

Chapter 5

The People of Promise

Those who would have you believe that God's promises to Israel have been transferred to the Church have some explaining to do. These promises are rooted in historical context. They were made to real people—people who *believed* them. I have a hunch that if God had told Abram, “I'm making these promises to you and your descendants, but someday I might change my mind and make 'em apply to other people I like better,” Abe may not have exercised quite the same degree of faith when told to offer up his promised son, Isaac, as a sacrifice.

Besides, it was Abram who met the conditions the promises had been predicated upon in the first place, not some nebulous future religious entity. How could the blessing be transferred to someone who had not met—someone who had not even been *asked* to meet—these conditions? **“Now Yahweh had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”** (Genesis 12:1-3) Abram took Yahweh at His word, and with his family, he left his ancestral homeland, Ur of the Chaldeans, and journeyed to Haran, far to the north. Abram took his sweet time about it, however. Only after his father died—when Abe was seventy-five years old—did he complete the instructions: “get out of your father’s house.” He had no children at this point, and that “great-nation” prediction meant he would have to have a son. At his age (think of a man fifty or fifty-five with today’s life expectancies), God’s promise was looking less likely every day. Nevertheless, he now traveled south and west to Canaan—the promised land.

Twenty-four years later, the situation had changed a bit. Abram had fathered a son, Ishmael, not by his wife Sarai but by her handmaid, Hagar. This wasn't what God had in mind for the child of promise, so He upped the ante. **“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, Yahweh appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.’ Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: ‘As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.** (Genesis 17:1-7) Abram, “exalted father,”

would now be Abraham, “father of many.” It was as if God was telling Abraham, “You’re going to keep doing this until you get it right.”

A year later, against all odds, Isaac was born to Sarai, now called Sarah. This was the son of promise—Abe’s *only* son, in God’s plan. How strange and terrifying it must have been, then, when God told Abraham a few years later to go up into the hills and sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering. But Abraham had finally learned to trust God. He did as he was told. Yahweh didn’t let him go through with it, of course; He provided His own offering, a prophetic picture of the sacrificial death of Yahshua, *His* son—two thousand years later. Abraham had passed the test of faith. **“Then the Angel of Yahweh called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: ‘By Myself I have sworn, says Yahweh, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.’”** (Genesis 22:15-18)

That’s three times now (that we know of). God kept reiterating this promise to Abraham, expanding and clarifying it as the years went by. And He didn’t stop saying it when Abe died. Isaac received the promises as well: **“Dwell in this land [Philistia], and I will be with you and bless you; for to you [Isaac] and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.... And Yahweh appeared to [Isaac] the same night and said, ‘I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham’s sake.’”** (Genesis 26:3-5, 24)

Thus the first two generations of the chosen family received very similar promises from God. They did not stop there, but continued when Isaac gave the customary inheritance blessing to his son, Jacob (though he thought he was talking to his elder son, Esau): **“May God give you [Jacob] of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!... May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples; and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.”** (Genesis 27:28-29, 28:3-4)

Easy enough for Isaac to say, you might be thinking. True, but God Himself later backed him up: **“And behold, Yahweh stood above it [the stairway to heaven in**

Jacob's vision] and said: 'I am Yahweh, God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you [Jacob/Israel] and your descendants. Also, your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.' (Genesis 28:13-15)

Jacob related the encounter to his own sons on his deathbed. "Then Jacob said to Joseph: 'God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, "Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession."'" (Genesis 48:3-4)

Starting with Abraham then, God promised his descendants, the people who would become known as Jews, some startling things—many of which have never been completely fulfilled, even to this day, or at best were only enjoyed for a very brief period during the reigns of David and Solomon. First he would bless them materially and numerically. He would make Abraham's "name great" and the Jews would "possess the gate of their enemies"—that's political power. Beyond that, God said He would bless the people and nations who blessed the Jews, and curse those who cursed them. This covenant was to be "everlasting," not just during the lifetimes of the patriarchs, but throughout their progeny's generations. And though the Jews would spread over the whole earth, they would be given the land of Canaan as "an everlasting possession." It bears mention also that while the blessings are national, the cursings are individual: "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you." (Genesis 12:3) Yahweh thus reserves the right to curse individual anti-Semitism within societies that generally support His chosen people.

Another remarkable promise was that "in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed." God repeated this promise to all three patriarchs, thus ruling out the non-Jewish branches like Ishmael and Esau. It's hard to imagine a scenario in which this prophecy could literally come to pass. *All* the families of the earth? What would one have to do to bless *everybody*? Discover fire? Invent the wheel? Not enough. In the end, the only act that qualifies is to provide a way for mankind to get back what we lost in the Garden of Eden: our innocence—the one thing that lets us have fellowship with our Creator. Yahshua of Nazareth opened this doorway back to God. He was the only man in history who even attempted it. A Jew, as it turns out, a son of Israel. What a coincidence.

There's something else worthy of mention. Though the promises to Abram/Abraham could be called conditional ("Leave your family and your father's house; walk blamelessly before Me") there is no indication that the

subsequent promises to Isaac and Jacob were anything but unilateral and unconditional. God simply purposed to do all this, and He didn't require anything from the recipients. Certain future blessings would later be made contingent upon good behavior on the part of the Jews—we'll get to those in a bit—but the basic promise, their place as God's chosen people, was given without strings attached.

The promises singling out the Jews for perpetual blessing were stated in plain words to the patriarchs. But the echoes reverberated throughout the Torah and beyond. God's instructions to Moses are full of little details that have eternal ramifications. For instance, **"In the tabernacle of meeting, outside the veil which is before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend [the lamp] from evening until morning before Yahweh. It shall be a statute forever to their generations on behalf of the children of Israel."** (Exodus 27:21) Or, **"Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever..."** (Exodus 31:16-17) Or how about, **"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for Yahweh your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you** (*ever*, is the implication)." (Deuteronomy 31:6) Words like "forever" and "perpetual" and "throughout their generations" speak of the mindset of God. He does not intend for his relationship with Israel to come to an end—it will be *everlasting*. Remember, Yahweh isn't restricted to a linear timeline as we are—He maneuvers within the dimension of time. Thus when He speaks of such concepts, He is not merely signaling His intent—He's teaching us a lesson in future history: the events are as good as done. He has seen them.

David saw the eternal relationship between Yahweh and his people like this: **"Who is like Your people Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people—to make for Yourself a name by great and awesome deeds, by driving out nations from before Your people whom You redeemed from Egypt? For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, Yahweh, have become their God."** That's an interesting turn of phrase: Yahweh was always God, but He only became *their* God when they chose to become His children—led to that choice by David their king. **"And now, O Yahweh, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, let it be established forever, and do as You have said. So let it be established, that Your name may be magnified forever, saying, 'Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, is Israel's God.' And let the house of Your servant David be established before You. For You, O my God, have revealed to Your servant that You will build him a house. Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray before You. And now, Yahweh, You are God, and have promised this goodness to Your servant. Now You have**

been pleased to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue before You forever; for You have blessed it, O Yahweh, and it shall be blessed forever.” (I Chronicles 17:21-27, cf. II Samuel 7:23-24) Note how many different things are described as being eternal: (1) Yahweh’s unique relationship with Israel; (2) the Messianic promise of the reign of David’s house; (3) Yahweh’s name being exalted; and (4) blessings upon David’s descendants.

David had a heart for the things of God. If everyone did, God would not have had to caution Solomon about following in his father’s footsteps: **“But if you [Solomon] turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods, and worship them, then I will uproot them from My land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and say, ‘Why has Yahweh done thus to this land and this house?’ Then they will answer, ‘Because they forsook Yahweh, God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore He has brought all this calamity on them.”** (II Chronicles 7:19-22) Though these two passages seem to be contradictory, they aren’t. David had revealed his heart for the things of Yahweh, and God in turn had made eternal promises to him. Those promises could have been kept through Solomon, but that was contingent on Solomon’s behavior. David, however, also had other sons through whom the promises could be (and ultimately were) fulfilled. As for Solomon, in his later life he did exactly what he had been warned not to do (cf. I Kings 11:4-8) and his people suffered the predicted consequences.

The same sort of thing—Yahweh fulfilling His promises in unexpected ways in order to avoid rewarding idolatry—was seen as far back as the Exodus. Although the entire generation that had witnessed the miracles of the exodus had died in the wilderness because of their unbelief, Yahweh’s promises to the Jews had not been abrogated. As the Children of Israel were about to enter the promised land, Moses taught them of God’s purposes for them: **“For ask now concerning the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether any great thing like this has happened, or anything like it has been heard. Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live? Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that Yahweh your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?...”**

The answer, obviously, was no. They were unique, and they knew it. **“To you it was shown, that you might know that Yahweh Himself is God; there is none other besides Him. Out of heaven He let you hear His voice, that He might instruct you; on earth He**

showed you His great fire, and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire. And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power, driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land as an inheritance, as it is this day.” Yahweh had bent over backwards to demonstrate his love for the Israelites and His power to deliver them. He had done everything He could (without making their choices for them) to form a personal relationship with them. **“Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that Yahweh Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which Yahweh your God is giving you for all time.”** (Deuteronomy 4:32-39)

Notice that although the land was being given to Israel “for all time,” the prospects of everything “going well” were contingent upon their keeping God’s commandments. Moses told them why: **“For you are a holy people to Yahweh your God; Yahweh your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. Yahweh did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because Yahweh loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, Yahweh has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore know that Yahweh your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.** (Deuteronomy 7:6-10)

Recapping Moses’ observations, we find that God doesn’t do this sort of thing every day of the week. Rather, His promises to the Jews are unique, given to them not because they were worthy or powerful or even good people, but simply because he chose to love them. (He chose to love me—and you—too, but this was different. We were chosen to receive salvation; *they* were to be the delivery vehicle for that salvation. Christ was the “package,” sent from God to man. The Jews were the FedEx guys.)

He purposely selected a nobody to start with—Abraham wasn’t even the head of his own household when God called him—to create of him a great nation. Like I said, God delights in doing what we would call impossible. Why? Read that last sentence again: **“Know that Yahweh your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.”** He wants us to know Him, know who He is, what He’s like. He wants us to obey His commandments because it’s good for *us* when we do. In short, He wants to have a personal relationship with us. This applies not only to the Jews but to anyone who knows Yahweh as God.

You may be thinking, “That’s all swell, but what does it have to do with unfulfilled prophecy?” Good question, which I’ll answer with another: how long is “a thousand generations?” 25,000 years? More? It’s an indefinite period of time, but I can assure you there haven’t been quite that many generations since Abraham. I once heard “eternity” described as “two people and twenty-pound ham.” A thousand generations is even longer than *that*. The point is that God’s promises to the Jews are designed to go on, in His words, “forever.” And forever isn’t over yet, not by a long shot.

You’re still skeptical; I can tell. “Sure, the Jews are still around after all this time,” you say, “unlike the Babylonians, Assyrians, or Philistines. But except for a very brief period of time some three thousand years ago, they’ve been on the losing end of most every confrontation. Remember Nebuchadnezzar? Remember Antiochus IV? Titus Vespasian? Hadrian? *Hitler*? If they’re God’s chosen people, I’ll bet they’re wishing God would choose somebody else once in a while.”

The reason the Jews haven’t gone the way of the Hittites and the Amorites is God’s original promises, outlined above. But the reason they’ve fared so badly throughout their long and rebellious history is tied up in the admonitions God gave them through the prophet Moses shortly after they left Egypt. First he gave them the good news:

“If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, then I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.” In other words, they would be prosperous—even wealthy. **“I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land. You will chase your enemies, and they shall fall by the sword before you. Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you.”** Their obedience would result in complete freedom from fear. **“For I will look on you favorably and make you fruitful, multiply you and confirm My covenant with you. You shall eat the old harvest, and clear out the old because of the new. I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.”** The best perk of all would be Yahweh’s presence among them. **“I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves; I have broken the bands of your yoke and made you walk upright. (Leviticus 26:1-13)**

“Yeah! That’s exactly what we want,” they all said. And then they proceeded to ignore His statutes and disregard His commandments, starting with the first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” By refusing to believe God’s promise of victory in Canaan, they were worshipping false gods, saying in effect, “the giants in the land—and *their gods*—are stronger than Yahweh. The

generation that heard those words never entered the land of promise. They left their corpses rotting in the wilderness.

Moses repeated the good news to their sons and daughters at the end of their forty years in the desert, praying, no doubt, that this time the lesson wouldn't fall on deaf ears: **"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that Yahweh your God will set you high above all nations of the earth."** That's a really big "If," of course. **"And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of Yahweh your God:**

"Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. Yahweh will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways..." In other words, He says they'll have prosperity in every area of their lives. Then, as if He hadn't made Himself clear, He repeated everything in more detail.

"Yahweh will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which Yahweh your God is giving you. Yahweh will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of Yahweh your God and walk in His ways." Holiness, i.e., separation *from* the other nations and *to* Yahweh, was the center of the blessing their obedient walk would bring them. **"Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of Yahweh, and they shall be afraid of you. And Yahweh will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which Yahweh swore to your fathers to give you. Yahweh will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And Yahweh will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of Yahweh your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them. So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them."** (Deuteronomy 28:1-14) Again, prosperity in every guise would follow faithfulness.

A quick survey of both addresses reveals that God's plan for their happiness hadn't changed much in forty years. If they would do right, both groups were promised material prosperity, numerous and healthy children, victory in battle (they were, after all, supposed to be exacting God's judgment upon the wicked Canaanites), and best of all, close fellowship with Yahweh. Both were to enjoy a harmonious relationship with nature, whether positive (good weather, predictable

rain), or negative (no lions and tigers and bears—oh my!—killing off their flocks).

Interestingly, what was described as “peace in the land” to the first group took the form of political ascendancy over “*all* nations of the earth” to the second. Whatever blessings Israel has enjoyed thus far during its brief periods of obedience and fellowship with God, they’ve never yet come close to that one. Will they one day? I wouldn’t bet against it.

So much for the good news. All this would happen “If you will....” Yahweh, through Moses, also had something to say about “If you won’t...,” and it wasn’t pretty. To the first group, those just leaving Egypt, He had said: **“But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you [forget about freedom from fear], wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart [forget about health]. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it [forget about prosperity]. I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you [forget about victory in battle]. And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze [kiss the easy life goodbye]. And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit....”** Rebellion would be met with what folks commonly characterize as “bad luck.” They wouldn’t see the *direct* hand of God upon them—lightning zapping them out of the blue and such like—but rather a series of things that are “unfortunate.” Yahweh is warning them right up front, however, that this is not coincidental, but is the direct result of their sin. Even at the very beginning of this chastisement, we see a pattern starting to emerge. The first phase will be bad enough, but continued disobedience will precipitate an escalation of the punishment. If they don’t repent, things will get worse—much worse—*seven times* worse.

“Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; and your highways shall be desolate.” We’re moving steadily from bad luck to tragedy. **“And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And I will**

bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant [not only would they not win in battle—God would actually be fighting *against* them]; **when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy** [lack of success has become utter defeat]. **When I have cut off your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall bring back your bread by weight** [hunger has become famine], **and you shall eat and not be satisfied....**” Tragedy is on its way toward becoming catastrophe. The last thing one should want is for God to “walk contrary” to them. The Israelites, having witnessed Yahweh’s power first hand, should have known that.

“And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.” It gets worse. Now Yahweh is angry, not just contrary. And what happens when God is really ticked off? **“You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and cast your carcasses on the lifeless forms of your idols; and My soul shall abhor you. I will lay your cities waste and bring your sanctuaries to desolation, and I will not smell the fragrance of your sweet aromas. I will bring the land to desolation, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it. I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste....”** We’ve moved from catastrophe to annihilation, or so it would seem. At this point, the sins of Israel would have made God’s unconditional promises of national blessings practically impossible to keep. To bless a nation, there has to *be* a nation.

“Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies’ land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths.” It’s interesting that Yahweh should come back to the observance of His mandated six-plus-one pattern as the bellwether of their hearts’ attitude. Again we must ask ourselves: is He really all that concerned that we kick back and take a break now and then, or is He rather teaching us His plan for the course of mankind? **“As long as it lies desolate it shall rest—for the time it did not rest on your sabbaths when you dwelt in it. And as for those of you who are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; the sound of a shaken leaf shall cause them to flee; they shall flee as though fleeing from a sword, and they shall fall when no one pursues. They shall stumble over one another, as it were before a sword, when no one pursues; and you shall have no power to stand before your enemies. You shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. And those of you who are left shall waste away in their iniquity in your enemies’ lands; also in their fathers’ iniquities, which are with them, they shall waste away.** (Leviticus 26:14-39) It will reach the point, Moses says, when you won’t need any real danger to make you afraid. A leaf trembling in the wind or a glimpse of your own shadow will be enough to make you fear for your pitiful life.

Why is it that the bad news is always longer than the good news? It's probably because God didn't want anyone to complain that they hadn't been warned. But if you think the horrible details in Leviticus were bad, listen to what Moses said to the second group, those about to enter the promised land, those who had witnessed Yahweh's judgment on the previous generation. It's a long passage, but I'm going to deliver it pretty much like Moses did—one huge gagging spoonful of bad news: no commentary, no snappy patter, no attempt to make it palatable or politically correct. I have, however, included a few scripture references that record Biblical examples of fulfillments. Think of this as cod liver oil for the soul: hold your nose and take your medicine:

“It shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you, cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country (Baasha: cf. I Kings 16:4, 11) Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl (cf. Ruth 1:1). Cursed shall be the fruit of your body (Jeroboam: cf. I Kings 14:16-17, 15:29) and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. Yahweh will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me. Yahweh will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess (cf. Amos 4:10). Yahweh will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching, and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish. And your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron. Yahweh will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed (Ahab: cf. I Kings 17:1).

“Yahweh will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them (the battle of Ai: cf. Joshua 7:4-5); and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten them away. Yahweh will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. Yahweh will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart (the paranoia of Saul: I Samuel 18:10-11, 22:8). And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness; you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save you.

“You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall lie with her; you shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but shall not gather its grapes. Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat of it; your donkey shall be violently taken away from before you, and shall not be restored to you; your sheep shall be

given to your enemies, and you shall have no one to rescue them (Midianites and Amalekites: cf. Judges 6:1-6). Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, and your eyes shall look and fail with longing for them all day long; and there shall be no strength in your hand. A nation whom you have not known shall eat the fruit of your land and the produce of your labor, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually (Babylon: cf. II Kings 25:1-5). So you shall be driven mad because of the sight which your eyes see. Yahweh will strike you in the knees and on the legs with severe boils which cannot be healed, and from the sole of your foot to the top of your head.

“Yahweh will bring you and the king whom you set over you to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods—wood and stone. And you shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations where Yahweh will drive you (Assyria: cf. II Kings 18:9-12).

“You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. You shall plant vineyards and tend them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil; for your olives shall drop off. You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity. Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land (cf. Joel 1:1-12).

“The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.

“Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of Yahweh your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. And they shall be upon you for a sign and a wonder, and on your descendants forever.

“Because you did not serve Yahweh your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom Yahweh will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you. Yahweh will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies (Babylon: cf. Lamentations 4:19), a nation whose language you will not understand, a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young. And they shall eat the increase of your livestock and the produce of your land, until you are destroyed; they shall not leave you grain or new wine or oil, or the increase of your cattle or the offspring of your flocks, until they have destroyed you.

“They shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls, in which you trust, come down throughout all your land; and they shall besiege you at all your gates throughout all your land which Yahweh your God has given you (Sennacherib’s campaign: Isaiah 36). You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and

your daughters whom Yahweh your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you (Ben-Hadad's siege: II Kings 6:24-29). The sensitive and very refined man among you will be hostile toward his brother, toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the rest of his children whom he leaves behind, so that he will not give any of them the flesh of his children whom he will eat, because he has nothing left in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates. The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because of her delicateness and sensitivity, will refuse to the husband of her bosom, and to her son and her daughter, her placenta which comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of everything in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates (Nebuchadnezzar's siege: Lamentations 4:10).

“If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, Yahweh Your God, then Yahweh will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues—great and prolonged plagues—and serious and prolonged sicknesses (Peor: Joshua 22:17). Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this Book of the Law, will Yahweh bring upon you until you are destroyed. You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of Yahweh your God. And it shall be, that just as Yahweh rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so Yahweh will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess (Solomon: I Kings 11:31-33).

“Then Yahweh will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known—wood and stone (This all happened after the siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.). And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there Yahweh will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. In the morning you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were evening!’ And at evening you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were morning!’ because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see.” In Titus' siege, a million Jews died—600,000 of them from starvation. Josephus reports that 97,000 were shipped off to Egypt to be sold as slaves, creating such a glut in the market that their value fell to almost nothing. How ironic it is that Moses had warned them: “And Yahweh will take you back to Egypt in ships, by the way of which I said to you, ‘You shall never see it again.’ And there you shall be offered for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.” (Deuteronomy 28:15-68)

I want to weep. This isn't theoretical. It's like reading a history book. All of this actually happened to the people of Israel, just as they had been warned.

Curses instead of blessings. Disease instead of health. Fear instead of confidence. Natural disaster and plagues in place of beneficial weather and a dearth of pests. Subjection and slavery in place of peace and political ascendancy. A barren, rocky wilderness replacing the land of milk and honey. A cringing remnant in place of a teeming multitude. Frustration, not fulfillment. Poverty, not prosperity. Famine, not the fat of the land.

Read the histories of the sieges of Jerusalem, especially that of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. and Titus Vespasian in A.D. 70. You'll see that Moses' description of desperate hunger was not exaggerated. They were driven to cannibalism—and worse: mothers eating their own newborn children along with the placenta (and not even sharing!). It's enough to make you scream *why!* Why didn't they listen? Why didn't they heed the warning? The choices were so clear.

And then I look at the sins of my own life, and in the life of my beloved country. And again, I want to weep.

Seems every time Israel had a chance to blow it, they did. And yet God said that no matter how badly they failed, He would not give up on them—ever. He would chastise them, even going so far as to destroy their entire political existence. But they would always exist as a separate people. **“Behold, the eyes of Yahweh are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob.”** (Amos 9:8) Or, **“I will not make a complete end of you. And it will be when you say, ‘Why does Yahweh our God do all these things to us?’ then you shall answer them, ‘Just as you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve aliens in a land that is not yours.’”** (Jeremiah 5:18-19) Yahweh has always let men choose their own destiny.

Moses had pointed out that no matter how far they fell, there was always a way to get back up: **“But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land. The land also shall be left empty by them, and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them [there's our six-plus-one reminder again]; they will accept their guilt, because they despised My judgments and because their soul abhorred My statutes. Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am Yahweh their God. But**

for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am Yahweh.”
(Leviticus 26:40-45)

“I will remember My covenant; I will remember the land.” It may come as a surprise to some, considering their history, but God *wants* to bless this people. Like any loving father, he hates disciplining his children, but He will if he has to. **“As I live,’ says Yahweh, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’”** (Ezekiel 33:11)

Jews the world over are trying to figure out why He has been so hard on them over the centuries. It never occurs to them, of course, that they *asked* for it: **“When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, ‘I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it.’ And all the people answered and said, ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’”** (Matthew 27:24-25) *Oops*. Be careful what you pray for, folks. The question of Yahweh’s apparent abandonment of the Jews has driven some of them to atheism—denying His very existence—and others to blind observance of traditions they don’t understand. But the answer is right there in the Torah. All that’s lacking to bring them back to the place of God’s blessing is for Israel—as a nation—to confess their iniquity, admit their unfaithfulness; accept their guilt, and humble themselves.

Will they ever do this? Some Jews would protest that they already have. A few decades back, Christians where I lived took to displaying billboards and bumper stickers announcing, “I found it!” It meant, of course, that we had discovered what the whole world was seeking, a personal relationship with the true and living God. Not to be outdone, the Orthodox Jews came out with bumper stickers of their own: “We never lost it.” A clever comeback, but untrue. If the Jews were honest with themselves, they would realize that they are nowhere near the center of God’s blessing as described in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. That means that either Israel is still in rebellion, or God is a liar. There is no middle ground.

The illustrious rabbi Moses Maimonides, in the eleventh century, compiled a list of thirteen articles of Jewish faith, pillars of orthodox Judaism to this very day. I find it fascinating that every one of them can be wholeheartedly espoused by Christians. They all start with the formula “I believe with a true and perfect faith....” Boiled down to their essentials, they say: God is the Creator, who works today and will work forever; God is one, unique and alone; He is incorporeal [this, of course, is not true of His manifestation as the Messiah—see Isaiah 9:6] and incomparable; He is the first and the last; He alone is to be worshipped; all the words of His prophets are true; Moses was the chief of these prophets; the

Law we now possess is the same as that which Moses received; this Law will not be changed nor replaced; God knows all of the thoughts and deeds of men; He rewards those who keep His commandments and punishes those who don't; Messiah will come (or as Christians would say, come *back*); there will be a resurrection of the dead.

I have often observed that the only significant difference between Christianity and Judaism is that Christians believe the Jewish scriptures, while the Jews do not. When Maimonides says that all the words of God's prophets—Moses being chief among them—are true, he is pronouncing a scathing indictment upon his own people. Will they ever turn back to God? Yes, they will. But not quite yet.

Yahweh didn't put a deadline on Israel's repentance. But He knew it would happen, and He knew when. (You will too before you've finished reading this book.) He instructed His prophets to predict it. All of His promises, both positive and negative, will stay in force until the day the Jews turn to their God.

Consider this: it's been three thousand years since the glory days of David, and four thousand since God called Abraham. How many national/ethnic groups can trace their lineage back that far? Not many. The very fact of Israel's existence today (whether or not they're in the Land) speaks of God's miraculous preservation of them as a people. When you consider the persecution or judgment the Jews have endured through the centuries, the numerous attempts of misguided men to systematically wipe them off the face of the earth, the hand of God becomes obvious.

David saw it happening: **“Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, and do not be still, O God! For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate You have lifted up their head. They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted together against Your sheltered ones. They have said, ‘Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more.’ For they have consulted together with one consent; they form a confederacy against You: The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagrites; Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria also has joined with them; they have helped the children of Lot.”** (Psalm 83:1-8) Not to mention the ones David didn't see coming—Babylon, Persia, the Greeks, Rome, the Spanish Inquisition, the Czarist pogroms, the Nazi Holocaust, and the ongoing *jihad* of Islam (though David's list is actually a pretty good summation of modern Islam's family tree).

I don't know; maybe he *did* see it coming. We're not sure who wrote the 102nd Psalm (it isn't identified as one of David's), but in light of our recent history, it is

clearly a prediction of the Nazi Holocaust. A careful reading reveals specifics that are too real to be coincidental. This is more than just a lament over a generalized Jewish “day of trouble.” This is future history. **“Hear my prayer, O Yahweh, and let my cry come to You. Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble; Incline Your ear to me; in the day that I call, answer me speedily. For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned like a hearth.”** Sounds like systematic extermination and cremation to me. **“My heart is stricken and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. Because of the sound of my groaning my bones cling to my skin. I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert. I lie awake, and am like a sparrow alone on the housetop....”** Starvation, desperation, hopelessness.

“My enemies reproach me all day long, those who deride me swear an oath against me.” That could be rendered “use my name as a curse,” which is exactly what the Nazis did with their yellow star-of-David badges and “Jude” labels, separating the Jews from their neighbors so they could be rounded up and slaughtered more efficiently. **“For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of Your indignation and Your wrath; for You have lifted me up and cast me away. My days are like a shadow that lengthens, and I wither away like grass....”** In the concentration camps, the Jews were forced to eat and breathe the very ashes of their brothers and sisters as they rained down upon them from the crematorium smokestacks. A “shadow that lengthens” speaks of the end of the day—they could envision the sun going down forever for the Jewish people.

“But You, O Yahweh, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of Your name to all generations. You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and show favor to her dust. So the nations shall fear the name of Yahweh, and all the kings of the earth Your glory. For Yahweh shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory. He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer....” This prayer could be the one spoken by so many generations of Jews, “Next year, in Jerusalem.” Or it might be the one uttered by millions in the camps, “God, help us!” Whatever it was, it was answered only three years after the Holocaust mercifully ended. On May 14, 1948, the sovereign state of Israel was declared, based upon a resolution agreed upon by “all the kings of the earth,” i.e., the United Nations. Since that day, Yahweh has “built up Zion” in times of peace, and “appeared in His glory” in times of war. And anyone who has traveled to Jerusalem knows how the Israelis “take pleasure in her stones.” Every building—by law—is faced with white Jerusalem limestone, making this one of the most beautiful cities on earth (but maybe I’m prejudiced). By the same token, the amazing Israeli farms, especially those built in the West Bank after 1967, prove that they “show favor to her dust.”

“This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise Yahweh....” The phrase “to come” is *acharon* in Hebrew. It means

“hindermost” or simply “last.” That’s an eye opener. This verse is actually saying that the *last* generation is who this Psalm was written for. Before their time (*our* time!), no one will be expected to “get it.” Indeed, most commentaries spout non-specific drivel about how the psalmist is bemoaning Israel’s distress. No kidding, Sherlock. The passage indicates that the world will vividly remember the horrors of the Holocaust until this present age has ended—and the world, as you may have noticed, never remembers *anything* for very long. “A people yet to be created” can only mean the Church—we who are praising Yahweh daily for the miracle of Israel, even if the rest of the world isn’t.

The rest of the Psalm sounds to me like a telescoped view of the coming of the Messiah. This describes His first advent. **“For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven Yahweh viewed the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to release those appointed to death...”** The Jews of the Holocaust weren’t the only ones “appointed to death.” That describes all of us. Yahweh sent his Messiah to release all mankind from our prison. The rest of the sentence has His final advent—still future—in view. **“...to declare the name of Yahweh in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem, when the peoples are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve Yahweh...”**

The end of the Psalm speaks, I believe, of the Tribulation, followed by Yahshua’s coming Millennial reign and beyond, but I’ll save the discussion of all this for later. **“He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. I said, ‘O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days; Your years are throughout all generations. Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end. The children of Your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before You.’”** (Psalm 102) Notice that when God inspired the Psalm, He lumped everything together, as if it’s all part of the same scene. If my guess is correct, the Holocaust triggered a chain of events that will culminate in the glorious return of our Messiah.

And what became of Hitler and his Nazi horde? The same thing that Isaiah predicted would happen to all who plunder Israel: **“Woe to the multitude of many people who make a noise like the roar of the seas, and to the rushing of nations that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! ...God will rebuke them and they will flee far away, and be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind, like a rolling thing before the whirlwind. Then behold, at eventide, trouble! And before the morning, he is no more. This is the portion of those who plunder us, and the lot of those who rob us.”** (Isaiah 17:12-14)

America, surprisingly to some, has not been entirely innocent in regard to the plunder of Israel. Journalist William Koenig, in his book *Eye to Eye* (2004, 21st Century Press) has tracked the remarkable correlation of America’s lack of

support for Israel with disasters both natural and unnatural here at home. *Forty-nine* major catastrophes between October, 1991 and November, 2003 all happened within days of U.S. political pressure being brought to bear on Israel to do things against her best interests—mostly involving a “peace process” that grants the Palestinian Arabs Israeli land for the promise of peace. The catastrophes include record breaking tornadoes, ice storms, and fires, huge stock market sell-offs, the three largest insurance events and top seven FEMA disasters in U.S. history up to the date of publication—including hurricane Andrew and the Islamic Twin Towers and Pentagon attack of September 11, 2001. And you know what’s happened since then. One example among many: hurricane Katrina blew in on the heels of the American-sponsored Israeli pullout from the Gaza Strip. God is not impressed with our “separation of Church and state.” His word stands: **“I will bless those who bless you [Abraham], and I will curse him who curses you.”** (Genesis 12:3)

Face it: America is not the same thing as “the Church.” This is a dangerous and erroneous attitude that has crept in among well-meaning but ignorant American Christians. In reality, we are but pilgrims in this land, as blessed as it has been when it honored God. And as pilgrims, we need to follow the example of the Early Church, and insist that our national leaders do the same: **“For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.”** (Romans 15:26-27) The politically correct crowd won’t admit it, but we *owe* our support to Israel.

The Jews who survived the Holocaust should have sung the following words; and those who fought for their infant nation against insurmountable odds—and prevailed—in 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973, should have them engraved upon their very souls: **“If it had not been Yahweh who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive, when their wrath was kindled against us. Then the waters would have overwhelmed us; the stream would have gone over our soul.”** (Psalm 124:2-5)

God’s ongoing protection of Israel is evident. But the prophets have not been coy about predicting the unpleasant fate of the unrepentant Jewish people. Everything they warned about has come to pass, from the judgment of the nation to the preservation of the race. As Ezekiel put it, **“Thus says the Lord Yahweh: ‘Although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.’”** (Ezekiel 11:16) If they want *a lot* of sanctuary, they’ll have to repent.

God has told us precisely what He intends to do. The preservation and eventual restoration of the nation of Israel is no accident, no coincidence. The revelation of this plan goes all the way back to the exodus: **“Thus says Yahweh: ‘About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the animals. Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it before, nor shall be like it again. But against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue, against man or beast, that you may know that Yahweh does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.’”** (Exodus 11:4-7)

There is a fine line between “God is no respecter of persons” and “Yahweh makes a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.” He is not impressed with anything we do or have. But He *is* impressed with His own promises. He cannot lie; it’s not in His nature. So that His chosen people would understand and remember this, He instituted an annual day of observance: **“Therefore you shall observe this day [Passover] throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance....”** This observance is eternally significant for only one reason: Passover was predictive of the sacrifice of Yahshua the Messiah for the sins of the world. **“For Yahweh will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, Yahweh will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you [Amen to *that*]. And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever. It will come to pass when you come to the land which Yahweh will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service. And it shall be that, when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice of Yahweh, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.’”** (Exodus 12:17, 23-27)

Passover wasn’t the last time God would save their bacon (so to speak). It was merely one of a long string of miraculous deliverances. **“And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to Yahweh. Then they said to Moses, ‘Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, “Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?” For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.’ And Moses said to the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand still and see the salvation of Yahweh, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. Yahweh will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.’”** (Exodus 14:10-14) Good thing *I’m* not God. I would have said, “Sorry, my mistake. Go back and croak in Egypt if you like it so much.” But

Yahweh had made a promise of preservation, and He kept it, parting the sea so they could escape. Then He told them, **“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”** (Exodus 19:4-6) Once again, that’s a big “if.”

In all fairness, I can’t imagine any Israelite at the time—with the possible exception of Moses—having the capacity to assimilate the significance of this proposition. How could they possibly know how good being Yahweh’s “special treasure” would be? “A kingdom of priests and a holy, set-apart nation?” A few weeks before, they’d been *slaves*. They had absolutely no point of reference. It reminds me of C.S. Lewis’ illustration of trying to explain the pleasures of sex to a boy who can’t imagine anything in the world better than chocolate.

When the Israelites were about to enter Canaan, Moses reiterated God’s promise of preservation: **“When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for Yahweh your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. And he shall say to them... ‘Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for Yahweh your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.’”** (Deuteronomy 20:1-4)

Yahweh says that not only will He keep them from harm, provide for them and so on, as He’d been doing faithfully for the past forty years, but He would also proactively fight for them. It was enough to make Moses wax poetic: **“There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, [i.e., Israel; literally: upright] who rides the heavens to help you, and in His excellency on the clouds. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; He will thrust out the enemy from before you, and will say, ‘Destroy!’ Then Israel shall dwell in safety, the fountain of Jacob alone, in a land of grain and new wine; His heavens shall also drop dew. Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by Yahweh, the shield of your help and the sword of your majesty! Your enemies shall submit to you, And you shall tread down their high places.”** (Deuteronomy 33:26-29) Well, that’s how it was supposed to work. There was still the little matter of their blessings being contingent upon their regard for His Law. God didn’t say *when* this would all happen—as it turned out, He had to defer the promised perks, waiting for Jewish national repentance. He is still waiting.

The point is that the promises of *preservation* were unconditional; those of *blessing* were not. It’s the same problem God had with Adam: if he had been allowed to eat of the tree that would have given him eternal life in his sinful, corrupted body, it would have been the ultimate good news/bad news scenario. The distinction between preservation and blessing became more marked as the

Jews' behavior worsened. For example, **“And he [Jehoram] did evil in the sight of Yahweh. Yet Yahweh would not destroy Judah, for the sake of his servant David, as He promised him to give a lamp to him and his sons forever. (II Kings 8:19)**

By the time of the prophets, you can almost hear the frustration, the sadness, in God's voice. He sounds like the anguished, loving father of a rebellious child. **“My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him. How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?... My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst; and I will not come with terror. (Hosea 11:7-9)**

We have been speaking of preservation and blessing (or cursing) on a national scale. But we need to keep in mind that God's purpose is to have a personal relationship with each of His children—one on One. Under the right circumstances, a single individual can turn the course of a nation's history—for better or worse. In Israel, for example, David did this—but so did Ahab. It is comforting to note that whatever our nation is doing right or wrong, God is still concerned with us as individuals. Consider this bit of prophecy:

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of Yahweh, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.’ Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence.” God is able to preserve His friends from both man-made peril and natural disaster. **“He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made Yahweh, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone... Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him.”** Satan quite rightly applied this verse to Yahshua, who of all people “made Yahweh His dwelling place.” But because Yahshua *was* Yahweh, our deliverance is guaranteed through our love for Yahshua. **“I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation.”** (Psalm 91)

Yep. That's where I want to live: in the secret place (Hebrew: *cithrah*, a place of hiding, shelter, protection) of the Most High. Thus it's a question of who we, as individuals, are trusting. And note: the psalmist says nothing about Israel here—this applies to all of us who “have known His name”—Yahweh.

Unfortunately, it appears that when God restores the nation of Israel to greatness, that's what they'll be reduced to: *individuals*—a remnant, not the teeming multitude numbering “as the stars of heaven” as they had been described in Solomon's day. **“In that day it shall come to pass that the glory of Jacob will wane, and the fatness of his flesh grow lean. It shall be as when the harvester gathers the grain, and reaps the heads with his arm.... Yet gleaning grapes will be left in it, like the shaking of an olive tree, two or three olives at the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in its most fruitful branches.”** (Isaiah 17:4-6)

But whether many or few, there *will* be restoration for Israel. The Church has not usurped her promises. For that matter, the Church *can't* usurp her promises: any Jew who recognizes his Messiah during the Church age becomes *part* of the Ekklesia, the body of Christ, where there is “neither Jew nor Greek.” Jewish national repentance must therefore come *after* the Church is taken out of the world (a subject we will address in detail in a later chapter).

God is faithful, compassionate, and extremely patient. His preservation of the Jews is a matter of history. His regathering of the nation of Israel is a prophecy we see unfolding before our very eyes: **“You, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham My friend. You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest regions, and said to you, ‘You are My servant,’ I have chosen you and have not cast you away: Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”** (Isaiah 41:8-10)

The Jews will one day recognize that Yahshua is their Messiah, and they'll sing with the sons of Korah, **“Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease. Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations? Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your mercy, Yahweh, and grant us Your salvation.** (Psalm 85:4-7)

They will enquire with the prophet Micah, **“Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old.** (Micah 7:18-20)

They will fall on their knees in gratitude with Jeremiah, who observed during the darkest days of Judah's history, **“[It is] through Yahweh's mercies [that] we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness.... For Yahweh will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.** (Lamentations 3:22-23, 31-32)

And they will at last abide in the secret place of the Most High, acknowledging that **“Those who trust in Yahweh are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so Yahweh surrounds His people from this time forth and forever. (Psalm 125:1-2)**