

Israel-Palestine RIGHT TO RETURN and the BIBLE

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April 5, 1998

A. INTRODUCTION:

The RIGHT TO RETURN to Israel-Palestine is a crucial concept in understanding the right to the land of Palestine. Some people still speak about their collective and exclusive right to return based on their own facts, whilst some others use Holy Bible to claim their rights to do the same.

This study is an attempt at proving an answer to many of our friends about the “right” to build settlement all over the Land of the “Fathers”, or an answer to some religious groups and their claims of biblical heritage.

The questions that we can ask are these between others.

- Does the Bible give Jews an indefinite right to return to Palestine? - Does such a right to return, if it exists, include any and all Jews on the world? - Does that right, if it exists, exclude any other people regardless of their ancestry? - Is God exclusively the God of Jews or the God of every Human being without distinction? - Could God really promise to one only people a land and exclude others?

Are the Jews of the Old Testament the ancestors of the Jews of to-day, especially the Israelites?

A great number of historians and Biblical scholars do not agree that the Jews of to-day are the same Hebrew that lived in the ancient land of Palestine thousand years ago and around whom all the biblical narratives revolves.

Today’s Jews and Israelites could be descendants of a spiritual heritage and tradition, not of a physical one. Some historians indeed speak about the Ethiopians and many others from a Russian tribe that converted to Judaism, they say that those are not descendants of the Hebrews.

This tends more support to the idea that Present day Jews could be joined to the ancestral Hebrews through a religious tradition, rather than a biological connection as are many Christians and Muslims.

Some historians and biblical scholars say that the Jewish rabbis in the first centuries of the Common Era refined that tradition into what is today’s Judaism of Mishnah and Torah.

When there is about nothing inherently biological or genetic about it, as any quick glance at ethnic diversity of modern Israelis will convince.

Yet, today we all use the language which allows all the Old Testament events, prophecies, names and places to be called “Jewish”, ignoring all the other people Cannaites, Jebusites, Philistins, Arabs etc. We also ignore as well that Christians and Muslims relate themselves to the traditions of the Old Testament who follow it with the New Testament, if they are Christians; and the Qoran, if they are Muslims.

Assuming that Israel is built on such heritage of the Old Testament on what is exclusively Hebrew, then Jew, then Israelite, then the actual Israel is anti-Biblical, anti-historical and anti-Truth. This makes the exclusively Jewish claims to the “Right to Return” exclusively a fallacy that no honest historian or Biblical scholar would accept or propagate.

B. Does the Bible give Jews an “Indefinite Right to return” to Palestine?

1. The greatest majority of Biblical scholars, Jewish, Christian and Muslim agree that the Bible did not give to any people, not even for Jews an “Indefinite Right to Return” to Palestine.

2. These scholars agree that if there is any “Right to Return”, this right is limited and based on some conditions. It speaks only of a moral right to return that should be considered within a reasonably short time after the factor prohibiting the return or caused the exile had ceased. And it pertains only those who had been forced to leave or have been unjustly exiled or prohibited from returning.

It does NOT allow that their descendants for generations and generations could have the “Right to Return” when the factor that made it impossible to them to fulfill their dreams have ceased. It speaks also of the short time that the Law of that country or that time had given them to return. The Bible does not provide open choice for the timing of the “return” indefinitely of distant generations.

3. Those who immigrated of their own free will and voluntarily looked for a better life, business elsewhere have no right to claim the same right of those forced to leave unjustly. These cannot claim any right to return in the name of the Bible or any civil Law of any time.

4. Those who were unjustly exiled and therefore had a moral right to return but did not return following the removal of the factors that forced them to leave and preferred to stay where they are or immigrated freely to another place had lost their right to return under the Biblical right to return and any civil law of anytime. Their descendants cannot claim in any time the right to return at all.

On the contrary under the Biblical Provision they disobeyed and should be punished. The Bible speaks of the punishment of the sons because of the sins of their fathers. They are no more considered to possess that Covenant because they disobeyed the appeals of the

prophets of Israel. Their descendants have no right to claim that Israelite heritage as they have disobeyed to the Law.

5. In fact “In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord inspired King Cyrus of Persia to issue this proclamation throughout his kingdom, both by word of mouth and in writing: “Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia, ...God has also charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever, therefore, among you belongs to any part of his people, let him go up, and may his God be with him.” (Ezra 1:1-3)

Chapter two speaks about the Census of those who returned to Jerusalem, it shows that not all the Jews had returned.

Should then the appeal of Cyrus be considered as an indefinite right to return? Should the Jewish who remained in Babylon (some of them had remained in the present-day Iraq when others went to live in Israel) be obliged to return to Jerusalem? Can the descendants of those who returned and those who remained in Babylon consider themselves to possess an indefinite “Right to Return”?

In fact after forty-eight years of deportation, in 539 BC, Cyrus the King, as we have said, allowed Jews to return, but a small group as W.F. Albright, an archeologist and scripture scholar says had returned. He then speaks of a group of 20.000 by the year 522 B.C in the a small part of the Holy Land not the actual one (the territory of Judah was at that time not wider than 40 miles wide and 25 miles deep, much smaller than the kingdom of Judah before the exile), including the people who have never left Palestine. (See W.F. Albright, The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezdra, P.P.87, 110 F.)

The number who returned did not exceed the number of Jews who chose not to return or those who chose freely to stay where they were, or immigrated before, during and after Cyrus.

6. After the Diaspora, God who punished his people for their disobedience, as the Bible says, had given the Israelites a reasonably time to return and turn to him. Their return is a sign of conversion and repentance and not a sign and a right of repossessing the Land. The symbol of their conversion and repentance was to build the house of the Lord and not to possess lands.

The Bible shows also that not all the Israelites accepted to return and repent or to participate to build the house of the Lord.

7. It is known also historically that before, during and after the Jewish- Roman wars, the majority of Jews were not living in Palestine. The majority did not return to Palestine, had not been obliged to return to Palestine, but exercised their choice to return or not to return. The right to return cannot be belatedly claimed because the factors that forced them to leave, or that prohibited their return had ceased to exist.

On the contrary, refusing to exercise their right to return at that short time given to them by God and the Prophets, shows that their right became nullified.

8. During the 78 years of the Maccabean Independence the vast majority of the Jews did not choose to return from the different diasporas and live in Palestine.

9. Throughout the last 3000 years, many Jews have chosen to live out of Palestine. In fact, even today, the number of Jews outside Palestine are more than triple of the number of Jews in Palestine and in the State of Israel. The descendants of these Jews of 3000 years ago cannot by any means under Biblical Law or civil Law claim any "Right to Return" and repossess in the name of God any land in Palestine.

As we have shown, they cannot belatedly lay claim to an ancient right of return which was intended for the limited period of time during which the factors that unjustly drove them to exile had ceased. The Bible in fact had given a moral right to return only to those who obey to the Law and not to all Jew. If they have failed to exercise their right to return, that right was nullified.

Having lost their priesthood, Temple, covenant Jews cannot claim, based on the Bible any right of return as they disobeyed the Law of Adonia and of the Prophets.

Lord had in fact given them a new covenant as says Jeremiah, the Prophet, "The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant and I had to show myself their master, says the Lord. But this is the covenant, which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my People. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and kinsmen how to know the Lord. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the Lord, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

10. In fact a lot of Orthodox scholars do not believe that Israel is the fulfillment of God's Promises to the Jews. For example Jewish communities as Samtar and Neturei Karta and many other religious groups and secular groups of Jews reject present-day Israel.

11. A claim for a "Right to Return" to Palestine for Jews is not Biblical but a political fact, it is in fact a clear injustice toward the Bible to interpret it not according the will of the Lord Adonai but the will of men.

C. A CATHOLIC POINT OF VIEW:

The Biblical "RIGHT TO RETURN" for the Catholic Church as a whole, as well for the majority of the Orthodox and Protestant Churches or Communities, as well for some Jewish Communities, is a spiritual call for repentance (return to the One, The Only One, The Holy God, Adonai, Allah) and the belief on the mission of Love of the Messiah.

For the Jews a spiritual awaiting for the coming of the Messiah who will restore the covenant pronounced by Prophet Jeremiah, quoted above. For Christians the belief that the Messiah had already come, that Jesus- Christ is the Messiah himself, and that he is the Son of God, the Redeemer, the Savior of the wholeWorld.

This return then refers to a conversion of heart, a turn to God so as to inherit not an earthy kingdom but the kingdom of God: "Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way." (Malachi 3:1) "A voice of one crying out in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord make straight his paths." (Isaiah 40:3) Then comes again the above quoted verses of Jermiah the Prophet that Jesus the Mesiah dah realized in time and in the heart of every singl e believer, through the work of the Holy spirit.

Note that as the Lord is speaking about a "New Covenant" in Jerimaiah the Prophet, the Lord declares that the "First Covenant" a covenant of flesh and of Land was abolished by the new one, and that the old one was only a symbol of the conversion of our hearts to Him.

He does not speak in Jeremiah about a right to return to a Land but about a kingdom of peace, love and truth open to all people, as He put the "Law within us and written it upon our hearts".

This call to return is an INDEFINITE appeal to man (Jewish, Christian, Muslim or beleiver of any faith or unbeleiver) for conversion to the Most Holy, to the Only one God, Allah, Adonia.

D. CONCLUSION:

- 1.** The Bible does not give to Jews any moral "Right to Return" and repossess all the Land, nor even a part of the land exclusively or make the people, who have lived there for thousands and thousands of years, to submitthemselves as illigal immigrants. God cannot be but God of righteousness, justice, peace and love. God is not a real estate agent for one people.
- 2.** There is not historical proof that the Jews had ever possessed all the Holy Land (i.e. the today Palestine-Israel).
- 3.** The Israelites came to Palestine as conquerors, they fought with an existed people who had never left Palestine, but coexisted with the different conquerors and ethnic groups.
- 4.** Whatever spiritual or moral right to return to Palestine that could still exist in the minds of some Jews, that right cannot and could not outweigh the spiritual or moral right of the Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims and Christians to their home land, Palestine.
- 5.** If some scholars are not sure to identify all the Palestinians with the Canaanites that possessed Palestine, it is also difficult, if not impossible, to identify the Jews of today with

the Jews of yesterday, those who were exiled in Babylonia or lived in the different Diasporas all over the world and still live today in different countries.

6. Whenever European governments and the USA administrations try to support the claims of Jews to return and build their home country, they should equally consider all those people they have themselves colonized, exiled, persecuted, depossessed of their land in the modern times and tried to change their heritage, language, history, religion etc.

Native American, for example, have more demonstrable rights and historical claims to repossess the USA than any Irish, Scottish, Italian, English etc.

7. It is known also historically that the agencies that brought Jews from many parts of the world to present day Israel used many times illegal methods. They coerced many Jews into by lies (Palestine is a land of no people), they used terrorist attacks to force non-Palestinian Jews to see Israel as the only safe place for the Jews.

They have used political, religious and economic means to oblige Jews to come to Israel. However many Jews chose to remain in the country of their blood, where they had a cultural heritage. Others also stopped in their way out from the country where they used to live and go elsewhere than to Israel, or left Israel after they discovered that they have been tricked by those agencies and hardly the land they have been led to believe in.

All this shows that the claims of a Biblical right to return is anti-biblical and anti-religious as well anti-truth.

8. The Bible as a word of God could not but call for Justice, Peace, truth and love, regardless of the use of it by some Christians (the Christian-Zionists, as they call themselves) saying that God is calling only the Jews and not anybody else. The Bible will never call for injustices and exclusivity, and should never be used to preach injustices. God, Adonia, Allah of the Bible, as it is the word of the same God, had made from all of us bloodbrothers to share his love and not to fight.