

The Return To The Land And The Jeremiah Factor

(Jer 16:14) Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

(Jer 16:15) But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.

There has been for some time a great interest among professing Christians in the establishing of the nation-state of Israel in its ancient place. Domestic and foreign policies of various nations reflect this zeal. Texts like JER 16:14-15 have inspired many Christians to praise God for the modern-day state of Israel's existence, assuming that it is the fulfilment of prophetic promises of their return. There are many problems with that religious theory but we will focus on only one in this meditation: to whom did the many "return" verses apply?

From the time of their exodus from Egypt, God had warned Israel of the consequences of their sins, which included their removal from their Promised Land. Within those warnings were words of hope that, under the right conditions, God would allow them to return to the land from their *diaspora* (exile and dispersion abroad). Consider these texts:

(Lev 26:40) If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me;

(Lev 26:41) And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity:

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

(Lev 26:43) The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes.

(Lev 26:44) And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God.

(Lev 26:45) But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.

(Lev 26:46) These are the statutes and judgments and laws, which the LORD made between him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.

(Deut 30:1) And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee,

(Deut 30:2) And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;

(Deut 30:3) That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.

Two things are highly significant from these texts: 1) Return to the land was conditioned upon a humble repentance, confession of their iniquities past and present, and full acceptance of God's justice against them; 2) These promises were clearly part of the Sinaitic Covenant that God made with Israel (which is otherwise known as the Mosaic Covenant, Law Covenant and now the Old Covenant). I will leave it up to the good judgment of the reader to determine if modern-day Israel met the spiritual requirements to return to the land according to God's promise of return, keeping in mind that the chief reason Israel lost that land in the past was owing to their belligerent unbelief that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ (MAT 21:42-45; LUK 21:22-24; 1TH 2:14-16). The unrepentance and unbelief of modern-day Israel is an obvious snarl for the Christian who waxes warm in his heart about that nation. It is largely a nation of antichrists (1JO 2:22). But there is something else of painfully obvious significance at stake: modern day unbelieving Jews/Israel not only are strangers to Christianity, *they have been cut out of the Law Covenant also, which was the basis of all "return" promises.*

There are a number of places in the prophets where God promised Israel a return to their land, especially concerning their captivity in Babylon (virtually every "return" prophecy concerns that). Ezekiel was a prophet around the time of the Babylonian captivity and prophesied occasionally of Israel's return (EZE 11:15-17; EZE 36:24; EZE 39:27-28). But the majority of such prophecies were by his contemporary, Jeremiah (JER 16:14-15; JER 23:3; JER 24:5-6; JER 29:10-14; JER 30:3; JER 30:10; JER 30:18; JER 31:8-10; JER 32:37; JER 33:7; JER 46:27; JER 50:18-19). It is no mean coincidence that when the seventy years of Israel's exile in Babylon expired (JER 29:10), the Holy Ghost noted:

(Ezr 1:1) Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, **that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be FULFILLED**, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

(Ezr 1:2) Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

(Ezr 1:3) Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.

This Jeremiah, often called, "the weeping prophet," who labored fruitlessly against a stubborn and rebellious generation was nevertheless singled out as the one to whom God revealed His divine timetable for release (JER 29:10), filled his prophecy with more promises of return than any other, and declared that the return from Babylon was the **fulfilment** of the "return" promises according to *his* words! *That* return from Babylon was super-important. Let Bible readers take note: there are NO more *such promises* of return to the land subsequent to that era of Ezra, Nehemiah, Zechariah, Haggai, etc. (the return and rebuilding program after the Babylonian exile).

But there is something else about Jeremiah: he was also the *only* prophet to whom God revealed a coming New Covenant. Here is that record:

(Jer 31:31) Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a **new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:**
(Jer 31:32) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:
(Jer 31:33) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.
(Jer 31:34) And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

The Apostle Paul confirms to us that these verses speak of the eternal salvation of God's elect by the bloodshed and death of Jesus Christ to take away their sins (HEB 8:7-12; HEB 10:11-18). Paul also shows us that the Law Covenant from Sinai was the first *testament* (HEB 9:15-20). Just before He died, *the mighty God* (for so Christ is called, ISA 9:6) made a *new testament* in His blood (MAT 26:28). He then died under that new testament/covenant, *not the first testament from Sinai*. Paul forcefully makes this argument to underscore the complete abandonment of the Law Covenant as an outdated will:

(Heb 9:15) And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.
(Heb 9:16) For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.
(Heb 9:17) For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

A testator is "One who makes a will; esp. one who has died leaving a will." This argument is profound in its simplicity. The only will/testament that counts is the last one a testator makes before he dies, and it disannuls all previous ones. That last will is in effect only when the testator dies and is the sole valid will. Therefore, that testament/will/covenant of MAT 26:28 is the only one that distributes its Maker's estate (which happens to be everlasting life and heaven) to His heirs. Remember, that promised New Covenant was expressly "...with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (JER 31:31). Israel/Judah have only one covenant by which they can positively relate to God: the New Covenant. Therefore, any promise of God to any Jew is absolutely governed by the terms of the New Testament, the previous testament having been made old and void. And note: **it was only in that Old Testament that promises of return to the land were found!** The legal update of God's will as expressed in covenant has voided all so-called prophetic support for the modern-day return of Israel to their ancient land *as the fulfilment of His promises*. Such promises were only to Israel under the Old Testament which has been disannulled. There is no return to earthly Canaan promised in the New Testament and there is no return to God's favor and forgiveness of sins but through repentance, faith and baptism unto

Jesus Christ (ACT 2:38-41). Returning to Moses' Law and/or Levitical sacrifices is futile.

This all leaves many Christians in a kosher pickle: unless they deny that the New Testament is of effect, they have no reason to believe that the return of Israel to the land and nationhood in 1948 is according to God's promises. Jeremiah may well become as unpopular with many Christians as he was then with many Jews (especially when they find out he also condemned decorating trees unto God, a chronic folly, JER 10:1-4).

The Jewish people's resolve to regather, reclaim and possess their ancient land should always have been only a matter of ethnic and political significance, as they, like many other strains of the human race have done throughout history, might assume the risks of displacing long-standing inhabitants of any land. This is the course of this world. Nations and borders are established by might moreso than by divine right. That professing Christian western civilization lent such strong support to the Jews' political aims in Palestine is evident, but why have western nations done so? If the support were merely based on perceived geopolitical advantages to western nations by "planting Isaac in the thick of Ishmael," the turmoil in that region between Israel and the surrounding Muslim culture, and its overflow of hatred towards the West should have been expected. Marshaling two historically fractious and opposed antichrist monotheistic cultures in the same region was certain to generate more heat than light. But it seems clear that there has been more than geopolitical issues behind Western thought. Many Christians have for decades, even centuries, operated under the false notion that there were still Divine promises to Israel of return to their land, and therefore to aid them in that pursuit is to curry favor with Almighty God. But the New Testament terminated that vain hope in favor of a better hope: Jesus Christ as king over a superior nation, a *holy nation*: the spiritual house which is His church (1PE 2:5-9), and a *lively hope of an incorruptible inheritance in heaven* by His resurrection (1PE 1:3-4). The pathway to this hope is not a return to *the land* but to *the LORD*: "But their minds were blinded...the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away" (2CO 3:14-16).

Further, the New Testament declares that as God cast away unbelieving Israel from expected kingdom blessings, He gathered in elect Gentile believers in Jesus Christ as "... a wild olive tree...grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree..." (ROM 11:7-24). Thus, Gentile Christians are no longer "...aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise..." (EPH 2:11-13). Therefore, if the retaking of Israel's ancient land by their assumed descendants in the Twentieth Century is according to promises of old, it would seem that Christians also have a divine right to that region. But true believers all "...desire a better country, that is, an heavenly..." (HEB 11:16), a heavenly Mt. Sion and heavenly Jerusalem (HEB 12:22) and consider themselves "...strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (HEB 11:13).

Bringing out these things is in no way "antisemitic" and any such insinuation is asinine. This is a matter of Biblical revelation rooted in the words of Jewish prophets and apostles. No dehumanizing of Jews can ever be justified, and the prayer of every godly Christian is that God's elect among them would be delivered from the bondage of their ignorance, even as Paul desired (ROM 10:1-4). But the fact is that too many Christians have spent too much time in their Scofield Bible footnotes and let his words change or substitute for God's words. Dr. Scofield was big on *dispensations*, concocting a clever, elaborate scheme of false prophecy upon their spurious foundations. The most important dispensation for his devotees is that they dispense with his footnotes and pray mightily for understanding about simple things like a New Covenant/Testament.