

The Jews - history's evidence that God means what He says

Did you know that the Bible foretells the whole history of the Jews? Would you be surprised to learn that events prophesied well over 3,000 years ago are coming to pass today?

You may have heard the idea that the Jews are God's Chosen People. God chose the Jews, in the Old Testament, as the people to whom and through whom he would reveal Himself:

"For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth."

Deuteronomy 14, verse 2

Evidence— the basis for belief

Modern science accepts or rejects an idea based on the body of evidence that is produced to support it.

Take, for example, the phenomenon of black holes. Believed to be super-compressed matter left by the collapse of worn-out stars, they are thought to exert such strong gravitational pull that anything within several light-years is sucked inside— even light itself. One black hole the size of a baseball could contain several times that mass of our sun!

No one has ever seen a black hole, yet many scientists believe they exist. This belief is based on evidence of some tremendous force working on other bodies in their parts of space. Scientists know what to look for, and they find evidence convincing enough to call "proof".

No one has ever seen God. Yet though he is invisible, He too has left solid evidence of His existence, His power, and His involvement with humanity.

God is not limited by time as we are. Since He knows the course of human history before it happens, His word contains prophecies which very specifically speak of events before they take place. Fulfilled prophecy is one kind of evidence the creator provides to prove He is a living, all-knowing and infinite God.

Scientists are alerted to the possible existence of a black hole when stars and light show unexpected behavior which cannot be explained by the usual theories. By the same token, God's prophecies concerning the Jews have not been what you would expect

in the "normal" course of events.

A before-the-fact account of Jewish history

Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy around 1400 B.C., a time just before the ancient Jews settled in the land of Israel. The three following prophecies dealing with the then-future history of the Jewish people demonstrate a divine foreknowledge of events.

As you read each Bible passage given below, ask yourself, "Are these prophecies vague and ambiguous, or are they clear and precise?"

1. The Jews would be forced out of their land and scattered throughout the world.

"And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other..."

Deuteronomy 28, verse 64

2. They would be hated and persecuted.

"And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee."

Deuteronomy 28, verse 37

(Also see verses 65 to 67)

3. They would never die out as a people, but would finally return to their land.

"...then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will gather

thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee.

And the Lord the God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers."

Deuteronomy 30, verses 3 and 5

These prophecies could only apply to the Jews. What other ancient people has survived scattering and persecution and lived to re-establish itself again in a homeland it was driven out of almost 2,000 years earlier?

A Choice and its consequences

The above prophecies were spoken by God through Moses, when God's miraculous delivery of Israel from slavery in Egypt and His care for them in the wilderness were still fresh in their memory. He had chosen them on no particular merit of their own. The He offered them a clear choice: obey His just commandments and enjoy His blessings of peace and plenty, or disobey and suffer the consequences.

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live..."

Deuteronomy 30, verse 19

Although there were always a few righteous individuals, the Jews as a nation cast their lot for disobedience.

Less than a century later, they were worshipping idols of wood and

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stone, adopting the pagan practices of the peoples around them, in direct contradiction to the commands of the God who had saved them from slavery in Egypt. With very few periods of repentance and the repeated warnings of God's prophets, Israel continued to go its own way rather than God's, until that way led to its end as a nation in its own land.

It was the iron fist of the Roman Empire which put an end to the Jewish nation forever. The Romans, whose symbol was the eagle, are described in this prophecy given over 1,000 years before the founding of Rome:

"The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young:

And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee."

Deuteronomy 28, verses 49-51

Between 66 AD and 135 AD, the Jews led three fierce revolts against Roman rule. Each time they were defeated. Finally, by 135 AD, the Romans had had enough. Determined to stop these insurrections once and for all, they utterly destroyed Jerusalem and ploughed up its site. Then they erased its name from their maps and sent all the inhabitants of Judea (the main part of the land of Israel) into exile.

And so, the entire land of Israel was virtually emptied of Jews. The banished people went literally from one end of the earth to the other", some finally ending up as far away as India and China in what is now called the Diaspora, which means "scattering".

"And the Lord shall scatter thee among all the people, from the one end

of the earth even unto the other..."
Deuteronomy 28, verse 64

Centuries of Suffering and Hate

In the lands of their dispersion, many Jews still longed for the lovely, fruitful land of "milk and honey" they had left behind. But, bereft of its caretakers, the land of Israel became a desolate waste.

"And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste."

Leviticus 26, verses 32 and 33

With no one to tend it, the fertile fields became wilderness, left unimproved or even further destroyed by successive conquerors. It seemed highly unlikely that any people, especially as urban a people as the Jews of Europe were to become, would even want to return to such a wilderness. And so the Holy Land lay waste as long as its people remained away.

The centuries of the Diaspora were as cruel to the people of Israel as they were to the land.

"And among those nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind."

Deuteronomy 28, verse 65

Driven by decree or oppression from one country, a community of Jews would make a home in another, only to be persecuted and driven on again, often in fear for their lives. Their entire history in Europe was full of wandering and expulsions.

Wherever Jews have lived, they have been the scapegoats for all kinds of ills, real and imagined. War and economic crisis, the plague, even imaginary crimes such as the ritual murder of Christian children has been

blamed on them. Even today, "Jew" is a "byword" used to denote a money-grabbing person.

"And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee."

Deuteronomy 28, verse 37

Hatred and fear of the Jews is by no means a thing of the past. Indeed, the present century saw anti-Semitism reach a terrible climax: Adolph Hitler's Final Solution, aimed at the extermination of the entire Jewish race. The nations were slow to believe the horrors being reported of the death camps and then slow to react. For a while it appeared possible the European Jews could be ended as a people...

The most improbable prophecy fulfilled

But God has centuries earlier promised otherwise.

"For I am with them, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished."

Jeremiah 30, verse 11

Despite centuries of dispersion, every kind of physical and moral persecution, even attempts at assimilation into other cultures, and finally a frighteningly close brush with extinction, the Jews remain as a race, as a people, and as a nation. Compare the remarks of noted historian Arnold Toynbee with Jeremiah 30, verse 11, above:

"As for long life, the Jews live on—the same peculiar people today, long ages after the Phoenicians and Philistines have lost their identity. Their ancient Syriac neighbors have gone into the melting pot and been reminted, with new images and superscriptions, while Israel has proved impervious to this alchemy performed

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by History in the crucible of universal states and universal churches and wanderings of nations—to which we gentiles, all in turn succumb...

Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Volume I (New York: Dell, 1969), p.119

Their survival alone would be wonder enough, but the Bible does not leave it at that. God's intent was to demonstrate His power and mercy by bringing the Jews, still His people, back to their homeland and establishing them there forever.

"...then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee."

Deuteronomy 30, verse 3

In 1948, the State of Israel was officially granted recognition, although Jewish colonization of Palestine had begun some 50 years earlier. The tide of the Diaspora turned and the scattered people now flowed steadily back. Under their hands the wilderness began to bloom.

Today, the world is reminded daily of the fact of Israel's restoration. Although the normal course of events would have seen the Jews wiped out as a people, God has kept the Jews alive through the centuries of peril and returned them safely to their homeland. The unlikely path that the Jews have traced through their history is compelling evidence of a divine hand working with them. Although Himself unseen, God has made His presence known by the miraculous preservation and regathering of a very visible people.

"Many peoples have preserved their nationality on their own soil, even under foreign conquest. But never before had any people been able to maintain its identity and spiritual distinctiveness in exile for thousands of years with sufficient vitality to ensure an ultimate rebirth. The singularity of Judaism lay in this extraordi-

nary power to flourish in Diaspora."

Abba Eban, *My People: The Story of the Jews* (New York: Ehrman House, 1968), p. 61

Evidence that God keeps His promises

Prophecies recorded thousands of years ago predicted in astonishing detail the unparalleled history of the Jews.

It would have been very simple for history to prove the Bible wrong. All that needed to happen was for the Jews to disappear just like other ancient peoples.

But they didn't, because God had promised to preserve them.

Through the Jews, God gives evidence to the whole world that He means what he says. Moreover, He has not restricted His dealings to the Jews, but offers His promises to believers of all nationalities.

Will you choose to examine the evidence and believe?

Recap

The scattering, sufferings and restoration of the Jewish people were predicted in detail by the prophets of the Bible.

The survival of the Jews as a people is proof that God keeps His

Recommended Bible Readings

You will find prophecies about the Jews in: Deuteronomy 28 and 30, Leviticus 26, Jeremiah 30 to 33, and Ezekiel 37.