

THE MODERN STATE OF ISRAEL IN BIBLE PROPHECY

By Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Th.M., Ph.D.

On the topic of the modern State of Israel in Bible prophecy, one will hear five views, giving five different perspectives.¹ Three perspectives will be discussed in the introduction of this study. The fourth perspective will be discussed in the context of Isaiah 11:11–12:6, after a fifth perspective has been introduced in connection with the two worldwide regatherings.

I. Introduction

A. Three Perspectives on the Modern State of Israel in Bible Prophecy

1. The First Perspective

The first perspective is the view of replacement theology, particularly amillennialism, which sees the modern Jewish State as purely an accident of history, totally unrelated to any type of Bible prophecy. This first view believes that when Israel rejected the Messiahship of *Yeshua* (Jesus), God was through with the Jewish people. Therefore, there are no unfulfilled prophecies for the Jewish people and there is no future final restoration. When Israel rejected the Messiah, all of God's covenantal promises were transferred to the church. Hence, this type of theology is a theology of transference. It is also a theology of replacement as it teaches that when Israel rejected the Messiah, the church replaced Israel in God's standing. Thus, the church is fulfilling Israel's promises.

When asked about prophecies that speak of a worldwide regathering of the Jewish people, replacement theologians usually answer that these are not to be interpreted literally, but allegorically of the elect being brought into the church until the church is complete. Jews could be saved today, but they simply would be amalgamated into the larger church. Hence, God has no future restoration for Israel as an ethnic people, and nothing happening with Israel today is in any way related to prophecy. There is no future prophecy for Israel either, and so again, the modern Jewish State is nothing but an accident of history.

¹ A more detailed study of this and other prophetic topics may be found in the author's *The Footsteps of the Messiah – A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2020).

2. The Second Perspective

The second perspective takes the opposite view and contradicts replacement theology by stating that there will be a future final restoration of Israel to the Promised Land. Those who represent this view take biblical prophecies literally. However, they have a hard time fitting the modern Jewish State into Bible prophecy. The reason is that these prophecies describe the final regathering of Israel as a believing nation in the Messiah. The chronological sequence of these prophecies is: national repentance followed by national restoration. Yet, of the 6.5 million Jews who live in Israel today,² only a few thousand are Jewish believers. To make it worse, most Israelis are not even Orthodox; they would class themselves quite secularly, either as atheists or agnostics. The situation in Israel therefore does not seem to fit prophecies such as the following three examples.³

The first example is Deuteronomy 30:1-5:

¹And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you shall call them to mind among all the nations, whither Jehovah your God has driven you, ²and shall; return unto Jehovah your God, and shall obey his voice according to all that I command you this day, you and your children, with all your heart, and with all your soul; ³that then Jehovah your God will turn your captivity, and have compassion upon you, and will return and gather you from all the peoples, whither Jehovah your God has scattered you. ⁴If any of thine outcasts be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from thence will Jehovah your God gather you, and from thence will he fetch you: ⁵and Jehovah your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and he will do you good, and multiply you above your fathers.

The second example is Isaiah 27:12-13:

¹²And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah will beat off his fruit from the flood of the River unto the brook of Egypt; and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. ¹³And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great trumpet shall be blown; and they shall come that were

² Arnold Dashefsky, Ira M. Sheskin, eds. "World Jewish Population," *American Jewish Year Book 2018* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2019).

³ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations are from the American Standard Version (ASV) of 1901. However, archaic language has been changed with one exception: The archaic *ye* has been retained in order to distinguish the second-person plural from the singular *you*. In addition, the word "Christ" has been replaced with "Messiah" and the name "Jesus" with "Yeshua."

ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and they that were outcasts in the land of Egypt; and they shall worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

The third example is Ezekiel 39:25-29:

²⁵Therefore thus says the Lord Jehovah: Now will I bring back the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for my holy name. ²⁶And they shall bear their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they shall dwell securely in their land, and none shall make them afraid; ²⁷when I have brought them back from the peoples, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations. ²⁸And they shall know that I am Jehovah their God, in that I caused them to go into captivity among the nations, and have gathered them unto their own land; and I will leave none of them any more there; ²⁹neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord Jehovah.

These three prophecies clearly speak of a national salvation of Israel prior to a national restoration to the land.

So, those who hold the second view disagree with the first view in that they do believe there will be such a future, final restoration. But they would agree with the first view that the modern Jewish State is an accident of history and is not relevant to Bible prophecy at all.

3. The Third Perspective

The third perspective claims that what is happening in Israel today **is** the final restoration of the nation and the beginning of the fulfillment of all eschatological prophecies. Those who hold this view believe that there will be more and more Jews returning to the land until all are back. At some point, these Jews will undergo a national regeneration and salvation, and the Messiah will return. When asked about the prophecies that speak of a period of divine wrath and tribulation preceding this time, those who adhere to this third view would say that the tribulation prophecies have already been fulfilled in the Nazi Holocaust. Therefore, there is no future tribulation, and what we are seeing today is the final restoration.

Emissaries of this third view are traveling around the world encouraging Jews to follow God's calling and return to Israel. They also go to groups of Jewish believers and Messianic congregations telling them that to live outside the land, such as in "the fleshpots of America," is sinful. When asked for biblical passages to prove their view,

these emissaries often refer to verses in which the prophets told the Jews to leave Babylon. They interpret these passages allegorically, claiming that Babylon represents the United States of America. When one points out that these prophecies mention the Euphrates River, which was in Babylon, they claim that the river is not really the Euphrates, but the Hudson River in New York City or the Mississippi River. This interpretation would surprise prophets such as Jeremiah.

Hence, to summarize, the third view interprets modern-day Israel as the final restoration and a fulfillment of eschatological prophecies, at least in the initial stages.

B. The Fourth and Fifth Perspectives: Two Worldwide Regatherings

What the first three perspectives fail to observe is that when the Bible speaks of a worldwide regathering of the Jewish people, it actually speaks of two distinct worldwide regatherings. First, there is to be a worldwide regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment—specifically, the judgment of the tribulation. This is to be followed by a second worldwide regathering in faith in preparation for blessing—specifically, the blessing of the Messianic kingdom.

Both the fourth and the fifth perspectives recognize this truth. However, they differ in the interpretation of its meaning. The fourth perspective claims that we cannot be sure that the modern State of Israel is a fulfillment of the prophecies that speak of the regathering in unbelief. The fifth perspective makes the point that, yes, we can be sure. This study will first deal with the fifth perspective and then answer the concerns of those who hold to the fourth view. Furthermore, this study will focus on those prophecies that clearly speak of a worldwide regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment rather than on the prophecies that speak of the worldwide regathering in faith in preparation for blessing.⁴ Once it is recognized that the Bible speaks of two such regatherings, it is easy to see how the present State of Israel fits into prophecy.

1. The Regathering in Unbelief in Preparation for Judgment

There are three key passages that speak to the worldwide regathering of Israel in unbelief in preparation for judgment and a fourth passage that is relevant to this issue.

a. Regathered into the Land: Ezekiel 20:33-38

³³As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, surely with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out, will I be king over you: ³⁴and I will bring you out from the peoples, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with an

⁴ For a study of the prophecies that speak of the worldwide regathering in faith in preparation for blessing, see Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, pp. 393-470.

outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out; ³⁵and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I enter into judgment with you face to face. ³⁶Like as I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I enter into judgment with you, says the Lord Jehovah. ³⁷And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; ³⁸and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me; I will bring them forth out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

In this passage, Ezekiel draws a simile with the Exodus when, under Moses, God brought the entire nation of Israel out of the land of Egypt and into the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula. God's plan and program for Israel at Sinai was to accomplish two things: First, the Jewish people were to receive the Law of Moses; and second, they were to build the Tabernacle through which much of the law could then be maintained. With these two things accomplished, they were to press on and to enter the Promised Land itself. But because of a series of rebellions and murmurings against God's revealed will, finally at the oasis of Kadesh Barnea, which was right on the border of the Promised Land, God entered into judgment with His people. The divine judgment was that those who came out of Egypt would now have to continue wandering throughout the wilderness for forty years. During those forty years, all who came out would die, except for the two righteous spies and those below the age of twenty. So, forty years later, it was a new nation that was allowed to enter the land under Joshua, a nation that was born as free men in the wilderness, not as slaves in Egypt.

This historical frame of reference is the backdrop for the future. But this time, Ezekiel prophesies that God will regather His people from all parts of the world (v. 34). It should be noted that it is a regathering out of wrath and a gathering for wrath. The Jewish people were gathered out of the wrath of the Holocaust, during which six million Jews died. The events of the Holocaust set the world stage for Israel to become a state and for the Jewish people to be regathered in the land. That this gathering is not in faith, but in unbelief, is seen from the fact that God does it *with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out*. Ezekiel repeats this phrase twice: in verse 33 and in verse 34. God's goal is that of Messianic Kingship, but the means of attaining it will be wrath and judgment. Hence, this is a regathering both *out* of wrath and *for* wrath.

This regathering in unbelief occurs after wrath has been poured out on the Jewish people. But because it is a regathering in unbelief, it is a regathering for a future time of wrath. In that future time of wrath, God will once again enter into judgment with His people and will purge out the rebels among them. Those who remain will turn to the Lord. They will be brought into *the bond of the covenant* (v. 37)—specifically, the bond of the New Covenant described in Jeremiah 31:31-34:

³¹Behold, the days come, says Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ³²not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them, says Jehovah. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

The Jewish people will be brought into a national salvation. Then, they will be a new nation, a regenerated nation, that will be allowed to enter the land under King Messiah for the final restoration.

In summary, Ezekiel 20:33-38 clearly describes a worldwide regathering of the Jewish people in unbelief, from wrath and for wrath, in preparation for a specific period of judgment that will then lead to a national salvation and in turn to Israel's final restoration.

b. Regathered to Jerusalem: Ezekiel 22:17-22

¹⁷And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, ¹⁸Son of man, the house of Israel is become dross unto me: all of them are brass and tin and iron and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are the dross of silver. ¹⁹Therefore thus says the Lord Jehovah: Because ye are all become dross, therefore, behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. ²⁰As they gather silver and brass and iron and lead and tin into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in my anger and in my wrath, and I will lay you there, and melt you. ²¹Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you with the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. ²²As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have poured out my wrath upon you.

Ezekiel again describes a regathering, this time focusing on the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem becomes the furnace of affliction. The following passages show that this is a common figure pointing to Israel's need for refining:

Isaiah 1:22: *Your silver is become dross, your wine mixed with water.*

Isaiah 2:25: *and I will turn my hand upon you, and thoroughly purge away your dross, and will take away all your tin;*

Isaiah 48:10: *Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.*

Jeremiah 6:27-30: ²⁷*I have made you a trier and a fortress among my people; that you may know and try their way.* ²⁸*They are all grievous revolters, going about with slanders; they are brass and iron: they all of them deal corruptly.* ²⁹*The bellows blow fiercely; the lead is consumed of the fire: in vain do they go on refining; for the wicked are not plucked away.* ³⁰*Refuse silver shall men call them, because Jehovah has rejected them.*

Jeremiah 9:7: *Therefore thus says Jehovah of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how else should I do, because of the daughter of my people?*

Zechariah 13:9: *Thus says Jehovah, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.*

Malachi 3:2-3: ²*But who can abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appears? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:* ³*and he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto Jehovah offerings in righteousness.*

Furthermore, the regathering detailed in Ezekiel 22:17-22 is a regathering in unbelief because the Jewish people are described as being filled with the impurities of *brass and tin and iron and lead* (v. 18). They are regathered for a future time of wrath when the wrath of God will be poured upon them for the purpose of melting and purifying them. As a purified, believing nation, they will then turn to the Lord.

Here again, Ezekiel speaks of worldwide regathering in unbelief in preparation for a specific future judgment, but the purpose of the judgment is to bring Israel to national repentance. Only then will the Jewish people experience the final worldwide restoration in faith.

c. Regathered before Being Regenerated: Ezekiel 36:22-24

While primarily dealing with the regeneration of Israel, Ezekiel 36:22-24 nevertheless makes it clear that a regathering takes place *before* the regeneration:

²² Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for my holy name, which ye have profaned among the nations, whither ye went. ²³ And I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I am Jehovah, says the Lord Jehovah, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. ²⁴ For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land.

d. The Fourth Passage: Isaiah 11:11-12

The fourth passage that is relevant to the topic of the worldwide regathering of Israel in unbelief in preparation for judgment is Isaiah 11:11-12:

¹¹ And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord will set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, that shall remain, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. ¹² And he will set up an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

It is in connection with this passage that the fourth perspective needs to be discussed.

2. The Fourth Perspective and the Number of Worldwide Regatherings: Isaiah 11:11–12:6

As mentioned, the fourth perspective does recognize that there are two types of regathering prophecies: those that predict a regathering in unbelief and those that speak of a regathering in faith. However, then the fourth view goes on to make the following claim: We really cannot be sure that the modern State of Israel is a fulfillment of those prophecies that spoke of the regathering in unbelief.

Why not?

Those who hold to the fourth view usually answer this question by stating that it is possible to have several regatherings in unbelief before there is the specific one that fulfills the prophecies just discussed. But Isaiah 11:11-12 shows that there cannot be

several regatherings in unbelief from *the four corners of the earth*. The context of these verses extends to Isaiah 12:6:

¹¹And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord will set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, that shall remain, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. ¹²And he will set up an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. ¹³The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and they that vex Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. ¹⁴And they shall fly down upon the shoulder of the Philistines on the west; together shall they despoil the children of the east: they shall put forth their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. ¹⁵And Jehovah will utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his scorching wind will he wave his hand over the River, and will smite it into seven streams, and cause men to march over dryshod. ¹⁶And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people, that shall remain, from Assyria; like as there was for Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

^{12:1}And in that day you shall say, I will give thanks unto you, O Jehovah; for though you were angry with me, thine anger is turned away and you comforted me. ²Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid: for Jehovah, even Jehovah, is my strength and song; and he is become my salvation. ³Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. ⁴And in that day shall ye say, Give thanks unto Jehovah, call upon his name, declare his doings among the peoples, make mention that his name is exalted. ⁵Sing unto Jehovah; for he has done excellent things: let this be known in all the earth. ⁶Cry aloud and shout, you inhabitant of Zion; for great in the midst of you is the Holy One of Israel.

In this context, the prophet speaks of the final worldwide regathering in faith in preparation for the blessing of the Messianic kingdom. Then, he numbers this final worldwide regathering as the *second* one. In other words, the final regathering is only the second regathering. If the final regathering is the second one, how many can there be before that? Only one. The first one could not have been the return from Babylon since that was not an international regathering from the four corners of the world, but only a migration from one country (Babylon) to another (Judea). Hence, the Bible does not allow for several worldwide regatherings in unbelief. It allows for *one* worldwide regathering in unbelief, followed by the final regathering in faith—or as Isaiah said it: *a*

second time that the Lord will set his hand... to recover the remnant of his people. Therefore, the present Jewish State *is* very relevant to Bible prophecy.

II. The Regathering Before the Tribulation

So far, passages have been shown that speak of a regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment as over against other passages that speak of a regathering in faith in preparation for blessing. But these passages have not specifically stated that this regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment will occur before the tribulation period. There are other passages that pinpoint this timeframe. One such passage is Zephaniah 2:1-2:

¹Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation that has no shame; ²before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of Jehovah come upon you, before the day of Jehovah's anger come upon you.

In Zephaniah 1:7-18, the prophet described some features of a time he calls *the day of YHWH (Jehovah)* or *the day of the Lord*. This is the most common Old Testament term for the tribulation. The most common term today is “the tribulation” or “the great tribulation.” Then in Zephaniah 2:1-2, the prophet speaks of an event that is to occur *before* the period of the day of the Lord begins. In verse 1, the nation of Israel is told to *gather together*. It is clear from this verse that this is a gathering in unbelief for it is a nation not yet ashamed of her sins. In verse 2, the word *before* is used three times in relation to the preceding passage regarding the tribulation, one of which includes *before the day of Jehovah* itself.

While primarily dealing with the regeneration of Israel, Ezekiel 36:22-24, which was mentioned above, makes it clear that a regathering takes place before the regeneration. So, while other texts speak of a regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment, these passages clearly state that this regathering in unbelief will occur before the tribulation actually begins.

III. Three Corollary Issues

In addition to the passages that speak of a worldwide regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment, there are three corollary issues that are relevant to the theme of the modern Jewish State in Bible prophecy.

A. The First Corollary Issue: The Start of the Tribulation

The first corollary issue is the start of the tribulation. In Daniel 9:24-27, the prophet was given his famous vision of the seventy sevens, or the 490-year period, that God has decreed over the Jewish people and over the city of Jerusalem:

²⁴Seventy weeks are decreed upon your people and upon your holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. ²⁵Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times. ²⁶And after the threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war; desolations are determined. ²⁷And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that makes desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate.

It goes beyond the purpose of this study to deal with the passage phrase by phrase.⁵ But to summarize, by the end of verse 26, the first 483 years of this 490-year period have already been fulfilled in history, coming to an end at the time of the first coming of the Messiah.

But there are still seven years of this prophetic time clock for Israel left to run, the same seven years of the tribulation. The question now is: What will be the one singular event that will begin the seven years of tribulation, the seventieth seven of Daniel?

The answer is found in verse 27. In this verse, the pronoun *he* goes back to its nearest antecedent, *the prince that shall come*, in verse 26. In other words, *the prince that shall come* and the *he* who makes a covenant are one and the same person, the individual better known in evangelical circles today as “the Antichrist.”

The last seven years, the seventieth seven, will begin with one specific, decisive event: the signing of a seven-year treaty between Israel and the Antichrist. Daniel points out that this treaty or covenant will be *firm*. The Hebrew word for “firm” does not mean to renew an existing covenant, but to make an original one containing strong guarantees. This is the event that begins the tribulation, not the rapture of the church. The rapture is

⁵ For details, see: Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, pp. 187-198.

an imminent event; it could happen at any time. It is not determined by any set of events. People often talk about signs for the rapture, but the rapture is a sign-less event. Therefore, it will never be a dateable event, in spite of the people making money by writing books that suggest they know when the rapture will occur. The rapture will come some time before the tribulation, but it might come ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years before the tribulation. While the Bible teaches that the rapture will precede the tribulation, it never says that the rapture **begins** the tribulation. Rather, the event that begins the tribulation is the signing of this seven-year covenant.

While Daniel 9:27 presents the covenant that begins the tribulation from man's perspective, Isaiah 28:14-22 views the covenant from God's perspective:

¹⁴Wherefore hear the word of Jehovah, ye scoffers, that rule this people that is in Jerusalem: ¹⁵Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: ¹⁶therefore thus says the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone of sure foundation: he that believes shall not be in haste. ¹⁷And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. ¹⁸And your covenant with death shall be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. ¹⁹As often as it passes through, it shall take you; for morning by morning shall it pass through, by day and by night: and it shall be nought but terror to understand the message. ²⁰For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. ²¹For Jehovah will rise up as in mount Perazim, he will be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon; that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act. ²²Now therefore be ye not scoffers, lest your bonds be made strong; for a decree of destruction have I heard from the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, upon the whole earth.

The reason Israel will even bother to make a covenant with the Antichrist is for military security. When they sign this covenant, they put their trust in the Antichrist for their military security. However, God declares that this is not a covenant of life, but a covenant of death. It is not a covenant of heaven, but a covenant of hell. Rather than gaining security, Israel will receive a strong measure of insecurity.⁶

⁶ A detailed analysis of Isaiah 28:14-22 is found in Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, pp. 198-200.

There is a common misconception that the Jews will accept the Antichrist as the Messiah. This is not taught anywhere in the Bible. What the Bible does say is that they will make a covenant with the Antichrist and will put their trust in him for their military security. There will be a segment of Jews who refuse to have anything to do with this covenant.

The signing of this covenant is yet future, but it presupposes two things that need to be in place before the tribulation can begin. First, sovereign states, such as Israel, do not sign covenants of this nature with nobodies. Therefore, in order for Israel to sign this covenant, the Antichrist must already be in high political power before the tribulation can begin. Second, the fulfillment of this prophecy presupposes that there is a Jewish State in place, with a Jewish government with whom a covenant like this could be signed. This has been true only since 1948. Biblically speaking, the rapture could have come before 1948, but the tribulation could not have come before 1948 because there was no Jewish government with whom a covenant like this could have been signed. In other words, Daniel 9:24-27 requires a Jewish State to be in existence before the tribulation, and today there is one. This is another way the modern State of Israel fits within Bible prophecy.

But again, the rapture does not depend upon any of these things. Keep in mind, the blessed hope of the church is not looking for the rise of the Antichrist. He is no blessing. The blessed hope of the church is the return of the Lord in the air to take believers to heaven.

B. The Second Corollary Issue: The Third Temple and the Abomination of Desolation

1. The Explanation of the Second Corollary Issue

The second corollary issue relevant to the modern State of Israel in Bible prophecy is the Third Temple and the abomination of desolation, an event that will occur in the middle of the tribulation.

There are four passages of Scripture describing this event, the first of which is Daniel 9:27:

And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that makes desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate.

The second passage is Matthew 24:15:

When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that reads understand),

The third passage is II Thessalonians 2:3-4:

³Let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴he that opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sits in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God.

The fourth passage is Revelation 11:1-2:

¹And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. ²And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it has been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

All four passages describe events that occur in relation to the third Jewish Temple. In all of them, the events described take place in the middle of the tribulation. The abomination of desolation takes place when the Antichrist breaks the seven-year covenant with Israel. At that time, he will take over the Third Temple, seat himself in the Holy of Holies, proclaim himself to be God Almighty, and call upon all the people of the world to worship him. Their acceptance of his deity will be signified by their taking of his mark of 666.

2. The Relevance of the Second Corollary Issue to the Present Theme

Since the abomination of desolation takes place in the middle of the tribulation, how is it relevant to the present theme on the modern Jewish State in Bible prophecy? It is relevant in that it means that Israel is in control of the Temple compound. Furthermore, the Temple must be both standing and functioning by the middle of the tribulation, which, in turn, means that it must be rebuilt before that mid-point. There are two options as to when the Temple might be rebuilt. First, it might be rebuilt during the first three and a half years of the tribulation. The second option is that it might be rebuilt even before the tribulation begins. It is impossible to be more exact than this. The only thing that can be known for sure is that by the mid-point of the tribulation, the Temple is standing and has been functioning for a while.

While Israel became a state in 1948, the City of Jerusalem was divided for nineteen years. From 1948 until the Six-Day War in 1967, the eastern part of Jerusalem (which is the biblical Jerusalem, the Old City where the Temple compound is located) was in Jordanian, not Jewish, hands. In 1967, one of the by-products of the Six-Day War was the takeover of the Temple compound. In other words, it was impossible to have the Temple rebuilt before 1967. This prophecy required the eventual Jewish control of the Temple compound, and that happened in 1967. This is another way the modern Jewish State fits within Bible prophecy.

3. The Preparations for the Third Temple

In spite of many rumors one hears today, there is no actual, active building of the Temple going on. But two things are happening that are relevant to the Third Temple.

First, there is a non-profit organization called the Temple Institute that is making furnishings for the next Temple. Located in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, the Temple Institute has already made a number of items that will be necessary for services to be held in the Temple, such as tools and shovels to carry out the ashes from the altar. It has made various jars and pitchers for the water oblations, wine oblations, and the pouring out of the blood. It has made the scarlet thread and the lots for the scapegoat. The Institute has not as yet made the high priestly garments, but is already working on the common priestly garments. The plan is to have all things ready so that they can be put into use as soon as the Third Temple is built.

Second, there is a Jewish organization called *Ateret HaKohanim* (also *Ateret Cohanim*) with a *yeshiva* (Jewish educational institution) located in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City that is training priests to perform sacrifices. Only the tribe of Levi was permitted by Mosaic Law to take care of the Temple and to conduct the sacrificial system. It is the only tribe that has kept its identity. Jews having names such as Levi, Levy, Levin, Leventhal, Levinson, or Cohen are members of the tribe of Levi. But not all Levites can be priests, only those who are descendants of Aaron. The name *Cohen* is the Hebrew word for “priest.” *Ateret HaKohanim* trains Orthodox *Cohanim* to perform proper sacrifices, so that by the time the Third Temple is built, there will be Levitical priests ready to do these things.

4. Commonly Asked Questions Regarding the Third Temple

a. What about the Ark of the Covenant?

The first question that is often raised in the context of the Third Temple pertains to the Ark of the Covenant. In some of the popular books on prophecy, there are reports of those who are looking for the Ark of the Covenant. They all seem to know where it is, but they have not been able to find it. The assumption is that it is necessary to have the Ark

of the Covenant before the Temple can be rebuilt. They are trying to help God to fulfill His prophecies, as if God needs anyone's help.

The fact is that the Ark of the Covenant is not essential for the building of the Third Temple. When the Jews came back from the Babylonian Captivity and built the Second Temple, they had no Ark of the Covenant. The Second Temple stood from 515 B.C. to A.D. 70. For almost six hundred years, the priests would bring blood into the Holy of Holies, but they sprinkled it without the Ark of the Covenant. The Temple standing in Yeshua's day had no Ark of the Covenant. So, it is not necessary to have the Ark for the Temple to be rebuilt or for the Temple to function.

Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that the Ark of the Covenant still exists. It was probably destroyed with the Babylonian destruction of the First Temple. Jeremiah 52:17-23 lists all of the things that Nebuchadnezzar took with him to Babylon, and the text says the rest was destroyed by fire:

¹⁷And the pillars of brass that were in the house of Jehovah, and the bases and the brazen sea that were in the house of Jehovah, did the Chaldeans break in pieces, and carried all the brass of them to Babylon. ¹⁸The pots also, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the basins, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away. ¹⁹And the cups, and the firepans, and the basins, and the pots, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the bowls—that which was of gold, in gold, and that which was of silver, in silver,—the captain of the guard took away. ²⁰The two pillars, the one sea, and the twelve brazen bulls that were under the bases, which king Solomon had made for the house of Jehovah—the brass of all these vessels was without weight. ²¹And as for the pillars, the height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits; and a line of twelve cubits did compass it; and the thickness thereof was four fingers: it was hollow. ²²And a capital of brass was upon it; and the height of the one capital was five cubits, with network and pomegranates upon the capital round about, all of brass: and the second pillar also had like unto these, and pomegranates. ²³And there were ninety and six pomegranates on the sides; all the pomegranates were a hundred upon the network round about.

The things that were destroyed by fire would include the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was merely a box of wood overlaid with gold, so all the Babylonians needed to do was to strip off the gold and then burn the box. That is why, when the Jewish people returned from Babylon after seventy years, there was no Ark of the Covenant to put in the Holy of Holies. If they could not find it after only seventy years, they will not be able to find it after two thousand five hundred years. Hence, there is a lot of energy and money being spent for naught.

b. What About the Ashes of the Red Heifer?

The second issue that has to do with the Jewish Temple concerns the ashes of the red heifer. One particular teacher has been traveling around the country saying he knows where the ashes of the red heifer are, so give him money and he will find them for you! He goes on to say that they must have the ashes of the previous red heifer to mix with the new ones before the Temple can be dedicated. Again, this is not true. The laws of the ashes of the red heifer are found in Numbers 19, and there is nothing said about mixing them with the ashes of the previous red heifer. There is no need to find the old ones.

By Jewish law, when the Israelites are finally ready for the Temple to function, they will simply slaughter a red heifer, burn it, and then they will have the ashes required. At the present time, they are trying to produce a perfect red heifer to use. The Jewish concern is the production of a perfect red heifer born in Israel, not searching for the ashes of the previous red heifer.

C. The Third Corollary Issue: The Invasion of Ezekiel 38 and 39

The third corollary issue relevant to the modern State of Israel in Bible prophecy is the invasion of Ezekiel 38 and 39. This passage describes an alliance of nations that are located north and south of Israel. This confederation invades Israel from the north. It goes beyond the purpose of this study to deal with the identification of the invaders or to discuss the timing of this invasion.⁷ The purpose here is to deal with two things found in this passage that are directly relevant for the modern Jewish State today: the Israel of Ezekiel 38-39 and the place of the destruction of the invading armies.

1. The Israel of Ezekiel 38 and 39

What kind of Israel is described at the time of this invasion? This description is found in Ezekiel 38:8 and 12b:

⁸After many days you shall be visited: in the latter years you shall come into the land that is brought back from the sword, that is gathered out of many peoples, upon the mountains of Israel, which have been a continual waste; but it is brought forth out of the peoples, and they shall dwell securely, all of them.

^{12b}to turn your hand against the waste places that are now inhabited, and against the people that are gathered out of the nations, that have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the middle of the earth.

⁷ For details, see: Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, pp. 106-126.

The Israel described in this passage is a nation that has been regathered from all over the world. It is a nation that is rebuilding wasted cities that have been lying desolate for many centuries, a nation that is regathered after having been pursued by the sword. This regathering is a regathering out of wrath. Contextually, it is a regathering in unbelief because the Jewish people are described as beginning to believe only after this invasion. In other words, Ezekiel is not describing what was true of Israel in ancient history. What is described here has been true only since 1948. Regardless of one's view about the timing of this invasion, the main point to note is that this invasion could not have come before 1948; before then, there was no Israel that fit this description.

2. The Place of the Destruction of the Invading Armies

The second thing to note in Ezekiel 38-39 is exactly where the invading armies are destroyed. A reading of the passage shows that these armies will succeed in advancing to the center of the country. Only then will God move to destroy them by His divine power. But where in the Land of Israel will the invading armies be destroyed? The exact location is revealed in Ezekiel 39:2 and 4a:

²and I will turn you about, and will lead you on, and will cause you to come up from the uttermost parts of the north; and I will bring you upon the mountains of Israel;

^{4a}You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel,

The phrase “the mountains of Israel” refers to the central mountain range that makes up the backbone of the country. In the Hebrew Scriptures, these mountains were known as the Hill Country of Ephraim and the Hill Country of Judah. Some of the famous biblical cities that lie within these mountains include Dothan, Shechem, Samaria, Shiloh, Bethel, Ai, Ramah, Bethlehem, Hebron, Debir, and most importantly, Jerusalem, which seems to be the target of the invading army.

However, from 1948 until the Six-Day War in 1967, these mountains were not in Israel, but in Jordan. They are now referred to politically as the West Bank. In 1948, Jordanian forces took over these mountains and annexed them as part of Jordan. All Israel had was a small corridor leading west to Jerusalem. The border between Israel and Jordan ran down the foot of these mountains, then cut into the mountains, dividing Jerusalem in two, and then went out again and continued along the foot of these mountains. Israel had maybe five percent or less of the mountains, while the rest belonged to Jordan. Only since 1967 have the mountains of Israel been in Israel.

Besides the Temple compound falling into Jewish hands, another by-product of the Six-Day War was that these mountains also fell under Israeli sovereignty. Therefore, not only could this prophecy not have been fulfilled before 1948, but it could also not

have been fulfilled before 1967. The mountains of Israel (the West Bank) are yet to have a very important and relevant role in Bible prophecy. As for the present State of Israel, they became part of Israel in 1967. This is yet another way the modern Jewish State fits within Bible prophecy.

V. Conclusion

What has been done in this study is to point out that the Bible speaks of two worldwide regatherings. It is agreed that the present Jewish State is in no way a fulfillment of those prophecies that speak of a worldwide regathering in faith in preparation for blessing. Rather, it is a fulfillment of those prophecies that speak of a worldwide regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment.

A balance must be kept on the issue of Israel and Bible prophecy. On the one hand, the common tendency today is to see more fulfillment than there really is. On the other hand, one must not fail to see the fulfillment that is there: There is biblical prophetic significance to the present Jewish State.