

ISRAEL: A Nation of Miracles

The rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948 was a miracle of history. Never before has a nation been destroyed, its people dispersed to the ends of the earth, and then, nearly two thousand years later, regathered to their homeland and reestablished as a nation.

Established by Miraculous Events

The victory of the 1948 War was a grand miracle composed of a series of smaller miracles. But why? Over 2,500 years ago, the prophet Isaiah made a remarkable prophecy concerning Israel's regathering: "They that war against thee shall be as nothing and as a thing of nought...for I will help thee." Isa. 41:12,13

When Israel declared itself a Nation on May 14, 1948, the armies of seven Arab nations marched in defiance against her, boasting that they would push the Jews into the sea. Outnumbered 100 to 1, Israel not only repelled the invaders but acquired more of Palestine than was granted in the UN partition plan.

A Syrian column of 200 armored vehicles, including 45 tanks, attacked Degania, the oldest kibbutz in Israel. Without artillery, Jewish forces were helpless to block the Syrian advance. Until then, the only heavy weapons available in all Israel were four howitzers of the type used in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Two of the obsolete weapons were promptly dismantled and rushed to Degania. The local commander, Lt. Col. Moshe Dayan, had them reassembled at the very moment the first Syrian tanks rumbled through the kibbutz perimeter, and Israel scored a hit on the advance tank. Had the Syrians known that these two antiques represented half the arsenal of field guns in all Israel, they would have pressed the attack. Instead, the armored vehicles swung around and clattered back up the mountain road.

At Safed, near the Sea of Galilee a small unit of Israeli defenders were holding off thousands of Arabs. A sudden tropical storm broke loose. In desperation, the Israelis took their remaining gasoline, poured it over 50 empty drums, set them afire and rolled them down the hill. The flaming barrels flying down the slopes, the rumble of hollow barrels striking rocks, together with the tropical storm, created such an illusion that the Arabs, imagining some sort of secret weapon, took to their heels and fled.

In December 1948, the Egyptians were harassing Israeli settlements in the Negev while advanced columns were moving north. Israel used the Bible for strategy. It mentioned an ancient road forgotten for centuries, which ran almost directly to the Egyptian's garrison. Bulldozers pushed aside the heavy boulders, and in armored vehicles and supply trucks, the Israelis sped under cover of darkness along the ancient road. This surprise attack destroyed the Egyptian defense system and ended the war 14 days later.

To liberate the airport at Lydda, again, Biblical tactics were employed. Seven thousand Arab troops were ready to attack. Sixteen Israelis dressed as Arabs infiltrated the city of Lydda. Like Gideon's band of 300, they made such a clatter during the night that the confused Arabs fired upon each other, and the majority fled back across the border.

The Syrian Army had regrouped east of the Galilee. A Jewish column of 24 homemade armored vehicles on the way to relieve a besieged kibbutz took the wrong road and crossed the border into Lebanon. Before they discovered their mistake, they ran head-on into a Syrian convoy of supplies—dozens of trucks of ammunition, a string of light artillery and 20 new armored cars. The Israelis fired point blank at the first truck—a tanker loaded with gasoline. It exploded and set on fire the following truckload of hand grenades. Terrified by the repeated explosions, the Syrians abandoned their cargo. The Israelis scarcely had enough men to drive the captured supply train back into Galilee. Finally they reached the beleaguered kibbutz, only to learn that the Arab besiegers heard rumors that the Jewish army had invaded Lebanon, and thus, the Arabs fled Israel.

One of the greatest military feats in history was the '67 War. The Arabs again boasted that they would destroy Israel. However, in six days Israel overran the combined forces of Syria, Jordan, Egypt and took the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, the West Bank (Samaria and Judea), and the Sinai.

"We rely on the Good Book"

David Ben Gurion, Israel's dynamic first Prime Minister, was an ardent advocate of the Bible as a guide to Israel's history and land. He dispatched engineers and horticulturists with the Bible in hand, and miracles happened! Trees, fruits and vegetables grow over what was once sandy wastes or malaria swamps. New industries fringe historic cities. Highways and pipelines stretch across an energetic nation which had slept for centuries.

Continuing to follow Bible clues, copper and iron mines were established. One mining engineer, Abraham Dor observed that at the richest veins of copper—"we come upon the slag and furnaces of ancient Israel. We often get the feeling that someone has just left." Deuteronomy 8:7-9 was often framed on the walls of mining offices: For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land... a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills thou mayest dig copper.

Barren land transformed to the fertility of ancient Israel is a miracle prophesied in Scripture. Amos 9:14-15; Ezek. 36:34-35 Since the diaspora, it had been assumed that most of Palestine was wasteland, irreclaimable for agriculture. But archaeologists discovered the presence of more than 70 ancient Hebrew settlement sites in one 65 mile stretch of the Jordan Valley alone, each with its own well for water. Lot, over 3,000 years ago, did not exaggerate when he "lifted up his eyes, and he saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord." Gen.13:10

From these ancient clues, new agricultural settlements—from Dan to Beersheba—have risen beside sites reidentified by Biblical archaeologists. Concrete pumping stations were set over ancient springs or wells. A well from Abraham's day, now supplies water for residents on the outskirts of Beersheba.

Reforestation is a basic necessity in an arid country. Since their return, Jews have been planting forests. Again, the Bible provided what kind of trees to plant and where to plant them. For Israel's immense Forest of Martyrs, they consulted Joshua, who provided necessary clues. "Knowing that trees grow more easily where trees have flourished before," explained Professor Zohary of Hebrew University, "we rely on the Good Book."

Dr. Joseph Weitz, noted botanist stated: "The first tree Abraham put in the soil of Beersheba was a tamarisk. Following his lead, we put out two million in the same area. Abraham was right. The tamarisk is one of the few trees we have found that thrives in the south where yearly rainfall is less than six inches."

The Bible made Israel the agricultural giant it is today exporting its products worldwide. It took another miracle to make this possible. In Bible times there were two copious rainy seasons in Palestine—the "early and the latter rain." But for the past many centuries the "early rain" had been minimal while the latter rain had disappeared completely. Since 1878, the "latter rain" is falling again. Both rains have spiraled over the decades just as predicted in Joel 2:23,24.

The Miracle of Immigration

Israel's Declaration of Independence stated that Israel "will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersion." Jews from around the world answered the call. Isa. 43:5,6

Even as war still raged and the little State faced possible destruction or bankruptcy, the newcomers poured in. During the first three years of statehood, average immigration reached 18,000 a month and in some months the figure exceeded 30,000. In just 5 short years, the Jewish population of the country doubled. By the end of 1956, Israel's population had nearly tripled, reaching 1,667,000. Imagine the economic shock of absorption! Jews kept pouring into Israel, and in 1984, 1985, and 1991 harrowing airlifts brought Ethiopian Jews from utter despair to a Land of hope. Finally, the long-expected prophetic fulfillment of Jews from Russia began in 1991. By 1998 over 800,000 have returned from the former Soviet Republics and they are still coming. Over a million are expected. Israel's population increased from 650,000 in 1948 to nearly 6,000,000 in 1998!

The Six Day War was a wake-up call to many Orthodox Jews worldwide. Thousands poured into Israel and settled in Samaria and Judea to stake Israel's eternal claim to the so-called West Bank—the heartland of Israel. As Biblical Zionists, they oppose any give-away of land in the peace process, as they stake claim to their promises from God.

A Hi-Tech Leader

Ezekiel 38 predicted Israel will become an economic envy of the nations. The immigration of Russian Jews is literally paying-off. This year has witnessed an explosion in both hi-tech developments and the number of worldwide contracts Israeli hi-tech companies have signed. Prime Minister Netanyahu said, "The failure of Soviet communism to capitalize on the outstanding R & D skills of the Russian Jews was a stroke of good fortune for Israel. We now have the highest per capita of scientists in the world. This has put Israel on the cutting edge of technology." The New York Stock Exchange lists more hi-tech companies from Israel than any other nation. Ezekiel also predicts the sanctification of God's name when Israel's enemies would threaten His people. Ezek. 38:16-23

To God Be the Glory!

Actually, Israel's miracles began a hundred and twenty years ago with the regathering of the Jewish people to their Land. Countless miracles have occurred since then—a real testimony to their claim: "This Land is Mine!"

The Arab/Israeli conflict is the oldest family feud in existence. It began when the promised inheritance of the Land was given to Abraham. The Arabs claim that this promise was passed along through their patriarchs, Ishmael or Esau. The Jews claim that it was passed through their father, Isaac. Who is right? To determine the rightful heirs of the promise, it is important to observe which claims are actually fulfilling prophecy.

The Biblical Claim

Jeremiah 16:14-18 speaks of Israel receiving a double of punishment before they are regathered to their Land. This double would be a period equal to their prior period of favor with God. Jeremiah 33:10-16 also states that during this double of punishment the Land of Israel would become relatively desolate of man and beast. This prophecy is confirmed by the personal observations of recognized authorities. In 1738 Thomas Shaw observed a land of "barrenness...from want of inhabitants." In 1835 Alphonse de Lamartine wrote, "Outside the city of Jerusalem, we saw

no living object, heard no living sound...a complete eternal silence reigns...The tomb of a whole people." The most popular quote on the desolation of the Land is from Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*, "Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes...the spell of a curse that has withered its fields and fettered its energies...Palestine is desolate and unlovely.... It is a hopeless, dreary, heartbroken land." (1867)

The Palestinian Claim

PLO Chairman Yassir Arafat in his speech before the UN in 1974 declared, "The Jewish invasion began in 1881 . . . Palestine was then a verdant area, inhabited mainly by an Arab people in the course of building its life and dynamically enriching its indigenous culture." Financed by the oil rich Arab States, Arafat has worked to convince the world that the Holy Land has sustained a thriving Palestinian culture for centuries.

The prior historic accounts simply do not confirm Arafat's claim of Palestinian roots in a verdant area since Arab rule of the land (A.D. 640-1099). But history does confirm the Biblical predictions that during the Jewish dispersion and double of God's disfavor, the Land of Israel would become desolate of man and beast awaiting the return of the Jews when their period of disfavor ended in 1878. Jer. 33:10-16

Real Roots of the Name "Palestine"

The Romans had changed the name of the Land of Israel to Palestine. From A.D. 640 until the 1960's, Arabs referred to this same Land as Southern Syria, only calling the Land Palestine in the 1960's. When the League of Nations in 1922 gave Great Britain the mandate to prepare Palestine as a national home for the Jewish people, the official name of the Land became Palestine—and remained so until the rebirth of the Israeli State in 1948. During this very period, the leaders of the Arabs in the Land, however, called themselves Southern Syrians, clamoring that the Land become a part of a Greater Syria, including Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Transjordan as well as Palestine. An observation in *Time* magazine well articulated how the Palestinian identity was born so belatedly in the 1960's. "Before Arafat began his proselytizing, most of the Arabs from the territory of Palestine thought of themselves as members of an all-embracing Arab nation. It was Arafat who made the intellectual leap to a definition of the Palestinians as a distinct people...and brought it to the world's attention."

Palestinian State Denounced by Arabs

From the Arab view, Palestine was an Arab territory forming an integral part of Syria. In 1919 the Syrian Congress stated, "We ask that there should be no separation of the southern part of Syria, known as Palestine." In 1956, Ahmed Shukairy, as current head of the PLO, announced to the Security Council the observation, "It is common knowledge that Palestine is nothing but southern Syria." Syrian President Assad once told Yassir Arafat: "You do not represent Palestine as much as we do... There is no such thing as a Palestinian People, there is no Palestinian entity, there is only Syria....Therefore it is we, the Syrian authorities, who are the true representatives of the Palestinian people." As late as 1974, Assad stated: "Palestine is a principal part of Southern Syria, and we consider that it is our right and duty to insist that it be a liberated partner of our Arab homeland and of Syria."

In the words of the late military commander of the PLO as well as member of the PLO Executive Council, Zuhair Muhsin, "It is only for political reasons that we carefully underline our Palestinian identity....yes, the existence of a separate Palestinian identity serves only tactical purposes. The founding of a Palestinian state is a new tool in the continuing battle against Israel."

The most authoritative Arab statement as to whom the Land belongs is found in the Islamic Koran. The Koran agrees with the Bible that God (Allah) made a covenant with the Sons of Israel and assigned the Holy Land to the Jews (See the Koran, Sura V, "The Table"). The Koran also describes the land given to the Jews as blessed and foresees a return of Israel to their land at the end of days.

Arab Immigration a Recent Phenomenon

These testimonies confirm the Bible Prophecy that God gave the Land to the Jews as an everlasting possession. The relatively few Arabs who wandered into the Land between A.D. 670-1878 were but temporary dwellers. With the exception of a relatively few families, the Arabs had no attachment to the Land. If Arabs from southern Syria drifted into Palestine for economic reasons, within a generation or so the cultural tug of Syria would pull them back. This factor is why the Arab population remained low until the influx of Jewish financial investments in the late 1800's made the Land economically attractive. The Jews created industry, agriculture, hospitals—a complete socioeconomic infrastructure. As job opportunities increased, so did Arab immigration. Before Jewish immigration and Jewish investments spawned massive Arab immigration, Arabs were actually leaving Palestine. Arab immigration, then, is a recent phenomenon.

Indeed, the verdict of history more than confirms the Prophets that the population of Israel would be minimal until the double of Israel's disfavor ended in 1878 when the regathering of the Jewish exiles began. The record of history testifies that the great influx of Arabs also began after that date. These facts of history explain why the United Nations needed to develop a definition that a Palestinian Refugee is any Arab who had been in Palestine for only two years.

The Jews themselves have dominated the Land called Palestine for the past two millennia. If any population has a right to the name Palestinian (if they wanted it), it would be the Jews.

At the break up of the Turkish Empire by the WWI Allies, both Jews and Arabs requested independent states. World powers generously granted Arabs 22 independent states, totalling 5.4 million square miles. The Jews asked for less than 1% of that vast land. The Allies agreed to this request, including both sides of the Jordan, in the 1917 Balfour Declaration and the 1920 San Remo Conference. Then, in 1921 Britain reneged, lopped off 77% of the Land promised, and set up the Arab Emirate of Transjordan. In 1922 the League of Nations gave Britain a Mandate to prepare the remaining 23% of Palestine, including Samaria, Judea, Gaza, Golan Heights and East Jerusalem, for a Jewish National Home. But under pressure, in 1923 the Golan Heights was ceded by the British to the French mandate of Syria.

Oil was then discovered in the Arab countries, and oil diplomacy was instituted. Bowing to Arab appeasement, in 1939 the British White Paper banned further immigration of the Jews to Palestine. Also, with brutal callousness, the US and most nations refused to accept the beleaguered Jews of Europe. Consequently, six million Jews were slaughtered in the Holocaust. How many millions of these tragic victims would have found a haven in Palestine if Britain had not reneged, with the silent consent of the other nations of the world? Finally, the nations, after defaulting on their promise since 1922, felt a moral obligation to grant the Jews an independent state. But then, the UN Partition Plan of 1947 further reduced the size of the new Israeli State.

When Israel became a Nation in 1948, armies from six Arab nations invaded the newborn State. Outnumbered 100 to one, Israel's ragtag army pushed back the invaders and took more of its rightful Land. The only failure in Israel's rightful victory at that time was not succeeding in recapturing East Jerusalem. Instead, the Arab State of Transjordan captured East Jerusalem, expelled all Jews and desecrated all Jewish holy sites. Defying the U.N. Mandate, Transjordan also occupied the west bank of the River Jordan.

In 1922 the League of Nations had recognized the legal, moral and historic right of the Jewish people to a national homeland in Palestine—including Jerusalem. If the Jews had a right to Jerusalem recognized by the world community in 1922, that right is still valid today. But since the vast oil reserves were discovered in Arab lands, the nations are compromising Israel's rights.

In the 1967 Six Day War, under the threat of being pushed into the sea by Egypt, Syria and Jordan, Israel actually liberated the occupied territory of Jerusalem and granted free access to Jews, Christians and Moslems to worship at their respective Holy sites. Israel also liberated the West Bank and Gaza. How easily recent history is forgotten.

For 19 years of brutal occupation of their fellow Arabs, Jordan and Egypt kept the areas of Gaza and the West Bank in a deliberate state of economic stagnation. Average unemployment in the early 60's ran between 35-45%, and refugee unemployment hit a high of 83%. Only after Israel's seizure of these territories in a defensive war in 1967, their situation improve under Israeli administration. Unemployment hovers around a mere 1% (1989) and per capita gross income tripled in less than 20 years; infant mortality rates dropped from the pre-1967 140 per 1,000 to only 30 per 1,000 today—at a time when the rest of the Arab world is still at 80 per 1,000.

Had the Arab countries any true intentions of helping their beleaguered brethren from western Palestine, they would and could have absorbed them easily 4 decades ago. But the 22 Arab countries, uninterested in aiding their Palestinian brothers, preferred to use them as a political weapon to wield against Israel, and the U.N. supported this heartless human manipulation.

God wills that the whole world—Arab peoples too—will come to respect Israel and worship Him in Jerusalem. Then, all will come to the LORD God of Israel because they will understand God is blessing Israel. God's own peace process will succeed where men have failed. The peace God will give Israel and the whole world will be everlasting! Zech. 8:3, 21-23; Isa. 35: 5-10

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