

Although few Orthodox thinkers would subscribe to the dogmatic fundamentalist approach of the author, the Editors felt that his views, especially in the light of his personal background, would be of considerable interest to our readers. Until his recent Aliyah to Israel, where he presently serves as senior lecturer in the Department of Physics of the University of the Negev in Beer Sheva, Dr. Aranoff was Assistant Professor of Physics at Rutgers University and served as a consultant on strategic issues with the Hudson Institute.

THE UNFOLDING OF BIBLICAL PROPHECIES

INTRODUCTION

Many of the prophecies of the Bible refer uniquely and unambiguously to our times. The creation of the modern State of Israel coupled with the influx of two and a half million Jews reveal the accuracy of the prophecies of Ezekiel almost 2500 years ago. It is the author's contention that similar prophecies voiced — Israel will never be destroyed and that the days of terror which the prophets state will herald the coming of the Messiah — refer to our day and age.

I

No prophecy could be more momentous than that which describes the ingathering of the exiles. The present partial ingathering is predicted here,¹ and the promise is given that this will continue unabated until the total ingathering is accomplished. Historically Israel blossomed only when Jews lived there. When the Jews were exiled from the land, it became a desert. God speaks to the land saying that the land should bring forth its fruit, for the Jewish people are coming back soon and will have to live off the produce of the land. *This has indeed been the case.* The pioneers came to Israel, tilled the soil and made the desert

bloom again, enabling Israel to absorb large numbers of Jews who immigrated there after World War II. Its population has increased from one-half million in 1948 to over two and one-half million today.

Abarbanel² says: "When they were driven from the land, the produce was damaged. When they will return, the produce will return to its blessing." I am surprised that this fact does not make an adequate impression on religious leaders. The Sages of the Talmud recognized this. In the daily *Amidah* we pray: "Sound the great Shofar . . . and gather us from the four corners of the earth." This prayer is preceded by "Bless . . . this year . . . and all types of produce for the best." The implication is that the ingathering of the exiles is to be preceded by the development of the land. This coincides with the modern history of Israel.

"And I will multiply upon you people, the entire house of Israel, and cities will be resettled and the ruins rebuilt."³ The words of the prophecy are being fulfilled literally! The present ingathering of exiles will continue until all Jews live in Israel; there will be no need for a Jewish community in Exile.

We are living in a unique age. For the first time in 2500 years we can read this prophecy and say that it refers to us. Never before in history was this possible. A proper appreciation of this would make us want to leave whatever land we find ourselves in and settle in Israel.

Today, we can be certain that the present state of Israel will exist forever. It is written:

Will I bring a woman to labor and not cause her to give birth?⁴

Rashi interprets this phrase:

Will I start something and not complete it?

Isaiah is saying that it is inconceivable for God to start the miracles of Redemption and then to stop before it is complete. It is inconceivable for all the miracles, such as the establishment of the State of Israel, the Six-Day War, the conquering of Jerusalem, the extremely rapid growth of the population, will be fol-

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lowed by exile. We can only expect greater and greater miracles to be followed by the completion of the Redemption.

Ezekiel's prophecy answers many questions raised by those who feel that the present times are not related to the time of Redemption, for the leaders of Israel are not religious. But Ezekiel states explicitly that the ingathering takes place

Not for your sake . . . but for My Holy Name which you have profaned in the nations you went to (36:22).

Israel was not established because the Jews were religious or because the leaders were religious and deserved it. It was established because the Divine Name was profaned (36:20) "when people say of them 'This is the nation of God and they left His land?' " Abarbanel interprets this to mean that: Not that they themselves desecrated the Name, but because of their exile and their troubles, being that they are the nation of God, His Name is desecrated among the nations. The biggest desecration of the Name in history was the Holocaust, when six millions Jews were killed while the whole world stood silent. Many people stopped believing in God. How could God destroy so many of His chosen people? Therefore verse 23 states:

And I will sanctify my Name . . .

In order to reestablish belief in God, it was necessary to re-establish Israel. Israel was reborn virtually immediately after the war. The beginning of the present return of the Jews to their homeland began as a result of the enormous sufferings of our people and is in precise agreement with the prophecy of Ezekiel:

And I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the lands and bring you to your land.⁵

The process has begun, and will continue until all Jews live in Israel. We can have no doubt that this will happen, for these are the words of God. Just as fifty years ago people had faith that a flourishing Jewish state would develop, we too require faith that soon all Jews will live in Israel. Verse 24 continues:

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“And I will bring you to your land.” Our land is Israel.

We do not have to fear that Israel will be destroyed, in accordance with the Torah, which states that if the Jews are wicked the land will spit them out. People will change and have more positive attitudes toward the Torah. The process has already begun in Israel. After the Six-Day War, many soldiers put on *tefillin* for the first time. Today, roughly 36 percent of the Israeli Jews are religious, as opposed to 2 percent in America, and 10 percent in New York City.⁶

And I will call upon the grain and multiply it and I will not give you any more hunger (v. 29).

The economy of Israel will only increase. There may be fluctuations, but the trend will be only upwards. Israel will become self-sufficient. Those who go to Israel are guaranteed God’s blessings!

When the Western Wall was conquered, Jews danced around it, and cried for joy. Why did they cry? Was it for the glorious past the Wall represented? No — they cried for the glorious future ahead. They cried for the future of unlimited possibilities and opportunities ahead, backed by Divine promises and blessings, in the coming age of man’s adulthood. We should be thankful we live in such a time, and show our appreciation by actually participating in rebuilding Israel.

And I will resettle the cities and the ruins⁷ will be rebuilt.

This is taking place. They are rebuilding the ancient ruins. And it is further written:⁸

And they will say this desolate land became like the Garden of Eden.

I do not know of one single person who visited Israel who did not say it is like a Garden of Eden. The country is one of the most beautiful in the world. The air is fresh and unpolluted. There are plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables most of the year around. The climate is ideal — neither too hot nor too cold. There are many variations of climate to suit different personal

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inclinations. Those who like a cooler climate can live in Jerusalem; those who like a warmer climate can live in Tel Aviv.

The prophecy concludes with: "One more thing I will be asked to do for the House of Israel. I will multiply them like sheep — people." One big problem in Israel is the very large Arab population. People are worried that Israel may turn into a Levantine state that there is talk about returning Judea and Samaria. The answer is that God will multiply the Jews to the extent that we do not have to be concerned about returning land to the Arab countries.

II

The Prophets speak of a holocaust in which most of the world will be destroyed. Israel, however, will be safe from all dangers. Those who live in Israel will not be hurt.

It is written in Daniel 12:1:

And there will be a time of trouble the like of which has never been from the time you became a nation until that time.

Before the coming of the Messiah there will be a time of terrible trouble for the world. According to our Sages, the pains of the coming of the Messiah will be worse than the pains of exile. We interpret this to mean that the concept of the coming of the Messiah does not mean that the Messiah comes, blows his shofar, and peacefully calls all the Jews to Israel. This false concept has led to many false messiahs during the Middle Ages. Since the Messiah has not yet come, we can anticipate events worse than World War II. A nuclear war is quite possible within this decade. And it is not hard to imagine that the prophecy in Daniel—of a time of trouble worse than anything before—refers to a nuclear war.

A nuclear war is something only our present generation can understand. The concept of nuclear war was meaningless a few decades ago. Chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel refers to the wars of Gog and Magog. The text describes a war in which a large group of nations invade Israel.

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The prophecy begins by mentioning the names of countries that will attack Israel. These are the names of nations found in Gen. 10. The meaning is that a large collection of nations will band together and attack Israel. In verse 6 it is stated: "to the north." A large group of nations to the north of Israel which can attack Israel is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which consists of many nations combined together. When will this terrible war take place? The answer is found in verse 5: "At the latter years you will come to a land returned from the sword." Indeed, Jews have escaped with their lives to Israel after World Wars I and II. The war of Gog and Magog will take place during the lifetimes of the people alive during World War I, within the very near future. If it would take place during their children's lifetimes, then the phrase "returned from the sword" would not be applicable. The verse continues: "They were gathered from many peoples to the mountains of Israel which have always been ruins, and were taken out from the nations." This is a very apt description of Israel today. The verse concludes: "And they dwell safely." Today people feel very safe in Israel. The war of Gog and Magog could not have referred to World War II, as it will happen only after Israel is settled and secure.

It may be possible, with a forced interpretation, to say that the war of Gog and Magog refers to World War II. Although this interpretation does not fit in precisely with the words, as mentioned at the end of the last paragraph, it does agree with the spirit of the prophecy. In verse 9 it is stated:

You will rise up like a darkness [Hebrew: *shoah*].

Shoah is the same word as the modern Hebrew word for the Nazi Holocaust. Our Sages say (see Malbim, verse 2) that the war of Gog and Magog consists of three battles — three terrible earthshaking wars involving the destruction of large segments of Jewry, three wars, involving many nations of the world. Two such wars have already occurred — World Wars I and II. World

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War III will be far more disastrous than World War II. World War III will be a nuclear holocaust. The certainty of a nuclear war in the near future should be clear from these general arguments. A careful analysis of various prophecies throughout the *Tenach* will rigorously verify this conclusion. Let us proceed with the analysis.

And it will be on that day you will think evil thoughts. (v. 10).

Malbim:

You will think thoughts you have not thought previously.

Indeed, an invasion of Israel is not part of current Russian strategy.

And you will say "I will go up against a defenseless country" (v. 11).

Israel has no defenses against Soviet weapons. The other sentences can be interpreted in a similar vein.

Thus sayeth God, are you that which I have spoken in earlier days by means of My Servants the Prophets of Israel? (v. 17)

Then will people realize the truth. It will be too late for those outside Israel.

The fish of the sea, the birds of the skies, . . . and all people on the ground will tremble before Me, and the mountains will be demolished . . . and every wall will fall to the ground (20).

Nuclear bombs can demolish mountains. The blast effects knock down walls. "And I will judge him with plagues and blood, (22)," could refer to radiation poisoning and death.

Pouring rain . . . fire and sulfur I will rain on him.

"Pouring rain" may refer to the missiles which pour like rain from the sky. The U.S. and Soviet Union each have over one

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thousand land-based missiles each, each capable of traveling thousands of miles and landing with high accuracy on their targets, each capable of destroying one or more large cities. In addition, each has scores of submarines, each of which is capable of launching many missiles. There are also hundreds of planes capable of carrying nuclear bombs great distances. Each missile may carry several warheads (MIRV). Pouring rain may refer to radioactive fallout which comes down from the atmosphere, causing suffering and death.

And it will be in that day there will be no light, but brightness and darkness (Zechariah 14:6).

The light from a nuclear bomb is so much brighter than ordinary light that it is as if the ordinary daylight is not present. A nuclear explosion is so bright that blindness — darkness — follows.

And it will be one day known to God (verse 7).

A nuclear war, according to most authorities, will last only a few hours. The verse continues: “neither day nor night.” The light will be so bright that it will overwhelm ordinary night. The verse concludes:

The [ordinary] light will be at evening time.

The war will be over in the evening. After this terrible war lasting only a day.

And God will be King over the entire earth (v. 9).

The Prophets speak quite clearly about the terrible disasters in the time preceding the coming of the Messiah.

And it will be in the entire earth, speaks the Lord, two thirds will be cut off and die, and one third will remain (Zechariah 13:8).

How will it happen? Now, for the first time in history, we know — by nuclear war! The survivors will undergo great suffering,

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for radioactivity, disease, and anarchy will be rampant.

And the house of Israel will know that I am God from that day on.⁹

After a nuclear war, people will recognize God, for if not then, never. World War III will be the war that will end all wars. People felt that way about World War I. Their mistake was assuming that it was over when the armistice was signed. It was merely the end of one battle of the war of Gog and Mogog.

The dark clouds of World War III are looming on the horizon. In a sense we are like the people of ancient Pompeii. They heard the ground rumble, but stayed put. Most Americans do not discuss nuclear war, for one does not know what he can do about it. People argued whether civil defense or missile defense (ABM) will help or hinder. Some people are pinning their hopes on the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT). However, these talks may take years, and a war may break out sooner. In addition, it is unlikely that these talks will lead to any significant reduction in the huge nuclear armaments both sides have. Most people decide to try to live with the problem, as they have no solution. However, for the Jew there is a solution. He can go to Israel and escape all danger. Those Jews who do not go to Israel are as foolish as the people of Pompeii who did not leave the region even after they heard the rumblings.

Currently, there is little danger of a nuclear war, as a rough parity exists between the U.S. and Soviet Union. However, they are building up at a rapid pace. The Soviets are deploying their SS-9 missiles at a rapid pace. These missiles are capable of knocking out hardened U.S. Minuteman sites. In addition, they are constructing Polaris-type submarines at a rate of seven a year. We have 1054 land based missiles (ICBM's), and they have 1500. It took us three years to build our ICBM's. We are not building any new offensive weapons — merely maintaining and improving the present systems. In a few years from now the danger of a nuclear war may become very great. We should not wait until the last minute, for it may be too late. Many tried to leave Germany when things became very bad, but it was too late. The people of Pompeii decided to wait until the rumblings

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became very bad.

In Mt. Zion and Jerusalem [i.e., in all of Israel] there will be refuge, as God has said, and for the remnants for whom God calls.¹⁰

Malbim:

In Israel everyone will be saved. Outside of Israel only some will be saved.

This is the main point of the paper. We have to go to Israel to be safe from a nuclear attack. The message is clear: There will be a nuclear war in the near future, and we have to go to Israel for salvation.

Why do the Prophets speak about such terrible punishments — death in nuclear war — for Jews who live outside Israel, while blessings are promised for Jews living in Israel? The answer lies in the Talmudic sayings on the *mitzvah* of living in Israel.

According to the Ramban,¹¹ living in Israel is one of the 613 commandments God gave Moses. To him, one who does not go to live in Israel has the sin of nullifying the positive commandment of living in Israel, just as a person who does not put on *Tefillin* in the morning or raise a family nullifies those commandments. Rambam, on the other hand, does not consider living in Israel as one of the 613 commandments; however, he explicitly states¹² that one is obligated to live only in Israel. The disagreement between Rambam and Ramban is on a technical question; both agree that it is a religious obligation to live in Israel and sinful to settle elsewhere.

The *mitzvah* of living in Israel is very heavily stressed in *Ketuvot* 110b.

One who lives in Israel is like one who has a God, and one who lives outside Israel is like one without God.

Jewish life without Israel is meaningless. When the Jews were in the ghettos, and could not get out, they had a rich spiritual existence. Now most Jews are free. If these free Jews do not go to Israel, the observance of Torah rituals becomes meaningless.

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Many brilliant products of years of yeshiva learning give up the Torah because they find it meaningless. A significant reason for this is because sufficient emphasis in the *yeshivot* is not given to the *mitzvah* of living in *Eretz Yisrael*.

At the end of *Ketuvot* we read the following:

One who walks a few feet on Israeli soil is guaranteed a place in Heaven and if one goes to Israel, all his sins will be forgiven.

The implications of these statements are profound for our times.

Some people try to justify their remaining in America because of the many great *yeshivot*. Today this is not true. In Israel, Torah is state supported. Local rabbis receive their salaries from the state, and so they do not have to bow to local pressures compromising the Torah, as is the case in America. (Of course, there are difficulties, but if more religious Jews would live in Israel, they would help alleviate the difficulties.) Torah research is state supported in Israel, making possible concerted long range group efforts necessary to reach very high, noble goals.

The present generation is the generation in which the Messiah, the son of David, will come. The Talmud states:¹⁴

As soon as Jerusalem is built David will come.

Israel now includes the old city of Jerusalem. It is inconceivable that God should allow the situation to be delayed much longer. We can expect the Messiah shortly.

Around the turn of the century the survival of the Russian Jews was threatened, and so millions of Russian Jews came to America. This was possible only because large-scale organization assumed the responsibility. Once more we are faced with a similar situation. It is necessary to establish large-scale machinery for comparable purposes. While the Jewish Agency has done a marvelous job evacuating whole Jewish communities from threatened countries, such as from Yemen (Operation Magic Carpet), the rescue of 250,000 Iraqi Jews, and the masses from North Africa, as regards Western Jewry, there prevails the unfortunate attitude of a select and individual *Aliyah* which leaves out the masses.

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This is our choice. If we stay here in exile, we face death by nuclear war. The survivors will face accursed existence. If we go to Israel we will find life — no more destruction — only Divine blessings.

In the High Holy Days, when we stand in judgment before God for life or death, we say in the *Amidah*:

Now, Lord our God, put your fear on all your creations.

Indeed, after a nuclear war great fear will exist for everyone. However, the prayer continues:

. . . joy to Your land and gladness to Your City . . .

In Israel we will find only happiness and rejoicing. If we claim that we love God we should therefore want to actively participate in this historical process — to go to Israel and encourage and help as many others as possible.

NOTES

1. Chapter 36.
2. אברבנאל, משמיע ישועה תקך. נמצא בסוף נביאים וכתובים. דפוס אלישע, תל אביב תש"ך.
3. Ezekiel 36:10.
4. Isaiah 66:9.
5. Ezekiel 36:24.
6. "The New York Times," Dec. 7, 1969, p. 66.
7. Ezekiel 36:28.
8. *Ibid.*, 36:32.
9. Ezekiel 37:22.
10. Joel 3:5.
11. רמב"ן, ספר המצות, מצות ששכח הרב, מצות עשה ד.
12. Rambam, *Yad Chazaka*, Kings, 5:12.
13. *Megilat* 17b.