



GOD'S PROMISE AND THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL

COMPELLING QUESTIONS PEOPLE
ASK ABOUT ISRAEL AND THE MIDDLE EAST



DON FINTO

P R A I S E F O R

GOD'S PROMISE AND THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL



God's Promise and the Future of Israel is dynamite! Vintage Don! It is clear, personal, articulate and fun to read, and it will raise your sights to the coming of the reign of the Messiah and to the full redemption of His covenant people. Don Finto is one of the most influential men in my life. His walk with God is dynamic, personal and *life* to all who meet him. You will discover why in this book.

TOD BELL

Author, *It Can Be Done: The Marketplace Maximized for the Kingdom of God*
Midsouth Regional Director, Harvest Evangelism
Founder, New Vision Network and Pass the Salt Marketplace Luncheons

Don Finto is a rare breed of Christian leader. A successful pastor of Belmont Church in Nashville (where I first met him), Don hasn't rested on his laurels, but has "retired" into an entirely different and critically important ministry, namely that of promoting God's work among the Jewish people today. Don's abiding love for Israel has not diminished his desire to see Jewish people come to Christ or distance himself from Jews who come to faith in Christ. Instead, Don has developed close ties to the Messianic Jewish movement. *God's Promise and the Future of Israel* grows out of these convictions and provides information that is helpful for Christians who want to understand what God is doing today among Messianic Jews and in the land of Israel.

DAVID BRICKNER

Executive Director, Jews for Jesus

If you're involved in worldwide evangelism, *God's Promise and the Future of Israel* is a must-read. In this book, Don explains and defends the idea that nations come to know Jesus as God through His dealings with Israel. You will see how God is fulfilling the ancient prophecies right now in Israel and what this means to the Gentile Church. As a marketplace minister, I'm excited after reading this book about being engaged in ministries in businesses in Israel. Read this book and find out why.

MIKE FRANK

President, Frank Consulting
Santa Barbara, California

In *God's Promise and the Future of Israel*, Don Finto has given us one of the most helpful roadmaps toward a biblical understanding of God's purposes for the people of Israel. With stunning clarity, he offers insightful answers to the questions surrounding Israel's place in the heart of God, why the chosen people are still the chosen people, and why we need to stand in a posture of blessing toward Israel. *God's Promise and the Future of Israel* is penetrating in its analysis and balanced in its presentation.

STEVEN L. FRY

Senior Pastor, Belmont Church
Nashville, Tennessee

Above the noise currently surrounding subjects such as the nation of Israel, the Jewish people, the Middle East and biblical prophecy comes the clear, calm and compassionate voice of Don Finto. Don speaks with the fiery passion of a prophet, the careful skill of a scholar and the gentle concern of a pastor. In *God's Promise and the Future of Israel*, Don offers insights, answers questions and presents challenges to all, Jew and non-Jew alike, who wrestle with these timely and essential issues.

MARTY GOETZ

Messianic Music Minister

With the art of a statesman, Don Finto communicates "loud and clear" for all to hear the relevant message of God's promise for Israel and the Jewish people. Solid answers for perplexing questions fill the pages of this strategic read. Clear the fog by reading this book!

JAMES W. GOLL

Cofounder, Encounters Network
Author, *The Seer* and *Praying for Israel's Destiny*

Pulsing with God’s heartbeat for His chosen people, *God’s Promise and the Future of Israel* brings further revelation to the Body of Christ concerning the prophetic purposes for the people and land of Israel. In this book, Don traces biblically the history-altering events that occurred when the promise of God intersected with the timing of God—a “suddenly” that changed the course of nations—and then outlines with clarity and revelation the “suddenlies” that are happening in our current day and their significance in the plan of God. Don’s answers to questions that often arise concerning Israel and the Jewish people bring insight and understanding to some of the pertinent issues in the Israeli/Arab struggle. A must-read for every believer.

JANE HANSEN

President and Chief Executive Officer, Aglow International

There is no more discerning perspective than Don Finto’s when we seek to grasp God’s profound dealings with the Jewish people or the nation of Israel today. Any reader, Jew or Gentile, will profit by this book, and every Christian leader deserves to have the answers to the forthright questions it addresses.

JACK W. HAYFORD

President, International Foursquare Church
Chancellor, The King’s College and Seminary
Los Angeles, California

Don Finto’s new book, *God’s Promise and the Future of Israel*, is both thought provoking and biblical. In this book, Don presents a wealth of material that he has gleaned over years of faithful ministry to the Body of Christ and by means of his “hands on” relationship with Israel and her people. I deeply appreciate the manner in which Don connects Israel’s journey to that of the nations. Israel was always birthed with the nations in view and this has not changed. This is what the future is all about.

MALCOLM HEDDING

Executive Director, International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

Don Finto is a father to many of us who are leaders in the Messianic Jewish movement. He is a man with a passion for God’s purposes for Israel and for the salvation of the nations. Yet Don’s passion is tempered by clear and realistic thinking. *God’s Promise and the Future of Israel* is inspirational, practical and balanced.

DANIEL JUSTER, TH.D.

Director, Tikkun International

Thank you, Don, for this comprehensive, refreshing guidebook through the really “hot” questions we’re all asking about Israel. Your years of passionate pastoral ministry combined with your devoted affection for the peoples of this Land bring both sense and sensitivity to the most crucial yet often misunderstood issues concerning the mystery that is Israel. We love you.

DAVID AND MICHAELLA LAZARUS

Beit Immanuel Congregation
Netanya, Israel

Don Finto has the ability to engage your mind, ignite your heart and compel your feet to walk as “one new man” embracing the King of the Jews and the King of the Nations. *God’s Promise and the Future of Israel* is captivating, educational and inspirational. It holds the keys to global revival, unity in the body of Messiah and understanding the end times, and it is relevant to people of all cultures, generations and denominations. As a gentile who longs to see the fulfillment of the great commission in all nations, the revelation that Don brings through this book is essential. I wholeheartedly recommend this book.

TOD MCDOWELL

Founder, Ignite Ministries
Missionary, Youth With A Mission
Spiritual Elder, University of the Nations in Kona, Hawaii

Five years ago, on an airplane to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, revelation struck as Don shared with me many of the teachings found in this book. Though I had acquired two university degrees in Biblical studies, it was as if I were reading certain passages of the Bible for the very first time. I could not believe I had not seen God’s promises regarding the everlasting covenant He made with the Jewish people. Since that time, these words have been the source of life and blessing for both me and the church I serve. I recommend *God’s Promise and the Future of Israel* to you wholeheartedly, for I am convinced the tremendous blessings we have seen as a church over the past five years are due in large part to honoring the prophetic principle of going “first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”

DAVID MCQUEEN

Pastor, Beltway Park Baptist Church
Abilene, Texas

God's Promise and the Future of Israel is a book that everyone must read. Don has a deep insight into God's heart and an understanding of God's purposes for Israel and the Middle East. He is a man of prayer and a father to many Messianic believers in the land of Israel. As a native and local Israeli pastor, I highly recommend this book. It will inspire and bring revelation to receive God's impartation in these last days. Definitely this is a timely book "for such a time as this."

AVI MIZRACHI

Pastor, Adonai Roi (The Lord is my Shepherd) Congregation
Director, Dugit Messianic Outreach Centre
Tel Aviv, Israel

As an Israeli Messianic Jew, I strongly recommend this book. Don Finto is not writing theoretically. He is giving his life to walk with us in the Messianic movement as a devoted father. His passionate heart is uniquely knit with both the Gentile and the Jewish disciples of Yeshua. Here you will find urgently needed insights rooted in humility.

EITAN SHISHKOFF

Tents of Mercy

Years ago I recorded an instrumental song titled "Hope of Israel." Many people who heard it said there was meaning behind each note. There was, but for me, as one who has come to love the nation of Israel and the Jewish people, the emotion went beyond words. Don Finto—my pastor of many years and my mentor—has captured the essence of the hope of Israel in the book you now hold in your hands. He never just shoots the breeze—he aims for the heart of the matter and hits his target. He has done it again, challenging me (and every Christian). I probably learned the most about worship from Don Finto. Now I am learning from him the most about having a passion for Jewish people and loving them with the love of Christ.

MICHAEL W. SMITH

Don Finto is one of the most unique servants of God I know—a man of deep compassion and integrity and extraordinary strategic wisdom. If only every Christian leader and dedicated lay person would read this book! It unlocks key end time signs and their significance for you and your life mission. Understanding God's strategy and timing revealed in this book will make a huge difference in your personal and corporate spiritual harvest.

ARI SORKO-RAM

President, Maoz Israel Ministries

God has filled Don Finto's heart with a passion for the Body of Christ to enter our full destiny, which means we must understand and participate in God's purposes for Israel and the Jewish people. In this articulate and persuasive book, Don informs us clearly, step by step, the Biblical basis for this stance. The one who engages this work with an open heart will not remain the same. You will be motivated to action . . . read at your own risk!

ROBERT STEARNS

Founder, Eagles' Wings Ministries

Author, *Prepare the Way*

God's Promise and the Future of Israel is truly anointed! It is a book to be read and read again by one of the foremost biblical scholars of our time. Study these words, keep a copy for your library and purchase additional copies to pass on to friends and family and church.

BROCK AND BODIE THOENE

Authors, The Zion Covenant Series, The Shiloh Legacy Series,
and The A.D. Chronicles Series

GOD'S PROMISE
AND THE
FUTURE OF ISRAEL

DON FINTO



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CONTENTS

A Personal Word from Don Finto	12
Acknowledgments	15
Introduction	17

PART 1: “THE TIME HAS COME”

Jesus, on the night that He was betrayed, broke bread with His disciples and prayed, “Father, the time has come.” The time has also come for the Jewish people to return as a nation to the world scene, a historical fact that is affecting our world.

Chapter 1: When Promise and Timing Intersect	25
<i>Biblical examples of God’s intervention, when His promise and His timing have intersected in the past, provide evidence of God’s faithfulness and point to the ways in which promise and timing are intersecting in our day.</i>	

Chapter 2: The Rebirth of the Nation of Israel	35
<i>The return of Israel is the most significant biblically predicted event of the last two thousand years of world history—all in God’s timing.</i>	

Chapter 3: Jerusalem Restored to Israel	47
<i>Nineteen years after the rebirth of the nation, God accentuated that return through the Six-Day War of 1967, when Israel reclaimed her ancient capital in Jerusalem, all according to promise.</i>	

Chapter 4: The Opening of Jewish Eyes	61
<i>The Messianic Jewish movement, no longer hidden, is a viable growing organism both in Israel and throughout the world—another present-day fulfillment of Scripture.</i>	

Chapter 5: Revival Among the Nations	75
<i>The astounding growth of the Church in Africa, Asia and Latin America is bringing about a shift of the Church’s power from the West. This revival in the nations is part of Paul’s and Ezekiel’s visions of the end times.</i>	

Chapter 6: Awakening the Church to a Love for Israel 91
After centuries of turning her back on the Jewish people, the Church of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is awakening to the Jewish roots of her faith.

PART 2:
**QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK ABOUT ISRAEL
AND THE MIDDLE EAST**

The return of the Jewish people to Israel and to Jerusalem, their growing faith in Yeshua (Jesus) as the promised Messiah, the Christian world revival, and the Church's awakening to her Jewish roots have all brought forth a myriad of questions from Jew and Gentile alike.

Chapter 7: What About the Arabs? 107
In the midst of the incendiary events unfolding in the Middle East, there is a prophetic destiny for the Arab nations—and a brotherhood between Arabs and Jews to be reclaimed.

Chapter 8: Does the Land Still Belong to Israel? 121
The Land belongs to Israel in perpetuity, but Israel's possession of the Land depends on her faithfulness and obedience.

Chapter 9: Will Jesus Literally Reign as King on Earth? . . . 131
Much of Jesus' brief ministry on Earth was spent in proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven was "at hand" and announcing that His return would be the beginning of an earthly millennial reign. Yet the fullness of God's restoration—of both mankind and nature—awaits eternity future, when Jesus will reign over both heaven and Earth.

Chapter 10: What Do Messianic Jews Believe? 159
The rapidly evolving Messianic Jewish movement is evidence that Jewish people worldwide are acknowledging their own Messiah as Savior and Lord, respecting the New Testament as well as the Old and desiring to grow in true godliness, which Yeshua modeled as life in the Spirit.

**Chapter 11: Why Should the Church Embrace Her
Jewish Roots? 179**
As Israel's "younger brother," the Church is coming into a new awareness of her Jewish heritage and is learning to appreciate those practices that are fulfilled in Jesus in preparation for the revival that is promised to the "one new man."

Chapter 12: How Should Christians Respond?	197
<i>As unconditional love for the Church's "elder brother," Israel, replaces fear, mistrust, hatred and suspicion, individual Christians are able to do much to support and encourage Jewish people, both believers and nonbelievers. Guidelines for action and personal testimonies will help you determine the ways in which you, too, can make a difference at this critical time in world history.</i>	
Appendix A: Suggested Bible Reading Plan	217
Appendix B: Quotations from Past Generations of the Saints on Israel and the Jewish People	219
Appendix C: Contact Information for Ministries Mentioned	224
Appendix D: Recommended Reading	227
Appendix E: The Caleb Company	230

A PERSONAL WORD FROM DON FINTO



I grew up with a certain reverence for the Bible, but it was not until more recent years that I have been motivated to read it for the sheer joy of drawing near to God and knowing Him better. In recent decades I have become increasingly aware of the importance of biblical prophecy. The constant threat of nuclear war, the reality of international terrorism and the proliferation of films and books that paint potential catastrophic possibilities and depict end-of-the-world scenarios compel all of us to think about the future.

So many people who are seeking answers today reach out to “spirit guides,” consult astrology charts or try to read tea leaves or tarot cards in order to find out more about God. We travel to the East to study under shamans. We read Nostradamus and Edgar Cayce, the Veda, the Koran, Bhagavad Gita and the Tao Te Ching to gain insights into our times. We have our Big Bang theories and end-of-the-world hypotheses, but we rarely refer to this ancient Book called the Bible. Sometimes we have gained the impression, perhaps through a radio or television evangelist, that the Bible causes us to hate each other rather than to love, narrows our view of life, and makes bigots of us all.

Even many of us who say that we believe the Bible, who frequent worship assemblies with some regularity and who consider ourselves born again, have never once read the Bible in its entirety and do not consider the possibility that this ancient book of writings, purported to have come from God’s chosen

scribes, is often an excellent commentary on current events.

I want to encourage you to reconsider all this and to pull out the old family Bible (or go to the bookstore and buy one) and begin to read it. The Lord has promised that He will reveal Himself to those who seek Him. The biblical prophets spoke often of our day. Moses lived about 3,500 years ago; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and the Hebrew prophets more than 2,400 years ago. Yet their predictions often describe our times with amazing accuracy. Do not let your view of Christians and of the Church limit your ability to hear from God. Read in order to learn, not to prove what you already believe!

To my Jewish friends: If you have not picked up the *Tanakh* (Old Testament) lately, I would encourage you to do so. You will find there some *very interesting* prophecies about the nation of Israel. Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the other prophets lived 2,000 to 3,000 years ago, and yet they spoke clearly of our day, when Israel would return from the nations.

Read the history of your people—especially the Prophets. You will not understand everything, even if you are a major historian. But you will find many passages that describe the history of the Jewish people up to the time of the scattering of the Northern tribes under Assyria, the exile and return under Babylon, the dispersion into the nations after the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, and the present-day return to the Land.

There are also those equally thought-provoking and inspired words about a Man, a Redeemer, a Messiah who would come, a descendant of David. (I do understand that there is disagreement today within the Jewish community about whether we should still expect a personal Messiah, but read the Scriptures for yourself. *You* decide.)


A growing number of Jewish people around the world are beginning to believe that Christians and Jews should be much

closer to each other. We have many things in common. Both see Abraham as the father of their faith. Both agree that the Ten Commandments and even the moral laws of the Jewish Scripture are essential for living life to the fullest. Could it be that the Christian “Jesus” and the Jewish Messiah are the same person?

You may want to read some of the Messianic prophecies and see if you think they could possibly refer to Jesus. Isaiah 53 sounds strangely like the suffering and crucified Lord of the Gospels. Isaiah 9 speaks of the birth of a Son who would be called “Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (v. 6). Moses assured all future generations that, after the scattering to the nations, “if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 4:29). You, my friends, are a part of those future generations. Your God, your prophets, and your Bible have promised you that if you will seek God with all your heart, you will find Him.

Do not allow the Church’s horrific history against the Jewish people to affect the way you hear from God. More and more of us non-Jews are developing a growing love for the Jewish family of faith and are determined to stand with you, whether or not we ever agree. After all, we share the same biblical heritage. As one of my friends says, “It is your family journal that has become our Sacred Scripture.”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



How could I have known, after years of pastoring a local congregation, that God would open up to me this world of the Jewish people? His ways really are beyond our comprehension. Thank you, Eitan and Connie, Asher and Betty, Dan and Patti, Ayal and Yardena, Ofer and Chris, Avner and Rachel, David and Emma, Marty and Marlene, Avi and Chaya, Ari and Shira, Eddie and Jackie, David and Michaela, Evan and Maala, and all of you who have let me into your hearts and who are now sealed eternally in mine. You have taught me and welcomed me as one of you.

I have had a few outstanding “encouragers” in my life. Anne Severance ranks at the top. She is more than an editor. She is a woman of God who knows how to bring more out of people than they even knew was there. I would not want to undertake any writing assignment without her.

How thankful I am for some of the recent books that have encouraged Christian leaders to have intercessors! When I hit a snag and wondered if I could go forward, I knew that Tina Marie Cerra, my faithful coworker and lover of God and of His covenant people, would rally the forces. Thank you to all of you who have believed with me, including the entire Belmont Church family who have loved us and supported us for almost 35 years. I am grateful to call Steve Fry my pastor.

And I continue to be awed that my Martha can maintain her sanity, having been married to me for more than 50 years! I often tell brides and grooms that, on that day when they take their vows, they are marrying many different people—the person who was, the person who is, and all the people that person will become! There have been many changes in my life, and Martha

has been beside me the whole journey. Even when she did not understand me, she trusted my heart for God. That is huge, and I will be eternally grateful.

Gospel Light and Regal, I still love you. I love your hearts. I love the reason for your existence—get His message out! Bill III, Bill II, Kim and Roger, be blessed!

And now “to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Tim. 1:17).

INTRODUCTION

Just recently, after spending time with a group of pastors in one of our nation's northern states, two brothers stayed behind to inquire more about the several hundred thousand Jewish people who have come to faith in Jesus as their Messiah in the last 30 to 35 years. It was an interesting encounter as we talked together. I could almost see the wheels turning in their heads as they tried to find a box into which to fit this startling information.

Their theological training had taught them that the Church would be taken to heaven before the Jewish people came to faith, and yet I was telling them that 400,000 or more of these first-covenant people have come to believe in Jesus in the last decades. I found myself almost grateful for my lack of higher theological training¹ since I had fewer preconceived notions about how God would bring about the return of the Jewish people and about other end-time biblical predictions.

My involvement with the Messianic Jewish movement began when many Jewish young people turned to faith during the Jesus Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s; some of them became “my sheep.” Of course I did not know how to shepherd them, because it was all too new to me; so I had to take a crash course in “Jewishness.” At least I was wise enough to reach out to some who were far ahead of me on the road—Dan Juster, Andrew (Eitan) Shishkoff, Keith (Asher) Intrater and others. I became acquainted with Jews for Jesus, Chosen People, Liberated Wailing Wall, Lamb, and other Jewish believers in Jesus who were trying to find their way in a totally Gentile Christian environment.

Today the number of Jewish believers has risen dramatically. It is no longer strange to find Jewish people who believe in *Yeshua*

(Jesus) as their Messiah. The son of one of our well-known Jewish doctors in town came to faith through Jews for Jesus. Another physician himself became a believer, much to the dismay of his family. According to recent surveys, in Israel there are now about 120 different house groups or synagogues of “Messianic believers,” some having as many as 300 members.²

The old Histadrut (Labor) headquarters of David ben Gurion in Tel Aviv is now a Messianic center with the Dugit Bookstore and Outreach Center on the ground floor, where a number of congregations (of different ethnic groups) meet for worship. The largest old theater in downtown Jerusalem has been bought and renovated as a community center for believers. It will be used for congregational meetings, concerts, drama and all sorts of ministry. Not far from that location are an innovative media-production center and music coffee house, which reach out to a young generation of Israelis.

A house, once purchased by the Anglican community in old Joppa, has now been turned over to Beit Immanuel Messianic congregation, which serves the growing body of believers in the area, including many of Russian descent. An Amharic-speaking, Ethiopian congregation and an Arab congregation use the building as well. The former Stella Carmel guesthouse on Mount Carmel, run by the Anglicans for years, is now owned and operated by a Messianic congregation that reaches out to both Jews and Arabs. Christ Church, in the Old City of Jerusalem, has a Hebrew-speaking congregation as well as an English-speaking one.

No fewer than 100 Messianic believers now serve in the Israeli army, some as officers. The former head of the Jewish Agency in a very prominent city in Eastern Europe is now a believer and helps to lead congregations both in the *Diaspora* (Jewish people living outside of Israel) and in Israel. In a north-

ern Israeli city, the mayor and government officials have expressed appreciation to the Messianic congregations for humanitarian aid and other types of aid and have welcomed a new Messianic congregation to their city.

In 2001, I wrote my first book, *Your People Shall Be My People*. Two primary reasons compelled me to write it. First, the Church as a whole seemed to know little of the growing Messianic Jewish movement, even though there are several hundred congregations in the United States, the former Soviet Union, Europe, Latin America and Israel. Some are small home meetings; others are quite large. The largest Messianic congregation in the world is in Kiev, Ukraine, with a weekly attendance of more than 1,400.

Second, I knew of no one who had connected world revival to the return of Israel to the Land and to the Lord, even though the Bible clearly indicates that we will experience “greater riches” when “their fullness” occurs (see Rom. 11:12), that it will be “life from the dead” when they begin to accept Messiah (see Rom. 11:15) and that the nations will know the Lord when He shows Himself powerful through Israel in the eyes of the whole world (see Ezek. 36:23).

The publication of *Your People Shall Be My People* has opened up many doors of ministry. Translations in German, French, Dutch and Russian also keep our e-mail and telephone communications busy. I have spoken to a gathering of Pentecostal pastors in Italy and traveled across Australia and New Zealand. The English translation was given to 10,000 pastors and leaders at the 2003 Phoenix, Arizona, Promise Keepers Pastors’ Gathering, to the leaders of Youth with a Mission in their Singapore meeting the same year, as well as to denominational leaders as they gathered in various locations.

I have met with leaders from about 70 nations at Tom Hess’s All Nations Prayer Convocation in Jerusalem, followed by the annual

Feast of Tabernacles celebration sponsored by the International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem, whose representation includes almost 100 nations. Doors have opened for meetings with leaders in the Jewish community, with representatives from the Consul General in Atlanta and then, later, with the Consul General from Ottawa, Canada.

In all of these settings, many questions have arisen. Some I thought I could answer; others were not so easy. Some answers were encouraging; others were disappointing. The Lord still continues to bring revelation, and yet the questions asked still call for an answer.

Shortly after the publication of *Your People Shall Be My People*, I began to see our present-day scenario—the reestablishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the retaking of Jerusalem in the Six-Day War of June 1967, the opening of Jewish eyes to the message of Jesus, the revivals around the world and the increasing awareness of many of us in the Church regarding the Jewish roots of our faith—as an intersection of God’s promises with God’s timing.

These thoughts bring us to the dual purpose of this book: (1) to look at the intersection of promise and timing in our day, and (2) to provide answers to questions about Israel and the Jewish people.

But as you read all this, remember that it’s not really about Israel! It’s not even about revival among the nations. It is about a God who loves and who comes to free us to be who we were created to be. It is about a forever-loving, covenant-keeping God. That’s why Israel comes in as a visible reminder of the God who does not forget—even after 2,000 years. He is still there—waiting, loving, wooing. And yes, Israel will again be a blessing and a light to all the nations.

This book has much to say about Israel and God’s purposes with and through her, but it’s also about you. He calls you,

not because He needs you, but because you need Him. That God-shaped vacuum within you will know peace only as you rest in Him and He in you.

Notes

1. I obtained my Ph.D. in German literature from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, after which I became head of the language department at Lipscomb University. I also have an M.A. with an emphasis in counseling from Harding Graduate School of Religion in Memphis, Tennessee, and I received further Bible training from an institution that is now Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas. None of these degrees or diplomas, however, granted me training as a theologian.
2. According to Kai Kjaer-Hansen and Bodil F. Skjott in their book *Facts and Myths About the Messianic Congregations in Israel* (Jerusalem, Israel: United Christian Council in Israel in cooperation with the Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies, 1999, p. 12), there were 81 congregations and house groups of Messianic believers meeting in Israel at the time of the book's publication. Current surveys conducted by Tom Hess indicate that the number is upward of 120.



PART I

“THE TIME HAS COME”



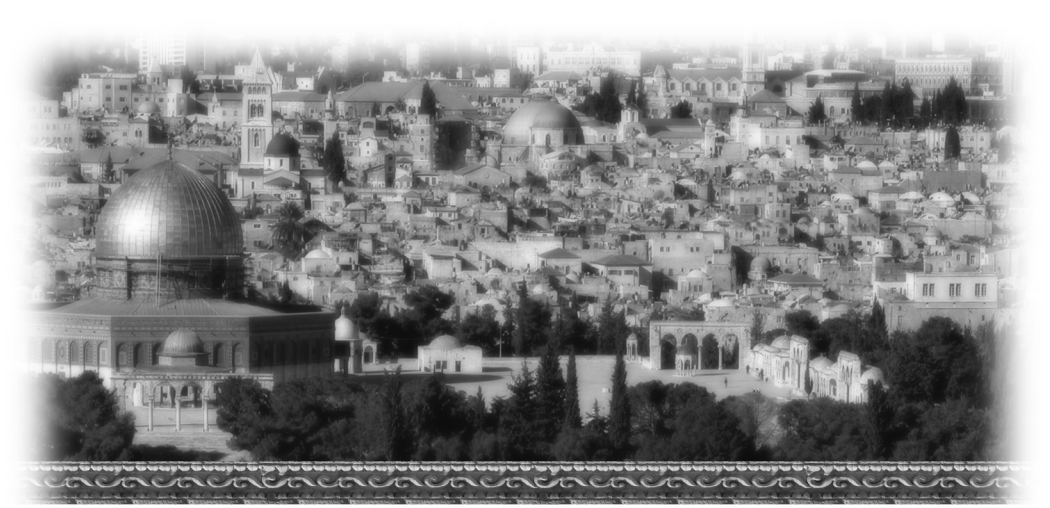
Jesus spoke these words shortly before His death. Jesus lived to die.

Early in His public ministry, Jesus said, “My time has not yet come” (John 2:4). On another occasion, when His brothers were preparing to go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, they asked Him whether He also planned to go. “The right time for me has not yet come” was His answer (7:6).

But on the night of His betrayal, Jesus said to His disciples, “My appointed time is near” (Matt. 26:18). And in one of His last prayers, Jesus “looked up toward heaven and prayed, *‘Father, the time has come’*” (John 17:1, emphasis added).

When Paul later reflected on the life of Jesus, he wrote to the Galatians, “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son” (4:4), and to the Romans, “You see, at just the right time, . . . Christ died for the ungodly” (5:6).

The time has come in our world as well, the time to which many of the prophets pointed. Get out your Bibles—for you, my Jewish friends, your Tanakh—and let’s look at the prophetic season in which we find ourselves.



CHAPTER I

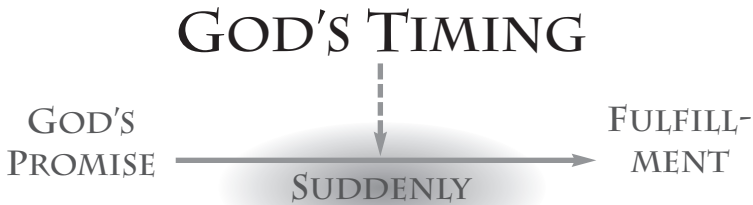
WHEN PROMISE AND
TIMING INTERSECT



*But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son,
born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law,
that we might receive the full rights of sons.*

GALATIANS 4:4

When the promise of God and the timing of God intersect, there is a “suddenly” that causes a significant change in the world, and God begins to look for people who will participate with Him in what He is doing in that generation.



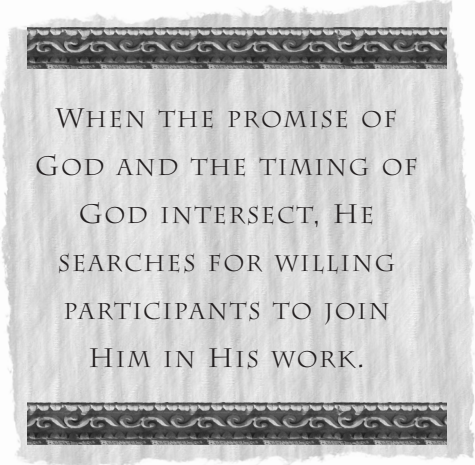
Moses and the burning bush. Joshua and the priests' setting foot in the Jordan. The Jewish leaders' return from Babylon in the days of Daniel the prophet. Gabriel's appearance to Zechariah in the temple. The founding of the State of Israel in 1948. Jerusalem's returning to Israeli control after the Six-Day War of June 1967. What do all these events have in common? They mark the intersection of God's promise with God's timing.

A PROMISE GIVEN

For 400 years the descendants of Jacob had languished in a foreign country. The early years had been good years. Jacob's son,

Joseph, was the prime minister of Egypt, confidant of the Pharaoh; as a result, Jacob's other sons and their tribes had been granted some of the best pastureland in the country. But that condition changed rapidly after the death of Joseph.

For centuries the children of Israel had been considered the scum of Egypt. On their backs the great Egyptian structures were built. The promise given to their father Abraham about being a nation of their own in their country of origin was like an indistinct legend. God's words had been clear enough when first spoken to Abraham:



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Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions (Gen. 15:13-14).

The promise was clear—I will bring you back. The timing was settled—in 400 years. But Egypt was the mightiest empire in the world. How could the promise come to pass when the enslavement of Abraham's descendants seemed so permanent?

And then one day, a bush burned in a Midianite desert. God encountered a man. That burning bush was the “suddenly” of Moses' generation, indicating that the landscape of the nations was about to change. God's promise and God's timing intersected

at the bush. He was searching for willing participants to join Him in His work in that time.

Moses, the reluctant leader, returned to Egypt to begin the confrontations with Pharaoh and his Egyptian court. At first, things seemed not to go well. Egyptian magicians matched the work of God. Moses' rod-turned-snake consumed the rod of Pharaoh's sorcerers, but it appeared to be an unsuccessful conflict of powers. Pharaoh made promises but then refused to honor them. The Egyptian taskmasters became even more demanding. The whole nation of Israel grew disillusioned and angry with Moses and Aaron, the very men who carried the message of God.

But the following years proved that there had, indeed, been a God-encounter. No generation had ever experienced what was about to take place. No guidelines were written. It was necessary to listen for God every step of the way—and to be obedient. God was fulfilling His promise. His people were being set free. Many frustrating years lay ahead, ignominious defeats along with miraculous victories, but an irreversible course had been set. God's promise to Abraham was not to be denied. Promise and timing had intersected.

CROSSING THE JORDAN

“For forty years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you” (Num. 14:34), God told Israel after they rejected the counsel of Caleb and Joshua and refused to go up and conquer their enemies. The promise was confirmed—you will yet enter the Land. The timing was given—after 40 years. Every adult male, with the exception of those two faithful men, was buried in the desert before God would allow Joshua to lead

the nation into the Land promised to Abraham's descendants.

Israel suffered through the miseries of their nomadic existence—2 million people eating manna each day, never sure how long they would tarry in any one location. The punishment for their disbelief took its toll on an entire generation. Not until after the death of Moses and Aaron did Joshua hear the words from the Lord:

Get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them. As soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD—the Lord of all the earth—set foot in the Jordan, its water flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap (Josh. 1:2; 3:13).

When the 40 years ended, the whole nation and all nations surrounding were forever changed. The divided water was the sign that promise and timing had intersected again.

RETURN FROM BABYLON

The promise came through the prophet Jeremiah in the days when the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple and carried the king and the leading officials in Jerusalem into Babylonian exile. “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place” (Jer. 29:10). Captivity for 70 years and then the return—that was the prophetic prediction.

Among the early captives to Babylon, young Daniel, who was trained to enter the king's service, proved himself to be so valuable to the king that he was later promoted to a position over all of the wise men in the province (see Dan. 2:48). One day, many

years later, after Daniel had become an old man, he was reading in the Jeremiah scroll and came across the prophet's words that promised the return. Daniel understood that he was living in the time for the promise to be fulfilled, so he began to give himself to prayer and fasting for that return (see 9:2-3). The old prophet came to God in intercessory prayer, taking upon himself the sins of kings and princes long since dead and crying out to God for mercy and for the fulfillment of the promise (see 9:4-8,17-19). Later, in recounting the story, Scripture says that Daniel "remained there [in Babylon] until the first year of King Cyrus" (1:21), indicating that Daniel was among those who participated with God as His promise and His timing intersected and the exiles were brought home.

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME

For 4,000 years the promise of God to Eve in the Garden—that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head (see Gen. 3:15)—lay dormant among the folklore of an erratic and often schizophrenic nation. The mysteriously worded promise would sometimes take on momentary, veiled assurance as prophets arose and spoke of a coming Redeemer. A remnant of Israel held on to those promises tenaciously; others seemed to move carelessly forward while the nation suffered through the oppression of world empires that surrounded and plagued her: Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Life's circumstances left little time for prophetic dreams. Long intervals passed without reference to the coming Chosen One.

All that changed one day when Zechariah went into the Temple to perform his normal priestly duties. After centuries of waiting in expectation, a strange thing happened. During

the daily incense offering, an angel appeared at the right side of the altar (see Luke 1:11). The angel announced that Zechariah's aged wife, Elizabeth, was to give birth to a son who would prepare the way for the Messiah. Zechariah's inability to speak until after the birth of his son John was evidence to the gathered crowd and to his friends that something unusual had happened in the Temple—God's stunning announcement that His promised Messiah was about to appear. The promises of centuries were about to intersect with the timing of God.

Rumors must have swirled around young Miriam (Mary) a few months later when she found herself pregnant before her marriage to Joseph. How could this be?! She had not been intimate with any man. But even stranger things unfolded in the following months.

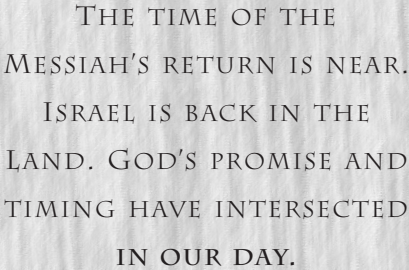
On the night of her son's birth, shepherds in the surrounding fields spoke of angels who had appeared and had directed them to the young child. Wise men from the east came, inquiring of the king who was to be born. When King Herod heard of the visit, he began to ask the chief priest and teachers of the law where the infant Messiah could be found. "In Bethlehem of Judea" was their reply (Matt. 2:5).

That all of this took place at the precise time the prophet Daniel had predicted the Anointed One would come (see Dan. 2:44; 9:25) should have alerted every reader of Scripture. Yet it all seems to have been forgotten by the time Jesus, as an adult, began to teach and minister with such authority, evidenced by the miraculous signs that accompanied Him.

"When the time had fully come" (Gal. 4:4), Rabbi Shaul (the apostle Paul) wrote many years later when thinking back on all that had transpired during those prophecy-fulfilling, world-changing days.

The appearance of the angel Gabriel to Zechariah, then later to Miriam (Mary) in Nazareth, was the “suddenly” that announced to all Israel and ultimately to the world, that the

promises of the generations were about to find their fulfillment. It would still be 30 years before John would make his appearance in the wilderness of Judea and Jesus would begin His brief three years of public ministry, but an irreversible course had been set. God’s promise to Eve in the Garden and His assurances to Isaiah, Micah and the prophets would soon



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come to pass. The promise of God and the timing of God had intersected. The world was forever changed. Thereafter, in every period of history, God would be looking for those who would participate with Him in His work.

PROMISES KEPT

Today we stand at another intersection of promise and timing. Within the past 60 years, two historical events have brought about the fulfillment of biblical promises and have changed the course of the nations.

1. The birth of the State of Israel in May 1948, resulting from the United Nations’ vote in November 1947, was God’s announcement to a watching world that major world shifts were about to take place—that the

time of the Messiah's return is near. Israel is back. Promise and timing have intersected *in our day*.

2. The recapture of Jerusalem by the nation of Israel during the Six-Day War in June 1967 was God's exclamation point that His plans were on schedule. King David's capital city is back in Israel's possession, just as Jesus Himself foretold (see Luke 21:24).

These two events have triggered three other phenomena that are having an impact on our world with exponential force.

1. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish people have opened their hearts to believe that Yeshua (Jesus) is indeed the Messiah of Israel, just as Isaiah, Hosea, Ezekiel and others predicted. Not since the first century, when the original Church was totally Jewish, have so many Jewish people begun to believe that Jesus is the long-awaited, prophecy-foretold Messiah of Israel.
2. An expansion of faith in this Jewish Messiah is reaching around the world to shake nations that have long known nothing of the world's Redeemer—exactly as Paul foresaw when writing to the Romans, just as the prophet Ezekiel had predicted and just as prophecy students have come to believe in the past 400 years or more.
3. The Church throughout the world is becoming aware of her own Jewish heritage and her “grafted-in-ness” to the family of Israel, and is becoming united as the “one new man” of which Paul spoke in Ephesians 2:15. Sadly, the Church has not been kind to the Jewish people through the centuries. All that is changing in our day, as fresh revelation about the Jewish roots of our

faith reaches the ends of the earth and as the Church grows in her desire to affirm and bless the people of the Land.

Let us take a more careful look at each of these intersections before we begin to answer some of the questions they evoke.

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