

Mine Eyes Are Upon All Their Ways

“I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, ... and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill. ... For mine eyes are upon all their ways.”

—*Jeremiah 16:15-17*

THIS YEAR MARKS THE 75th anniversary of the reestablishment of Israel as a nation in 1948. In our opening passage of prophetic Scripture, the Lord explains that he would send “fishers” to entice, and then “hunters” to compel the people of Israel to return to the land given “unto their fathers.” He also explains that, in sending the fishers and hunters among his people, it would be because his eyes were “upon all their ways.”

The implication of this prophecy is that God would permit many experiences to come upon his people during the end of

the present Gospel Age, including much trouble. This trouble would not be an evidence of his disfavor, but rather as evidence of his favor in shaping their circumstances in such a manner as to turn their faces toward the land of promise. History thus shows us that this “hunting” was accomplished by the persecutions under Nazi Germany, by which the Jews were driven out of Europe during World War II.

Some may ask, if God’s favor was to be the result of the events that eventually brought them back to their land, why did the Jews experience one of the most severe periods of persecution in their long history? We read, “As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.”—Ezek. 20:33-37

According to this prophecy, the Israelites were to be brought out from the countries where they had been residing by what is described as the Lord’s “fury.” Furthermore, Ezekiel’s prophecy declares that in doing this he would be ruling over his people. These were to be signs that divine favor was now gradually returning to them. The illustration used in this prophecy gives us the proper understanding.

He says, "I will bring you into the wilderness of the people," and again, "Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you."

God's favor was upon his people when, in the person of Moses, he visited them and delivered them from their slavery. Even so, it was a trying time for the Israelites in times of old. It was necessary for them to experience some of the plagues which came upon the Egyptians in order to encourage them to follow Moses out of bondage. In leaving Egypt, they did not move directly from Egypt to Canaan, the land of promise, but shortly found themselves in the wilderness where their circumstances were most difficult.

The prophecy foretold a similar experience when he would bring them out from among the nations wherever they had been scattered. Their uprooting from the Gentile nations would not immediately result in a peaceful and secure settlement in their land. Instead, there was to be a long wilderness experience, a time of uncertainty and insecurity such as we have witnessed, particularly in the events of the past one hundred years.

After much in the way of severe trouble, by the ruling of the United Nations on November 29, 1947, the land of Palestine was apportioned, partly to the Arabs and partly to the Jews. Later, on May 14, 1948, the Jewish provisional government proclaimed a new State of Israel. It is perhaps this situation that is referred to by the Prophet Joel in reference to the time when the Lord would be restoring his people to their land. The prophecy reads, "In those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and

Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.”—Joel 3:1,2

THE BOND OF THE COVENANT

From this and other relative prophecies, as well as the passage of 75 years since their rebirth as a nation, it is evident that God’s full purpose in the restoration of Israel to the land of promise is not yet accomplished. Considering further the prophecy of Ezekiel, it is noted that God’s intent in uprooting the Israelites from among the nations in which they were living has been that they should ultimately be brought “into the bond of the covenant.”

This is similar to the sequence of events experienced by ancient Israel when delivered from slavery in Egypt. At that time, they were first brought into the wilderness and then into the bond of the Law Covenant, mediated by Moses at Mount Sinai. (Exod. 24:3-8) The bringing of the Israelites into the bond of the promised “New Covenant” is the ultimate design of the Lord in the experiences through which he has been presently leading them.—Jer. 31:31-34

In fulfillment of this purpose, Israel’s bitter experiences during the past century have served merely to point to a beginning, a key element of which we have seen to be the granting of Israel the right to return to the land of their forefathers and to establish a national home. Thus, it is evident that God’s dealings with his ancient people are being accomplished according to his own purpose and in his own due time.

FOR GOD'S GLORY

Beginning with Ezekiel 36:16, and continuing through chapters 37, 38 and 39, various aspects of God's dealings with Israel at the time of their restoration are presented. In these chapters, God's Word declares his purpose in restoring them to the land of promise. We read, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went." (Ezek. 36:22) In the previous verse, the Lord tells us, "I had pity for mine holy name."

In this we are reminded of an interesting facet of God's dealings with his people. The thought is first introduced in a prayer by Moses, in which he reveals his concern for the glory of God's name. The Lord had told him that, because of the Israelites' transgressions, he proposed to destroy them all, and build a new nation with Moses.—Exod. 32:9,10

In prayer, Moses replied to this, "Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever."—Exod. 32:11-13

In response to Moses' prayer, God determined not to destroy Israel. In another account of this episode, we learn that Moses asked the Lord to pardon his people Israel, and he responded by saying, "I have pardoned according to thy word: But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers."—Num. 14:20-23

Concerning the time that God, by his great power, delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage, we read, "So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day." (Neh. 9:10) Moses emphasized the point at issue in connection with the glory of God's name by referring to the oath-bound promise that had been made to Abraham concerning the land of Canaan as being an everlasting possession for this people. Moses was concerned as to how this promise could be fulfilled if God were to destroy the Israelites and then establish a new nation.

Moses felt that if God were to thus allow this people to die in the wilderness, it would prove either his unwillingness to fulfill his promises, or his inability to do so. However, to him to whom a thousand years are "but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night," the ability to pardon and to save his people in the wilderness was only a temporary consideration. (Ps. 90:4) If God was to maintain the glory of his name and the integrity of his promises by keeping this people alive and eventually giving them the land of promise as an everlasting

possession, it would have to be accomplished through long centuries of time and in full harmony with all of his divine purposes.

The Jewish people have always been a persecuted minority. Almost any other people under similar circumstances would have given up the determination to continue their identity as a people, and would have been assimilated by the larger, and more favored, nationalities and races. God's protection has kept them intact as a people by restoring them to their land when his due time came, and he has thus continued to magnify the glory of his name in them.

THE RESURRECTION

The glory of God's name in connection with the restoration of the Jews to the land of promise involves much more than the returning of a certain percentage of recent generations to the region of Palestine. However, this is an important piece in the fulfillment of his promises. Those Jews dwelling in the land of Israel will be among the first to begin receiving the blessings of God's promised kingdom. (Matt. 6:10) This will be at the time when the whole earth is under the righteous rule of Christ. (Heb. 1:1-3; 12:2) Furthermore, the work of restoration will continue even on behalf of all those who have died in past generations.

We will fail to appreciate the full significance of God's promises if we overlook the resurrection feature of his plan of the ages. As we have seen, the Israelites were uprooted from the many countries in Europe, and elsewhere in which they were dwelling, just as he brought up the ancient people of

Israel from Egyptian bondage. Thus far, as then, his people have entered merely into a “wilderness” condition. However, God’s grand objective is to bring them into the bond of the New Covenant, in fulfillment of the words of the Prophet Ezekiel.

This will be true of those who have died, as well as those who are living at the time when the Messianic kingdom begins. The resurrection of the Israelites is described as bringing them back from captivity, not merely from bondage to other nations, but from the captivity of death. In this connection, the Lord further promises, “I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.”—Ezek. 16:62

Of the Israelites who are restored at that time, God said, “Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.” (Ezek. 36:31) This will be true, not only of the then living generation, but also of those who are raised from the dead thereafter.

Returning again to Ezekiel chapter 16, we read, “I will turn again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them; that thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be ashamed because of all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them.”—vss. 53,54, *American Standard Version*

ALL HAVE SINNED

The Israelites as a people, or nation, have perhaps been neither more nor less righteous than any

other race or nation. As members of the fallen race, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23) In this and other respects, God has been pleased to use the Jews as symbolic of the whole world of mankind, among which only a few individuals—one here and one there—have been fully faithful to the Lord.

The prophecy of Ezekiel 16:53-63 reveals that when the Israelites are brought forth from the captivity of death, they will at first be ashamed and confounded. The Prophet Daniel reveals that this will occur following the great time of trouble with which the present Gospel Age comes to an end.

Through Daniel, the Lord said, “At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”—Dan. 12:1-3

Daniel’s people who were promised deliverance from death, are God’s people—his human creation. All are “written in the book” in the sense that they are assured an awakening, in due time, from the sleep of death. Many of them will come forth to shame as the prophet points out. This will not be unending shame, however, for the word here translated “everlasting” denotes “age-abiding.” (*Rotherham Emphasized Bible*) When the Israelites’ shame has accomplished its purpose in humbling them, it will pass away, as will also be true of all nations and people.

God's promise to Abraham concerning the land was unconditional. (Gen. 12:7; 13:15) Later, however, he placed a condition upon the high honor of being his representative in the teaching and blessing of the world. This condition was obedience to the covenant of statutes and laws he had given them. "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." (Exod. 19:5,6) In the original setting forth of these conditions, no mention is made that later a spiritual seed of Abraham was to be developed, also based upon the conditions of faith and obedience as explained in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul.—Gal. 3:27-29

Throughout the ages of the past, prior to the time of Jesus' First Advent, many were faithful to God's Law, and thus qualified to be his special servants under the terms set forth in Exodus 19:5,6. Many who preceded the Law given to Israel were likewise faithful to God. All of these were thus proven worthy of that "better resurrection" outlined by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 11:35.

A SPIRITUAL CLASS

Beginning with Jesus, and subsequently since the Day of Pentecost, a spiritual class began to be developed under the terms of faith and obedience. The first of this class was selected exclusively from the natural seed of Abraham. However, because of Israel's disobedience, the invitation was extended

to Gentiles to make up the foreordained number of the spiritual seed. Throughout the present Gospel Age those of the Lord's people who have faithfully met the proper conditions of consecration and continue to be submissive to the will of God, will thus participate in the future work of blessing both Israel and the whole world of mankind.

God, through the Prophet Isaiah, speaks symbolically of two classes that will assist fallen mankind in the ways of righteousness under the administration of Christ's kingdom. He says, "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."—Isa. 2:2,3

TWO PHASES OF THE KINGDOM

In the concluding portion of this wonderful prophecy, we note that Isaiah specifically mentions two separate groups, one spiritual and the other earthly, who will carry out the will of God during Christ's kingdom, "for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." Zion represents the glorified spiritual class, with Christ as its Head, who will function as the Mediator of the New Covenant, in the administration of righteousness over the affairs of mankind. John the Revelator also speaks of this faithful class, "I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on

Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.”—Rev. 14:1, *New American Standard Bible*

The earthly representatives of Christ’s kingdom will share in dispensing, as Isaiah states, “The word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” These worthies of old lived prior to the time of our Lord’s earthly ministry, and Apostle Paul explains, “These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the [heavenly] promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”—Matt. 11:11; Heb. 11:39,40

Under these two faithful groups—the spiritual class and the earthly class—the rest of mankind will learn to know, love and serve the Lord. What a glorious prospect for the poor groaning creation of the present time. Let us rejoice in God’s past and present dealings with his people, Israel, and realize that their experiences are merely a foretaste of God’s ultimate plan to restore and bless all mankind, Jew and Gentile alike. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come, And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—Rev.22:17 ■