

January 2013

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Must Israel Go It Alone?

"In the 1930s, there were two kinds of countries with respect to Jews: Places where they weren't allowed to stay, and places where they weren't allowed to go." --Hon. Jim Talent, National Review

It's remarkable to think that the most significant prophetic event of the Bible (next to the Cross) that signals the soon return of Messiah has been fulfilled in our generations. On November 29, 1947, an ad hoc committee of the United Nations voted 33-to-13 with ten members abstaining to allow the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine. That historic vote, coupled with Israel's subsequent declaration of statehood on May 14, 1948, brought to a close, nearly two thousand years of forced exile for Jacob.

But much like a previous return from exile during the time of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, Arabs and other refugee groups that had been living in the area were not exactly tying "yellow ribbons 'round the old oak tree" on that memorable spring day as the British surrendered military control of the region and scurried for cover.

Palestine, the name given the region in mockery by Roman conquerors in 70 AD, was partitioned according to UN sanctions in 1948 to accommodate both Arabs and Jews. Jerusalem itself was divided down the middle. But it became apparent that serious trouble was ahead when Arab leaders persuaded an estimated 630,000 Arab refugees to leave Israel, promising to purge the land of Jews.

During the past 64 years of statehood, Israel has had to go to war no fewer than five times to defend its right to exist. It has convincingly won each time—despite overwhelming odds and a world that grows less tolerant of the Jewish State with each passing day. Only America has stood resolutely behind Israel for most of those years, and even that support, some worry, is waning.

Jesus prophesied both the destruction and restoration of Israel in Luke 21:24 when he said, *And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* Within 40 years of that prophecy, Roman armies laid siege to Jerusalem putting a million Jews to the sword and dragging off another two million in chains to serve as slaves in various parts of the empire.

For a brief period after the fall of Jerusalem, a small group of Jewish zealots called *Sicarii*, continued to resist by taking over fort Masada (Hebrew for *mountain fortress*) which looms 1400 feet above the Dead Sea. In their final hours before committing mass suicide rather than surrender to Rome, the *Sicarii* buried a scroll in the synagogue with the words of prophecy from Ezekiel 37; a sign of their belief that one day the nation of Israel would be miraculously resurrected.

It is quite amazing, even miraculous, that the Jewish people retained their language, their culture and their religion through the Diaspora by transmitting the hope of God's promises from one generation to the next. Although Jews learned to adapt to the nations within whose borders they lived, they unceasingly prayed for their return to Zion. "Next year in Jerusalem" became an expression of hope at each Passover that one day, they would indeed, celebrate their special feast "at home" in Israel.

That hope, was remarkably enhanced as a result of some unusual circumstances that occurred during "The Great War," World War I.

Great Britain and the Allies were seriously bogged down in their efforts against the Central Powers which included Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire. The most pressing concern for the Allies was the rapidly depleting store of explosives due to a critical shortage of acetone—essential to the manufacture of ammunition.

Dr. Chaim Weizmann, a Jewish scientist, and subject of England at the time, just happened to discover TNT and presented the formula to the government. When grateful officials wanted to know how they might reward him, Dr. Weizmann told them he wanted nothing for himself but they could in fact do something for his people. As a result, Arthur J. Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, issued a declaration on November 2, 1917, which read in part:

“His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object.”

Barely a month later, British expeditionary forces moved within striking distance of Jerusalem and the fierce Ottoman Turks who controlled it. On the evening of December 8, General Sir Edmund Allenby knelt in his tent and prayed that God would spare both sides the horrors of a bloody siege that everyone was expecting.

At first light, Allenby sent several planes ahead to scout out the area. Never having seen a plane before, the badly frightened Turks fled from the city without a single shot being fired—perhaps in fulfillment of Isaiah 31:5 which says; “*As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also He will deliver it; and passing over He will preserve it.*”

As Allenby approached the Jaffa Gate two days later, his troops saw him dismount before entering the old city—an unspoken gesture that he came to Jerusalem as a pilgrim and not as a conqueror.

While there are many remarkable stories associated with the abrupt re-emergence of ancient Israel, the point is that God has special plans for His people that will not fail. Moreover, God says, “*...I will bless them that bless thee (Israel), and curse him that curseth thee...*” (Gen 12:3a)

Unfortunately, Great Britain did not honor its declaration to bless Israel, largely due to lucrative business ties to rich Middle East oil sheiks. As a result, millions of Jews who were later trapped in Hitler’s Europe in the 1930s perished, and Great Britain ceased to be great.

America too, has a compact with Israel—to come to its aid if attacked. But of late, the U.S. appears to be having second thoughts. Former Nebraska Senator Chuck Hagel, President Obama’s choice to replace outgoing Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, has purportedly been heard to say that America’s partiality towards Israel has contributed to the unrest in the Middle East. While we think Hagel’s career voting record on social and fiscal issues is commendable, we are deeply concerned that his confirmation by the full senate could send the wrong signals to Israel’s most dangerous and despicable enemies.

Perhaps addressing these very times, the Lord said, “*...And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.*” --Zechariah 12:3

Here is a poignant illustration: Not too long ago, the United States attempted to move that “burdensome stone.” Former Secretary of State Colin Powell had planned to inform the Saudi Arabian ambassador on September 13 of a new U.S. policy recognizing a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capitol. But, something very BIG scuttled that plan—on 9/11!

For thus says the LORD of hosts: “*He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.*” –Zechariah 2:8

Rick Forcier