

The Regathering of the Jewish People

The Most Important Prophetic Development of the 20th Century

By [Dr. David R. Reagan](#)

One of the greatest examples of God's continuing love for the Jewish people can be found in the most important prophetic development of the 20th Century.

When I think back on the 20th Century and all its amazing events, I am reminded of some words found in [Habakkuk 1:5](#). They constitute a statement made by God to the prophet:

Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days — you would not believe if you were told.

The 20th Century was full of momentous events that no one could have foreseen in 1900. Looking back on that century, what would you consider to be the most important event from a biblical perspective — particularly from the viewpoint of Bible prophecy?

- World Wars I and II?
- The Great Depression?
- The advent of space travel?
- The collapse of Communism?
- The reunification of Europe?
- The resurgence of Islam?

The answer from a biblical perspective is none of these events. The most important development of the 20th Century — more important than all of these events put together — was the worldwide regathering of the Jewish people to their homeland.

And lest you think I am exaggerating, let me prove it to you.

The Relevant Prophecies

There are many Bible prophecies concerning the regathering of the Jewish people in unbelief. In fact, their regathering in unbelief is the most prolific prophecy in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Let's take a look at three of the most important of those prophecies. The first is found in Jeremiah 16. It is mind-boggling. Read it carefully:

14) "Therefore behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when it will no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,'

15) but, 'As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them.' For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers."

This same prophecy is repeated verbatim in [Jeremiah 23:7-8](#).

You cannot fully appreciate what is said in these verses unless you know something about Judaism. The one event that all Jews consider to be the greatest miracle in their history is the deliverance of their ancestors from Egyptian captivity under the leadership of Moses.

But this scripture passage asserts that a time will come when the Jews will look back on their history and proclaim that their regathering from the four corners of the earth — the event that began in the 1890s and continues to this day — was a greater miracle than their deliverance from Egyptian slavery. In other words the regathering in the 20th Century will eclipse the Exodus!

This means that you and I are privileged to witness one of the greatest miracles of history. And yet, the average Christian has no appreciation for what is happening because he is ignorant of Bible prophecy and he has been taught that God is finished with the Jews. Therefore, the current regathering is simply viewed as an accident of history.

The second prophecy I want to bring to your attention is found in Isaiah 11:

10) Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples...

11) Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

12) And He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Some have tried to debunk any modern application of this prophecy by claiming that it was fulfilled about 500 years before the time of Jesus by the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity. But that cannot be. The passage refers to a “second” regathering (the return from Babylon being the first). Further, it states this will be a regathering “*from the islands of the sea,*” which is a Hebrew colloquialism for the whole world, as is made clear in verse 12 where it states that the regathering will be “*from the four corners of the earth.*” Also, verse 12 says that “*the banished ones*” of both Israel and Judah will be regathered. The return from Babylon was a regathering of Jews from Judah.

The third prophecy is found in Ezekiel 37. This is the famous prophecy of the Valley of the Dry Bones. The prophet was placed in a valley full of bones and told to preach to them. As he did so, the bones began to come together, flesh grew back upon them and they came to life, becoming “*an exceedingly great army*” ([Ezekiel 37:1-10](#)). At that point, the Lord explained to Ezekiel what he was witnessing:

11) Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.’

12 “Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.’”

This is a symbolic prophecy. The dry bones represent the Jewish people in their end time dispersion, with no hope of ever existing again as a nation. The resurrection from their graves represents their regathering from the nations where they had been dispersed.

We can be assured of this interpretation because it is the one that God Himself provides later in the chapter:

21) "Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;

22) and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.'"

Again, those who are determined to argue that God has no purpose left for the Jewish people, attempt to invalidate these verses as an end time prophecy by arguing that they were fulfilled when the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity. But that simply cannot be.

The entire chapter has an end time context. It speaks of a regathering from *"the nations,"* and not just from Babylon (verse 21). It says this regathering will result in a union of Jews from both Israel and Judah (verse 19). And it says that following this regathering, the Jewish people will turn their hearts to God and will become *"My people"* (verse 23).

At verse 24, the chapter moves into the Millennial Reign of Jesus as it speaks of David (in his glorified body) once again becoming the king of the Jewish people. Further, it states that at that time, *"the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel..."* (verse 28).

Herzl's Vision

The fulfillment of these prophecies began in the late 19th Century through the efforts of a Hungarian Jew named Theodor Herzl (1860-1904). He was an intellectual who was serving as a Viennese journalist when the infamous Dreyfus Affair occurred in France.

Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935) was a young French artillery officer who was Jewish. He was falsely accused of treason in 1894. This accusation occurred in the midst of a wave of anti-Semitism that had been generated by the publication of a book in 1886 titled, *Jewish France*.¹ The author, Edouard Drumont (1844-1917), was a virulent anti-Semite who attacked the role of Jews in France and argued for their exclusion from society.² The book became wildly popular and went through more than 150 printings before the end of the century.³

When the accusation of treason was levied against Dreyfus, the popular press jumped on the band wagon and decided to spotlight the case as proof of Drumont's case against the Jews. They proceeded to whip the general public into a frenzy.

Herzl was sent to Paris to cover the trial for his newspaper. When he arrived, he was shocked by Parisians shouting, "Death to the Jews!"⁴ He suddenly experienced an epiphany in which he realized that the Jews had

not been assimilated into European society, as he had assumed. Further, he realized they never would be. He sensed an even greater persecution to come.

This realization prompted Herzl to write a brief political booklet called *The Jewish State*, which was published in 1896.⁵ In it he called for the return of the Jews to their homeland and the creation of their own state. He argued this would be the best cure to anti-Semitism. His most famous sentence in the book was, “If you will it, it is no dream.”

The booklet captured the imagination of Jews all over the world, and it produced the First Zionist Congress, which was held in Basel, Switzerland in 1897. During that conference, Herzl wrote in his diary that he expected the Jewish state to come into existence within 50 years.⁶ That statement proved to be prophetic when the United Nations voted 50 years later in 1947 to create a state for the Jewish people.

Another result of Herzl’s call for a Jewish homeland was a series of what the Jews called *aliyahs*.⁷ These were groups of Jews who decided to pull up stakes in Europe and move back to the land of Palestine, as it was called then, in order to pioneer the land and re-establish a strong Jewish presence.

Another response — a highly significant one — came at the end of World War I when the British government issued the Balfour Declaration in which the promise was made to make Palestine a homeland for the Jews.⁸



This Israeli stamp was issued in 1968 to honor immigrants making aliyah. (Source: fotosearch.com)



Death Camp Escapees in 1944. (Source: Israel National Photo Collection)

The Motivation to Return

Still, there was no great surge of Jews who returned to their homeland. The prospect of being a pioneer in the midst of a wilderness was not appealing enough to draw the Jews back home, despite the rising anti-Semitism they were experiencing. World War I provided the land for the Jewish nation, but it would take World War II and the Holocaust to provide the motivation to return to the land.

The Jewish people came out of the Holocaust proclaiming, “Never again! Never again! We are going to have our own land and our own state, and we are going to govern ourselves!”

In 1900 there were only 40,000 Jews in all of Palestine. By the end of World War II that number had ballooned to over 600,000.⁹



Immigrant camp in 1949.
(Source: Israel National Photo Collection)



Survivors of the Buchenwald Death Camp
arrive in Haifa in July of 1945.
(Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Major Surges of Immigration

The next great surges of immigration resulted from the 1956 Suez War and the 1967 Six Day War. After the Suez War, Egypt expelled almost all of its Jewish population. Following the Six Day War, the rest of the Arab world followed suit. As a result of these expulsions, almost 800,000 Jews were forcibly expelled from the Arab nations in the Middle East. In 1948 there were 851,000 Jews in the Arab nations of the Middle East. Thirty years later, in 1978, there were only 31,000 left.¹⁰

But the world's largest Jewish population was unable to return to their homeland because they were held captive in the Soviet Union. The Russians hated the Jews, but they used them as whipping boys — blaming them for all their nation's problems.

Nonetheless, there was a biblical prophecy that one day the Jews of Russia would be allowed to return to their homeland. It is found in Isaiah 43. The prophet quotes God as saying:

4) "Since you are precious in My sight, Since you are honored and I love you..."

5) Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, And gather you from the west.

6) "I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth..."

Notice that this prophecy says the Jews will come freely from the east and the west, but the world will have to demand that those in the north be released. All directions in the Bible are given from Jerusalem. The uttermost part of the north would be the nation of Russia today. Note also that the prophecy says that the world will have to say to the south, "Do not hold them back." We will see in a moment what that refers to.

But first, let's take a look at the north. In fulfillment of this prophecy, as the Soviet Russian empire began to crumble in the early 1990s, the world began to demand that the Russian Jews be allowed to return to Israel. And in 1990, the Russian premier, Mikhail Gorbachev, suddenly opened the door of the Soviet Union.

The result was a flood of refugees into Israel. During the next two years, almost 400,000 Russian Jews arrived in Israel, averaging over 16,600 a month.¹¹ It was equivalent to the United States today absorbing the entire 27 million population of Saudi Arabia during the same time period.

Amazingly, the refugees came knowing:

- They would have to abandon all valuables.
- They would face the necessity of learning Hebrew.
- They would have to live in minimal housing.
- They would face military service.
- They would find a non-existent job market.
- They would have to pay some of the highest taxes in the world.
- They would face the constant threat of terrorism and war.

They were fully aware of these stark realities because all of them had relatives living in Israel.

Yet, despite all these hardships, they came. Why? I believe they came, and are still coming, because God has placed in the hearts of the Jewish people the highway to Zion, and He has triggered the impulse for them to return home. Consider [Psalm 84:5](#) — *“How blessed is the man whose strength is in You, in whose heart are the highways to Zion!”*

Operation Solomon

The largest Jewish population to the south of Jerusalem in the mid-20th Century consisted of the Black Jews of Ethiopia. No one knows for sure the origin of these Jews. The most common speculation is that they resulted from a union between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (2 Chronicles 9), but there is no biblical evidence of this. All we know for certain is that they existed in New Testament times because Acts chapter 8 contains the story of an Ethiopian Jew who came to Jerusalem to observe the feasts and who was converted to Christianity on his way back home to Africa by an evangelist named Philip.

In the late 1980s the Jews of Ethiopia began to feel a tug on their hearts to return to the Jewish homeland. In response, they started migrating to Addis Ababa by the thousands where they camped out around the international airport, demanding transportation to Israel. The government adamantly refused to let them leave, in fulfillment of the prophecy in [Isaiah 43:6](#) which states that the Jews in the south will be held back.

But in 1991, as the government began to crumble in the midst of a civil war, the United States and Israel intervened, providing bribes to military leaders. The government then relented and provided a 48 hour window of time for the refugees to depart.

The resulting airlift in May was amazing. In just under 36 hours, 14,500 Ethiopian Jews — nearly the entire Jewish population — was flown to Tel Aviv in 40 flights involving 35 aircraft. At one point there were 28 planes in the air at one time. And a world record was set when one El Al Boeing 747, designed to carry about



Operation Solomon
(Source: www.solveisraelsproblems.com)

350 people, was loaded up with 1,086 passengers. This was possible because all the seats had been stripped out of the plane, the Ethiopians weighed very little, and they had no luggage. When that particular plane reached Tel Aviv, there was a total of 1,088 on board because two babies had been born en route!¹²

When I read about that development in the newspapers at the time, I immediately thought of a prophecy in [Jeremiah 31:8](#) which reads as follows: *“Behold, I am bringing them from the north country, and I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together; a great company, they will return here.”*

Today, over 6 million Jews — as many as were killed in the Holocaust — have been gathered back to their homeland, and they are still coming.

The Purpose

Why is God regathering the Jewish people after a dispersion lasting almost 2,000 years?

It’s because He has promised that He will bring a remnant of the Jews to salvation before the consummation of history ([Zech 12:10](#), [Isaiah 10:20-23](#) and [Romans 9:27](#)).



Immigrant Camp in 1991.
(Source: Israel National Photo Collection)

The prophetic scriptures reveal that God has a specific plan for achieving that goal. He will regather them, and then He will bring all the nations of the world against them, allowing them to be hammered until they come to the end of themselves and turn to Him in repentance, accepting His Son as their Messiah. What a glorious day that will be!

The Saga of Exodus 1947

After World War II, The British, who controlled Palestine, decided to stop Jewish immigration by sending ships loaded with Jewish refugees back to their ports of embarkation in Europe.



Students from the USA arrive in Tel Aviv in August 2007 to serve in the Israeli Armed Forces. Their transportation was supplied by a non-profit organization called Nefesh B'Nefesh, meaning "Soul by Soul."

The first ship to which this policy was applied was the *Exodus 1947*.

The ship sailed from a port in France on July 11, 1947, with 4,515 immigrants, including 655 children, on board. On July 18, near the coast of Palestine a British destroyer rammed the ship and boarded it, while the immigrants put up a desperate defense. Two immigrants and a crewman were killed in the battle, and 30 were wounded. The ship was towed to Haifa, where the immigrants were loaded onto deportation ships bound for France. The French government refused to force them off the boat. Eventually, the British decided to return the would-be immigrants to Germany!

World public opinion was outraged, and the British changed their policy. Instead of sending immigrants back to Europe, they started re-settling them in detention camps in Cyprus.

The majority of the passengers on the *Exodus 1947* ultimately settled in Israel, though some had to wait until after the establishment of the State of Israel.

This incident was the basis of the 1958 novel by Leon Uris and the 1968 movie directed by Otto Preminger, both titled, *Exodus*.

Notes

- 1) William I. Brustein, *Roots of Hate: Anti-Semitism in Europe Before the Holocaust*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003) page 119.
- 2) The Jewish Encyclopedia, “Drumont, Edouard Adolphe,” www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5336-drumont-edouard-adolphe.
- 3) Wikipedia, “La France Juive,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_France.
- 4) Richard L. Rubenstein and John K. Roth, *Approaches to Auschwitz: The Holocaust and Its Legacy* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003) page 94.
- 5) The original title was *Der Judenstaat* (German for “The Jewish State”). It was published in 1896 in Leipzig and Vienna. Its subtitle was “A Proposal of a modern solution for the Jewish question.”
- 6) Unsigned article published by the Zionism and Israel Information Center, “The Jewish State – 1896: Theodor Herzl’s Program for Zionism,” http://zionism-israel.com/Joshua/Jewish_State.html.
- 7) Jewish Virtual Library, “Immigration to Israel: The First Aliyah (1882-1903),” www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/First_Aliyah.html.
- 8) Jewish Virtual Library, “The Balfour Declaration: Commentary on the Declaration,” www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/balfour_commentary.html.
- 9) Jewish Virtual Library, “Demographics of Israel: Population of Israel/ Palestine (1553 – Present),” www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/demographics.html
- 10) Jewish Virtual Library, “Fact Sheet: Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries,” www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/jewrefugees.htm.
- 11) Jewish Virtual Library, “Immigration to Israel: Total Immigration, from Former Soviet Union (1948 – Present),” www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/FSU.html.
- 12) Joel Brinkley, “Ethiopian Jews and Israelis Exult as Airlift Is Completed,” *The New York Times*, May 26, 1991, www.nytimes.com/1991/05/26/world/ethiopian-jews-and-israelis-exult-as-airlift-is-completed.html.