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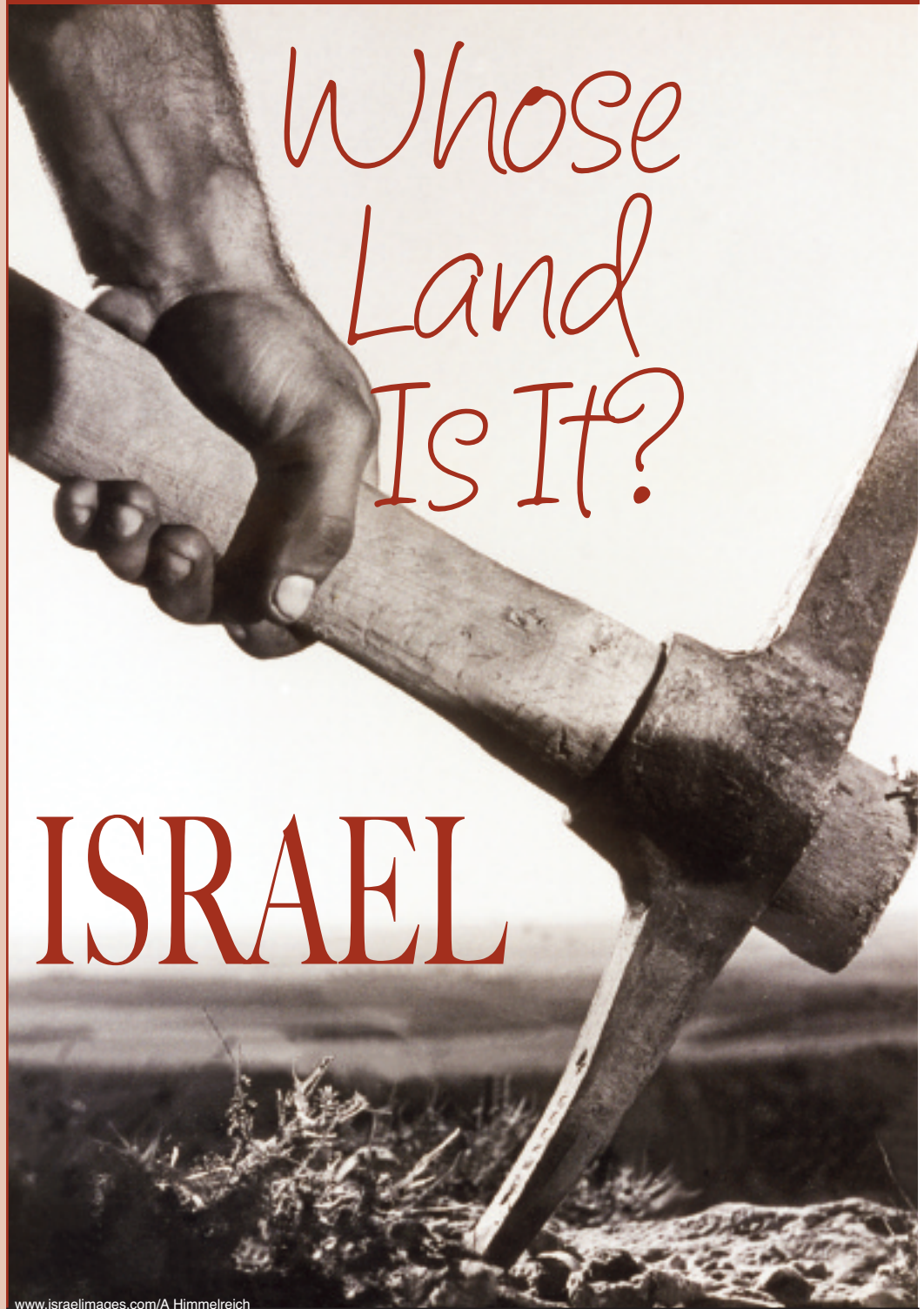
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Whose
Land
Is It?

ISRAEL

ISRAEL

Whose Land Is It?

“And the LORD
said to Abram...

‘Lift your eyes now and look
from the place where you are—

“Next year in Jerusalem!”

This has been the heartfelt cry of countless thousands of Jewish people over the centuries. It is recited daily in prayer, spoken out with longing and rejoicing, cried out in adversity, often hidden deep within hearts, and even thought of as an answer to dreams. What or whom has made this statement a reality for so many Jewish people from the time of Abraham to David—when Jerusalem was acknowledged as the capital of Israel in 1000 BC—right up to the past 100 years?



Biblical Right

The first reference in Scripture pertaining to ownership of the Land of Israel is found in the book of Genesis, chapters 12 and 13. These Scriptures relate how Abraham was summoned by God to move from Haran in upper Mesopotamia to the land of Canaan in order to form a nation based on monotheism. “And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: ‘Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever’ (Gen. 13:14–15). From Abraham would spring a new family, the nation of Israel, and God’s purpose to bring forth the Savior of the world from the descendants of Abraham.

northward, southward
eastward, and westward;
for all the land which you see
I GIVE TO YOU
and your descendants
FOREVER.”

Gen. 13:14–15

It was God’s covenant promise to Abraham, reiterated throughout the Bible, which laid the foundation for the Jewish nation in Israel. This covenant was the first theocratic covenant of God’s rule. It is unconditional, depending solely on God, and incorporates an important link in all of God’s plans for mankind, even salvation. The promise, as recorded in Genesis 12:1–3, contains four areas of blessing for:

- The nation of Israel—“I will make you a great nation.”
- Abraham and his descendants—“I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing”
- Those who bless Israel—“I will bless those who bless you...”
- All nations—“And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

When God made this covenant with Abraham, He gave the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants as an everlasting possession. "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'" (Gen. 15:7; also see 17:7-8). It took a great step of faith for Abraham to accept the promise, as he was childless at that time. However, Isaac was eventually born to Abraham and Sarah.

God promised to bless Isaac according to the oath or covenant He made with Abraham: "Dwell in this Land and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your Father" (Gen. 26:3-5). Then the covenant promise was repeated to the next generation when God spoke to Jacob at Bethel and told him that He would bring him back to the Land and would not leave him until He had fulfilled His covenant to him (Gen. 28:13-15). Throughout the prophetic Scriptures, God promised a regathering of the Jewish people to their Land in the latter days from which they would never again be uprooted (Isa. 11:11-14; Jer. 16:14-16; 30:3; Amos 9:14-15).

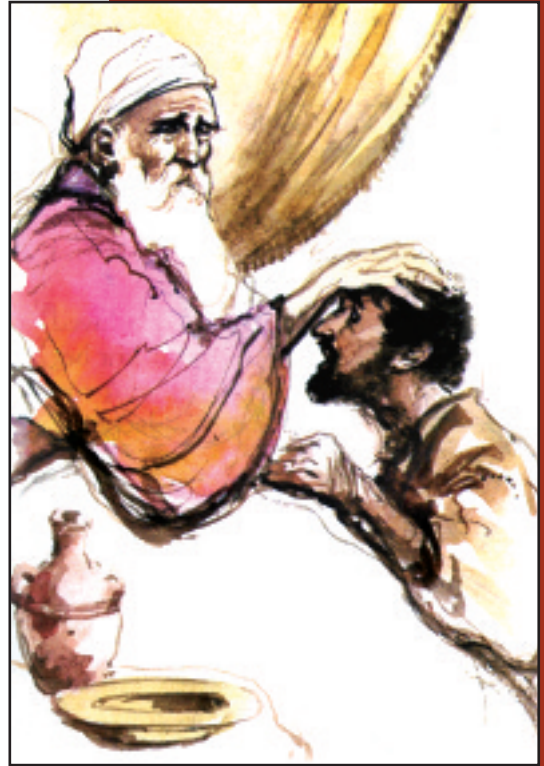
The Land of Israel, however, clearly belongs to God. Leviticus 25:23 says, "The land is Mine and you are strangers and sojourners with Me." We are reminded here that the Land shall not be sold permanently, because it belongs to God. God acknowledges the unique character of this territory by referring to it as "My land" (Ezek. 36:5, 20; 38:16; Joel 3:2) and as the Jewish people's "own land" (Ezek. 36:17, 24; 37:21). It seems as if the people of Israel and the Land of Israel are so entwined in Scriptures as to be described as "married" to each other. "But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you" (Isa. 62:4b-5a). (White)

God has been faithful to His promises to the descendants of Abraham. We should not fail to recognize God's continued plan for His covenant of the Land, the nation, and people of Israel. This does pose a question: Why did God choose this people? In Deuteronomy, we read, "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people for you were the least of all peoples, but because the LORD loves you and because He would keep the oath He swore to your fathers" (7:7-8a). Exodus 19:5 speaks of a conditional promise. If the Israelites obeyed God fully and kept His covenant, then they would be His treasured possession out of all nations, and He would do wonders amongst them previously never seen in any nation (Exod. 34:10). But, in Deuteronomy 28-30, God said if they did not obey Him, He would uproot them from the Land. However, when they repented and turned back to the Lord, He would bring them back. The Land would still remain theirs.

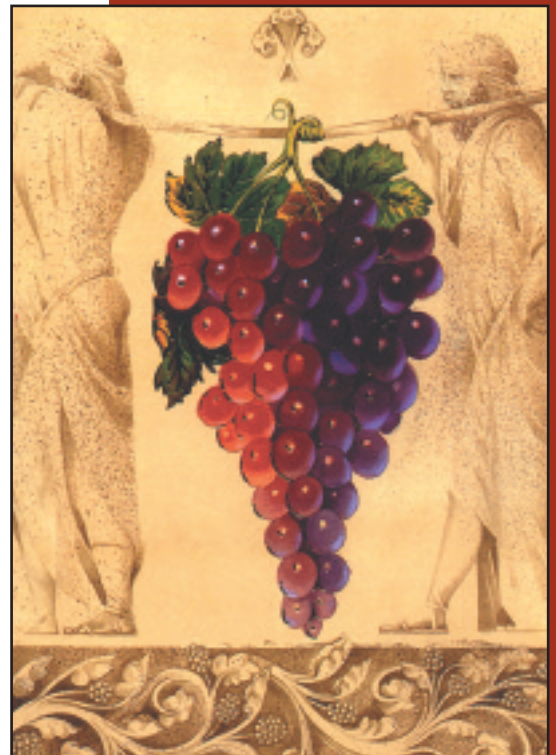
Historical Right

It is evident from the Scriptures that the birthplace of the Jewish people is the Land of Israel. Their connection to the Land spans some 3,800 years, where a significant part of their history took place. It should be remembered that throughout those many centuries, there has always been a continual vibrant Jewish presence in the Land.

However, history shows that the Jewish people never actually possessed their full inheritance, even during the great leadership of Joshua and Caleb when they took the fertile plains bordering the Mediterranean and the River



GOD gave the land of Canaan to ABRAHAM'S descendants as an EVERLASTING POSSESSION.





Jordan. The promised territory extended from the River Euphrates to Egypt and eastward to the area of modern day Kuwait (Gen.15:18). When Golda Meir was Prime Minister of Israel, she suggested that the only mistake Moses made in staking out the Promised Land was in not locating it over the world's oil deposits. Little did she realize—He did! (LaHaye, 27)

The location of Israel was selected by God as were all the other original nations. "When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He

separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD'S portion is His people, Jacob is the place of His inheritance" (Deut. 32:8-9). God had a special purpose for locating Israel in the center of the ancient world. Around 4,000 years ago, the Promised Land was the major crossroads of international trade routes connecting Africa, Asia, and Europe. God placed the Jewish people in the center of the earth to be His distinctive light. He intended that Israel obey Him, so that He could bless her to such a degree that all the nations of the world would see how they lived and prospered in Israel when they worshipped Him (Deut. 4:6; Ezek. 39:7).

History records that the descendants of Abraham, under the leadership of Joshua, entered the Promised Land in about 1422 BC. The Land was then divided among the 12 tribes. God later renewed His covenant with David, Israel's greatest king, who first reigned over the territory of Judah and finally over the entire nation of Israel. The

Scriptures record that the reign of David lasted some 40 years, between 1011 BC and 971 BC, during which time the affairs of the people of the nation were tied to the spiritual and moral condition of their king. The nation enjoyed God's blessing when David was obedient to the Lord and suffered hardships when David disobeyed God. In 2 Samuel 7, God made a covenant with David that promised 3

things: a land forever (vs.10), an unending dynasty (vs.16), and an everlasting kingdom (vs.16). "At this point in Israel's history, we see a very rare period where God is obeyed, loved, worshipped and appreciated for who He is. As a consequence, David is exalted, Israel is delivered from all its enemies, all its territory is restored, and Israel becomes the great power of the region" (Bennett, 55).

As we consider the covenant God made with David, we can see the continuing reaffirmation of the covenant with Abraham. The exploits of at least 42 other kings, who ruled at some time over the Land of Israel, are recorded for us from 1 Samuel to 2 Kings, but David is the only king of whom God said He remained a man after God's own heart because of his responsive and faithful attitude towards God. David is the standard by which all subsequent kings are measured. David is revealed in the Scriptures as being a foreshadow or type of the coming Messiah, which is revealed in the important covenant God made with him (2 Sam. 7:4-17).



GOD made a covenant with DAVID that promised a LAND FOREVER, an unending dynasty, and an EVERLASTING KINGDOM.



The small size and location of Israel, surrounded as it is by other countries, made it inevitable that, over the centuries, there would be countless attempts to invade the country. Israel was trampled on by great leaders of nations including Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Cyrus the Mede, and Alexander the Great. With invasion came the worldwide dispersion of the Jewish people.

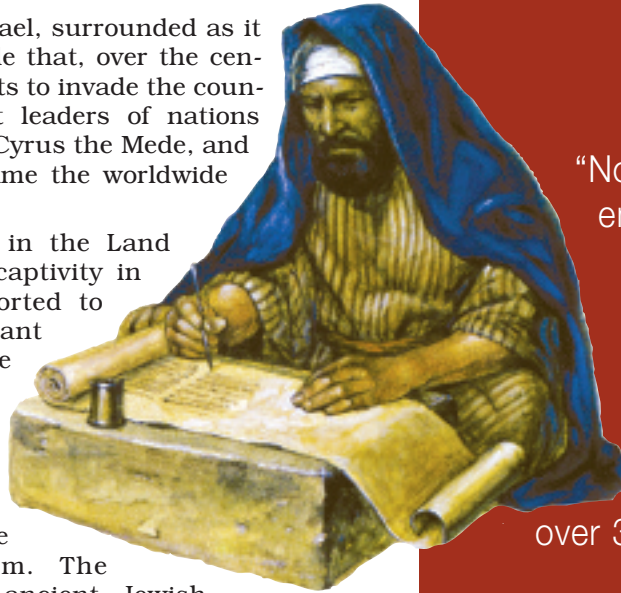
The people of Israel remained in the Land until most of them were taken into captivity in Babylon. However, not all were deported to Babylon, so there was always a remnant in the Land from then to the end of the Second Temple period. The Bible records the glorious account of the return of a small number of people at the time of Nehemiah (approx. 464–423 BC). They joined with the remnant remaining in Israel to restore the wall of the city of Jerusalem. The Elephantine Papyri, a collection of ancient Jewish manuscripts found in Egypt dating from the fifth century BC, historically supports the biblical account.

Nehemiah's great concern for his people and the welfare of Jerusalem led him to take bold action, as he courageously sought King Artaxerxes' permission and assistance to travel back to Jerusalem with provisions for the massive project of rebuilding the wall around the city (Neh. 2:1–9). Even after much opposition in the form of conspiracy, the wall was rebuilt in a miraculously short period of time, just fifty-two days (Neh. 6:15). Ezra, the priest, then led the people in a time of consecration. The covenant was renewed with God as the people committed themselves to "walk in God's Law" (Neh. 10:28–29).

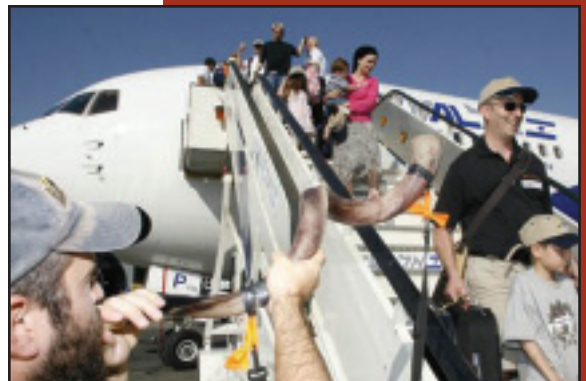
Eventually Rome succeeded in conquering the Land. Even after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, many still remained, and others returned between AD 70 and 1948 and are still returning. "No other people emanating from one family have lived continuously in their designated homeland for over 3,420 years, whilst maintaining their national identity, ancient language, religion and culture" (Blood, 16). God has kept His word. Genesis 17:7–8 reads, "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. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

Current Right

We are living in the days of the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy: "Behold I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and the one who labors with child together; a great throng shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn" (31:8–9). The stage is being set for the coming



"No other people emanating from one family have lived continuously in their designated homeland for over 3,420 years..."



Welcome Home!

Nefesh B'Nefesh

Nefesh B'Nefesh

“The State of Israel,
ERETZ YISRAEL,
heir to ancient Judea,
Hebron and Samaria,
HAS BEEN BORN.”

Messiah. God is restoring Israel and bringing the Jewish people home to His Land with the purpose of restoring them to Himself. God has promised that they will be His people and He will be their God. He will give them one heart and one way and make an everlasting covenant with them, promising that they will remain in the Land forever (Jer. 32:37–41).

On the Fifth of Iyar, 5708 on the Jewish calendar, or May 14, 1948, at 4.00 p.m., David Ben Gurion stood and announced to the people assembled that the “State of Israel, Eretz Yisrael, heir to ancient Judea, Hebron and Samaria, has been born.” The culmination of the dreams of people like Theodore Herzl, the father of modern Zionism, and many million Jewish people who perished in the Holocaust had at last become a reality. A miracle had taken place. The United Nations officially recognized the State of Israel. How did the Jewish people survive since the time of the Roman Diaspora in AD 70 after experiencing massacres, genocide, ghettos, purges, deportations, etc. and still be numerous enough to come to settle in their homeland? The modern State of Israel is nothing less than a miracle of God.

The backdrop to this modern day miracle was a complicated network of people and world events that only God could have engineered. In 1861, a Society for Colonizing Palestine was formed in London, France, and Germany, which eventually helped popularize the emigration to Israel. Throughout the dark times in Russia and other European countries, faithful Jewish believers continued to meet in their synagogues to read God’s promises to Israel recorded in Deuteronomy. They prayed what the Jewish people have been praying for centuries, “Next year in Jerusalem!”

A Chronological List Highlighting the Major Events of This Return

- 1897** First Zionist Congress called by Theodor Herzl—Jewish leaders from most of the Western countries attended, and the following resolution was adopted: “Zionism strives to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law.”
- 1914** More than 90,000 Jews were living in Palestine, and at least 43 agricultural settlements had been established.
- 1917** Balfour Declaration—Arthur Balfour, Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, viewed with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national homeland for the Jewish people.

As the numbers of Jewish immigrants increased and began to turn the desert land into fertile fields, the Arabs became increasingly fearful and hostile. In 1929, they started large scale attacks on Jewish settlers until 1936, when the Arabs rebelled against British rule. At first, it appeared the British offered a disciplined presence in the Land, but by 1939 under the pressure of constant unrest in Palestine, the British government reneged on the Balfour Declaration and issued a White Paper, favoring Arab independence and control.



5th Iyar 5708 — 14th May 1948



Theodore Herzl,
Father of modern Zionism

- 1932** Iraq became an independent nation.
- 1943** Lebanon gained independence from France.
- 1944** Syria became independent.
- 1945** The Arab League united Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Transjordan, the first united move amongst Arabs with intense opposition to the establishment of a Jewish state.
- 1946** Transjordan attained independence with the end of the British Mandate. United Nations voted to partition Palestine into two states, Jewish and Arab.
- 1948** On May 14, the Israeli government officially established the State of Israel with a population of more than 650,000 Jews.

“Behold I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?” (Jer. 32:27).

Since the establishment of the State of Israel, there have been eight wars (not counting the recent war with Lebanon) fought over its borders. God’s response? *“I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,” says the Lord your God*” (Amos 9:15). In 1967, during the Six-Day War, Jerusalem came solely under Jewish control for the first time since the Roman era. The war with Lebanon is proof that there continues to be unrest in this region.

The Jewish people constantly have to fight to remain in the Land and to increase their presence. The continual conflict over the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state alongside Israel has caused daily suffering not just to soldiers, but to the people in the streets, children going to school on buses, mothers and babies in markets, and young people enjoying coffee in a bar. The major powers of our world are still crying out “land for peace” in negotiations with a Palestinian people who have never been a sovereign state or people at any time in past history. Where will it all end?

In Conclusion

The stubborn refusal of this little people to disappear, although they were repressed, persecuted, and threatened by assimilation, remains one of the enigmas of history. “It is unlikely that the Jews as a people would long have survived these many disasters unless the instrument of its survival had been forged beforehand in a unique spiritual and cultural heritage, and that one of the most important instruments of survival of the Jewish people has been the religious writings, historical narratives, laws, etc., the recording of God’s word to them as a people” (Comay, 9). The Jewish people have been severely tested during centuries of dispersion. The testing threatened the very fiber of their lives, including their tightly knit family, the Jewish community, their collective worship, their religious



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In a
MESSIANIC DAY
to come,
GOD'S GLORY
will be seen in the Land
of His people again,
and His
MESSIAH
will reign from
JERUSALEM.

education, and the belief in their coming Messiah. The very fact that the Jewish people are still expecting their Messiah points to the covenant faithfulness of God.

The Jews have lived in Israel for over 4,000 years, have the longest history in the Land, and have both biblical and legal recognition confirming that they are the rightful indigenous people of their region. The Land of Israel really belongs to God, and He has chosen to whom it will belong. God's manifest presence once dwelt there. In a Messianic day to come, God's glory will be seen in the Land of His people again, and His Messiah will reign from Jerusalem. Oh, that it would be "This year in Jerusalem"!

By Pamela Thomas,
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TheGalileeExperience.com/Larissa Lando



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All Scriptures are taken from the New King James Version.

Many pastors, Bible teachers, and lay people have written and asked if they can use these notes for preaching and teaching. The answer is a resounding "yes"! It is our hope that the information contained herein will be disseminated over and over again, whether through the spoken word or by photocopying and redistributing these teachings. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

