

# Teaching *from* Zion

“...for out of Zion shall come forth Torah  
and the word of the Lord from  
Jerusalem.” -Isaiah 2:3



*Land of Desire*

# Land of Desire

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# News From Netivyah

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It is not possible to write news about Netivyah without expressing the very difficult and dangerous developments in our region. What was called the "Arab Spring" three years ago is now becoming a deep and dark "Arab winter." There is a vast sea of terror from Mesopotamia in the North East (Syria and Iraq) all the way down to Egypt and stretching through the Sahara Desert to Algiers and beyond. Within Israel's borders, every day there are more violent riots and terrorist attacks.

Netivyah is one of the pioneer organizations that worked for the reconciliation between Arab and Jewish brothers. Our main interest has always been the Jewish people in Israel, but we have always worked, evangelized, blessed and fellowshipped with our Arab brothers. Over the years of ministry, we have never felt so concerned for the Middle East as we do now. All of this can be rather depressing to us who seek peace and reconciliation, but we must never give up nor cease to pray. Israel is an island of sanity, righteousness, and justice in the midst of this sordid sea of terrorism. Within Israel, Netivyah is an island of good news despite all the bad news around us. I ask that you would pray for Israel, for Jerusalem, and for Netivyah.

The big news for Netivyah is that our new building is coming together wonderfully. The windows, floor and elevator are in place. Now we are working on the seats in the Synagogue and the professional kitchen. Please continue to pray for Netivyah and the building project. We plan, Lord willing, to have the dedication service in Purim of 2015. During the biblical Holidays in September and October our services were so full that many arrived a little late and found there were no more seats available. Some actually came and decided to leave as soon as the door of the elevator opened and they saw that there was barely room to stand. This is a blessing and we pray that the new building will suffice for at least a few years so that we may serve all our local brothers and sisters as well as visiting guests.

This issue of Teaching from Zion is about the Land of Israel and restoration. There are two main aspects to this topic: 1) The return of the Jewish people to the land and the rebuilding of the ancient cities according to prophecy. 2) The restoration of Israel's spiritual heritage of Israel. The return to the Land brings a return to the basic biblical principles that in the Diaspora were not relevant. One of the most fabulous things in Israel is that many of the great leaders who have built the country, although not religious in Modern Orthodox Jewish terms, were great students of the Bible.

We are slowly but surely producing good material in the Teaching from Zion magazine, on our web page ([www.netivyah.org](http://www.netivyah.org)) and for the Kol HaYeshua Radio. I encourage you to enter our web page and sign up to receive the "Jerusalem Prayer List" that I send out weekly with news updates from Netivyah and something from the word of God. Please keep us in your prayers and remember Jerusalem. The sounds of the battle for Jerusalem are already reaching a crescendo level. Jerusalem needs your prayers and your support.





# Land Of Israel, People Of God, Promises Of God

David H. Stern Ph.D, M. Div.

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God promises the Land of Israel to the Jews – to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-7, 13:14-17, 15:7-20, 17:1-22); to Isaac (Genesis 26:1-5), to Jacob (Genesis 28:1-4, 28:10-20, 35:9-12, 48:3-4), to Moses (Exodus 6:2-8, 23:26-32, 32:11-14), and to Joshua (Joshua 1:2-9). This promise has not been revoked, and, like all of God’s promises, it will be fulfilled through Yeshua the Jewish Messiah, Lord and Savior of all humankind -- Jews, Arabs and everyone else. For in him all of God’s promises are Yea and Amen (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Mainstream Christianity has gone through fantastic exercises, distorting vast areas of theology, in avoiding this obvious truth, stated

by God century after century in the Hebrew Bible, which, together with the New Testament, constitute God’s exclusive inspired Word to humanity.

More specifically, these distortions have affected the theology of the People of God (ecclesiology, “Israelology”), the theology of salvation (soteriology) in its corporate aspects, the theology of the covenants, the theology of the Torah (“the Law”), the theology of God’s promises, and, of course, the theology of the Land. Much of this has resulted from a mistaken effort, dating from at least the second century, to divorce the Church from the Jewish people -- in contradiction to

Ephesians 2:11-12, which states that Gentile Christians have, through their faith in Yeshua, been “brought near” to the commonwealth of Israel, not left it or replaced it!

To see what a correct theology of the Land should be, we must try to correct the most egregious of these theological mistakes. For the theology of the Land is a relatively minor part of theology as a whole. Conclusions reached in these more important areas of theology determine the possibilities available for a theology of the Land. Mistakes in those areas will produce mistakes in the theology of the Land.

## People of God Mistakes

The people of God are a chosen people, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, witnesses for God, a people with a mission, a people with a Book, and a blessing to the nations. The Bible applies such descriptions both to the Church and to the Jewish people. Therefore any proper theology of God’s people must take account of both Jews and Christians. Not only that, it must take account of Messianic Jews as being 100% Jewish and 100% New Testament believers.

The usual theologies of God’s people, both Jewish and Christian, are too simple. Much of non-Messianic Jewish theology, of course, portrays the Jews as God’s people and takes no account of the Church at all. The Rambam (Rabbi Mosheh Ben-Maimon or Maimonides, 1135-1204) and his followers broke new ground by concluding that Yeshua and Mohammed had brought many Gentiles to a true though imperfect faith in the God of Israel. Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) developed this into Two-Covenant Theology, which says that Christians are saved and come to the Father (Yochanan/John 14:6) through Yeshua and his New Covenant, but Jews don’t need him or it because they are already with the Father through the Mosaic Covenant. (Some Christian theologians, e.g., Reinhold Niebuhr and Rosemary Reuther, in an attempt to

honor Jewish sensibilities, especially since the Holocaust, bought into Two-Covenant Theology and used it as an excuse not to evangelize Jews -- in direct violation of the New Testament’s Great Commission. But that is another issue.)

The simplest Christian theology of the people of God, Replacement Theology, says not that the Church has been “brought near” to the Jews, who remain God’s people, but has replaced the Jews as God’s people. The erroneous rationale often used is that the Jews rejected Jesus and therefore lost the blessings promised them (e.g., Deuteronomy 28:1-14) and receive only the curses (e.g., Deuteronomy 28:15-68). At best they are portrayed as just one of the nations, no longer having any special status with God. According to this theology the Jews have no longer any promise from God concerning the Land of Israel because they are no longer God’s people. Unfortunately this antisemitic theology remains the most widespread in the Church, and efforts to patch it up or hide its antisemitic thrust fool no one except those who want to be fooled. (I have intentionally avoided the term Covenant Theology in this paragraph, because some versions of Covenant Theology do not espouse the replacement concept. However, many versions do.)

In the 19th century Dispensationalist Theology, attempting to present a more balanced and less anti-Jewish view, one that would see that the Jews have not become merely another nation, portrayed them as God’s earthly people and the Christians as God’s heavenly people. This strict separation of roles did not deal with the problem of Messianic Jews -- do we ascend at the Rapture with the Church or remain below, loyal to our Jewish people? Either profoundly unsatisfying answer demonstrates the absurdity and inadequacy of this theological solution to the question of God’s people.

Any right theology of the people of God must account not for one or two groups but three.

Romans 11:17-26, in the analogy of the olive tree, depicts natural cut-off branches (non-Messianic Jews), grafted-in wild branches (Gentile Christians) and formerly cut-off but now regrafted-in natural branches (Messianic Jews). I use the term “Olive Tree Theology” for a theology of the people of God which acknowledges that the Jews and the Church are each imperfect subpeoples of God, and that Messianic Jews belong to both. Without foreclosing on the eschatological possibilities, this theology must surely postulate that when all Israel is saved (Romans 11:26), the two subpeoples will, at least in some senses, become one.

How did the Christian theologies of God’s people miss this? The chief reason must be, as I suggested earlier, the tendency to disassociate the Church from its Jewish roots, an essentially antisemitic enterprise. But I can imagine another more mundane explanation: I suppose theologians, like the rest of the human race, are lazy, and prefer not having to deal with all three groups at once if they can get by with a theory involving only one or two of them!

God has not rejected his people Israel (Romans 11:1); he will not cast them off, at least not until the sun and moon cease to exist (Jeremiah 31:35-37). The immediately preceding verses (Jeremiah 31:31-34) are the very ones and the only ones that specifically hold out the promise of a “new covenant” (which is made not with the Church but with the house of Judah and the house of Israel). The authority of the New Testament itself depends on those verses. How then can one make void the next three verses, which make the people Israel and therefore the promise of the Land virtually eternal?

In conclusion, a right theology must clearly show that the Jews are still God’s people -- or, more accurately, along with the Church, one of God’s two sub-peoples. If this is so, one must stop questioning whether God’s promises to the Jews are still valid and instead ask how they apply

in the present context. That means asking how God’s promise that the Jews will have the Land of Israel as an everlasting possession is going to be, or is already being, fulfilled.

## Soteriology Mistakes

The individualistic Protestant Western world tends to stress the individual aspects of salvation. But the Bible, reflecting a Middle Eastern viewpoint that is still widely held today, gives comparable weight to corporate aspects. One way in which this is done is by identifying the individual leading God’s people with the people as a whole, as, for example, at 1 Kings 9:3-9, where God adjures King Solomon that his obedience or disobedience will determine Israel’s future. Clearly the New Testament, written by Jews, continues this cultural pattern of identifying the king with his people in portraying Yeshua as the head of his Body, the Church (Ephesians 1:22-23). Less well understood is the fact that Yeshua is also similarly identified with the Jewish people. This is expressed indirectly by Mattai (Matthew). At Matthew 2:15 he cites Hosea 11:1 (“Out of Egypt I called my son”), which the author considers “fulfilled” by Yeshua’s return from Egypt to the Land of Israel.

‘Fulfilled’ how? What is the “fulfilment”? Surely the verse in its context refers to the exodus of the Jewish people under Moses, and “my son” does not speak of Yeshua but alludes to Exodus 4:22, where the people of Israel are collectively called God’s “son.” By the novelty of referring Hosea 11:1 to Yeshua, Mattai hints at a deep truth, that Yeshua and his people Israel, the Jewish people, are intimately identified one with the other.

Yet while there are such things as deep truths, it will not do to say, as Replacement Theology does, that specific promises to the Jewish people are somehow mystically “fulfilled in Yeshua” already. The promise of the Land of Israel is forever, and the plain sense of this is that the Jewish people will possess this Land (at least in

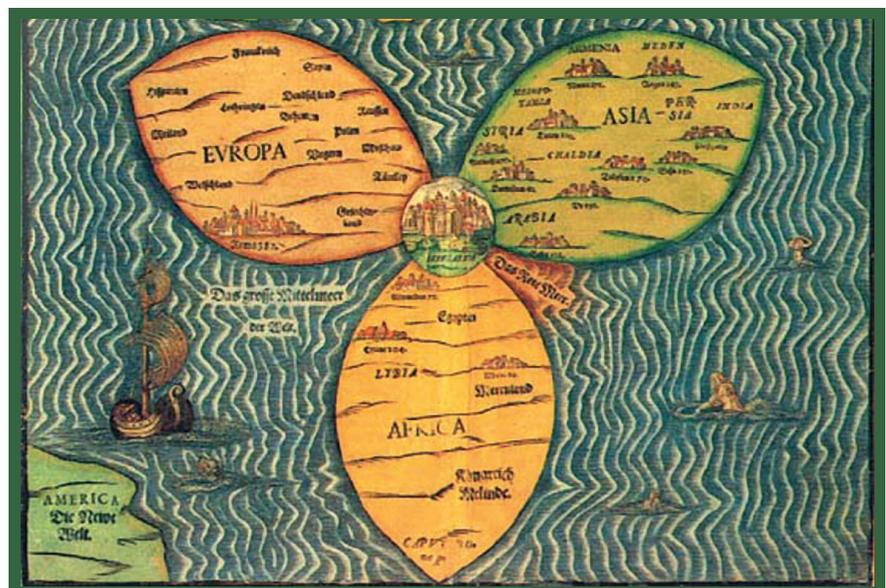
trusteeship; see below, numbered paragraph 4) and live there. To say that the New Covenant transforms this plain sense into an assertion that those who believe in Yeshua come into some vague spiritual “possession” of a spiritual “territory” is intellectual sleight-of-hand aimed at denying, cancelling and reducing to nought a real promise given to real people in the real world! This is an intellectually unacceptable way of dealing with a text or with ideas.

Nevertheless, those who insist that all of God’s promises to the Jews now apply willy-nilly to all believers in Yeshua, regardless of for whom they were intended, and not to the Jewish people (for whom they were intended) must consider this: there are Jews who are believers. Why shouldn’t these Jewish believers constitute the present basis for God’s continuing to consider the Jewish people the recipients of the promise of the Land? Why should the literal meaning of the promise be cancelled and replaced by a spiritual/allegorical application to all believers? Why should this promise apply, in a literal sense, to Gentiles of any kind, whether believers or not? The Messianic Jews are the “righteous remnant” (Romans 9:6-18) for whose sake God always extends himself -- whether for ten in Sodom (Genesis 18:22-32) or for seven thousand in Elijah’s day (Romans 11:1-7).

This is all the more so because at Romans 11:16 the Messianic Jews are called the “firstfruits” of the Jewish people, with the stated necessary implication that “the whole lump,” i.e., the Jewish people as a whole, “is holy.” As if this were not enough, it is in this same section of Romans (chapters 9-11) that Sha’ul (Paul) reminds his readers that “the promises,” which include the

promise of the Land, belong to his “kinsmen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:3-4). Finally, Isaiah 51:10 says that “the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their head.” If these “redeemed of the Lord” who “come with singing unto Zion” are not the Messianic Jews now living in the Land, then who are they? In sum, even if there were not other reasons, God’s promise of the Land to the Jewish people would remain literally valid today for the sake of the faithful remnant, the Messianic Jews.

It is common for Christians to suppose that the New Testament has little or nothing to say about the Land. In fact the New Testament refers no less than 18 times to the Land, although most



New Testament translations conceal that fact. The Greek phrase *gē* is usually translated “the earth,” but in the New Testament it often refers to the Land of Israel. Two references are explicit -- Mattai 2:20-21 calls the Holy Land “Eretz-Israel” (“the Land of Israel”) -- neither the New Testament nor the Old ever calls it Palestine. Four are citations from the Tanakh -- Matt. 5:5 (Psalm 37:11, where the context requires the rendering, “the meek shall inherit” not the earth but “the Land”); Matt. 24:30 and Rev. 1:7 (Zechariah 12:10, 14, “all the [twelve Jewish] tribes of the

Land shall mourn”), and Ephesians 6:3 (Deut. 5:17, the “first commandment with promise... that you may live long in the Land”). Five are based on the Tanakh without being direct citations -- Luke 4:25 and Ya’akov (James) 5:17, 5:18 (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 45); Messianic Jews (Hebrews) 11:9 (Genesis 12, 13, 15, 20, 23); and Revelation 20:9 (Ezekiel 38-39). The remaining eight are implied by the context (Matt 5:13, 10:34, 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 12:51, 21:23, 23:44; and Rev. 11:10). Clearly the physical Land of Israel is not ignored in the New Testament.

Dispensationalists sometimes regard Romans 9-11 as a “parenthesis” in Sha’ul’s argument, understood as moving directly from Chapter 8 to Chapter 12. This is an error in analysis. Chapters 9-11 form a crucial part of the thread of Sha’ul’s

separate us believers from the love of God that comes through Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord.

“But,” asks his Gentile Christian reader in Rome, “What about the Jews? God made them so many promises, yet they have not, as a people, accepted Yeshua’s Messiahship. They have gotten off the track. How can God bless them with the fulfillment of these many promises if they turn away from the Messiah? And, more to the personal point, how can I, a Gentile Christian in Rome, trust God to fulfill his promises to me that you have told me about if I can’t see how God will fulfill these much older promises to the Jews?”

Sha’ul thus is obligated to talk at this point in his argument about the Jewish people and God’s



thought in the Letter to the Romans. In Chapter 8 he brings his description of the process of individual salvation to its climax with a series of amazing promises to believers in Yeshua, culminating in the assertion that nothing can

promises to them. His answer is that while there is and always has been a believing remnant (in the present dispensation, the Messianic Jews), it will be through the ministry of the Gentiles to the Jews that “all Israel” (Israel’s majority or

Israel's establishment -- not necessarily every single Jew) "will be saved" (Romans 11:26); moreover, God will fulfill all his promises to Israel, for "God's gifts and calling are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29) -- and one should surely consider God's promise of the Land to the Jews a "gift," in the sense of this verse. Only now, after this reassurance that God remains faithful to his people the Jews and will fulfill his promises to them, promises which include permanent possession of the Land of Israel, can the non-Jewish Roman Christian be confident enough in God's promises to him to be able to pay attention to Sha'ul's instructions in Chapters 12-15. That's why Romans 9-11 is not a parenthesis.

## Covenantal Mistakes

Space does not allow me to analyze in depth the errors found in Christian theologies of the covenants and of the Torah, but the above discussion hints at the directions I would take in addressing these aspects of Christian theology on which a correct theology of the Land of Israel depends.

Basically, there are two points I would make. First, I would follow Paul's argument in Galatians 3:15 ff. that a later covenant cannot cancel an earlier one. He says that the Mosaic Covenant, made 430 years after the Abrahamic one, does not abolish the Abrahamic Covenant and its promises. Likewise, I would argue that the New Covenant does not abolish either the Abrahamic or the Mosaic Covenant, both of which contain promises concerning the Land. Nor would the New Covenant abolish prophecies made by the prophets of Israel long after Moses died, up through and including such prophets as Zechariah, who lived after the Babylonian Exile and still promised a return of the Jews to the Land -- which proves that the post-Babylon return did not exhaust or entirely fulfill these promises (some Christian

theologies regard the return from Babylon as a complete fulfillment of God's promise that the Jews will return to the Land).

Second, I would take note of the fact that the promises and laws of these covenants and of the Torah do not all apply to everyone. For example, the Torah requires the king of Israel to write a Torah scroll and read it. This law applies to only one person in all of Israel -- no one else has to write a Torah scroll. If, as I believe, Torah still applies today (and, by my understanding of Hebrews 8:6 the New Testament itself has been made Torah -- see my Jewish New Testament Commentary, *ad loc.*), one should not suppose that every believer is required to write a Torah scroll. This is a law that applies not to all Israel, or all leaders or all priests (*cohanim*), but only to the king. Similarly, there are many laws and promises in the Torah which apply to the Jewish people but are not transferred to all believers. So it is that the Land is given not to all of God's people but to the Jews alone.

## Messianic Land Theology

Here are additional principles and factors to be taken into account by anyone who would develop a comprehensive biblical theology of the Land of Israel.

1. Why does the Torah (the Pentateuch) start with the story of the creation of the world? RaShI (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, 1040-1105) answers: "In case the nations would say to Israel, 'You are bandits because you conquered and destroyed the land of the seven Canaanite nations,' Israel can respond by saying, 'The whole earth is the Lord's; he created it all, and he gave it to whom he pleased. By his will he gave it to them, and by his will he took it from them.'"
2. The borders of the Promised Land are sometimes not stated (Gen. 12:3ff., 13:15-17).

Sometimes they are stated generally (Ex. 23:31, “from the Reed [Red] Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the Desert to the River,” that is, to the Euphrates; Deut 34:1 and Judges 20:1, “from Dan to Be’er-sheva”). And sometimes the boundaries are stated very specifically (the description of the tribal borders in the book of Joshua).

3. The promise is forever (Gen. 24:5, 7, no time limit; Gen. 48:4, Lev. 25:4, Josh. 14:9, “an everlasting possession”; Ps. 105:7-11, “a thousand generations,” which, biblically speaking, is 40,000 years).

4. However, God can not only bring his people into the Land of Promise, their eternal possession, at his will, but he can and does remove them at his will. He does the latter in response to their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28), but he returns them by his grace (Ezekiel 36, Jeremiah 31, Deuteronomy 29-30). Thus eternal possession does not imply continuous habitation; rather, a trusteeship model is more appropriate.

5. There is no relationship whatever between the Philistines of biblical times and the Palestinians of today, The Philistines were descended from Yefet (Japheth), while the Palestinians are Arabs descended from Shem. The Philistines originally came from Cyprus (Caftor) and lived mostly in five cities near the seacoast – Gath, Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, The name Palestine was introduced by the Romans after they conquered the Land; it was based on the name Philistines and was meant to be insulting to the Jewish people. But the name Palestine had staying power and was how Jewish people referred to the Land up until the founding of the

State of Israel in 1948. For example, the Jewish founders of the newspaper “The Jerusalem Post,” originally called it “The Palestine Post.” The use of the term Palestinians for Arabs in Israel became widespread only in the 1960’s.

In the modern development of Land theology, non-Messianic Jews have understandably led the way. Two such pioneers were Avraham Kook, Israel’s first Chief Rabbi, and his son Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, whose views are summarized in his book *Torat Eretz Yisrael* (“Doctrine of the Land of Israel”), published in English by *Torat Eretz Yisrael Publications* (20-Gimel Ben-Zion, Jerusalem). These two inspired thousands of Jews to settle in what is called Judea and Samaria or West Bank Jordan or the Occupied Territories – depending on who is doing the calling.

## Eschatological Responsibility

In what follows I think I can safely claim to be speaking for virtually all Messianic Jews in Israel.

Zechariah 12 and 14 proclaim the day when all nations will come against Jerusalem, and the Lord (that is, the Messiah Yeshua) will fight and defeat them. The Jewish people will be saved as they recognize and mourn for their Messiah, “whom they pierced” (Zechariah 12:10). He, Messiah Yeshua, will be standing on the Mount of Olives, “with all his holy ones,” repelling and defeating all the nations battling the Jews.

And where will you be? Will you be opposing the Jewish people as we defend our Land? or standing with Yeshua? I see no other option. ♦

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The original version of this article appeared as Pages 7-11, 23, in Fuller Theological Seminary’s publication *Theology News and Notes*, Volume 41, Number 4, pages 7-11, 23 (December 1994). A number of revisions, adaptations and additions have been made since then.

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# The Negev Desert

Joseph Shulam

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The Negev Desert in Israel is part of a desert strip stretching from the Atlantic Ocean across the Middle East, deep into south central Asia. Negev is a biblical word, which means south. The northern Negev was a part of the allotted land to the tribe of Judah, while the western and south part of the Negev was allotted to the tribe of Simeon. Today the Negev borders the city of Be'er Sheva in the north and the gulf of Aqaba (Eilat) in the south, constituting 60% of the state's territory. In the center of the country the population density is 7522.2 persons per square kilometer, while the density of population in the Negev is 79.1 persons per square kilometer. The Negev is still relatively empty and there is room there for many people to settle, for the building of industry, and even agriculture!

The biggest problem of any desert is water and the same is true for the Negev. The main source

of water is Israel's new National Water Carrier that brings water from the Sea of Galilee all the way to the Negev desert. There is actually some water in the Negev, as the two natural sources of water are dew and fog along with a few natural springs of water. The rainfall is an average of 31 millimeters per year. Because of the shortage in water, vegetation in the Negev is very sparse. In the northern Negev there are some Acacia, Pistacia, Retama and other trees in small numbers. Wildlife is also sparse. There are a few Negev leopards particular to this part of the world, some Negev Tortoise and several types of snakes that hunt small rodents.

Human existence in the Negev has been primarily nomadic tribes, whom trace back nearly 7000 years. These nomads come from varied ethnic groups; Canaanites, Amalekites, Edomites and also Pharaonic Egyptian. In the last 1500 years



the nomads in the Negev are Arab and their Arabic name is Bedouine. Urbanization of the Negev came in the 4th century B.C. by a group called Nabatean. These Nabateans arrived from the Great Arabian Desert and their main business in the Negev was the 'Spice Route.' They carried everything, from the East to the West and back. Their capital was Palmyra in the Syrian Desert. The Nabateans built flourishing cities like Avdat, Mamshit, Shivta, Haluza (Elusa), and Nitzana. At a time, these cities were great trade centers and caravan stations with travelers dealing and transporting incense and spices and every kind of product from Asia all the way to the Aegean Sea – to the port of Ephesus.

For visitors in the Negev today the Nabatean cities are a major attraction. The remains of these cities have been excavated by Israeli Archaeologists. These sites stand proud in the middle of the desert as monuments to a great culture and a people that served as the classic traders of the ancient world who have now disappeared. These ancient travelers and camel caravan drivers left the Negev long ago and their cities are now tourist sites. However, since the establishment of the State of Israel several development towns, including Dimona, Arad and Mitzpe Ramon, as well as a number of small Bedouin cities, including

Rahat and Tel as-Seba have developed. The Kibbutz movement has several very successful and famous kibbutzim, including Revivim and Sde Boker (which became the home of Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, after his retirement from politics).

You might be concerned as to how the Nabateans live in the Negev and where did they get water? The Nabateans were actually very capable engineers. They developed ways to save and collect water and farm in a special way. Israel's success in desert farming today is a direct result of the methods that the Nabateans developed!

## Be'er Sheva

In the north of the Negev, Be'er Sheva is probably one of the most integrated and multicultural cities in Israel. It has absorbed immigrants from the former Soviet Union and from Ethiopia, with older immigration from the 1950's and 1960's from North Africa and of course there is the Bedouin population of the Negev that works there.

Be'er Sheva is home to the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, one of Israel's major universities with a medical school and full

academic curriculum for thousands of students from every walk of life. The university also holds the Midreshet Ben-Gurion campus adjacent to the kibbutz of Sde Boker, the faculties of which include the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research and the Albert Katz International School for Desert Studies.

The Bible tells us that Abraham, the father of the Hebrew Nation, established the city of Be'er Sheva: "So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. Then Abimelech asked Abraham, what is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves and he said, you will take these seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well. Therefore he called that place Be'er Sheva, because the two of them swore an oath there." Abraham, the father of the Faithful in all generations, was he who founded the capital of the Negev.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob made their camp in the northern Negev in the environs of Be'er Sheva. Why did the Fathers of the Hebrew nation pitch their tents near Be'er Sheva? The answer to this question is simple. The land of Canaan in the patriarchal age was a total mess. Just counting the nations that are listed, one could see how complicated the situation was in this small piece of land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. Here is the list from Genesis 15:19-21, "Kenites, Kenezites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaim, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and the Jebusites." There are ten groups listed here as living in the Land of Canaan during the Patriarchal age. Abraham did not come from the big city of Haran merely with Sara and Lot his nephew. Rather, he had a very large camp with hundreds of people!

According to Genesis 12:5, these are the people who followed Abraham to the land of Canaan:

"Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan." The phrase regarding the people "acquired in Haran" in the English language and with the history of both England and the United States could be misconstrued as if Abraham was a slave master who purchased people in Haran and took them to the land of Canaan. But unlike the NKJV translation, this phrase in the Hebrew text reads: "The Souls that he had made in Haran." The truth is that the phrase in Hebrew "to make souls" means to evangelize – convert.

Another indication is Genesis chapter 14:14, when Abraham goes after the kings from the north that capture Lot and his family, the text says: "he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan." This is a small army that Abraham had in his camp – people who were born in his own household. So Abraham does not live inside the cities, but in the outskirts of the cities of Be'er Sheva and Hebron in the northern Negev desert. He does so for several reasons: his life style is different and he does not want to mix his people with the idolatrous peoples of the land; these small city-states made up of different nations were at war with each other; Abraham and Isaac and Jacob did not want confrontation with these nations and their leaders.

One can see that Abraham and the fathers of the nation of Israel did not seek confrontation or to take land nor do anything that would be considered aggression against this population of ten nations. Despite that fact that God gave him and his seed the land of Canaan forever, still he did not take any of it by force. When Sarah his wife died, Abraham wanted to bury her in Hebron. Ephron the Hittite wanted to give him the cave of Machpelah for free, but Abraham insisted that he pay for it fully and

did not complain about the price at all. You can read the fascinating story in Genesis chapter 23 and learn how good business ought to be done between Jews and Arabs today.

## Sepharad

It is interesting that the prophet Obadiah concludes (verse 20) with the following prophetic prediction: “And the captives of this host of the children of Israel shall possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the (Negev) South.” This prophecy is rather enigmatic for a number of reasons surrounding the term Sepharad.

'Sepharad' is a hapax legomenon, which means it is mentioned only one time in the Bible. This makes it difficult to define! Etymologically, in Late Hebrew this is the word for Spain (sephAradh). Sepharad is broken into two words: Seph, is from the root Sof and means end; Arad, is a term from Arabic and other Semitic languages that means land or world. So, Sepharad literally means “The End of the World.” At the time, Spain was considered the end of the world because once you pass Spain there is nothing, endless ocean. This is why in Hebrew, Spain received the name of Sepharad – the Iberian Peninsula. Rashi, one of the most important commentators of the Hebrew Bible, said that Sepharad is Spain. The classic Jewish commentators of the Bible after the 12th Century followed Rashi in identifying Sepharad with Spain.

Most likely, the identification of Sepharad of Obadiah with Spain and the Iberian Peninsula is correct. The problem is that in the Spain and Portugal there are not many Jews in the Jewish communities there. The majority of the Jews from Spain were converted to Catholicism by force in the 15th and 16th centuries of our Common Era. The other Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 and scattered throughout the world. How

then will this prophecy be fulfilled? Where are the Jews from Spain and Portugal, the Jews of Sepharad?

The Jews from Sepharad are what is called 'Anussim' in Hebrew (literally those who were coerced) and 'Marranos' in the Latin languages (derived from Arabic, literally meaning the anathematized). The descendants of these Anussim/Marranos are scattered throughout the whole world, but especially in Latin America.

How these Jews can be identified when they are actually still living a kind of secularized liberal form of Catholicism is a challenge. Many of them don't go to the Catholic Church to worship. They are Catholic by name only, and they carry in their family tradition the knowledge that they are Jews and keep some Jewish traditions that are particular to them. They light candles on Friday afternoon. They change the bedding on Friday. They have some certain customs surrounding the Jewish holidays. But the most common sign that they are Jewish is their family name.

When the Catholic Church Holy Office of the Inquisition (that is the official Catholic name) converted a Jew to Catholicism, they forced him to take a “Christian name.” When the Catholic Church itself selected the name, they gave them holy names: Santos, Diaz/Dias, De Maria, Asuncion, Henrique, Hernandez, and other names with religious connotation. However, the Church would often allow Jews to choose for themselves such a name, in which case Jews would come up with some neutral name like a kind of tree or an animal. For example, “Oliveira” – “Fegira” – “Pinto” – “Vieira” – “Carvalho.”

According to Professor Anita Novinsky from the Sao Paulo University, there are 60 million descendants of these living in South America today. These are the ones that are going to immigrate to Israel and settle the Negev one day, thus fulfilling the words of Obadiah the prophet and pleasing the old Israeli premier David Ben-Gurion. ♦



# Reserve Duty Calls

Yehuda Bahana

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This publication of ‘Teaching from Zion’ is dedicated to the Land of Israel. When we speak of this topic, the thoughts that rise in my head are associated with Jerusalem, the Sea of Galilee, the Torah, Prophets and Archaeology but also with the military. In addition, every time I return from reserve duty my wife and friends question me on how it was, if it was difficult, etc... Christians from around the world also often ask me regarding the IDF and what God is doing in the Land. People are interested. Therefore I have chosen to present to the reader my recent experience on duty in the IDF Reserves.

At 18, I was drafted to serve in the Paratroopers brigade. Each soldier received what we call a pakal, which is an acronym for either ‘permanent orders for a soldier’ or ‘permanent orders for battle’

(often the original meaning of military jargon is up to debate). The pakal is a function or a piece of equipment you carry throughout basic training and beyond. My pakal was the RPG, which is a special portable anti-tank missile launcher. This weapon is used today mostly in urban warfare, it is very effective against combatants entrenched in a building, for example. For a few months I was responsible for the MAG (M240), which is a heavy machine gun for infantry with heavy ammunition but powerful.

After training, I was assigned to the ‘veteran company’ as a sniper. My weapon was the Remington M24, which is the younger brother of the M700, the rifle of a choice of American security forces. I remained a sniper for the rest of my 3-year mandatory service. As of today, I have

served in the Reserves for over 13 years. My job is still sniper and I prefer the M24 instead of the new HTR2000, because to me it feels better, like they say, the weapons ‘grows on you.’

Every year when I’m off to reserve duty, the experience is different. I can’t individually postpone my reserve duty because I am assigned to a particular unit and we function as a group, so either I show up or I miss it. Turnover of personnel is common, as older reservists are relieved of their duties and younger soldiers

the north. We may practice shooting or tactical formation. Of course, we could also get called up in times of distress, as we did in Operation Defensive Shield (2002), when we entered Tul-Karem to confiscate large amounts of weapons and arrest many combatants. We were also called up to take part in the Second Lebanon War (2006).

Granted, every reserve duty experience is unique, but the last time really was different. We were informed just a few weeks prior. We arrived promptly, and instead of wasting hours on the



join our ranks. We tend to miss our friends who leave, after spending so much time and sharing experiences together. It is a custom to talk about these friends and tell stories about them to pass on. I suppose this is a natural thing to do in many circumstances in life, and it happens to resemble biblical traditions as well.

Sometimes reserve duty is operational, and sometimes training. It could last for 2-3 days or several weeks. Sometimes it is easy, but sometimes intense and difficult. It could take place in the rain of winter or in the summer heat. We might train in the south of Israel or in

routine preparations registering for equipment and organizing the tent encampment, we quickly strapped up our gear and braced ourselves for a drill that would reflect wartime. No logistics, no tents. Anything we want to bring we have to take on our backs; food, water, warm clothes, ammo and more, for the next 3 days. Water is heavy, so are bullets. Extra clothes take up a lot of room and get entangled with other things. So we bring thermal clothing, which is thin but keeps you warm during the cold of the desert night.

We were given measured time to pack our gear and guns for this war. At seven in the morning I

was a normal citizen, father to two wonderful children and husband to a lovely wife, working at the Netivyah office in Jerusalem. Yet in a matter of hours there I was with another 1500 men in uniform boarding transport helicopters! All of us soldiers, like me, were just a moment ago safe at home. All from different parts of society, some older some younger, students and artists, accountants and lawyers, some married with children, all in the same boat. All of us with full gear on our backs, pretending we are going to war.

would meet us at a certain point and boost us forward on our path.

The ride was cold. We set out on foot once again and arrived at the meeting point shortly thereafter. We were given 3 hours to rest and sleep but no one managed to fall asleep, due to the terrible cold wind. The temperature dropped so low that the dew froze and our feet felt frozen. We stuck together, shivering, and made hot coffee to warm us up. The art of coffee-making is an important ritual for reserve duty that any soldier



We land somewhere in the middle of the Judean desert where the actual operation begins. With coordinates and maps, we must navigate ourselves on foot to meet the rest of the company and receive further orders. The first order comes in, to advance some 15-20 kilometers and prepare to attack the destination at dawn. The moon is full, which is comfortable. The light reveals the beautiful desert landscape, which is hard to enjoy with so much weight on our backs. At any rate, the moonlight made the trek relatively easy. As we marched on they told us that special military trucks designed for off-road terrain,

who respects himself must master. You need a mini-gas tank and spare gas balloons, a small metal coffee pot called a 'finjan', Turkish (black) coffee and cookie wafers. [Last Purim, Netivyah, in collaboration with New Beginnings and other international friends, distributed 120 quality coffee sets to believers serving in the IDF.]

An hour before sunrise we get ready for the 'battle' ahead. We remove the extra clothes we are wearing and any unnecessary items including extra food and water that we won't be needing. Then it begins. Two combat helicopters give us cover. Tanks, field engineers, dog handlers,



infantry and aircraft are all participating. It was incredible to see how each unit shoots while another unit advances in synchronized fashion. Soldiers leaping forward, rolling over and taking cover. Tanks rush from one hill to another, firing and then hiding again. There were thousands of soldiers involved, wherever you looked you could see soldiers. This ensued for over 12 hours, as we conquered each and every target.

During the exercise we observed and appreciated the glorious landscape of the Judean desert. Time and again I found myself stopping to reflect upon what a grand thing God is doing. There is no doubt that only by His grace we have returned to the promised land to establish the nation and the state, and now I am part of the army of Israel, fulfilling biblical prophecy. What an astounding thought!

When the exercise is over, we received orders to “control” an abandoned village located 15 kilometers away. We had some time to eat and reorganize our gear, learn the path we would take to navigate to the destination, etc... In the dark of the night we set off again, marching all night long

in the cold. The pace was slow due to the load we each carried and the rocky earth upon which we walked. At dawn we reached the village, which as it turned out had been occupied by various refugees and Bedouins. We were careful not to point our guns in the direction of the inhabitants and we did not enter the houses themselves. The locals came out to see what was going on. Children chased after us and we gave them some of our supply of sausages which we were sick of by then. In the end, we were relieved to see the buses waiting to pick us up.

The first two drills were long and hard, but gave us a sense of satisfaction. It was good to spend time thinking during the long walks under the full moon. From the bus I could see the mountains surrounding Jerusalem were covered in snow, which is rare. It reminded me of the verse, I lift my eyes unto the hills (Psalm 121). It felt as if the song had new meaning and was speaking to me personally: “A Song of Ascents. I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber.

Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth and even forevermore.”

The third drill was to conquer a ghost village near Be'er Sheva. American forces built this years ago to resemble a residential area in Iraq for battle simulations. We had measured time to prepare, eat and rest. We started on foot at night, but on easier terrain than the previous drill; the earth was smooth and level, as opposed to the rocky mountains that hurt your feet, knees and back. Since it was the third day we had less water and food, which made our packs much lighter. It was also not as cold as before. At the break of dawn we attacked. In the village there were mock hostile combatants, dressed like terrorists and shooting (blanks) at us. Our job was to take them out before they can respond... When we are done controlling one area, we give cover to others, before we advance. [In real-time war the danger of friendly-fire is common and so it is important to make precautions by practicing and strengthening the level of coordination.]

In summary, I would describe my reserve duty with the words of my captain; We are a small country surrounded by enemies, while the task bestowed upon our security forces is too great for those in active-duty. Soldiers must train and equip themselves for war, and they have only 3 years to do so. The Reservists are still an essential part of the security mindset of Israel, designated primarily to reinforce the active-duty force in the case of war. In actuality, they ease the load carried by

the military in regular duty and routine security. Reserve duty is not fun. It is not fun to sleep in the cold, in the mud. After so many years, it is wearisome. It is difficult to disconnect from work, life, and family. It is boring to do guard duty all night, and it is especially horrible when someone wakes you up when you are sleeping to do it. Watching the sun rise, more than once in a while, is not fun and no longer magical. When we were 18 we were so young, brave and foolish. Today, most of us have a career and a family, so we feel responsibility and real fear of danger. We worry about the people we would leave behind. We come to the Reserves, knowing that no one else can do this; it is our responsibility, something greater than us. We know that our country needs us to sacrifice for it's survival. I feel this way in regards to my life as Messianic, it is not always comfortable to live as such, but I lack the privilege to be selfish.

Our faith is based on giving from yourself for the sake of the other. Not many people, relatively speaking, are willing to sacrifice their time and



energy to help and serve other people in the community. A handful of people volunteer every week to help, clean, set up and observe that the congregation is efficient and will grow. The question for all of us is, where do we stand? The foundation of our Messianic faith is giving yourself for the sake of another, just as Yeshua did for us. ♦

# The Historical Kingdom of David and Solomon

Netivyah Staff

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“The Bible is an historical book.” Such a sentence to believers may sound impious or even blasphemous. They would feel that the Bible has been downgraded from a “sacred” to “profane” or secular text. But we should think in a different way! Our faith is proven by history. We do not believe in something ethereal but in ancient historical book of books. Biblical Archaeology is an academic discipline researching the biblical period in the light of excavations and discoveries. The Bible is indeed the cornerstone of this field, but approaches towards this corpus vary from pro-biblical to anti-biblical.

Biblical Archaeology is a relatively new academic field that was born in the first half of the 20th century. In the beginning, the majority of archaeologists insisted that Archaeology undoubtedly proves and approves the general historicity of the Bible. For generations many large-scale excavations were conducted in the land of Israel in order to prove the Bible’s historicity. Yet now we encounter a crisis for us within Biblical Archaeology, this is biblical minimalism.

Biblical minimalism began in the 70’s. According to this school, the Bible was

written in the Hellenistic or even Roman period, nearly a thousand years after the time of David and Solomon. Biblical descriptions are merely folklore. This would mean that everything we believe in the Bible is nothing but myth. Since then, the main discussion in Biblical Archaeology has focused on the united monarchy of David and Solomon, in the 10th century BCE. The central questions are: Did this united monarchy exist? Are David and Solomon historical figures?

Minimalists alleged that King David was historical in the way that ‘King Arthur’ was historical, based on the premise that the name of David is absent in all ancient sources besides the Bible. In the excavation of Tel-Dan in 1993, an inscription was discovered from the 9th century. In the script, the words “House of David” appeared, which in Hebrew means dynasty. This discovery provided clear historical evidence to the existence of David’s kingdom. This reference put an end to the controversy whether or not David was. The “Tel-Dan Stele” did not, however, totally suppress this minimalism.

What was the reaction of the minimalists? They recognized the existence of a person named

David, but not the king that is described in the Bible rather just a leader of a small Beduin tribe called “Israel.” What is the logic of their claim? It goes like this: the period from the days of the Judges until the Babylonian captivity is considered historically to be about 600 years (ca. 1200 – 586 BCE) and is coined the “Israelite period.” This period is also named “Iron Age” and is divided into two Iron Age I and Iron Age II. A significant difference between these two sub periods is that Iron Age I is characterized as rural community with primitive social organization while Iron Age II as urban community with centralized social organization. In other words Iron Age I is similar to the biblical description

chronology” in contrast to high chronology. Low chronology considers the 9th century to be the beginning of the Israelite kingdoms, asserting that the Northern Kingdom (ca. Omri and Ahab) was the first kingdom of ancient Israel while the Kingdom of Judah developed much later, even after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 720.

This view is notably against the biblical narrative entirely. The Bible tells of a united kingdom that split with the rebellion of the ten tribes who established the Northern Kingdom, while the the Kingdom of Judah inherited what was left of the original united kingdom in the south. This anti-biblical sort of approach is also called



about the days of the Judges, and Iron Age II is similar to the period of Israelite kingdoms.

According to new minimalists, the days of David and Solomon (ca. 1000-925 BCE) belong to the primitive culture of Iron Age I, as opposed to the biblical description regarding them as kings of the the kingdom. This method is known as “low

the “Tel Aviv school” which is parallel to the “Jerusalem school” which asserts the dating of the Israelite kingdom under David and Solomon in accord with the biblical narrative.

In Biblical Archaeology today, the “low chronology” method is mainstream. David was not the great king nor powerful leader whose

memory and legacy became the image of Messiah afterwards. Solomon was not the wise king nor architect of the first Temple. The stories about these two kings are merely historical fiction. This is especially shocking to Bible-believing individuals who perceive Yeshua as Messiah and descendant of King David, not some tribal chieftain. Thanks be to G-d, baruch ha-Shem, the tide is changing in our favor.

Recently, a monumental building was discovered at the highest place in the city of David, believed to be from the 10th century based on pottery and radiocarbon dating. This structure apparently was the palace of David. In the Bible it is written, “then Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters and masons, and they built David a house” (II Samuel 5:11). Tyre was one of the strongest cities of Phoenicia, and Phoenician-styled ivory carvings were found at this structure. Thus the excavator proposed to identify the structure as King David’s palace. Although we cannot be sure of this assumption, the structure surely functioned as an administrative post because of its monumentality and location above the city. Such an administrative building also indicates the centralized character of Jerusalem society in the 10th century, just like the Bible says.

Another important site is located in the Ella valley, where young David defeated Goliath. The site, called “Khirbet Qeiyafa”, is in Judea on the border between Israelite and Philistine territories. Qeiyafa, which was only recently excavated, revealed some important points. It is a strongly fortified city surrounded by walls and massive gates consisting four chambers. The fortification is demonstrative of an organized society. The style is typically Israelite, not Canaanite or Philistine. Moreover, two monumental (administrative) structures were discovered, one of them located on the highest place, just like in Jerusalem. A shard of pottery was found at the site, with 70 letters. It contains words like:

“do not”, “judge” and “king.” The inscription bears witness of a governmental and judicial system there. The most important fact from Qeiyafa is the date of all these findings: a well-organized society from the 10th century, exactly the time of King David.

Advocators of the low chronology view object by stressing the inaccuracy of radiocarbon dating. They typically date the findings at Qeiyafa to the 9th century as a deduction from their general dating theory. Another objection claims that even though the site is from the 10th century, it is not Israelite but Philistine. However, there is enough evidence to show that Qeiyafa was Israelite site and not Philistine. First of all, the inscription is in Hebrew or Proto-Canaanite, not in Philistine which is thought to be Indo-European. Secondly, the main entrance of Qeiyafa is faces the direction of Jerusalem and not Philistia (the area of Gaza, southwest of Israel). The third and strongest evidence is the absence of pig bones, a customary food of the Philistines, that are not to be found in Israelite sites.

Because of archaeological discoveries like these, more scholars are now convinced that the Israelite kingdom of David and Solomon did indeed exist in Judea in the 10th century, just as the Bible says. It is no myth. It has much historical credibility. We do not believe in mythology like that of the Greeks and the Romans. We believe in a historical book, and in the descendant of a very real King David of an ancient Israelite kingdom.

It is my hope that more excavations will be conducted in Judea to strengthen the historicity of the biblical Israelite Kingdom from the 10th century, refuting “low chronology” which denies the historicity of King David and the fundamental biblical narrative. Please pray for this.

[ In Biblical Archaeology the term “Bible” refers to the Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament, more often than the New Testament. In this article when I write “Bible” I am referring to the Old Testament.] ♦

# Dynasty of Promise

Hannah Kovner

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*"In that day I will restore the fallen tabernacle of David" Amos 9:11*

King David, father of the "house of David" dynasty, is no doubt one of the most venerated heroes in Jewish history. His influence goes far beyond his actual reign in Judea, a kingdom that reached its end in 586 BC when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. Yet the prophets of Israel continued to speak of a "son of David," the eternal king and Messiah to bring peace and comfort to this broken world.

During the first centuries that followed the Israelite conquest of the Promised Land, otherwise known as the Judges era, battles ensued between the tribes of Israel and the nations of the region, such as the Philistines, Midianites, Ammonites and others. The Philistines, or the People of the Sea, were of Hellenistic origin. This people in fact came from the Aegean Sea, settling the western coastal areas of Canaan some years prior to the Israelite advance. It was at this time a centralization of power in Judea took place under the hand of Saul and then David himself.

1 Samuel 17 tells us of David's first 'public appearance' at the legendary battle in the Elah valley against the Philistines and their champion

giant named Goliath. The battle ends with David's victory: "When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran. Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron. Their dead were strewn along the Sha'araim road to Gath and Ekron." (1 Samuel 17:52) Until recently, the location of Sha'araim, mentioned also in Joshua 15:36 and 1 Chronicles 4:31-32, was unknown.

## Discovery

In 2003, an archaeologist of the Israel Antiquities Authority named Sa'ar Ganor noticed a random stone structure on a hilltop actually resembles an ancient fortification rather than a typical agricultural terrace. He convinced Professor Josef Garfinkel of the Hebrew University to visit the site, whom decided to conduct a major archaeological excavation upon discovering a massive city wall there.

The site, traditionally known as Khirbet Qeiyafa, revealed a precisely planned city typical to Judean settlements: common walls between



different houses, total absence of pig bones and the lack of any carved images in places of worship. C14 tests of organic material (olive pits found during the excavation) helped date the city to 1052 – 974 BC. The location in the Elah valley near the battle of David and Goliath, along with the discovery of two large gates, unique to this

city, led the archaeologists to identify the site as the biblical town of Sha'araim, the two gates.

Sha'araim was a fairly large city on the border between Judea and Philistia. The ancient city was destroyed by a foreign invasion and was not resettled until the early Hellenistic period,

after some 600 years. Why was such a large city established there, and why it was not rebuilt after its destruction? The absence of a natural water source at the bottom of the hill may explain the fact that it was not rebuilt. But why was the city established here in the first place? It is located on an important road leading from the coast to Jerusalem that David conquered. Also, Sha'araim was located a day's trip distance from Jerusalem, and thus was important for the immediate territorial continuity of David's kingdom.

At the end of 11th century BC, after the fall of Philistine city of Ekron, the major area of confrontation between Judea and the Philistines moved from the Timnah and Sorek valleys towards the city of Gath and the Elah valley, as reflected in the Bible. It was then that Sha'araim flourished. A century later, Gath was destroyed by Hazael of Aram (2 Kings 12:17) and the conflicted region moved back north towards Ekron. Sha'araim, the Judean stronghold, was never rebuilt.

## Important Findings

**Gates;** Two massive gate-houses, built with huge stones that weigh nearly 8 tons. The gates of the ancient city provided easy access for travelers and merchants, yet when at war provided the highest level of protection. Each gatehouse consisted of four chambers. The casemate wall was adjoined to the gates, so we know that the gates were built first and then the wall was later connected to it.

Typically, the location of the gate was chosen according to the roads that passed through the city. The southern gate was built opposite the road to the Elah valley and eastward to Judea. The western gate was adjacent the road to the coast, in the direction of Tel Azeqah. The presence of two gates in an ancient city is a unique phenomenon known by archaeologists at Sha'araim alone.

**Ostrakon;** A 5x6 inch pottery shed, with an ancient inscription in the script used in the First

Temple period in Judea. This ostrakon inscription is the oldest and longest Hebrew text ever found. The writing is only partially preserved and thus difficult to read. The direction of the text could be up or down, left or right. Several graphologists proposed various readings, such as the following take:

1 you shall not do [it], but worship (the god) [E]l  
2 Judge the sla[ve] and the wid[ow] / Judge the orph[an]  
3 [and] the stranger. [P]lead for the infant / plead for the po[or and]  
4 the widow. Rehabilitate [the poor] at the hands of the king  
5 Protect the po[or and] the slave / [supp]ort the stranger.

A press release by Haifa University states, "This text is a social statement, relating to slaves, widows and orphans. It uses verbs that were characteristic of Hebrew, such as `asah ("did") and `avad ("worked"), which were rarely used in other regional languages. Particular words that appear in the text, such as almanah ("widow") are specific to Hebrew and are written differently in other local languages. The content itself was also unfamiliar to all the cultures in the region besides the Hebrew society: The present inscription provides social elements similar to those found in the biblical prophecies and very different from prophecies written by other cultures postulating glorification of the gods and taking care of their physical needs.

The contents of the text express social sensitivity to the fragile position of weaker members of society. The inscription testifies to the presence of strangers within the Israeli society as far back as this ancient period, and calls to provide support for these strangers. It appeals to care for the widows and orphans and that the king—who at that time had the responsibility of curbing social inequality—be involved. This inscription is similar in its content to biblical scriptures (Isaiah 1:17, Psalms 72:3, Exodus 23:3, and others), but it is clear that it is not copied from any biblical text."

[This press release and the proposed reading of the inscription above were published in "Qeiyafa Ostrakon Chronicle," The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2009.]



## Shrines

According to modern religious research, two unique features of worship were born in the ancient Near East: Monotheism, worship of One God; and Aniconism, worship without graphic images. In all three shrines excavated, not a single carved or painted image was found, in accordance with the Biblical command “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below” (Exodus 20:4).

The worship was conducted in one particular room dedicated to religious purposes. Archaeologists found several incense altars, clay vessels for pouring oil, standing stones and 3 portable shrines (two made of clay and one carved out of limestone), each with unique features and painted red. Biblical stories from the First Temple Period describe such artifacts (see Judges 17:5, 1Kings 14:23). Such practice is unknown among Philistines and local Canaanite residents.

## David’s Palace

A large palatial building beside a pillared storeroom with great numbers of pottery sheds, centrally located at the top of the hill and with resemblance to a structure discovered recently in the City of David in Jerusalem. According to a press release issued by the Israel Antiquities

Authority on July 18, 2013, the structure is believed to be King David’s very own palace in the Shfela (Judean foothills).

## Conclusion

The ancient stones of this Land continue to reveal to us our own past. Every biblical city unearthed deepens the historical, physical and spiritual connection of Jewish people with the Land. Sha'araim is the city that witnessed the first victory of David over his enemies. One day we will witness the final victory of David’s son, the Messiah, over His enemies, when the tabernacle of David is restored as He returns to rule the Land from David's throne in Jerusalem.

This article draws generally from information appearing in 'Footsteps of King David in the Valley of Elah' by Yosef Garfinkel, Saar Ganor and Michael Hasel (Yedioth Ahronoth, 2012), as well as in 'Khirbet Qeiyafa: Absolute Chronology' by Israel Finkelstein and Eli Piasezky (Tel Aviv University, 2010). ♦

# Theo-political Zionism: Kingdom, Land and Holiness

Solomon Intrater

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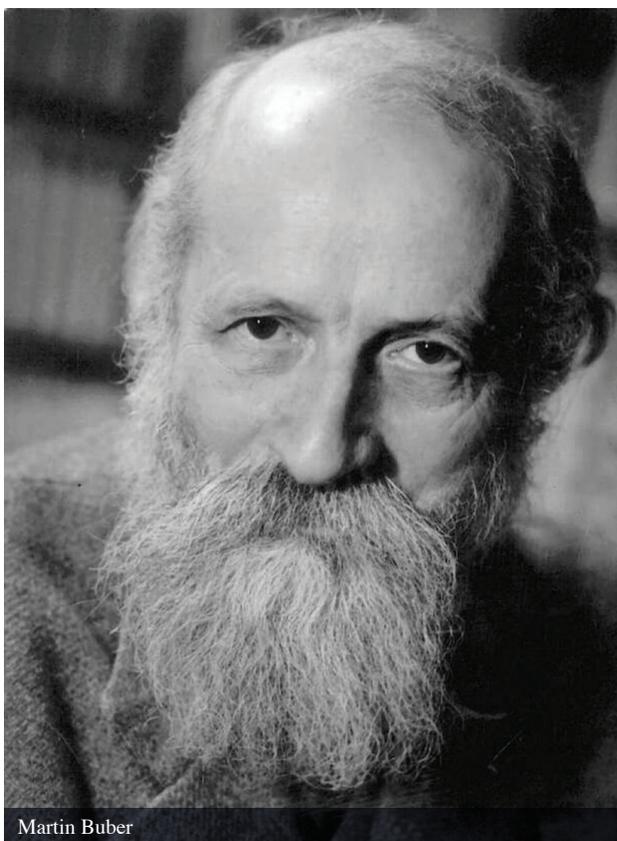
In Israeli society and throughout the history of modern Zionism, there have been different worldviews operating in the minds of activists and citizens. Varying worldviews are the reason for many of the ideological clashes we see until today. Given there are many worldviews, I wish to present but two of them which I find interesting and relevant. It is my assumption that Zionism, as the modern Jewish nationalist movement in the land of Israel, in its psychology, is rooted deeply in messianism. In other words, even secularists in their Zionism are affected by the messianic idea, whether they are aware of it or not.

This short article is a simplification of the matter, focusing on two forms of theo-political Zionism. Using polarized types is a theoretical tool for the sake of discussion. Typological approaches in Zionism may stem from a humanist or a traditional religious worldview. Martin Buber, one of the great modern Jewish philosophers, is one major representative of humanistic theo-political Zionism, while Rabbi Abraham Israel Kook was a formative thinker for what is coined “religious Zionism” in Israel today. What comprised their worldviews and Zionist ideology? How did they express the significance of Kingdom, Land and Holiness? Does any of this relate to the New Testament writings? Here is a short summary of

their positions which I have produced working with secondary articles.

## Martin Buber on Kingdom

Martin Buber considered himself a Zionist since the beginning of the 20th century. However,



Martin Buber

from an early stage on he became critical, like many Zionist thinkers, of popular Zionisms. At the time, nationalism in Europe was powerful and dangerous. It was important for Jewish intellectuals, as for Buber, that this modern Jewish nationalism would be different, standing out as a unique nationalism so as not to be “like all the nations around us” (Deuteronomy 17:14). For this reason, Buber could not accept the ordinary historical argument for the Land of Israel. If the only claim for this land is that it was ours in the past, then the argument has no leverage against other peoples who were there before and after. Furthermore, all the nations and their states are plainly the same in that aspect; a band of local tribes that developed organically into a people in that area and eventually established a society and centralized state. That is exactly where Israel the Jewish nation would be unique, if unique in actuality. We actually developed as a people outside our land, and sustained as a nation when we lost our land. Therefore we might be worthy of reclaiming our land because of our spiritual capacity.

Buber rejected also the “ontological” notion, that the Jews are naturally greater than others, or that the land is imminently superior and holier. Rather, the Jewish people as a people were simply chosen by God to be in covenant, given revelation and the ability to choose His ways and promises including the land of promise. Thus holiness is about chosenness, to be set apart, and the responsibility in that calling as God’s chosen. The land is only holy in that it is chosen, almost simply allotted. We would apprehend the land in as much as we are aware and accept that responsibility before the God. He is the God of morality and truth, obedience and piety are through moral responsibility and existential authenticity. So knowledge of God, or revelation, naturally gives rise to justice and this is the Kingdom of Heaven. Buber reads the Bible with this kingdom hermeneutic. When Abraham experienced revelation, he set up an altar, as a

declaration of God’s reign. Mt. Sinai then, is the grand example of declaring the Kingdom, chosenness and holiness.

For Buber, Kingdom and messianism are not about eschatology but the ideal and impetus for concrete theo-political activism in the world. God is King, not any man of flesh and blood. The ‘Kings’ of Israel were named this because of their role as charismatic leadership, in substitution of God Himself the King. Zionism for Buber must be a society based on the deep understanding of God and covenant, while the claim for the land of Israel can only be realized-chosenness and thus holiness. Anything else, would be assimilation. [Buber’s ideas on the land are articulated in his book “On Zion: The History of an Idea” (1945).]

## Rabbi Kook on Kingdom

Rabbi Kook was the first chief rabbi of pre-state Israel. Unlike Buber, his setting was not European Jewish intelligentsia, but the world of orthodox Ashkenazi Judaism. Kook’s career was to unite the camps of the Jewish people in the Zionist project. This task was extremely difficult, as the majority of pioneers in Israel were staunch atheists hostile towards religion and religious institutions, while the heavily religious world for the most part rejected Zionism as false messianism for apostate dissidents. But this rift became the cornerstone of Kook’s kabbalistic paradoxical approach.

Himself a scion of both the Lithuanian Yeshiva movement through his father and the Hassidic movement through his mother, the “unity of opposites” principle suited his life and calling. In the Jewish settlement in Palestine, Kook devoted himself to harmonize that which seemed incongruous, and suffered much for doing so. Jewish pluralism is a central issue in Israeli society until today, and Kook’s ideas grow more and more relevant to a broadening audience. Although rightfully considered the father of the “national religious” camp, there



Rabbi Kook

is much debate surrounding his persona and theology even within the sector. It is important not to misinterpret and mistake him for the later political ideology of his son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, who led the hawkish “settler movement” after the Six-Day War conquest. For the thoughts of the father transcend the son.

In Kook’s kabbalistic worldview, God is imminently manifest in the world, entirely and necessarily. Kook could not align with

the contemporary “Mizrahi” religious faction, because in their worldview they separated God and state thus reducing Zionism from providence and holiness. If the nation-state of the Jews is devoid of holiness, then why is it necessary and what is its purpose? The unity of opposites, assuming God’s imminent essence in all things, means that the apostate Zionist pioneers are not merely serving a greater purpose by accident, but that they carry holiness and truth that must be revealed and cherished.

Kook was certain that these times were the beginning of the redemption; an hour of anticipation and messianic birth pangs. As such, revolutionary measures are permitted when necessary. Kook realized that revision and breakthrough were of necessity yet impossible for the conservative ultra-orthodox camp, and so rose the need for the rebellious young Zionists. If God is one, then all things are from him, as one. The Zionists were fulfilling the commandment of the land, where as the religious camp maintained Torah. The people, the land and the Torah are of equal importance, in their imminent holiness and purpose.

Kook’s approach was thus deeply open-minded and paradoxical. Morality is rooted in Torah but also outside of it; denial of natural morality and general logic is damaging to Torah. History itself is ordained by God in a dialectic manner, between Israel and the nations. Despite the darkness of the exile, there is much to learn and good to see in the Gentiles! Jewish political sovereignty in Israel is essential, despite that institutionalized power entails corruption and the brutality of war. Nonetheless, the Jewish state would serve as the embodiment of God’s Kingship on earth, to serve peace in all nations. This holiness is far from being described in absolute terms, and far from racist xenophobia. This messianic Zionism is radical, but hardly extremism.

## A Short Comparison

Upon reviewing their theo-political Zionist ideology, Buber seems less humanist and Kook seems less dogmatic than one would expect. Neither hesitate the notion of holiness, albeit in different forms, while both boldly express the interest to apprehend and inhabit the land. They equally stress the concept of holiness and naturally connect this to the calling for a peaceful society and a morality imperative for all mankind. Kook makes a definite impression as a messianic forerunner; apocalyptic in that he believes the 'end times' are in effect and blatant with his gospel of unity and 'teshuvah' (repentance). But Buber's worldview renounces the fundamental imminent-holiness mindset of Kook, as well as his apocalypticism. My impression is that Buber sees himself as like a prophet, critically reminding the governmental leadership of the Kingdom-ideal, for justice and refined knowledge.

We must not forget the context in which these men were responding. Buber was opting for higher ground in philosophical intellectual circles and meaning in his own soul, and Kook was opting for a justification of the secularists in

the eyes of the ultra-orthodox and consistency in his own faith. A variety of political agendas may be interpreted from either ideologies, though the religious messianism could more easily shaped into fundamentalism while humanism would be inclined towards compromising territory for liberal moral reasons. We see today unsympathetic right-wing fanaticism and naive left-wing appeasement devoid of territorial affinity, but these are not in accord with the theo-political messianic Zionism of Buber and Kook, which were so rich in morality and heritage.

## Jesus' Kingdom of Heaven

What does any of this have to do with Jesus' preaching on the Kingdom of Heaven? First off, I believe Messianic Judaism is an agreement with many of the ideas of Buber and Kook. [For a well-rounded argument of Zionism and the land from a Messianic Jewish perspective I recommend the short book "What Does the Bible REALLY Say About the Land?" by my father Asher Intrater.] However, instead of adopting these ideas into a worldview that is ecclesiological and evangelistic in orientation,





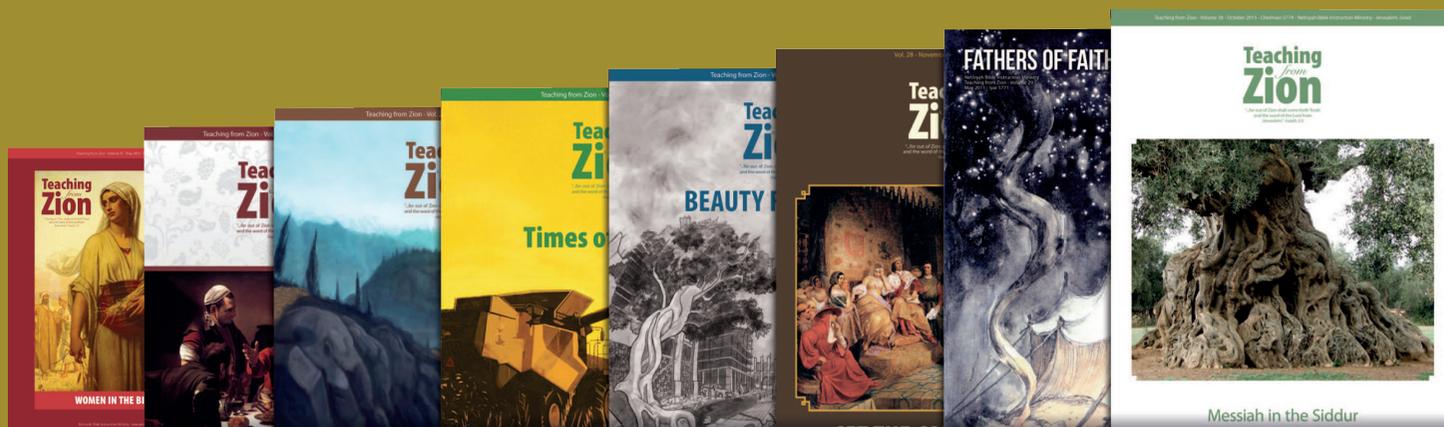
my quest is for relevance, if any, of Jesus' Kingdom kerygma to organic theo-political Zionism. This theo-political Zionism I speak of is indeed messianic, but it is essentially impersonal messianism in it's form, though not strictly exclusive of personal messianism, while Messianic Judaism and Christian Zionism are of course apocalyptic Jesus-messianism in form.

Secondly, I believe many of the values of the New Testament, or at least the content of the Gospel accounts, if modified can be applied to theo-political Zionism. These values include theism, universal vision, Jewish particularism, mysticism, advanced morality, servant leadership, realpolitik, social justice, zeal, prophetic utopianism and rhetoric. Most importantly is messianism itself, as the progressive redemption of history and the iconic symbols of David and such from early 2nd Temple biblical literature surrounding the Return from Exile. [The term "messianic" is

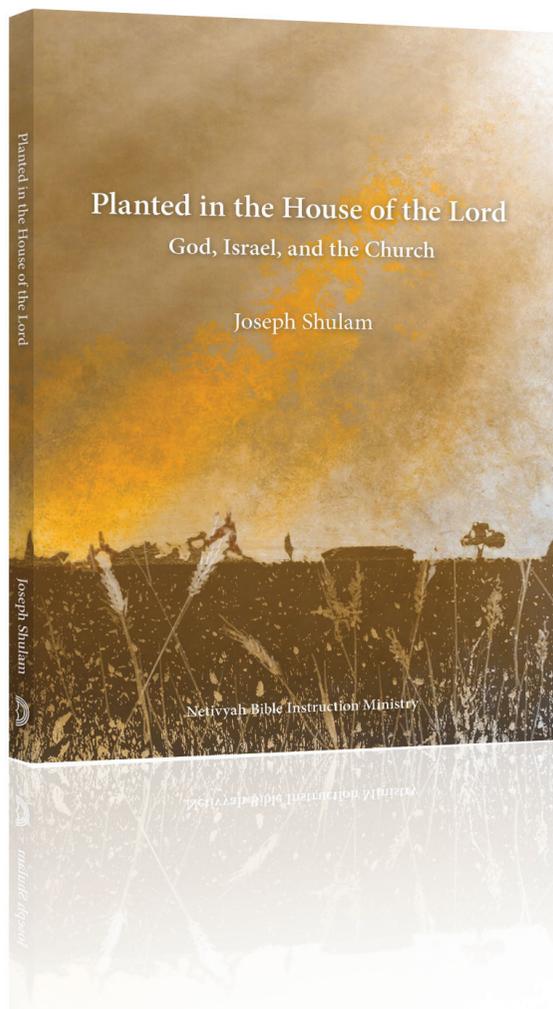
actually anachronistic when used to describe elements and ideas in biblical literature such as the ingathering of the exiles, the restoration of the Davidic dynasty and the rebuilding of the Temple. Only later on the term "messiah" came to represent the legendary son of David figure associated with the eschatological fulfillment of these events.] These themes are intertwined with Jesus' preaching on the Kingdom and could benefit Israeli society and Zionism.

Lastly, is the concept of Kingdom itself. Kingdom is the theme of Jesus in the gospel accounts. He himself is crucified in a mock coronation ceremony by the Romans with a crown of thorns and a silk garment, labeled king of the Jews. He spoke of God as King and declared the Kingdom of Heaven in many parables. I believe that within the ambiguous teaching of Jesus on the Kingdom, lay secrets to unfold for theo-political Zionism. But seek first the Kingdom, and all these will be given to you. ♦

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## Planted in the House of the Lord: God, Israel, and the Church

By Joseph Shulam

This book is a must-read for all thinking believers who have ever asked themselves questions like the following: Who are God's people? Are the Jews still the chosen people, and if so, what is the Church? What are the spiritual callings of Israel and the Church, and have they been fulfilled yet? How does monotheism work out with the Trinity? Where can one find grace and truth in the Torah, and what did Yeshua (Jesus) say about the Written and Oral Law?

These pages investigate these questions and many others. Written from the unique perspective of Israeli Messianic Jews, it faces these old-age debates armed with the truth of the Bible and its Jewish context. It addresses the Jewish task of bringing monotheism to the world, the importance of Jerusalem, and the interconnected relationships between God, Israel, and the Church. Along the way we discover vital biblical models for identity, community, election, and lives of faith and good deeds. Planted in the House of the Lord is a reader-friendly book that explores the relationships God has with his people and their complementary roles in his great plan to redeem creation from idolatry and sin and to restore his kingdom to earth.

Since its release in 2011, Planted in the House of the Lord has enjoyed resounding success among Messianic Jews and Christians all over the world. It has been the topic of seminars and articles and has been highly praised by its readers. It has already been translated into Dutch, German, Hebrew, Portuguese, Finnish, Japanese and Korean.