

Answering Those Who Oppose Israel

Tom's Perspectives

by Thomas Ice

"Then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever."

—Jeremiah 7:7

I have on more than one occasion heard Bible teacher Chuck Missler say that there is only one piece of real estate on planet earth where God has specifically said that it belongs to a specific people and that is Israel. Yet, that specified land is the most contested on the entire planet. This is true because God has spoken specifically on the matter. The fact that God's clear Word is contested by so many means that Satan is behind such a consensus.

The dispersion of the Jewish people in A.D. 70, their preservation as an ethnically distinct people during the nineteen hundred years of their scattering, and their regathering to form the modern state of Israel is a miracle brought about by the hand of God. The arrival of the modern state of Israel on the world scene in 1948 was a big boon to the premillennial understanding of the Bible. This vindicates—in history—our biblical belief that God has a future plan for the land of Israel and the Jewish people. In spite of these developments, there are a group of evangelicals who think that the current state of Israel has nothing to do with God's biblical promises. How could anyone who claims to believe the Bible hold to such error? The current state of Israel is prophetically important because the Jewish people have been regathered in order to fulfill events during the coming seven-year tribulation period, following the rapture.

Gary North has boasted that he has a book already in his computer for when "Israel gets pushed into the sea, or converted to Christ."¹ Lutheran Don Matzat has said, "The present-day nation of Israel is no more involved in God's plans for the future than is France, England, Germany, the United States, etc. The teaching of the New Testament is very clear—Jesus fulfilled everything pertaining to Israel and formed the New Israel."²

Perpetual critic Gary DeMar adds:

Where is this "super sign" found in the Bible? Not in the New Testament. There is not a single verse in the entire New Testament that says anything about Israel becoming a nation again. Nothing prophetic in the New Testament depends on Israel becoming a nation again. If Israel becoming a nation again is such "a significant sign," then why doesn't the New Testament specifically mention it?³

One of the most interesting books in my personal library is entitled *God and the Jew*,⁴ but William Thomas Rouse. It is a whole book about why Israel would never become a nation again. It has chapters like: "God and the Rejection of the Jewish Nation," "Paul's Teaching Concerning God's Rejection of the Jews," and my favorite, "There Will Never Be a National Restoration of the Jews." "When was this book written," you may ask? The copyright is 1946. Apparently Mr. Rouse died some time in 1946 since the title page refers to him as, "Late Professor of Bible . . ." He did not live to see his book disproved

by the events of history in 1948. Similarly, many objections to Zionism will be disproved by future historical events.

We do not have to wait on history to know what the Bible teaches concerning these issues. Since Israel is one of the major subjects of the Bible, we can know what Scripture teaches about her future.

MODERN ISRAEL IS A WORK OF GOD

First of all, Israel is not going to get pushed into the sea, God has other plans for her. I wish the critics would show me where such a scenario is found in the Bible. Those who say that modern Israel has no more prophetic significance than France completely ignore a very significant fact. Israel is mentioned *thousands* of times throughout Scripture. France is never mentioned.

The Bible insists many times that *Israel is not finished in history*. Paul said in Romans 11:1: “I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!” Paul continues in Romans 11 by saying: “From the standpoint of the gospel they [Israel] are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they [Israel] are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (verses 28–29). The New Testament teaches that God cannot, therefore, will not revoke His promises from the Old Testament to Israel.

Gary DeMar cannot find a New Testament promise of Israel’s future restoration. Yet I have just cited a strong New Testament assertion—“May it never be!”—that God has not rejected Israel. Since we believe that all sixty-six books of the Bible are equally inspired and infallible, then Old Testament statements of Israel’s national restoration will do just fine. What DeMar and any opponent of Zionism must come up with is any single passage that teaches that God is forever finished with His chosen people. In fact, Romans 11:1 says just the opposite.

AN EVERLASTING PROMISE

Zionists often point to the many times that the biblical text speaks of God’s guarantee of the land of Israel to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their descendants as an *everlasting* promise. For example in Genesis 13:14–15 the Lord said to Abram: “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants *forever*.” (Italics added.) Later in Genesis, when the Lord sealed His covenant promise to Abram by requiring circumcision, he said: “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an *everlasting* covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an *everlasting* possession; and I will be their God” (Gen. 17:7–8). Similar *everlasting* promises are repeated many times throughout the Old Testament (Gen. 13:14–15; 17:7–8; 48:4; Ex. 32:13; Josh. 1:4, 9; 2:1; 2 Sam. 7:13, 16, 24–26, 29; 1 Kings 2:45; 8:15; 9:3, 5; 10:9; 2 Kings 21:7; 1 Chron. 16:17; 17:12, 14, 22–24; 27; 22:10; 23:25; 28:24; Isa. 34:17; 55:3, 13; 59:21; 60:21; 61:8; Jer. 17:25; 25:5; 32:40; 50:5; Ezek. 16:60; 37:25, 26, 28; 43:7, 9; Joel 3:20; used dozens of times in the Psalms).

How can anyone who claims to be a Bible-believing individual not agree with the clear meaning of God’s everlasting promises to His people Israel? The same Hebrew word translated *everlasting* is used many times to describe God Himself. Anti-Zionist Gary DeMar writes mockingly about the Zionist belief that God’s promise to Abraham

is an everlasting one.⁵ DeMar never tells his readers what he believes *everlasting* means, instead, he lashes out at others by beating up a straw man of his own construction.

Some of the critics of Zionism argue that the word everlasting is used of many things in the Old Testament that have not and will not last forever. Examples that they give include: many of the specific temple ritual that the Levitical priests were to engage in were to be carried out forever, yet they have not been able to do them since the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70; ancient land boundaries were to remain in place forever; that the Aaronic priesthood would last forever, yet it has been done away with according to Hebrews and replaced by Christ's Melchizedekian priesthood; the Mosaic covenant is said to be everlasting, but it has been replaced by the New covenant, etc. Therefore, in the same way that everlasting is used of the things mentioned above and did not really mean everlasting, so also, the references to an everlasting land promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants does not mean forever.⁶ So what does everlasting really mean in its original Hebrew?

The Hebrew (*'olam*) is the word often translated by the English word *everlasting* and occurs 439 times in the Hebrew Old Testament⁷ and "20 times in the Aramaic parts of the Old Testament."⁸ It is "probably derived from *'alam*, 'to hide,' thus pointing to what is hidden in the distant future or in the distant past."⁹ Most scholars agree that "the basic meaning . . . is farthest time, distant time."¹⁰ The precise nuance of the word "is a relative concept in the context of the given temporal horizon for *'olam* in reference both to the future and especially to the past."¹¹ Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ Personal letter from Gary North to Peter Lalonde, April 30, 1987 on file.

² Don Matzat, "The Great Premillennial HOAX," *Issues, Etc. Journal* (Internet edition, www.issuesetc.com/resource/journals/v1.htm).

³ Gary DeMar, *End Times Fiction: A Biblical Consideration of The Left Behind Theology* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), pp. 202-03.

⁴ William Thomas Rouse, *God and the Jew* (Dallas: Helms Printing Co., 1946).

⁵ Gary DeMar, "The Abrahamic Covenant: Fulfilled or Postponed?" (Parts 1 and 2), located on the AmericanVision.org website. See at www.americanvision.org/articlearchive/08-22-05.asp.

⁶ In addition to those like Gary DeMar, some who have made similar arguments are the following: Roderick Campbell, *Israel and The New Covenant* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1954), pp. 199-205; George L. Murray, *Millennial Studies: A Search for Truth* (Swengel PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1951), pp. 26-30; William W. Baker, *Theft Of A Nation* (Las Vegas: Defender's Publications, 1982), pp. 89-92.

⁷ From a search conducted by the computer program *Accordance*, version 7.4.2.

⁸ G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, Editors, *Theological Dictionary of The Old Testament*, Vol. X (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), p. 531.

⁹ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, Editors, 2 Vols., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), vol. II; p. 672.

¹⁰ Willem A. VanGemeren, Editor, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 5 Vols., (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1997), vol. 3; p. 346.

¹¹ Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 3 Vols., (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1997), vol. 2; p. 854.