

Jacob's Trouble – past or future

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A Watchmen from Jerusalem Teaching

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Jacob's Trouble – the question

Why should believers pray for and help Jewish people in the nations to make *aliyah* – to return to the land of Israel – if two-thirds of them are going to get slaughtered there in "Jacob's trouble" (*Jer. 30:7*)?

There is a current teaching in many churches and ministries that God is gathering His people back to the land and then will allow a second Holocaust – some say it will even be worse than the first – to befall them. The basis of this teaching is the belief that once the Church is raptured, then a seven year tribulation period begins (the "pre-trib rapture" teaching). At the start of this seven year period, the Anti-Christ is revealed. He signs a peace treaty with Israel, even allowing them to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. Then in the middle of this period, after three and a-half years, he breaks his treaty with Israel and starts a war against them, in which two-thirds of them die. According to this teaching, this time period is referenced in Scripture as 'Jacob's trouble', a term found only in *Jeremiah 30:7*.

Why does God allow this? It is being taught that even after He brings His people home, they remain stubborn and stiff-necked, refuse to repent, or bow the knee to Jesus as their Savior. After, presumably, millions die, whoever remains alive finally accepts Christ and becomes a Christian. At the same time, the raptured Church is in heaven enjoying the marriage supper of the Lamb as the Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. While there are many variations on the details of this teaching, this reflects the basic outline.

At *Intercessors for Israel*, we have often been asked why we pray for Jews to return to Israel if this is what the future holds for them. We can and do pray for them to return, for this teaching lines up with neither God's Word nor His nature.

We agree with the Apostle Paul that all of us "know in part, and we prophesy in part" (*1 Cor. 13:9*), and we see in a mirror dimly, not seeing the whole picture as clearly as we would like (*1 Cor. 13:12*). When God's Word prophesies, we see it clearly only after it comes to pass, and then we can say with the Apostle Peter, "this is that which was spoken by the prophet" (*Acts 2:16*). Based on that pattern, we can see that "Jacob's trouble" and the "two-thirds cut off" have already happened.

Jacob's trouble and the two-thirds cut off: context, context, context

When interpreting prophecy it is most important to look at the context of the verse or section before deciding what it means. Second in importance is to interpret the prophecy literally. Messiah Yeshua used the prophetic word literally – and we trust that He knows better than anyone else how His Word is to be handled. Yet there are prophetic revelations of a non-literal nature, and we will look at this later on.

There are two verses most often used to 'prove' that just before the Lord returns another holocaust awaits the children of Israel. While there are other verses, these two are the main sources feeding this particular teaching stream. As we will see, both of them have already been literally fulfilled.

Jeremiah, in chapters 30 to 33, speaks of the last days of this world system. At least nineteen times in these four chapters God either says or indicates He will bring Israel back to its land, bringing Jacob's descendants out of captivity/exile and settling them in their God-appointed homeland. The proof that this restoration occurs in the last days is found in the final verse of *Jeremiah 30*: "The fierce anger of YHWH shall not return until He has done it, and until He has fulfilled the purposes of His heart. In the latter days [lit. in Hebrew = 'the last days'] you shall

understand it." (*Jeremiah 30:24*)

As already mentioned, *Jeremiah 30:7* is the only place in Scripture where the phrase "Jacob's trouble" appears. Here it is in context, "And these are the Words that YHWH spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus says YHWH, We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see whether a man is giving birth? Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, like a woman in labor, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of **Jacob's trouble**; but he shall be saved out of it." (*Jeremiah 30:4-7*)

Chapter 30 continues, identifying the overall timeframe for this to occur: "For it shall be in that day [the time of Jacob's trouble], says YHWH of Hosts that I will break his yoke from your neck and will burst your bonds. And strangers [gentiles] shall no longer enslave him, but they shall serve YHWH their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up to them. And you, My servant Jacob, do not fear, says YHWH. Do not be terrified, O Israel. For behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid." (*Jer. 30:8-10*)

Often in biblical prophecy, there is a partial fulfillment while we wait for the final fulfillment. The overriding evidence of end-time prophecy is that Israel as a nation returns to the land in unbelief and then, in the land, God reveals Messiah Yeshua to them. So the scripture above talking about Israel serving God and David – most likely David's greater Son, Yeshua – are still to come to pass, although the growth of the Israeli Messianic Body since 1967 is nothing short of miraculous.

According to those verses in Jeremiah, "Jacob's trouble" occurs **before** Israel comes back to the land and **before** Israel becomes an independent nation again. Israel became a nation again in 1948. Did anything occur to Jacob's descendants before 1948 that could qualify as "Jacob's trouble"? While some believe that the whole 1,900 year exile can be seen as Jacob's trouble – and there can be a good argument made for this – still the event that seems to be the climactic fulfillment was the demonically inspired Nazi Holocaust. Jacob's trouble has been fulfilled.

As noted briefly before, there can also be a future fulfillment, based on a spiritual principle of 'now-and-not-yet' that applies to some prophetic passages. That principle, if we are being honest with the text, would indicate that *if* there was another wave of anti-Semitic hatred leading to the deaths of many Jews, it would happen in exile. Jews who refuse to return to Zion are – and will continue to be – in much more danger than those Jews who have come home.

This is being written at the end of the summer of 2015. Here is a question to the Jews still in exile, of which most are in North America and Europe. Do you really trust Obama, Merkel, Cameron, et al, to have your back? Thank God that PM Stephen Harper of Canada is a blessed exception among leaders! But the exception proves the rule. Should the Jewish people trust their children and grandchildren to compromising, appeasing politicians, some of whom will not even mention 'Islam' and 'terrorism' in the same breath? Or would it not be much better to have someone like Netanyahu, with all his faults, and the miraculously resurrected Israeli army (*Ezek. 37:10*) looking out for them and their future in a nation restored by God according to His promises?

The nasty "two-thirds" verse

The second verse often used by those who believe in the teaching under discussion is *Zechariah 13:8-9*:

"And it shall be in all the land, says YHWH, two parts in it shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, YHWH is my God."

IFI's annual Intercessors Prayer Conference in January 2015 included a message on *Zechariah 12-14* that explained why its middle chapter refers to the period around the Lord's first coming and not to the one for which

we are all still waiting. In short, *Zechariah 12* ends with all Israel being saved, as they look upon the One whom they have pierced and mourn for Him as if He were their precious only child (*12:10*). In the Hebrew, the word in the KJV translated "upon", should be "to/toward" as with spiritual sight. After all, if all Israel is saved when they see Yeshua return, then we are saying that gentiles get saved by faith, but Jews get saved by sight. Nowhere in the Bible, and especially not in the New Testament, are we taught this. In fact, Paul is emphatic that the gospel is meant for the Jews as well as the gentiles (*Rom. 1:16*) and that all are saved by grace through faith – an amazing gift from God (*Eph. 2:8*).

Then *Zechariah 13:1* clarifies how all Israel will be saved, prophesying, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the people of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." This fountain was opened at the Cross, which for Zechariah was still over 400 years in the future. But, if this was not fulfilled when Yeshua died, how have so many Jews been saved over the centuries since then? And if Jews have not been saved, how did gentiles ever hear the gospel? Recall that there were no gentiles at all in the Church until *Acts 10*. We thank God; this fountain was opened and remains open today.

The other proof that *Zechariah 13* has already been fulfilled is found in *verse 7*: "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man who is My companion, says YHWH of Hosts; strike the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. And I will turn My hand on the little ones."

Compare this to what Yeshua said as He and His disciples went out to the garden of Gethsemane: "All of you will be offended because of Me this night. For it is written, 'I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad'." (*Matt. 26:31; cp. Mark 14:27*) So Yeshua Himself said this very verse would be fulfilled even before He went to the Cross.

The very next verse back in Zechariah says, "And it shall be in all the land, says YHWH, two parts in it shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left in it." (*Zech. 13:8*) Did anything like this happen in the same general time period that this chapter is referring to? Remember, Yeshua wept over Jerusalem because He knew what was soon to come. "And as He drew near, He beheld the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known, even you, even at least in this day of yours, the things for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come on you that your enemies will raise up a rampart to you, will surround you, and will keep you in on every side. And they will tear you down, and your children within you, and will not leave a stone on a stone because you did not know the time of your visitation'." (*Luke 19:41-44*)

The *Trumpet Sounds* website has [this](#): "... in the tragic massacres at the hands of the Romans in AD 70 and 132, the total population of Jews declined from 4.5 million to 1.5 million. Indeed, this prophecy was fulfilled exactly as Zechariah had foretold. Two-thirds of the Jewish people died in this ghastly purge, and one-third was left alive, to be scattered among the nations."

This article goes on to state that many other Christian and even some Jewish writers and historians have said this, listing a few: Matthew Henry, Keil & Delitzsch, John Walvoord, John Wesley and Josephus.

Even though Gog and Magog and Armageddon are other end-times events that do not apply to what we are clarifying here, note that in the Gog and Magog battle (*Ezek. 38-39*), those who come against this land are the ones in trouble with God! And Armageddon can be compared with *Zechariah 14*, since this appears to be the final battle as the Lord Yeshua comes to set up His Kingdom on earth. In fact, let us look briefly at this.

And His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives

Zechariah 14:1-4 describes the time period just before the Lord Yeshua's return. While these initial verses parallel what is said about the nations coming against Jerusalem in *Chapter 12*, here the intensity increases until the climax of His glorious return. *Chapter 12* is taking place today – diplomatically and in a covert way, and physically as terror attacks increase. Almost all nations are challenging Israel's right to all of Jerusalem. As they go from this diplomatic stance to a more active military stance, actually sending troops to thrust Israel out of the land which God has promised to them, God will provide both divine and human protection (*12:4-9*). The human, earth-bound protection will be a result of God continuing to use the Israeli army as a mighty fighting machine (*Isa. 41:14-16; Jer. 51:20; Ezek. 37:10; Mic. 4:11-13; Zech. 10:3-8, et al*). The Hebrew translated 'governors' in

12:5-6 is *allufim*, which is the modern Hebrew word for 'generals', as in "army generals".

Yet there comes a time when God will allow Jerusalem to be divided again for a short period. "For I will gather all nations to battle against Jerusalem; and the city shall be taken, and the houses plundered, and the women raped. And half of the city shall go into exile, **and the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.**" (14:2) This verse was hard to understand until recently. How do the nations take the city of Jerusalem – yet only take half of it? Does this not describe exactly what the world wants in pressing for the creation of a Palestine with eastern Jerusalem as its capital? And the description of what happens to the Jews who are caught on the wrong side of this international divide is an apt description of what has happened to Jews historically whenever they have been left to the 'mercies' of their enemies – whether of the 'Church' in Europe or of the Muslims in the Middle East.

Yet since this apparently triggers the return of Yeshua, it cannot be that this situation lasts for a long period of time. It is definitely not "Jacob's trouble" nor the "two-thirds" being cut off. So we suspect that we are much closer to the return of the Lord than many Christians in the West are considering. It seems that Christians in the deceptive comfort of the 'civilized' West are hoping, "Maybe after the children get married and we see our grandchildren – then it would be good for Jesus to return." For Christians now being severely persecuted, He cannot come soon enough.

To God be the Glory

God is bringing His people back, but not because the Jews are smarter, nicer, better looking, or more righteous than any other people group. No, it is to fulfill His promises to the Jews for the exaltation of His Holy name. Anything that leads to that should be the goal of the life and prayers and works of all God's regenerated children. Although these two verses – *Jeremiah 30:7* and *Zechariah 13:8* have already been fulfilled, they are being misused to caution Christians not to help the Jews return home. Of course the Adversary wants the Jews to remain easily accessible in exile, but God desires them to come home now! He has been sending the fishers for over one hundred and twenty years. He has been sending the hunters for seventy years, and now the time is short indeed (*Jer. 16:16*).

God's judgment on Israel – the Exile

In the two Old Testament chapters listing the blessings and curses associated with God's covenant, the final curse/judgment is exile. These two chapters deal with His chosen people, Israel, as a nation, not as individuals, and the ultimate threat is declared to be exile from Israel's promised inheritance – the land – with the people being scattered among the gentiles/nations. Not only would this bring shame to the Jews, who would be forced to live among pagans in darkness, but they would also bring God's name into disrepute – or as He says in *Ezekiel 36:20-23*, by their exile, they profane His name.

Here are the relevant verses from *Leviticus 26* and *Deuteronomy 28*.

*But if you will not listen to Me, and will not do all these commandments; if you shall despise My statutes, or if your soul hates My judgments ...so that you break My covenant, I will also do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, consumption, and burning fever, consuming the eyes and causing sorrow of heart... You shall perish among the gentiles, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. They that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in [exile]. Also they shall pine away with them in the iniquities of their fathers. Yet if they shall confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their sin which they sinned against Me...If then [in exile] their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they then accept the punishment for their iniquity, **then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham... And I will remember the land.** The land also shall be forsaken by them, and shall enjoy its Sabbaths, while it lays waste without them...Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I hate them, to utterly destroy them and to break My covenant with them, for I am YHWH their God. But for their sakes, I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the*

sight of the nations, so that I might be their God. I am YHWH.

Leviticus 26:14-16a; 38-45

It shall be, if you will not listen to the voice of YHWH your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, all these curses shall come on and overtake you...You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of the heavens for multitude, because you would not obey the voice of YHWH your God. And it shall be, as YHWH rejoiced over you to do you good and to multiply you, so YHWH will rejoice over you to destroy you and to bring you to nothing. You shall be plucked from off the land where you go to possess it, and YHWH shall scatter you among all people...There shall you serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known...Among these nations you shall find no ease...but YHWH shall give you there a trembling heart and failing of eyes and sorrow of mind. Your life shall hang in doubt before you, and you shall fear day and night, and shall have no assurance of your life.

Deuteronomy 28:15, 62-68:

As you can see, these verses are a prophetic portrayal of what happened to the Jewish nation after the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 70 AD, and the total scattering of the nation in 135 AD. This also matches the sense of Jacob's trouble mentioned in *Jeremiah*. We see that the worst curses/judgments waited for them in exile among the gentiles. The point is simply that **for Israel as a nation – the ultimate judgment is exile**. So should we expect God to change His method of dealing with Israel in the last days and save the worst, most horrific slaughter yet for when the Jews return home? "For I am YHWH, I change not. Therefore, you sons of Jacob are not destroyed." (*Mal. 3:6*) God's prophetic promises to do better for His people after He has regathered them, is being seen and marveled at in Israel today.

Regathering, Blessing and Salvation

Trying to prove an argument from the negative is difficult. So we want to look at a sample of His many promises of doing good to Israel when He returns Jacob from exile in the last days. What we will find is that the sheer number of these declarations far exceeds those few verses that are misused to come up with the 'Jacob's-trouble-is-yet-to-come' teaching.

Isaiah 40-66 contains many specific directives from God to His Church about Israel's end-time restoration. He tells His Body to cooperate with Him in the restoration of Israel to their land and to their Messiah. So even if it could possibly be a 'restoration to destruction', which we reject, the Church would still need to help because it is God's direct command to her. No way out of that one.

Comfort, O comfort My people, says your God. Speak lovingly to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is done, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received of YHWH's hand double for all her sins.

Isaiah 40:1-2

To whom is God speaking this? To a people who are not the Jews, yet a people who also declare that the God of Israel is their God. The only people in all of history to which this could possibly apply is the true Church. Now why would God ask the Church to comfort Israel if the worst is yet to come?

*Fear not; for I am with you. I will bring your seed from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Do not keep back; bring My sons from far and My daughters from the ends of the earth; **everyone who is called by My name; for I have created***

him for My glory, I have formed him; yes, I have made him.

Isaiah 43:5-7

This was not fulfilled when the Jews returned from just Babylon because at best that return was only from the north and east. Here God is prophesying of a worldwide return – the one which we see today. Jews have been streaming back to this land since the early 1880s from over 100 different nations. Why is this important? Because it has to do with God's glory, His name and reputation. We will see this more clearly when we look at *Ezekiel*, yet in this chapter of *Isaiah*, in **verse 21**, God adds icing to the cake, stating, "This people that I formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise." So how could God receive all this glory and praise from those He fulfills His promises to, if He is still going to allow them to be slaughtered for unbelief?

Thus says the Lord YHWH, Behold, I will lift up My hand to the gentiles, and set up My banner to the people; and they shall bring your sons in their bosom, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.

Isaiah 49:22

In the *Tanach*, the hand of God is often symbolic of Yeshua who now sits at God's "'right hand'" in glory (*Psa. 110:1; 118:15-16*). Who would be the only non-Jews in all of history who would even be looking to the hand of Israel's God? Only the true Church – and they are tasked here with helping to carry the Jews back home. Yet how could this provoke Jews to jealousy (*Rom. 11:11*), if gentiles were helping them back while saying that destruction awaits most of them? Even now, Jews in the Israeli media are condemning Christianity for such a sick hypocrisy, and they are right to do so, since some Christians who have come here to "help", have shared this teaching with Israelis.

*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, making peace heard; who brings good news, making salvation heard; **who says to Zion, Your God reigns!** Your watchmen shall lift up their voice! They lift up the voice together; they sing aloud, for they shall see eye to eye, when YHWH shall bring again Zion. Break out, sing together, waste places of Jerusalem; for YHWH has comforted His people; He has redeemed Jerusalem. YHWH has bared His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

Isaiah 52:7-10:

The Hebrew word for 'good tidings' and 'good news' is what we use in modern Hebrew for 'gospel', literally the same 'good news' in the Greek of the New Testament. God here speaks to a people who are not Jewish, a people who know the good news of salvation, and tells them to declare to unsaved Zion, "Your God reigns!" If a believer cannot, in total faith, say this to an unsaved Jew, then exactly in whom does that believer put his trust? The God of Israel is the only God there is. Can it be that many in the Church today actually believe in "another Jesus and another gospel" because they are infected with "another spirit" (*2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6-9*), one refusing to see Israel as still God's chosen people and the Jews as still beloved for the sake of the forefathers (*Rom. 11:28*)?

The rest of this *Isaiah* portion says when Jerusalem's waste places will be restored, God will comfort and redeem His people. And this will result in something else that is often mentioned in prophecy – that the restoration of Israel leads to multitudes of gentiles coming to know Israel's God.

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of YHWH has risen on you. For behold, the

darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but YHWH shall rise on you, and His glory shall be seen on you. And nations/gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawning. Lift up your eyes all around, and see. All of them gather themselves; they come to you. Your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you shall fear...and your heart shall throb and swell for joy; because the abundance of the sea shall turn to you, **the wealth of the nations/gentiles will come to you** ...All of them from Sheba shall come; **they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall proclaim the praises of YHWH**...and I will glorify the house of My glory. Who are these who fly like a cloud, and as doves to their windows? Surely the coastlands shall wait for Me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, to the name of YHWH your God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you. The sons of strangers will build up your walls, and their kings will serve you; for in My wrath I struck you, but in My favor I had mercy on you. Therefore your gates will always be open; they will not be shut day nor night, to bring to you the wealth of the nations...For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you will perish. Yes, those nations will be completely wasted.

Isaiah 60:1-12

This prophecy occurs when "the darkness," also called "gross darkness", covers the earth and its people. Welcome to today's world! To live a lifestyle that God calls abominable is now the 'new righteousness', while all who oppose it are seen as enemies of mankind, enemies of love and peace, even enemies of God – who, as cheap grace tells us, "really just loves us so much, that like, no matter what we do, it like, really doesn't matter." That is, it doesn't matter unless you insist that the Bible really is God's Word and He actually means what He says; then you will be seen by the world as part of the problem and not the solution. But at the same time, there is a people who see God fulfilling His promises with His chosen nation of Israel. These gentiles help carry the Jews home – even providing finances to do so. Who are they? They are gentiles who "proclaim the praises of YHWH" and bring the Jews home for the sake of "the name of YHWH your God, and for the Holy One of Israel." Again, this can only mean the true Church. While there have been others who are not Christians who have aided the Jewish return, it is the true Church that in both England and Scotland started praying for Jewish return from exile in the 1700s and the true Church that has helped hundreds of thousands of Jews make *aliyah* since the 1990s. What we are seeing is that which was spoken of by the prophet.

Of great weight is the above warning that God lays on the nations/gentiles who dare to interfere with His end-time restoration of His people: "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you will perish. Yes, those nations will be completely wasted."

For Zion's sake I will not be silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until its righteousness goes out as brightness, and her salvation as a burning lamp. And the nations/gentiles will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; and you will be called by a new name, which the mouth of YHWH will name. You also will be a crown of glory in the hand of YHWH, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You will no more be called Forsaken; nor will your land any more be called Desolate; but you will be called 'My delight is in her', and your land 'Married'; for YHWH delights in you, and your land is married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so will your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so will your God rejoice over you. **I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem, who will not be silent all the day nor all the night; you who remember YHWH** [*lit: YHWH's "reminders", from which we get the modern Hebrew for "secretaries"*], **do not be silent, and give Him no rest** until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

Isaiah 62:1-7:

God declares His will in this passage. In order for His will to be accomplished, He raises up intercessors, called

here 'watchmen', who ask God to do His revealed will. True intercession is God revealing His will to us and then we, by the anointing of His Spirit, persistently ask Him to do it (*Luke 18:1*). Has He raised up so many to pray for this nation at this time so that the Jews will come back to be massacred? Does that sound like the God you know?

*Behold, the storm of YHWH goes forth with fury, an intense storm; it shall break upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of YHWH shall not return until He has done it, until He has fulfilled the purposes of His heart. In the last days you shall understand it. At that time, says YHWH, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people. Thus says YHWH, The people who were left of the sword [Jacob's trouble/the Holocaust of Jer. 30:7) found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to give him rest. YHWH has appeared to me from afar, saying, **Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you. Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin of Israel... You shall yet plant vines on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things. For there shall be a day that the watchmen on Mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise and let us go up to Zion to YHWH our God! For thus says YHWH, Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations. Cry out, give praise and say, **YHWH, save Your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north and gather them from the far corners of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together; a great company shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with prayers I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way; they shall not stumble in it, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn. Hear the Word of YHWH, O gentiles, and declare it in the coastlands afar off, saying, **He who scattered Israel will gather him and keep/guard him, as a shepherd keeps his flock.*******

Jeremiah 30:23-31:10:

Recall that there are no chapter divisions in the original Hebrew or Greek texts. So at times a message is divided by man-made chapters – and that is the case here in Jeremiah. When a chapter starts with "At that time says YHWH," one needs to look back to find out exactly what time this refers to. It is clear that this passage refers to 'the last days', and also to a time that is **after** Jacob's Trouble (30:7).

This portion is full of major implications. First, the God of the *Tanach*, whom many still only see as a God of judgment, anger and war, speaks one of the most loving and gracious messages to be found anywhere in Scripture, and He speaks it to a still unsaved Israel. "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you." (31:3b) The Hebrew for 'lovingkindness' is *chesed*, which can be defined as God's stubborn love based on His commitment to His covenant promises, or simply, His covenant-love. His drawing of Israel is because of who He is and not who Israel is – just as He saves us because of who He is and not because of who we are. Thank God for that!

The result of His covenant-love is a restoration of His people to His land. The specific area to which God declares He is settling them – Samaria – is part of the so-called 'occupied territories' today! One would think that God should have known how this would upset the rest of the world and settle His people somewhere else, but then our God has never been known to be 'politically correct'.

The Hebrew word used here for "watchmen" is *notzrim*, which is the modern Hebrew word for "Christians". Obviously, it did not mean that to Jeremiah, and there is another, more commonly used word for watchmen that could have been used, *shomrim*. Yet the Holy Spirit, writing through Jeremiah (2 *Tim. 3:16*), chose this specific word. And since this is a last days prophecy, it is obvious that God is speaking to the Church, directing us to **pray for the salvation of the remnant of Israel** (31:7).

Here is His answer to that prayer: I will bring them home from exile to Israel (vv. 8-9). Then in *verse 10*, God specifically states that in these last days, it is here in the land that Israel will be afforded His personal protection.

"He who scattered Israel will gather him and keep/guard him, as a shepherd keeps his flock ." As Derek Prince used to point out, since God has scattered Israel and is now gathering them, why doubt that He Himself will guard them? So where does the 'slaughter-in-the-land-is-still-to-come' teaching fit into this clear picture?

*Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath. I will bring them again to this place, and will cause them to dwell safely, and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for their good and for the good of their children after them, **and I will cut an everlasting covenant with them** that I will not turn away from them, to do them good, but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. **Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will truly plant them in this land with all My heart and all My soul. For thus says YHWH: As I have brought all this great evil on this people, so I will bring on them all the good that I have promised them,** and fields shall be bought in this land of which you say, It is a desert without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for silver, and write it in a book, seal it, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south. For I will cause their captivity to return, says YHWH.*

Jeremiah 32:37-44:

At times in God's prophetic statements, there is a joining of near and far future, with a long time gap in the prophetic sentence itself. Of course, we can only see this after the fact, but Yeshua interpreted *Isaiah 61:1-3* in this way. In a synagogue in Nazareth, He quoted the first part of this prophecy as being fulfilled before the eyes of those who were listening to Him. "The Spirit of the Lord YHWH is on Me; because YHWH has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to preach the acceptable year of YHWH..." (61:1-2a). Then He stopped in the middle of that sentence and sat down. The rest of that prophecy is being worked out in our day – before our eyes: "... and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn [in Zion]; to appoint to those who mourn in Zion, to give to them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the mantle of praise for the spirit of heaviness; so that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of YHWH, that He might be glorified."

In the previous prophecy from *Jeremiah 32*, there is a brief mention of the Chaldean conquest of that day, but the final fulfillment is clearly for the days we live in. Again, God states that He will gather the Jews from all nations to which He has scattered them – and not just from Babylon. This is being fulfilled today. Also He says after He gathers them, then they will dwell safely and be saved as a nation – both of which we look forward to seeing before our eyes in the very near future.

Do you realize that **verse 41 is the only place in all of God's Word where He says He will do something with all of His heart and all of His soul?** And it has to do with the physical restoration of the Jews to the physical land of Israel – including all of the 'occupied territories'. If God is doing this openly before the world for His glory, does it make sense that after they are settled and buying properties and being saved – as we are seeing right now – that He would allow another Holocaust to happen? Plus reread what He promises in *verse 42*: "Thus says YHWH: As I have brought all this great evil on this people, so I will bring on them all the good that I have promised them." (*Jer. 32:42*) "Good" is not describing a genocide.

Are you in a church that is actually resisting what Your God is doing with all of His heart and soul? God's land that He is giving to His people for His glory – does your congregation ignorantly call it 'the occupied territories'? [See *Ezek. 35*] Is your denomination considering, or already boycotting Israel? If you attend a church that is hindering what Your God is doing with all of His heart and soul, have you asked Him if He wants you to stay? Error breeds more error, and missing what God is doing with Israel in these days is one of the gravest errors/deceptions in the modern Church.

Ezekiel 36 deserves an in-depth study by itself. This message to Ezekiel starts in *Chapter 35* and warns nations that speaking against God's land is heard in heaven as blasphemy! "Because you [who have eternal hatred against Israel (v.5)] have said, These two nations and these two lands shall be mine, and we shall possess it; yet YHWH was there; therefore, as I live, says the Lord YHWH, I will act according to your anger and your envy which you have shown out of your hatred against them. And I will make Myself known among them [Israel] when I have judged you. And you shall know that I am YHWH, and I have heard all your blasphemies which you have spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, Desolation! They are given to us to consume. Thus with your mouth you have boasted against Me, have multiplied your words against Me, and I have heard them." (35:10-13)

Those who speak against or falsely about Israel's mountains, God accuses of blasphemy/slander – of speaking lies and distortions against God's land and His nature. Why His nature? Because of the more than 200 times that He promises to give this land to His people, including 40 times when He swears to do it. As He says in *Ezekiel 36*, this restoration of His people to His land is **for His holy name's sake** (36:22-23). So if Israel's restoration could be prevented, it would prove our God both a liar and unable to do that which He has clearly promised.

Does this mean that all the politicians and media people, even pastors and Christians, that call His mountains the 'occupied territories' are slandering God? He alone examines the hearts (*Jer. 17:9-10*) – but please understand that He takes this speaking against His land and His people very seriously (*Gen. 12:3*).

Ezekiel 36:8-12 God commands Ezekiel to speak to His mountains – symbolic for all of His land (v.4-5) – these words of incredible blessing: **"But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall put out your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel; for they have drawn near to come home . For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. And I will multiply men on you, all the house of Israel, all of it. And cities shall have people, and wastes shall be built, and I will multiply men and beast on you, and they shall increase and be fruitful... and I will do better to you than at your beginnings . And you shall know that I am YHWH. Yes, I will cause men to walk on you, even My people Israel, and they shall possess you, and you shall be their inheritance, and will not any more increase their bereavement."**

While the complete fulfillment of this is still to come, this prophecy covers the time from the 1880s when the Jews started returning in large waves of *aliyah* until the time of their salvation, as the rest of this chapter points out. So where in these precious promises do we see another Holocaust? We don't; but just the opposite. Since God says that He is doing this for His holy name's sake – and not because Israel is such a righteous, holy nation (36:16-23, 31-32), why do people say He needs to allow His people to be slaughtered in great numbers just to save a few? Will that really bring Him glory? But God says despite who the Jews are, and what they have done, often profaning His name, He does this for Himself. He gathers them from the nations (v. 24), saves and cleanses them (v. 25-27) [the best description of being born-again in all of Scripture!], settles and blesses them in their land (v. 28-30), and after salvation they see their wrongdoing and repent (v. 31-32; *cp. Zech. 12:10-14*). The ultimate goal of Israel's restoration and salvation will be that many gentiles will see what God is doing in Israel and give Him the glory (v. 33-36).

A final note: in *verse 37*, we see the only thing that God is requiring from His people in order to do this is not repentance, not worship, not more congregational meetings, not an increase in finances – but that which He is always seeking for – intercession! He waits for us to ask Him to do that which He wants to do (*Isa. 62:6-7; Ezek. 22:30; Matt. 6:9-10*).

*Thus says YHWH of Hosts: I was jealous/zealous for Zion with great jealousy/zeal, and I was jealous/zealous for her with great fury. Thus says YHWH: I have returned to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called a City of Truth, and the mountain of YHWH of Hosts, the Holy Mountain ... There shall yet be old men and old women living in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of their many days, and the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing...If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in those days, will it also be marvelous in My eyes, says YHWH of Hosts? Thus says YHWH of Hosts: Behold, I will save My people **from the east country, and from the west, and I***

*will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people, and I will be their God, **in truth and in righteousness.***

Zechariah 8:2-8

This word cannot be about the Babylonian captivity, as it was said originally to a people who had basically just returned from there! Also, God says He will regather His scattered people from the east and the west. West of Israel is the Mediterranean Sea and beyond. God adds that we will see old people and children in Jerusalem's streets. Living in Jerusalem, this is something we are seeing today, and it also lines up with *Psalms 147:2*, "YHWH is building Jerusalem; He is gathering together the outcasts of Israel."

Again we see a general pattern that the Jews return and then Yeshua is revealed to them as a nation. After all, to be God's people in truth and righteousness can only mean to be found in Messiah (*John 14:6*; *2 Cor. 5:21*).

We see ***Psalms 102:1-18*** as a confirmation of all that we have said above. This chapter starts with a description of the Nazi Holocaust, then proceeds to the birth of modern Israel with an accompanying global revival and all of this gives the general timeframe of Messiah Yeshua's return.

A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before YHWH. Hear my prayer, O YHWH; let my cry come to You. Hide not Your face from me in the day when I am in trouble; bow down Your ear to me; in the day I call, answer me quickly. For my days are consumed like smoke, my bones are burned like a hearth.

vv.1-3

That last line is a clear picture of the end of the Jews in the concentration camp ovens.

My heart is stricken, and dried like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. Because of the voice of my groaning, my bones cling to my skin.

vv.4-5

What an apt description of the concentration camp survivors.

...I watch, and am as a sparrow alone on the house top.

vv.7

This symbolizes someone who has lost their spouse.

My enemies curse me all the day; and they who are mad against me are sworn against me.

vv.8

Some say the Hebrew can also be translated, "they...use my name against me", which is a perfect picture of the infamous 'yellow star' the Jews were forced to wear.

For I have eaten ashes like bread and have mixed my drink with weeping.

vv.9

With all of the bodies being burned, ash got into everything, including the food.

Because of Your anger and Your wrath; for You have lifted me up and cast me down.

vv.10

In Scripture, there are no second causes, as both writers and those they write about really believed that God was sovereign, with nothing happening unless He either ordained it or allowed it. While Christians today may be hesitant to think about God as the ultimate cause of everything, or the One who takes ultimate responsibility for it all, the Bible is not. "YHWH reigns." (*Psalms 93:1a; 96:10b; 97:1a; 99:1a*); "YHWH has prepared His throne in the heavens; His kingdom rules over all." (*Psalms 103:19*); "If there is a calamity in a city, has YHWH not also done it?" (*Amos 3:6b*); "For God gave into their [the ten kings] hearts to do His mind, and to act with one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast [the Anti-Christ] until the Words of God will be fulfilled." (*Rev. 17:17*)

My days are like a shadow stretched out; and I wither like grass.

vv.11

All of these verses, in spirit, line up with what is said about Jacob's trouble in Jeremiah 30. Yet now, as the Psalmist looks to the Lord Himself, he begins to prophesy a wondrous future.

But You, YHWH, shall endure forever; and Your memory to all generations. You shall arise, and have mercy [rachem – from the Heb. root word for a mother's womb] on Zion; for the time to favor [lit., 'grace'] her, yes, the set time [moed – a time divinely appointed], has come.

vv.12-13

What a description of the rebirth of the modern state of Israel – since it happened right after the Holocaust and only because of God's amazing covenant love and His perfect timing. After all, what other nations were ever born – let alone reborn – when they were at their weakest point in all of their history (*Isa. 66:8-9*)?

For Your servants take pleasure in its stones, and pity its dust.

vv.14

Israelis are so prone to do this – whether by collecting rocks, or archeological items, or just loving and working this land that God has graced us with.

So the nations/gentiles shall fear the name of YHWH, and all the kings of the earth Your glory.

vv.15

Many of those who believe in the 'Jacob's-trouble-is-still-to-come' teaching, say that after Israel – whomever is left – gets saved, then there will be a huge worldwide revival. Yet this Psalm says the worldwide revival occurs as Israel is being restored to its land. Missiologists have reported that since around 1900, [Jews started returning in significant numbers around the mid-1880s with the First Aliyah], more people have come into the Kingdom of God than all previous centuries combined! Recall that the modern Pentecostal movement started shortly after that First Aliyah. And around the same time when Jerusalem was recaptured by Israel in 1967, and no longer trampled down by the gentiles, the Jesus movement and the modern charismatic movement occurred. Since 1967, more Jews have come to know their Messiah than at any time since the beginning of the book of *Acts*. Also, Muslims, Chinese, Hindus, Mongolians, Africans, and other people groups have seen huge numbers being saved – all around the time of Israel's restoration. So that huge end-time revival so many are waiting for is actually happening today – just not in the West where much of the Church is under the curse that accompanies replacement theory (*Gen. 12:3; cp. Gal. 3:17*).

When YHWH shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory.

vv. 16

Here is one of the clearest markers of the timing of Yeshua's return, as Zion is restored after the Holocaust. Yeshua came the first time in humility, riding on a donkey's colt (*Zech. 9:9*). This *verse 16* refers to His soon return in glory – riding on a war horse (*Rev. 19:11-16*). "Then the sign of the Son of Man shall appear in the heavens, and then all the tribes of the earth [*i.e., the land, Israel*] shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the heaven with power and **great glory**." (*Matt. 24:30*)

He will turn to the prayer of the forsaken and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come [literally, "the last generation"]; and the people who shall be created shall praise YHWH.

vv. 17-18

What kind of God is He?

Is He lying to the Church when He tells them to do whatever He says to help restore (*Isa. 49:22; 60:3-11, etc.*) and comfort (*Isa. 40:1-2*) and save (*Jer. 31:7; Rom. 11:11, 30-32*) His Jewish people? They were enemies of the gospel for the sake of the gentiles, and while most Jews still remain in that state – God says they are still beloved for the sake of the forefathers (*Rom. 11:28*).

Would the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God whose very nature is best expressed in the incarnation as Yeshua the Jew (*Isa. 7:14; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3*), celebrate His marriage supper while His covenant people, who are still "beloved for the fathers' sake", are being slaughtered? Yeshua Himself said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father," (*John 14:9*) – and shortly after that, He wept over Jerusalem because of what He knew was coming about 40 years later [70 AD]. Would He now rejoice at His Marriage as Jerusalem is surrounded? Not so! God has declared that He is YHWH who changes not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed (*Mal. 3:6*). Whenever this particular aspect of this troubling teaching appears, it blasphemes the very nature of our God.

Conclusion

Prophecy would be so much easier to understand if it was not about the future! God can fulfill His word in all of its details because He alone knows the end from the beginning. Yes, we can see through a dark glass – but not clearly enough to be dogmatic about details. Yet when we look back, we see how faithful God is to literally fulfill that which He said – in those prophetic statements that are to be taken literally.

But some of God's prophetic declarations are not to be taken literally, particularly when they have been written

down from dreams and visions. Visions and dreams use symbol and metaphor to express a reality beyond what we usually consider “real”. We are not expecting the Anti-Christ to be a real beast with seven heads, ten horns, ten crowns, and the title ‘Blasphemy’ on its heads, who comes out of the sea (*Rev. 13:1*). And while there can be 144,000 virgin male Israelis who will follow the Lamb, that number might also be seen as symbolic. It is important to know that sections of the books of *Daniel*, *Zechariah* and *Revelation*, are part of the genre known as Jewish Apocalyptic literature, which emphasizes visions, dreams, symbols and metaphors to share deep truths in a non-literal, more pictorial manner. While there can be literal fulfillments of much of what is written in these books, there does not have to be, in order for God to faithfully fulfill what He meant in sharing His word with us.

Does that bother us? Have we become so dogmatic in our end-time prophetic charts that if God fulfills what He said – but in a way that does not line up with what we have already decided – we would miss it even as it happens before our eyes? Are some so convinced that the rapture is pre-tribulation that if it is not, they would be unable to recognize the Anti-Christ, because according to their prophetic chart, the Church will be gone before he appears?

Do you who love Israel realize how the teaching dissected in this study comes across as total hypocrisy to many Israelis and Jews? They correctly understand it to mean that the Church wants the Jews to return home to Israel so that Jesus Christ will return – but only after the Jews are slaughtered. And, of course, the Church will be in glory – celebrating – while this happens here on earth. How does this even begin to provoke the Jews to jealousy? What Jew would even want to serve a God that allows His people to be slaughtered again – while saying He loves them? Jews have enough issues between them and their God because of the Nazi Holocaust. That did not draw them to Him. Rather it added some major question marks as to exactly what type of God He is – and for many Jews, to question if there even is a God. Also, does Paul not clearly say that it is “the goodness of God which leads you to repentance” (*Rom. 2:4*)?

We have laid out a more scriptural alternative to the teaching that Jacob’s trouble and two-thirds being slaughtered in the land of Israel is still to come. We do not expect everyone who reads this to agree. In fact, we suspect this will anger some who have carelessly made this teaching a part of their ‘prophetic’ ministry.

Yet there is no doubt that God is bringing His people home today. And there is no doubt that He expects the Church to help. Therefore, you need to study and decide whether the God you serve, the One who tells the Jews, “I have loved you with an eternal love,” is really bringing the Jewish people back as lambs to the slaughter, or bringing them home for salvation. And if it is in order to meet their King, Messiah Yeshua, and if it is the goodness of God that leads one to repentance, and if He has promised His people a hope and a future, then maybe the prophecy charts we love to create need changing. It might be a good idea to start studying the Word contextually.

*Try earnestly to present yourself approved to God,
a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.*

2 Tim. 2:15