

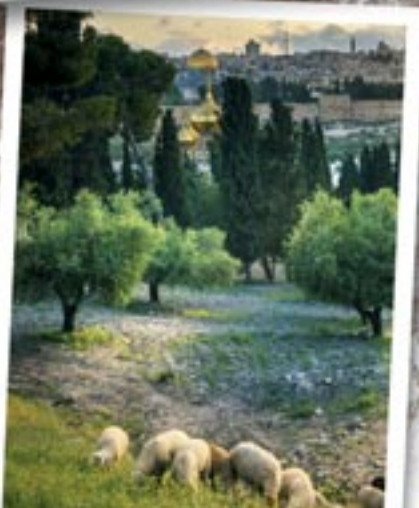
NEWS FROM ISRAEL

February 2023

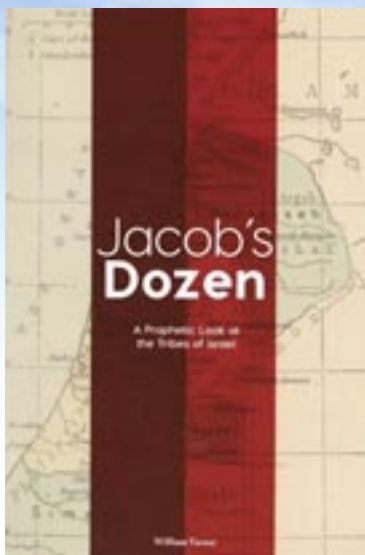
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Does Israel Have a Future?

– Part 8



Were Jacob's prophetic utterances true?



Have they been fulfilled? If so, how and when? Are some of Jacob's prophecies still awaiting final fulfillment? These questions are answered in this study of biblical history and the prophecies associated with each of the 12 tribes. Other fascinating subjects—such as the lost tribes of Israel and the role of the tribes in the end-times—are explored.

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Dear Friends of Israel,

BY FREDI WINKLER

Even though Benjamin Netanyahu originally wanted to present his new government within one week, it took almost two months to get it done. The reason for the delay was the many coalition partners and some of their exaggerated demands. Only with difficulty did Netanyahu manage to form a government within the allotted time. It was also due to time pressure that various coalition partners gave in, since none of the participants wanted to prevent the formation of a government. However, the divergence within this new government will create difficulties for Netanyahu's leadership and does not bode well.

For example, Amir Ohana, the new Knesset speaker, appeared

with his same-sex partner and their two children for the ceremonial presentation and swearing-in of the new government. Netanyahu paid special attention to them on this occasion. But when it was Amir Ohana's turn to take the oath, the religious representatives covered or averted their eyes so as not to view the unacceptable. Still, what good did that do? From now on, he will regularly be in front of them as Knesset speaker and, for better or worse, they will have to look at him.

This example illustrates how, right from the beginning, the new government seems to be on a collision course. Leading rabbis have already voiced their opinion; for them, the Bible's statements on same-sex relations are



still authoritative. Given this explosive subject in the background, the chances for a stable and lasting government are poor.

In his inaugural speech, Netanyahu stated that the primary concern and task of the new government will be the fight against the Iranian threat. He is probably correct—and everyone would agree—but we've been hearing these same words in Israel for over 20 years. This is nothing new. With such a goal, it is easy to unite the people in the beginning. But internal security has clearly become a burning and urgent concern, which the government has to address and cannot neglect.

With the campaign slogan of internal security, the new right-wing party led by Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich won a great election victory. However, these two are likely to cause internal tensions in the new administration, and it remains to be seen what they can achieve in this area. The Arabs, in any case, are worried about their rise to

power. But Ben-Gvir has given assurances that he will care for all citizens in the country in equal measure, including the Arabs. The situation is especially dire in the Arab sector. In the past year, there were 108 murders with many seriously wounded, mostly due to criminal attacks.

Ben-Gvir, now the new Minister of Internal Security, announced that he will pursue this problem. Others previous had not really dared to penetrate these Mafia-like groups. But what became such a problem in the Arab sector has now spilled over into the Jewish region as well. Thus, there is no lack of problems, both from the outside and within. Looking at all of this, it is to be hoped that the new government will succeed for the best of Israel.

Looking upward to the Guardian of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, I greet you warmly with Shalom.



Does Israel Have a Future? – Part 8

The Prophets and Israel's Future

BY NORBERT LIETH AND JOHANNES PFLAUM

Bible teacher Loraine Boettner once wrote: "It is generally agreed that if the prophecies are taken literally, they do foretell a restoration of the nation of Israel in the land of Palestine, with the Jews having a prominent place in that kingdom and ruling over the other nations."

Interestingly, Loraine Boettner was a committed replacement theologian. Nevertheless, the Old Testament prophets speak very clearly and distinctly about Israel's future, when they are read without a preconceived theological system in view, as Boettner himself had to admit. The land question once more proves to be the strongest argument against Replacement Theology.

Many forthcoming promises for Israel speak not only of Israel, but also of "Israel and Jacob," or "Jacob and Israel." The prophet Isaiah begins his 43rd chapter this way:

"But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine."

Then, beginning in verse 7, promises follow for Israel's future gathering together from all directions (i.e., not just from one direction, as from Babylonian exile).

Isaiah 10:20 speaks of both Israel and the house of Jacob in the context of future salvation.

In Jeremiah 31:35-37, the Lord speaks of the fact that His covenant with Israel as a people is no more capable of being dissolved than the natural order and the limits of science that He established for mankind. This promise from God is confirmed again in Jeremiah 33:25-26. It first mentions the seed of Jacob, and then the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And if that weren't enough, Isaiah even associates Israel's enduring existence with the new heavens and earth to come (Isaiah 66:22).

Further passages from the prophet Isaiah are representative of the other prophets. They mention the double phrasing "Israel and Jacob" or "Jacob and Israel" in the context of forthcoming promises to Israel: Isaiah 14:1; 27:6; 41:14; 44:1-2; 48:12; 49:5. Additionally, there are numerous other prophetic Scriptures about Israel's future that speak only of Jacob. Some of the passages from

Jacob received a new name, Israel, after his own strength was quenched in the struggle with God (Gen 32:24-32).



Isaiah are 29:22; 59:20; 65:9. Why is the mention of Jacob important in this context?

For one thing, the Old Testament always uses the name “Jacob” or “house of Jacob” to indicate the chosen people of Israel in their unredeemed state, just as Jacob the patriarch was unredeemed before his encounter with the living God at Peniel. He received a new name, Israel, after his own strength was quenched in the struggle with God (Gen 32:24-32). Thus, the double des-

ignation Jacob/Israel makes it clear what the chosen people is in itself, as well as what God will one day make of His people. Therefore, in many places in the prophets, judgment is announced; not just for Israel, but also for Jacob or

the “house of Jacob” (cf. Is 42:24; 43:28; 58:1). So, the double designation Israel/Jacob not only represents the unredeemed state of the people of Israel, but also is used in promises yet to be fulfilled to make it clear how God will achieve His purpose for His people.

On the other hand, the name Jacob is never used in the New Testament to refer to the Church of Jesus. For this reason, it is inappropriate to apply the promises made to Jacob and Israel to the

Church. Jacob is always associated with the people of Israel, never the Church!

The name Jacob is mentioned 25 times in the New Testament. Twenty-two of them are dealing with the patriarch Jacob as a person, which leaves three in which “Jacob” isn’t referring to him. Two of them are in Romans 9—11, the big passage about Israel and the Church. In Romans 9:13, the name is used in connection with Israel’s election to illustrate the importance of God’s election for His saving work. And Paul quotes the promise from Isaiah 59:20 in Romans 11:26, to establish Israel’s future salvation. Here too, Jacob is associated with the current unsaved state of the people, until the time when the Lord will prevent ungodliness. In the third passage, Luke 1:33, Jesus’ birth is announced, and Christ is referred to as the Ruler over the house of Jacob. The house of Jacob always refers to the chosen people of Israel as well. This is corroborated by verse

32, which speaks of the throne of His father David.

To summarize, we can say that the New Testament only uses the name Jacob three times when it is not directly referencing the patriarch. But even in these passages, there is an unmistakable reference to the people of Israel. By contrast, the unsaved people in the New Testament are associated with Adam (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22).

Replacement theologians overlook the fact that the yet-to-be-fulfilled promises made to Israel are intrinsically linked to Jacob or the house of Jacob. When this term is used in the Bible and isn’t referencing the patriarch himself, it is referring exclusively to the people of Israel (and never the Church).

ISAIAH 11 AND ISRAEL’S FUTURE

Let’s remain with the prophet Isaiah, who has something to say about Israel’s future.

In Isaiah 11:1-5, Jesus’ first and second comings are interwoven. Events that occur thou-

sands of years apart are revealed here with no segue, in a single act.

The first four verses describe Jesus' first coming. However, Isaiah also speaks—without transition—of the Lord's return by prophesying:

“And he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins” (Isa 11:4b-5).

Since Jesus didn't do this at His first coming, the passage must be referring to His return.

The verses that follow Isaiah 11:1-5 involve the fulfillment of one of mankind's dreams. This dream can only be realized through the Messiah. He is the only One able to bring forth the righteousness described in the chapter's opening verses. It is the righteousness that He accomplished at His first coming through His death and resurrection, and which He will enforce

at His second coming: “And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins” (v. 5).

After that, it says:

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (vv. 6-9).

Isaiah 11 is describing a true golden age, where formerly dangerous and venomous beasts are harmless and no longer kill each other; the lion will eat straw. It's a time when children can play with these animals without fear;



“And he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the

wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins” (Isa 11:4b-5).

a time when there will be no more war, and no more terror in the Middle East and worldwide! The Apostle Paul confirms this truth in the New Testament:

“For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Rom 8:19-22).

As labor pains bring forth new life, so the pains of tribulation will bring about Creation’s rebirth.

We must never lose sight of the fact that just as all of Creation fell through Adam, so through Jesus everything is restored. God never abandons a work that He has begun (Rom 5:12-21)!

“And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious” (Isa 11:10).

These words show us how the Gentiles (or nations) will inquire of the Lord (who is the root of Jesse), the One who is of the house of David. And they will be led into His rest. This is fulfilled in Revelation 22:16: “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.” (NAI0722/1260)



Qeren

**in the Book of
Samuel
- Part 3**

Gabriele Monacis

The Messiah will be humbled and exalted.

In the previous article of this series, we discussed Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. This is the first time the term *qeren* appears in the Bible. The story prophetically points to the Messiah giving His life for the salvation of many. Instead of his son

Isaac, Abraham sacrificed a ram whose horns had gotten caught in a bush. This is when the word *qeren* is used: the very part of the ram that gives it strength and majestic appearance (its horns) caused it to get stuck, making it easy prey for Abraham. And our

In Hannah’s prayer, “horn” (*qeren*) is symbolic of strength.

Lord Jesus Christ had a crown of thorns placed on His head—the very spot that was intended for His coronation as King of kings.

In this third article, we’ll be examining two passages where the word *qeren* appears in 1 and 2 Samuel. If we consider the two as a single book, the two texts are found at the beginning and near the end of the book. In this part of the Bible too, *qeren* has a prophetic meaning; it tells us something important about the life of Christ—His death and resurrection, each in its turn.

The book of Samuel begins with the story of Elkanah and his two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Hannah, whom Elkanah dearly loves, has no children because God has made her infertile. As a result, she is offended by Peninnah’s fertility and jealous of her children. Every year their family goes to the

house of God in Shiloh to offer sacrifices. It would have been a holiday for all of them, but also a time of suffering for Hannah. We read how one day, “deeply distressed,” she prayed to God and wept bitterly (1 Sam 1:10). As she was praying, she vowed to God that if He granted her a son, that son would be consecrated to Him for life.

God answered Hannah’s prayer, and she gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel. First Samuel 2 records Hannah’s prayer of thanksgiving, in which she praises and glorifies God because He has answered her prayer. In the first verse, she says, “My heart exults in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the LORD.” In Hannah’s prayer, “horn” (*qeren*) is symbolic of strength. She’s saying that God renewed her strength when she was without hope. But this isn’t the

only place where *qeren* appears in her prayer. At the end in verse 10, she declares that God will “give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.” In other words, God will do for His Anointed One (in Hebrew, this means the Messiah) what He did for Hannah: He will give Him strength and lift Him up from deep lowliness.

As mentioned earlier, *qeren* also appears at the end of 2 Samuel. In 2 Samuel chapter 22, we find David’s song of thanksgiving, which he wrote “when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul” (v. 1). In the third verse, David sings praises to God for His protection: “...God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation.”

Both David and Hannah thank God for saving them from their enemies. But there

is another parallel: Hannah’s prayer and David’s song of thanksgiving both end with a reference to the Messiah. Hannah speaks of “the horn of his anointed”; David sings in 2 Samuel 22:51 that God brings “Great salvation ... to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever.” Once again, in Hebrew the “anointed” refers to the Messiah.

Both Hannah and David were able to testify that their enemies had brought them close to death. But they cried out to God in their distress, and He saved them and brought them to safety. What Hannah and David experienced are illustrations of what the Messiah had to go through. He too had to go all the way down, into the Valley of Death. From there He cried out to God, who rescued Him by raising Him from the dead.

(NAI0622/1240)



On the Horizon



ISRAEL

Research Institute for Energy Storage

Israel's Energy Ministry has chosen Bar-Ilan University and the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology to establish a new national research institute for energy storage, the Energy Ministry announced.



A 55-MEGAWATT solar power plant in Israel's south.
(photo credit: MOSHE SHAI/FLASH90)



The institute's goal is to push Israel's energy sector to work in response to national strategic energy challenges, as well as to train future experts in the field and give the industrial sector some new innovative technology made by experts in academia.

In particular, the institute will help work towards reaching Israel's goal of zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050—a goal established in light of the ongoing climate crisis. This will require a full transition to renewable energy sources, such as solar energy and wind turbines.

NEWS IN BRIEF



SPYDER DEFENSE SYSTEM UPGRADE

Rafael's SPYDER air defense system has been upgraded to include sophisticated Counter-TBM (tactical ballistic missiles) capability.

The announcement followed research by Rafael and its customers and analysis of the lessons learned from recent and ongoing armed conflicts involving extensive use of TBMs.

"The new capability involves the Derby LR missile interceptor, which underwent both hardware and software upgrades, which were adapted according to customer requests and from lessons learned from operational events."

-jpost.com
4 January 2023



“The field of large-scale energy storage is one of the most important challenges for the strong integration of renewable energies,” Energy Ministry chief scientist Dr. Gideon Friedman said in a statement.

“The new energy institute will enable Israel to become a leader in the field, in continuation of the ministry’s additional efforts in the field of storage. For the first time, an institute is being established that will be led by a steering committee comprised of a combination of members of academia, industry and government.”

-*www.jpost.com*, 3 January 2023

Commentary: While we are familiar with Israel’s future, we take heed of the developments taking place in our days. The nation—not even a century old—has reached remarkable goals in many different fields of technology. Energy is one of the great issues in our days, partially due to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Now, Israel concerns itself with large-scale energy storage.

Not too long ago, Israel was at the mercy of various countries that would export oil and gas to

them. That changed in June of 1999, when a large natural gas field was discovered only 40 kilometers off the coast of Ashkelon. In November of last year, the London-based company Energean reported that 13.3 billion cubic meters of natural gas had been discovered. From various additional reports, there seems to be no end in sight to more discoveries. In short, Israel has become energy independent. Natural gas is being piped to Jordan and Egypt. Plans are in the works to connect Israel’s natural gas fields to Europe’s pipeline grid.

While we realize these developments are of limited duration, we also know there is no other nation to be compared to Israel. The Lord told Moses to say to Pharaoh, who represents bondage: “...Thus saith the Lord, Israel

is my son, even my first-born” (Exodus 4:22).

7922

(See *Unwrapping the Pharaohs*, Item #2230, \$34.99.)





ISRAEL

4th Best Performing Economy

Israel is the fourth-best-performing economy in 2022 among a list of OECD countries, according to a ranking compiled by *The Economist*.



Illustrative: An aerial view of the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange and the surrounding area. (Matanya Tausig/Flash90)



Israel's economy shared fourth place with Spain and was ranked after Ireland among the 34 wealthy OECD countries cited in the survey. Greece scored the top spot followed by Portugal in second place, while Latvia and Estonia came at the bottom of the list. Japan, France, and Italy made it into the top 10. Meanwhile, the US economy, which grew at a rate of 0.2%, ranked 20th, and Germany, "despite political stability," is in 30th place, according to *The Economist*.

Israel's economy is projected to have grown at a rate of 6.3% in 2022, according to Finance Ministry estimates, following its even faster expansion of 8.1% in 2021, the year of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. That compares with projected GDP growth of 3% among world economies for this year, according to an OECD outlook.

-www.timesofisrael.com, 26 December 2022

NEWS IN BRIEF



TOURISM BOOM IN 2022

More than 2.67 million tourists arrived in the Holy Land in 2022, a huge spike after the industry took a big hit due to the coronavirus pandemic.

As COVID-19 raged into Israel and countries worldwide, 2020 only saw a mere 831,000 tourists and 2021 less than half that with 397,000. So seeing millions arriving in Israel this past year was a huge win.

These still are not pre-pandemic numbers, mind you. The year 2019 was a record year for Israel's tourism industry, with over 4.55 million tourists coming to visit.

Nevertheless, 2022's tourists brought a massive income into the country of NIS 13.5 billion.

-jpost.com
4 January 2023



Commentary: Emory University's *Journal of Law and Religion* published an article in 1988 titled, "Biblical Law and the Economic Growth of Ancient Israel," which was summarized as follows:

This paper shows that the laws of ancient Israel found in the Old Testament significantly restricted economic transactions and limited the possibility of economic growth. The paper begins by examining the production function in light of Hebraic teaching, demonstrating that theological principles can be translated into economic regulations. The paper then describes the various laws regarding land, labor, capital, and technology and analyzes the probable economic effects of such laws during approximately the fourth century B.C.

That's history. Today, we live in an international global community that is in the process of building the final economic system, as recorded in Revelation 18. Interesting, however, is the fact that this final system is based on economic "fornication." Dictionary.com defines the word fornication as, "voluntary sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons." The word can also be translated as

idolatry.

Thousands, if not millions of experts the world over are racking their brains to accurately analyze the global economy. One thing, however, becomes abundantly clear: this economic "fornication" or idolatry is globally successful: "For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies" (Revelation 18:3).

One of the most powerful contributors toward that success is advertising. Some include outright falsehoods, while others are only partially true. Products and services are praised to work, but actually don't. That's what we call idolatry.

The goal for Israel, however, is the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 15:6: "For the Lord thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee." 7919

(See *Exposing Mystery Babylon Part 2*, Item #1080, \$4.50.)



JORDAN

Jesus' Baptism Site a Tourist Bonanza

For centuries thousands of pilgrims a year have made the journey to Bethany Beyond The Jordan, a site on the east bank of the Jordan River which Christians believe to be the exact spot where Jesus was baptized.



Baptism site on the Jordan River: Israel in foreground and Jordan on opposite bank. (credit: J. Froese)



This number could swell to one million visitors a year if a proposed phased six-year estimated \$300 million project for a 'tourist city' adjacent to what is a designated UNESCO World Heritage site goes ahead.

Organizers hope that with souvenir shops and walking trails, boutique hotels and botanical gardens, the site—which lies outside the formal boundary of the baptism location—will eventually attract five times as many annual visitors than the current 200,000, and will help preserve the region's dwindling Christian presence.

Bethany Upon The Jordan, which lies around 50 km west

NEWS IN

BRIEF



10th HIGHEST LIFE EXPECTANCY

Israelis enjoy the 10th highest life expectancy in the world, according to a report from NiceRx based on data about OECD countries from Worldometer's Life Expectancy of the World Population.

Average life expectancy in Israel is 83.49 (81.98 for men and 84.91 for women).

Hong Kong came in first place with an average life expectancy of 85.29. The other countries ranking above Israel were Japan, Switzerland, Singapore, Italy, Spain, Australia, Iceland and South Korea. Latvia has the shortest life expectancy of the countries profiled, averaging 75.73 years.

NiceRx also found that Israel ranks 27th out of 39 countries for health expenditure per capita, totaling \$3,057 in 2021. The United States ranked first in health expenditure per capita, totaling \$12,318.

-israel21c.org
3 January 2023



of Amman, is mentioned in the Gospel of John as the place where John the Baptist baptized Jesus.

Extensive excavations since the mid-1990s have unearthed ruins of churches, baptismal pools and caves that show it was a Christian pilgrimage site as early as the fourth century.

In recent years, the unregulated construction of huge edifices and churches by competing churches has altered the once-untouched landscape.

-www.reuters.com, 14 December 2022

Commentary: About Jerusalem, it is standard to declare the Temple Mount as venerated by three religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Thus, it behooves us to ask, do Christians have holy places? The answer is an unqualified no. We learn this from the Gospel of John chapter 4. There at the place of Jacob’s well, Jesus dialogs with the Samaritan woman. She identifies a so-called holy place: “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship” (verse 20). How did Jesus answer? “Ye worship ye know not what:

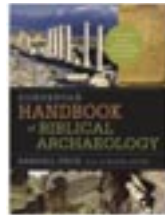
we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (verses 22-24).

When Paul is confronted with idolatry in Athens, he finds an altar with the inscription, “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.” Cleverly, he does not condemn it but uses it to preach the Gospel: “That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:27). Members of the true, universal Church do not need a specific holy place, certain times of the day, dates, or some sensational event on planet earth; we can worship God the Father anytime, anywhere, without any

assistance from certain holy places.

7909

(See *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, Item #2339, \$42.99.)





ISRAEL

Sign of Messiah's Coming?

Is the Messiah about to appear? Is the end of the End Times upon us? That's what a gathering of religious Israeli Jews wanted to know in response to mounting incidents of animals bizarrely walking in circles.



Rabbi Zamir Cohen speaks to an audience in Jerusalem about the End Times and the Coming of Messiah. Photo: Yaakov Naumi/Flash90



In recent months, a flood of video clips have shown all manner of animals beginning to walk in large circles for no apparent reason.

For instance, Chinese media reported that a flock of over 100 sheep had started walking in a large circle and continued doing so for more than 10 days.

Rabbi Zamir Cohen, founder of the religious television network Hidabroot, told the gathering that while "there are many signs that are attributed to the Coming of Messiah, there is nothing written about animals walking in circles" in the last days.

He suggested that there was a sort of divine hint in the bizarre animal behavior for us to not trudge on with no purpose in life, simply following one after the other, but rather to break out and find our true purpose.

-www.israeltoday.co.il, 4 December 2022

NEWS IN BRIEF



QUANTUM NANOSATELLITE LAUNCHED

A new nanosatellite developed by Tel Aviv University researchers was launched into orbit by a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from the Vandenberg Space Force Base in California.

The 20-centimeter (7.9-inch) nanosatellite, named TAU-SAT3, is the first Israeli satellite built to advance research into optical and quantum communication from space and an "important step towards demonstrating reliable quantum communication," according to the researchers.

At an altitude of 550 kilometers (342 miles), the TAU-SAT3 will orbit the earth for about five years to conduct several scientific missions while sending optical and radio communication signals back to an optical ground station set up on the roof of a building at the TAU campus.

*-timesofisrael.com
4 January 2023*



Commentary: Waiting for the Messiah is definitely prudent behavior.

In this case, it was a video clip showing sheep going in a circle somewhere in Mongolia. Science Alert stated:

To be a sheep is to blindly follow the crowd. But is a sheep's sheepiness really enough to make an entire flock walk around in a circle non-stop for days on end?

-www.sciencealert.com, 23 November 2022

Another source, HITC, a British news and entertainment website, reads:

While there is no explanation for this rather strange behavior, petrified people on the internet want to know what sheep mean in the Bible and if the video is some sort of a sign of unprecedented danger.

-www.hitc.com, 19 November 2022

And *Jerusalem Post* declares:

Scientists have long studied why some animals, such as sharks and turtles move in circular patterns. However, they have not yet come to a conclusion about the cause.

-www.jpost.com, 20 November 2022

We are reminded how in 2004, a tsunami in the Indian Ocean, caused by an underwater earthquake with a magnitude of 9.1, took the lives of

almost 230,000 people. After that horrible tsunami, many reports testified that various animals, for unexplained reasons, moved to higher ground before the event. That's not surprising, as there are hundreds if not thousands of scientific reports indicating unusual behavior by animals just before catastrophes.

When we look in our backyard, we see birds and rodents seeking shelter before a storm; even ants cease their work above ground. They don't have a computer, but the Creator has endowed them with the collective knowledge that winter is coming.


Are these things related to the coming of the Messiah? Most likely not. We remember the words of our Lord, that He will come "when ye think not."

7911

(See *The Messiah in the Temple*, Item #2274, \$39.99.)

AFGHANISTAN Taliban Orders Sharia Law Punishment

Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada has ordered Afghan judges to impose punishments for certain crimes that may include public amputations and stoning.

 When in power in the 1990s, the



Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada is a political and religious leader who is the third Supreme Commander of the Taliban.

Taliban were condemned for such punishments, which included public executions.

The exact crimes and punishments have not been defined by the Taliban, but one religious leader in Afghanistan told the BBC that under Sharia law, penalties could include amputations, public lashings and stoning.

Levels of violence have fallen across Afghanistan since foreign troops pulled out after 20 years of war, in the face of the Taliban advance in the summer of 2021.

But the group has faced numerous allegations that it is abusing human rights, including of opponents, women and journalists.

Billions of dollars in Afghan assets held abroad are frozen as the international community waits for the Taliban to honor promises still to be met on security, governance and human rights.

-www.bbc.com, 14 November 2022

Commentary: It is difficult for the West or the East to convince Afghans to follow the modern system. The Soviet Union

fought a war against Afghanistan from 1979–89, but lost and had to withdraw. In 2001, the United States launched an invasion of Afghanistan, supported by an international military coalition. That lasted 20 years, with devastating consequences for the Afghan people. One thing remains clear: whether the East or the West, no one dares to get entangled with Afghanistan militarily again.

What next? Money is an important element for the future. In order to function, even as a religiously dominated nation, money has to be made. Industry has to be developed; otherwise, Afghanistan will be as isolated as North Korea, for example. When frozen “Afghan assets held abroad” will be released is unknown. But the immediate future calls for some kind of compromise.

While religiously dominated by Islam, we know that the Church is well and alive in the country. Thus, our fervent prayer is that the Church will let her light shine into the darkness, and many Afghans will see the light and be liberated – not just temporarily but eternally. 7886

(See *The Cross in the Shadow of the Crescent*, Item #2300, \$16.99.)



What Is Life Like at the Ebenezer Home?

A Poem by an Ebenezer Resident

By David Phillips (CEO)

Living in Ebenezer is a real blessing,
 I know I'm not worthy,
 I'm confessing.
 But God is so good and so kind,
 Really, it just boggles my mind.
 How He brought us here to
 such a wonderful place
 To spend our last days by His
 saving Grace.
 The caretakers work hard day
 and night
 To keep everything going just
 right.
 They serve us such good, tasty
 meals
 until our poor stomach feels
 We just can't hold another bite,
 So please keep more food out
 of our sight.

Yes, I really do love living here,

Well protected and without any
 fear.
 There are many things here to
 amuse us,
 and they take care not to
 confuse us.
 I thank God for bringing
 us here
 With all of these friends
 we hold so dear.

And then there are the times
 with Ilana we spend,
 She's truly uplifting, a very dear
 friend.
 We sing and we chat and enjoy
 each other,
 enjoying each sister, and also
 each brother.
 With this, good memories we're
 making
 In this journey we are taking.



Ebenezer Home is a great place to be,
If you don't believe me, just come and see!

*Ilana was Ebenezer's Social Worker

Eli and Fern, thank you for joining the Ebenezer family in 2011 and gracing our Home with your presence. Fern, we will treasure all those years you blessed us by playing the piano for us each morning!

Thank you for entrusting your care to us and allowing us to help you finish this earthly race. We love and miss you both and cherish all the sweet memories you left behind.

Eli and Fern passed away November 19 and 24, 2022, just six days apart from each other and after more than 70 years of marriage. We are so thankful for the dozens of lives that they blessed. To hear Fern play the piano, please visit our YouTube channel: Ebenezer Senior Citizen's Home.



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“But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!”
(2 Chronicles 6:18).

BY ARNO FROESE

The above confession of Solomon, the son of David, at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, reveals his spiritual capacity to understand that God cannot be enclosed in the walls of a man-built temple. What happened next is highly significant: “Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house” (2 Chronicles 7:1). In the plainest words we can possibly find, it meant that God had accepted Solomon’s prayer and the sacrifice on the altar.

Now the question: has God changed His mind about Israel,

after they desecrated themselves with idols, or after they were sent in captivity to Babylon and later returned to rebuild the destroyed temple? The answer is rather simple: no. Why not? Because His supernatural act at the dedication of the temple, was a visible demonstration to the people of Israel that God is who He is; He is the same from eternity to eternity. He is the One who appeared unto Abraham with this irrevocable promise: “...Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates” (Genesis 15:18). That promise is irreversible, for God’s Word is eternal and will not change.

The New Testament explains Abraham's faith: "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). Abraham is the father of faith; he knew that the various other promises regarding the nation and the land of Israel were of limited, temporary value. The ultimate destination is the city "whose builder and maker is God." John, who wrote Revelation, testifies: "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" (Revelation 21:10). That, incidentally, is our ultimate destiny; it is the eternal home for those who follow the Lamb.

In the meantime, however, the land of Israel and the Jewish nation—particularly the city of Jerusalem—will continue to be a controversy for the whole world.

Nakba Day

On 30 May 2022, the UN General Assembly adopted the first reso-

lution to commemorate Nakba Day ("Day of Catastrophe"), when Palestinians (Arabs) were driven from their homes in 1948 following the founding of the State of Israel. It seems that the UN organization, which represents the world of nations, has little else of urgency but to repeatedly target Israel with their condemnation. That, my friends, is an important issue when trying to understand Bible prophecy. As repeatedly mentioned, all 200+ nations of the world were established by force and deceit. Surely the Indians, the original inhabitants of the American continent (North and South), could also request a Nakba Day. That can also be said for Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia.

We do not wish to belittle or overlook the fact that the Arab population has suffered tremendously; that's always the case during war. Not only do the soldiers bear the consequences, but also particularly the women, children,

and old people pay the horrible price of severe suffering.

But why Israel? Because God, the Creator of heaven and earth, selected this country and this people for a specific purpose: to create salvation through the revelation of His Word, which “became flesh and dwelt among us.” The Bible is a Jewish book; Jesus was, is, and always will be a Jew. He is identified in Revelation 5:5: “And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” Salvation, world peace, the environment, the oceans, and the air we breathe are not subject to the United Nations or to any country, whether friend or foe of Israel. As the old song goes, “He’s got the whole world in His hands.”

Citizenship

There is something else unique when it comes to the land of Israel. The people in the territories that

were conquered with weapons of war, were privileged to obtain Israeli citizenship. Wikipedia reports:

Palestinians who returned to their homes in Israel after the war did not satisfy the conditions for citizenship under the 1952 law. This class of residents continued living in Israel but held no citizenship or residence status. A 1960 Supreme Court ruling partially addressed this by allowing a looser interpretation of the residential requirements; individuals who had permission to temporarily leave Israel during or shortly after the conflict qualified for citizenship, despite their gap in residence. The Knesset amended the Citizenship Law in 1980 to fully resolve statelessness for this group of residents; all Arab residents who had been living in Israel before 1948 were granted citizenship regardless of their eligibility under the 1952 residence requirements, along with their children.

An article by UNwatch.org from 1 September 2022 was titled, “UN Condemns Israel 15 Times; Rest of the World 13.”

To obtain citizenship in Saudi Arabia, you must be a resident continuously for 10 years; must prove you have a way of earning a living legally; must be considered generally moral; and, must read, write, and speak fluent Arabic. The application is sent to the king, who is advised by the Ministry of Interior. They may or may not reject the application, with no

reason given. Qatar? The most difficult nations to obtain citizenship from:

1. Qatar
2. Bhutan
3. Saudi Arabia
4. Kuwait
5. Switzerland

These few facts supply overwhelming proof of the uniqueness of the land and people of Israel, exactly as Amos 3:2 states: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth...” (NH)

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