Is the Modern State of Israel Prophetically Significant?

Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics
Belmawr, New Jersey
September 16-17, 2026

J. Randall Price

In a conversation on religious questions, Fredric II, King of Prussia (1740-1786) asked Hans Joachim von Zieten (1699-1786), General of his army and a man whom he esteemed highly as a Christian for his plain and uncompromised views: "Give me proof for the truth of the Bible in two words!*"* To which von Zieten replied without hesitancy: "Your majesty, the Jews!" The General's statement reflected his understanding of not only the miraculous preservation of the Jewish people, but his belief that their preservation was for the purpose of bringing God's unfulfilled promises to pass. To Zeiten, the present existence of the Jewish people was proof that God's Word was true because Scripture had promised that they would remain until all that had been prophesied concerning them was fulfilled. Remarkably, this expression of faith was made in a day when the Land of Israel was largely desolate of a Jewish population as the majority of Jews were scattered among the nations.

A century before von Zieten, the famed reformer Martin Luther also struggled with the significance of God's Land promise to the Jews. Seeing the Jews same desolate condition, he came to a very different conclusion. He said: "If the Jews are Abraham's descendants, then we would expect to see them back in their own land. We would expect them to have a state of their own. But what do we see? We see them living scattered and despised."[1] As a result, he concluded they could not be the heirs of promise and so accepted the spiritual interpretation of his Augustinian order that the Church is the only heir of the promises to Abraham. I wonder what Luther would say if he lived in our day when six million Jews have returned to the biblical homeland to regain their independence in a developed Jewish state whose technology and military achievements are the envy of the world? I wonder, too, what they might say to us, their heirs in the defense of the prophetic Word, who almost eighty years after this historic return still ponder the question "Is the modern state of Israel prophetically significant?" Yet, this is the question that has been asked ever since the State of Israel was established. In 1948, many

[1] As cited in Halvor Ronning, The Land of Israel: A Christian Zionist View," *Immanuel* 22/23 (1989): 132. In private conversation in 2003, Halvor Ronning told me he no longer refers to himself as a "Christian Zionist" but as a "Biblical Zionist," since the actual ground for this conviction is biblical rather than Christian.

Orthodox Jews were appalled at the idea that a Jewish state could exist based upon modern secular principles of nationality. They held that the Prophets only envisioned a Restored Kingdom in the Messianic Age. That view continues within Hasidic Judaism which rejects the modern state and actively seeks to undermine it in hopes HaShem will find their actions merit its replacement with the expected righteous Kingdom.

The debate also continues to be at the center of controversy within the evangelical church today. At the heart of the issue, as von Zeiten correctly discerned, is whether God will fulfill His Land promise to His Chosen People. If there is to be a literal future fulfillment to the same people with whom the Land covenant was made, these same people must exist at the time of fulfillment. This, of course, assumes a literal interpretation, which Reformed Christianity does not accept in this instance, arguing from a spiritual interpretation that the Chosen People are the Church, the Promised Land is now the whole earth, and the time of fulfillment has been the last 2,000 years. Our purpose here is to recognize, not refute, the Reformed position but to focus on the questions that exist within Dispensationalism.[2] In this regard, three issues affect the understanding of this matter. First, are the Jewish people today the actual descendants of the ancient Israelites, second, does the unbelief of modern Jews disqualify them from inheriting the promises since their fulfillment is conditioned upon entering the New Covenant, and third, how the Scripture promises can include the modern secular state without claiming prophetic fulfillment within the Church Age.

The Issue of Modern Jews as Descendants of the Ancient Israelites

The "Orthodox churches" of the East and West, along with Reformed churches make a theological distinction between the ancient people of God (biblical Israel) and the modern political state of Israel founded in 1948. They hold that the promises made to biblical Israel find their final fulfillment in Christ and His Church (the "new Israel" and the "new people of God"). The question of modern Jewish identity and continuity as Israel has become an issue within the evangelical churches, provoked by the resurgence of global anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism attendant to Israel's war with Iran and its proxies, especially the Palestinian terrorist organization Hamas. Much of this resulted from war-time propaganda, with the historical and theological question of Jewish identity and continuity becoming a

[2] I have dealt with a critique of the figurative/spiritual interpretation (Replacement Theology) in an earlier version of this paper topic presented at the Pre-Trib Research Center Conference (see the paper presentation list at pre-trib.org) and in some of my books: *Jerusalem in Prophecy* (The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 2020) and *What Should We Think About Israel?* (Harvest House Publishers, 20).

political issue that has reduced traditional Christian support for Jews as God's Chosen People and for the modern State as a fulfillment of prophecy. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly address this current concern before considering the textual and theological issues related to modern Israel in prophecy.

Before considering the supporting historical evidence, the first priority is to understand that Scripture guarantees the divine preservation of the Jewish People, especially as a Nation. Jeremiah declared that Israel would never cease from being a nation (גוי) forever (Jer. 31:35–36). This includes the unbelief, apostasy and rebellion of Israelites within the Nation that brought divine discipline upon the Nation (Ps. 106:6-46). Despite God's judgment, the Nation would not be destroyed as other nations (Jer. 30:11). Despite being scattered among the nations, a Remnant of Israel would always remain to constitute the Nation (Amos 9:8-9) and reconstitute it in its Land in the future (Ezek. 36:16-24) because of God's unconditional and everlasting Covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:7, 13, 19; 2 Sam. 23:5; Ps. 105:8-11). Because God's Covenant was made with a physical lineage it must be fulfilled with the same. If God did not revoke these terms of His Covenant, who are the people carrying that Covenant today? Therefore, a Remnant of ethnic Israel as a Nation must be preserved to fulfill the New Covenant promised to it (Jer. 32:40).

1) *There has been continual Jewish habitation in the Land of Israel from ancient to modern times.*

Archaeological excavation throughout the Land of Israel since the 19th century has revealed an stratigraphic history of Jewish artifactual remains. This includes the subsequent periods of foreign occupation up to the modern era. This has been particularly documented by the large repertoire of finds from Jerusalem that have been recovered in the Temple Mount Sifting Project. This material evidence supplements the literary evidence preserved in historical documents throughout these same periods. Therefore, archaeology has confirmed a distinct and continuous Israelite/Jewish presence in the Land from the Iron Age to the modern period.

The historical record also documents uninterrupted Jewish residence in the Land. As is well-known, after the Roman destruction of A.D. 70, the Jews continued in the Land and later staged a second revolt (Bar-Kokhba Revolt, A.D. 132-136). Even though the Roman Emperor Hadrian had banned Jews from entering Jerusalem, at Tisha B'Av they were permitted to assemble on the Mount of Olives that overlooked the desolate Temple Mount. Later, under the Emperor Constantine, the Church Father Jerome reports that they were able to purchase a permit to visit the *lapis pertusus* ("pierced

stone"), most likely the site of the Foundation Stone on the Temple Mount.[3] To the Jewish and Roman records of this event we may add communication between Jewish Diapora communities and Jews resident in holy cities (Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias, Acco, Safed), accounts in the Church Fathers, Byzantine pilgrims, Crusader, Islamic and Ottoman Turkish records. The Jewish presence in the Land is explained by Dan Bahat, former district archaeologist of Jerusalem:

> Although the Temple was destroyed, the physical and spiritual nexus between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel was not broken. Throughout the succeeding centuries, even if a large part of the nation was driven from exile to another, many stayed on, reinforced from time to time by returning exiles, maintaining their communities and settlements in the face of all manner of persecutions, natural disasters and alien conquests. For nearly two thousand years, they provided the nucleus around which the aspirations of the dispersed nation crystallized, and, through them, the nation clung to the dream of returning to its Land.[4]

From the second through the fourth centuries A.D., Jewish communities flourished in the Galilee and south of Jerusalem, as well as in the main cities.[5] During these periods when the Land was under oppressive foreign rule, even though the Jewish People constituted a minority of the resident population, they often wielded significant influence and rose to hold important places of service. By the late 19th century, prior to the Arab worker immigration into the Land in the 20th century (origin of the "Palestinians"), the Jews constituted the majority of the population at intermittent periods and were the largest recorded population in Jerusalem.[6] Therefore, the descendants of these Jews who remained in the Land constitute a vital link to the Jewish population from ancient times. There are also, of course, the large Jewish populations that resided in Egypt, Assyria and Babylon from ancient times and, refusing assimilation, maintained their heritage, religion and observant lifestyle. These populations, despite oppression and persecution, continued to have remnants in these countries (e.g., Egypt, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Yemen) until modern times, though most have now immigrated to Israel. They have been joined by other ancient Jewish communities in Russia and the Ukraine as well as so called "lost tribes" from China, Ethiopia, India, Kurdistan and Bukharan.

2) *There is an unbroken tradition of Jewish worship at holy sites from ancient to modern times.*

---

[3] Jerome, *Commentary to the Book of Zephaniah*. Petrologia Latina (Paris, 1845), 347-419.

[4] Dan Bahat, ed., *Twenty Centuries of Jewish Life in the Holy Land: The Forgotten Generations* (Jerusalem: The Israel Economist, 1975), 2.

[5] During the 4th century, Eubebius, the Bishop of Caesarea (A.D. 300-339), wrote of the Jewish influence on Christians in the Galilee who built churches next to synagogues and regularly attended Jewish services.

[6] See the statistical chart from 1820-1911 in Eliyahu TaI, *Whose Jerusalem?* (Tel Aviv; International Forum for a United Jerusalem, 1994), 94.

There is a popular misconception that after Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70 and its people scattered among the nations, Jewish people did not inhabit the holy city again until the Zionist movement at the beginning of the 20th century. This view has been promoted by Muslim clerics who seek to justify their occupation of Al-Aqsa (the Temple Mount) based on a confused late Qu'ranic tradition that either Adam or the pre-Islamic prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael built a sanctuary there (see Al-Bukhari and Muslim from Abu Tharr).[7] However, the Qu'ran credits Abraham and Ishmael with founding the Ka'ab in Mecca (Qu'ran 2:125; 3:96-97; 22:26-27). However, Jews on the basis of the older biblical text (Gen. 22:2-14; 1 Kgs. 6-8), archaeology, including inscriptions, can demonstrate a prior history and exclusive presence at the site going back 3,000 years. F. M. Loewenberg, Professor Emeritus at Bar-Ilan University asserts that after the Roman destruction the Jewish people never abandoned Jerusalem or forgot the site of their Temple. He argued that not only has the Jewish Community maintained an unbroken, 2,000-year-long connection with the Temple Mount, but from time to time as foreign rulers permitted access, Jewish communities in Israel were joined by others from the Diaspora to try to rebuild the Temple on its site or to establish regular services there:

> The destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 C.E. did not spell the end of Jewish activities on the Temple Mount. For many centuries, Jews continued their attachment to the site by maintaining a physical presence on the mountain. And when they were prevented from doing so, they prayed three times a day for the speedy renewal of the sacrificial service in a restored temple … There is even evidence that sacrifices continued for some time on a surviving altar. It was only after the Bar - Kochba revolt (132-35 C.E.) that Jews were barred from the site and from Jerusalem by the victorious and vindictive Emperor Hadrian.[8]

Archaeological evidence of the Jewish effort to restore worship on the Temple Mount is an inscription in the Western Wall, just below Robinson's Arch, from the prophetic text of Isaiah 66:14: "You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the grass." It was inscribed in the wall by a Jew returning from the Diaspora to Jerusalem in the early 4th century A.D. with the hope that under the Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate (A.D. 331-363) the Temple might be rebuilt.[9] Here, as at other sites such as the Tomb of the Patriachs in Hebron, the Tomb of Joseph in Shechem (Nablus) and the Tomb of Rachel (Bethlehem) have a long and unbroken tradition of Jewish worship at the site.[10] In the Diaspora

[7] Islamic clerics argue that Sulayman's (Solomon's) building at the site was only a rebuilding of what had been previously built by Ibraheem (Abraham), which Muhammad said were constructed 40 years apart! see https://islamweb.net/en/fatwa/83441/who-built-al-aqsa-mosque.

[8] F.M. Loewenberg, "Did Jews Abandon the Temple Mount?" *Middle East Quarterly* (Summer 2013): 37

[9] For details and discussion see Randall Price, *The Temple and Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2005), 96-100.

[10] For example, the late fourth-century sage, Rabbi Bibi, offered instructions to those who went to the Temple Mount to ensure their behavior would not degrade the holiness of the place.

communities, daily prayers facing Jerusalem[11] as well the essential Jewish celebrations can be traced as a regular observance back 3,000 years based on archaeology, post-biblical Jewish writings and records and written traditions such as the Mishnah (A.D. 200) in tractate *Seder Moed* ("Festivals") and the Talmud (A.D. 600-700) in TB, *Pesachim*. In addition, with respect to Jerusalem, Jews demonstrated fidelity with the ancient psalm: "If I will forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her skill. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember thee not; if I set not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy..." (Psalm 137:5-6). The aspiration of rebuilding the Temple, enshrined in the required thrice daily Jewish recitation of the *Shemoneh Esreh* ("Eighteen Beneditions")[12], has characterized the united hope the Jewish community worldwide. As one modern rabbi has stated: "In the course of 2,000 years, the Jewish people have never forgotten the Temple. … The dream of rebuilding the Temple spans fifty generations of Jews, five continents and innumerable seas and oceans."[13] In testimony to this hope Jews have been buried on the slopes of the Mount of Olives for more than two millennia. This, in itself, reflects Jewish continuation in the Land and its capital, Jerusalem.

3) *DNA tests affirm an ethnic and national link to ancient Jewish ancestry going back to Abraham.*

Genetic studies have consistently shown a continuity with ancient Near Eastern populations traditionally associated with Israel. Although some genetic mixing with local populations in the Diaspora was expected, the genetic tie to the Land is indisputable. Today there exists two branches of the same Jewish People: Sephardic and Ashkenazi. These branches are distinguished by where their ancestors settled for centuries with Sephardic Jews in Spain, the Middle East (including North Africa) and the wider Mediterranean, and Ashkenazi Jews in Central and Eastern Europe. There they developed different cultures and custom but remained united in the Jewish faith. Ashkenazi Jewry has particularly been the target of misinformation campaigns to discredit their Jewish identity from descent from the Khazar (a semi-nomadic Turkic people who established a commercial empire in the areas of modern European Russia, southern Ukraine, and western Kazakhstan in the late 7th century A.D.) to claims of assimilation and remarriage that altered their ethnic identity. However, Jewish

[11] A sixth-century Aggadic work, *Midrash Shir Hashirim Rabba*, includes instruction for Jews everywhere to face in the direction of the Temple Mount when praying, adding that "those who pray on the Temple Mount should turn to the Holy of Holies."

[12] Benediction 14: "Be merciful, O Lord our God … toward Jerusalem Thy City and towards Zion the abiding place of Thy Glory and towards the Temple and Thy habitation …"

[13] Published statement by Rabbi Chaim Richman, a member of the revived Sanhedrin, is Founder and Director of Jerusalem Lights and former International Director of the Temple Institute (1989-2020), www.templeinstitute.org.

communities previously existed throughout the Mediterranean and Europe before the Khazar period and even if some Khazar ancestry could be found among Ashkenazi Jews (those living in Ashkenaz ot medieval Germany), "it cannot explain the origins of Sephardi Jews, Mizrahi Jews, Yemenite Jews, Ethiopian Jews, and Persian Jews. These groups existed long before the Khazar empire collapsed."[14] However, the opposite is true. Broad genomic studies reveal a clear genetic continuity with ancient Levantine ancestry consistent with Near Eastern origin[15] plus later European admixture. Ashkenazi Jews not only share more total autosomal DNA, but also significantly more DNA segments with their matches.[16] This is because throughout their history in the Diaspora they were ostracized by the resident populations and survival and livelihood depended on remaining a closed and segregated community. This resulted in them also being endogamous populations. This is the custom, mandated internally through religious and cultural tenets, that endorsed marrying only other Jews (no non-Jews) within the limits of their defined communities, tribes or clans.[17] Among Ashkenazi Jews this was often to close relatives. Therefore, after centuries of consanguineous marriage in various Askenazi communities around the world they share more than just religious or cultural practices; they also have strong genetic commonalities[18] and have many more predicted genetic matches than non-Jews.

Two well-established DNA studies have confirmed this. The Behar et al. (2010) demonstrated that Jewish groups share substantial ancestry derived from the Middle East and Ostrer (2012) revealed Jewish populations show shared Middle Eastern ancestry with some mixing from host populations. This was the expected pattern for a population that originated in ancient Israel and was scattered across diferent countries yet remained religiously and socially connected. In addition, the Avotaynu DNA Project, a worldwide academic collaboration utilizing FTDNA results to trace the origins and migrations of the Jewish people,[19] and he related populations among whom they have lived, over the last 3,000 years, continues to show to a core Levantine, Middle Eastern ancestry of great antiquity underlying the Jewish communities of the Mediterranean. It emerged from, and was

---

[14] Angela G., "Are Modern Jews the Real Israelites? A Biblical-Historical Timeline," *No Longer Lukewarm* (March 20, 2026), accessed at: https://nolongerlukewarm.com/2026/03/20/are-modern-jews-the-real-israelites-a-biblical-historical-timeline/

[15] Jerusalem Post Staff, "DNA study: Modern Jews and Arabs retain more than half their ancestry from Bronze Age 'Canaanites': Genome-wide analysis of 93 skeletons from Israel, Jordan and Lebanon traces an unbroken genetic thread across three millennia," *The Jerusalem Post* (July 10, 2025), accessed at: https://www.jpost.com/archaeology/article-860458

[16] Jeffrey Mark Paull, Gaye Tannenbaum and Jeffrey Briskman, "Why Autosomal DNA Test Results Are Significantly Different for Ashkenazi Jews," *AVOTAYNU* 30:1 (Spring 2014), 16-17.

[17] A.H. Bittles, "Endogamy, Consanguinity and Community Disease Profiles," *Public Health Genomics* 8:1 (2005), 17-20.

[18] Alla Katsnelson: "Jews Worldwide Share Genetic Ties." Nature, Published online, June 3, 2010. http://www.nature.com/ news/2010/100603/full/news.2010.277.html#B1.

[19] See https://avotaynuonline.com and https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/avotaynu/about for more information.

never wholly separate from, the wider population of the ancient Near East. From this common root the later communities diverged." The project's reading of the lineage tree is that the Ashkenazi Jews are not a separate people but a subset of this older Mediterranean Jewish population who moved north and cut off from this community, developed their own language and customs.

The earlier genetic studies of the "Cohen gene"[20] should also be mentioned since these studies isolated a unique abberation of the "Y" chromosome in Jewish males who by tradition bore the claim they were Kohanim of the tribe of Levi. The genetic research confirmed their unique status – in both Sephardic and Askenazi populations – evidence that they were once connected before geographic separation affected their communities, as well as supporting the validity of Jewish geneaological ancestry tradition, since such ancestry affected religious and marital status as well as land possesssion. Based on this research, the Kohanim were reactivated in Israel and today have a new generation that have been trained to function as priests should the Temple service be restored.[21] This indicates that "a large portion of the Kohanim population carries common genes, perhaps inherited directly, through patrilineal descent from Aaron [the founder of the Kohen lineage]."[22] In addition, the Cohen Modal Haplotpe (CMH), the genetic signature of Aaron, the dominant haplotype of the MED (J) haplogroup, is not unique to the Kohanim nor to Jews., but appears in other Middle Eastern populations (primarily Lebanese, Syrians, Druze, Iraqi Kurds, Armenians and some Central Italians and Hungarians). What this may indicate is that the CHM haplotype goes back to earlier generations, likely to Abraham as the progenitor of many nations.[23] The biblical text speaks of Abraham's *seed*, indicating that the determining factor is transferred through the mechanism of biological inheritance. Since there are only seven generations between Aaron and Abraham, a few hundred years, and geneic signatures change slightly over many generations, it is possible to assme that the CHM is also the genetic signature of Abraham. This includes Arabs through Ishmael as well as the Jews through Isaac.

The Issue of the unbelief of modern Jews as disqualifying them from inheriting the promises which are conditioned on participation in the New Covenant.

The concern here is that the prophecy of the divine preservation of the Jewish People does

[20] These studies were orignally published in the journals *Lancet* (August 1997) and *Nature* 9 (June 1998).
[21] Nachman Kahana established the Center for Kohanim in the Hazon Yehezkel Synagogue and seeks to locate Kohanim worldwide through its International Survey of Kohanim and Levites (www.Cohen-Levi.org). The Yeshiva of Kohanim in Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter, Taharat Kohanim and The Temple Institute, also in the Jewish Quarter, educate and train qualified candidates for the Temple service.
[22] Miryam Z. Wahrman, "Priestly Genes," *Roundup,* Jewish Communications Network (September 18. 1998), 1-2.
[23] Rabbi Yaakov Kleiman, *DNA and Tradition: The Genestic Link to the Ancient Hebrews* (Israel: Devora Publishing Company, 2004), 160-163.

not require that prophecy support a modern group of unbelieving Jews forming a government within the Land based on political principles and not biblical ones (monarchy under a Davidic descendent, functioning Temple with a Zadokite priesthood, Torah-observant Jewish population). However, as will be discussed in the third issue regarding biblical fulfillment, prophecy does not require national spiritual regeneration as a condition for Jewish people re-establishing a national presence in the Land. In fact, as we will see, it predicts the opposite, that not only will there be Jews in the Land (as there has been for the past 2,000 years) but Jews will have a government in the Land sufficient to enter into a foreign agreement (Dan. 9:27), rebuild the Temple (Matt. 24:15), and impose Sabbath observance on a national scale (Matt. 24:20). In fact, a nation returned to the Land in unbelief is a prerequisite to the nation experiencing the prophetic fulfillment of spiritual regeneration in the Land under the New Covenant at the coming of the Messiah (e.g., Ezek. 36:22-27; 37:1-14; Zech. 12:10-13:1). Founder and President of Olive Tree Ministries, Jan Markell, makes this point when she writes:

> In Romans 9–11, Paul argues that God remains faithful to the Jewish people despite their widespread unbelief in Jesus and worldly pursuits, as his promises are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). God maintains a "remnant" by grace, uses Israel's partial, temporary hardening to bring salvation to the Gentiles, and promises a future restoration where "all Israel will be saved" at the Second Coming (Romans 11:26).[24]

There was no time in biblical times in which Israel's national existence in the Land was not plagued with religious syncretism, disobedience and unbelief. This was recounted by the psalmist as Israel's scandalous history (Ps. 106:6-43) and God established the means to deal with spiritual rebellion under the Land covenant through cycles of divine discipline (Lev. 26). But the psalmist also declared God's faithfulness to His covenant promise (Ps. 106:44-46; cf. Ps. 89:1-4, 30-37) and that in discipline He would not completely destroy (i.e., annihilate) His People but preserve them as a Remnant for future fulfillment (Deut. 4:31; 10:10; 2 Chr. 21:7; Jer. 30:11; Amos 9:8). The modern secular state is no different than those governments of ancient Israel under human kings (an act itself that was a rejection of God's role as the nation's Theocratic King, 1 Sam.8:7). Therefore, the nation's unbelief, while the reason for exile from the Land, was not a deterrent to its physical return to the Land under the promise of the Land covenant to one day fulfill the spiritual promise of the New Covenant.

For these reasons it may be asserted that the Jewish People, who genetically are the same

[24]Jan Markell, "Is Israel's Spiritual Blindness A Reason For Christians To Reject Them?," *Harbinger's Daily* (June 2, 2026), accessed at: https://harbingersdaily.com/jan-markell-israels-spiritual-blindness-is-not-a-reason-for-christians-to-reject-them/

as the ancient Israelites, are the only group in history to be dispossessed of their land twice and yet to have maintained their ethnic identity, cultural heritage, ancient language over the past 2,000 years and still returned to their ancestral Land and restored their national life. We now turn our attention to a textual and theological examination of how biblical prophecy indicates the modern State of Israel is significant to future fulfillment. However, let us first survey the views of Dispensationalists on this issue.

1) *Possible prophetic significance, but cannot know for sure.*

This view accepts the proposition that a return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel has prophetic significance, but remains agnostic to the conclusion that this applies to the modern State of Israel because it is a secular rather than spiritual state and because the majority of Israelis continue to reject Jesus as their Messiah. This is the predominate position of evangelical academics who hold a dispensational theology, regardless of whether they are Classical or Progressive Dispensationalists. Classical Dispensationalist J. Vernon McGee contended that since the Jews had not returned to Christ their return to the Land was insignificant. A more mediating position was articulated by Mark Bailey, former President of Dallas Theological Seminary,

> Is that what is happening today? I can't say for sure. It is the first time in 2,500 years, though, that you have this kind of constitution of people in that land, but I don't *know* what that means. This may be the prelude to end-time events, but I think we're presumptuous if we try to give it meaning beyond that. It *may be*, that's all we can say.[25]

This hesitancy to attribute definite prophetic significance to the modern Jewish State, however, does not exclude Christians supporting Israel's claims to the Land on historic grounds, nor from seeing the hand of God at work in bringing unbelieving Jews into the Land prior to the coming of the Messiah as the prophetic texts indicate. However, it argues that Jewish unbelief (or covenant disobedience) or the mistreatment of "aliens and strangers" in the Land (Exodus 22:21) or failure to treat them as equals (Ezekiel 47:21-22) has disqualified the present generation of Israelis from possessing the Land granted to them in the divine covenants.

However, as to this latter concern for acts of social injustice toward the Palestinian population based on the Mosaic Law, it is necessary to distinguish between "aliens and

---

[25] Mark Bailey, "The Lord's Land Policy in Israel," *Veritas* 2:3 (July 2002): 4.

strangers" who wish to live peacefully under Israeli authority (such as the Israeli Arabs) and those who do not wish to live under Israeli rule and have declared war against the Jewish State (such as those under the Palestinian Authority who are waging the Al-Aqsa Intifada or Oslo War and employ acts of terrorism against civilians). In this case of the Israeli Arabs Israel *has* treated them as equals, giving them Israeli citizenship, which includes public education, socialized medical benefits, the right to vote, and the freedom to live and work alongside (and even marry) Israeli Jews. In the case of those who have declared war on Israel, they must rightly be construed as enemies and Israel must be recognized to have the right to maintain its national security and defend its citizens against terror attacks. Moreover, Ezekiel 47:21-22 is a millennial restoration context that presumes Israel's spiritual regeneration and ability to obey this condition of New Covenant legislation. With regard to the issue of covenantal failure, Classical Dispensationalist Charles Dyer, Dean of Moody Bible Institute, explains:

> Judged on biblical grounds, the nation today does not pass divine muster as a nation living in covenant obedience to God. The promise to possess the land is directly tied to the nation's response to Messiah. Though its international right to the land can be well defended, Israel's divine right by covenant to possess it today has only sentiment in its favor.[26]

However, Israel's "divine right" to the Land is not based on their own conditional possession but on God's unconditional promise. The territorial grant in the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-21; 26:3-4; 28:13-15), which is expanded in the Land Covenant (Deuteronomy 28-30), is grounded on God's unconditional promise (Genesis 15:8-17) to a graciously chosen people (Deuteronomy 14:2). From its inception as a nation, Israel's possession of the Land was not because of its merited performance as a people but because of its unmerited position as God's people (Psalm 111:6). God Himself explained this in Deuteronomy 7:8: "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath He swore to your forefathers …" This oath included the promise of the Land of Canaan to Israel. To be sure the Israelites possession of the Land depended on their obedience to the conditional provisions of the Mosaic Covenant, but the promise of the Land remained despite the nation's disobedience.

---

[26]Stanley Ellisen, *Who Owns the Land?* Revised and updated by Charles Dyer (Chicago: Moody Press, 2003), p. 137.

Israelite history was one of regular disobedience to the Mosaic legislation, yet Israel continued to possess the Land (except for a 70 year exile) from 1406 B.C. until A.D. 70, a period of some 1,400 years. Can this long possession be explained as a result of the nation's imperfect practice or because of God's perfect promise? The answer to this may be seen at the time of Israel's first exile for national idolatry. At the climax of Mosaic violation and the enactment of the covenantal curses, the prophet Jeremiah nevertheless affirmed that no matter what Israel might do, God's covenantal promise would not be affected (Jeremiah 31:25-27). Daniel also recognized that the basis for Israel's return to possess the Land after the exile was God's loyal love toward His chosen people, and not their own ability to obey (Daniel 9:18-19). In like manner, even after the national rejection of Jesus as Messiah, the climax of the prophetic hardening pronounced on the nation through Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9-13; cf. Matthew 13:13-15; Mark 4:11-12; Luke 8:10; John 12:37-40; Acts 28:26-27; Romans 11:8-10), which was punished by a second exile (the post-A.D. 70 Diaspora) in keeping with Israel's position of greater accountability (Amos 3:2) and the judicial sentence of the covenantal curses, Paul still affirmed that the covenantal promise remained intact for the Jewish people as the Jewish people and also for the Jewish people as unbelieving and Christ-rejecting Jewish people (Romans 11:28). Again, the basis for this unprecedented promise was the unchanging character of God who made an unconditional covenant (Romans 11:29). The reason for this rest in the nature of unconditionality, which means that God Himself will fulfill the terms of the covenant. With respect to possession of the Land, history attests that Israel never completely obeyed and therefore has never completely possessed all of the Land. Yet, in order for the promise to be fulfilled it must one day do so. Therefore, Israel will obey completely and possess the Land completely when God has sovereignly effected the national repentance and regeneration of Israel (Romans 11:25-27) and restored them to the Land and the LORD in the Millennial Kingdom (Ezekiel 36:25-27; 37:25-28).

As a further corrective to the view that possession of the Land may be postponed or even removed, is the understanding that the Land is an eternal possession of the Jewish people. This aspect of the Land promise is seen in Genesis 13:15-18 and 2 Chronicles 20:7 where the Land of Israel is said to have been given by God to the Jewish people "forever." The word "forever" translates the Hebrew term עולם (*'olam*), which has been thought to mean only "an indefinite period of time." For example, in Exodus 21:6 it is used of an Israelite slave who has his ear pierced in token of his pledge to serve his masted "forever." Because his duration of service may be terminated by his or his master's death or by the year of Jubilee, it demonstrates that *'olam*

may indicate a long period of time, but not "time without end." On this basis the Land promise has been seen to have been granted to Israel for a time, but not for all time. However, Messianic Rabbi David Friedman in his doctoral dissertation examined the use of more than 80 biblical uses of *'olam* and concluded that it expresses the time element of "as long as the present heaven and earth exists."[27] This understanding of the term also takes into account duration for a period of time but the time is until this present world has run its course. On this basis the Land promise is extended to Israel for "all time."

Still, there is another construction of *'olam* that does extends the duration of the term to an infinite degree. The phrase מין עולם ועד עולם (*min 'olam v'ad 'olam*), translated "from everlasting to everlasting" or "forever and ever," is usually almost exclusively of God with respect to His eternal nature or rule. However, in two cases it is used explicitly to describe Israel's possession of the Land of Israel. Jeremiah 7:7 states in a conditional context concerning Israel's obedience: "then I will let you dwell in this place, in the Land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever." Notice that while the privilege of possession of the Land is conditional, the promise of possession is not. Rather, it is as eternal as the God who gave it since it is based on His unconditional character. Again, in Jeremiah 25:5, in a similar conditional context, the prophet makes the imperative statement: "dwell on the Land which the LORD has given to you and your forefathers forever and ever." In this context it is the fact that Israel has received an unconditional and eternal promise of the Land that should motivate them to obedience so that they may possess it as God intended (Deuteronomy 8:6-18).

(2) Prophetic significance in fulfillment of prophecy.

This group of evangelicals, most often characterized as Christian or Biblical Zionist, charismatic and non-dispensationalist, hold that the modern return of the Jewish people to form the Jewish State is a direct fulfillment of prophecy.[28] Some even ascribe special prophetic

---

[27] David Friedman, "Israel from the Eyes of a Messianic Jew Living in the Land," *Kesher* 13 (Summer 2001), 17.

[28]In Israel organizations such as the International Christian Embassy and Christians United for Israel would fit this classification. The Bridges for Peace organization, which also exists to promote Christian support for Israel, has been thought to be dual covenant because of its policy against evangelizing Jews. However, its international director Clarence Wagner insists that it is not dual covenant and that he does not prohibit his staff or volunteers from personally witnessing to Jews outside of their official duties. He says that the organization continues its non-evangelistic policy adopted by founder Douglas Young because the purpose of Bridges is educational, rather than missionary and because this policy protects it (usually) from the Israeli Ministry of Interior which has often worked against Christian

significance to the dates of 1948 and 1967, but in any case believe that the messianic era has arrived and will be soon climaxed by the return of Christ to set up His messianic kingdom in Israel. For many in this group, the concept of dual covenant (salvation for the Jews under the Abrahamic Covenant and for Gentiles under the New Covenant) allows them to accept a secular Jewish state as a fulfillment of the end time prophecies of national restoration. Therefore, Jews do not need a national repentance or conversion nor do they need to experience a future judgment. They have suffered enough in past tribulations, especially the Holocaust, which is often consider as having fulfilled the "time of Jacob's (Israel's) trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7) and Jesus' prediction of a "great tribulation" (Matthew 24:21.

Those who adopt this viewpoint have no difficulty financially supporting and serving in Orthodox Jewish organizations, such as the Temple Mount Faithful (whose financial base is Christian and whose work has been advanced largely by Christian workers and volunteers), even though such organizations reject Jesus, Christian doctrine, and consider Jewish believers to be worse than the terrorists! They consider such Jewish leaders, especially those in the Temple Movement, as doing the work of God and as being prophetic voices in this day calling God's people home so that the blessing of the world can be affected through the Jewish people. Because they view the government of Israel as God's government, they may uncritically support policy decisions, although they stand against policies that compromise the Zionist agenda. They are often the most demonstrative Christian voices against the Arab and Palestinian residents of the Land, usually considering them as enemies of Israel who have no rights to territory (the original land grant) promised to Israel in the Abrahamic Covenant. In addition, they consider countries, churches and individual Christians who do not support Israel to be against God and under His curse (based on Genesis 12:3). Moreover, they would accuse Jews who do not leave their countries outside the Land and immediately immigrate to Israel as violating God's covenant. Such convictions stem primarily from their confusion of the present return with the final restoration preceding the Millennial Kingdom. Unfortunately, this group is often confused with Dispensationalist who are more discerning with respect to the biblical text and Israeli politics.

(3) Prophetic significance in preparation for fulfillment.

---

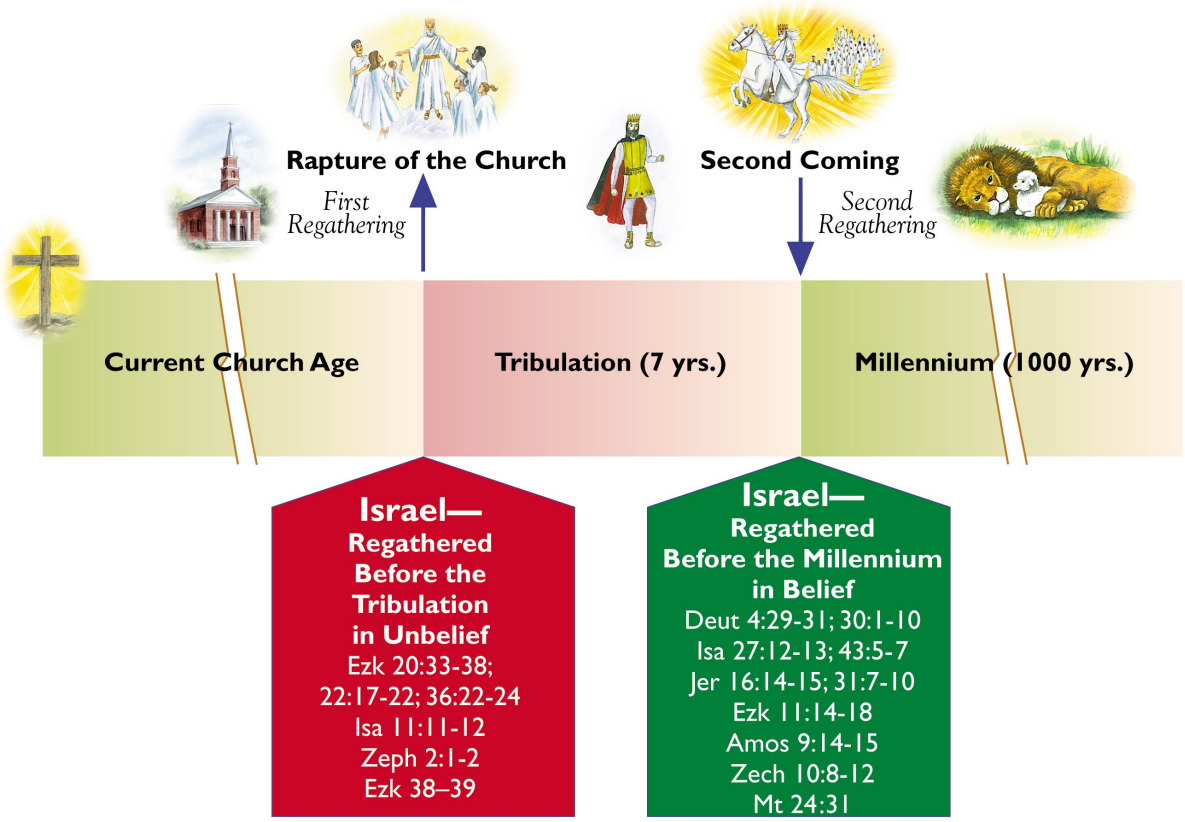
organizations in the Land.

This last group, identified as Classical/Traditional or Modified Dispensationalists, accepts the prophetic significance of the modern State but sees its present importance in its role of preparing for the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the Jewish people in the Land commencing with the seventieth week of Daniel. Since God has stated that He has not yet completed His purpose for Israel (Jeremiah 31:35-37; 33:7-26; Acts 3:19-21; Romans 11:25-29) and since God controls history and is directing it toward the fulfillment of His program, events throughout history related to the Jewish People and their Land must have prophetic significance, even if these events do not yet completely fulfill any specific prophecy. Present prophetic *significance* does not require present prophetic fulfillment, but only present preparation for future prophetic fulfillment. In this light, the return of the Jewish people to the Land today is making possible the final regathering and restoration tomorrow. It is not a present fulfillment of prophecy, rather it is the means to the ultimate fulfillment of prophecy. To explain how this view understands the prophetic significance of modern Israel it is necessary to consider four propositions that argue for this affirmative position.

a) Israel will be regathered to the Land before the Tribulation in unbelief.

Many Old Testament prophecies indicate that Israel would be regathered first in a state of unbelief in preparation for judgment (the Tribulation), and only after (at the Second Advent) would be regathered a second and final time in belief in preparation for blessings of the Millennial Kingdom.

Israel's Two End-Time Gatherings



Graphic: Tim LaHaye, Thomas Ice, *Charting the End Times* (Harvest House Publishers, 2021)

Ezekiel clearly defines these two phases of regathering: first to the Land and then to the Lord. Ezekiel 36:24-28 reveals that the temporal and logical order of Israel's return in the process of restoration:

Phase 1: Regathering to the Land (physical)

> 24For I will take you from the nations, and *I will gather you from the lands*, and *I will bring you back into your Land*.

Phase 2: Regathering to the Lord (spiritual)

> 25***Then*** I will sprinkle on you clean water, and you will be clean; I will purify you from all your defilement and from all your idols. 26I will give you a new heart and put within you a new spirit, and I will remove the stony heart from your flesh and give you a fleshy heart; 27and I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my decrees, and you will faithfully obey my laws. 28And you will dwell in the Land which I gave to your forefathers; and you will be My people, and I

will be your God (*author's translation*).

Note that in this passage the regathering is first *physical* (to the Land), verse 24, and then *spiritual* (to the LORD), verses 25-28. Therefore, the initial return to the Land must necessarily be in a state of unbelief since it is not until Israel is *in their Land* is changed from a state of unbelief to a state of belief. The prophetic chronology of these events are given in Ezekiel 20:33-38. In this text a future judgment of Israel is predicted that will lead a Remnant of Israel to national repentance and restoration. That the time of fulfillment is in the future (eschatological) age rather than in the near return from Babylonian Captivity in the Persian period can be seen from the description of the events of redemption and restoration in verses 40—44 where the redemption is universal ("the whole house of Israel," not a portion as in the return to Jerusalem) and the regathering is worldwide ("from the peoples and from the lands," not localized as from Babylon). Moreover, the deliverance here is not effected by a human king (such as the Persian kings Cyrus or Darius), but directly by God Himself. The historical pattern for this event is the divine deliverance from Egypt, verse 36 (cf. Exodus 6:6-7; Haggai 2:5-9), with its climax in the possession of the Land of Israel, verse 42 (cf. Exodus 6:8). However, Israel's failure of obedience to enter the Land, verse 38 (Numbers 14:22-23), resulted in a judgment, verses 35, 37 (cf. Numbers 14:29) in "the wilderness," verse 36 (cf. Numbers 14:3, 29, 32-35) which purged the nation of its "rebels," verse 38 (cf. Numbers 14:9-11) so that a new, faithful, generation could enter into possession of the Land, verses 41-42 (cf. Numbers 14:31). Following this predicted pattern, modern Israel has been brought out from the nations (verse 34) *in unbelief,*[29] and therefore into divine judgment (verse 35). However, this experience will result in national repentance (verses 43-44), and inclusion in the "bond of the covenant" (New Covenant), verse 37, and because Israel is now *in belief* (verse 42a), they will experience national restoration to the Land (verses 42b), cf. Romans 11:25-27.

While some dispensational commentators[30] place this "purging of the rebels" (verse 38) after the Second Advent at the time of the judgment of the nations (Matthew 25:32), the proper timing for this according to Ezekiel is in the Tribulation before the Second Advent of Christ.

---

[29]The "unbelief" from an Orthodox Jewish perspective is that the regathering was a secular, rather than spiritual return. From a Christian and Messianic perspective it is the condition of unrepentant heart toward Yeshua as Messiah (see Acts 3:17-26).

[30] For example see Ryrie's note on Matthew 25:32: "This is a judgment of those Gentiles who survive the tribulation … Surviving Jews will also be judged at this same time (Ezek. 20:33-38)," *Ryrie Study Bible* (The Lockman Foundation, 1976), page 1493.

This judgment cannot take place within the Land of Israel (where Christ returns and reigns), these "rebels" are not allowed to enter the Land (Ezekiel 20:38). Therefore, the historical and eschatological fulfillment of this prophecy would be a regathering of Israel in unbelief to the Land of Israel followed by "the time of Jacob's (Israel's) trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7), during which the rebels would be purged from the faithful who will repent at the end of the Tribulation (Zechariah 12:10-13:1), followed by the faithful Remnant's regathering (Zechariah 8:7-8) and restoration to the Land during the Millennial Kingdom (Zechariah 8:11-23).

Ezekiel 22:17-22 likewise describes a regathering in unbelief for judgment, in this case to the city of Jerusalem. That this is again has in view a far, rather than near fulfillment, can be seen in the fact that the near return in 538 B.C. was in belief, not unbelief, and was restoration, not judgment. Ezra 1:5 makes it clear that those 49,897 Jews that joined in the return were those "whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem." However, in Ezekiel 22:20-22 it is stated that the LORD will gather them in "anger" and "wrath" and will "pour out His wrath" on them. The purpose of this judgment, described in the imagery of smelting ore, is for national repentance and regeneration, as seen in the words "you will know that I am the LORD" (verse 17, cf. verse 22). The specific time for this may be the last half of the Tribulation following the invasion of Jerusalem by the international armies of Antichrist (Revelation 11:2; Zechariah 12:2-3, 9; 14:2a) and the battle for the city in which half of its Jewish population will be exiled and the rest remain in a condition of siege (Zechariah 14:2b-c). As a result of this purifying experience (cf. Zechariah 13:1), the Jews in Jerusalem will join in the national repentance of Israel (Zechariah 12:10-14).

A final passage that indicates that Israel will be regathered before the Tribulation in unbelief is Zephaniah 2:1-2:

> **Gather** yourselves together, yes, **gather**, O nation without shame,
> *before* the decree takes effect – the day passes like chaff –
> *before* the burning anger of the LORD comes upon you,
> *before* the day of the LORD's anger comes upon you.

It is clear from verses 2 and 3 that time of the regathering is *before* the Tribulation or "the day of the LORD's anger."[31] It is also evident that the nation is in unbelief since they are

[31]The preceding chapter defined this day as the eschatological "Day of the LORD" by using this term (Zephaniah 1:7) and numerous other synonyms: 1:8 "day of the LORD's sacrifice"(1:8), "the great day of the LORD" (1:13), "day of wrath, trouble and distress, day of destruction and desolation, day of darkness and gloom, clouds and thick darkness" (1:15), "day of trumpet and battle cry" (1:16), "day of the LORD's wrath" (1:18).

described as a "nation without shame" (verse 1), meaning they have not yet repented. For this reason they are threatened with judgment when the Day of the LORD arrives (verses 2-3). Therefore, this passage shows a regathering of the nation in unbelief prior to the Tribulation through which it will be brought to national repentance and its shame will be removed.[32]

Therefore, if Jews have been regathered to the Land of Israel for the first time in history since their dispersion among the nations and have returned in unbelief to form the modern secular State of Israel, just as these texts have predicted, how can we not say that the modern State of Israel is prophetically significant?

b) Israel will be regathered to the Land through persecution and for judgment.

Jeremiah 16:15-16 predicts a worldwide regathering of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel through the means of persecution. In verse 16 this means is metaphorically described as "fishermen" and "hunters" who will pursue the Jewish people back to their Land. These pursuers, said to be sent by God, have been used to force the Jewish people back to their Land in preparation for the events that will result in their final restoration. The modern history of Israel reveals that persecution has been the leading cause of the Jewish return to the Land. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries czarist pogroms and Polish economic discrimination in Eastern Europe motivated the creation of the Zionist Movement. During the Second World War, the attempted genocide of Jews during the Nazi holocaust encouraged international sympathy for the Jewish plight and led to the creation of the State of Israel. The Arab-Israel war of 1948-49 then forced Jews from Arab lands and later Soviet repression forced over a million Jews to immigrate to Israel. Over fifty years Israel has had to fight five major wars with its Arab neighbors for its survival and wage an on-going war of attrition with the Palestinians that during last decade Jews has resulted in a growing hostility in the international community toward Israel and provoked a renewed anti-Semitism in Europe. These "fishermen" and "hunters" continue to drive otherwise complacent Jews from the Diaspora to find safe haven in the Jewish State. If this modern history of events has occurred as these prophetic texts have predicted, how can we not say that the modern State of Israel is prophetically significant?

c. Israel will be regathered to the Land in stages.

[32]Note that Zephaniah 3:11 says "In that day you will feel no shame …" and parallels Ezekiel 20:38 in the removal of the rebels from Israel prior to Israel's national repentance.

It is often objected that the modern return of the Jewish People has been only partial (part of the Jewish People to part of the Land) and is secular, not spiritual, in nature. However, it is a misconception that all of the Jewish People would return to the Land at once when the process of national regathering was commenced, and that the regathering is singular and would be spiritual in character. The prophetic texts reveal that the regathering would be in two stages – one before the Tribulation and one before the Millennium. The account of Israel's restoration in the vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37 depicts a progression from the physical to the spiritual. As Moody professor and author Michael Rydelnik notes:

> The bones come to life in stages: first sinews on the bones, then flesh, then skin, and finally, breath of life (37:6-10). Then God told Ezekiel that "these bones are the whole house of Israel" (verse 11) and their restoration is a picture of the way God will bring them "back to the Land of Israel" (verse 12).[33]

As with the previous chapter of Ezekiel (36:24-28), the pattern of successive stages in the process of restoration is first a physical regathering to the Land, followed by a spiritual regathering to the LORD. If this first regathering is in spiritual *unbelief*, then it would be expected to be a secular and political movement, such as is the modern Zionist movement that led to the establishment of the secular Jewish State. Too, the lack of a spiritual motive to return to the biblical Land would produce only a *partial* physical return from the Diaspora, that is, mostly among Jews in lands experiencing persecution and forced exile, as the majority of Jewish immigrants to Israel have experienced. This would leave the remainder of Jews outside the Land to experience the second regathering at the end of the Tribulation. However, even the limited extent of this first stage of regathering can be said to be geographically from "the four corners of the earth" in harmony with the worldwide pattern of prophetic return. The second regathering, then, which would follow a time of worldwide Jewish persecution in the Tribulation will result not only in Israel's seeking deliverance physically but also spiritually in a time of national repentance (Luke 21:25-28). Therefore, just as the Jewish dispersion occurred in successive stages over time (722 B.C., 586 B.C., A.D. 70, A.D. 115, et. al), so the Jewish regathering can be seen to occur in stages modern and future (before the Tribulation, e.g. 1897, 1948, 1967, and at the end of the Tribulation). If the regathering is in stages, and the first regathering of the Jewish

---

[33] Michael Rydelnik, *Understanding the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2004), p. 119.

people to their Land is the historic modern regathering, how can we not say that the modern State of Israel is prophetically significant?

d. Israel's two regatherings will be sequential and without interruption.

Despite the previous arguments, the common hesitation of futurists in ascribing prophetic significance to the modern Jewish State is the uncertainty that the modern State of Israel is the *same* Israel of prophets predictions. In other words, "How do we know that the modern Jewish State might not be wiped out by its many enemies and the Jewish people again driven out of the Land and scattered among the nations to be brought back sometime in the future to fulfill these prophecies? One response to this might be that if this were to happen, there would be no way anyone could ever know that a future return to the Land was the return that would fulfill prophecy. If the Jews could be dispersed again after returning to the Land, there is nothing to prevent this from reoccurring many times more. Therefore, it would be impossible to know when a return was of prophetic significance. A response to this might be that this is precisely the point, no one can know if a return to the Land is prophetically significant until after prophecy has begun to be fulfilled. On this basis, no one in the age of the Church is able to know if a modern Israel is prophetically significant because prophecy will not begin to be fulfilled until after the Church has been Raptured and the seventieth week of Daniel commences. However, is this prophetic agnosticism warranted?

Arnold Fructenbaum has proposed an answer to this dilemma in his interpretation of an uninterrupted temporal sequence of regatherings in Isaiah 11:11-12.[34] If his understanding is correct, the text requires that the present Israel be the Israel that will remain in the Land to experience prophetic fulfillment in the end time. This passage reads:

> 11Then it will happen on that day that the LORD will again the second time[35] *regather* with His hand the remnant of His people [the Jewish People] who remain from Assyria (Greater Syria), Egypt, Pathros (Upper Egypt), Cush (Ethiopia), Elam (Iran), Shinar (Iraq), Hamath (Middle Syria), and from the islands of the sea (Mediterranean coastlands). 12And He will lift ~~up~~ a standard for the nations, and will assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth .

[34] Arnold Fructenbaum, Radio Manuscript #189 "The Modern State of Israel in Bible Prophecy" (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries), p. 6.
[35] Arnold Fructenbaum, Radio Manuscript #189 "The Modern State of Israel in Bible Prophecy" (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries), p. 6.

The context of this passage is clearly eschatological (cf. verses 1-10), as the prophetic formula ביום ההוא ("on that day"), a temporal prophetic marker (cf. Isaiah 7:18-25; 10:20-23) indicates. It should be noted that although the Masoretic text clearly reads שנית ("the second time"), most critical commentaries along with BHS have argued it is a scribal error (because it is superfluous with [יוסף "happen once again"). They have emended שנית ("the second time") on the basis of the Arabic *sanija* ("be high"),even though there is no evidence for this meaning in Hebrew.With this emendation the text then reads שא ("lift up") and with יד ("hand") to read שא ידו ("lift up His hand"). There is some support for this from the LXX which reads "the Lord will stretch forth His hand again" in comparison with Isaiah 49:22 which reads "raise high his hand." However, there is no warrant for this emendation and the Aramaic Targum clearly supports שנית ("a second time") with its paraphrase: "the Lord shall display His might *a second time*." While one anticipates that there should be a verb before ידו ("His hand"), it may be implied from the context. Yet, even if one were to accept the emendation, the term יוסף "once again" (lit. "add") implies the idea that this is a *second* deliverance. However, it is my opinion that the redundancy ("again … second time") is intentional to make the point of two regatherings and for this reason in my translation I have supplied as the implied verb "regather." The first "regathering" failed to achieve the promised restoration because the hearts of the nation were unchanged. The second and final regathering is a rescue that concentrates on the שׁאר עמו, "Remnant" of His nation – those whose hearts are changed (Ezek. 36:26-27) and therefore succeed in fulfilling the promise. The setting then is the ultimate period of prophetic fulfillment in the Messianic Kingdom, with verses 1-5 describing the Second Advent of Messiah in judgment to rule the earth, verses 6-9 depicting the peaceful conditions of restoration under the New Covenant, and verse 10 introducing Israel's national repentance toward and return to the Messiah. Verses 11-12 continue this theme, revealing the time and extent of the end time regathering. Notice that the universal regathering to the LORD is said to occur when "the LORD again recovers *the second time* with His hand." This "second time" has been thought by commentators to be either the return from Babylon at the beginning of the Persian period or subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. However, given the eschatological context, it is evident that the "second time" will be the "last time," since this restoration is the final one for Israel characterized by the end of hostilities with Israel's enemies, the agents of its prior dispersions (verses 14-16; cf. Isaiah 2:3-4). If then, the "second time" is the "last time," when is the "first time" implied in the text? Like the "second time" it too must be a time of international regathering to Israel by God's hand. If we go back into Israel's history of regathering we find an exodus from Egypt and a restoration

from Babylon.

However, neither of these regatherings can satisfy the specific geographic and temporal conditions of this prophetic text because they were regatherings from only *one* place (Egypt, Babylon=Persia), and not globally - from "the four corners of the earth." Also, each of these historic regatherings had a subsequent exile follow their return. But, how many exiles and returns can you have between a "first time" and a "second time"? How many numbers are there between one and two? The answer is none! According to Matthew 24:30-31 the last regathering of Israel to the LORD will be in national repentance at the time of His coming at the end of the Tribulation. This "last time" or "second time" regathering (according to Isaiah) is followed the establishment of the Kingdom for Israel and the judgment of the nations (Matthew 25:31-46), ending forever Israel's fear of exile. Notice that the "second time" regathering as a time of repentance indicates that national Israel existed in a state of unbelief prior to this (cf. Zechariah 12:10-14; 14:4; Romans 11:25-27). Moreover, the context makes it apparent that the Nation was already in the Land of Israel. Therefore, the "first time" regathering must be sought immediately before this in a time in which Israel has returned to the Land in unbelief. The "first time" regathering of Jews to the Land of Israel is the modern one, and since there cannot be another dispersion before the "second time" regathering, the modern State of Israel will remain in possession of the Land to fulfill end time prophecy just as the Jewish people will remain in existence among the nations for the "second time" regathering, according to prophecy. In addition, the acceptance of this interpretation requires us to accept that the modern return of Israel to the Land (even in unbelief) is a divinely ordained event ("by His hand") and therefore part of God's prophetic program.

e. Modern Israel parallels the Israel predicted to exist in the End time.

In order for the prophetic texts concerning Israel to have a literal fulfillment, futurists in the past expected that at some point in history (1) the Jewish People would have to return to their ancient homeland, "the Land of Israel," (2) they would have to regain their national status as "the people of Israel," and (3) they would again be in an adversarial position with the Gentile nations. The prophecy of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38-39 describes a situation and condition that fulfills this predicted pattern. Set in an eschatological context (Ezekiel 33-48), the text specifically states that its fulfillment "will come about in the last days" (38:16). At this time "the people of

Israel" are described as living in "the cities of Israel" in "the Land of Israel"(38:14, 18-19; 39:9). According to Ezekiel 37:25 this Land is "the land that I [God] gave to Jacob (Israel) My servant, in which your fathers lived." Ezekiel 38:8 also states that the Jewish People who had retuned to the Land had been "gathered from many nations" (a worldwide regathering). The regathering of Jews from exile in 538 B.C. had only been from one nation (Babylon). Only in our modern period have we witnessed a regathering of Jews to Israel from "many nations" in accord with this prophecy.

Ezekiel's Gog and Magog prophecy also speaks of "the mountains of Israel"(39:2, 4, 17). This mountainous region that extends the length of the country did not become a part of the modern State after the Six Day War of 1967. Only then could this region again be properly called "the mountains of Israel." Before this date it was under a succession of foreign rulers until wrested from Jordan (who last controlled it from 1948-1967). This is in harmony with Ezekiel 38:8, 12 which states that this mountainous land before being restored to Israel had been under "the sword" (foreign dominion). The text further states that the Land had been "a continual waste." History affirms that under foreign domination, and especially under the 400 years of Ottoman Turkish domination, the once fertile mountain region (particularly in the north) had been denuded and had eroded into a wasteland.

It is also significant that this territory of biblical Judea and Samaria, known today by its political designation as "the West Bank," is, like the rest of the modern State, in a state of contention with the surrounding nations and even the nations of the world. Ezekiel 38-39 is a prophecy that uniquely details a future invasion of Israel by a huge alliance of foreign nations (38:3-13). Interestingly, Ezekiel's prophecy also provides the detail that at the time of this invasion the people of Israel are living "securely, all of them" in a "land of unwalled villages" (38:8, 11). This would not have been true of ancient Israel where cities were typically surrounded by a defensive wall, but only in the modern era in which Israel's military has afforded the Nation unparalleled security and modern methods of warfare have made walled cities unnecessary. Therefore, Ezekiel 38-39 demonstrates that an Israel with the conditions presently experienced by the modern State was predicted to exist before final prophetic fulfillment would be possible.

Other texts also reveal that the Israel of the end time will have conditions that parallel those existing in the modern Jewish State. Daniel 9:27 depicts Israel in the Land, in possession of the Land, and in the city of Jerusalem when the seventieth week of Daniel starts. It also speaks of a "covenant" being made between the Jewish leadership ("the many") and a foreign leader ("the prince that shall come," verse 26). In order for any covenant to be legally binding and

enforceable both parties must be recognized entities that have the authority and power to fulfill the terms of the agreement. Since this verse implies that the covenant has something to do with the restoration of the Temple and the sacrificial system, it is understood that the Jewish leaders have a control in the city that qualifies them as partners in the contract. Matthew 24:16 likewise implies that Jewish law (the Sabbath) is being observed in the Land, another factor that indicates Jewish control of the city or at least freedom from foreign rule that would restrict the free exercise of the Jewish religion. Today, the modern Jewish State fulfills all of these conditions, including having sovereignty (whether fully exercised or not) over the Temple Mount.

If the modern State of Israel parallels the Israel for the end time, how can we not say that the modern State of Israel is prophetically significant?

A Final Note

It may still be asked, how do we *know* that the establishment of the modern Jewish State in 1948 was prophetically significant? In response it may be asked, how do we know that the dispersion of the Jews and the destruction of the Jewish State in A.D. 70 was prophetically significant? The event of dispersion and destruction was certainly prophesied, but no date was given when this would occur. After A.D. 70 Jews continued to live in the Land and even marshaled sufficient forces to wage a second Jewish revolt against Rome. Yet, both Jewish and Christian historians have accepted the Roman dispersion and destruction in A.D. 70 as the prophetic fulfillment of divine judgment against the Jewish nation? One reason for this was that this judgment was the *first* experience of Jewish exile from the Land since the Babylonian Captivity, and being *like* that judgment (with the destruction of the city and the Temple), it was evident that A.D. 70 marked a pivotal point in Jewish history.[36]

The parallels between the end of Jewish independence in the Land of Israel marked historically by the date of A.D. 70 and the reestablishment of Jewish independence in the Land of Israel marked by the date of 1948 should be observed. Just as with the event of Jewish dispersion, the event of Jewish regathering to the Land was certainly prophesied but no date was given. The Zionist movement and waves of Jewish immigration to the Land of Israel in the 19th

[36] It was also recognized that since both the destruction of the First and Second Temples occurred on the same day (the 9th of the Hebrew month of Av), that the destructions were the fulfillment of divinely ordered prophetic judgments (cf. Jer. 20:4; 38:3; Lk. 19:43-44; 21:20-24).

and early 20th centuries, after nearly 2,000 years of dispersion from the Land, called attention to a new direction in God's movement of history, but 1948 was the time when the existence of the Jewish State began and ended the *necessary condition* of Diaspora. Jews may have continued to live in the Diaspora after 1948, just as Jews continued after to live in Israel after A.D. 70, but in either case this does not change the fact that an event of prophetic significance took place. Therefore, just as the dispersion of the Jewish people among the nation from the Land of Israel (the Diaspora) was deemed prophetically significant (of God's judgment), so the return of Jewish People from the Diaspora to the Land of Israel must also be considered prophetically significant (of God's restoration). For this reason, the creation of the modern Jewish State in1948 has the prophetic significance of beginning the process of regathering from the nations (in unbelief) that will be followed by a further regathering (in belief) in preparation for the time of Israel's restoration in the Millennial Kingdom.

Conclusion

Evangelicals, and especially Christian Zionists and dispensationalists, are deeply divided over how to interpret the question of the prophetic significance of the modern State of Israel. Opponents of ascribing any theological significance to the Jewish State contend that those who do exercise a flawed exegesis of Scripture and that their beliefs, and particularly their influence in the political arena in support of Israel, is having disastrous political and human consequences. Moreover, they claim, as has Colin Chapman, that:

> … the case against Christian Zionism has been expressed more strongly in recent years than the case supporting them, and it has been supported by new scholarship, as for example, in the excellent volume of papers in *Jerusalem, Past and Present in the Purposes of God* (edited by P.W.L. Walker (Cambridge: Tyndale House, 1992). Can work of this quality be matched by Christian Zionists, or are they simply – dare I say it – repeating the same old arguments that have been put forward in the past?[37]

From my perspective, dispensational scholarship has, since Chapman made this challenge, produced important works matching the "excellence" of its opponents (although this is not to admit that *before* this time dispensational writings did not also do so). However, dispensational arguments must, by virtue of their source in the prophetic Scriptures, be "the same

[37] Colin Chapman, "One Land, Two Peoples – How Many States," *Mishkan* 26:1 (1997): 14.

old arguments." Even so, these old arguments applied to the modern reality of the Jewish State have stimulated new evangelical response. It is only hoped that every student of the Bible will consider the historical events happening in the Middle East with the on-going Jewish return to Israel, the development of the Land, the belligerence of the Arab world, the current rise in Anti-Semitism and opposition to Israel in the international community in light of the prophetic scriptures that give meaning to their significance.