

THE PARAMOUNT NECESSITY

MY FRIENDS, we are currently considering certain chapters of the prophecies of Ezekiel, chapters specially selected because they appear to throw prophetic light upon מדינת ישראל, the State of Israel, which, as you know, re-emerged into history on May 14, 1948.

Equipped with the verbal landscape supplied by Ezekiel in his thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters, we surveyed the scene and circumstance of a mighty invasion of the Holy Land by Gog and his hordes in **“the latter days.”**

We also surveyed the sudden shock of Divine interposition and judgement that fell upon the invaders from the Throne of the God of Israel.

There is a deep and sovereign reason for this Divine inburst into human affairs, a reason much deeper than would appear upon a surface even so eloquent as the overthrow of Gog and his hordes.

This world will yet discover that מדינת ישראל, the State of Israel, is a purposive embryo, the nascent norm, of מלכות השמים, the Kingdom of Heaven. **“Your kingdom come”** is no futile petition, of that I am convinced.

As I said before, when Gog invades Israel **“in the latter days”** he really invades God Himself and the intensity of the manifestations and the searching thoroughness of Gog’s overthrow will convince the whole world that a Divine act of retribution has been witnessed.

This acknowledgement will be wrung from the lips of mankind in general even as the Eternal declares in these majestic words:

“Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself, and I will make myself known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am the Eternal.”

As Rabbi Dr. Fisch so admirably observes, and here I take pleasure in quoting him,

“The manifestation of God’s omnipotence in the defeat of Gog, and His intervention on behalf of His people will prove to the nations that Israel’s suffering in exile was not due to His (that is, God’s) inability to save him (that is, Israel), but to his (Israel’s) sin.”

My friends, these are timely and necessary words. Israel simply must recognize and acknowledge that the dread גלות, Galut, Dispersion was a mark of the Divine displeasure upon the nation – upon the nation, mark you, not necessarily upon the total aggregate of the single individuals comprising the nation. Observe the distinction, because it is important. How warmly I rejoice to assure you that every single individual son or daughter of Abraham is precious to the God of Israel and beloved in His merciful and gracious eyes.

But the nation of Israel, as a national entity, has a great lesson yet to learn. Happily, I feel persuaded that the miraculous deliverance of Israel from the ominous Gog will have its due effect upon the nation of Israel, too, and may probably initiate the process of Israel's national self-examination leading ultimately to national repentance of Israel's major national sin.

Will you allow me to refer back to something I said in my ninth message in this series?

In that message I led you to the gate of hope for Israel as a nation and, swinging wide that gate, I invited you to glance into a prophesied realm of national prosperity, leafy green with Divine promise in three blissful dimensions.

The scene is scented and fragrant with the Divine שכילה, Shekinah Presence, the promised משיח, Messiah, the Shepherd Prince, guaranteeing to the soul of Israel a long Sabbath of monarchical prosperity and security.

The second dimension of felicity is the bestowal of the gift of a supernatural productiveness to Israel's soil guaranteeing to the body of Israel a material prosperity and security.

The third dimension of ecstasy is the fulfilment of the promise of God through Moses and the prophets of the bestowal of the second circumcision, the circumcision of the heart, guaranteeing to the Spirit of Israel a manifold prosperity through a spiritual palengogenesis.

That much neglected prophet Zechariah speaks of a great repentance in his twelfth chapter when, as the mouthpiece of God, he declares:

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, The spirit of grace and of supplication; And they shall look unto Me Whom they have pierced, And they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son . . .”

The prophet Hosea announces that after the long Galut **“shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Eternal their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Eternal and His goodness in the latter days.”** (Hosea 3:5)

Do you notice, my friends, that Ezekiel's expression **“in the latter days”** is exactly the phrase employed by Hosea, **“in the latter days.”** We have seen that this term relates to the Messianic era.

Now, whilst the phrase in each instance acts as a handle enabling us to lift the predictions from the local ground of utterance and place them reverently into the general chronological area which they belong prophetically, yet, nevertheless, we must resist the temptation to place both deposits of Divine prediction on to one single square in the calendar, thus perhaps forcing upon each a coincidence neither Divinely authorized nor intended.

Therefore, all I suggest, is that the Gogian debacle may touch off that pre-announced national repentance that opens wide the gate of national bliss and well-being for Israel.

This national repentance is followed by the Divine grace and forgiveness. The concluding verses of the thirty-ninth chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy are among the most touching and most glorious in the whole of the Scriptures.

The ultimate issue of this divine visitation is the regeneration of Israel **“for I have poured out my Spirit upon the House of Israel, saith the Lord God.”** (39:29)

Israel is reinstated into the directive will of God's beneficent purposes for mankind and, at last, fulfils the full original purpose of the Divine calling as the earthly channel of the blessing and government of God.

That we rightly interpret the general purport of Ezekiel's prophecy is supported from the following quotations from Jewish and general sources:

“One of the prophecies of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 38 and 39) deals with Gog, of the land of Magog, who is prince of Meshech and Tubal. He is to become a great conqueror, overpowering many nations, but will finally come to an end on the mountains of Israel (Palestine) in a great catastrophe accompanied by earthquake, pestilence, fire and mutual slaughter. This will result in the final liberation of Israel.”

I have quoted from The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia (Vol. 5, p. 10), and from the same source I give you also the following:

“When Ezekiel's prophecy was not fulfilled in his time, it became gradually assigned, with the development of a Jewish eschatology, to the end of the world.” Permit me one last quotation from Rabbi Dr. S Fisch. Here it is: “In Rabbinic literature, Gog and Magog (the latter as an individual) are frequently referred to as the leaders of a hostile army against Israel before the coming of the Messiah.”

The Encyclopaedia Britannica, in a pertinent article, says that Gog is the “name of a great anti-theocratic power destined to manifest itself in the world immediately before the final dispensation is ushered in.”

These quotations, in my judgement, epitomize with reasonable accuracy the general purport of Israel's great destiny and of Ezekiel's prophecy regarding the same and also the trend of my message thus far.

Do any enquire the nature of the major national sin to which I have referred in this message? I believe it to be none other than the national and official rejection of the Sent One, One sent from God to Israel nearly 2,000 years ago and Whose National rejection touched off the long Galut.

I have a strong personal conviction, which I invite you to share, that the prophetic scenes granted us by Ezekiel are proximately related to the Second Advent of the Messiah Who proves to be the predicted Shepherd Prince Deliverer of His people, for is He not described by Isaiah not only as a Light to lighten the Gentiles but also the Glory of His people Israel.

In my next message we shall begin our efforts to identify in their present nomenclatures those nations referred to by Ezekiel as they may possibly exist today.

Dr Lawrence Duff-Forbes

(1900-1964)

Founding Director of David House Fellowship Inc.

This article is an extract from the very popular radio series, "Treasures From Tenach", which are also transcribed. Both audio (click MP3 tab, then "017paramountnecessity.mp3", and transcriptions are available for free download at www.thevineyard.org.au