

Isaac and Ishmael

Israel, Arabs and the Middle East

Part 2

Whenever people discuss the issue of who has a right to the land of Israel, you can be sure that God and the scripture are generally not part of the discussion. However, in this eight-part series we are examining the prophetic writings concerning the modern political Middle East and the collision of the spiritual forces at war with one another.

Two questions are key to the issue of the land. 1) How does one acquire property? It is acquired in one of three ways: hostile takeover, a purchase or a gift. 2) Who is it acquired from? It is acquired from the land owner. Let's look at the second question first, "Who was the land of Israel acquired from?"

God is the ultimate land owner and landlord.

The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters. Psalm 24:1-2

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. Exodus 19:5

Scripture affirms the universal ownership of God in numerous references. (Deut. 10:14; Ps. 50:1; 89:11)

What right do the Jewish people have to claim the land? The land that is occupied by the modern state of Israel was a gift given to them by God, the owner of the property.

Then He said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it. And he said, "Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?" Genesis 15:7-8

On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates__" Genesis 15:18

Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." Genesis 17:8

And the Lord will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. Deut. 28:11

For behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says the Lord. And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.'" Jeremiah 30:3

In approximately 1800 B.C., God spoke to Abram, a man from Ur of Chaldea and gave him and his descendants the land of Canaan (Israel) as a heritage forever. This land grant was later confirmed in Isaac (Gen. 17:21) and then in Jacob (Gen. 28:3-4). The descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not begin to take possession of the land until hundreds of years later when Joshua led them to victory over the Canaanites.

Down through history there have been interruptions in the occupation of the land as God judged Israel for idolatry and sin. However, God never terminated His gift of land. Even in the references in which God foretells of Israel's exile from the land, the prophecies include the promise of a return to "their own land."

The borders of the land are found in a number of scriptures, but two are especially important. The first is in Numbers 34:1-14. The borders of the Promised Land were to stretch from the wilderness of Zin and Kadesh-barnea in the south to Lebo-hamath and Riblah in the north, and from the Mediterranean seacoast on the west to the Jordan River on the east. The land of Gilead was also included.

The other important scripture that lays out the boundaries is found in Ez. 47:13-23. The boundaries of Ezekiel are substantially larger than those given to Moses and will be realized in the future.

We are living in the end of days. No point drives that home more than the fact that the Jewish people after 2,000 years of exile have returned to their own land and taken possession of it. Much of the conflict in our world is over that little piece of real estate that is about the size of New Jersey!

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