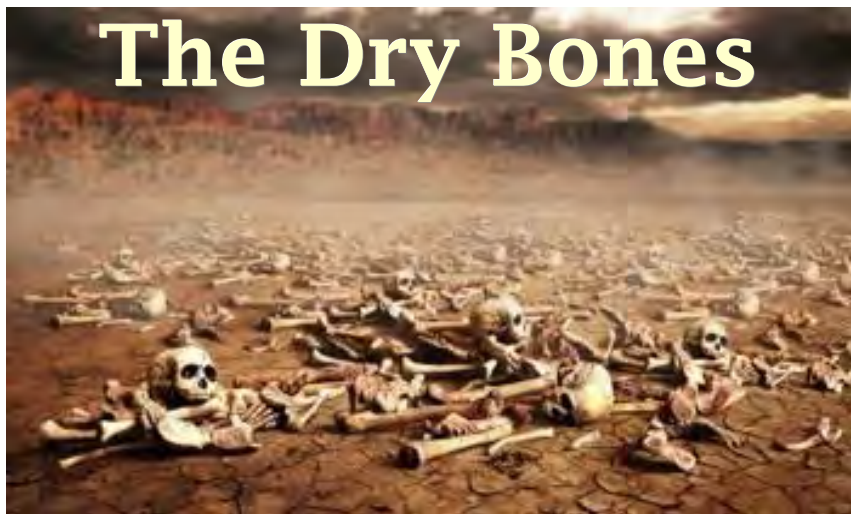


The Christadelphian Advocate

SPECIAL ISSUE

Ezekiel's Prophecy of

The Dry Bones



MAY 2014

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A monthly magazine in defense of the “Things Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ” as embraced in The Hope of Israel with a view to “Taking Out A People For Yahweh’s Name”

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(excerpts from) **Theodor Herzl's Address to the First Zionist Congress:**
 "Zionism, self-help of the Jews, thus provides a way out of these various difficulties. Zionism is simply the factor that makes for peace. Indeed...whoever believes that the Jews could as it were return as thieves in the night to the land of our forefathers is deluding himself or deluding others. In no place does the appearance of new Jews awaken alarm signals so quickly as it does in the historic homeland of the nation. Precisely because it is the historic homeland. Nor are we interested in arriving there before the time is ripe... Nobody is considering a complete and total exodus of the Jews from anywhere. Those who wish to stay and are capable of staying and assimilating will stay where they are and assimilate. If, after the agreement is made with the authorized political powers, the exit of the Jews will begin with all due order...What will cause the exodus to stop? Quite simply by the gradual waning, and eventual disappearance of anti-Semitism. This is our understanding and this how we anticipate the solution to the Jewish question." *(Editor – In the above we read of "self-help" and confidence in "agreements" with the world's "political powers." Here we find that Zionism was thought to be the solution to the "Jewish question" and the end of anti-Semitism. Zionism is a Jewish nationalist movement pursued through secular and political interests. What wishful thinking it was that Zionism would be their "peace" and their "solution;" yet they performed the role that God decreed for them in the process of reestablishing the "house of Israel" in their own land, where their nation would be resurrected to become a "burdensome stone for all people" pending their Messiah's return.)*

The Christadelphian Advocate

He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.

Jeremiah 23:28

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Introduction

The Prophet Ezekiel

Ezekiel was a prophet of God during Israel's exile in Babylon, his work overlapping that of Jeremiah and Daniel. Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem during the conquest of Judah, seeking to turn the people away from their idolatry and wickedness. Later, he told them to submit to their captivity in Babylon that they might live; for God would return them to Jerusalem after seventy years (Jeremiah 29:1-10). Ezekiel and Daniel were God's chosen prophets to teach and encourage the exiles while in Babylon. Ezekiel's charge was to explain why God permitted their captivity, that they might come to know and understand His ways and turn their hearts to Him. Ezekiel prophesied in an appointed time of vengeance, yet, beginning in chapter 36, Ezekiel comforts Israel with visions of the glorious end that God had determined for His people, His city Jerusalem, and His land. It is this latter portion of Ezekiel's prophecies – the vision of the Dry Bones and Gog and Magog – that relate to our times, portions of which we wish to examine in this issue.

We read, *The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him* (Ezekiel 1:3). The character of Israel at that time is described in

Visions and symbolic actions characterized Ezekiel's mission, for he was a man of "sign," that is, he represented in the experiences and visions God laid upon him certain things which should befall the house of Israel.

Ezekiel's commission: ***Son of Man,** I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiff-hearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them...And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear...* (Ezekiel 2:3-7).

The title “Son of Man” is associated with Ezekiel ninety times in the course of this book. Ezekiel, whose name means “God will strengthen,” is a type of Jesus, for it is clear that there is some parallel between the circumstances and mission of Ezekiel and that of Jesus. Both are identified through the title “Son of Man” (this address is Divinely used in relation to Ezekiel some 90 times and to the Lord Jesus some 60 times). We recall that both accomplished their mission at the close of great and terrible periods in Israel’s history, as it is recorded regarding Christ, that *once in the end of the world (age) hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself* (Hebrews 9:26). This “end” came to the Jewish “world” when, as Christ foretold, the Romans came against Jerusalem and left not one temple stone standing upon another (Luke 21:6).

Visions and symbolic actions characterized Ezekiel’s mission, for he was a man of “sign,” that is, he represented in the experiences and visions God laid upon him certain things which should befall the house of Israel. *Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done shall ye do: and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD* (Ezekiel 24:24). The phrase “ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD” is a dominant theme in the book, occurring some 62 times in twenty-seven of the forty-eight chapters. Yahweh consistently gives fair warning, appealing to his people to turn to Him, leaving them with no excuse for their disbelief and disobedience. We see this same principle played out by Christ in his warnings to apostate Israel of God’s impending judgments, which of course have application to us in these latter days of apostasy and unbelief.

The Vision of the Dry Bones in chapter 37 represents the national resurrection of natural Israel, their gathering into their own land, and the reunion of Judah and Israel under the reign of an everlasting king. Through this “resurrection” God will manifest Himself to His people (as well as to the world), that *ye shall know that I am the Lord* (vss. 6, 13). A new and everlasting covenant shall be made with Israel, and God’s “sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.” This is the vision and the hope revealed to Ezekiel during the exile in Babylon, and a source of hope and instruction for all succeeding generations of believers.

Over sixty years ago, a past Advocate editor made the following observation: “Chapter 37 gives a wonderfully appropriate and forceful picture of the gradualness of the restoration to its completeness. Somewhere in that description is the part that is applicable to this present day of 1953; for much of the prophecy has already been fulfilled, and considerable is still future. Yet it is difficult to say precisely where, in that prophecy, the restoration stands today; or at least we would probably not agree on the matter.” (Advocate, May 1953, page 109) Though there remain differences

in interpretation among brethren in determining the extent of the restoration, the prophecies in Ezekiel 37 are so significantly applicable to us in 2014 that attention to and discourse regarding them is, we believe, time well spent. May the fulfillment of the prophecy of the “dry bones” along with other “latter day” prophecies continue to be a source of hope and encouragement to us as Bible students and faithful witnesses of the fulfillment of His Word in these last days.

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Maintaining Our Focus on the Nation of Israel

Two dates from the previous century should loom large in the minds of all believers. On May 14, 1948, the modern nation of Israel was established in the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people. On June 7, 1967, in the Six Day War, the Jewish people captured the old city of Jerusalem, reuniting the city. The brothers and sisters who witnessed these events were filled with anticipation and excitement.

Today, these events should still inspire us. The establishment, prosperity, and the notoriety of the modern nation of Israel is the greatest manifestation of the visible hand of God in the world since the close of the first century. It may turn out to be the greatest display of His power and purpose that we will see until the return of our Lord. The importance of Israel for us is that it is a sure sign that the return of our Lord is near. This witness should motivate us to draw together, to strengthen one another in our most precious hope and faith. As stated in the May 1998 special issue of the *Advocate* – [A Jubilee for Israel](#), “The nation of Israel is a modern miracle. It is clear and positive evidence that God accomplishes what He pleases, and that His word does not return to Him void. This one single event in modern history has restored our faith in the word of God. It has given us assurance that the Kingdom is coming, and it has demonstrated clearly to us that the return of Christ is very near.”



The inevitable shift in demographics and attitudes that takes place over time challenges the younger generations in our community to appreciate the importance of these historic occurrences. Due to the

passage of time, our community has fewer members who witnessed these miraculous events. What is worse, we have entire generations (generations not in the Biblical sense, but in our culture's way of assessing new waves of younger people), for whom the nation of Israel is not a miracle, but a commonplace fact. According to U.S. Census population estimates, about 85% of the current population was born after 1948, and nearly 60% after 1967 (the figures for Canada are assumed to be similar). The vast majority of people alive today never knew a world without the modern nation of Israel. Likewise, for large numbers of individuals, the city of Jerusalem has always been in Jewish hands and the capital of the nation. Considering this trend even further, our community now has teenage children and grandchildren – those born after the year 2000 – for whom these events are truly from a past century, i.e., nothing new, exciting, or different; just something that has always been.

Because the presence and trials of the nation of Israel have been an ongoing fact of life for so many in our community, it runs the risk of losing its significance and motivation in relation to our hope through God's plan and purpose for the earth and mankind upon it. We have an obligation to keep the importance of Israel – this most notable sign of this age – at the forefront of our minds and the minds of our younger members and children. We live in perilous times. Every generation has been evil, but our youth are facing new and different challenges than that of their parents' generation. Scientific education and society's moral standards are wholly oriented against God and Biblical values. In past generations the majority opinion was supportive of what the Scriptures define as moral behavior. Now society is moving to an outright antagonistic position in opposition to God's Word and commandments. Even among the self-proclaimed religious members of society, numerous observers, commentators and studies have noted that they have moved away from doctrine and moral absolutes. In this country being "religious" doesn't necessarily imply faith in God or the Bible.

The existence of the modern nation of Israel has often been cited as evidence that the Lord's return is near. The quotation cited from the 1998 *Advocate* on the previous page is a case in point. This message repeated over time can lose its impact and make us dull of hearing. Israel's hope can become susceptible to the kind of attitude described by the apostle Peter, "all things continue as they were from the beginning of (Israel's) creation..." making talk of momentous changes coming to Israel seem remote. Shortly before his offering, the Lord made reference to prophecies he would fulfill and said, *For the things concerning me have an end* (Luke 22:37). The same message might be applied to the things concerning Israel – they have an end also, and that end is embodied in God's purpose that the apostle Paul styled *the hope of Israel* (Acts 28:20).

The nation of Israel is concrete. The nation of Israel reminds all believers that God is in the world. The nation of Israel demonstrates to our children and youth that God is working and accomplishing His plan as has been revealed in His Word. It is a reminder that we have the opportunity to be a part of that plan and the great blessings He has promised to those that love Him. Let us search out and consider the prophecies and current events pertaining to Israel – God’s witness in these latter days – that we may be strengthened in our understanding and faith, and thereby equipped to endure with patience and confidence until the end.

The Dry Bones of Ezekiel 37

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live... (Ezekiel 37:1-5).

While among the captives in Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel sees a vision of a valley full of dry bones. As commanded by God, Ezekiel prophesies that the bones should live again. In response, the bones are rejoined and covered in flesh, but there was no breath in them. God told Ezekiel to prophesy that breath should come upon them, which he did, and *they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army*. God tells Ezekiel, *These bones are the whole house of Israel* and that *He will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel*. This vision is a prophecy of the national resurrection of Israel after a period of severe desolation. This resurrection of the nation occurs in two distinct stages.

A National Resurrection

Christadelphians have traditionally understood this vision as a prophecy of the restoration of the nation (i.e., a national resurrection) and not a vision of individual resurrection as has been suggested by other interpreters. Four features of the prophecy support this national resurrection interpretation:

First, Ezekiel and the rest of Scripture use the phrase *house of Israel* to describe the Jewish people as a whole. Ezekiel actually employs the phrase more than seventy-five times and it is always in reference to the Jewish people as a nation. For example, Ezekiel condemns, *Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face*; and he counsels, *Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations* (14:4-6). Additionally, during his vision of the Kingdom Age (Ezekiel 44:10-12), the prophet uses *the house of Israel* to refer to the Jewish nation (other examples include: Ezekiel 3:4-7; 4:1-8; 11:15; 20:27-30). Likewise, Jeremiah notes that the *house of Israel* and the other nations are *as the clay is in the potter's hand* (18:3-7), and Jesus stated that he was sent to the Jewish people when he said, *I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel* (Matthew 15:24).

Second, the context for the vision of the dry bones is also a national restoration. The balance of Ezekiel 37 is a vision of the joining of the two sticks. This second prophecy is a metaphor illustrating the restoration of all 12 tribes into the nation. The features of the two sticks prophecy also help indicate that the vision of the dry bones was not fulfilled by the returns under Zerubbabel, Ezra, or Nehemiah. Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin returned to the land of Israel under the direction of those men.

Furthermore, several features of the vision of the valley of the dry bones do not fit the picture of individual resurrection to the Judgment Seat of Christ. To begin, those who have fallen asleep in Christ and are awaiting resurrection to judgment have a hope. Specifically, that hope is in the resurrection and the gift of eternal life. In contrast, however, the dry bones say, *our hope is lost* (vs. 11). Additionally, Ezekiel 37 does not identify the spiritual seed of Abraham or place any covenant restrictions on this resurrection. To consider this vision in reference to individual resurrection in the absence of such a qualification would be in conflict with Paul's declaration, *For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel* (Romans 9:6). Also, the manner of death of the bones does not fit with individual resurrection. These bones were *slain* and not a product of a natural death (vs 9). Some, but certainly not everyone gathered at the resurrection of the saints, will have died a violent death. This vision does not sound like individual resurrection either, but rather reflects the imagery that the Scriptures use to describe the destruction of the nation of Israel (e.g. Lamentations 2:2-6; Ezekiel 21:9-12; Luke 21:24).

Third, the purpose of the resurrection of the dry bones does not match the purpose of the resurrection to the Judgment Seat of Christ. Ezekiel records,

Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel...then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD (37:12-14). According to this vision, the resurrected bones know that God does exist because of the resurrection. In contrast, do those appearing before the Judgment Seat of Christ have to be told who brought them there? A prerequisite of the Judgment Seat of Christ is a belief that resurrection to judgment was part of God's plan. In the case of individual resurrection, the act of resurrection is not what demonstrates that God exists. In the case of the vision of the dry bones, the resurrection is the evidence that God exists. While not every description of the resurrection to judgment is comprehensive, they have consistent themes that fit together. Not only does this vision of the dry bones lack any of those expected elements, what is here mentioned is in contradiction to Scriptures describing the resurrection to the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Lastly, and, lo, they were very dry.

Ezekiel records that the bones *were very dry* and that the House of Israel would say *we are cut off for our parts* (37:2, 11). The Jewish Publication Society translation renders verse 11 as “we are clean cut off.” The prophet sees bones that have blanched and dried in the sun. The bodies that covered them are long gone. These dry bones have fallen apart. This imagery depicts a nation that is thoroughly destroyed; one that died out long ago. A short review of history demonstrates that “*dry bones*” was an apt metaphor for the nation of Israel as depicted in this prophecy:

- “ **722 BC** – Assyrians take the Northern Kingdom captive and carry away the ten tribes.
- “ **604-586 BC** – Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem and the Temple and takes Judah captive into Babylon. The remnant of the people flees to Egypt.
- “ **538 & 516 BC** – With the Decree of Cyrus, a small number of exiles return to build the Temple. However, Judah is not an independent kingdom or a political entity.
- “ **141 BC** – The Maccabees / Hasmonean kingdom is not ruled by a Son of David. Instead it is ruled by the descendants of Simon Maccabee who are ineffective and prone to infighting.
- “ **64 BC** – The Kingdom of Judah becomes a Roman Province, and by 37 BC has an Edomite King.
- “ **70 AD** – Four legions of Roman Soldiers destroy Jerusalem and the Temple.

- “ **118-132 AD** – Jews in Judah again revolt. In the resulting Roman military response, 580,000 Jews fell in battle, not including those who succumbed to hunger and pestilence. The subsequent era was one of danger for the Jews in the Land, during which the most important observances were forbidden. It was the aim of the Roman government to destroy the very essence of Judaism by preventing the study of the Law. Other prohibitions were promulgated concerning the Sabbath and circumcision. There was a prohibition that prevented the Jews from walking in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Jews were sold into slavery. After the plow had been drawn over the Temple mount, Jerusalem became a pagan city.
- “ **637 AD** – Jerusalem captured by Muslim armies.
- “ **Middle Ages** – European Jewish pilgrims to Jerusalem describe how desolate the city was. In the 1200s, one writer reported that only 200 Jews lived in the city. In the 1400s, another traveler reported that Jerusalem contained only 250 families. Other pilgrims report even fewer numbers.¹ By the 19th century, the Land of Israel was still desolate as noted by Mark Twain:

“Of all the lands there are for dismal scenery, I think Palestine must be the prince. The hills are barren, they are dull of color, they are unpicturesque in shape. The valleys are unsightly deserts fringed with a feeble vegetation that has an expression about it of being sorrowful and despondent. The Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee sleep in the midst of a vast stretch of hill and plain wherein the eye rests upon no pleasant tint, no striking object, no soft picture dreaming in a purple haze or mottled with the shadows of the clouds. Every outline is harsh, every feature is distinct, there is no perspective – distance works no enchantment here. It is a hopeless, dreary, heart-broken land.”²

The above paints a picture of very dry bones. This was the prophesied outcome for the nation during their scattering and dispersal from the Land. The nation had been warned that destruction would occur if they failed to follow God’s commands. *And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me... I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste* (Leviticus 26:27, 33).

The Resurrection of the Nation of Israel

While God warned that destruction and scattering would be the result of failure to keep His commandments, He also prophesied that He would remember His people and the covenant He made with them. *And yet for all*

that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD (Leviticus 26:44-45). Over the course of history, countless nations have been founded and countless have disappeared. However, the nation of Israel is the only nation in history prophesied to exist, promised to be destroyed, promised to be reestablished, and was reestablished in front of the entire world.

Events that occurred in 1897, 1917 and 1948 were most instrumental in the establishment of the modern nation of Israel and the fulfillment of Ezekiel 37.

1897

Through the work of Theodor Herzl, the first Zionist Congress was held in 1897 in Switzerland.

The Congress grew in response to the extreme anti-Semitism of 19th Century Europe, and included 200 Jewish representatives from Europe, Russia, and the United States. The prevailing thought among Jewish leaders and thinkers of that time, in regard to the best course of action for Jews, was assimilation into society (which was proving elusive), or to leave Europe *en masse* for a more favorable location such as America or Argentina. Theodor Herzl, an international journalist turned diplomat and politician, was at the forefront of the Zionist movement. “Zionism” is a Jewish nationalist movement that has as its goal the creation and support of a Jewish national state in the land of Israel (it is a political movement and not a religious movement). After this First Zionist Congress in Basle, Herzl wrote in his diary:



“If I had to sum up the Basle Congress in one word – which I shall not do openly – it would be this: At Basle I founded the Jewish state. If I were to say this today, I would be greeted by universal laughter. In five years, perhaps, and certainly in 50, everyone will see it.”³

Brethren in Christ recognized this event for its significance in relation to the vision of the dry bones.

“MANY students of the Bible, alive fifty years ago, were thrilled to see, and hear, the shaking of the dry bones of Israel in an endeavour to “stand upon their feet.” “That goodly cedar of the Lebanon,” humanly speaking, fell all too soon! Yet while he lived he brought a message to Jewry, and electrified the world by his plea, in behalf of his people, for “a legally assured home in Palestine.” ... In the year 1897 at Basle, Switzerland, there were assembled together two hundred delegates, representing 81 cities, in the first International Jewish Congress.” (Albert Hall, From Eden to Eden, 1951)

1917

The brothers and sisters of Christ alive in 1917 were able to witness two dramatic events critical to the return of the nation of Israel. First, on November 2, the British Government issued the Balfour Declaration, which was a statement of British support for the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people. This position was defined in a letter from the British foreign secretary, Arthur James Balfour, to a leader of the British Jewish community for transmission to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. This letter was adopted in post WW1 Treaties. The declaration that “His Majesty’s government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object...” aroused enthusiastic hope among Zionists who saw it as a step in the fulfillment of the goals of the World Zionist Organization.

The second dramatic event of 1917 came less than one month later. As part of the Middle Eastern Allied front in WW1, General Allenby was put in charge of British forces in the summer of 1917 with the instructions, “Jerusalem before Christmas.”



Together with allied forces, the British army defeated the Germans and Ottomans and captured the city of Jerusalem in December. Famously, out of respect Allenby walked into Jerusalem instead of riding in on horseback.

Beyond getting Jerusalem out from under the control of the Ottoman Empire and into the hands of a nation friendly to the return of the Jews, why is 1917 so important? Leviticus 26:27-28 reads: *And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.* A time is equivalent to 360 years, so seven times equals 2,520 years of Israel's downtrodden state. Using the captivity of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 604 BC as the starting point, the 2,520 years ran out in 1917. Students of the Bible were looking forward to this year for momentous events:

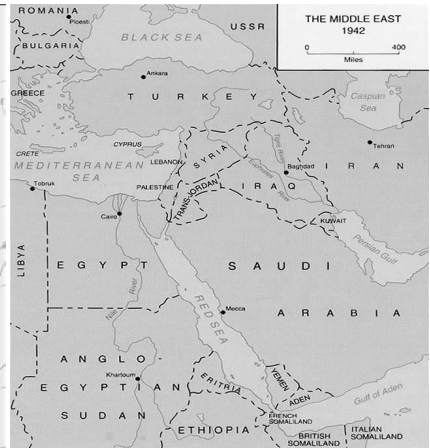
"The year 1917 is consequently doubly indicated as a final crisis date, in which the 'seven times' run out...there can be no question that those who live to see this year 1917 will have reached one of the most important, perhaps the most momentous, of these terminal years of crisis."⁴

1948

On May 14, 1948, on the day in which the British Mandate over Palestine expired, the Jewish People's Council gathered at the Tel Aviv Museum and approved the following proclamation, declaring the establishment of the State of Israel. The new state was recognized that night by the United States and three days later by the USSR. The text of the declaration of establishment reads...

"ERETZ-ISRAEL [*Hebrew* – the Land of Israel, Palestine] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books. After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom."⁵

For those of us who were born after all of these events, they may seem like ancient history. They may not seem like that big of a deal. That perception would be wrong, for these events were really not that long ago, and the change was dramatic! Maps are powerful ways of illustrating this change. In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire was an expansive power in control of the land of Israel. After WW1, they lost nearly all of this land. The maps on the next page of the Ottoman Empire at its greatest expanse, and of the same area during the WW2 era, reflect a very different world. No country of Israel was there in either map (the dramatic birth of the nation of Israel occurred over a very short period of time and is still a relatively recent event).

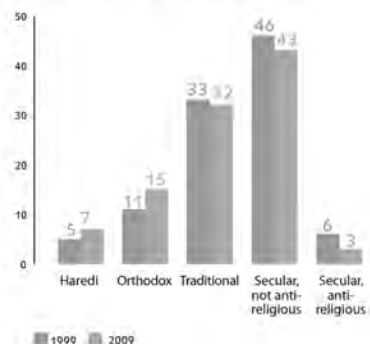


...but there was no breath in them

And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them (Ezekiel 37:8). The resurrection of the dry bones occurs in two stages, the second of which is reflective of a change that is yet to occur. First, the bones come together and form a body, but no breath of life is present in these reconstituted bodies (vss. 7-8). In fact, when the bones come together the bodies are not standing up, but are still lying on the ground as though dead. While back together, these bones are still not alive in the spiritual sense. The word rendered “breath” in verse 8 is the Hebrew word *ruwach*, variously rendered *wind* and *breath*, and by extension *spirit*, *mind*, *heart* — referring to God’s power as well as an emotional or intellectual attribute. Using the same word *ruwach*, the Scriptures say that Moses laid his hands on Joshua who was filled with the *spirit* of wisdom (Deuteronomy 34:9). While clearly God’s power was working to bring together these dry bones, at the end of this first stage, the nation of Israel does not have God’s spirit. They are not following God’s ways, nor do they recognize Him as the One who has placed them in their land.

That is the stage at which Israel is now. The nation of Israel is a secular nation. It does not have God’s Spirit. According to a regular survey of adult Israeli Jews, nearly half of the population identifies themselves as secular.⁶ Even those who view themselves as religious do not observe any or only a few Jewish customs.

How would you define yourself religiously?*



The existing secular Jewish nation fits within the first stage of the vision of the dry bones. According to Ezekiel, the nation recognizes God only after the second stage when He puts His spirit in them. Likewise, that imagery of a secular nation, or one that is not recognizing God, is consistent with the rest of Scripture. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land* (Zechariah 13:1-2). The status of the land of Israel when Messiah delivers them from their enemies is that their land is full of idols, false prophets, and unclean spirits. The people still have to be refined, for they have yet to receive the spirit of God. It is not until God “breathes” on them (the second stage in the resurrection of the nation), that *they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army* (vs. 10). That is the day which we are still looking forward to.

Conclusion

For some, the above account is but a history lesson. However, the events foretold, both past and future, are of the utmost importance to our faith and understanding. The nation of Israel is and must be incredibly significant to all that love the Truth. We must not forget what a great miracle the nation of Israel is. Likewise, though its reestablishment occurred before many of us were born, or that it belongs to the last century, we have to keep the right perspective. For the present generations, this first stage assembly of the prophetic dry bones of the nation of Israel may be from the past, but for all previous generations, the establishment of the nation of Israel was not about looking back, but instead was something earnestly looked forward to with longing and anticipation.

As Dr. Thomas so confidently expressed in 1850, “The truth is, there are two stages in the restoration of the Jews, the first is before the battle of Armageddon; and the second, after it... There is, then, a partial and a primary restitution of Jews before the manifestation; which is to serve as the nucleus, or basis, of future operations in the restoration of the rest of the tribes after he has appeared in the kingdom. The pre-adventual colonization of Palestine will be on purely political principles; and the Jewish colonists will return in unbelief of the Messiahship of Jesus, and of the truth as it is in him.”⁷

Josh Vest, Bronxville, NY

¹For examples see: Nicole Chareyron, Pilgrims to Jerusalem in the Middle Ages, 2013 or JB Friedman and KM Figg (eds), Trade, Travel, and Exploration in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia, 2013.

²Mark Twain, The Innocents Abroad, 1869.

³“Theodor Herzl.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online Academic Edition*, 2014.

⁴H. Grattan Guinness. Light for the Last Days, 1888

⁵<http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/declaration%20of%20establishment%20of%20state%20of%20israel.aspx>

⁶http://en.idi.org.il/media/1351622/GuttmanAviChaiReport2012_EngFinal.pdf

⁷John Thomas. Elpis Israel, 1850, page 441

Light for the Last Days

The following provides the context of the footnoted quotation in the preceding article – “The Dry Bones of Ezekiel 37” (page 121 – in reference to the events and recognized prophetic significance of the year 1917).

It was in the year B.C. 606 that Nebuchadnezzar first came against Judah, and carried Daniel and the Hebrew children among others captive. At this time he was acting on behalf of his father, and it was not until nearly two years later, B.C. 604, that he himself acceded to the throne. That year is consequently, properly speaking, the first of Nebuchadnezzar; and it was probably also the year in which he saw the vision of the great image, in connection with which it was said to him, “Thou art this head of gold.” This year has therefore some special claims to be considered as a very principal starting-point of the “times of the Gentiles.” Measured from it the period runs out in A.D. 1917, and it is a very notable fact that a second most remarkable period also expires then. The 1,335 years of Daniel 12:12, the *ne plus ultra* [most profound] of prophetic chronology, which is evidently eastern in character, and consequently lunar in scale, measured back from this year 1917, lead up to the great Hegira era, the starting-point of the Mohammedan calendar, the birthday of the power which has for more than twelve centuries desolated Palestine and trodden down Jerusalem... The year 1917 is consequently doubly indicated as a final crisis date, in which the “seven times” run out, as measured from two opening events, both of which are clearly most critical in connection with Israel, and whose dates are both absolutely certain and unquestionable... there can be no question that those who live to see this year 1917 will have reached one of the most important, perhaps the most momentous, of these terminal years of crisis.

(Light for the Last Days, 1888, H. Grattan Guinness,
Chapter XV – The Future Dates)

Israel: Beyond Comparison with Other Nations



There is no nation in the history of mankind that has had such a bearing on the world at large as the Jewish nation. There is no nation that can trace its history and pedigree back to the remotest antiquity as the Jewish nation can...so much so that their history and present status in the world are unaccountable when compared with other nations. During the long history of this people they have enjoyed peace and prosperity comparatively for only a very short time. About three-fourths of their history has

been one of trouble, exile and persecution. The great Gentile nations, Babylon, Greece and Rome in the zenith of their power and glory were famous so long as they maintained their power and prestige in the world, but as soon as the tide turned, down they went. Their downfall meant their obliteration as nations from the earth. Where is Assyria? Where is proud Babylon? Where is the much boasted greatness of classic Greece? What has become of the mighty empire of Rome? They are gone. Their identity has been lost and their subjects and citizens have been absorbed among the multitudes of the past and present divided world. Not so, however, with Israel. **It might be said that Israel's fame and greatness are not so much in their past prosperity and power as it is in their persecution, exile and trouble in all parts of the world. Where other nations have sunk out of sight by the hardships of human history, Israel has thriven upon persecution and trouble of all kinds imposed upon them in the worst ways imaginable.** Every nation has raised its hand to smite Israel, and endeavored to crush it into the earth; but in spite of all this the people are here to-day. They are in every land...in every city...marked out distinctly from every other people, hated and despised and yet they are the victors...except in the conflict for national existence and power as a kingdom. By analogy of human history this is impossible to account for. It is unique in the history of human affairs. Upon the principles of the laws of nations it is without comparison. And here we might say that there is nothing in the world that is a more powerful proof of the divinity of the Bible than Israel's history and present existence. Its history is a standing miracle before an astonished world. Its survival of all the persecutions and oppressions which have been heaped upon it is a greater miracle still. Divinity is written upon every page of Israel's Book; and it is also written upon every page of Israel's history.

(Thomas Williams, *The World's Redemption*, Chapter Seven, pp. 92-93)

The Statement of Faith in Relation to the Dry Bones

In 1863, the first edition of *Twelve Lectures* was published, a Christadelphian book that was to be widely distributed in both North America and the United Kingdom. Lecture X in the book was entitled, *The Hope of Israel, or, The Restoration of The Jews, A Part of the Divine Scheme and an Element of The Gospel*. As the author, Brother Robert Roberts, reviewed prophetic testimonies concerning the restoration of the Jews, including Ezekiel 37:21-22, he summarized them in this way: “There is no evading this language. It is too definitely worded to be spiritualized or misunderstood. As if to preclude such a thing, it is put in the following antithetical manner in Jeremiah 31:10: Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off. *He that SCATTERED Israel will GATHER him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.*”

Brother Roberts recognized that one of the barriers to accepting this truth, at the time in which he wrote, was the condition of the Jewish race itself: “Individuals who have looked with interest and compassion on the exile race may expect a blessing when the scoffer’s brazen voice is heard no more. We look upon the Jews in their present reprobate position, and find them destitute of all that is lovely or admirable. This is a difficulty in the case, at which many honest minds stumble. It arises, however, from a misapprehension. The mind previously unacquainted with the subject, naturally supposes that the restoration of the Jews will in some sense be conditional upon the moral condition of the nation. This, however, is a mistake. Restitution takes places altogether independent of Jewish deservings. This is very explicitly stated in Ezekiel 36:22-32...”¹

Brother Roberts correctly discerned that the return of the Jews would not be predicated or conditioned upon the moral condition of the nation – there would be no national repentance in the lands of the dispersion prior to their restoration. That expectation was how things worked out. Many of the Zionist movement’s leaders were not observant Jews. They acted out of secular, political interests rather than religious ones, and some did not believe in God at all.

The language in the Statement of Faith currently in use by Christadelphian ecclesias was framed in the following decade; in the early years of the 1870s. Concerning those things proclaimed in the Statement

Concerning those things proclaimed in the Statement of Faith with respect to the fortunes of the Jews, it truly was a statement of *faith*; it anticipated the occurrence of improbable things that had not yet happened.

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Proposition 22. That this restoration of the Kingdom again to Israel will involve the ingathering of God's chosen but scattered nation, the Jews; their reinstatement in the land of their fathers, when it shall have been reclaimed from "the desolation of many generations"; the building again of Jerusalem to become "the throne of the Lord" and the metropolis of the whole earth. Isa. 11:12; Jer. 31:10; Zec. 8:8; Eze. 36:34-36; Isa. 51:3; 60:15; 62:4; Jer. 3:17; Mic. 4:7-8; Joel 3:17; Isa. 24:23.

The early Christadelphian conviction was clearly articulated. There will be "the ingathering of God's chosen but scattered nation, the Jews" and "their reinstatement in the land of their fathers." There was anticipation that the land would be "reclaimed from 'the desolation of many generations.'" While these words were set forward as matters requiring sufficient strength of conviction that fellowship was to be based upon them, at the same time, the condition of the land, as reported by travelers like Mark Twain as cited on page 118 of this issue, was desolate and foreboding.² The land was languishing under the grip of the Turkish Empire. The Jewish people, for the most part poor and weak in their dispersion, were in no position to contemplate any kind of organized effort to return there. The Christadelphian expectation of the Jewish return was a matter of faith based on the testimony of the Word of God without any empirical evidence in the earth that it was possible.

There are two different principles of restoration revealed in the Scriptures. They might be described as the "old covenant" and "new covenant" principles of restoration. Under the old covenant, the Law of Moses provided that the Jews could be restored if they returned to God in the lands of their dispersion. *And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you* (Deuteronomy 30:1-4 ESV). This provision of the Law was the basis of the partial restoration from Babylon. It was *not* the basis of the restoration which occurred in the twentieth century, which was *not* accomplished under the terms of the Law of Moses.

Under the new covenant, there was provision that the Jewish people could be restored to the land unconditionally and without repentance beforehand, as an act of mercy and favour. *Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you... Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations. It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel* (Ezekiel 36:22-25, 31-32). The new covenant was based on a higher principle than the old covenant. The old covenant required that the people's heart reform and turn towards God first; the new covenant pledged God's merciful intervention in the people's fortunes: first, to cause them to return to the land, and second, when in the land, to accomplish their cleansing and reformation. The new covenant specified the principal agency for turning ungodliness from Jacob, *And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob* (Romans 11:26, citing Isaiah 59:20). The turning of Israel to God will be accomplished by the Messiah when he returns to his people. Not until then will the process of Israel's restoration be completed. As set out in the Statement of Faith, the end of the process is that "Jerusalem should become the throne of the Lord and the metropolis of the whole earth."

Where does Israel's situation in this second decade of the twenty-first century leave these early, heart-felt expressions of Christadelphian faith in the restoration of the Jews? The Christadelphian body today does not have the same intense interest in and admiration for the things that concern Israel as it did a generation ago. As a young person, this writer remembers attending many gatherings and Bible Schools where brethren who presented slides of recent trips to Israel held their audiences spellbound. There was a sense of awe and wonderment at the scenes of the Jewish people in their own land and the achievements they had made in bringing it back from the wasted condition in which they found it. As Christadelphian zeal concerning Israel's restoration ebbs, the view that it is not that meaningful, as a specific fulfilment of prophecy, gains more currency. Is what we have seen unfold,

in the rise of a nation of over six million Jews in the land of their fathers, from all countries of the earth, not the outcome that the prophets proclaimed and for which earlier generations of brethren watched in faith?

The question is sometimes posed, “Surely you do not suppose that the present state of Israel is the early stage government of the Kingdom of God?” The answer is no. It is not according to the Scriptures to so regard

Israel today. The Kingdom of God will not exist in the earth before the return of our Lord Jesus. The laws by which Israel is currently governed will be swept away and the Knesset will be abolished. The military, the state and rabbinical courts, and the political structure will be no more. Israel is in need of a great

spiritual transformation in which the heart of the whole nation turns towards God. Although there is no doubt that the dry bones prophecy is being fulfilled before our eyes, it has not progressed to the stage where the natural body has had the spirit of God breathed into its form.

Although there is no doubt that the dry bones prophecy is being fulfilled before our eyes, it has not progressed to the stage where the natural body has had the spirit of God breathed into its form.

One important characteristic of the dry bones prophecy is that it is progressive. There is no turning back once the process that was revealed to the prophet has begun to occur. There is no point at which the reassembled bones are broken apart and decimated again. That surety is characteristic of the new covenant. It is certain because it is based on the mercy of God through the work of Christ. That is why we have faith that Israel will not be destroyed by the nations of the earth.

As Brother Roberts observed in his day, so we do in ours: “Honest minds (may) stumble” at the things concerning the restoration of the Jews. Mistakes and misapprehensions are possible. In this regard, in our view, a misunderstanding has occurred in the reading of Ezekiel 39:23-24, *And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them.* The question to be settled is whether the closing section of Ezekiel 39 is to be understood as a discrete, sequential event following the destruction of Gog which preceded it, or whether it is to be understood as an overarching summary of God’s purpose with Israel that the Gentile nations were at last able to grasp. The former might be termed a narrow, future construction of these testimonies, and the

latter, that they provide a concise historical overview. Those who put a narrow future construction on these testimonies look for a time ahead when Israel must go into captivity among the Gentiles for their iniquity once again, and once again fall by the sword. Those who understand Ezekiel's testimony to be a summary of God's purpose with Israel over the generations believe that the time for Israel's scattering has reached an end. The prophecy of Daniel makes specific reference to a time when "the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end and all these things would be finished" (Daniel 12:7 ESV). The Septuagint rendering is "when the dispersion is ended." The point is that at the end of the seven times (understood to be 2,520 years that began with Nebuchadnezzar's ascension to the Babylonian throne as the head of gold, and ending in 1917 with the concurrent release of Turkish dominion over the holy land, and the Balfour Declaration committing His Majesty's government in England to establishing a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine³), the dispersion of Jewry was ordained to come to a permanent end. **Thus, depending on how one understands Ezekiel 39:22-29 affects one's expectations for Israel. Will Israel be destroyed and the people experience another scattering, or will Israel be saved from her enemies?** It also has profound implications for how Israel's restoration is viewed. In the first view, the primary purpose of Israel's ingathering in the twentieth century would be to enable God to execute judgment on the nation and bring it to the desperate condition depicted by the dry bones at a time in the future. In the second view, the primary purpose of Israel's ingathering in the twentieth century was for the purpose of saving the nation through the return of Christ and vindicating God's honour before the world. This matter is therefore an important one to study and search out in order to rightly divide the Word.

The answer to the meaning of the last section of Ezekiel 39 needs to take into consideration the closing verses of the chapter, Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name. They shall forget their shame and all the treachery they have practiced against me, when they dwell securely in their land with none to make them afraid, when I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies' lands, and through them have vindicated my holiness in the sight of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore. And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD (Ezekiel 39:25-29 ESV).

Most versions of the Bible indicate that these verses are the beginning of a new paragraph or a new section. There are, however, two possible applications by which the statement, “Then shall they (the whole house of Israel) know that I am the LORD their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land,” may be understood.

- Does the reference to “sending into exile” concern a specific series of events subsequent to the destruction of Gog at the very end of history, a future exile to be followed by a future assembly into their own land?
- Or does it have reference to the history of Israel over twenty-seven hundred years from the point at which the curses of the Law to bring the land into desolation and the people into dispersion were brought to bear, up to the present time, in which the majority of the world’s Jews have reassembled in their ancient land?

If the first question is answered in the affirmative, then we would be right to expect that Israel will be destroyed, her people exiled from the land once again, and the time for the great ingathering of the Jews of which the prophets speak yet in the future. In that case, the return of the Jews we have witnessed is only a precursor, brought about by God in order to execute judgment on the Jewish people, and dispossess them of their land at the hands of the Gentile nations once again.

On the other hand, if the first question above is answered in the negative and the second question in the affirmative, then we understand that the exile is past and the ingathering includes in part that which we have ourselves witnessed over the course of the twentieth century. In that case, we can anticipate that our Lord will come at any time to pour out God’s Spirit on the nation and secure their deliverance from their enemies; and, the adverb “now” in verse 25 is understood to refer to the present time – a time when Israel’s fortunes have been restored and God’s mercy has been shown in measure to His people.

Because these two different ways of understanding Ezekiel 39:25-29 have far-reaching implications, how can a decision be made as to which one is correct? There are convergent lines of reasoning which can be brought to bear to lead us to the right answer.

First, if Ezekiel 39:25-29 is a reference to catastrophic events affecting Israel’s destiny that yet lie in the future, it would seem to have much in common with futurist interpretations of prophecy in which the great events of God’s purpose are compressed into a very short interval at the end of history. Most Christadelphians have declared that they uphold a continuous

historical view in contradistinction to the futurist concept. In our understanding of the prophetic testimony, there are not two ingatherings of Israel in the latter days, one before the Gogian invasion and one after. There is only one that has two phases. While the second phase of the ingathering is not fully completed until after Christ returns, as the prophet Ezekiel declares, *I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore*, the first phase is well underway in the earth at the time of his coming.

In our understanding of the prophetic testimony, there are not two ingatherings of Israel in the latter days, one before the Gogian invasion and one after. There is only one that has two phases.

Second, the outcome of the Gogian invasion does not align with the understanding that Israel is to be slain by the sword and scattered again among the nations. Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 are an account of great deliverance that God executes on behalf of Israel. It is the host of Gog that is buried by the people of Israel (Ezekiel 39:9). The rhetorical question that God poses to Gog at the onset of the invasion is, *On that day when my people Israel are dwelling securely, will you not know it?* (Ezekiel 38:14). Israel's condition, described as *dwelling securely*, is not a matter of Israel's perception. It is God that is asking the question. He does not say, "When my people Israel think that they are dwelling securely." He says, "When my people Israel **are** dwelling securely." It is a matter of His determination.

Third, the reason why Israel is delivered and Gog is slain is explained by the prophet, *You will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the land. In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes* (Ezekiel 37:16). How would this purpose be achieved if Israel was decimated and scattered among the Gentiles?

Brothers and sisters, we need to take great care that what we teach and expound concerning Israel's restoration does not invalidate the expectations of our brethren who framed the Statement of our Faith. At this time in history, when mankind walks more by sight and less by faith, and being eye witnesses of many things that former generations longed to see fulfilled, let us not treat the powerful evidence with the contempt that familiarity can breed. Israel's existence today is not merely the work of Divine providence – it is the tangible fulfilment of many Divine prophecies. It is the living evidence of the restoration prophecies brought to pass before our eyes.

Why was the dry bones prophecy given in the form of a symbolic enactment of resurrection? Was it not to give us confidence that the same

God who would bring Israel up out of its Diaspora graves will be mighty also to bring those who sleep in the dust of the earth up out of their graves? Is not the same everlasting covenant and the promises made to the fathers which it sealed, the foundation of both? *But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it* (Matthew 13:16-17).

James Farrar, Grimsby, Ontario

¹*Twelve Lectures*, 1867 4th edition, Robert Roberts, p. 280-281

²Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad*, 1869 (see page 118 of this issue)

³See fuller references of these events on pages 120 and 124 of this issue



The Star of David – Symbol of the Nation of Israel

When Theodor Herzl looked for a symbol for the new Zionist movement in the late 19th Century, he chose the Star of David. It was officially adopted at the first Zionist Congress in 1897 and appeared on the earliest versions of the Israeli flag. **Today, the Star of David is still the most distinctive and universally recognized symbol of the Jewish people**, but what is its background and history? How did it become associated with King David, and is it a legitimate symbol of the nation? Is there any scriptural basis for it, and are there other associations that cast it in a different light? These are questions of significance to us as Christadelphians in that we have such a strong affinity toward the Jews as God's people, and the land of Israel as their inheritance.

The evolution of the six-pointed Jewish star, the Magen David (literally – the “Shield of David”) in Hebrew is long and difficult to trace. It is Jewish tradition that David, king and warrior of Israel, had this particular insignia on his shield. However, there is no Biblical or historical support for this legend, nor is there any support for it in early rabbinic literature. **Various speculations exist about the origin of the symbol itself.**



One goes back to the ancient Hebrew alphabet, when the letter “d” was represented by a triangular shape. The two d’s or *dalets* in “David” were represented with two triangles – one facing up (toward God) and one facing down (toward the earth and mankind) to form the six-pointed star. According to tradition, the two interlacing triangles were inseparable as are

the Creator and the Jewish people. A second and later theory of origin dates to the time of Alexander the Great when he conquered Jerusalem in 300 BC. The Jewish soldiers were reported to have had six-pointed stars on their shields based on the Greek letter “delta” which is also a triangle. In this case, one of the triangles was said to have stood for King David and the other for his promised seed, the Messiah. Others say that there are actually twelve sides to the star (3 exterior and 3 interior on each triangle), representing the twelve tribes of Israel. While these theories may be interesting, they have little or no basis in historical fact.

The intertwined equilateral triangles that form the Star of David are not unique to Jewish tradition or history. The shape, generally known as the “hexagram,” is actually a common symbol that has been used by many ancient cultures. The hexagram of other cultures was often associated with magic and pagan practices, and as a family/community insignia of good luck in the Middle East and North Africa. Among the ancient claims for its geometric symmetry is that the upward triangle represents female sexuality and the downward triangle represents male sexuality; combined, they were said to symbolize unity and harmony. In alchemy, the two triangles symbolize “fire” and “water,” together representing the reconciliation of opposites. In the Middle Ages, this star shape appeared frequently on Christian churches, but only rarely in synagogues or on Jewish ritual objects. Historically, it has been the menorah that has served as the Jew’s primary religious or rabbinical symbol, even unto this day.

The earliest known Jewish use of the six-pointed star was as a seal in ancient Palestine (6th Century BC). Its next known historical usage was not until eight centuries later where it appeared on a stone frieze on the synagogue in Capernaum. These early Jewish hexagrams may have only been ornamental designs with no particular significance. At most, they were part of mystical Jewish traditions (known as “practical Kabbalah”) in the context of protection against demons and other “works of wonder.”

The star became more predominant in European Jewish culture during medieval times. It was used as a printer’s mark, especially in Prague. When Emperor Charles IV granted the Jews of this city the privilege of displaying their own flag on state occasions, it was adorned with a large six-pointed star in its center. A similar flag remains to this day in the oldest synagogue in Prague. From Prague, the use of the star spread to Jewish communities in Moravia and Bohemia, and eventually throughout all of Eastern Europe.

It has only been over the last two hundred years or so that the six-pointed star achieved the status that it enjoys today as the most common and universally recognized sign of Judaism and Jewish identity. It was not until after the French Revolution and Jewish political

emancipation that they began to look for a symbol to represent them as a nationalistic community. They settled upon the six-pointed star, principally because of its traditional associations with ancient Israel, King David and Solomon. Ironically, the religious Jews of Europe and the Orient, already accustomed to seeing hexagrams on mystical amulets, accepted this secularized emblem as a legitimate Jewish symbol, even though it had no scriptural basis or historical religious context.

As mentioned earlier, the Star or Magen David gained additional popularity as a symbol of Judaism when it was adopted as the emblem of the Zionist movement in 1897. The symbol took on even more meaning during the Holocaust when the Nazis chose the yellow star as an identifying badge that was sewn on the garments of all Jews. After the war, the Jews turned this symbol of humiliation and death into a badge of honor. **The Star of David then became associated with national redemption and was thus a logical choice as the symbol to represent the new Jewish State of Israel in 1948.**

However, even with its emotional and deep-rooted meaning to 20th century Jewish people, there was much debate over whether this symbol should be used on the flag of the new nation. The hexagram is a pagan occult symbol, long used as such in other eastern cultures and religions; its roots are deeper and more historical in the pagan world than in the Jewish. (It is still used by the Freemasons in their Masonic temples and “worship” services today.)

Some believe that the dominant influence of the very wealthy Rothschild family was a factor in the hexagram being chosen as the symbol of the modern nation of Israel. The Star of David was adopted as its family crest or shield during the 19th century. Although the Rothschilds were among the major supporters of the Zionist movement in its early decades, how much influence they had on the selection of the Star of David by Theodor Herzl in the early days of the Zionist movement is unknown.

In summary, we can conclude that the origins of the Star of David are suspect at best and should not be viewed as anything more than a human-derived symbol for the secular nation of Israel. We share in their love of the “Land” and see the regathering of Yahweh’s people there as a faithful witness to His prophetic word. However, God’s words spoken to Jeremiah are appropriate to our subject and should not be overlooked, *O house of Israel: Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven... For the customs of the people are vain...* (Jeremiah 10:1-3).

Ken Wood, Brattleboro, VT

(Primary source: Jewish Traditions: A JPS Guide by Ronald L. Eisenberg, pp. 575-578)

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STATE OF ISRAEL IS BORN

The first independent Jewish State in 19 centuries was born in Tel Aviv as the British Mandate over Palestine came to an end at midnight on Friday, and it was immediately subjected to the test of fire. As "Medinat Yisrael" (State of Israel) was proclaimed, the battle for Jerusalem raged, with most of the city falling to the Jews. At the

same time, President Truman announced that the United States would accord recognition to the new State. A few hours later, Palestine was invaded by Moslem armies from the south, east and north, and Tel Aviv was raided from the air. On Friday the United Nations Special Assembly adjourned after adopting a resolution to appoint a med-

iator but without taking any action on the Partition Resolution of November 29. Yesterday the battle for the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road was still under way, and two Arab villages were taken. In the north, Acre town was captured, and the Jewish Army consolidated its positions in Western Galilee.

Most Crowded Hours in Palestine's History

Between Thursday night and this morning Palestine was crowded with the most intense activity in its history. Events must be among the most crowded hours in the history of the Jewish people. For the Jewish population there was the struggle over the fate of the few hundred Haganah men and women in the Kfar Etzion block of settlements near Hebron. Their surrender to a fully equipped superior foreign force desperately in need of a victory, was a foregone conclusion. What could not be known, with no communications since Thursday morning, was whether and to what extent the Haganah men would be treated as prisoners and would be sent to the dead Dothan on some of those anxious questions have now been resolved.

On Friday afternoon, from Tel Aviv, Jewish settlements in Acre, Haifa, the occupied zone, North Be'erot, Gush Katif, and in official running at birth, today in a special session to convene the "Medinat Yisrael." State of Israel action on the invasion of the first Council of Government. The UN. In the afternoon, Jerusalem was subjected to shelling from the northwest. Haganah forces throughout the land. High Commissioner. Within the country continued sniping, the Jewish forces claimed most of the city. The British had decided to evacuate the British. By agreement to the Jewish State, with Majestic, inside, Trans-Jordan,

JEWS TAKE OVER SECURITY ZONES

The Battle of Jerusalem, the Jewish forces took over the security zones on Friday morning, continued all day Friday and yesterday. The Jewish forces took over the security zones on Friday morning, continued all day Friday and yesterday. The Jewish forces took over the security zones on Friday morning, continued all day Friday and yesterday.

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Egyptian Air Force Spitfires Bomb Tel Aviv; One Shot Down

Kol Israel, the Tel Aviv, the Egyptian Air Force Spitfires Bomb Tel Aviv; One Shot Down. The Egyptian Air Force Spitfires Bomb Tel Aviv; One Shot Down. The Egyptian Air Force Spitfires Bomb Tel Aviv; One Shot Down.

2 Columns Cross Southern Border By WALTER COLLINS. Cairo, Saturday. — A column of two columns crossed the southern border of the Egyptian Air Force Spitfires Bomb Tel Aviv; One Shot Down.

U.S. RECOGNIZES JEWISH STATE

WASHINGTON, Saturday. — Ten minutes after the announcement of the British Mandate on Friday, the White House released a formal statement by President Truman that the U.S. Government would recognize the Jewish State.

The U.S. is also considering lifting the arms embargo that it has not known whether to Palestine only or the entire Middle East, and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Jewish Provisional Government.

Proclamation by Head of Government

The creation of "Medinat Yisrael," the State of Israel, was proclaimed at midnight on Friday by Mr. David Ben-Gurion, with them Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive and of the State's Provisional Council of Government.

The first act of the Council of Government, as announced by Ben-Gurion, was to appoint a committee to study the situation of the Jewish people in the land of Israel and of their relations throughout the world. The committee was composed of the Jewish Agency Executive and the Jewish Agency for Palestine.



David Ben-Gurion, Prime Minister of Israel.

Special Assembly Adjourns. The Special U.N. Assembly, called four weeks ago to discuss the U.S. proposal for a Jewish State, adjourned today after a session of three days.