



JUDAISM FOR LIVING SERIES

ISRAEL - THE MESSIANIC ERA "DAYS ARE COMING"

SOURCE SHEET AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



The Nation of Israel has a unique, perhaps even supernatural relationship to their land from time immemorial. Consider the following sources which describe the strange connections between Jews and the Land of Israel:

SOURCE 1: *"The Jewish Wars" Josephus Book III 3:2 (first century)*

For the whole area is excellent for crops or pasturage and rich in trees of every kind, so that by its fertility it invites even those least inclined to work on the land. In fact, every inch of it has been cultivated by the inhabitants and not a parcel goes to waste....(pg. 192)

As part of the fertile crescent, we would actually expect Israel to be as fertile and good a land as Josephus suggests.

SOURCE 2: *Nachmanides Account of his travels to Israel (1260 CE)*

What shall I tell you about the land? There are so many forsaken places, and the desolation is great. It comes down to this: the more sacred the place, the more it has suffered – Jerusalem is most desolate, Judea more so than the Galil. Yet in all its desolation **it is an exceedingly good land.**

Q: Perhaps we can pin it all on the natural decline the land would suffer through constant conquest? Yet, would that thesis hold up for 2,000 years? Or is there another rational explanation?

Let's take a look at this prediction from the Torah in Leviticus:

SOURCE 3: *Vayikra (Leviticus 26:32-33)*

So devastated will I leave the land that your enemies who live there will be astonished...
Your land will remain desolate, and your cities in ruins.

Q: The Torah seems pretty clear, that the land will "remain" desolate! But, Why? If the land is so good, why couldn't any foreign power cultivate it?

It seems that many people have speculated about this. Consider the inimitable words of Mark Twain on his trip to the Holy Land in 1867:

SOURCE 4: *The New Pilgrim's Progress Mark Twain (1867)*

We traversed some miles of desolate country whose soil is rich enough but is given wholly to weeds – a silent mournful expanse. A desolation is here that not even imagination can grace with the pomp of life and action....We pressed on toward renowned Jerusalem... No landscape exists that is more tiresome to the eye as that which bounds the approaches to Jerusalem....It is a hopeless, dreary, heartbroken land....Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes...Over it broods the spell of a curse that has withered its fields and fettered its energies.....And why should it be otherwise? Can the curse of the Deity beautify a land?
Volume II pp 216-359

Q: His words seem to suggest that the devastation of the land is a Divine punishment. That makes sense if the Jews lived on the land, by why curse the land so long after the Jews have been exiled?

Q: Is there a positive way to look at this situation, perhaps revealing a hidden silver lining?

Take a look at these comments from Nachmanides for an astonishing answer to our question:

SOURCE 5: *Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah (1194-1270)*

That which G-d states here, **"So devastated will I leave the land that your enemies...,"** constitutes a good tiding, proclaiming that during all our exiles, our land will not accept our enemies. This also is a great proof and assurance to us, for in the whole inhabited part of the world one cannot find such a good and large Land which was always lived in and yet is as ruined as it is (today). **For since the time that we left it, it has not accepted any nation or people, and they all try to settle it, to no avail.**

Even scholars of the nations of the world have noticed this strange phenomenon:

SOURCE 6: *Modern Science in Bible Lands Sir John William Dosson pp. 449-450. (1888)*

Until today **no people has succeeded in establishing national dominion in the land of Israel...**No national unity or spirit of nationalism has acquired any hold there. The mixed multitude of itinerant tribes that managed to settle there did so on lease, as temporary residents. **It seems that they await the return of the permanent residents of the land.**

Yet, just as the Torah predicts our exile from Israel, it also predicts our more astonishing return:

SOURCE 7: *Ezekiel Chapter 11:17 (Also in Deuteronomy 30:3-5, Isaiah 41:18-20 and more)*

Thus says the L-rd, G-d, "I will gather you from the nations, and assemble you from the lands where you have been scattered, and I will **give you the Land of Israel.**"

Other lands react to the natural occurrences of history, while the Land of Israel reacts to the deeds and actions of the Jewish People. **However, there is one tell-tale sign, the Rabbis explain, which will signal the dawning of the messianic era:**

SOURCE 8: SOURCE 5: Rabbi Shmuel Eidels HaLevi ("Maharsha" -- 1555-1632)

As long as Israel does not dwell on its Land, the land does not give of its fruits, as she is accustomed. **When she will begin to re-flourish, however, and give of her fruits, this is the clear sign that the end – the time of Redemption-- is approaching, when all of Israel will return to their land.**

This wasn't written in 1892 or even in the 1860's when the stirring of national identity was beginning to take form, but in 1600. How these words must have been ridiculed in Europe of the 16th century when the world had long dismissed the Jewish hope of return. Yet here we are in the 21st century, the land giving abundantly of her fruits, clearly fulfilling the words of the Prophets.

Days are coming when all the words of the Prophets will be fulfilled concerning the Jewish return to Israel and the Torah. Let's make sure we all heed the call!

UPPING OUR GAME: LOVING OUR FELLOW JEWS

We are one family and must recommit to appreciating and loving our fellow Jews, particularly now when Israel is under direct attack and Jews are under duress throughout the world. The Torah's command to love Jews is phrased, Love your neighbor "like yourself." What does "like yourself" come to add to this directive? Consider the poignant words of Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler:

SOURCE 9: RABBI ELIYAHU DESSLER ESSAY ON KINDNESS

"...By giving to him of yourself, you will find in your soul that you and he are indeed one; you will feel in the clearest possible way that he really is you, "as yourself."

All Jews are one. When you attack one of us you attack all of us. We are one body and must collectively "fight back" and do whatever we can to support our brothers and sisters in Israel, both physically and spiritually. May our learning, good deeds and prayers be a merit for their safety and ultimate salvation.

**For Questions, Comments and more FREE Learning Modules
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