



Shaqah

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

We ended our last segment by finishing Genesis chapter 12, where Abram had portrayed Sarai as his sister and ended up greatly angering Pharaoh, who had taken her into his house and been plagued for it. Because of this, Pharaoh would drive Abram out of Egypt, and that brings us to Genesis chapter 13 verse 1, which confirms to us Abram, along with all that he had, truly left Egypt to go back into the land God intended to give to him and his seed.

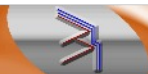
Verse 1 also makes it specific that Lot did not remain in Egypt but came out along with Abram at this same time. This is important in light of what we talked about in our last segment, which was the fact Lot was very much his own household after leaving Haran, and Abram did not hold authority over him. Now, with that in mind, we can say, due to Lot's later actions, he had an obvious lack of concern for living among very sinful people. Lot liked the good life, which for him seemed to be what man calls civilization, in particular living in a city instead of the countryside. Thus, one can speculate the main reason for Lot leaving Egypt was because he was driven out along with Abram, whether he liked it or not. However, this, again, is God using circumstances to accomplish His will. Lot would come back to the land to be part of that overall picture of this family establishing a presence there.

This verse is also trying to clarify that in no way did earlier ties with Egypt have to do with what happens to the family later. Abram, Lot, and all that belonged to them came back to Canaan, and nothing was left behind to be a binding tie. This verse also says that they journeyed, "...into the south." This to some may seem a strange wording, and it is not how we might put it. However, it is another one of those points which shows us a Biblical perspective that we must seek to have in order to understand the Word. This does not mean they went south of Egypt, for that would have been traveling further down into the African continent. This is not something Pharaoh would have allowed for those he was casting out, because Pharaoh would have seen the vast South as belonging to him. Sending Abram back where he came

from is what Pharaoh would have wanted. Thus, Abram, in another connection to future events, would basically take the path the chosen nation was to take out of Egypt, going across the Sinai Peninsula, and into the south of Canaan.

As we discussed before, Israel did not end up taking a path out of the peninsula and into the south end of Canaan because they feared the people of the land, but that is the route God had laid out to begin with. Also, Abram would not have taken the extensive journey through the peninsula which Israel later took, because God takes time in the peninsula for Israel to receive the Law and be established as a nation. However, Abram did take a path that made Israel's general journey out of Egypt and back to the land of promise, something that could be traced back to their earliest forefather. The Biblical perspective in all this is that the words are focused on referring to the world as if Canaan was the centerpiece. This is all part of understanding that God wants the reader of His Word to understand the placement of Abram, and eventually Israel, was not arbitrary or random. The promised land was not just wherever Israel found themselves. Abram traveled from Mesopotamia to the north of this land. He then entered this land and traveled through it going south, eventually ending up all the way down in Egypt. By the plan of God he was sent back to this specific land, and right here with Abram's beginnings we see wording that references Canaan very much as home. To say the "south" means to travel to the south part of Canaan, not to travel in a direction from where one was.

This concept we just covered also serves as an example of how people, who are not studying the Word with a heart to find and follow God, will jump on any religious view that seems to give power unto men. God speaks this way in His Word so we will understand He had a definite unmovable plan from day one, and that there is a place which will remain important throughout this world's history. Nineveh, Babylon, or even Rome can never replace Jerusalem, if for no other reason than the fact they are not located in the promise land! To this very day we see God's



people returning to the land God gave them, and this is the place to look in order to see God's plan unfold! At the same time, this does not mean there is some magical power in this place that can be tapped into somehow and exploited. It also does not mean, while it was and is a very strategic geographical location, that it is a violation of God's will if one does anything to indicate or show it is not literally the center of the universe or even this world.

Again, these beliefs arise because men are always hoping for something they can exploit, or looking for something that will justify their "authority." It's the simple king of the mountain game played by many a generation of children. The idea that whoever can maintain the spot on the top of the hill is king! This, in turn, can very easily translate into the idea that wherever you can maintain a spot, you should try to proclaim that spot as the top of the hill! This childish thought pattern has been the cause of much bloodshed by those who believe Israel's land is special to possess, because they want to be king of the mountain, as well as much effort by others to minimize the land's importance in an attempt to convince us another spot they own or set up is, at the very least, the new mountain which displaced Israel. However, God's Word makes it clear from these beginning days with Abram - and so it is to this day - only this land God gave to Abram and the chosen nation which was to come from him is the mountain. This we can not deny if we are a true believer in God's Word.

Now, to finish the point, this land only means something because this is the place God gave to that chosen nation. This, in turn, brings the truth that it only means something for the chosen nation to possess it, and holds no "power" for just whoever might be able to hold it at any particular time. The only exception to this, which the devil and many evil-hearted men understand, is that if others can possess it, that keeps God's chosen nation from possessing it. This, again, has to do with that bloodshed over the land issue! We see attempt after attempt to keep Israel off the land. However, God will not be stopped; and as He wills, so it will come about. The fact those of the chosen nation understand that, at the very least, this land is the center of their universe, and heritage is why for centuries Jews outside the land end many an occasion with the words, "Next year in Jerusalem!"

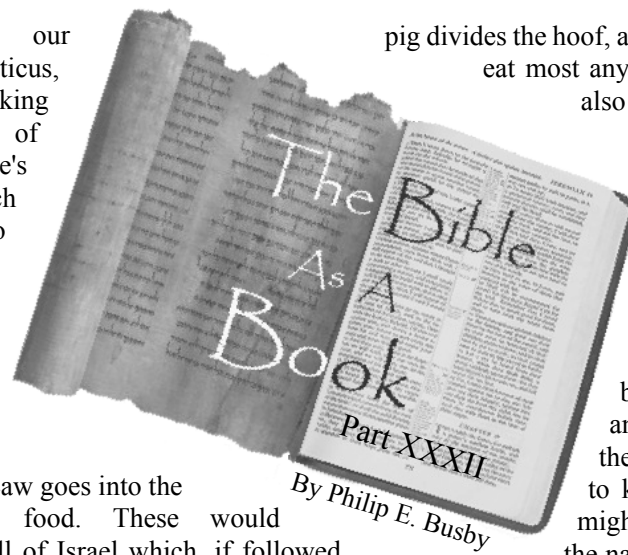
So, again, we see Abram traveling to and in the southern part of the land, which while still only being the south out of the whole promised land, it is that portion that would be of steadfast importance to God's plan and His nation. Verse 2 tells us, even at this time Abram was very rich in about all the ways one can physically be rich, even by today's standards. This is another reason it was important something take the family back out of Egypt. Egypt would have loved to absorb such a family as part of its own! However, this verse is the emphasis which tells us Abram did not lose anything in the experience. Not only did he leave no binding tie in Egypt, he did not emerge from Egypt as a man who had foolishly lost everything living it up there.

Verse 3 confirms to us that referring to the south in verse 1 was putting Abram back into the land, as it tells us he traveled from the south back to one of those prominent places he had setup his tent when first making any kind of inroads into Canaan. This place was once again that spot located in the hills, which truly was the House of God, between the city eventually known to history as that, "Bethel," and the city of Hai. Verse 4 tells us this brings Abram back to the altar he had built there at the first. It had not been torn down, making this one of the first truly established spots marking this land as God's promise to His chosen nation. In this spot, Abram would again call upon the name of The Lord, no doubt with a new and more fervent understanding of how much he had found and come to understand the territory God called him out of his father's house to live in!

Verse 5 takes us solidly to that point about just how much neither Abram or Lot had lost anything in Egypt when it came to their wealth. They were so rich they were like communities of their own, not just owning herds and things, but people to run their affairs - this is the reference to "tents." Verse 6 tells us their two communities alone were more than the land could handle. Now what we must understand is that we are not talking about just the area where Abram had built the altar. That spot was just the place where Abram himself setup his personal tent. His flocks, possessions, and those who looked after them would have covered a considerable amount of ground, and what this means is that in later verses as we are told of Abram moving from here to another place, it's often not about his entire household and wealth moving, as the trip into Egypt had been. Instead, we are talking more about Abram moving from one end or side of the territory his possessions were covering, to another. This territory, of course, would include the need for some migration of his herds so as not to overtax any one spot with the great number of animals grazing and such. However, the point again is, Abram and Lot were no insignificant group among a large Canaanite population!

Thinking about this should give us a perspective on a couple things. First is that point we have been over and will continue to go over, which is that the family was truly establishing a presence in the land. It was not just about Abram and some small group of personal servants moving around, but a large community of possessions making use of a vast area of the land. This takes us to our second point, which is, as much as this was the land of Canaan, the Canaanites did not greatly cover the land themselves. It's true they may have had some fairly big cities and settlements. There were no doubt other family or tribal groups which took up significant space in the land, but we need to understand this was in many ways more of an open frontier than we often think about. God was bringing Abram in to establish a presence that was just as predominate - if not more so - than of those we know generally as Canaanites. Relatively speaking, we are not that far removed in the time sequence from the confounding at the Tower of Babel here, and migration of Ham's family to this area, following that event, took time as well. All this means that while the Canaanite

As we continue our overview of the book of Leviticus, we finished last time by talking about those very first days of beginning the tabernacle's service, and the story which showed Aaron was learning to interpret the Law for himself, which set Moses' mind at ease. This brought us to the end of Leviticus chapter 10, and in this segment we are ready to begin chapter 11.



The next part of the Law goes into the commandments concerning food. These would establish a specific diet for all of Israel which, if followed, would make them the healthiest nation on the planet. This diet would come to be known as a “Kosher” diet. The word “Kosher” simply means fit, proper, or correct. At creation, God had not given animals to humans for food, but allowed it after the flood of Noah's day. For His chosen nation, God would not return them to the non-animal diet of the beginning, for the conditions of being able to eat only plant material was very difficult at certain parts of the year and under certain conditions, which is why God gave permission to eat animals after the flood. However, God would now give His nation rules for how to separate animals which are more beneficial to eat and generally eliminate from the table those that had more negative effects.

For most of the non-bird dry land animals there would be some very basic ways to distinguish between the good and bad. For this, they were to look for two things, animals that divide the hoof in two, and that chew a cud. The simple fact an animal needs to have a hoof instead of just toes, immediately put most all the more rodent and scavenging animals out of the diet. The fact the hoof needs to be divided takes from the diet most all the animals that are more useful for other purposes than eating, which shows us the stipulations are not solely focused on health but also practicality. Chewing a cud indicates an animal that very thoroughly processes and thus, digests its food. It also indicates an animal that eats not just a strictly plant-based diet, but a very clean one. Animals that chew a cud do not tend to eat even plant life that is spoiled or will become spoiled. Grass, alfalfa, corn, and the like can even be dried and stored for these animals, and does not begin to spoil. If kept dry or left as fodder in the field, it does not mold easily. This is important, because if you are what you eat then so are the animals. If you're going to eat animals, it's better to eat animals that are what you were created to eat.

Now, both these stipulations need to be true of any animal considered good for eating, as there are many examples of animals that have one of these features but not both. The camel being a good example because it chews a cud, but not dividing the hoof makes it a valuable pack animal. The

pig divides the hoof, and while more a vegetarian animal, will eat most anything no matter how spoiled. There is also the stipulation that one was not to just refrain from eating such animals, but not even touch their dead remains. A person might need to be ceremonially made clean again because they had to dispose of their work animal which had died, such as a horse, but the not touching thing certainly kept those of the nation from butchering or even keeping unclean animals if they had no direct benefit to them. For example, they would not want to keep many animals for the profit you might gain by selling them to those outside the nation. While it may be lawful for others

to eat, you don't encourage them to do something God has instructed you not to do, nor do you want the temptation of having the animals so conveniently available. If an animal that can't be eaten has no other useful function, they just aren't worth the bother of having them around at all.

When it comes to animals that live in water - both fresh and salt - again there would be two easy things to look for. However, the wording for those not accepted as food is stronger about leaving them alone. For water animals to be edible they must have fins and scales. This, of course, puts anything such as shellfish, and other water creatures we wouldn't even be tempted to call fish, off the table. It also takes out the sea mammals like dolphins, whales, sea lions, and the like. As to the dead remains of those without fins and scales, they are not just unclean to touch, but are to be considered an abomination. What this means is that dead water animals are truly to be left to deteriorate in a natural state. One is definitely discouraged from keeping them in an artificial environment where those that die of themselves have to be dealt with, and for no purpose would you want to harvest these animals' body parts for other uses. In many ways, this is because almost all these animals are vital parts of the water system, making many of them scavengers, and also too precious a resource to be hunted by man. The curses after man fell into sin makes this true of a lot of natural resources, but replacing what we deplete out of the water is something man has difficulty doing anything about, even with our modern technology. The world would be a much healthier place to live if more cultures recognized the simple basis for this law God gave His nation!

Next, is the fowls, or in more general terms, all winged/flying things are covered. For what most of us truly would call a fowl or bird, there are no features of the animals which can generally be used to separate those you want from those you don't. Here the wording is used, “after his/her kind,” and various examples are given to make the point that fowl who use other animals, both dead or alive, as a food source, are unclean. In speaking about other flying things, we move to

those we generally would classify as bugs. Here they are referred to as going on all fours. This does not limit the category to just those things that only have four legs, but a general reference to those things that regularly use their feet to walk and crawl, but are not biped fowl whether flightless or not. All these legged creatures are not good for food. However, those that have legs for jumping are edible. This does not mean all things that can jump or leap to some degree, but only those with specific legs for the purpose, and a few examples are given to make the point clear.

The dead remains of those unclean creeping things are as the water animals, they should be left to natural causes in order to dispose of them. Thus, the word "abomination" is used again. However, because these types of animals are very abundant and living on land makes them harder to specifically avoid than water animals, this, in spite of the fact there are not many reasons anyone has ever come up with for specifically keeping these animals for practical purposes, we see the specification of what it means to be unclean by handling the remains. These stipulations are fairly simple, but still recognize they should be avoided if one can. A person who touches one of these is simply considered unclean until sunset. A person who has to clean up the remains of these kind, faces the same uncleanness time period, but is also to wash their clothing.

The next verses go forward to explain what it means to be unclean from contacting other categories of unclean things. Going back to the remains of unclean animals which satisfy one but not both the stipulations of splitting the hoof and chewing the cud, these fall into the same class, making a person unclean that the remains of all animals that walk on their paws do. Simply touching the remains will make a person unclean until sunset, but if you have to specifically handle the remains, then you are unclean until then and must again wash your clothing. The instructions next turn more specifically to a category of things that, unless you are raised in certain cultures, people don't generally consider good for eating at all. However, to be clear, rodents, reptiles, and things such as snails, which we might or might not call bugs, are all unclean. These are all land creatures, of course, that are not to be eaten; but, again, their dead remains are also not to be touched or one will be unclean. Because of the very nature of the purpose most of these creatures serve, they are more likely to carry diseases and bacteria that are harmful to humans. Thus, the law takes the uncleanness of their remains a step further. Not only is a person unclean until sunset if they come in contact with them, but any useful vessel, in other words any container that is not already trash, that the remains come in contact with is unclean. It really does not matter what material the container is made of, with the exception of those made of clay and the like. Vessels need to be washed in water and considered unclean until sunset, but an earthen vessel is to be destroyed.

It goes on to specify food and drink that may be in these containers or come in contact with the remains are to be unclean as well. One should also take care that water used to

wash out any unclean container or which is already unclean and being dumped out should not come in contact with other food, or that food will be unclean. You should also be careful to get these things away from cooking utensils, surfaces, and what today we call appliances. These items are considered unclean when they come in contact with such remains, and will need to be broken down. All this is certainly making sure that one errs on the side of caution, and especially before the days of antibacterial cleaners and even the knowledge of what caused sickness and disease, this was all very good. We also now understand that overusing antiseptic cleaners can leave behind only the strongest germs, creating even more resistant strains. So, all this is actually good general practice to this very day. Letting nature reabsorb and deal with things is also shown in the next specifications, which is that if the remains fall into a well or fountain where there is no shortage of water, the entire well or fountain does not become unusable. Remove the remains, allow the water to clear, and the water from such sources may be used again. Also, seed that is going to be used for planting does not become unclean if the remains touch it. However, if the seed has had water put on it, which will start the growth process, and then the remains come in contact, it becomes unusable.

Now, even those animals which are considered clean for the purpose of eating, when they die without being slaughtered properly, there can be no real knowledge of why, even if you believe the animal was just old. Touching such remains will make a person unclean as if the animal was an unclean animal to begin with. Eating of the animal's flesh or handling the remains will also require the time and the washing of ones clothing, as with unclean animals. To be clear, once more, it is specified all things that live and move upon dry land are unclean unless they fall into a category of things specified as clean. Thus, all things you might question are not a question. Such things as snakes that have no feet, or insects which have multiple feet, are an abomination. As such, they should not be eaten, and be avoided. God goes on to make it a point that His chosen nation is not just to accept the fact there are procedures for becoming clean again after becoming unclean. They are not to defile themselves by being involved with unclean creatures more than life makes necessary. This is all part of the nation being holy. The fact a member of the chosen nation may seem to others to be very strict and picky about what they will touch and what they will put in their bodies is, at the very least, all part of the illustrative point that they are separated for the purposes of The One True God of the universe!

Continuing this line of thinking, the law next moves to rules concerning disease and bodily function. These start with childbirth and recognize a woman's need to rebuild her strength and spend time with her baby. When a woman gives birth to a male child, she is considered unclean; and thus given great privacy for seven days. This does not inhibit her from being touched for any needed medical attention as those who handle such things must often accept being ceremonially unclean. On the eighth day, a male child will be brought by his parents to the temple to be circumcised. The mother will

What About God's Chosen People?

Part VI

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

In our our last segment, we really began to cover how Israel came to be known by just one tribe's name; and thus, the term "Jews." We did this by covering the history of God's chosen nation leading down to the threat that even Jerusalem would fall to the Babylonians. We ended by talking about how a third son of king Josiah, named Zedekiah by the Babylonians, was put on the throne by that empire after they had removed the previous king of Judah, and how surely this king would turn to God in order to spare what was left of the nation still living on the land God had given them!

Now, we have talked a lot about the fact God was not interested in simply using whomever the people chose to be just because they were of the right bloodline, and this might be harder to see as the history moves into these more desperate times. The fact this sometimes is hard for people to see is what often causes some to think Israel was, at some point, totally rejected, or even had to be rejected as God's chosen nation. However, we need to understand that God had, by this time, established them as His nation. The challenge was no longer one of finding those in the bloodline for which to establish the nation, but the finding of those who could and would maintain it. This meant not just looking for those individuals out of all the nation who could be used at each point, but using them in the capacity those individuals as a group made possible. This brings us back again to the fact that the chosen nation reflects us all. It's difficult in a sin-filled world to maintain a group of people of any size who can build and hold something as predominate as God wanted to through the Law and its establishment of the temple. This is where we should see there is a more basic truth of holiness. Just as we have discussed God not accepting just any person who was of the right bloodline, God could also not just accept whatever the established nation interpreted or was willing to perform as the Law.

That being true, the maintaining issue turned to not just looking for the individuals who could be used at the particular time, but, if that's what it took, maintaining the nation and waiting for those individuals who lived at future points in time who could be used. This issue is why we see the nation being narrowed down until they were known mostly by just one tribe's name; but even after that, we see what God was saying in Amos 9:8-10 about how He would sift the nation. The commitment to this people had been made. The promise and prophesy for David's line had been laid out. God says what He will do so all the world will know where to look to find the truth. God does what He says, and only God could know who to choose and what actions to take so as to accomplish all this

in spite of man's sinful choices! That is an important point to remember, for the foundation of our understanding of why the Jews are God's chosen nation is that after the nation's full establishment, it was/is imperative the nation be maintained in order to be available for what God had prophesied their ultimate goal and gift to the world would be.

To insert a point here, if we believe that purpose was completed with the first appearance of The Messiah, then we are as misled by our Biblical ignorance as those who crucified Jesus. The only real difference is that at Jesus' first appearing, they believed Jesus was not The Messiah because He did not come as the powerful King of Israel the religious leaders believed The Messiah should be. Those who believe the nation's purpose ended, or was completed by Jesus' first coming as a humble servant to offer Himself for that position, are missing the fact His crucifixion is why prophesy does, in fact, tell us The Messiah will one day come as the powerful King of Israel. (Zech. 14) This is a terrible irony for a church whose entire existence was to be the proclaiming of the fact The Messiah has come and will return!

Getting back to the maintaining of the chosen nation, to do this, God would plead with the people to hold on and seek Him through all the turbulence their lack of following Him had created, and all the trouble mankind as a whole had chosen to create for the world. It was and/is God's desire to bless His chosen nation in every way, but maintaining them to do His work, which He called them to do, was more important than their comfort. This should stand as a lesson to all people all over the world as they study Israel's history. Our comfort is less important as individuals than the ultimate salvation of our souls!

One should remember God had sent prophets all through this process to give the people clear guidance as to what to do and how to get it right under whatever the current circumstances held. This is evident in maybe no more obvious way than looking at the work of the prophet Jeremiah, who faithfully continued to instruct of God's Words for each moment throughout all this turbulence of Judah and Jerusalem being under threat of destruction! Jeremiah's words would not end even after Jerusalem fell; for yes, even king Zedekiah would fail to follow the instructions of God that the nation should not care about the fact Babylon was a secular ruler over them, but they should care about maintaining God's Word and the representation He called the nation to fulfill!

God would allow not just Judah, as the last remaining portion of the nation on its land, to fall and be carried away, but specifically Jerusalem would be razed to the ground by the Babylonians. Most of those left of Judah would go into a

captivity prophesied to last seventy years. Though it is true I almost can't help but weep every time I cover this part of the history, which tells us of how Jerusalem itself was destroyed, one of the greatest points in all this is that Jerusalem was truly turned to rubble! That might sound odd, but what this meant was that the city would not be left in debate as to whose city it was after the captivity. For all the strangers running to and fro in the land during the nation's absence, Jerusalem would not be one of those places inhabited by any of them. This was a good thing!

To insert yet another very relevant point to our question, some might argue this truth raises some questions about the Jews truly continuing to be God's chosen nation because this kind of protection did not take place when the temple, which stood during Jesus' time, was destroyed. This concept should become more clear as we go forward in this study. However, for now, suffice it to say that human history gives us a clear record, available even to the common man who has eyes to see and ears to hear, that not only at that time but ever since that time, there has been a concerted effort to destroy the Jews, keep them out of Jerusalem, or at the very least, from rebuilding the temple. (Rev. 12:1-17) This raises the simple question of, why? Who would choose to do such a thing to one specific people for such a prolonged period of time, spending massive resources over several generations to see it through to the best of their ability? Who would continue such an effort even to this very day, after the Jewish people have not only survived as a people, but risen to rule over some of the land again, winning major wars almost no one thought they could win, to the extent of repossessing Jerusalem itself? Have we not passed a major threshold that would tell these enemies the Jews are not going away, and the effort it has and will continue to take to hold them back has been and apparently will be so draining it just can't be worth it? Would it carry on as it has and does if it were not backed by the devil himself and the realization by so many individuals who, like those going all the way back to the Tower of Babel, fear and hate having the things of God in this world? In the end, is it not simply the fear of what the Jews' survival, and especially the rebuilding of the temple, has and would accomplish in solidly reestablishing the Jews as indisputably God's chosen nation?

God will continue to maintain His chosen nation and use those who would serve Him in every place and in each time period through our human history. Some have and will serve, others never will, but the chosen nation is still the chosen nation! This, again, should emphasize to us that being of God's chosen nation is not God's plan of salvation for all men nor has it ever been, but that does not affect the simple truth - they are and will be the people through whom God has and will continue to reveal to the world that saving plan for all of us. If God turned back on this plan every time man chose not to do everything exactly right, how would we know God's real plan apart from the many false religions, as well as corrupted practices, man has chosen to create and the devil desires to foster?

Now, once again, getting back to our point of historical study about the destruction of Jerusalem and the

captivity of the Jews, two important points belong to this period which we should look specifically at. One is the fact that it is during this time God really uses His chosen nation to influence world affairs in a very up close and personal way. Jeremiah even prophesies to those carried into captivity that they should not fight to be free, but to hold on to the promise God would, in time, bring them home. For the time being they were to build houses, plant gardens, marry their sons to daughters of their people. (Jer. 29:1-14) In other words, they were to establish their presence in the empire as a specific people. They were not to be lost, but work to maintain their unique way of life which God had given them through His Law. They were no longer a demonstrative people in a far land, but a demonstrative people in the village, if not the house next door, to others of this world. The fact many many of God's chosen nation became this is shown to us very predominantly in the story of Esther.

Esther's story demonstrates the point, as king Ahasuerus' right-hand man named Haman hated a specific Jew named Mordecai. Haman was jealous of God's blessing upon Mordecai, and Mordecai would not honor this man as a godlike figure, which those in rulership positions expected, and the common citizen did. However, there was more to this than the hatred of just this one man. There was a realization that this one Jew was an example of what all Jews, at the very least, should have strove to be like. This fact made all those willing to hold on to their identity of being part of God's chosen nation (a Jew) very identifiable among all the people of the empire. While many individuals of Israel were truly lost into the world's population, many would begin to hold on to God's Word and Laws more than they ever had before. This made these individuals distinct even from all the other varied cultural peoples of the empire. This made it easy for Haman to go to the king and argue there was a strange people throughout the empire who had strange laws and traditions. (Esth. 3:8) Because of this, targeting the Jews could and would be arranged. This is part of that fact we just talked about seeing to this very day.

Now, at the time, the work of Esther, by the hand of God, would turn a scheme to destroy God's chosen nation from among the world, into a situation which escalated their presence and predominance! This historical event is why Jews, and those who stand with them, enjoy the celebration of Purim every year. It's not one of the God-given feast laid out in the Law, but it is truly an act of God worthy of shouting and joy as we see God still using His chosen nation in whatever circumstance they found themselves in. (Phili. 4:11-13) If this could be true even at a time when they were off their land and held captive by one of the greatest world empires there has ever been, we know God can make it true anytime any place!

The second point to remember in all this time period of even Jerusalem laying in ruin is that God had, in fact, left a remnant of Jews on the land who were to maintain their presence in the land. These, sadly, would not end up following God's instructions through Jeremiah about staying on the land, but they would go to Egypt where God would send Jeremiah with them to continue to instruct of God's words in spite of

their disobedience. Jeremiah's prophesy and actions would also serve as a rebuff against a later emergence among the Jewish religious leaders who believed the Jews themselves should take the steps to reinterpret God's Law to more of a form, fitting with the rest of the world's thought pattern. Lord willing, we will get back to this point later in this study; but the point is that God always intended to leave a group of His nation on the promised land. Had they followed God's instructions, there would have been a significant community of the nation still on the land ready to greet and reestablish the nation when those of the captivity began to return. We simply never know the blessings of God we pass up when we do not have the courage to trust God and stand our ground. Maybe we die, maybe we live, but to live is Christ and to die is gain for those who serve The Lord and are called according to His purpose! (Rom. 8:28, Phil. 1:20-21) This is true anytime, anyplace. Always has been and always will be!

Looking more directly at the captivity for those specifically carried to Babylon, we see the great way in which those willing to serve God were used to affect world affairs and other cultures in general. Right off, there was Daniel and his companions who were taken there because they were considered the best and brightest. The king of the empire believed these kind of captives could truly be an asset to the empire, but oh how he had no idea! One of the first stories tells us Daniel and those who truly served The Lord would refuse to eat the king's meat because they had no way of knowing, not to mention the likelihood was high, if it had been offered to idols, and in other ways not allowed by God's Law to be eaten by God's nation. Daniel would propose a test of God's Law in that the Jews would be allowed to eat a diet of those things available that were not offered to pagan idols and allowed by God's Law. This meant they would basically eat only the original diet God gave to mankind by eating fruits, including some things we now categorize as vegetables. This test was proposed because the servant the king had put in charge of grooming these men was not sure he could allow the Jews their diet. He feared they would become weak and it would cost him his head. However, at the end of the test period, these men of God would not be the weaker of the men but those in better health. This is about the greatest example of why God gave these eating laws to Israel that we might ever see, and the end result of this would be the king's servant decided all the men in his care should eat this way! (Dan. 1:3-16)

Later on, three of Daniel's Jewish companions would one day refuse to bow to an idol the king had made and ordered everyone to worship or suffer the consequence of being thrown into a fiery furnace. These three would be put in a furnace stoked so hot the men who throw them in died from the heat. However, later the king would see not three but four men alive and walking in the fire. The king would be amazed as at his beckoning the three he had thrown in would step out of the fire without even so much as the smell of smoke on them. In refusing to break God's Law these men did not get to go home to glory, but they did get to meet The Messiah in that fire, and they gave God the opportunity to prove how much The God of Israel was/is The True God and no other! (Dan. 3)

After Daniel had proven how much wisdom serving God can provide, he eventually rose very high in the governmental system of the empire. During the time of the empire which took over the Babylonians, Daniel would have a plot against him by men who were jealous of the wisdom God had given him and the position it had led him to. These men would talk the king into a law making prayer to anyone but the king illegal for a time. They knew Daniel prayed only to God; and in spite of this law, Daniel would continue to pray three times a day just as he always had. In spite of the fact the king regretted making the law once he found it would be Daniel who would be punished for it, the king would have to have Daniel thrown in the den of lions. Among the Medes and Persians the law was the law once it was made. Not even the king was to override it. Daniel would be thrown in the lions' den and left all night. However, he also would not get to go home to glory. He would be there alive and well to answer the king's call the next morning, who was wondering if Daniel's God was greater than the king's own decrees! Daniel would confirm God is The True God; and not only would the king dispose of the evil men who wanted the law, by having them meet the fate they intended for Daniel, but he would send a letter into all the world telling how The God of Israel was The One True God. (Dan. 6:4-28)

All these events show us even when God's chosen nation was not on the land God had wanted them to possess, they were still His chosen nation. Just as Joseph, so many centuries earlier, had been placed in the king's palace of Egypt to play a part in God's plan, so too was Esther, Daniel, and through time only God knows how many others were used in much the same way. This should convince us all, that God was and is serious about maintaining His chosen nation, not rejecting them or working on a plan to replace them! However, here is another critical junction along our path of understanding the people we know as Jews are God's chosen nation. Now, I'm not going to argue with others about all the scholarly thoughts around this issue, but the simple point could be made that here in the Babylonian captivity came the birth of what we would call the Jewish religion, or Judaism!

The reason I talk about scholarly points is that there are many who would argue or take issue with this statement, and some with very good reason. Many might argue different points and views on when Judaism truly began and where. Let me say the one I would most easily agree with is to say true Judaism began when Moses led Israel out of Egypt and Passover took place, or more specifically at Mount Sinai where God gave Israel the Law. This is by far the best answer to when the Jewish faith - as we might refer to it - as given by God, truly began. It is the most logical place to say God gave His chosen nation religious ceremony which to adhere to. However, that's why I want to point out, I'm not attempting to be a technical historian of Judaism as a religion. What I wish to point out is that for almost two millennia now God's chosen nation has been without a tabernacle or Jerusalem's temple. A very important addendum to this is the fact the reason they have been without is the same reason which existed during the Babylonian captivity time period.

As we have at least touched on already in this series, there were times in Israel's early history when the tabernacle was not truly functioning as it had been in the wilderness, after Moses got it all together according to God's instructions. There were also times after the temple was built in Jerusalem when it was not being administered according to God's commandments. One could even make the argument that after the death of Moses, this condition was more often true than it was not. It is almost certainly true if you want to be very technical about exactly how it needed to be ran to be in full compliance with God's Law, as it was meant to be as God showed Moses - but I digress. The point here is that during the captivity the entire chosen nation had to, for the first time, deal with the fact there simply was no tabernacle to be built which could go with them. The temple was built to replace the tabernacle, and the temple was built where it was because there God chose to place His name among Israel. Again, this speaks to that fact you cross thresholds of no turning back. God had not only established who His chosen nation was but where their center of worship belonged. This means the temple belongs exclusively in Jerusalem, and even in a specific spot and nowhere else!

The Jews, at this time, were also very much scattered among the world without the freedom of movement that would have allowed them to go to such a place had there been one, even if it could have been mobile. No doubt such a structure would have been vehemently attacked at every chance, as well. This truth is why even in the wilderness the tabernacle was placed right in the middle of the camp of Israel. It's not to say God couldn't easily protect this structure, but, again, establishing such a thing and maintaining its ordinances was given to the chosen nation exclusively. God will certainly intervene to help them with what they can not do on their own, but acting against their desire to not maintain it was not a step God intended to take. The promise has always been that if God's people would humble themselves before Him, then He would hear from heaven and heal their land. (II Chron. 7:14)

All this means that just as has been the case for most of the past two millennia, circumstances at the time of the captivity dictated the temple could not be rebuilt until God opened a path. This forced, at the very least, the beginning development of what we see as Judaism today; which in many of its facets is a way of being a follower of God's Law for those of His chosen nation, without the existence of the temple and the ability to carry out the Law's ordinances as prescribed in the beginning. It also is something that can be observed without a significant group of the people living cohesively and/or on their land! So, I say again, this captivity was in many ways the birth of the Jewish religion. A religion that would not, or should not, exist in a form which differed from what was established in the wilderness at Israel's beginning, if it had not been for this time, and which solidified the whole chosen nation being defined as "Jews."

To be clear on this point, I want to cover a couple

more points, (only one of which we have the space to begin in this segment). The first is that there were already those of the northern kingdom who had been carried away by the Assyrians many years before the fall of Judah. As we talked about, there were those who escaped this captivity by moving to the South and joining Judah, and there were no doubt those who escaped from where they had been displaced, who made it back to Judah. However, there were many of these who stayed in the places they were carried off to, several of whom were simply lost into the general population of the world. At the same time, there were those who, just like the ones carried away by Babylon, began to take their heritage more seriously than ever. These communities, groups, families, or just individuals would also have begun a process of holding the Law in the ways they could without the temple.

However, in this there is one very important point which must be remembered by the modern observer of history! Many of these individuals from the North had been corrupted by the false religion started by Jeroboam as a way to keep the people from going to the South. There may have been plenty of them who, after the fall of the North, realized what a fallacy these things were, or who wished they had never stayed in the North till it came to this point. However, most of them would not have been in tune with the true ordinances as they should have been. We understand this especially when we consider how true this was even for those of Judah! What would have greatly inhibited the correction of all this is one very crucial fact - they did not have copies of the Law as we might today.

Books, as we know them, did not exist at the time, and there certainly were no printing presses. Writing was done by hand onto scrolls which were made of materials that did not necessarily endure for very long time periods without being kept in the proper environment. This fact is why there developed people known as scribes, who show up predominantly during the time of Jesus. These men were responsible for copying the Law over and over. This would ensure there were fresh scrolls to take the place of old ones, and as many copies of the Law as needed. However, this practice, along with other factors, did not mean the common man had access to a copy of the Law. Thus, those carried away by an empire such as Assyria, the point of which displacing people was to dismantle diversity, were not likely to have any more of the Law go with them than could have been carried in the minds of those who knew what they knew of it. (Ps. 119:11) While this brought about various practices concerning God's Law, it came from a much more disadvantaged state than those in Babylon had!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by
Philip E. Busby.***

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then go into a 33 day period of not involving herself in the representative laws of going to the temple and being involved in ceremony. This afforded more time to rest and not be obligated to the work for even ceremony belonging to things such as the feasts days.

For a female child, the woman gets double the time. She gets two full weeks of privacy and rest, for a female does not have to be taken to the temple after the first week. Beyond that, the mother is given another 66 days of limited service to ceremony. Upon the completion of these time periods for either a male or female child, she is to bring two sacrifices to the temple. A lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or turtle dove as a sin offering. The burnt offering is to show, after her time of rest from the ceremony of the Law, her life is still, and again, fully dedicated to the things of God. The sin offering is a way to standardly, thus more discreetly, make an atonement for anything she might feel she needed to bring a sin offering for during the time of not being able to. To make this more affordable for everyone, only the animals allowed for these sacrifices which are of lesser value are called for. Even if she feels she can not afford a lamb, the burnt offering can be accomplished using a turtle dove or pigeon, as well.

Next, we deal with the very contagious disease of leprosy. If a person shows any of the possible beginning signs of this disease, they are to be brought to the priest for official determination of if they are sick enough that they should be freed from the ceremony of the Law, which requires one to be involved with the temple and community activities. If the priest believes the signs are adequate to make a determination immediately, he will declare the person unclean. If not, the person will go into quarantine for seven days, and on the seventh day the priest will see if a determination of being unclean can be made at that point. If it has not progressed, the person goes into quarantine for another seven days. On the seventh day, the priest will look at it again. If it is healing and not spreading, the priest will declare the person clean, and they are to wash their clothes. If it has spread, the priest will pronounce the person unclean.

If a person already has a definite sign of progressed leprosy, they are to be brought to the priest, and if there is observed, even in a small spot, that the skin is breaking out, the priest will declare the person unclean. However, if it has spread all over the body by then, but there is no breaking out in the skin, only a change in color is observed, the person has survived the leprosy and is to be declared clean. Even for those who have visible breaking out of the skin, who are declared unclean, if they believe they have come past that state at some point and no further breaking out exists, they can come back to the priest. If he agrees, the person will be declared clean again.

Those who have something such as a boil on their skin which is healing should be observed for any sign of

leprosy as well, and if any exists, they should go to the priest for determination. If the priest believes it is leprosy, the person is declared unclean. If he sees it only as a possible leprosy, the priest will quarantine the person for seven days. If it spreads, it's leprosy, and the person is unclean. If it does not spread, it is just the boil healing, and the person is clean. This same procedure is true for any injury or rash of the skin. The priest will determine if they are unclean or need to be quarantined, after which any spreading will determine there's a problem. If not, the person is clean.

If indications show up in a place where there is heavier hair, such as the head or beard area, the priest will determine if he sees definite signs of leprosy. If so, the person is unclean; but if there is doubt, they will be quarantined for the seven days and be observed again. If there is still no spreading or definite sign of the disease, the quarantine will last another seven days, and men will shave their facial hair after the first seven days to make it easier to observe. After seven days more, if there is spreading or indications of worsening, the person is unclean; but if it does not worsen, it is not leprosy, and they are clean.

Changing coloration of a spot in the skin can be possible leprosy also, and is to be shown to the priest for determination. However, the simple fact one loses the hair of their head, even if it is just receding from the front, this is not considered a sign of the disease. That being said, if the skin now exposed ever shows signs like skin on other parts of the body that might possibly be leprosy, it should be shown to the priest for determination. Now, for anyone who is determined to have the disease, they will indicate it with three signs. They shall rend their clothes, which is a sign of mourning. They shall not cover their head, which, along with mourning, has to do with exposing at least some part of their body so as not to covertly hide their leprosy. They are also to cover their nostrils and mouth so as not to transfer airborne particles. Beyond this, they are obligated to warn others verbally that they have leprosy, so others can take precautions against contact with them. The person is also to live outside the camp to be quarantined from the greater community. This they need to do until they are healed of the disease, which sadly never happens for most.

The next precautions against leprosy have to do not just with something that is truly leprosy in its strictest definition, but any kind of progressive bacteria, mold, or the like that might cause disease or sickness in a human. These stipulations have to do with items people wear as clothing, no matter what the material the item is made of. If there is a sign of something abnormal in clothing, it is to be brought to the priest. The priest will take note of what the abnormality looks like and quarantine the item for seven days. On the seventh day, he will observe it again for any progression of the abnormality. If it has progressed in anyway, the garment is unclean and is to be destroyed by burning. If there is no progression, the item is to be washed. Then before the priest quarantines it for another seven days, he will look for about three things. First, if the washing has changed nothing about

the abnormality. Second, if it has darkened in color; in which case he will remove the piece with the abnormality before the quarantine. Third, if it has gone away, at least for the most part. After the second quarantine, if the abnormality is gone away or stays away, the item is to be washed again and is usable once more. If an abnormality that had not changed, still does not go away, in spite of the fact it has not spread, the item is to be burned. If the abnormality was removed or had gone away, but now appears in the garment again, it is to be burned.

The Law next covers the fact any person determined to have leprosy may survive the disease and be declared clean again. For this, the person is to be brought to the priest who will take them out of the camp to make a true determination. If it's truly healed, the priest will call for two clean live birds, cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet to be brought for a representative ceremony to make the deceleration. One bird is to be killed over a stream or some kind of running water to take away anything that is not caught in the earthen vessel, used and intended to capture mostly the blood. The priest will then take the scarlet, which represents the person's blood, and therefore their life; and the hyssop, which represents the bitterness the individual has endured; and the cedar wood, which represents the healing - that is to say, God has given the person's body the strength to survive the disease. These items along with the remaining live bird are to be dipped in the blood of the bird that was killed. Then using these items, the individual is sprinkled seven times with the blood, and the live bird is set free into the open field to live out the rest of its natural life. This represents the fact the person really should have died and been swept away by this disease as the first bird killed over the water. However, in spite of the fact the person had this upon them, they have survived to live their life without the disease, just as the bird dipped into the blood is set free to live!

The former leper is then to wash their clothing, shave off their hair from head to toe, and wash thoroughly. This is so as not to carry with them any of what might be on them of the disease from living among other lepers and/or those things they used while infected. The shaving of the hair also accomplishes this and resets the process of being able to tell if the disease makes a comeback, which should be shown to the priest. It also proclaims to everyone who sees them, especially those who knew they were a leper, that they are going through the ceremony of being declared clean again. This is also why the person can re-enter the camp, but must live outside their normal dwelling so as many of the community as can will see them and know they are no longer infectious. On the seventh day of this process, they are to once again shave off all body hair, which would have grown back to some degree. They are to again wash their clothes, their body, and be ready to re-enter society as fully clean. The hair shaving continues to assure cleanness from residual of the disease, and give opportunity for those who see them entering the temple and resuming normal activities that they have been declared free of the disease.

On the eighth day, they are truly ready to resume being part of the ceremony of the Law. For this, they are to take to the tabernacle for sacrifice: two male lambs and one female of the first year, all prime specimens. A specific measurement of fine flour mingled with oil for a plant-based offering, and a log of pure oil, which is nearly a pint by U.S. standards. The priest who determined the person was clean would present them and their offerings before The Lord. One of the male lambs would then be used for a trespass offering, because trespass offerings were used when one neglected God's law without intent. This lamb and the log of oil would be wave offered to present them to God, and then the lamb would be offered as a normal trespass offering. However, some of the blood of this offering would be used to reconsecrate the person to the service of God's Law. To do this, the priest would put some blood on the tip of the person's right ear, their right thumb, and right toe. Then the priest would take the oil, pour it into his left hand, and using his right fingers, sprinkle the oil before the tabernacle seven times to represent the completion of the persons reconsecration. The priest would then use the oil to anoint the person by putting it on them in the same places he did the blood. The remaining oil in the priest's hand would be poured on the person's head.

The female lamb would then be brought and sacrificed as a sin offering. This was for the fact the person had not, for what was likely a long time, been able to bring such an offering, no matter what they knew or did not know of sin in their life. This offering would be like a sin offering for sin out of ignorance as to represent the person's request for forgiveness over all their sins during their absence from the tabernacle. The other male lamb would then be offered as a burnt offering along with the plant-based offering in its prescribed way. This was last because burnt offerings represent a person giving their life fully unto God. This offering would complete a full range of offerings to reconsecrate the person, request forgiveness for their sins, and finally, the representation that the person willingly gave their life to God's service once again!

Now, if the person was too poor to afford bringing all this, they would still bring the male lamb for the trespass offering, the fine flour mingled with oil, and the log of oil. However, the sin and burnt offering lambs could be replaced with two turtle doves or two young pigeons. The procedure for offering the trespass lamb would be the same, with the blood being put on the person as prescribed. The oil would also be used in the same exact way as prescribed before. Then one of the birds would be offered as a sin offering in the prescribed way for this type of animal, and then the other bird offered for a burnt offering. The plant-based offering goes along with the burnt offering, just as it would if the lambs had been brought. All this would serve in the same way as the lambs, but make the bringing of the offering far more affordable for the individual.

Let's stay in God's Word!

FBS continued from pg. 2

population no doubt grew over the years, the Hebrews - as this family would be known - were as much a people indigenous to the land as anyone. When Israel comes out of the captivity in Egypt, they were in every way not just coming back to a land where their fathers had made connections, but a land their fathers were very much responsible for establishing as something more than just wide-open spaces. The fact of how true Abram, Isaac, and Jacob's presence here did this work becomes even more evident in the stories a bit further down.

Getting back to the point of verses 5 and 6, we see that both Abram and Lot had such great communities of possessions it became increasingly difficult for them to stay side by side. The need arose for them to truly separate into different territories within the land. The fact this was possible, again emphasizes the point of just how open the territory was at this time. Now, some would argue verse 7 disputes this point as it specifies the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt in the land. However, the verses make it specifically clear the strife was between Abram and Lot's herdsmen, not those outside the family. The point here is, in spite of the fact those outside the family were, in fact, living in the land, meaning the family was not alone, it was the families possessions which were causing the problem of space, not the tribal people outside their family.

The other important reason for pointing out they were not alone comes out in verse 8, as Abram tells Lot they are family, and it's not good for there to be strife between them. I think we often read this verse with just the thought Abram was saying, "We are family and while we might have to fight with others it's not good for us to fight with each other." However, I believe the more potent point Abram is trying to make is that they were not alone! There were other people watching them who saw the example of their lives. Being a man of God, Abram was concerned about their witness. If they were a family that could not figure out how to do anything to solve their problems other than to end up in a virtual war with each other, what kind of example would this be to those who did not serve or even respect The One True God Abram had been called to serve? They were not to foster the humanistic thought pattern that the strong simply overtake the weak and that's the way it should work. Even Israel was held back from later taking the land with force until a time when they could be used to bring God's judgment upon the sinful people of the land, whose iniquity had come to a full. (Gen. 15:16)

Verse 9 shows us Abram's humility and desire to sacrifice in order to live peacefully with every man. (Mark 9:50, Luke 6:27-31) He points out that the land was vast and open. All they had to do was choose who would go in what direction, and Abram gives this choice to Lot. In verses 10 through 13 Lot looks the situation over and shows what we talked about earlier, which was, his concern was more focused on the good life. He sees the hill country which was not as desirable for that purpose but, in no small part because of this truth, afforded more separation from those in the land who did not serve The Lord, and he chooses the more lush and green

valley of the Jordan. It is even specified Lot would live close to and in the cities. This puts him right in the place of people whose iniquity would very soon come to a full, and even in the days of Abram and Lot they would be destroyed by the direct actions of God! On the other hand, Abram would be left with the better part of the land which was outside the cities of the people and the consequences such a lifestyle inevitably leads to. It's not to say that living in a city is sinful in and of itself, but there is an old saying that birds of a feather flock together. While this is true, it is also a bit of a self-fulfilling truth in that birds who flock together become of a feather.

Verse 14 is where God confirms to Abram that his actions of staying in this hill country would be of no consequence to God's promise to Abram's descendants. Abram may not have sought the geographically best part of the land, but God tells him to look in every direction around him and realize that one day his descendants would not have to choose, for they would own it all. Verse 15 specifies the point we started out this segment talking about, which is - there is no place that can replace this spot as the place God chose to locate His nation, and the fact His chosen nation possessing it is what gives it its significance. God says this land would belong to Abram's seed forever! Now, some would point out Abram's seed includes a vast amount of people outside just the chosen nation, and I applaud that recognition. However, here is another point of Biblical perspective. It has been true that those who can trace their lineage directly back to Abram, but not through Isaac and Jacob, have been used to fulfill this promise and keep it true. However, while God is true to His promises, God's purer intent here was to talk specifically about the chosen nation. Remember that singularity in the wording of God calling Abram out of his father's house? As I said then it is not until later Abram is told he will be the father of many nations. The promise of taking him out of his father's house was that God would make a great nation out of Abram.

So, here too, the intent is to talk about the promise that the chosen nation would come from him, and this is the land they would possess forever. Now a point to remember here is that no matter who might or might not actually possess or control the land at any particular time, God's Word is unshakable. This means, when God says the land is theirs forever, it is so. Others may live on it, at times control it, but they will never truly own it. This is why the desire to drive the chosen nation off the land, or attempt to disconnect them from it is pointless. By the command of God it still belongs to Israel and always will. You might wonder why this matters in light of the truth others have, in fact, controlled it at times, ways, and/or in part? Well, it matters for the very same reason the chosen nation's existence matters. When God is ready to act, there is an unmovable, unchangeable place and people to keep an eye on. Discrimination will come. Sadness and sorrows might abound, and, at times, things may seem hopeless, but make no mistake about it, things are not as they appear. If God said it, you should believe it, His Word does not lie. If it's written in the Bible you'd do well to believe till you die. Mountains might be removed and cast into the sea, but God's

Word will last forever throughout eternity. The land is theirs, and the simple truth is, when God acts, you don't want to be on the wrong side of this fact!

Now, one can make the argument that verse 16 is about making Abram the father of many nations, not just the chosen nation. To that I will say, it is certainly the first hint of what God would eventually promise Abram about that fact. Again, the fact Abram is the father of many nations definitely ensures the promise of this verse is true. There is simply no way for us to count even all those we know can trace their lineage back to Abram. However, that's where my agreement ends. Man has a free will, and God was not taking that away from Abram or any of His seed. This truth effects the perfect plan of God from being everything it could/can be, but that's why this world must come to an end one day. That being true, God will not be made a liar in any way! In being the father of many nations, this promise was made true beyond a shadow of doubt, but that does not change the fact God's specific intent in saying this here was to say His chosen nation would be a very large group of people, and lest we forget - this is still true! Abram's seed through Isaac and Jacob alone is one of the largest demographics of people on this planet. In spite of attempts over century upon century to wipe them out, there is still a very great number of them to this very day. When looking at one of the best historically documented and largest attempts to wipe them out, which is also one of the most recent, we see it failed in spite of the unbelievable numeric destruction it brought to the Jewish people.

The Holocaust took the lives of literally millions of Jews, and the logistics this took to accomplish is nothing short of staggering! Think about it. Many groups as a nation of people have disappeared from the globe, and the effort to do so was often not specifically intentional, much less organized. At the same time, when those incidents of destroying an entire people has been intentional, it has never been so organized and - for lack of a better term - mechanized as the Holocaust was. This is why I think one of the greatest studies of the Holocaust is to simply look at the planning, effort, and resources that was put into it. Now, in what I'm about to say I'm not blaming the entire German people for the Holocaust, for there were many Germans who fought against it, and certainly no shortage of non Germans who were part of it! That being said, we can't deny the historical fact the heart of the orchestration of the Holocaust came from those of German blood.

Now, I have enough German blood in my veins to speak without blame of malice on the subject, and after pointing that out it might seem a bit arrogant to make my point for specifying the Germans, which is to say - one is hard pressed to find a more organized and efficient people in the world than the Germans. It just astounds me how much of that efficiency was employed on top of an all-out war effort just to carry out the mission of the final solution, which was the code name for the total annihilation of those of Jewish descent! In

my opinion, the Germans very well might have been unstoppable if they had not put so much effort into the Holocaust and focused solely on the war for world domination. That might seem antipatriotic to say, but the facts simply speak for themselves. Hitler took much from his war effort to call up massive resources, right to the bitter end, in an attempt to accomplish the final solution. Meeting after meeting was convened, and technology was improved - if not all out invented - for the sake of figuring out how and accomplishing the finding, transporting, killing of Jews, and then even dealing with the tremendous amount of dead bodies this created. My point here is this, in the end, even if you argue Hitler only wanted to rid Europe of the Jews, again the facts speak for themselves. He failed!

If he had not lost the war overall would he have failed? This we can only speculate the answer to, but one simple fact that answers this question is this, God was not going to allow him to accomplish it, which is why we truly give praise to God for the fact the Allies won the war. At the same time, if we lay that aside for a moment, it is hard to see how he could have succeeded in the final solution, especially if killing every last Jew in the world was his intent. When one looks at what it took to accomplish what he did, it's hard to imagine there being the resources necessary to kill off such a massive demographic of people spread across the globe. Just as God promised in this verse, His chosen nation is truly as the attempt to count the dust of the the ground for their numbers alone. Add to that their spirit to survive, much of which comes from the various attempts to destroy them, and you see what they mean when Jews say - never again!

Today they still stand on the land Abram was promised they would own forever, and the number of those returning to that land grows everyday. As individuals, they are responsible for many true advancements in human achievement, and it should be no surprise that as a nation, they are one of the most sophisticated and technologically advanced societies in the world, even surpassing nations once considered giants in these areas. They are solving problems no one thought could be solved, and bringing life back to land once barren and dead. They are also growing in their ability to defend themselves against those who would attempt to destroy them, and ever gaining the ability to stand all by themselves if need be. This may anger those who desire to see the true things of God in this world destroyed, but the flag of the Jewish people, bearing the very star which during the Holocaust was law for Jews to wear in order to identify them and warn others who they were, flies in the land Abram was commanded in verse 17 to walk the length and breadth of! When the time comes that the armies of the world decide they must mobilize to see this brought to an end, God Himself will split the eastern sky, and the blood of those who hate God and His Word will be that which flows!

Until next time, Shalom!

