



The Heart of the Land



**Who does Israel
belong to?**

The Heart of the Land

Jeremiah 16: 4 & 15

“However, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when men will no longer say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt’, but they will say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where He had banished them.’ For I will restore them to the land I gave their forefathers.”

In the early 90’s when these verses were on the lips of many owing to the vast Russian Aliyah (return of Jewish people to the Land). However, it is worth noting that these verses not only refer to the Jewish return from the north but also to their return from all the countries where God had banished them. That this return is ongoing is clearly another example of the Lord’s faithfulness in fulfilling His word. The conclusion of verse 15 reminds us of the destination of their return, it is of course to the Land He gave to their forefathers, the Land of Israel.

Much is written in His word about this Land and for many years now the world’s media has also referred to it (usually on a daily basis) in some context or other. But what does the Bible actually say on this subject and in particular what are the promises related to the Land?

Genesis 12: 6 - 7

“Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.”

Here we can see the promise to give the Land to Abram’s offspring. But where was he when God made the promise? According to verse 6 he was at Shechem (site of modern day Nablus).

Genesis 13 - 15

“The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, ‘Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.’” Here we can again see the Lord promising the Land to Abram and his offspring, although now the word “forever” is included. But where was he when the promise was made?

Genesis 13: 3

“From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier” And then verses 17 and 18 of the same chapter “Go walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.” So Abram moved his tent and went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the Lord.” Logically then in view of these verses we can confidently assume that he was somewhere between Bethel and Hebron.

Genesis 28: 12 - 13

“He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and he said: ‘I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.’” Here we read of God’s promise to give the Land to Jacob and his offspring. But at that moment in time where was Jacob?

Genesis 28 vs 18 & 19: “Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.” So according to verses 18 and 19 he was at Bethel.

At this point it is worth noting the location of the three places mentioned. As we can see on the adjoining map they all lie within the confines of Judea and Samaria (referred to by the nations as the West Bank). Certainly these verses in Genesis do not stand alone in recording the promises of the land to the Patriarchs and their offspring. There are of course several more.

While the locations at which these promises were made are not always mentioned, it is reasonable to assume through the context that the majority of them were also made within this territory. Conversely, it is interesting to note that at no point does the book of Genesis suggest or even hint at the possibility that such promises were made while the Patriarchs were strolling along the beach at Jaffa - situated beside present day Tel Aviv or Acre or anywhere else along the coastal strip. (Some might refer to Isaac at Gerar in Genesis 26, but even this is some 10 to 15 miles inland.) In view of this it seems logical to conclude that Judea and Samaria (The West Bank) and not Tel Aviv and the coastal strip, are actually the heart of the Promised Land.

Psalms 105: 8 - 11

“He remembers His covenant forever, the word He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath He swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit.”

Clearly these verses serve to confirm the promises made in relation to the Land. Note that in verse 8 the word “forever” is used and the word “everlasting” appears in verse 10. It is apparent therefore that these promises are not temporary in nature. In fact, they are in effect for at least as long as planet earth continues to exist.

Ezekiel 36 contains further revelation regarding the Lord’s plans for the Land. In verse 1 the prophet is commanded to speak to the mountains of Israel. “Son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say, ‘O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord.’”

As we delve deeper into the chapter we begin to see His purposes for those mountains. Verses 8 to 12 for example make clear that the Lord intends that multitudes of His people live on those mountains. “But you, O mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home. I am concerned for you and will look on you with favour; you will be ploughed and sown, and I will multiply the number of people upon you, even the whole house of Israel. The towns will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. I will increase the number of men and animals upon you, and they will be fruitful and become numerous. I will settle people on you as in the past and will make you prosper more than before. Then you will know that I am the Lord. I will cause people, my people Israel, to walk upon you. They will possess you, and you will be their inheritance; you will never again deprive them of their children.”

The mountains of Israel

Is the Lord referring to Mount Tabor, Mount Carmel, Mount Hermon and the Golan Heights or is He perhaps referring to the hills of the Galilee? Well actually the term “mountains of Israel” again refers primarily to mountains and hills of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). Obviously this fact only serves to reinforce the reality that Judea and Samaria are actually the heart of the Promised Land. Consequently we shouldn’t be surprised therefore that the Lord wants multitudes of His People to live there. Nor should we be surprised that the world actively tries to oppose this.

In fact, any of us with even a minor interest in current affairs knows that for many years now the world has sought to insert a Palestinian state into this territory. Obviously the scriptures we have just read indicate that not only is this not God’s will, but it is actually the complete opposite of it. That Jerusalem itself is situated on these mountains is surely not coincidental. Neither can it be considered a coincidence that the three Patriarchs are all buried on these mountains, at Hebron. Clearly these factors again strengthen the reality that this is the very heart of the Promised Land. Sadly the nations are so deceived on this matter that whenever plans are announced to build homes for Jewish people in this territory, the government of Israel is harshly condemned. In addition, intense pressure is directed against Israel in the hope that these decisions will be reversed.

Often world leaders proclaim that such moves violate international law. Obviously that depends on how international law is interpreted. It certainly seems that these pronouncements are made without due consideration of certain relevant legal factors. Nevertheless, as believers in Yeshua (Jesus) we know that God’s promises far outweigh any man-made laws. Therefore the ongoing actions and attitudes of the nations actually put them in great danger. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that they are in fact on a collision course with God.

As we dig further into Ezekiel 36 it is important to take note of the consequences of this Jewish return to the Land and in particular to the Mountains of Israel. Read

verses 24 to 28: “For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep My laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be My people, and I will be your God.”

Clearly the results are of great significance. In summation they are a restoration of the relationship between the people of Israel and the God of Israel. No wonder the powers of darkness so intensely resist the movement of Jewish people into Judea and Samaria.

Hopefully for those who pray for the Land and People of Israel, this study will bring encouragement and perhaps additional revelation. Obviously it’s important to pray for the ongoing return of the Jewish people to the Land. However, in light of God’s word it would be especially fitting to pray that increasing numbers of them along with native born Israelis would take up residence in Judea and Samaria. I believe that the current Jewish population there is only a tiny fraction of the multitudes God wants. Clearly we can expect to see the Lord rectify this situation. Quite possibly He will use Aliyah along with future events and their consequences to facilitate this.

Endorsement

In this article, Andrew Lessey offers God’s answer to the question “Who owns the Land?” and explains that ultimately it was the Lord who gave this Land to Abraham and only the Lord who could take it back. Israel was sent into exile because of their sin. However, what we have witnessed in the last century or so is the Lord creating situations to cause His people to come back to His Land. Ezekiel says that it was for the Honour of His Name. But in doing so, this return would be the opportunity for them to respond to the new covenant that would redeem them from their sin. The Bible is clear that the Battle today over who owns the Land is part of this spiritual battle over who is the true and living God. There is no doubt that in the end, all the Nations will know that He is the Lord.

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