



## **The Biblical Foundation for Establishing Israel**

Who could ever imagine that there would be a day when the very legitimacy of the State of Israel as a homeland for the Jews would be challenged? Or that some in the Christian world would deny the prophetic destiny and covenantal blessing yet to be fulfilled for Israel and for the Jews.

The legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish homeland was not established in May 14, 1948, but, rather, it was birthed thousands of years ago when one believing man, Abram, put his trust in the One true and living God. In 1936 the future Prime Minister of the nascent State of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, told the Royal Peel Commission appointed to make recommendations about Palestine that “Our right to the land of Israel is not given by the British government or the Balfour Declaration; it is much older. The Bible is our mandate to the land.” The Jews are inextricably joined to the land through the promise made to Abram and in perpetuity.

Though the Jews have been scattered, wandering throughout the world, their Jewish identity and the land of Israel have remained inseparable. They are forever connected.

### **God’s Covenant with the Jews and the Land**

Canaries were once regularly used in British coal mining as an early warning system. The birds were brought down into the mines where the sound of their singing signaled that the air supply in the mine shaft was safe for those working there. If carbon monoxide, methane or carbon dioxide, all invisible toxic gases began to leak in the mine shaft, it would first kill the birds because they were particularly sensitive to these gases. The silence of their singing signaled to the miners that conditions were unsafe and they needed to take action immediately and evacuate.

The phrase “living like a canary in a coal mine” refers to someone or something which serves as an early warning to others, signaling that something has changed that action is needed. It’s like saying, “In the midst of living be attentive to the signposts in your life.”

In a very real sense, Israel is like that canary in a coal mine. Because of the unique covenant relationship that God established with the land and the people, Israel is the signpost of the times. To the discerning it signals shifts in seasons, where we are in the Kingdom timeline of God. Israel plays a “center stage” role in all that God is about. We need to pay attention.

# What is that unique relationship and how was it established?

## The Beginning Point

The story begins in Genesis chapter 11 with a man named Abram, born five generations after Babel when God confused the language of the peoples and scattered them. Abram lived among a polytheistic society in Ur of the Chaldeans, today southern Iraq. Joshua 24:2 says that Terah, his father, served other gods, yet Abram had separated himself from these gods.

While Terah was the oldest member of the clan, and by tradition, the leader, the call of God to come out from Ur to go to the land of Canaan came to Abram. In faithful obedience Abram, his father, Terah, Abram's wife Sarai and his nephew Lot left Ur for Canaan. Abram was 75 years old.

Along the way they paused for a season in Haran. During that time Abram's father, Terah, died. So Abram took his wife, nephew Lot, all of his possessions and all the people that he had acquired there in Haran and set himself to obey God's directive.

**Genesis 12:1** *"Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you."*

God called Abram to leave all that he had known, the place where he had experienced a measure of blessing, for a place of unknown. His obedience was not only for himself and his family, but would be the door of covenantal blessing for his descendants and, ultimately, for all the peoples of the earth.

When called Abram He gave him 7 promises: (**Genesis 12:2,3**)

1. I will make you a great nation
2. I will bless you
3. I will make your name great
4. You will be a blessing
5. I will bless those who bless you
6. Whoever curses you, I will curse
7. All the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.

From all the peoples of the earth, Abram and thus his descendants became God's sovereign choice, a chosen people.

## Cutting Covenant

In **Genesis 15** God again comes to Abram to speak to him. He reaffirms to Abram that he will be a great nation of many peoples and then God speaks to him regarding the land.

*5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. 7 Then He said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it."*

Abram asks God, **8** *"Lord God, how can I know that I will inherit it?"* He wants to know how committed is God to what He has just told Abram. The answer to his question is covenant.

- Covenant is built on relationship with a high level of accountability. In ancient times the stronger of the Kingdoms always initiated the making of a covenant. Asher Intrater, author of *Covenant Relationships*, describes the two-sided nature of a covenant.

*"In God's dealings with mankind, there is a twofold cooperation. The human being, puny in comparison to God Almighty, must himself choose to stand up as a partner opposite God."*<sup>1</sup>

- Covenant is based on mutual trust. *"The covenant itself is actually a set of words that are spoken to define the nature of that relationship and set forth the principles of commitment to it. A covenant can be seen as an oath that seals the relationship between two people.....He has sealed himself by his word of honor into faithfulness to the relationship that he has established..."*<sup>2</sup>
- Covenants help define the relationship. *"The purpose of the covenant is to continue to reiterate the set terms by which the relationship between the two parties operates. The covenant is permanent and steady, and therefore helps maintain a permanence and steadiness in the relationship between the two people....Another aspect of the word of the covenant is that it will last on into time."*<sup>3</sup>....unlike a contract between two people whose relationship ends when the obligated terms of the contract are completed.

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<sup>1</sup> Asher (Keith) Intrater, *Covenant Relationships* (Destiny Image: Shippensburg, PA, 1989) p. 27

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 19

<sup>3</sup> Op.cit. p.19

- Covenants can extend into perpetuity. The permanency of the covenant that God is about to enter with Abram is described that way in **I Chronicles 16:15** *“Remember His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations.”*

Abram needs assurance that God will do what He has promised. So God answers the question Abram asks in Genesis 15:8 by a binding oath, a covenant, showing they were irrevocably bound by blood. This was the first blood sacrifice covenant. Life was in the blood.

That is why the Hebrews actually described the making of a covenant as “cutting covenant.”

- According to the ancient rituals of the day animals were slaughtered, cut in half and the 2 parties would walk between them as a way of saying, “Let this same thing happen to me if I do not honor what we have agreed to.” Once the covenant was completed with the parties walking between the carcasses the terms of the covenant couldn’t be changed.
- Jeremiah 34 made clear the terms and the responsibility of those entering into the blood covenant. Failure to keep a covenant that King Zedekiah and the people had made required their own blood shed like that of the animal(s).

**18** *“And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it--* **19** *the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf--* **20** *I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. Their dead bodies shall be for meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the earth.”*

- Others described cutting covenant as intending to show that, as the two parts of the carcass belonged to one body, so also are the two of one mind who were making the covenant.

Following God’s instructions, Abram brought three animals, a three year old heifer, female goat, and ram, cut them in half and arranged them opposite each other covering the ground with their blood. As the sun was setting God put Abram into a deep sleep. A certain horror came upon him as he recognized and was in awe of the holiness of what was taking place. When it was dark a smoking firepot with a blazing torch, the shekinah glory of God, passed between the pieces.

God alone made the promise and He alone was responsible for fulfilling it. He alone walked through the blood and carcasses. Abram simply believed.

Asher Intrater writes, *“the Shechinah presence of God appears as a flaming torch and passes through the cut pieces of the animals. The Lord had just cut the covenant with Abraham. The implications that God Himself would pass through the pieces of the covenant are far-reaching. The God of all creation has bound Himself to a relationship with a human being.”*<sup>4</sup>

God’s covenant with Abram was:

- Literal – God was not speaking figuratively; He meant exactly what he said.
- Unconditional – All Abram had to do was believe. Keeping the covenant would never depend on him or his descendants. Even in their disobedience and rebellion God’s choosing of them would never waiver.
- Unilateral – the responsibility for fulfilling the covenant depended solely on God’s faithfulness to keep it.
- Everlasting – God made His covenant in perpetuity.

**Genesis 17:4** *“As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7 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.”*

Furthermore, this “everlasting,” irrevocable Covenant that God made with Abraham and his descendants, was not only to a people group– the Jews – but also to the land itself –Israel, because the LAND was His to give.

**Genesis 15:18** *“On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.’”*

So the Jews and the land of Israel were God’s sovereign choice and He would relate to them in ways unlike no other people or land.

**Deuteronomy 7:6** *“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.”*

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<sup>4</sup> Op.cit. p. 27

God reaffirmed this covenant relationship with Abraham's son and grandson.

- To his son, Isaac: **Genesis 26:4** *"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."*
- To Isaac's son, Jacob: **Genesis 28:13** *"And behold the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants....."*

Even when the people rebelled and turned away from the God of Israel, He remembered His covenant.

**Leviticus 26: 44** *"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 the Lord their God. 45 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 the Lord.' "*

**Jeremiah 31:35** *"Thus says the Lord, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The Lord of hosts is His name): 36 "If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the Lord, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever." 37 Thus says the Lord: "If heaven above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel For all that they have done, says the Lord."*

There would come a day for the Jews and for all peoples when another covenant, marked by blood requiring only faith for its efficacy – its “effectiveness” – would be made. It, too, was unilateral, everlasting and literal. For **whosoever** would believe in the offered lamb – *Yeshua* – a son of Abraham, would have eternal life.

**Luke 22:20** *"In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'"*

It is through this new covenant that we, the in grafted wild olive tree, by faith, become a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, Israel, yet never to replace the unique position of the Jews.

## Why the Jews are God's chosen people: chosen for purpose

In choosing Abraham and his descendants they would: be a living testimony to the world of the authority of the Word of God. By looking at Abraham and his descendants the world would see that obedience brings blessing and favor of the Lord.

**Deuteronomy 28:10** “...And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord...”

And when they rebelled He was also true to His Word.

**Leviticus 26:32, 33** “I will lay waste the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled. I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins.”

- As people of the covenant, they were called to be a “light to the gentiles”, to bring truth to a lost and pagan world.

**Isaiah 42:6** “I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.”

- They were chosen to be the vehicle through which God would redeem the world. Through the Israelites, the family that began with Adam and Eve, and became a nation through Abraham, God would redeem all peoples from the effect of sin, for from the seed of Abraham would come the Messiah.

**Romans 9:3** “For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, **4** who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; **5** of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.”

- They were God's choice to be stewards of His revelation, a people to bring forth the prophets and give the world His inspired word – the Bible.

**Romans 3:1** “What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? **2** Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.”

## God's Special Call: From Beginning to End

**Isaiah 46: 9** *“Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure.’”*

What God began in Genesis He completes in Revelation because He had already thought it through to completion.

- He always intended to use a people group and a nation to demonstrate His love and faithfulness.
- He always intended to have a nation we could look to, that would be a teacher nation, by which to frame our thoughts about God.

From Genesis to the book of Revelation God's relationship with Israel, the Jews and a Jewish Jesus are central to the reoccurring theme of redemption. In the final book John has an open vision of the Throne Room of Heaven. As he weeps, for no one is worthy to open the scrolls, one of the elders around the throne declares that Jesus, “the Lion of Judah, the Root of David”, is indeed worthy.

Revelation 21 and 22 describe a new heaven and a new earth. Its descriptive language is filled with Jewish symbolism. It is the Hebraic framework upon which the picture of Heaven is built.

Jerusalem, forever the heart to Jewish identity, is the city upon which God put His name forever and ever. He called her *“The City of Truth, the Mountain of the LORD of Hosts, the Holy Mountain. (Zechariah 8:3)*

The city of Jerusalem has a glorious place in the coming Kingdom.

**Revelations 21:2** *“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God””*

- The holy city called Jerusalem is portrayed as a bride and declared to be the dwelling place of God, where He will live with men. He will be their God and they will be his people.



- The twelve gates of the city are inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Also, the twelve foundations of the city have the names of the twelve Jewish apostles written on them.

**Revelations 21:12** *“Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13 three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. 14 Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”*

- The foundations of the city walls are decorated with precious stones. These stones are also the same ones found on the breastplate of the high priest when he ministered in the Temple.

**Revelations 21:19** *“The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony (agate), the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite (turquoise), the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase (diamond), the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.”*

**Exodus 28:17** *“And you shall put settings of stones in it, four rows of stones: The first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald; this shall be the first row; 18 the second row shall be a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond; 19 the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; 20 and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold settings. 21 And the stones shall have the names of the sons of Israel, twelve according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, each one with its own name; they shall be according to the twelve tribes.”*

- Jesus will return to rule and reign from Jerusalem, just as the angel declared to Mary.

**Luke 1:32** *“He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.”*

And the peoples from every nation will stream to that city of the great ing.

**Micah 4:1** *Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And peoples shall flow to it. 2 Many*

*nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

- The One who is the Passover Lamb, who came as the Light of the world, is now the Lamp giving light to the city.

**Revelation 22:16b** *"I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."*

God is not finished working through the Jews or Israel. He began with one man who had the faith to believe, one land for which He drew the borders and one city that He declared His very own.

The story of a covenant keeping God that began with Abram in Genesis culminates in Revelation. This has been God's plan from the beginning. No plan B.

He always intended to use Israel and the Jewish people to show forth the intentionality of His heart; a living demonstration of who He is and who He is for us.

And He will not return to reclaim earth until the sons and daughters of Abraham welcome Him back with *"Blessed are you who come in the name of the Lord."*

God is a faithful God. He will complete the good work that He began. He will honor His covenant. What comfort! What joy! God's faithfulness to the Jew becomes our assurance, too. It is, after all, the intentionality of His heart to redeem and restore a lost and dying world. God is a covenant keeping God.

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Note: All scriptural references and quotes are taken from the NKJV.