

“The Promised Land?”

The news from Israel is almost always heartbreaking. A report of another suicide bomber near Tel Aviv is not headline news anymore and has even become in a morbid sense, routine.

This “Promised Land” is filled with violence, fences, and a time clock to disengagement from the Gaza Strip that has even divided the Israeli people. Jewish settlers are fighting both the Palestinians and Israeli soldiers over their right to live in the land that was promised to them 4,000 years ago.

However, this article is not written with a political purpose, agenda or call to action. But you should also know, that this article will state categorically that the “Promise Land” is the land given to the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by God himself.

The primary reason why you should know that this is true is because of the nature of the Covenant Promises given to Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, and 17. This nature is evident in two ways – 1) it was God initiated and 2) it was God enacted. God chose Abraham. God directed Abraham to the land. And God negotiated and finalized the deal.

These two characteristics might not seem obvious on the surface until one examines the actual covenant initiation in Genesis 15. The Abrahamic covenant began with the sacrifice of a heifer, female goat, ram, turtledove and a pigeon. The sacrifices were then divided into two rows and God alone, in

the image of a furnace and lamp, walked the covenant path while Abraham slept (Gen. 15:12-18).

In other words, Abraham’s part of the covenant was in the preparation of the sacrifices but God did everything else. The covenant was initiated and made by God and can therefore never be broken. So while Abraham never owned any of the land except the tomb he purchased upon the death of Sarah (Gen. 23), his descendants through Isaac are deeded and guaranteed the land by the creator and owner of all the earth.

Therefore, what you should take away from this article is three-fold. First, while there might be debate in the UN over to whom the land belongs, the decision was made by our Father God and His decision is final. Second, we must support Israel in their struggle for the land given to them by God. Third, and most of all, pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:6) and pray that the Jewish people will soon realize that the Promised Land is not the only promise given to them by God. The **ultimate promise** is the promise of the Messiah, and His name is Jesus!

Amy Downey

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE . . .

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Ishmael?

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What about Abraham's Other Son ... Ishmael?

Ishmael is an enigmatic figure in Scripture. His birth was due to Abraham's desire to "help" God keep the covenant promises (Genesis 12 and 15). Abraham had a son with his servant, Hagar, and then had to live with the results of his actions.

Who would have thought that such a bad decision would result in a 4,000 year old family feud? A feud that can be seen every night on TV as the children of Isaac and sons of Ishmael battle for the land (the promise), approval, and acceptance.

There is not enough space to write about all of God's plans and promises for the descendants of Ishmael. So please take the time to read about the life and death of Ishmael in Genesis 16; 17:18-21; 21:8-21; and 25:9-18.

However, we can take with us certain truths and lessons about the life of Ishmael. First, and even though he was not God's answer to the covenant promise, God still provided for Ishmael and his mother. Second, God keeps His word for Ishmael's descendants are strong and powerful even 4,000 years later. Finally, God loves Ishmael's children and yearns for them to believe in Messiah Jesus, the Jewish carpenter from Nazareth.

Ishmael was not the answer to the Abrahamic covenant, but he was still Abraham's son. And perhaps the world should take a lesson from Isaac and Ishmael, who despite their differences and legacy, still came together to bury and mourn their father Abraham (Gen. 25:9).

People ... Not Just Names on a List

Every morning, I (Amy) pray that God will use me to accomplish His will for my life. I also pray for 16 Jewish people who I have either met or have learned about from someone who has a burden to see this person come to know Jesus as Messiah.

Please add these names (which have been changed for privacy reasons) to your "prayer list." Each name represents a soul who needs to receive Jesus as Messiah.

Kelly – raised Orthodox but now searching for God

Larry – student who needs "The Ultimate Teacher"

Georgette – brilliant but knows nothing about Jesus

John – soon to face to a life and death decision

James – married into a Christian family

LeAnn – married into a Christian family

Leon – professor who still has much to learn

Karissa – married into a Christian family

John – married into a Christian family

Wesley – has an employee who cares for her boss

Jerry – another boss who is loved by his employee

Sherry – married into a Christian family

Warren – Holocaust survivor who still needs Jesus

Suzie – has a dear friend who really cares for her

Greg/Sherry – intermarried couple who both need the Messiah

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE ...

What is Kabbalah ... really what is it?

Observing the High Holy Days as Believers