

## THE VALLEY OF DEAD HOPE

MY DEAR FRIENDS, in the preceding seven messages of this series we have been arming ourselves with preparatory knowledge and information; this has been wise, for we should now be poised effectively to enter into our exploration of the fascinating prophecies of יחזקאל, Ezekiel, which we think to be pertinent to our new born מדינת ישראל, State of Israel.

Ezekiel's prophetic ministry extended over a period of twenty-two years but two distinct emphases are clearly detectable; during the first period, from the year 592 to 586 B.C.E., repentance and judgement were his major themes and, as you know, he foretold the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, which event took place in the year 586 B.C.E.

From thence onward, however, Ezekiel's Divinely-inspired prophecies were upon the fascinating topics of the Final Restoration and ultimate Regeneration of Israel and the future Messianic Kingdom. His enunciations on these grand subjects extended over a period of some sixteen years, from 586 to 570 before the Common Era.

Now, I mention this as being indicative of the fact that, although they are startling and highly dramatic predictions, they are not the product of sudden human fantasy expressed in some spasmodic moment.

You will find these spectacular prophecies enclosed within the sixteen chapters from chapter 33 through chapter 48 in the book bearing the prophet's name.

Since it is not my immediate intention to make a detailed exposition of these sixteen chapters, but rather to rivet the eyes of your understanding upon our precious little reborn nation of Israel in its possible relation to those chapters, I will just give you a suggestive outline and then press onwards into our main theme.

I think you will discover that the sixteen chapters of Ezekiel fall naturally into two sections, which I have designated as follows —

First: The Messianic Kingdom Eminent — chapters 33 through 39. Second: The Messianic Kingdom Incorporated — chapters 40 through 48.

But as we shall be more particularly occupied with the first section at this juncture, let me further subdivide it for you.

- • The Watchman and the Shepherds - chapters 33 through 34.
- • The Restoration of Israel - chapters 35 through 37.

- • The Gagging of Gog – chapters 38 through 39.5

And now, my friends, I want you to come with me and view the birthplace of a song, the cradle of a carol, where the curtain rose on the embryo of an anthem.

The Spirit of God, רוח השם, blessed be He, has blazed the trail into the very strange domain into which I am now about to conduct you, because by His Divine power He projected His prophet Ezekiel to the very spot where we are now to tread.

Let us follow the blaze of prophetic light which, like the incandescent trail of some great comet, streaks the surrounding darkness with its illuminating qualities.

We find ourselves in a very strange and eerie locality.

The bleached, Golgothic hills surrounding us in imprisoning finality seem like the morbid vestments of a funeral shroud enfolding us in a valley from which all hope has been utterly drained.

Half-stifled and oppressed, we turn our gaze from the enshrouding gloom of the hills to survey the valley of depression in which we stand.

Suddenly, with a sense of shock, we stare into the socket-less eyes and grinning jowl of a human skull, then another, and another until, with mounting agitation, we find ourselves to be centred in a valley cemetery, so inhospitable that earth's bosom has refused its warmth and left the surface strewn with bleached and dismal bones, unco ned and unkind. Bones, dry bones everywhere.

Tense and awestruck, we stand riveted in this valley of dry bones, feeling already the depressing hopelessness of the whole scene.

The questioning within us dare not emerge into articulation, although we long for enlightenment; yet, as if in gracious answer to our unspoken query, we hear the Divine Voice speaking to Ezekiel:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בֶּן־אָדָם הָעֵצְמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה כָּל־בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה הֵנָּה אֲמַרִים יִבְשׁוּ עֵצְמוֹתֵינוּ וְאִבְדָּה תְּקוּתָנוּ נִגְזַרְנוּ לָנוּ

**“ . . . Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost . . . ”** (Ezekiel 37:11)

Yes, my friends, predictive prophecy has furnished the sad scene of Israel's national expulsion with the gloomy garniture of the Diaspora, the scattering, the גלות; Israel as a national entity is seen dispersed among the nations of the world, and the whole scene is depicted as a valley of dry bones, and these dry bones are the whole house of Israel.

The chill and comfortless winds moan down the cheerless valley pressing through the scattered bones and sightless eye sockets with dismal-sounding chorus of despair:

**“Our hope is lost, our hope is lost.”**

Again, however, there comes the note of interrogation, and this time it is the Divine voice articulate in propounding a staggering question: **“Son of man, can these bones live?”** Live! These bones live! How wise is Ezekiel’s answer: **“O Lord God, You know.”** (Ezekiel 37:3)

One of our rabbis correctly concludes: “Israel’s restoration could not be achieved by human power, but only by the spirit of God.”

The bones may cry out “Our hope is lost,” but the Eternal God, faithful to His promises as embedded in that wonderful thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel, made it gloriously possible for Naphtali Hertz Imber to write the Jewish National Anthem entitled, poetically enough, התקווה, “THE HOPE” in which the dismal dirge of the hopeless bones is put into a glad reverse:

עוד לא עברה תקותנו

**“Our hope is NOT lost.”**

O my beloved friend of Israel, may the glow of that inextinguishable God-bestowed hope be yours as it is mine; believe me, I am so sincere when I assure you that the only hope that will blossom beautifully and bear the choicest fruit is that hope which is rooted deep, deep into the Divine promises of the Messianic redemption and spiritual regeneration of Israel.

With all my heart, I hope these messages are proving and encouragement and a blessing to you. You will join me again in my next message, won’t you? For we have other domains to explore together.

**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 “008valleydeadhope.mp3”, and transcriptions are available for free download at [www.thevineyard.org.au](http://www.thevineyard.org.au)