THE MODERN STATE OF ISRAEL IN BIBLE PROPHECY



By Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

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And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look unto me whom they have pierced.
Zechariah 12:10

On the topic of the modern State of Israel in Bible prophecy, one will hear four views, giving four different perspectives. Three perspectives will be discussed in the Introduction of this study. The fourth perspective will be discussed in the context of Isaiah 11:11-12:6. And a fifth perspective will be introduced in connection with the two worldwide regatherings.

INTRODUCTION

A. Three Perspectives on the Modern State of Israel in Bible Prophecy

1. The First Perspective: Replacement Theology

The first perspective is the view of Replacement Theology, particularly Amillenialism, which sees the modern Jewish State as purely an accident of history, totally unrelated to any type of Bible prophecy. This first view believes that when Israel rejected the Messiahship of Yeshua (Jesus), God was through with the Jewish people. Therefore, there are no unfulfilled prophecies for the Jewish people and there is no future final restoration. When Israel rejected the Messiah, all of God's covenantal promises were transferred to the Church; hence it is a theology of transference. Or, put differently, when Israel rejected the Messiah, the Church replaced Israel in God's standing; hence a theology of replacement. Thus, the Church is fulfilling Israel's promises. When asked about all those prophecies that speak of a worldwide regathering of the Jewish people, their answer is that these are not to be interpreted literally, but allegorically of the elect being brought into the Church until the Church is complete. Jews could be saved today, but they simply would be amalgamated into the larger Church; God has no future restoration for Israel as an ethnic people. And so nothing happening with Israel today is in any way related to prophecy. There is no future prophecy for Israel either, and so again the modern Jewish State is nothing but an accident of history.

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2. The Second Perspective

The second perspective takes the opposite view in that they do believe there will be a final restoration of Israel. They take the prophecies that speak of a worldwide regathering of the Jewish people literally and believe that there will be a future final restoration of the Jewish people to the Promised Land. However, when they look at the modern Jewish State, they have a hard time fitting it into Bible prophecy. The reason is that these prophecies describe the final regathering of Israel as a nation believing in the Messiah. The chronological sequence of these prophecies is: national repentance followed by national restoration. When they look at the present Jewish State, the vast majority of the population are unbelievers in the Messiah; in fact, of the 5.1 million Jews in the Land today, only about four to five thousand, maximum, are Jewish believers. To make matters worse, the vast majority of Israelis are not even Orthodox; they would classify themselves quite secularly, either as atheists or agnostics. This does not fit these prophecies as they read. These prophecies that clearly speak of a national salvation prior to a national restoration to the Land include: Deuteronomy 30:1-5; Isaiah 27:12-13; and Ezekiel 39:25-29, among others.

So they disagree with the first view in that they do believe there will be such a future final restoration. But they would agree with the first view that the modern Jewish State is an accident of history and not relevant to Bible prophecy at all.

3. The Third Perspective

The third perspective claims that what is happening today is the final restoration of Israel; this is the beginning of the fulfillment of all those prophecies. There will be more and more Jews going back to the Land until all are back. At some point, they will undergo a national regeneration and salvation, and the Messiah will return. When asked about the prophecies that speak of a period of divine wrath and Tribulation preceding this time, they would say that the Tribulation prophecies have already been fulfilled in the Nazi Holocaust, and so there is no future Tribulation to come. It has already passed, and what is seen today is the final restoration.

Emissaries of this view are traveling around the world encouraging Jews to return. They also go to groups of Jewish believers, messianic fellowships, and congregations, laying guilt trips on Jewish believers claiming that if they do not go back to Israel right away, they are living in sin. They say that God is now calling all Jews, particularly Jewish believers in the Messiah, back to their Land. To live outside the Land, such as in "the flesh pots of America," would be living in sin. When asked for biblical passages to prove their view, they refer to those prophecies where the prophets called the Jews to leave Babylon. They interpret the passages on Babylon not to be the real Babylon past or future, but that Babylon represents the United States of America.

When it is pointed out that these prophecies mention the Euphrates River, which is in Babylonia, they claim that the river is not really the Euphrates, rather, it is the Hudson River in New York City! That would surprise prophets such as Jeremiah, among others.

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And so, in this third perspective, this is the final restoration; this is the fulfillment of those prophecies, at least in the initial stages.

B. Two worldwide Regatherings

What the first three perspectives fail to observe is that, when the Bible speaks of a worldwide regathering of the Jewish people, it actually speaks of two distinct worldwide regatherings. This is the fifth perspective. First, there is to be a worldwide regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment; specifically, the judgment of the Tribulation. This is to be followed by a second worldwide regathering in faith in preparation for blessing, specifically, the blessing of the Messianic Kingdom.

This manuscript will focus on those prophecies that clearly speak of a worldwide regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment rather than the prophecies that speak of the worldwide regathering in faith in preparation for blessing. Once it is recognized that the Bible speaks of two such regatherings, it is easy to see how the present State of Israel fits into prophecy.

I. THE REGATHERING IN UNBELIEF IN PREPARATION FOR JUDGMENT

There are three key passages that speak to the worldwide regathering of Israel in unbelief in preparation for judgment and a fourth passage that is relevant to this issue.

A. To the Land: Ezekiel 20:33-38

As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, surely with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out, will I be king over you: and I will bring you out from the peoples, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out; and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I enter into judgment with you face to face. Like as I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I enter into judgment with you, says the Lord Jehovah. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me; I will bring them forth out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

In this passage, Ezekiel draws a simile with the Exodus when, under Moses, God brought the entire nation of Israel out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula. God's plan and program for Israel at Sinai was to accomplish two

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things: first, they were to receive the Law of Moses; and secondly, they were to build a Tabernacle through which much of the Law could then be maintained. With these two things accomplished, they were to press on and to enter the Promised Land itself. But because of a series of rebellions and murmurings against God's revealed will, finally at the oasis of Kadesh Barnea, which was right on the border of the Promised Land, God entered into judgment with His people. The divine judgment was that those who came out of Egypt would now have to continue wandering throughout the wilderness for forty years. During those forty years, all who came out would die, except for the two righteous spies and those below the age of twenty. So forty years later, it was a new nation that was allowed to enter the Land under Joshua, a nation that was born as free men in the wilderness, not as slaves in Egypt.

That historical frame of reference is the backdrop for the future. But this time, Ezekiel prophesies that God will regather His people from all parts of the world. It should be noted that it is a regathering out of wrath, and a gathering for wrath. They were gathered out of the wrath of the Holocaust. The events of the Nazi Holocaust, when six million Jewish people died, created the world stage for Israel to become a state, for the regathering in unbelief. That this gathering is not in faith, but in unbelief, is seen from the fact that this gathering is *with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out.* This phrase is repeated twice and is found in verses 33 and 34. God's goal is that of Messianic Kingship, but the means of attaining it will be by wrath and judgment. This is a gathering both out of wrath and for wrath. This regathering in unbelief occurs after wrath has been poured out on the people.

But because it is a regathering in unbelief, it is a regathering for a future time of wrath. In that future time of wrath, God will once again enter into judgment with His people, and will purge out the rebels among them. Those who remain will turn to the Lord; they will be brought into *the bond of the covenant*; specifically, the bond of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). They will be brought into a national salvation. Then it will be a new nation, a regenerated nation, that will be allowed to enter the Land under King Messiah for the final restoration.

In these verses, Ezekiel clearly describes a worldwide regathering in unbelief, from wrath and for wrath, in preparation for a specific period of judgment that will then lead to a national salvation, and in turn to their final restoration.

B. To Jerusalem: Ezekiel 22:17-22

And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is become dross unto me: all of them are brass and tin and iron and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are the dross of silver. Therefore thus says the Lord Jehovah: Because ye are all become dross, therefore, behold, I will gather you into

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the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver and brass and iron and lead and tin into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in my anger and in my wrath, and I will lay you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you with the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have poured out my wrath upon you.

Ezekiel again describes a regathering, this time focusing on the City of Jerusalem. Jerusalem becomes the furnace of affliction, a common figure pointing to Israel's need for refining (Is. 1:22, 25; 48:10; Jer, 6:27-30; 9:7; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2-3). Furthermore, it is also a regathering in unbelief because they are filled with the impurities of *brass and iron and lead and tin.* They are also regathered for a future time of wrath, when the wrath of God will be poured upon them for the purpose of melting and purifying them. As a purified, believing nation, they will then turn to the Lord.

Here again Ezekiel speaks of worldwide regathering in unbelief in preparation for a specific future judgment, but the purpose of the judgment is to bring them to national repentance. Only then will they experience the final worldwide restoration in faith.

C. The Number of Worldwide Regatherings: Isaiah 11:11-12:6

The fourth passage that is relevant to the first three states in verses 11-12: *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord will set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, that shall remain, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he will set up an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.*

1. The Fourth Perspective

It is in this connection that the fourth perspective needs to be discussed. This view recognizes that there are two types of regathering prophecies: a regathering in unbelief and a regathering in faith. But then the fourth view goes on to say that one really cannot be sure that the present Jewish State, as it is seen today, is a fulfillment of those prophecies that spoke of the regathering in unbelief. Why not? Because the supporters of this view believe that it is possible to have several regatherings in unbelief before there is the specific one that fulfills the prophecies just discussed. But this passage in Isaiah shows that is exactly what cannot be: there cannot be several regatherings in unbelief from *the four corners of the earth.*

2. Only Two Regatherings

The entire context is Isaiah 11:11-12:6. In this context, Isaiah is speaking of the final worldwide regathering in faith in preparation for blessing. Isaiah numbers the final worldwide regathering in faith in preparation for the Messianic Kingdom as *the second one.* In other

words, the last one is only the second one. If the last one is the second one, how many can there be before that? Only one. The first one could not have been the return from Babylon since that was not an international regathering from the four corners of the world, it was only a migration from one country, Babylonia, to another country, Judea. The Bible does not allow for several worldwide regatherings in unbelief; it allows for one worldwide regathering in unbelief, followed by the last one, the one in faith, which is the second one. This text permits only two worldwide regatherings from *the four corners of the earth.* Therefore, the present Jewish State is very relevant to Bible prophecy.

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D. The Regathering Before the Tribulation

So far passages have been shown to speak of a regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment. But these passages have not specifically stated that this regathering will occur before the Tribulation period. However, there are other passages that do pinpoint the regathering in unbelief as occurring before the Tribulation period. One such passage is Zephaniah 2:1-2: *Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation that has no shame; before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of Jehovah come upon you, before the day of Jehovah's anger come upon you.*

In Zephaniah 1:7-18, the prophet described some features of a time he calls *the day of Jehovah* or *the day of the Lord.* This is the most common Old Testament term for the Tribulation. The most common term today is "the Tribulation" or "the Great Tribulation." Then in Zephaniah 2:1-2, he speaks of an event that is to occur *before* that period of *the day of the Lord* begins. In verse 1, the nation of Israel is told to *gather together*. It is clear from this verse that this is a gathering in unbelief for it is a nation not yet ashamed of her sins. In verse 2, the word *before* is used three times in relation to the preceding passage regarding the Tribulation, one of which includes *before the day of Jehovah itself.*

While primarily dealing with the regeneration of Israel, Ezekiel 36:22 -24 nevertheless makes it clear that a regathering takes place before the regeneration: *Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for my holy name, which ye have profaned among the nations, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I am Jehovah, says the Lord Jehovah, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land.*

So while other texts speak of a regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment, these passages clearly state that this regathering in unbelief will occur before the Tribulation actually begins.

II. THREE COROLLARY ISSUES

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In addition to these passages that speak of a worldwide regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment, there are three corollary issues that are relevant to the theme of the modern Jewish State in Bible prophecy.

A. The Start of the Tribulation

The first corollary issue is the start of the Tribulation. In Daniel 9:24-27, the Prophet was given his famous vision of the Seventy Sevens or the 490-year period that God has decreed over the Jewish people. It goes beyond the purpose of this study to deal with the passage phrase by phrase. But to summarize, by the end of verse 26, the first 483 years of this 490-year period have already been fulfilled in history, coming to an end at the time of the First Coming of the Messiah.

But there are still seven years of this prophetic time clock for Israel left to run, the same seven years of the Tribulation. The question now is: What will be the one singular event that will begin the seven years of Tribulation, the seventieth seven of Daniel? The answer is found in Daniel 9:27: *And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that makes desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate.*
In this verse, the pronoun *he* goes back to its nearest antecedent *the prince that shall come* in verse 26. In other words, *the prince that shall come* in verse 26 and the *he* who makes a covenant in verse 27 are one and the same person, the individual better known in evangelical circles today as "the Antichrist."

The last seven years, the seventieth seven, will begin with one specific, decisive event, the signing of a seven year treaty between Israel and the Antichrist. The Hebrew word does not mean to renew an existing covenant, but to make an original one containing strong guarantees. This is the event that begins the Tribulation, not the Rapture of the Church. The Rapture is an imminent event; it could happen at any time. It is not determined by any set of events. People often talk about signs for the Rapture, but the Rapture is a signless event; therefore, it will never be a dateable event, in spite of the people making money by writing books that suggest they know when the Rapture will occur. The Rapture will come some time before the Tribulation, but it might come ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years before the Tribulation. While the Bible teaches that the Rapture will precede the Tribulation, it never stays that the Rapture begins the Tribulation. Rather, the event that begins the Tribulation is the signing of this seven year covenant.

While Daniel 9:27 presents the covenant that begins the Tribulation from man's perspective, Isaiah 28:14-22 views the covenant from God's perspective. The reason Israel even bothers to make a covenant

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like this is for reasons of military security. When they sign this covenant, they put their trust in the Antichrist for their military security. However, God declares that this is not a covenant of life, but a covenant of death. It is not a covenant of Heaven, but a covenant of Hell. Rather than gaining security, they will receive a strong measure of insecurity. There is a common misconception that the Jews will accept the Antichrist as the messiah. This is not taught anywhere in the Bible. What the Bible does say is that they make a covenant with the Antichrist and put their trust in him for their military security. This is yet future, but it does require the existence of a Jewish State before the Tribulation. This passage makes clear that there will be a segment of Jews who refuse to have anything to do with this covenant.

The fulfillment of this prophecy presupposes that two other things are in place: one is not in place, but one is. First, this presupposes that the Antichrist is already in high political power before the Tribulation, with whom a sovereign state like Israel could sign a covenant of this nature. Sovereign states like Israel would not sign covenants with nobodies. This has not yet taken place, but must come to pass before the Tribulation can begin. The second thing that the fulfillment of this prophecy presupposes is that there is a Jewish State in place, with a Jewish government with whom a covenant like this could be signed. This has been true only since 1948. Biblically speaking, the Rapture could have come before 1948, but the Tribulation could not have come before 1948, because there was no Jewish State, no Jewish government with whom a covenant like this could be signed. In other words, this passage required a Jewish State to be in existence before the Tribulation, and now there is one. This is another way the modern State of Israel fits within Bible prophecy.

But again, the Rapture does not depend upon any of these things. Keep in mind, the blessed hope of the Church is not looking for the rise of the Antichrist. He is no blessing. The blessed hope of the Church is the return of the Lord in the air to take believers to Heaven.

B. The Third Temple and the Abomination of Desolation

The second corollary issue relevant to the modern State of Israel in Bible prophecy is the Third Temple and the Abomination of Desolation. There are four passages of Scripture describing this specific event that will occur in the middle of the Tribulation. The first is Daniel 9:27: *And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that makes desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate.*

The second passage is Matthew 24:15: *When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that reads understand).*

The third passage is II Thessalonians 2:3-4: *let no man beguile you in any*

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wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sits in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God.

And the fourth passage is Revelation 11:1-2: *And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it has been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.*

All four passages describe events that occur in relation to the Jewish Temple. In all of them, the events described take place in the middle of the Tribulation. The Abomination of Desolation takes place when the Antichrist breaks the seven-year covenant with Israel; he will take over the Jewish Temple, seat himself in the Holy of Holies, proclaim himself to be God Almighty, and call upon the whole world to worship him. Their acceptance of his deity will be signified by their taking of his mark of 666. What these texts do make clear is that the Temple is built and functioning by the time of the middle of the Tribulation.

1. The Prophecy

Since this event takes place in the middle of the Tribulation, how, then, is it relevant to the present theme on the modern Jewish State in Bible prophecy?

It is relevant in that it means that Israel is in control of the Temple Compound. The fact that these events take place in the middle of the Tribulation means that the Temple is both standing and functioning by the middle of the Tribulation, which, in turn, means that it must be rebuilt before that mid-point. There are two options as to when the Temple might be rebuilt. First, the Temple might be rebuilt during the first 3½ years of the Tribulation. The second option is that it might be rebuilt even before the Tribulation begins. It is impossible to be more exact than that; the only thing that can be known for sure is that by the mid-point of the Tribulation, the Temple is standing and has been functioning for a while.

While Israel became a state in 1948, the City of Jerusalem was divided for nineteen years. From 1948 until the Six-Day War in 1967, the eastern part of Jerusalem,, which is the biblical Jerusalem, the Old City where the Temple Compound is located, was in Jordanian, not Jewish, hands. In 1967, one of the by-products of the Six-Day War was the takeover of the Temple Compound. In other words, it was impossible to have the Temple rebuilt before 1967; it became a possibility only since 1967. This prophecy required the eventual Jewish control of the Temple Compound, and that happened in 1967. This is another way the modern Jewish State fits within Bible prophecy.

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2. The Preparations for the Third Temple

In spite of many rumors one hears today, there is no actual, active building of the Temple going on. But two things are happening that are relevant to the Third Temple.

First, there is one group in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, called the Temple Institute, that is making furnishings for the next Temple. They have already made a number of items, such as various tools and shovels to carry out the ashes from the Altar. They have made various jars and pitchers for the water oblations, wine oblations, and the pouring out of the blood. They have made the scarlet thread and the lots for the scapegoat. They have not as yet made the high priestly garments, but they are making the common priestly garments. They want to have all these things ready so that they can put these things immediately into use when the Third Temple is built.

Secondly, the *Ateret Hakohanim*, a group located in the Moslem Quarter of the Old City, is training priests to do sacrifices. The Tribe of Levi was the only tribe permitted by Mosaic Law to take care of the Temple and to conduct the sacrificial system. The Tribe of Levi is the one tribe that has kept its identity. Jews having names such as Levi, Levy, Levin, Leventhal, Levinson, Cohen, and other comparable names are members of the Tribe of Levi. But not all Levites can be priests, only those who are descendants of Aaron. The name of Cohen is the Hebrew word for "priest." Orthodox Cohens are being trained to do proper sacrifices so there will be Levitical priests ready to do these things once the Temple is rebuilt.

3. Questions Asked About the Temple

a. What About the Ark of the Covenant?

In some of the popular books on prophecy, there are reports of those who are looking for the Ark of the Covenant. They all seem to know where it is, but they have not been able to find it. The assumption is that it is necessary to have the Ark of the Covenant before the Temple can be rebuilt. They are trying to help God to fulfill His prophecies, as if God needs anyone's help.

The fact is, the Ark is not essential for the Temple to be rebuilt. When the Jews came back from the Babylonian Captivity and rebuilt the Second Temple, they had no Ark of the Covenant. The Second Temple stood from 515 B.C. to A.D. 70. For almost six hundred years, they brought blood into the Holy of Holies, but they sprinkled it without the Ark of the Covenant. The Temple standing in Jesus' day had no Ark of the Covenant. So it is not necessary to have the Ark for the Temple to be rebuilt or for the Temple to function.

Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that the Ark of the Covenant still exists. It was probably destroyed with the Babylonian destruction of

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the First Temple. Jeremiah 52:17-23 lists all of the things that Nebuchadnezzar took with him to Babylon and the text says the rest was destroyed by fire. This would include the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was merely a box of wood overlaid with gold, so all they needed to do was to strip off the gold and then burn the box. That is why, when they came back from Babylon after seventy years, there was no Ark of the Covenant to put in the Holy of Holies. If they could not find it after only seventy years, they will not be able to find it after two thousand five hundred years. Hence there is a lot of energy and money being spent for naught.

b. What About the Ashes of the Red Heifer?

The second issue that has to do with the Jewish Temple concerns the ashes of the red heifer. One particular teacher has been traveling around the country saying he knows where the ashes of the red heifer are, so give him money and he will find them for you! He goes on to say that they must have the ashes of the previous red heifer to mix with the new ones before the Temple can be dedicated. Again, this is not true. The laws of the ashes of the red heifer are found in Numbers 19, and there is nothing said about mixing them with the ashes of the previous red heifer. There is no need to find the old ones.

By Jewish law, when they are finally ready for the Temple to function, they will simply slaughter a red heifer, burn it, and then they will have the ashes required. At the present time, they are trying to produce a perfect red heifer to use. The Jewish concern is the production of a perfect red heifer born in Israel, not searching for the ashes of the previous red heifer.

C. The Invasion of Ezekiel 38 and 39

The third corollary issue relevant to the modern State of Israel in Bible prophecy is the invasion of Ezekiel 38 and 39. This passage describes a confederation of nations located north and south of Israel that invades Israel from the north. It goes beyond the purpose of this study to deal with the identification of these invaders or to discuss the timing of this invasion. The purpose here is to deal with two things found in this passage that are directly relevant for the modern Jewish State today.

1. The Israel of Ezekiel 38 and 39

First, what kind of Israel is described at the time of this invasion? This description is found in Ezekiel 38:8 and 12b. Verse 8 states: *After many days you shall be visited: in the latter years you shall come into the land that is brought back from the sword, that is gathered out of many peoples, upon the mountains of Israel, which have been a continual waste; but it is brought forth out of the peoples, and they shall dwell securely, all of them.*

Verse 12b states: *to turn your hand against the waste places that are now inhabited, and against the people that are gathered out of the nations, that have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the middle of the earth.*

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The Israel described in this passage is a nation that has been regathered from the nations around the world. It is a nation that is rebuilding wasted cities that have been lying desolate for many centuries, a nation that is regathered after being pursued by the sword. It is a regathering out of wrath. Contextually, it is a regathering in unbelief because they begin to believe only after this invasion. In other words, Ezekiel is not describing what was true of Israel in ancient history; what is described here has been true only since 1948. Regardless of one's view about the timing of this invasion, the main point to note is that this invasion could not have come before 1948; before then, there was no Israel that fit this description.

2. The Place of the Destruction of the Invading Armies

The second thing to note in this passage is exactly where the invading armies are destroyed. They do succeed in penetrating into the center of the country. Only then does God move to destroy them by His divine power. But where in the Land will they be destroyed? The exact location is revealed in Ezekiel 39:2 and 4a. Verse 2 states: *and I will turn you about, and will lead you on, and will cause you to come up from the uttermost parts of the north; and I will bring you upon the mountains of Israel.*
Verse 4a states: *You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel.*
When the prophet refers to *the mountains of Israel*, he refers to the central mountain range that makes up the backbone of the country. In the Old Testament, these mountains were known as the Hill Country of Ephraim and the Hill Country of Judah. Some of the famous biblical cities that lie within these mountains include: Dothan, Shechem, Samaria, Shiloh, Bethel, Ai, Ramah, Bethlehem, Hebron, Debir, and most importantly, Jerusalem, which seems to be the target of the invading army.

However, from 1948 until the Six-Day War in 1967, these mountains were not in Israel, they were in Jordan. They are now referred to politically as the "West Bank." Jordanian forces took over these mountains in 1948 and annexed them as part of Jordan. All Israel had was a small corridor of West Jerusalem. The border between Israel and Jordan ran down the foot of these mountains, then cut into the mountains, cutting Jerusalem in two, and then went out again and continued along the foot of these mountains. Israel had maybe five percent or less of the mountains, but for the most part, the mountains of Israel were in Jordan. Only since 1967 have the mountains of Israel been in Israel.

Besides the Temple Compound falling into Jewish hands, another by product of the Six-Day War is that these mountains also fell under Israeli sovereignty. Therefore, not only could this prophecy not have been fulfilled before 1948, it could not have been fulfilled before 1967 either; only at that point did *the mountains of Israel* fall under Israeli sovereignty. The point is that the mountains, the West Bank, are yet to

have a very important and relevant role in Bible prophecy. But for the present State, they became part of Israel in 1967. This is yet another way the modern Jewish State fits within Bible prophecy.

CONCLUSION

What has been done in this study is to point out that the Bible speaks of two worldwide regatherings. It is agreed that the present Jewish State is in no way a fulfillment of those prophecies that speak of worldwide regathering in faith in preparation for blessing. Rather, it is a fulfillment of those prophecies that speak of worldwide regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment.

A balance must be kept on the issue of Israel and Bible prophecy. On the one hand, the common tendency today is to see more fulfillment than there really is. On the other hand, one must not fail to see the fulfillment that is there: there is biblical prophetic significance to the present Jewish State.✡

NOTES