

A Prophetic Palestinian Perspective: 'From the River to the Sea'

You have, no doubt, seen the banners and heard the chants from pro-Palestinians: "From the river to the sea ... Palestine will be free."

They are not calling for a "two-state solution" to the Arab and Jewish dispute over the ancient land of Palestine. Instead, they are calling for a Palestinian state—free of all Jews—from the Jordan River on the east to the Mediterranean Sea on the west. That apartheid intent is where this modern, nationalistic call comes from today.

Ancient Prophecies

But where did this phrase "From the river to the sea" come from? Would you be surprised to know it comes from the Bible? Several passages describe the dimensions of the Hebrews' promised land. Here it is in the first chapter of Joshua, named for Moses' assistant:

"Moses my servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them. I promise you what I promised Moses: 'Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you— from the Negev wilderness in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the north, from the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, including all the land of the Hittites'" (Joshua 1:2-4; NLT, author's emphasis).

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Joshua was instructed to lead the Hebrew people, encamped on the eastern side of the Jordan River opposite Jericho on the west side, to take possession of all the land from the Egyptian border all the way northeast to the Euphrates River, not merely the territory from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. These boundaries repeat those described to Abram in Genesis 15:8 and to Moses in Exodus 23:31-33. They were augmented slightly in Deuteronomy 11:24 to clarify that the boundary due north was to be the land of Lebanon.

Messianic leader Ariel Blumenthal has helped me understand the modern geopolitical ramification of these boundaries in the northeast when he recently wrote that Israel's promised land inheritance covered a much larger physical territory than I had previously visualized: "between the Euphrates River and the Mediterranean Sea to include what today would be sections of Jordan, Syria, and Iraq."

Whether these biblical boundaries "from the river to the sea" will be realized as a result of the current war in Gaza is unclear. We don't know. But, when we hear of a key Iranian general being assassinated in Syria in an alleged Israeli bombing and Russian and U.S. advisers and observers in the area to counter the Islamic State terrorist activity, it makes one take note. The prophet Isaiah declared that Damascus will one day become a "heap of ruins" (Isa. 17:1-3).

A Prophetic Perspective

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Blumenthal believes "God is shifting things, and I believe we're going to see some major changes in the boundaries" in the Middle East. He offers a new perspective on the Palestinian/Jewish crisis when he urges us as believers "to point people to the Bible and say, 'Hey, do you know where

that phrase comes from? It comes from the Bible, in the book of Joshua. Do you know that God promised the land to the children of Israel, the Jewish people, more than 3,000 years ago before there was ever such a thing as Palestine or the Palestinian people?'"

He points out that many of the modern historical records of the Middle East are "a fairly new thing." What had been controlled for 400 years by the Islamic Ottoman Empire suddenly became the stewardship of the victors of World War I. New "countries" were sketched out in the dirt, sand and marshlands of the massive territories that had no formal governments, money or capitals before. Jordan is a new thing. Kuwait is a new thing. Israel is new but yet as old as Abram, as the biblical records reveal.

Blumenthal believes we should embrace the phrase "From the river to the sea" and point people to the Bible—God's eternal Word. Arab Christians need our prayers as well as Messianic Jewish believers. Pray for them and their Arab neighbors today.{eoa}

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