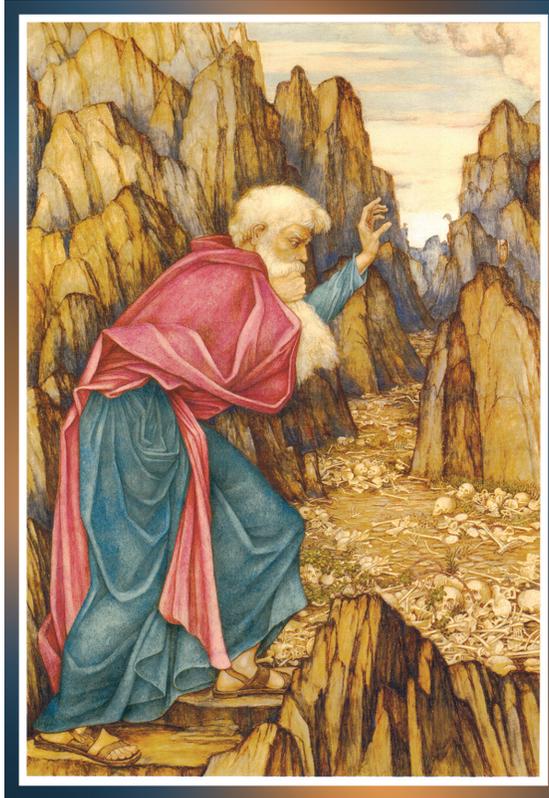


EZEKIEL'S VISION: THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

"Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live." — Ezekiel 37:5

As Jesus stood before Pilate, the Jewish multitude, incited by the Priests and Pharisees, exclaimed, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." (Matthew 27:25) Just days before, Jesus had expressed his sorrow at this expectation: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets... Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Matthew 23:37, 38



and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God..." Ezekiel 36:19-29

Ezekiel's Vision

This sure word of the Lord given to Ezekiel is followed in the next chapter by the vision given him of the valley of dry bones. Ezekiel 37:1-14 states: "The hand of the LORD... set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones... and, lo, they were very dry. And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? ...I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. ...as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin

Did this prophecy mean the end of all favor to the nation of Israel? It is important not to make that assumption! The prophecies of both the Old and the New Testaments indicate clearly that God knew quite well that Israel would reject His beloved Son. God declared through His prophets that there would be a time of punishment for their self-proclaimed curse: but that, for the sake of their fathers, He would restore them to favor once again: "...this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people... for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34) Indeed, this, and every prophecy which points to a time of punishment, provides a reassurance that Israel's chastening will be limited and that blessings will follow. Isaiah states it most emphatically: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins." Isaiah 40:1, 2

covered them above: but there was no breath in them... Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live... and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army... these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts... Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD..."

God's purpose in bringing the Jews back into His grace is to illustrate through them His great mercy and power. "And I scattered them among the heathen... But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen... I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake... And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen... and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD... when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean... A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh,

At the time of Ezekiel's vision, Israel had been taken captive for seventy years by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. These dry bones represented the whole house of Israel. They did not represent merely the two tribes which went last into captivity, nor merely the ten tribes which went earlier, but the whole house of Israel — the twelve tribes. They were no longer to be considered as two distinct nations, as they had considered themselves for the preceding four hundred years. They were to understand that in divine providence they were henceforth a reunited nation, and the reunion is pictured in this same chapter by the miraculous uniting of two sticks into one in the hand of the prophet. (Verses 15-22) Thus, there are not "ten lost tribes," as some have concluded, for this regathering has brought all together as one nation — Israel.

At the end of seventy years, Babylon was taken captive by the Persian Prince Cyrus. Cyrus gave to this now united people his decree to return to their land and rebuild their nation again. Those Jews who returned, though chiefly of the tribe of Judah, represented all of the various tribes who had faith in God's promises and who desired to return to their homeland as one nation.

The Grand Prophetic Fulfillment of Ezekiel's Vision

Even though Israel was regathered from ancient Babylon in B.C. 536, the *grand prophetic fulfillment* of Ezekiel's vision was yet far in the future. Since the nation of Israel was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, and the Jews were then scattered throughout *all* nations, the grand fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy would have to be *future* from that time. As Jesus declared, their national hopes would be *desolate*, and, as Ezekiel prophesied of his people, "*Our strength is dried, and our hope is lost, we are cut off from our parts.*" Ezekiel 37:11

Israel experienced this desolation from the time of Jesus' prophecy, but, let us not forget that God also promised Ezekiel that Israel's hope of becoming a mighty nation again would one day be realized. And it has been so, for the grand fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision has been taking place for the past 134 years. It began in 1878, 3690 years after the death of Jacob, when the first indication of returned favor to Zion took place. Like the sound of the *Jubilee Trumpet* which blew throughout the land of Israel, declaring the restoration of that which was lost, Israel's hope of receiving again what they lost as a nation began to stir. Israel's Messiah, prefigured in the great Prince Cyrus, has been gradually bringing the *dry bones* together by means of the *Zionist movement* which has been drawing the Jews from the four corners of the earth to which they had been scattered. Leviticus 25:9-13; Zephaniah 3:16-20

Many Jewish commentators recognized that Israel's subjection to the Gentile powers was a period of chastening and disfavor. Hosea 3:4, 5 is quoted as proof, "*For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.*" Seeing the children of Israel returning to their homeland, is there not good reason to believe we are in *the latter days* where they will begin to realize the *goodness of God's favor once again*?

This was God's appointment with His people. Again His face was turned toward them, and His hands lifted to bless them. It was this favorable condition that made possible the development of Zionist hopes. Zionism was as dead as the *dry bones* in Ezekiel's vision until *the time to favor Zion had come*. Through this noble appeal of Zionism God called and still calls His people back to the land which He had given them. Jews of faith wasted no time in hearing His call, for in 1878 the first Jewish settlement of Petah Tikva was established by a handful of Jews. Petah Tikva in Hebrew means "*door of hope*"— it truly was the portal of their Zionist dream to becoming a nation again.

Yes, Zionism began to awaken Jewish minds throughout the world to God's Providence working on behalf of His people. In 1896, Theodore Herzl, a man of great vision, presented his booklet entitled, *The Jewish State*. He called upon wealthy Jews to assemble a congress of Jews and begin laying a foundation for Zionist activities. The booklet was

a success, but from an unexpected quarter. Herzl thought the wealthy Jews would spearhead the movement. He was wrong. Zionism flourished among the poor and oppressed Jews all over Europe and Russia.

Miraculously, the *very dry bones* which Ezekiel saw in the vision began to gradually come together, but in 1914, a major event in world history occurred which would set in motion a more complete skeletal body for the Jewish nation. Since the time of Israel's captivity in ancient Babylon, the Jewish people never had full control of the land: they and their land had been subject to Gentile dominion — but this was about to change. In 1914, war broke out in Europe between Great Britain with her allies against Germany, Austria-Hungary and, later that

year, the Ottoman Empire. This resulted in the break up of the Ottoman Empire — and the *Holy Land* was a part of that Ottoman Empire. As Ezekiel prophesied, "*behold a shaking, and the bones came together.*"

World War I — this great shaking — has been identified by all historians of our day as the most momentous change in world politics. As a result, in 1917, the Jewish people gained international recognition of their right to their former homeland. Great Britain endorsed a Jewish state in the famous *Balfour Declaration*. "*His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object...*" (Letter from Arthur James Balfour to Baron Rothschild, November 2, 1917) The *Balfour Declaration* granted Jews greater freedom, including the right to purchase land and

colonize in their ancient homeland — a right denied them for centuries. God was declaring to the nations, "*This land is mine!*" Leviticus 25:23



Sinews, Flesh and Skin

A gathering together of the dry bones has been truly miraculous, but what would bind these together? *Sinews* (ligaments) came on them— giving them cohesion, then *flesh* (muscle)—giving them substance. The *sinews* and *flesh* represent the restoration work on the land—the farming, building, and infrastructure that was established before they became a sovereign nation. And so it was, even in those days when nationhood was but a vague hope, an infrastructure began to develop. Under the encouragement of Chaim Weissman, the Hebrew University was formed. The Haganah, Mossad and Irgun formed military *muscle*. Hadassah reached forth to provide medical services. Ben Yehuda resurrected the dead Hebrew language. A shadow government with such strong ambassadorial figures as David Ben Gurion, Chaim Weissman, Levi Eshkol and Golda Meir began to function in exile. *Bones, sinews* and *flesh* were appearing. But still they were just that; a government in exile. *Skin* had not yet appeared to give them the semblance of a nation.

From 1939 to 1945 over six million Jews were killed in the Nazi Holocaust. In effect, the persecution of a madman caused thousands of Jews to flee to the only safe haven on earth where they were free to just be Jewish without fear. This horrific tragedy also caused the sympathetic attention of the nations, and in 1948, as a result of a United Nations partition, Israel became a sovereign nation. "*...and the skin covered them from above...*" (Ezekiel 37:8) Jubilation reverberated throughout the Jewish world at the recognition of a miracle of history! Never before had a people, stripped of their national dignity and scattered to every corner of the earth, come together again as a nation — after 2000 years!

But, their jubilation was soon tempered when an overpowering multi-national Arab force sought to deprive the Jews of their rightfully

gained homeland. When Israel declared itself a Nation on May 14, 1948, the armies of seven Arab nations marched in defiance against her, boasting that they would *drive the Jews into the sea*. Outnumbered 100 to 1, Israel not only repelled the invaders but acquired more of Palestine than was granted in the UN partition plan.

During the first three years of statehood, average immigration reached 18,000 a month and in some months the figure exceeded 30,000. In just five short years, the Jewish population of the country doubled. By the end of 1956, Israel's population had nearly tripled, reaching 1,667,000. Imagine the economic shock of absorption! Jews kept pouring into Israel, and in 1984, 1985, and 1991 harrowing airlifts brought Ethiopian Jews from utter despair to a *land of hope*. Finally, the long-expected prophetic fulfillment of Jews from Russia began in 1991. By 1998 over 800,000 had immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Republics, and they are still coming!

Though hope abounded, so did conflicts. In 1956, an invasion led by General Nasser of Egypt was soundly repelled. In 1967, the *Six Day War* of Israel against another invading Arab coalition enlarged the borders of the new state, and Jerusalem was united once again under Jewish control. In 1973, on the eve of the Jewish high holy day of Yom Kippur, a third Arab attack was again set back. In 1989, the dismantled countries of the Soviet Union permitted the Jewish *Refuseniks* to immigrate to Israel. In 1991 and 1992, repeated scud attacks by Saddam Hussain of Iraq failed to dislodge the Israelis from their homeland. Despite unrelenting attempts by Arab forces to *drive the Jews into the sea*, the national *skin* prophesied by Ezekiel has bound Israel together as one nation.

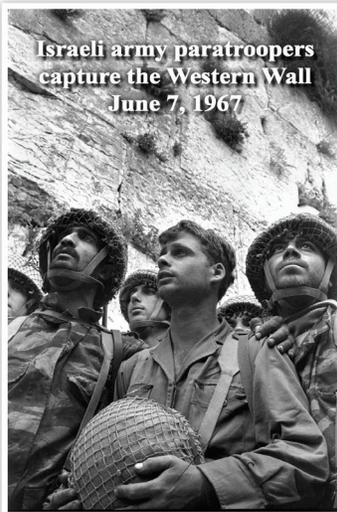
Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe...

"But there was no breath in them." To be *alive* in the sight of the nations around them was one thing, to be *alive* in the sight of God was yet another. In Ezekiel's prophecy, the *breath*, or *life*, was to come from the wind. *Wind* throughout the Bible signifies trouble — "*winds of war*," "*winds of turmoil*," "*winds of strife*" — causing men to be as turbulent as the wind-driven waves of the sea. Nor was it from *wind* alone, but specifically from "*the four winds*" that this breath was to come. We read of these same *four winds* in Revelation 7:1. "*I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on any tree.*" These *four winds of earth* are of an even more troublesome event — a virtual whirlwind of anarchy, depicting a period of trouble which particularly involves the newborn nation of Israel. This battle is described in great prophetic detail in the 38th and 39th chapters of Ezekiel. These chapters describe an invasion of Israel by a coalition of nations "*from the north*" during a time when Israel is dwelling "*in peace and safety.*" A parallel account in Zechariah informs us that Jerusalem will be attacked and "*the city shall be taken.*" After trying heroically to save themselves by their own military might, Israel will learn their final lesson — it is their God alone who can ultimately bring deliverance and salvation. Israel's defeat will be only temporary for: "*Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.*" The lesson will then be understood clearly: "*Not by might, Nor by power, But by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.*" Zechariah 4:6; 14:2,3

It is then, knowing the weakness of their own might, and seeking after their Messiah for divine aid, that faith will be renewed and *breath* — *life* — will come upon them. That *breath* will be the Spirit of the

Lord: "*I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*" Zechariah 12:10

In progressive stages Israel is being prepared for the *breath of life*, when they will *live* as a whole nation — a people of God under the guidance and rulership of their Messiah. At that time, Israel will no longer be bound by the *Old Law Covenant*, but God will make a *New Covenant* with them, and they will be used of God to *bless all the families of the earth*. "*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people... for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*" Jeremiah 31:31-34



Israeli army paratroopers
capture the Western Wall
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Israel's Regathering Will Mean Life for All!

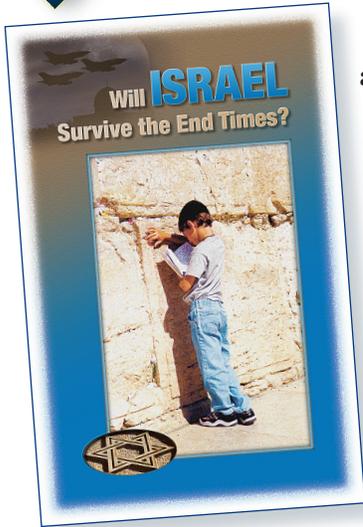
Breathing, they shall live! Living, they shall teach others how to live: "*And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*" "*In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.*" Micah 4:2; Zechariah 8:23

In Romans 11, the great Apostle Paul expresses what Ezekiel's vision will mean for the world of mankind: "*Hath God cast away his people? God forbid... God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew... For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? ...For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery... blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in time past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.*" Verses 1, 2, 15, 25 to 32

What a thrilling prospect! God's Word is iron-clad. It will come to pass that the nation of Israel will inherit what was promised, when they turn to their Messiah and accept God's mercy through their *New Covenant*. Then, blessings will begin to flow to all families of the earth as they learn of God's gracious plan for all mankind. "*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.*" Psalm 122:6



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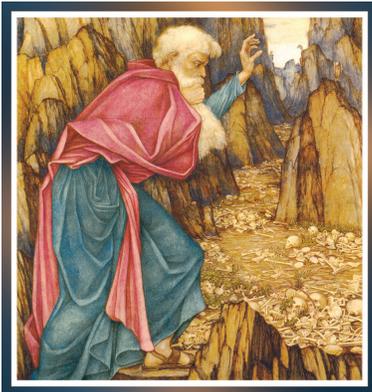
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