

GOOD FROM THE GHASTLY

MY FRIENDS, I have bestowed upon this particular message the strange title, "Good from the Ghastly."

In employing the word "ghastly" I have in mind that in my own lifetime total war, like a savage beast of the jungle, has twice crept from its lair and left the world with ripped flesh and horror-seared soul.

Can any good come from twins so ghastly? Can benefit emerge from war, "that mad game the world so loves to play"? (Swift)

I am of the opinion that through the overruling governance of a righteous and purposive God we shall be able to answer that question in the affirmative; but let us not stand in the immediate scene where the flash of fire, the intermingled cross-currents of hate-hurled projectiles, and the billowing black bursts of angry detonation press sinister pulsation even into the groans of the fallen, so that very chaos itself becomes an agitated and ghastly confusion, and where nothing is silent but death.

No, we must leave the close-range crash of battle and retire to the far-distant observer's box of time, insulated against the din close up, and reserved for those who will view the issues, even of wars, from the tranquil heights of calm reflection.

Let us assume this attitude and angle and, so far as Israel is concerned, we shall make the unexpected discovery that World War I prepared the Land for the People, whilst World War II prepared the People for the Land!

Let us realize that, so far as the Holy Land is concerned, God has first claim upon it. Now, this statement is neither "prettitude" nor platitude; it is a plain declaration of scripture very clearly enunciated in Ezekiel 38:14-16.

To the descendants of Abraham, restricted to the twelve tribes of Israel, the people more commonly known in these days as the Jewish people, God gave His land in unconditional and unending ownership. The nation of Israel was, as it were, a tenant in fee simple of the Eternal God.

As Mr. Garcia-Granados writes in his informative book *The Birth of Israel*:

"Few knew that Palestine had never been an Arab sovereign state; that even the period when it was part of the Arab empire was so brief as to be the duration of a lightning flash, historically. Palestine fell into the hands of Omar in the seventh century. Less than four centuries later the Seljuk Turks dismembered it, and thereafter it was conquered by numerous non-Arabic people — the Crusaders, the Kurds, the Mongols, the Mamelukes, the Tartars, the Mongols again, and, in 1516, the Ottoman Turks. It remained an Ottoman province until World War I. (*The Birth of Israel*, by Jorge Garcia-Granados, p.63)

My friends, the quotation I have just completed is both valuable and informative.

Now let me pinpoint your attention upon a strikingly interesting instance of chronological repetition in history, regarding which the prophetic principle known as the Canon of Double Sense, with which we became acquainted in our last message, would be highly appropriate.

As you know, the Temple in Jerusalem was ever regarded as the observable outward monument of the fact of God's Presence in the midst of His People Israel.

It has been declared that no building has excited so much attention in the ancient world as Solomon's Temple which he completed about the year 1012 before the Common Era.

This magnificent and elaborate structure was destroyed by the Babylonian power under Nebuchadnezzar in the year 587 before the Common Era.

The Temple was rebuilt by the returning exiles from Babylon under Zerubbabel in the year 520 before the Common Era but on a less grandiose scale until, 500 years later, Herod reconstructed in the year 20 before the Common Era.

It was this Second reconstructed Temple which was destroyed by the Roman power under Titus in the year 70 of the Common Era.

Now, note this arresting feature. This will interest you, I am sure. It was on the 9th day of the Jewish month known as Av that the Temple, built by Solomon, was completely destroyed by the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar.

It was also on the 9th day of the Jewish month known as Av, that the Temple, reconstructed by Herod, was destroyed by the Roman Titus in 70 of the Common Era.

What are we to say to the interesting fact, so little known, that it was also on the 9th day of the Jewish month known as Av in the year 1914, that England and Germany became locked in World War I, an event which proved to be the first battering ram blow upon the closed doors of Palestine — as it was then known — doors rusted fast by centuries of closure against the people of Israel, but then soon to burst open and admit the weary exiles of the long Galut and thus pave the way for the present Restoration.

From the detached vantage point of our observation box in the theatre of time, let us see how World War I prepared the Land for the People, the people to whom God has given it.

On November 5, 1914, the Ottoman Empire, of which Palestine was a part, declared war on the Allies.

On November 2, 1917, the famous Balfour Declaration was promulgated viewing with favour the establishment of Palestine as a national home for the Jewish people. It is worthy of our note that the British statesmen principally associated with this historic document were Mr. Balfour and Mr. Lloyd-George, both of whom were Bible-believing and God-fearing men.

Wherever these twin qualities are found there is no hesitation in recognizing the age-long Divinely-bestowed relationship between the people of Israel and the Land of Israel; it is abundantly true that the Bible is Israel's Mandate, and happy the nation and individual that acknowledges it.

It is, therefore, significant that on December 11, 1917 General Allenby entered Jerusalem at the head of a victorious Allied army which included, by the way, 8,000 Jewish legionnaires.

Thus, my friends, the 4th of August in the year 1914 of the Gregorian calendar — significantly, as I have already indicated, Tisha B'Av, in the Jewish calendar — witnessed the unsheathing of a sword which cut through the barriers of obstruction to Eretz Yisrael and presented the prospect of the Land to the People.

So far so good; but what of the people? Were they pleased with the prospect? Were they preparing to clasp in fond embrace the land thus beckoning their affectionate caress?

Yes, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel, both seared and scarred with the agonies of two thousand years of separation, now clasped each other in ardent reunion.

The Land, discarding her gaunt and sombre garments of neglect, soon appeared in vestments of green and golden verdure; but the unexpected happened.

The Balfour Declaration had become an instrument of international law at San Remo, on April 25, 1920, when the Allies in adopting it assigned the Mandate to Britain; but, on May 17, 1939, the Neville Chamberlain Government issued a White Paper — white in name only, by the way — restricting Jewish land purchases and limiting Jewish immigration to 75,000 over a five year period after which Jews could migrate to Palestine only upon Arab acquiescence.

Not only the Jewish people, but other non-Jewish peoples maintained that this White Paper was contrary to the intent of the Mandate. It was therefore referred to the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations who declared against the White Paper and upheld the Jewish contention.

About this time a sinister son of Satan was rising on the horizon in blood-red portent. Adolph Hitler advented with a boast that the world-dominion he would establish would last a thousand years. Vain boast!

He planned to glue his empire together with the blood of Israel, but he failed to reckon with the God of Israel, and with the Divine assurance that whosoever raised a hand against God's Covenant people, the Jewish people, would be committing spiritual and national suicide.

History shows that God keeps His pledges and although the demon-driven Hitler plunged the globe into a blood-bath of World War II, it cannot be denied that, as never before, the Jewish people were prepared for the Land.

Thus, when the State of Israel was declared and reborn on May 14, 1948, in the absolute ultimate, it was good from the ghastly; the hate-soaked Hitler was the unwilling instrument of its birth, through the over-ruling governance of a God who faileth not His people Israel.

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(1900-1964)

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This article is an extract from the very popular radio series, "Treasures From Tenach", which are also transcribed. Both audio (click MP3 tab, then "007goodghastly.mp3", and transcriptions are available for free download at www.thevineyard.org.au