

BIBLE
PROPHECY:
The
ESSENTIALS

AMIR TSARFATI & BARRY STAGNER



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ISRAEL



Among God's most amazing miracles of all time is His preservation of the nation of Israel. Not long after Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, the Roman Empire sent armies to destroy Jerusalem and the temple, and the Jewish people were scattered abroad to the nations. For many centuries, the land was ruled by hostile foreign powers.

But beginning in the late nineteenth century, God worked in numerous ways through people and events to restore Israel as a nation. Jewish people began to return to the land, with their numbers increasing up through World War II, especially as Jews fled Europe during the Holocaust.

Then on May 14, 1948, the modern State of Israel was born. On a live radio broadcast, the first prime minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, read aloud the words of Israel's Declaration of Independence. Those who were familiar with Bible prophecy recognized the significance of what was happening. Time and again, the prophets

had predicted that there would come a day when the Jewish people returned to the Holy Land, and, at last, it was now happening. As God promised in Ezekiel 36:8-10:

You, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come. For indeed I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt.

Here we see God speaking fertility into this dead land in preparation for the masses of Jewish people who would return. And today, the land is bountiful and filled with life. God has brought back His people by air, on ships, and by land. This is not man's doing, but God's. Against all odds, the nation of Israel has returned to its homeland and prospered.

The fact Israel is a country today—after 2,000 years of the Jewish people having been scattered worldwide—confirms God is faithful to His promises. And just as He has been faithful to Israel, He will be faithful to us. He will fulfill His promise in John 14:1-3 to rapture us and take us to be with Him in heaven. It is because God is faithful that we can have hope, and that we can be certain about the wonderful future that awaits us.¹

1. Did God choose the nation of Israel or just the man Jacob?

Amir: The answer is simple: Jacob *is* Israel. When Jacob wrestled with the Lord in Genesis 32, the Lord changed his name to Israel. Also, all throughout Scripture, the tribes of Israel are called the sons of Jacob. Yes, God chose Jacob, and that is the same as choosing Israel.

The promises made to Israel were not for only one person, but for the whole nation. In the Bible, sometimes the nation of Israel is referred to as Jacob, and vice versa. You cannot separate them. The Lord said through the prophet Malachi, “I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob” (3:6). Even though since their early days the Israelites had drifted away from the Lord’s ordinances, God Himself confirmed that Jacob is national Israel.

Barry: When God made His covenant promises with national Israel, He also made promises regarding the land of Israel. In Genesis 17:8, the Lord said He was giving the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob—and not through Ishmael—as an everlasting possession. So not only did God choose the nation of Israel, He also chose the land that would become their national home.

Why would God give all the land of Canaan to one man? He didn’t—He gave the land as an everlasting possession to the Jewish people. In case you’ve wondered, the people of Israel began to be referred to as the Jews after the Babylonian captivity because the majority of the captives were from Judah. Today, not all Israelis are Jews in the sense of geographic homeland, but in a spiritual sense. The Jews, Israel, and Jacob are all references to the same people group, not a single individual.

2. Is the rebirth of Israel important to Bible prophecy?

Amir: Most definitely yes! God promised that in the latter days, He would bring His people back into the land. He said through the prophets that Israel’s banishment from the land was temporary

and that He would bring the people back because He promised the land to the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. In Jeremiah 31:35-36, the Lord said that when the sun, moon, and stars stop giving their light, then you will know that Israel is no longer a nation in His eyes.

We also know from Zechariah 12:10 that God has brought His people back into the land because He is going to save them. A time is coming when they will “look on [Him] whom they pierced,” and “they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”

We also know that in the future, there must be a third temple on the Temple Mount so that the antichrist can commit the abomination of desolation. For that to happen, Israel must be in possession of all of Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount. The prophet Amos said that when Israel comes back into the land, the people will never be uprooted from it (Amos 9:14-15), and we have seen this be fulfilled. Israel has been attacked repeatedly since it became a nation in 1948, and yet the mighty hand of God has been a strong tower for His people and protected them.

Israel must be back in the land for all these things to happen.

Barry: I would say the rebirth of the nation of Israel is probably the most important sign of the last days. It set the stage for the end of the time of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24), which will conclude with the rapture of the church and opens the door for the seventieth week of Daniel to be fulfilled.

Israel has been referred to by prophecy teachers as God’s time-piece. You cannot understand last days if you do not see Israel as central to that time period. In fact, the rebirth of Israel and the regathering of the Jews back into their national homeland are integral to the integrity of Scripture. If the modern nation of Israel has

nothing to do with the Israel of the Bible, then passages like Amos 9:14-15 are either unfulfilled, allegorical, or untrue. Any of those interpretive approaches to the prophecies concerning the nation of Israel cause major problems for the other prophetic passages in Scripture. What does it mean for someone to make a covenant for seven years and then break it at the midpoint (Daniel 9:27)? What allegorical application can you derive from that? What is the abomination of desolation that Jesus spoke of that requires a Jewish temple in Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15)? The list goes on and on. Thus, the presence of the modern state of Israel is essential to interpreting all prophecies concerning the last days.

The most significant of all the reasons that modern Israel is a fulfillment of prophecy is what we are told in Daniel 9:24: “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city.” We can now look back and see the three divisions of the 70 weeks happen exactly as they were described in Scripture. The word “weeks” actually means “sevens,” and we see that there are 70 “sevens” determined for Daniel’s people, the Jews, and the holy city, Jerusalem. We can see that the sevens are periods of seven years, and Daniel was told they would occur in three parts: seven weeks, then 62 weeks, then one week—with that final week being the seventieth.

The first seven weeks refer to the time from Artaxerxes’s decree for the Jewish people to return to their land to when they rebuilt Jerusalem. The next 62 weeks spanned the time from the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the day of Jesus’ triumphal entry, when He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and was recognized as the one who came in the name of the Lord. If the first seven weeks had a literal fulfillment and the next 62 weeks also had a literal fulfillment, then the seventieth week must also have a literal fulfillment.

Israel is God’s timepiece, and the rebirth of the nation began the

march toward the seventieth week of Daniel—or the tribulation—which has yet to be fulfilled.

3. What did Paul mean when he said “all Israel will be saved” in Romans 11:26?

Barry: Let’s look at the bigger context first. In Romans chapter 11, the apostle Paul wrote about God’s temporary rejection of national Israel. He posed this question in verse 1: “Has God cast away His people?” He then answered with an emphatic “Certainly not!” Later in the chapter, Paul taught about the grafting in of the Gentile branches to the root of the Jews. This implies that the root is necessary for the existence of the branches, or the predominantly Gentile church.

Paul then said that this blindness, in part, has happened to the Jews until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in—then all Israel will be saved (verses 25-26). This tells us that after the church age, which will end when the rapture takes place, all Israel will be saved—that is, during the tribulation. That’s the wonderful news. The sad part is that according to Zechariah 14:8, two-thirds of the Jews will die during the tribulation, and the remaining one-third (that constitutes all Israel) will be saved.

Again, this underscores the necessity of there being an Israel for “all Israel” to be saved. The covenant people who were promised a Holy One who would save them, as stated in Zechariah 9:16, have yet to see this fulfilled. But with the Jews back in their national homeland and in possession of their capital city, this is possible.

Amir: It is a tragic that two-thirds of Israel will die in unbelief during the tribulation in much the same way that the generation that

made the exodus out of Egypt died in the wilderness in unbelief. This also reminds us that there is but one Savior of the Jews and the Gentiles, and that is our Lord Yeshua, who came to the Jews first, through whom the Messiah came into the world.

Like the apostle Paul, I have a great burden for my countrymen (Romans 9:1-5), desiring that they would come to know the Holy One of Israel as their Savior. But I also know that it is their suffering that Zechariah speaks of that will lead them to the place where they finally see that the One who was wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities is the One whom they rejected and pierced.

In Zechariah 13:9, God said, “I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘This is My people’; and each one will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

The one-third who will go “through the fire” are the Jewish people Paul spoke of in Romans 11:26 when he wrote that “all Israel will be saved.”

4. Are the annexation efforts in Israel today found in Bible prophecy?

Amir: First, we must keep in mind that the return of the Jews to their land was prophesied. The Lord promised this through the major and the minor prophets, including in Ezekiel chapters 36–37. The fact Israel is in the land again is why we believe that the events of Ezekiel 38–39 are around the corner. God gave this land to the Jews and said He would bring them back, and that includes the Jewish possession of Jerusalem.

Because of God’s promises, there is absolutely nothing unbiblical about having parts of the land of Israel—the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people—being declared as belonging to the state of Israel. This is biblical. I personally don’t see any problem with the annexation efforts. In fact, I watched an interview recently with a Saudi journalist who said, “I believe that the Israelis should move ahead with annexation.”

The Palestinians have had multiple opportunities to get whatever land they needed, and they missed all of them. The world needs to face the reality that Israel is a sovereign nation, and all of Israel is sovereign Israeli territory. Some of the Arab states today are favoring Israel in the Middle East conflict simply because Israel is now important to them in the fight against Iran.

Bible prophecy said the Jewish people would come back into their land—all of it. One of the positive results of the pandemic and the ethnic tensions and riots around the world is that they have spurred a remarkable interest among Jews worldwide to move to Israel. Recently, the Israeli government has received immigration inquiries from more than a quarter of a million Jews from America, Australia, France, Germany, and other places.

While the annexation efforts are not *directly* related to a specific Bible prophecy, they fit within God’s prophetic promises to bring the Jewish people back to their homeland.

Barry: The fact that the annexation efforts most often in question are biblical Judea and Samaria—called the West Bank by many today—indicates these regions are part of God’s promised homeland for the Jews. That’s why it is important for Christians to recognize these areas as being part of Israel.

Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Israel, and there’s no way to come to any other conclusion after a careful study of Scripture—especially

the prophetic portions of Ezekiel and Zechariah. These prophets were clear about the geography of last days and the return of the Jewish people to the land that God had given them.

As Amir said, because of all the chaos happening in the world, Jews who live all over the globe are saying, “Maybe it’s time to go home.” The Bible said this would happen, and we’ve seen this immigration taking place for more than 100 years. With the recent major push for the Jewish people to make *aliyah* (“ascent to Israel”), we cannot help but realize we are getting closer to the seventieth week of Daniel. The concerns people are expressing about Israel’s annexation of Judea and Samaria may have prophetic significance in connection with the prophecy about Israel becoming an increasingly burdensome stone to the international community (Zechariah 12:3).

5. Where are the lost tribes of Israel, and which tribes are currently in Israel today?

Barry: The short answer is that all of them are now in Israel—none are lost. The rest of the answer is that when people talk about the “lost tribes,” usually they are referring to the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel, who were taken captive and carried away by the Assyrians. British Israelism erringly teaches that Anglo-Saxons are actually the Jews, and Mormons believe they descended from Ephraim and Manasseh. Both views are incorrect. The reality is that the idea of lost tribes is a misnomer. God doesn’t lose track of anything, including who and where His chosen people are. He knows exactly where they are, and He has been gathering them back into their homeland for more than a century. If God were to lose track of anyone or anything, we would have great reason for concern. But thankfully, that isn’t the case.

We should also keep in mind the multitude of instructions God gave to Israel, forbidding His people to intermarry with those from other nations. He wanted them to maintain their national identity and practices, which distinguished them from other peoples of the world. Looking back, we can now see how important this was. Through the ages, pockets of Jews scattered all across the globe maintained their Jewish identity and kept meticulous records of their ancestry. This allowed them, over the past 2,000 years, to maintain their national identity even though they did not have a nation to call their home until 1948.

Virtually all other ancient cultures that were captured or driven from their homelands were assimilated into the cultures and nations that conquered them. The only exception is God's chosen people. By maintaining their identity, their future homecoming became possible.

Amir: I believe that all the tribes are out there, and that predominately it's the tribe of Judah and the Levites (with the surname Cohen) that are back in the land right now. However, God is bringing back people from the tribes of Dan and Manasseh. We are seeing Jewish people who are not from the tribe of Judah come back from the diaspora from places like India, Ethiopia, and other countries in Asia and Africa.

We know the 12 tribes still exist because according to Ezekiel, during the millennial kingdom, the land will again be divided by tribes. All the tribes will receive an inheritance, and Joseph will be given a double portion. Ezekiel 48:29 says, "This is the land which you shall divide by lot as an inheritance among the tribes of Israel." We know the context of this passage is the millennium because Ezekiel 40–48 gives exhaustive and specific details about that era—a time during which healing waters will flow from the threshold of

the temple, according to Ezekiel 47:1. These healing waters are consistent with what Zechariah 14:8 records about the return of Jesus to the Mount of Olives and the “living waters” flowing from Jerusalem and bringing life back to the Dead Sea.

Every tribe is named in Ezekiel 48, as are two of Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. And specific geographic boundaries are listed in that chapter, which again requires every tribe’s presence at that time.

6. Do the blessings and curses of Genesis 12:3 still apply today?

Amir: Yes. God promised that through Abraham, all the families of the earth would be blessed. That means families today are still being blessed through Abraham. In what way? Through the One who came from Abraham’s grandson Jacob, who had 12 sons, including one named Judah. Through the lineage of Judah—the tribe of kings—came the Messiah, Yeshua, who is still a blessing to people today. If the blessings part is still true, then the curses part also has to be true. Remember, Jacob was renamed Israel, the Jews are the chosen people of God, and land was given to God’s chosen people as an eternal inheritance.

Look at how God has brought His people back into the land as He promised, and how He has protected them through the many times they have been attacked since 1948. The plans of Israel’s enemies have been cursed. On the very day the Jewish people declared themselves to be a nation again, they were attacked by five Arab nations with trained armies, guns, tanks, and planes. Their goal was to wipe out Israel right from the start. What was the outcome of that war? Behold Israel today, and you will see. The enemies who

attacked did not prevail, nor did they in 1967 or 1973. They could not prevail because those who curse Israel will themselves be cursed. Yes, Genesis 12:3 is still in effect today.

Barry: Amen! The key word in this promise is “all,” which, as Amir pointed out, gives us the scope and duration of God’s promise. Genesis 12:3 declares that through Abraham “*all* the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

One interesting aspect of this promise is that when the Lord said, “Whoever curses you I will curse,” He used two different Hebrew words that are both translated “curse” or “curses.” The first Hebrew word means “to trouble,” and the second means “to lightly esteem,” or to “think little or nothing of.” That means the Lord will trouble those who think little or nothing of Israel.

This is one of many reasons that Replacement Theology is so dangerous and heretical. As Amir pointed out, if the positive part of the promise is still true, then the negative part must be true as well. God has promised to trouble those who think little or nothing of His chosen people—through whom He would send the One who would be a blessing to all the families of the earth.

Yet additional evidence that confirms the negative part of Genesis 12:3 is still true is a prophecy that appears in Zechariah 12:3, which describes what will happen during the tribulation period. There, we read that those who come against the Jews “will surely be cut in pieces.”

Back when Hamas terrorists in the Gaza Strip attacked Israel in 2014, they complained, “Their God changes the paths of our rockets in mid-air.”² They might be right! God is for Israel, and He who watches over Israel “shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Psalm 121:4).

When you mess with the people of Israel, you are messing with the God of Israel. Genesis 12:3 is still true today.