-4, 35-48.

<sup>7</sup> Nibbi, *Sea Peoples and Egypt*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Nibbi, *Sea Peoples and Egypt*, 4-5, 48-58.

## **Land Migration from Turkey**

Rameses III tells us that before their attack on Egypt, these Asiatics ravaged both Alashia and the Hittite kingdom.<sup>9</sup> He says, “no land could stand before their arms.” Furthermore, the famous city of Carchemish, in southwestern Turkey, is mentioned as one of the places they destroyed. Indeed, Carchemish was destroyed in about 1190 B.C.

Pictographs on the Medina Habu Temple include Philistine, ox-driven carts with heavy wooden wheels, loaded with women, children and possessions. The ox carts are identical to those still in use in Turkey and the Middle East today.<sup>10</sup> These pictures suggest that the Philistines invaded Egypt via the land bridge of Palestine rather than from the Mediterranean Sea, and that they first settled in the region prior to their attack.

But additional Egyptian evidence discloses that the Philistines existed in the area well before this attack. A long Karmak inscription shows that other attacks by Asiatics dwelling in the Delta had occurred throughout the earlier history of the kings of Egypt.<sup>11</sup> Many years before these invasions, Philistines were hired as mercenaries in the Egyptian army. It is known that Rameses III even placed some Philistines as guards on the northeastern Egyptian border.<sup>12</sup>

## **Dwelling in Palestine Before the Attack**

The Egyptian South Stela reveals that these Asiatics (Philistines) who attacked Egypt in about 1190 B.C. were afterwards driven out of the Delta and back into their own

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<sup>9</sup> Aharoni, *The Land*, 245.

<sup>10</sup> Nibbi (*Sea Peoples and Egypt*, 112) cites expert Yadin in *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands*, 339-40.

<sup>11</sup> Nibbi, *Sea Peoples and Egypt*, 73, 103.

<sup>12</sup> Aharoni, *The Land*, 246.

lands, where they were later defeated by Pharaoh's forces.<sup>13</sup> Their lands were identified as "the plains and hill-countries." This accurately describes southwestern Palestine, with its coastal plain and the hills of the Shephelah. The stela therefore confirms that Philistines had been established in Palestine well before their attack in the early 12th century B.C.

Assuming the widely-accepted latest possible date for the Hebrews' entrance into Canaan, about 1260 B.C, the Philistines would not have had ample time to possess their territory and become a formidable foe, as is presented in the books of Joshua and Judges, if they had not already been established there by the time of the attack on Egypt in 1190 B.C. during the reign of Rameses III.

### **Archaeology**

While considerable uncertainty remains, archaeological excavations at Ashdod show that the Philistines' initial settlement there "preceded their great invasion and subsequent settlement associated with the eighth year of Rameses III."<sup>14</sup> This is also confirmed in other Philistine cities, like Ashkelon.<sup>15</sup>

Archaeologist Trude Dothan is recognized as the leading authority on the Philistines. Through her monumental work, she, along with M. Dothan, has discovered that these Philistines invaded Egypt in more than the one wave recorded by Rameses III. Trude Dothan shows that an earlier wave of the supposed Sea Peoples arrived prior to the reign of Rameses III and settled in the Nile Delta and the Egyptian

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<sup>13</sup> Nibbi, *Sea Peoples and Egypt*, 81-82, 100.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Avi-Yonah, ed., *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 4 vols. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 1:125.

<sup>15</sup> Avi-Yonah, *Archaeological Excavations*, 1:125.

southern frontier of Nubia (modern Sudan).<sup>16</sup> Relatives in these colonies corresponded and visited each other.<sup>17</sup>

Yohanan Aharoni has been an professor of archaeology and a distinguished authority on the history of the land of Israel and its neighbors. He claims that after the Egyptians pushed the Philistines outside the Egyptian northeastern frontier, beyond the Wadi el Arish, the Philistines “seized control over the whole southern coastal region and enforced their rule upon the local Canaanite populace. Most of the Canaanite towns continued to exist, though under new leadership, and their residents doubtless were absorbed by the Philistines with the passage of time.”<sup>18</sup>

The major Canaanite cities which the Philistines took over were Gaza, Ashkelon and Ashdod.<sup>19</sup> If the Philistines had been situated south of Gaza since the patriarchs’ time, they had now expanded northward.

### **Later Philistine Expansion**

It seems that Pharaoh Rameses’ repulsion of the so-called Sea Peoples resulted in their being pushed outside Egypt’s northeastern frontier into southwestern Palestine. If Philistines already dwelt there, the defeated Sea Peoples must have assimilated with the already-established Philistine community. Perhaps this and other enlargements of the Philistine population became the occasions for expansion of the land of the Philistines northward. If the Genesis record is

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<sup>16</sup> Cited by Amihai Mazar, “The Emergence of the Philistine Material Culture,” *Israel Exploration Journal*, Vol. 35, Nos. 2-3 (1985), 102.

<sup>17</sup> Cited by G. Ernest Wright, “Fresh Evidence for the Philistine Story,” *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (September 1966), 71.

<sup>18</sup> Aharoni, *The Land*, 251.

<sup>19</sup> Aharoni, *The Land*, 248.

accepted literally concerning the Philistines, at some later period they must have pushed the neighboring Canaanites farther northward until the more familiar northern boundary of Philistia became established. Only then would the Philistines have possessed Gaza, Ashkelon and Ashdod.

The allotted inheritance of the tribe of Dan was the coastal plain from the Nahal Sorek northward to just beyond Joppa (Josh 19.40-46). But one of the Canaanite nations, the Amorites (Gen 10.16), pushed the Danites eastward into the hill country (Jud 1.34). For lack of space, much of the Danite tribe later migrated into present southeastern Lebanon (Jud 18). The conclusion must be that the Philistines lived farther south, not that these Amorites were actually the Philistines, as some have erroneously supposed. Yet during the period of Israel's judges the Philistines spread northward to establish themselves just beyond Joppa (Tel Aviv).

The settlement pattern of early civilization seems to substantiate further this Philistine expansion from south to north. Since Mount Ararat is located in Turkey, the descendants of Noah likely settled Canaan from north to south. The city of Sidon must have been where Canaan's first-born son, Sidon, settled (Gen 10.15). The southern extent of Canaan was probably less established, rendering it more vulnerable to an encroaching civilization like the Philistines.

## **Conclusion**

There remains much uncertainty regarding the early history of the Philistines. If the Genesis accounts of the Philistines are not anachronisms, their original migration into their land predates the Israelites' entrance into Canaan by several centuries. The so-called Sea Peoples of the 12th century B.C. seem to have migrated from the region of the Aegean Sea, or western Turkey, to southwestern Palestine and to have joined earlier

Asiatics who had settled there long before and become known as the Philistines.

Certain endtime biblical prophecies identify “Philistines” living in their ancient homeland. (See Chapters 11-14.) These people appear to be today’s Palestinians, a heterogeneous group like their forerunners, the Philistines. The Palestinians may be viewed as Philistines partially because of some genetic link, but mostly because their name derives from the Philistines. (See Chapter 5.)



## Appendix B

### WHO ARE THE ARABS?

Palestinians are among the 165 million people in 21 countries of the Middle East and North Africa who identify themselves as Arabs. Whatever people think of the Arabs will affect their attitude toward the Palestinians.

The purpose of this appendix is to correct two popular misconceptions concerning Arabs and therefore concerning the Palestinians. **First, the term “Arab,” as it is used almost universally today, does not identify an ethnic (racial) group but a culturally related people. Second, it cannot be established that the Arabs descended from Ishmael, the son of Abraham, so it is erroneous to call the Palestinians “Ishmaelites.”**

#### Use of the Terms “Arab” and “Arabia”

The word “Arab” has undergone many changes throughout its complex history. The first literary source where the words “Arab(s)” and “Arabia”<sup>1</sup> appear is the Bible, in the account of the reign of King Solomon in the mid-10th century B.C. (1 Kgs 10.15; 2 Chron 9.14). The first secular sources are Assyrian annals, dating to 853 B.C. **The Bible distinguishes the Arabs from the Philistines** (2 Chron 21.16), as well as from the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites and others of present Jordan and the Negev (e.g., Neh 2.19; 4.7; 6.1).

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<sup>1</sup> “Arabia” is used herein to denote only the Arabian Peninsula, and “Arabian” refers only to an inhabitant, or former inhabitant, of Arabia, having a long genealogy of descendants who lived in Arabia.

**The term “Arab” originally referred to the wandering nomads, also called Bedouins, of the northern and central Arabian Peninsula as early as the late second millennium B.C. “Arab’ was the designation that the nomads applied to themselves.”<sup>2</sup> The term distinguished the nomads from the permanent settlers of the desert oasis.<sup>3</sup> Many centuries later, Mohammed still refrained from calling the townsfolk of Mecca, Medina and other cities, Arabs. The Koran attests throughout that Mohammed applied the word “Arab” exclusively to the nomads.<sup>4</sup>**

The land where most of these nomads wandered came to be called “Arabia.” The name first identified the northern and central peninsula we call the Arabian Peninsula, comprised mostly of present Saudi Arabia. The word was eventually applied to the whole peninsula, and even beyond by outsiders. For example, in the mid-5th century B.C., Herodotus included the Negev, Sinai and land reaching to the Nile River in his designation “Arabia.” Centuries later, Roman historians Strabo and Pliny did likewise. The apostle Paul called the Sinai, “Arabia” (Gal 4.25).

The Arabs (nomads) were desert dwellers who raised camels and sheep, lived in tents and moved about seeking pasture for their flocks. Although the nomads of the northern and central Arabian Peninsula were Semitic, the word “Arab” originally identified only the nomadic way of life. Ironically, this meaning also describes the semi-nomadic life of Abraham.

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<sup>2</sup> Israel Eph’al, *The Ancient Arabs: Nomads on the Borders of the Fertile Crescent, 9th-5th Centuries B.C.* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982), 6.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Israel Eph’al, “‘Ishmael’ and ‘Arab(s)’: A Transformation of Ethnological Terms,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* (October 1976), Vol. 35, No. 4, 227.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History*, 4th rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 12.

He too lived in tents and wandered about seeking pasture for his animals.

The term “Arab” does not appear in any of the thousands of inscriptions from the southern portion of the Arabian Peninsula until the 3rd century B.C. Even then, it only identifies the nomads of central and northern Arabia.

Those dwelling in the southern portion of the Arabian Peninsula were sedentary people who enjoyed a rich civilization dating from the late second millennium B.C. Their land received more rainfall than the peninsula’s interior. They made it cultivable by developing an intricate dam and canal system. This region, later called Southern Arabia, was famous the world over for its spices and perfumes. Some of the Arabs (nomads) to the north became traders by developing caravan routes through the desert to transport these commodities northward.

Southern Arabian civilization collapsed in the third and fourth centuries A.D. Thereafter, the northern Bedouin tribes moved into southern Arabia; many settled permanently. Afterward, the term “Arab” gradually came to be applied to the whole population of the peninsula.<sup>5</sup> The entire Arabian Peninsula came to be called “Arabia,” and “Arab” was used interchangeably with “Arabian.”

### **Isolation of the Arabian Peninsula**

The Arabian Peninsula is separated from its northern neighbors by the wasteland of the Syrian Desert. On the other three sides are seas. The Arabian Peninsula is therefore isolated from the rest of the world. That is why the Arabic name for the peninsula is *Jazirat al-Arab*, meaning “the island of the Arabs.”

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<sup>5</sup> Eph’al, *Ancient Arabs*, 9.

Throughout its history, very little immigration of foreigners into the Arabian Peninsula has occurred. This is attributed to its geographical isolation, sparse rainfall, harsh climate, largest sand deserts in the world and the earlier reputation of the Bedouins for raiding.

The Arabian Peninsula has never been conquered by outsiders. The Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians and Nabataeans only made temporary advances into the fringes of northern Arabia. Caesar Augustus sent a military expedition across nearly the entire length of Arabia. It ended in disaster, indicating how insurmountable the task was for outsiders to conquer the peninsula.

Such an isolated, hostile environment has enabled the population of the Arabian Peninsula to remain unusually pure, ethnically. Thus, when the word Arab, or Arabian, became applied to the entire population of the peninsula, this was the first time that the term acquired an ethnic meaning. But the use of the term changed after the Arab conquests.

### **Arab Conquests**

In the 7th century A.D. Mohammed (Muhammed; A.D. 570-632) founded the monotheistic religion of Islam. He developed a political-religious community centered at Medina and Mecca in present Saudi Arabia. Adherents were called Muslims, or Moslems.

Following Mohammed's death from illness, tribal wars broke out as his successors sought to establish control over north and central Arabia. Their conquests spilled into the outskirts of Syria, then Palestine. In A.D. 636 the Arabs took control of all of Syria and Palestine, except Caesarea and Jerusalem, from the Byzantine Empire. These they stormed two years later. The populace in Palestine welcomed the Arab conquests as relief from Byzantine oppression.

Conquests of foreign lands solved economic problems for the Arabs. With their camels they were masters at hit-and-run raiding in the desert. They took booty from the rich Byzantine Empire: money, clothing, jewelry and women. (The Koran allows men to have up to four wives and an unlimited number of concubines.) The warriors distributed the spoils among themselves and sent one-fifth to the caliph (successor to Mohammed) in Arabia proper.

Twelve years after Mohammed's death, one-half million residents of the Arabian Peninsula had emigrated to these conquered lands in search of wealth and political power.<sup>6</sup> Within a century the new Arab empire included all of the Middle East and North Africa; it stretched from Persia (present Iran and Afghanistan) to Spain.

The Arabs ruled the new lands in the form of aristocracies. To govern successfully, they felt it necessary to remain separate from the indigenous population. Contrary to popular belief, for many years the Arab conquerors discouraged proselytization of the non-Arabian population to Islam. Historians therefore first identify the cultured arabization of these conquered peoples; their conversion to Islam followed years later.

### **Population Mix**

By the 8th century A.D. the term "Arab" had undergone another transformation. Most of the conquered peoples came to be called Arabs because they spoke the Arabic language and shared a common culture. Most had also become Muslims. All of these features served to unify the developing empire. From then until this day, the word "Arab" has designated a cultural group. Nevertheless, "in the cities of the Arab world of today—

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<sup>6</sup> Edward Atiyah, *The Arabs* (Beirut, Lebanon: Lebanon Bookshop, 1955), 35.

Cairo or Khartoum, Damascus or Bagdad—the sedentary and civilized Arab is still apt to refer to the nomads as, specifically, ‘the Arabs.’”<sup>7</sup>

Some peoples within Arabic countries have spurned the designation Arab, the Arabic language and Islam. These include the Kurds in northwestern Iraq, the Berbers in North Africa, the Christian sects of the Marionites in Lebanon and the Copts in Ethiopia.

In addition, even some Muslims in non-Arab countries do not call themselves Arabs. They do not speak Arabic. These include Turks, Persians (Iranians), Pakistanis and others.

In the conquered lands, intermarriage between the ruling Arabs and the local populations eventually resulted. But it is incorrect to deem the resulting population as ethnically Arab. Professor of the Middle East, Bernard Lewis, relates that intermarriage “produced a new governing class of administrators and traders, heterogeneous in race.”<sup>8</sup> Professor of Arab history, Philip Hitti, explains, “Through their intermarriages with the conquering stock they served to dilute the Arabian blood and ultimately to make that element inconspicuous amidst the mixture of varied racial strain.”<sup>9</sup>

But what about the Palestinian Arabs? In a historical analysis of Palestine published in 1920, the British Foreign Office concluded, **“the people west of the Jordan [River] are not Arabs, but only Arabic-speaking. . . . In the Gaza district they are mostly of Egyptian origin; elsewhere they**

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<sup>7</sup> Atiyah, *The Arabs*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, *Arabs in History*, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted by Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict over Palestine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 148.

**are of the most mixed race”** (emphasis added).<sup>10</sup> Arab historian John of Wurzburg claims that the Palestinians are “the greatest human agglomeration drawn together in one small area of the globe.”<sup>11</sup>

A further complication of the ethnic issue is the Turks, who are non-Arabs. Except for the brief era of the medieval Crusades, the Turks ruled Palestine and most of the Middle East from the 11th to the 20th century. Though mostly Muslim, Turks are not Arabs and do not speak Arabic. During this long period, the word Arab reverted to its original meaning, referring only to the Bedouins.<sup>12</sup> After the 1917 defeat of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, the word Arab regained its cultural meaning, which it maintains today the world over.

### **Negative Connotations about Ishmael**

Many people are convinced that the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict will never be resolved. One reason is that they think the Palestinian Arabs are Ishmaelites. They believe the Bible predicts that the Ishmaelites will never be at peace with the Jews. Indeed, in the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths, the terms “Arab” and “Ishmaelite” have been regarded as synonymous.<sup>13</sup> The concept of an unending rivalry between these two lines of Abraham’s offspring contributes considerably to many persons’ perceptions of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In the biblical tradition concerning Ishmael, there are several negative connotations which do not endear the

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<sup>10</sup> British Foreign Office publication No. 60, quoted by Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, 157.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, 156.

<sup>12</sup> Lewis, *Arabs in History*, 15.

<sup>13</sup> Eph’al, “Transformation of Ethnological Terms,” 225.

Ishmaelites to the Hebrews. God's covenant promise was to give Abraham a multitude of descendants through his wife Sarah (Gen 17.19-21; 21.12). Before Isaac's miraculous conception, however, Sarah prodded Abraham to have sexual relations with her maid,

Hagar, in order to produce an heir. He did, and Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. Thus, Ishmael was the product of Sarah's initial unbelief in God's promise.

God announced to Hagar concerning her son Ishmael, recorded in Gen 16.12:

“And he will be a wild donkey of a man,  
His hand will be against everyone,  
And everyone's hand will be against him;  
And he will live to the east of all his brothers.”

Some versions render this last clause either, “And he will live in defiance of all his brothers,” or, “And he will live in the presence of all his brothers.” The NASB presents both as alternate readings. The same thing is stated in Gen 25.18, and versions vary here too. C.F. Keil renders both passages to mean the same thing: the Ishmaelites settled in the presence of their Hebrew brethren and remained separate from them.<sup>14</sup> Thus, it may very well be a mistake to deduce from two ambiguous scriptures the idea of a perpetual rivalry between the Israelites and the Ishmaelites.

The problem is further aggravated by an apparent contradiction between the Koran and the Bible. In the Koran's brief portrayal of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of his son, Chapter 37 does not explicitly identify whether Abraham offered Isaac or Ishmael. The promise of Isaac's birth follows this narrative as if it were a reward for Abraham's obedience in offering Ishmael. Thus, “it is the most received opinion

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<sup>14</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT*, 1:220, 265.

among the Mohammedans that the son whom Abraham offered was Ishmael, and not Isaac, Ishmael being his only son at that time.”<sup>15</sup> This view is affirmed in Islamic tradition. During mid-summer, Muslims celebrate Eid Aladha (Arabic for “the Feast of Sacrifice”), commemorating Abraham’s near-sacrifice of Ishmael.

### **The Ishmaelites**

Upon Sarah’s demand, Hagar and Ishmael were forced to leave Abraham’s household and live in the wilderness. Yet “God was with the lad.” He grew up, became an archer and “lived in the wilderness of Paran” (Gen 21.20-21). This region was in the northeastern Sinai Peninsula. God promised to bless Ishmael, saying, “I will make him a great nation” (Gen 17.20; cf. 21.13, 18). Ishmael’s Egyptian mother “took a wife for him from the land of Egypt” (Gen 21.21). Ishmael eventually had twelve sons (Gen 17.20; 25.16). If they were by his Egyptian wife, as it seems, the original stock of the Ishmaelites was 75% Egyptian!

The names of Ishmael’s sons were preserved as names of places where they settled “by their villages, and by their camps, twelve princes according to their tribes. . . . They settled from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria” (Gen 25.16,18). Though its exact location remains unknown, Shur was apparently an Egyptian military outpost situated just outside Egypt’s northeastern delta. “The way to Shur” was the last segment of a major caravan route in the northern Sinai. It either came through or near the Wilderness of Paran, where Ishmael had settled.

The location of Havilah is uncertain. Various locations in the Arabian Peninsula have been suggested. However, these do

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<sup>15</sup> *The Koran: Translated into English from the Original Arabic*, tr. George Sale (London: Frederick Warne, n.d.), 438, n6.

not accord with 1 Sam 15.7, which states that “Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as you go to Shur, which is east of Egypt.” Historians agree that Saul did not wage war in the Arabian Peninsula. Furthermore, the tall Amalekites, descendants of Esau, lived in the Sinai and Negev. Soon following the Israelites exodus from Egypt, the Amalekites attacked them in the Sinai. All of this seems to rule out Havilah being located much farther east, in the Arabian Peninsula.

Jewish scholar Israel Eph'al is a distinguished authority on the ancient Arabs, one who is well acquainted with the literary sources. He claims that the virtually identical description in Gen 25.18 and 1 Sam 15.7 “enables us to locate Havilah definitely in southern Palestine although not pinpoint it.”<sup>16</sup> In agreement with Eph'al, some scholars claim that “Havilah” in 1 Sam 15.7 is a misspelling of a hill named “Hachilah,” which is located somewhere south of Hebron.<sup>17</sup> If so, the sons of Ishmael originally dwelt along a line extending from the northwestern border of Egypt, through the Sinai Desert and its Wilderness of Paran into the Negev, but not into the Arabian Peninsula.

On the other hand, Assyrian sources reveal that several of the names of Ishmael's sons were place names in North Arabia. No such names are known in the Negev and Sinai.

It is possible that all the sons of Ishmael first settled west of the Arabah—the depression which divides the Negev from present southwestern Jordan—and that their descendants later moved eastward to Arabia. Josephus writes that the Ishmaelites “inhabited all the country from Euphrates to the

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<sup>16</sup> Eph'al, *Ancient Arabs*, 234. Eph'al, however, regards the genealogy of Ishmael and others in Genesis as Jewish midrash (unhistorical).

<sup>17</sup> Tenney, *Zondervan Pictorial*, 3:48.

Red Sea.”<sup>18</sup> This would support that the Havilah of Gen 25.18 was located near Assyria, perhaps in northeastern Arabia.

Even if Josephus is correct, this does not mean that all of North Arabia was populated by Ishmaelites. Classical Arab genealogies do place the Ishmaelites in North Arabia but do not regard them as the original inhabitants, only as “arabized.”<sup>19</sup>

Distinguished New York Times correspondent David Shipler writes in his monumental work, *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land*:

There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that Ishmael was the forefather of the Arabs, nor was this a belief held by the ancient Arabs. The tribe of Ishmael disappeared early in biblical history, but the term Ishmaeli lived on, evolving into a designation of a desert people, and eventually extending to Arab peoples as a whole. The idea that Jews and Arabs were “cousins,” descended from Isaac and Ishmael respectively, was accepted in Jewish writings and included by Muhammad in teachings that became the Koran, and it is an article of strong conviction among many Muslims today. Many Jews also accept the assumption.<sup>20</sup>

## **The Ishmaelites in Judith and Jubilees**

All biblical mention of the Ishmaelites precedes the mid-10th century B.C.<sup>21</sup> Eph’al claims that “the biblical terms ‘Arabs’ and

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<sup>18</sup> Josephus, *Ant.*, I, xii, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Eph’al, “Transformation of Ethnological Terms,” 234. Josephus (*Ant.*, I, xii, 2; II, ix, 3; II, iii, 3) refers to the *Arabs* as Ishmaelites, which Eph’al attempts to dismiss (p. 233.).

<sup>20</sup> David K. Shipler, *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land* (New York: Times Books, 1986), 152.

<sup>21</sup> This is providing that Ps 83 was written before this time, as generally supposed.

‘Ishmaelites’ are not used concurrently” in the Bible and that this only occurs in extra-biblical sources, long after the term Ishmaelite(s) had become obsolete.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the Ishmaelites are not mentioned in any non-Jewish literature as a recognized, existing people until the Islamic era. Yet many civilizations of the intervening 1600-year period provide much information on the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula.

Mention of the Ishmaelites first reemerges in the Jewish apocryphal Book of Judith, written in Palestine during the 4th century B.C. The author, writing over 200 years after the fact, alleges that King Nebuchadnezzar “spoiled all the Children of Rasses, and the Children of Ishmael, which were against the wilderness to the south” of Babylonia, viz., the Syro-Arabian desert (Judith 2.23).

Scholars have recently claimed that the author of Judith probably used as a source the Babylonian Chronicle, which contains a passage corresponding to the above. In contrast to Judith, it identifies the persons plundered as A-ra-bi, the Babylonian word for “Arab.” The romantic author of Judith was fond of referring to present lands and people by their biblical names which were no longer in use. Accordingly, he has substituted the word “Ishmaelites” for Arabs. It is doubtful that by that time the Ishmaelites existed as a recognized people.

Jewish biblical scholar Doron Mendels heartily endorses the work of Israel Eph’al. He also shows that the Jewish intertestamental literature contributed to the erroneous belief that the Arabs are Ishmaelites. Mendels takes particular issue with the pseudepigraphical Book of Jubilees. It is a Jewish commentary on Genesis and Ex 1-12 produced in the late 2nd

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<sup>22</sup> Eph’al, “Transformation of Ethnological Terms,” 227.

century B.C. Mendels repudiates the Book of Jubilees' repeated assertion that the Arabs are descendants of Ishmael.<sup>23</sup>

## **Joktan**

Abraham descended from Shem through Eber (Gen 21.24). Philologists believe that the word "Hebrew" may derive from Eber. Eber had two sons: Peleg, from whom Abraham descended, and Joktan. Joktan fathered thirteen sons, many of whose names, along with those of his grandsons, were perpetuated as place names (Gen 10.30-31) in Arabia. Some can be identified with certainty in South Arabia. Classical Arabic genealogies trace Joktan as the progenitor of the Southern Arabians. Keil and Delitzsch comment that "Joktan is called Kacktan by the Arabians, and is regarded as the father of all the primitive tribes of Arabia."<sup>24</sup> Thus the sons of Joktan became established in Arabia long before the Ishmaelites could have arrived there.

## **The Sons of Keturah**

Eight lines of descent came from Abraham. Besides Ishmael and Isaac, Abraham had six sons by his concubine Keturah (Gen 25.1, 6; 1 Chron 1.32-33). Some of their names, and those of their sons, became place names in Arabia after Abraham sent them away from Isaac, "eastward, to the land of the east" (Gen 25.6). Of the sons of Keturah whose identity is certain, Dedan, Midian and Ephah can be located definitely in North Arabia.<sup>25</sup> The well-known Midianites usually lived on the eastern side of the Arabah, in far western Arabia. Moses fled

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<sup>23</sup> Doron Mendels, *The Land of Israel as a Political Concept in Hasmonean Literature: Recourse to History in Second Century B.C. Claims to the Holy Land* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1987), 147-51.

<sup>24</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT*, 1:171.

<sup>25</sup> Eph'al, *The Ancient Arabs*, 232.

from Egypt to Midian and stayed there 40 years; his wife was a Midianite.

Another son of Keturah was Shuah. Shuah was an international trade center near Mesopotamia. Eph'al shows that the sons of Keturah lived in North Arabia and were caravan traders of spices, gold, etc., from South Arabia.<sup>26</sup>

## **Conclusion**

To summarize, the word "Arab" originally meant a nomad or Bedouin. Throughout most of history the word "Arab" has identified a cultural, not an ethnic, group. Today, the word "Arab" is used almost universally to signify a person who speaks Arabic. Therefore, Palestinians are called Arabs, not because of ethnic derivation, but because they speak the Arabic language and share a common culture with other Arabic-speaking peoples.

The original sons of Ishmael were not Arabian; they were 75% Egyptian. If the Ishmaelites lived in northern Arabia, they could only have represented a small portion of the total population of the Arabian Peninsula. They seemed to have been subsumed by those who lived in the peninsula, since their name vanished after the mid-10th century B.C.

The Arabians, who conquered and ruled Palestine beginning in the 7th century A.D., cannot be reckoned as Ishmaelites. Neither can today's Palestinians. Instead, the Palestinians are a very heterogeneous group. Like the original Ishmaelites, the Palestinians are more Egyptian than anything else.

No prejudice should be held against the Palestinians, on the grounds that they are Ishmaelites who will remain in defiance

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<sup>26</sup> Eph'al, *The Ancient Arabs*, 233.

of their relatives, the Jews. Such an erroneous belief hinders resolution of the present Israeli- Palestinian conflict.



## Appendix C

### EXCERPTS FROM ISRAEL'S PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE<sup>1</sup>

The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed. Here they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance. Here they wrote and gave the Bible to the world.

Exiled from the Land of Israel the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and the restoration of their national freedom.

Impelled by this historic association, Jews strove throughout the centuries to go back to the land of their fathers and regain their statehood. . . .

In the year 1897 the First Zionist Congress, inspired by Theodor Herzl's vision of the Jewish State, proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national revival in their own country.

This right was acknowledged by the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, and re-affirmed by the Mandate of the League of Nations, which gave explicit international recognition to the historic connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and their right to reconstitute their National Home.

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<sup>1</sup> Laqueur and Rubin, eds., *The Israel-Arab Reader*, 125-28.

The recent holocaust, which engulfed millions of Jews in Europe, proved anew the need to solve the problem of the homelessness and lack of independence of the Jewish people by means of the re-establishment of the Jewish State, which would open the gates to all Jews and endow the Jewish people with equality of status among the family of nations.

The survivors of the disastrous slaughter in Europe, and also Jews from other lands, have not desisted from their efforts to reach Eretz-Yisrael, in face of difficulties, obstacles and perils; and have not ceased to urge their right to a life of dignity, freedom and honest toil in their ancestral land.

On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a Resolution requiring the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine. The General Assembly called upon the inhabitants of the country to take all the necessary steps on their part to put the plan into effect. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their independent State is unassailable.

It is the natural right of the Jewish people to lead, as do all other nations, an independent existence in its sovereign State.

ACCORDINGLY WE, the members of the National Council, representing the Jewish people in Palestine and the World Zionist Movement, . . .

. . . HEREBY PROCLAIM the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine, to be called Medinath Yisrael (The State of Israel).

WE HEREBY DECLARE that . . . the National Council shall act as the Provisional State Council, and that the National Administration shall constitute the Provisional Government of the Jewish State, which shall be known as Israel.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersion; will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on the principles of liberty, justice and peace as conceived by the Prophets of Israel; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of religion, race, or sex; will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, education and culture; will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and will loyally uphold the principles of the United Nations Charter.

We appeal to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building of its State and to admit Israel into the family of nations.

Our call goes out to the Jewish people all over the world to rally to our side in the task of immigration and development, and to stand by us in the great struggle for the fulfillment of the dream of generations for the redemption of Israel.

With trust in the Rock of Israel, we set our hand to this Declaration, at this Session of the Provisional State Council, on the soil of the Homeland, in the city of Tel-Aviv, on this Sabbath eve, the fifth of Iyar, 5708, the fourteenth of May, 1948.



## Appendix D

### RESOLUTION 242 (1967)

*The Security Council,*

*Expressing* its continuing concern with the grave situation in the Middle East,

*Emphasizing* the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security,

*Emphasizing further* that all Member States in their acceptance of the Charter of the United Nations have undertaken a commitment to act in accordance with Article 2 of the Charter,

1. *Affirms* that the fulfillment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles:

(i) Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;

(ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force;

2. *Affirms further* the necessity

(a) For guaranteeing freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area;

(b) For achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem;

(c) For guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every State in the area, through measures including the establishment of de-militarized zones;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to designate a Special Representative to proceed to the Middle East to establish and maintain contacts with the States concerned in order to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement in accordance with the provisions and principles in this resolution;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the progress of the efforts of the Special Representative as soon as possible.

## **Appendix E**

### **RESOLUTION 338 (1973)**

#### *The Security Council*

1. *Calls upon* all parties to the present fighting to cease all firing and terminate all military activity immediately, no later than 12 hours after the moment of the adoption of this decision, in the positions they now occupy;

2. *Calls upon* the parties concerned to start immediately after the cease-fire the implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) in all of its parts;

3. *Decides* that, immediately and concurrently with the cease-fire, negotiations shall start between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East.



## Appendix F

### GOD'S PROMISED REGATHERING OF THE JEWS

Religious Israeli Jews anticipate “the redemption of Israel.” By this term they mean the fulfillment of the biblical promises of God’s final ingathering (regathering) of the Jews to the land of their forefathers, the land’s increased fruitfulness and the restoration of Israel’s fortunes. These subjects are some of the most recurrent themes in the Hebrew Bible.

We have seen that Scripture repeatedly predicts that when God redeems Israel through His Messiah, Jews will acquire all of the remaining Promised Land. This includes the Plain of Philistia, Lebanon, part of present Jordan and Syria (Obad 19-20; Mic 7.14; Zech 10.10).

#### Israeli Expansionism

The U.S. has so heavily armed tiny Israel that it has reportedly become the fourth largest military power in the world. This military buildup, along with Israeli excursions across its borders, has caused Israel’s neighbors to worry about possible Israeli expansionism. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter sees the possibility of Israeli expansionism as a real, not imaginary, threat to stability in the Middle East.<sup>1</sup>

Right-wing Israelis advocate expanding Israel by annexing the occupied territories. Former Prime Minister Begin advocated expansionism throughout most of his career. Ariel Sharon often argues that Israel should seize more territory in

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<sup>1</sup> Carter, *Blood of Abraham*, 144.

Lebanon and Jordan. The former Israeli defense minister resigned from the Likud cabinet in February, 1990, in protest against Prime Minister Shamir's plan to negotiate a resolution of the Palestinian problem. Right-wing zealots like Sharon seek to recreate the greater Israel of David's and Solomon's monarchies. Some Jews and Christian Zionists think that the present return is that promised in Scripture, associated with the Messianic kingdom, and that Israeli Jews therefore have a divine entitlement to seize the remaining

Promised Land. This is a serious mistake! It is imperative that Christians distinguish the present return of Jews to Eretz Israel from the future regathering promised by God.

### **Distinguishing the Present and Future Returns**

In Chapter 3 it was pointed out that most past rabbis have taught that God's final ingathering of the Jews would be preceded by a spiritual awakening. Walter Kaiser, of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, correctly observes regarding isolated OT texts, "the question as to whether the return follows a national spiritual awakening and turning to the Lord or vice versa is difficult. Sometimes the prophets seem to favor the first, as in Deuteronomy 30, and sometimes it appears that the return precedes any general repentance, as in Ezekiel 36:1—37:14 and perhaps in Isaiah 11."<sup>2</sup> (See also Deut 4.29-30; 31.29.) An important question to ask is this: Does God require repentance before restoration?

We have already seen that God seemed to require a level of obedience to the Torah in order to give Israel the Promised Land. Considering the facts that Zionism has predominantly been a secular movement and that secularism continues to be the condition of the present State of Israel, it might be

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<sup>2</sup> *Bibliotheca Sacra* (October 1961), Vol. 138, No. 552, 309.

questioned whether or not God has created modern Israel at all! Indeed, some non-Israeli rabbis think that a pre-Messianic Jewish state is contrary to both Scripture and Judaism. Rabbi Yosef Becher explains:

According to our belief, we [Jews] are not allowed to have a state. . . . The [earlier] rabbis were against a Jewish state because it was not the will of the Almighty. When it is his will, it will happen in a supernatural way—with the coming of the Messiah, when all kinds of miracles will be wrought. . . . until then we must remain among the peoples [Gentiles]. It is safer for us. If we have a state we could bring catastrophe upon ourselves, even if that state is religious and especially if it is irreligious, as the present state of Israel is.<sup>3</sup>

However, the closing chapters of this book show that several prophetic scriptures implicitly require a return of Jews to Eretz Israel before Messiah’s coming in glory, and Eze 38.8 expressly declares it. Because God foretells a regathering does not necessarily mean He initiates or blesses it. Some of these passages reveal that God will redeem an Israeli nation already established in its land while simultaneously regathering all remaining Jews worldwide (herein called the “future return”). Such a view requires two returns: the present, partial return and a future, complete one at the coming of Messiah in glory.

Some Jews and zealous Christian Zionists, however, believe that the present return of Jews to the land of Israel is God’s **final** regathering predicted in Scripture. They do not distinguish two returns following the long Diaspora.<sup>4</sup> This

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Chapman, *Whose Promised Land?*, 193-94.

<sup>4</sup> The words “God’s promised regathering” refer herein to God’s final regathering, not the predicted return of the Babylonian exiles in the 5th century B.C. (e.g., Isa 44.28; 48.20; Jer 25.11; Dan 9.2).

erroneous view both excuses and prolongs Israeli ill-treatment of the Palestinians and fosters designs for their forced expulsion and for further Israeli expansionism. The main cause of this view is carelessness in considering the context of the pertinent biblical passages.

**The present return of Jews to the land of Israel is not described in Scripture as God's promised regathering.** The present and future returns can be distinguished in the following ways:

1. **The present return is partial.** In contrast, God's promised regathering will include every Jew throughout the world (Isa 43.5-7; 49.18; 66.20; Eze 36.10; 39.28).

2. **The present return has been a gradual process.** God's promised regathering will be accomplished in days, not decades, as the Gentiles bring the Jews back to the land (Isa 11.11-12; 60.9).

3. **The present return is a return in unbelief.** In contrast, the Jews of the future return will be called "the holy people" (Isa 62.11-12; cf. Zeph 3.9-10). Zionism is a secular movement. Furthermore, along with the rest of the world, Israel is predicted to apostatize (fall away from truth and righteousness) toward the end of the age (Deut 31.29).

4. **The future return will be preceded by the Jews' humility and repentance.** Unconverted Israeli Jews will begin to repent and seek God at the end of the age (Isa 59.20; Joel 2.12-17); Jews of the Diaspora will do likewise throughout the world (Deut 4.27-30; 30.1-5; Hos 3.4-5). Then God will gather the dispersed Jews back to the land of Israel (Isa 60.4, 9). Upon their arrival, their humility will become even more pronounced, after which they will realize total forgiveness (Zech 12.10; Eze 36.24, 32).

**5. The future return will be accompanied by an instantaneous conversion of the entire nation of Israel.** At the future return, Israel will be spiritually reborn in a day (Isa 66.8, 20). God will put both His Spirit and a new heart in every Jew, after which they will keep His commandments forever (Jer 31.31-34; Eze 36.26-27; 39.29).

**6. The present return is restricted chiefly to the historical land of Israel, whereas the future return will pertain to all of the Promised Land** (Isa 49.20; 54.3; Obad 19; Mic 7.11, 14; Zeph 2.7; Zech 10.10).

**7. The future return will begin during, or soon after, the Messianic conquest of the nations** (Isa 10.16-23; Jer 30.3-7; Dan 12.1; Zech 10.5-12).

**8. The future return will be accomplished by Gentiles escorting Jews back to their land. Many of these Gentiles will become their servants** (Isa 14.2; 35.10; 49.18-23; 66.20).

**9. God's promised regathering will commence the promised Messianic kingdom.** This is indicated by the context of many of the above passages.

### **Ezekiel 36-37**

Perhaps the most prominent passage which is mistakenly applied to the present return is Eze 36-37.<sup>5</sup> These two chapters provide some of the most vivid and cherished prophecies in the Hebrew Bible: "O mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people Israel; for they will soon come. . . . O house of Israel, . . . I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. . . . everyone who passed by . . .

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<sup>5</sup> E.g., Lindsey, *Late Great*, 49. Charles Lee Feinberg (*The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord* [Chicago: Moody, 1969], 207) shows otherwise.

will say, “This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden” (Eze 36.8, 10, 22, 24, 34-35).

The following features of the context of Eze 36 reveal that the regathering mentioned therein can occur only at the time of the Messianic kingdom, so that it does not apply to the present return:

1. It will be a complete regathering of “all of the house of Israel, all of it” (36.10).

2. There will be no more bloodshed in Israel and Jews will never again be bereaved of their children (36.14).

3. Israel will no longer hear insults from the nations nor bear any disgrace (36.15).

4. God will cleanse all Jews from their sins upon their arrival in the land of Israel, and He will enable them to keep His commandments (36.25-28; 39.29; Joel 2.28-32).

5. All Jews will thereafter worship God (36.11, 28, 38).

6. The nations will know that Yahweh is God (36.36; 37.28; 39.23).

Dispensational premillennialists persistently avow the necessity of interpreting biblical prophecy literally. Yet when it comes to Ezekiel’s valley of the dry bones in Eze 37.1-14, most interpret it allegorically to mean the present political revival of Israel.<sup>6</sup> Ironically, most church fathers and commentators have regarded this portion literally, as the classic OT passage on the resurrection from the dead.<sup>7</sup>

Also to be considered is the scriptural principle that God hides His face from Israel until the nation repents (Deut 31.17-

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<sup>6</sup> E.g., Lindsey, *Late Great*, 41, 50; Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible*, 1284.

<sup>7</sup> Feinberg, *Ezekiel*, 212.

18; 32.20-21; Isa 6.9-10; 30.20; 45.15; 54.8; 64.7; Eze 39.29; Hos 5.15; Rom 11.25).<sup>8</sup> God hiding from Israel further precludes the present return being His promised ingathering.

Even though God has turned away from Israel, He still desires that individual Jews repent and turn to Him. “Return to Me,’ declares the Lord of hosts, ‘that I may return to you” (Zech 1.3; cf. Mai 3.7). When the nation of Israel does begin to repent at the end of this age, God will turn to shine His face on His covenant people. Then He will finally gather all Jews to the land of Israel and bless them abundantly, just as He promised to their father Abraham.

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<sup>8</sup> Many dispensationalists claim that the 144,000 Jews in Rev 7.4 will evangelize the world during the Tribulation, resulting in the redeemed multitude of v. 9 (e.g., Lindsey, *Late Great*, 99-100). Some further suppose that these Jews will stir a spiritual awakening in Israel during the Tribulation. This interpretation is based solely on the juxtaposition of the two visions, a weak hermeneutic. Furthermore, it is contrary to a clear and recurrent theme in the biblical prophets: Israel will succumb to apostasy and idolatry in the latter days (Deut 31.29; Isa 29.13-14; 31.6-7; Amos 9.8-11; Zeph 3.18), as will the rest of the world (Mt 24.12-13; 2 Thes 2.3; 2 Tim 3.1-5).

## A SOLUTION TO THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT BASED ON HISTORY AND BIBLE PROPHECY

### THIS BOOK ADDRESSES

#### **Human Rights:**

- The Jews deserve the rights claimed in their Proclamation of Independence. So do the Palestinians.

#### **Nationalism:**

- The Jews are entitled to their state in Mandate Palestine. So are the Palestinians.

#### **History:**

- Israeli leaders claim their "ancestral land." Yet the Jews never possessed present Israel's southern coast.

#### **Defense:**

- Israel must retain the West Bank in order to provide secure borders.

#### **Economics:**

- A Palestinian state in the separate territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip will not succeed.

#### **Religion:**

- God will not give the Jews all of the Promised Land until they seek to keep the Law of Moses.

#### **Bible Prophecy:**

- The Jews will keep the West Bank. The Palestinians are destined to have their own state in the Plain of Philistia.

**Kermit Zarley** has been a student and teacher of the Bible for 30 years. His *The Gospel* and *The Gospels Interwoven* are now followed by this first book of a planned trilogy on Bible prophecy. Zarley is best known as an American pro golfer, a tournament winner on the PGA TOUR. In 1965 Kermit co-founded and helped lead the PGA TOUR Bible Study, which flourishes today.



**HANNIBAL  
BOOKS**