

The Master Potter's Plan for the Holy Land

Prophecy tells us not only what will happen in the future but also the process by which it will happen. The prophet Jeremiah provides us with a series of word pictures illustrating the process by which God would regather Israel.

In Jeremiah 16, the prophet proclaims what has come to be known in our generation as Exodus II. Jeremiah declares that Exodus II will completely overshadow the original exodus of Israel from Egypt under Moses' leadership at the original Passover.

"Therefore behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "that it shall no more be said, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' but, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.' For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers."

—Jeremiah 16:14–15

This amazing prophecy came from the pen of one of Israel's acknowledged major prophets. For more than 3,000 years the Jews celebrated the exodus of Moses from Egypt's bondage as the greatest event in their history. Yet Jeremiah declares there is coming a second exodus that will be so great that the first exodus will pale by comparison.

Jeremiah states that the people will come from "the land of the north," which I believe is Russia. In the Bible, all directions are given from Jerusalem. In the mind of God, Jerusalem is the center of the universe.

Jeremiah expanded his prophecy of Exodus II to include "all

the lands where He had driven them.” As I write this book, the chief rabbi of Israel has his representatives going to the four corners of the earth to help Jewish people return to Zion. Exodus II is far from complete, as the mighty right hand of God continues to gather “the apple of His eye” to the land given to Abraham and his seed almost 6,000 years ago.

Fishers and Hunters

The Bible is a book of parables and word pictures describing principles of truth from God to man. The prophet Jeremiah puts his pen to parchment and paints a vivid picture of the human agents God intended to use to bring the Jewish people back to Israel.

*“But now I will send for many fishermen” declares the LORD,
“and they will catch them. After that I will send for many
hunters, and they will hunt them down on every mountain and
hill and from the crevices of the rocks.”*

—Jeremiah 16:16, NIV

I believe this verse indicates that the positive comes before the negative. Grace and mercy come before judgment. The fishermen come before the hunters. First, God sent the fishermen to Israel. These were the Zionists, men like Theodor Herzl who called for the Jews of Europe and the world to come to Palestine and establish the Jewish state. The Jews were encouraged to escape while there was still time. The situation for Jews in Europe would only get worse, not better.

A *fisherman* is one who draws his target toward him with bait. Herzl and his fellow Zionists were God’s fishermen, calling the sons and daughters of Abraham home. Herzl was deeply disappointed that the Jews of the world did not respond in greater numbers.

God then sent the hunters. The *hunter* is one who pursues his target with force and fear. No one could see the horror of the

Holocaust coming, but the force and fear of Hitler's Nazis drove the Jewish people back to the only home God ever intended for the Jews to have—Israel. I stand amazed at the accuracy of God's Word and its relevance for our time. I am stricken with awe and wonder at His boundless love for Israel and the Jewish people and His divine determination that the promise He gave Abraham, Isaac and Jacob become reality.

"Go to the potter's house."

In Jeremiah 18, the prophet presents a second vivid picture of the process God will use to bring Israel to its divine destiny. God tells Jeremiah to go down to the potter's house, and God declares that He Himself will be the potter.

"Arise and go down to the potter's house." ... Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was making something on the wheel. Yet the vessel that he made of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. "As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel."

—Jeremiah 18:2–6, MEV

God makes it absolutely clear that He is the potter, and the pot in His hand is the nation of Israel. The first time the Lord set out to mold Israel as a potter molds the clay, He envisioned that the clay pot was marred in His hand.

God did not cast the pot away. Instead, He crushed the clay on the wheel and formed it into a second pot, whereby the divine destiny of the Jewish people could be realized according to His eternal plan.

On one of my many trips to Israel, I was taken to a potter's

house in Hebron. Here the potter was making pottery on a pottery wheel just as masters of his craft had done for thousands of years before. He took a lump of clay, moistened his hands and, as he pumped the spinning wheel with his feet, carefully began shaping the clay into the image locked in his mind.

He found lumps and imperfections in the clay and plucked them out, throwing them onto the floor. Patiently, he shaped the pot, and when it didn't come together, he smashed it and began again. The second pot came out perfectly as everyone in our group applauded.

God, the Master Potter, has shaped Israel a second time. The process continues with imperfections being plucked out and cast aside. The pot will reach perfection when Messiah comes, and the whole earth will applaud as Jerusalem becomes the "praise in the earth" (Isa. 62:7).