



Israel in The Old Testament

*God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man,
that He should change his mind. Does He speak and then not act?
Does He promise and not fulfil?*

(Numbers 23:19)

In respect of the Old Testament (aka Old Covenant) there can sometimes be a subconscious tendency in the context of the New Testament (Covenant) to dismiss the promises and prophecies made by God to Israel and the Jewish people as being either fulfilled, superseded or spiritualised as mere allegory. In latter-day times as we await the second coming of Israel's Messiah, any such tendency can lead to a misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the purposes of God for the present-day people and the land.

There are at least four major areas of the Old Testament which convey the mind of God for the Jewish people and the modern nation.

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

(Gen. 12:1-3; 13:15-17; 17:6-8)

This covenant was and is unconditional (independent of Israel's behaviour) and this characteristic was symbolically portrayed by God when he caused Abraham to fall into a deep sleep (Gen 15:12). The Lord was clearly saying to the patriarch: "This is all of Me and nothing of you." God's promise to Abraham was also eternal (or everlasting), and it is a gross distortion of Scripture to suggest any other interpretation. God, in His word, says what he means and means what he says (Num. 23:19; Isa. 66:9). In summary, the commitments and promises made to Abraham are three-fold.

God said concerning His purposes for Abraham that the latter would be -

- the father of multitudes
- a blessing to the whole earth
- an inheritor through his descendants of the land of Canaan; the 'Promised Land'

He remembers His covenant for ever, the word He commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant He made with Abraham, the oath He swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit."

(Psalm 105:8-11)

THE EXILE AND RE-GATHERING

Though the northern and southern nations were taken away as captives (by the Assyrians and the Babylonians respectively), the Lord through the prophet Isaiah clearly stated that following what we now see as a nineteenth-century exile, He would gather them back to the land.

In that day the Lord will reach out His hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people (Is. 11:11)

“I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth.” (Is. 43:6)

“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.” (Ezek. 36:24)

PROMISE OF THE NEW COVENANT AND REVELATION

Under the New Covenant, promised and revealed through the prophet Jeremiah, the returned remnant will ultimately have the veil removed from their eyes in order that they might come to recognise Jesus, God’s Son, as their promised Yeshua haMashiach (Zech 12:10). Through this regathering and ultimate revelation, God, for His Holy Name’s sake, has said of Israel and the rest of world:

Therefore My people will know My Name; therefore in that day they will know that it is I who foretold it. Yes, it is I.” (Is. 52:6)

“The time is coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people.” (Jer. 31:31, 33)

And of the rest of the world:

“I will make known My Holy Name among My people Israel and the nations will know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel.” (Ezek. 39:7)

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

There is ahead of us a date which draws ever-nearer: it will witness an event unique in the history of the world. It is a day foretold through the prophet Zechariah when the feet of Jesus will stand on the Mount of Olives on the east side of Jerusalem – the city of David where God has “caused His Name to dwell” (Ezra 6:12); the city and capital of present-day Israel set in that particular piece of Eastern Mediterranean real estate which God has called “My Land”.

The Lord will be King over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and His Name the only name. (Zech. 14:9)