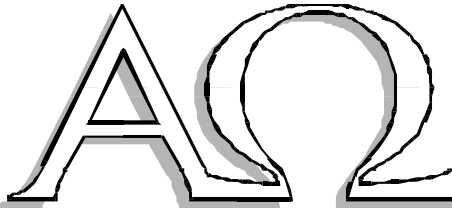


Creation Revelation



God is in the details

Volume 11, Issue 4

Fall 2007

Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one
of thy righteous judgments endureth forever.

Psalm 119:160

The Return of Israel

The Land

Israel's claim to the land is based specifically on two Old Testament covenants given to Israel directly by God, the Abrahamic and Palestinian. Israel's claim is by divine right, and is acknowledged by Israel's prophets.¹ Besides the divine right claim, Israel's claim is also supported by the Balfour Declaration of 1917, the League of Nations mandate in 1922, and by United Nations resolution in 1947. The Abrahamic covenant, briefly stated, is that Abraham and his descendants would receive the land as an "everlasting possession." This covenant is an unconditional covenant; God will do what He says unaffected by anything Israel might do.² This Abrahamic covenant is found in Genesis chapters 12, 13, 15, and 17. God told Abram (Abraham) to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to a land that He would show him. Psalm 105 reaffirms the covenant and clearly includes Israel as well.³

Which **covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant:** Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of **Canaan**, the lot of your inheritance: Psalms 105:9-11

From these and other verses of the Old Testament it should be clear that God intended Israel

to have the land of Canaan (modern Palestine) forever, as a divine right, unconditionally. God reaffirmed this to Moses when he led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage about 600 years after Abraham. God entered into another covenant, the Palestinian covenant, with Moses regarding the conditions of Israel's occupation of the land promised to Abraham and his descendants. It is clearly stated that "its benefits were conditional, depending upon Jewish obedience and conduct."⁴ The inheritance was "forever," but the possession was conditional.

And it shall come to pass, **if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments** which I command thee this day, that **the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:** Deuteronomy 28:1

Following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, Masada in 73 AD, and Bar Kochba's Revolt from 131-135 AD the Jews were scattered into many nations.⁵ After that time the Jewish homeland deteriorated into a vast wasteland so that it was described by Mark Twain in 1867, and other visitors, as sparsely populated, barren, and poor.⁶

According to Samuel Katz, in 70 AD the population of Palestine was between 5 and 7 million people. By 1785, the population was not more than

200,000, and by 1850 the population declined to between 50,000 and 100,000 people in the whole of Palestine.⁷ In 1835, Alphonse de Lamartine wrote of Israel as a tomb.⁸

Outside the gates of Jerusalem we saw indeed no living object, heard no living sound, we found the same void, the same silence... as we should have expected before the entombed gates of Pompeii or Herculaneam... a complete eternal silence reigns in the town, on the highways, in the country... the tomb of a whole people.⁹

In 1882 Palestine was not a political entity, and by that time had a population within the territory of modern Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza of about 624,000 people, of which there were about 24,000 Jews. A smaller area that was later partitioned into the new Jewish state by the United Nations in 1947 had a population of between 100,000-150,000 people in the 1880s.¹⁰

In general, before 1880 the land that was to become modern Israel was largely owned by absentee real estate speculators in Damascus, Syria, Lebanon, and elsewhere.¹¹ It can be shown that between 1880 and 1930 that Jews began to purchase Palestinian land in Israel, so that the number of Palestinians displaced by the Jews is relatively small; fewer than the number of Egyptians displaced by the construction of the Aswan Dam in Egypt. Little, if any, of the land owned and worked by the local fellahin was taken or purchased by the Israelis.¹² So, it was a logical location in which to provide a Jewish homeland following a cruel exile into many nations where there occurred much persecution and atrocities of the rejected Jewish people. The massive return of European Jews occurred in 1948.

The Return

The Bible is specific that there will be a worldwide re-gathering of Israel into her land in the end-times. In fact, the Bible is clear that this will take place in two parts. First there will be a gathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment, then second will come a gathering in belief. This can be seen in the following Scriptures:¹³

First – In unbelief in preparation for judgment, as since 1948:

As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a **mighty hand**, and with a **stretched out arm**, and **with fury poured out**, **will I rule over you**: And **I will bring you out from the people**, and **will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered**, with a **mighty hand**, and with a **stretched out arm**, and **with fury** poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and **there will I plead with you face to face**. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And **I will cause you to pass under the rod**, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And **I will purge out from among you the rebels**, and **them that transgress against me**: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Ezekiel 20:33-38

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, **the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead**, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore **I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem**. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will **I gather you in mine anger and in my fury**, and **I will leave you there, and melt you**. Yea, **I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath**, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; **and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you**. Ezekiel 22:17-22

This gathering in unbelief is to be before the Tribulation (The Day of the Lord; The Time of Jacob's Trouble).

Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, **before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you.** Zephaniah 2:1-2

Beginning in 1880, when Jews began to purchase land in Israel, the migration back to the land began. This migration was not in belief, but was a secular return. This is the situation today; Israel is largely a secular nation. From 1880 until 1914 approximately 60,000 Jews returned to the Land of Israel, so that by the beginning of the First World War there were approximately 80,000-90,000 Jews living in Palestine. This early return was mostly Jews from Russia, Galicia, Poland, and Rumania. At the time of the United Nations partition in 1947, before the massive migration and the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, the population of Israel had swollen to about 538,000 Jews and 397,000 Arabs according to official United Nations estimates. In fact there may have been a clear majority of Jews over Arabs in that part of Palestine that became Israel as early as 1890.¹⁴ The important point is that at the time of the massive return of the European Jews in 1948 the Jews were already the majority of those residing in Israel, and may have been so for more than 60 years.

The return that we have seen occurring for more than a hundred years follows precisely what has been prophesied in Scripture. According to these prophecies, God first brings Israel to Jerusalem for judgment to refine them and bring them to national repentance. When they are purified they will return to the Lord. They are redeemed with judgment (See: Isa 1:22, 25, 27; 48:10; Jer 6:27-30, 9:7; Zec 13:9; Mal 3:2-3).

Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: **And I will turn my hand upon**

thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. **Zion shall be redeemed with judgment,** and her converts with righteousness. Isaiah 1:22-27

During the seven years tribulation Israel will endure severe persecution by Satan and his Antichrist (Rev 12), two-thirds of the Jewish population will die. God will refine and preserve the remaining one-third.

And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, **two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.** And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: **they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God.** Zechariah 13:8-9

The initial regathering of Israel takes place before her repentance and refining (Eze 36:22-25). God will bring them back just as they are.

Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for **mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.** And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For **I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.** Ezekiel 36:22-25

The Gog and Magog war of Ezekiel 38 and 39 is during the time that Israel is gathered into her land in unbelief.¹⁵ It is midway through a seven year

peace covenant, during the time when Israel is back in the land in unbelief, that the realization of the Great Tribulation will suddenly come on Israel.

When ye therefore shall see **the abomination of desolation**, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then **let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains**: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For **then shall be great tribulation**, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. Matthew 24:15-21

The Tribulation particularly relates to God's dealing with Israel as seen by Jeremiah:¹⁶

And these are the words that the Lord spake **concerning Israel and concerning Judah**. For thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for **that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it**. Jeremiah 30:4-7

Israel's relationship to God is that of a first born:

And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, **Israel is my son, even my firstborn**: Exodus 4:22

Because of this unique relationship to God, Israel will suffer greatly in her refinement during the Tribulation, receiving a double portion for her sins.

O Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare

is accomplished, that **her iniquity is pardoned**: for **she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins**. Isaiah 40:1-2

Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes. And **first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things**. Jeremiah 16:16-18

We will now see that Israel will again be regathered, this time in belief following her refinement.

Second – In belief, in faith for blessing, in preparation for the Messianic Kingdom.

There are four groups of Jews to be considered.¹⁷

1. **Apostate Jews, "the many" of Daniel 9:27** – These are those that enter into the Seven-Year Covenant with Antichrist, about two-thirds of the nation. They will die in the worldwide persecution in the Tribulation.
2. **The 144,000 Jews (Rev 7:3-8)** – Part of the one-third that will survive the Tribulation.
3. **Other Jewish Believers** – Those Jews who come to belief through the ministry of the 144,000 (Rev 7), or through the ministry of the Two Witnesses (Rev 11), or in some other way. Some will be martyred with the two-thirds, while others may remain as part of the one-third.
4. **The Faithful Remnant** – This group will make up the majority of the one-third of the nation that will survive the Tribulation. At first they will be unbelievers in the Messiahship of Jesus, but they will not

be fooled by the Antichrist, nor agreeable to his Seven-Year Covenant. They are the ones that "shall not be in haste."

Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: **he that believeth shall not make haste.** Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And **your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand;** when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. Isaiah 28:16-18

The Faithful Remnant will survive the Tribulation as recorded in Isaiah:

And it shall come to pass in that day, that **the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.** For though **thy people Israel** be as the sand of the sea, yet **a remnant of them shall return:** the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land. Isaiah 10:20-23

At first they will trust in God, but not necessarily in Jesus as their Messiah (see also: Isa 4:2; 37:31, 32; Joel 2:32; Obadiah 17). The Remnant will be protected during the Tribulation (Isa 41:8-16). The Remnant will be provided for during the Tribulation (Isa 41:17-20; Isa 65:8-16). The Remnant will have a specific place of refuge prepared in advance for that purpose (Matt 24:16; Rev 12:6, 14; Isa 33:13-16). The specific place is clearly identified in Micah:¹⁸

I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee;
I will surely gather the remnant of Israel;

I will put them **together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold:** they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. Micah 2:12

Bozrah is located in ancient Edom, in the region of Mount Seir, where the rocky fortress of Petra is located. The name Bozrah means "sheepfold." Petra, with its restricted access is shaped like a giant sheepfold.¹⁹

In describing the Antichrist's campaign to conquer the world, Daniel records that three nations will escape his onslaught:

He [Antichrist] shall enter also into the glorious land [Israel], and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. Daniel 11:41

It is significant to realize that all three nations, Edom, Moab, and Ammon comprise the modern Kingdom of Jordan, in the very place where Petra is located, a place safe from the Antichrist's grip.²⁰

"The Salvation of 'all Israel' will occur only after Christ's coming in power" when He comes to deliver the Jews from the Antichrist as seen in the following:²¹

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, **until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved:** as it is written, **There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:** For this is **my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.** Romans 11:25-27

The restoration of Israel in faith is covered by Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48.²² Isaiah comments that a **second gathering** of Israel will take place, this time in belief.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that **the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people,** which shall be left, from

Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah **from the four corners of the earth**. Isaiah 11:11-12

The context of Isaiah 11:11-12:6 is the return of Israel in preparation for blessing, not in unbelief for judgment. This regathering for blessing will occur after Israel's repentance and regeneration, after the Time of Jacob's Trouble (the Tribulation), and before the Millennium. The curses that were on Israel will now be applied to her Gentile enemies. Israel will now obey.²³

If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will **the Lord thy God gather thee**, and from thence will he fetch thee: And the Lord thy God will **bring thee into the land** which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the Lord thy God will **circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed**, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And **the Lord thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies**, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee. And **thou shalt return and obey the voice of the Lord**, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day. Deuteronomy 30:4-8

Although many commentators describe the return from the Babylonian captivity as the first regathering, it cannot be because the return from Babylon was not a worldwide regathering as is described for the first regathering in unbelief. The final regathering in belief is best illustrated by the prophecy found in Isaiah 43:²⁴

Fear not: for I am with thee: **I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my**

daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him. Isaiah 43:5-7

Jeremiah 16 says that God will bring them **again** into their Land (see also: Jer 23:3, 4, 7, 8).

Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, **The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers**. Jeremiah 16:14-15

Israel will be regenerated then will return with weeping and supplications:²⁵

For thus saith the Lord; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, **O Lord, save thy people, the remnant of Israel**. Behold, **I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth**, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. **They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them**: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, **He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock**. Jeremiah 31:7-10

The final regathering is expressed this way by Jesus as an event following the Second Coming:²⁶

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and **they shall gather together his elect from the four winds**,

from one end of heaven to the other.

Matthew 24:31

A passage in Mark indicates that this final regathering will include living Israel and resurrected Israel.

And then shall he send his angels, and **shall gather together his elect** from the four winds, **from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.**

Mark 13:27

The Possession of the Land

The basis of the possession of the land is the Abrahamic Covenant. In Genesis, God told Abraham that the land was to be for him **and** his seed. However, Abraham died without ever possessing the full extent of the land that God had promised. The only land that Abraham possessed was a few wells and a burial cave that he purchased. The only way that Abraham can obtain what God promised is that he is to be resurrected at the final regathering as we have seen in Mark 13:27.²⁷

And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, **Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.** And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, **walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.** Genesis 13:14-17

The exact boundaries of this possession, from the Euphrates River in the north to the River of Egypt in the south, are given in Genesis 15, and have never yet been achieved, pointing to a future fulfillment:²⁸

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs,

and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day **the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:** The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites. Genesis 15:12-21

The River of Egypt refers to a finger of the Nile along the line of the present day Suez Canal. Some have mistakenly thought it refers to the Nile itself, but if that is so then Israel entered the Promised Land before they left Egypt at the time of the Exodus. Others believe it refers to the Brook of Egypt in the central Sinai, but the Brook is not a river, but a dry river bed known as a wadi (Wadi-el-Arish). Some prophetic passages refer to the Brook, but the difference is between "extent of possession and control as over against the extent of actual settlement." The Jews will settle as far as the Brook of Egypt, but will have control to the River of Egypt (Suez Canal). The east-west borders will be from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea (Eze 47:15-20). It is only in the Millennial Kingdom that Israel will possess the land in accordance with the Abrahamic and Palestinian Covenants.²⁹

What Now?

The modern return of Israel should bolster belief in the accuracy of Scriptures. Today however, many people reject the Bible as being not relevant for today. It was many years ago in the early 1970s that this writer was of the same mind. However a chance reading of Hal Lindsey's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, showed that the Bible can be read literally. While that book today is somewhat

dated by the passage of events and the changing globe, the events that are unfolding daily before our eyes fit the prophetic Scriptures even better than when Hal Lindsey first wrote his book.

An event on the horizon that is just coming into focus is the remarkable prophecy of the war of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38 and 39). The nations mentioned as coming against Israel in that battle are all in alignment today represented by the current Muslim nations, including Libya and Iran. Interestingly, the nation known as Iraq is conspicuously absent in the description of Israel's enemies in that battle. Likewise, Saudi Arabia is also seen sitting on the sideline. Russia however is mentioned as playing a leading role, and considering the recent stance of Russia's Putin in regards to nuclear Iran, the time seems very close.

Recently someone was heard saying that he was not interested in Bible Prophecy. In fact, many churches today have the same attitude. They believe it is scary, difficult, controversial, and not conducive to church growth. That's sad, because the Bible is at least one-fourth and possible nearly a third prophecy.³⁰ If almost a third of the Bible is prophecy, then don't you think that God considers it important? Paul, in his letters to the Thessalonians, did not think that the subject of prophecy, or future events was too difficult or controversial for those new Christians to comprehend. The study of prophecy encourages believers to live holy lives and to be prepared for the return of Christ at any moment. The expectancy that is generated by the study of prophecy also promotes evangelistic fervor.

The return of Israel to her land should stir up expectancy in our hearts. It should cause us to look longingly for the soon return of Jesus Christ. How can the bride be prepared if she doesn't know the time? That is why Jesus said we must watch. If we are to watch, then what is it that we are to watch for? This is the importance of studying prophecy. The realization of fulfilled prophecy, such as the return of Israel, should be a strong witness to those seeking for reasons to believe. How can we be an

effective witness if we are not interested in prophecy? Fulfilled prophecy is a strong witness to unbelievers. Wake up Church! If you don't understand prophecy you cannot even recognize the signs of the end-times. **AΩ**

(Endnotes)

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- ¹⁸ Fruchtenbaum, THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MESSIAH, pp. 287-292.
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- ²³ Fruchtenbaum, THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MESSIAH, pp. 412-414.
- ²⁴ Fruchtenbaum, THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MESSIAH, pp. 414, 415.
- ²⁵ Fruchtenbaum, THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MESSIAH, p. 417.
- ²⁶ Fruchtenbaum, THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MESSIAH, p. 419.
- ²⁷ Fruchtenbaum, THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MESSIAH, p. 421.
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Topics will have a primary focus on the Defense of Scripture, including Creation (Genesis), Humanism, and Prophecy (Revelation). Other topics of interest may be presented. Questions, comments, and suggestions are encouraged.

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