

Israel Revival: A Mystery Revealed

In a 30-minute span one morning this summer, Hamas sent a barrage of 13 Qassam rockets at Israel. This is what life is about here in the Holy Land. Considering how much controversy surrounds this tiny sliver of real estate on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, it is amazing that some theologians actually don't believe that the rebirthed nation of Israel is a fulfillment of prophecy.

The Scriptures back that statement up:

- "For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land" (Ezek. 36:24, NIV).
- "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and bring you home again to your own land" (Jer. 29:14, NLT).
- "For the time is coming when I will restore the fortunes of my people of Israel and Judah. I will bring them home to this land that I gave to their ancestors, and they will possess it and live here again. I, the Lord, have spoken!" (Jer. 30:3, NLT, and dozens of other prophecies).

Biblically, there can be no doubt that God promised long ago that He would bring the Jewish people back to Israel. We know from Zechariah 14 that there will be Jews in Jerusalem, albeit in the midst of war, when Jesus returns.

Paul pleaded with his friends in Rome not to be deceived on this issue. He basically prophesied that the church would be tempted to judge the Jewish people and treat them harshly. He warned them of dire consequences:

“[Israel was] broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches (Israel), *he will not spare you either.*

“Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, *provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.* And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again (Rom. 11:20-23; emphasis added).

It would be easy to simply focus on verse 23—that God can save Israel again—but first we have to be honest concerning a bloody history. Sadly, the church did not heed the words of the rabbi from Tarsus. Instead, it not only judged Israel but also persecuted the Jewish people many times—even to the point of death.

One could say that the Roman Catholic Church judged Israel for embracing a *works righteousness based on human tradition*. The judgment would be correct, but God has not called the church to judge Israel, but to “provoke her to jealousy” (Rom. 11:11). Did not the Catholic Church become the very thing it judged? I have been to Rome and indeed it is beautiful—but it is dead.

The popes and cardinals forbade the reading of Scripture to not only the common people, but even most priests were denied this luxury. This enabled them to control the people and teach unbiblical doctrines such as *purgatory*—which in truth had nothing to do with theology, but fund raising. They told their people that when they gave *indulgences*, their dead relatives would be released into heaven.

They persuaded hundreds of thousands to march in the Crusades by promising them heaven if killed in battle. Add 72 virgins and you’ve got al-Qaeda or Hamas.

But the anti-Israel, anti-Jewish stance of the church started long before the Crusades. Augustine, the most famous theologian of his time, taught that the Jews are merely left on Earth to see the church's triumph over Israel:

"Jews deserved death but were destined to wander the earth to witness the victory of the church over the synagogue."

Replacement theology became predominant in the church—the idea that the church does not merely become co-heirs *with* Israel, as Paul states in Eph. 2:19, but that the church eliminates the call of God on Israel. Paul said in Rom. 11:29 that the "gifts and callings of God (to Israel) are irrevocable," but Eusebius (275-339 CE) taught that the promises of Scripture were meant for the Gentiles *and the curses were meant for the Jews*. He asserted that the church was the "true Israel."

Other early church leaders were more blatant in their hatred of the Jew:

- "Jews are a perverse people, accursed by God forever." – Hilary of Poitiers (CE 291-371)
- "The Jews are a brood of vipers, haters of goodness." – Gregory of Nicaea (died CE 394)
- "[Jews] are serpents, wearing the image of Judas, their psalms and prayers are the braying of Donkeys." – St. Jerome (CE 347-407 Note: St. Jerome seems to have forgotten that the other 11 disciples were also Jews who spread the gospel to the nations so that he could partake in it.)

This next quote comes from a man called the *Goldenmouth*. His sermons were so passionate, and he is presented as a very godly man. You be the judge ...

"The synagogue is worse than a brothel ... it is the den of scoundrels and the repair of wild beasts ... the temple of demons devoted to idolatrous cults ... the refuge of brigands

and debauchees, and the cavern of devils. It is a criminal assembly of Jews ... a place of meeting for the assassins of Christ ... a house worse than a drinking shop ... a den of thieves, a house of ill fame, a dwelling of iniquity, the refuge of devils, a gulf and an abyss of perdition ... I would say the same things about their souls. As for me, I hate the synagogue ... I hate the Jews for the same reason.” – John Chrysostom (CE 344-407)

On this foundation it became easy for Spain to unleash the Inquisitions on its Jewish community. Jews were given the choice to leave or convert. More than 30,000 Jews were murdered during the Inquisitions by the church—not for the sin of not becoming Catholic, but for the sin of converting and still secretly being loyal to Judaism. Lighting Sabbath candles was punishable by death. A Jewish convert would be burned alive for refusing to eat pork.

It is no wonder that Hitler used to gloat that he was merely finishing what the church had started!

But surely it can't end like this, can it? Can Jesus the Jew return to an anti-Semitic bride? No, the end-times church will love Israel. Even as the Jews brought salvation to the nations, the true church will intercede for revival in Israel.

No longer will the younger brother persecute the firstborn. I am reminded of the amazing witness of Casper ten Boom, father of the more famous Corrie. When the Jews in his Dutch town had to take the yellow star, he stood in line with them.

That is the type of love toward Israel that Paul spoke of when he poured out his heart in Romans 9—to the point of being willing to trade his salvation for the salvation of Israel.

“I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were *cursed and cut off from Messiah* for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel” (Rom. 9:2-4a; emphasis added).

Such compassion can only be found in the bosom of the Messiah Himself. And it is this type of selfless intercession that will lead to the revival in Israel—a revival of which the prophets spoke.

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel ... (Jer. 31:31).

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son” (Zech. 12:10).

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God” (Ezek. 36:25-28).

We have similar promises of revival from the mouth of Jesus Himself. Speaking to the Jews of Jerusalem, He said: “For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (Matt. 23:39).

In Hebrew, *blessed is he who comes* (Baruch haba) is a greeting. Yeshua is saying *I am not coming back until you welcome me*—much like David, when he said he would not return to Jerusalem until his brothers from Judah came and retrieved him (2 Sam. 19:11-18).

Paul is even clearer when he says that after the “fullness of the Gentiles” ... “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:25-26).

Interestingly, he begins verse 25 with these words, “I do not

want you to be ignorant of this mystery ..." In other words, understanding God's plan for Israel in the end times took revelation—it was a mystery.

Just as Israel was blinded to the truth of Yeshua, the church was blinded to Israel's call and future restoration.

But thank God in these days that more and more believers are honoring the natural brothers of the Messiah—even as more and more Jews are putting their faith in the Messiah.

Ron Cantor is the director of *Messiah's Mandate International* in Israel, a Messianic ministry dedicated to taking the message of Jesus from Israel to the ends of the Earth (Acts 1:8). He is an author and serves on the pastoral team of *Tiferet Yeshua*, a Hebrew-speaking congregation in Tel Aviv.