



Understanding Israel -

Two Witnesses

by Tim Kelley

For the past few weeks, we have been discussing the history of the nation of Israel and have seen that YHVH had taken a unique interest in the Israelite people, even before they had become a people. We have seen that:

- They were raised up as a nation simply because of a promise YHVH made with Abraham
- YHVH entered into a marriage covenant with them at Mount Sinai
- Israel became the greatest nation on earth during the reigns of King David and King Solomon
- Within a few years of reaching their pinnacle of greatness, they became a divided kingdom

Many in the Christian world would claim that YHVH failed in making Israel what He had intended, and that because of His failure, He set Israel aside and started a new work through Christianity, or more precisely – The Church. As we continue this study, we will see that is not the case. Instead, we'll see that YHVH called Israel for a purpose and He will see to it that Israel fulfills the purpose for which she was called.

In this study we will discuss the main purpose for which Israel was called, then look at some of the many prophecies pertaining to Israel's return to the land.

The Bible establishes a guideline by which a person can know whether a matter is true or false. It's the law of two witnesses. We see this law echoed in various places in scripture:

ESV Deuteronomy 17:6 On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.

TNK Deuteronomy 19:15 A single witness may not validate against a person any guilt or blame for any offense that may be committed; a case can be valid only on the testimony of two witnesses or more.

In this passage we see that a person cannot be put to death on the testimony of only one person. There must be at least two witnesses to the murder. This used to be how the laws concerning murder were applied in the United States, but recently other forms of "testimony" have been accepted including DNA evidence and even circumstantial evidence.

The law of two witnesses continued to be upheld within Judaism even through the first century. In the trial of Yeshua, the Jewish leaders brought forth two *false* witnesses in their attempt to convict Him of blasphemy.

Another place this law is used is in the case of a woman caught in adultery. If there are not two witnesses to the adulterous act, the case cannot be prosecuted. This sheds a little light on the case where the Pharisees were trying to trap Yeshua by provoking Him to cast judgment on an adulterous woman when no witnesses were willing to testify.

The law of two witnesses applies beyond what we might call "criminal law", extending on to the establishment of truth in the scripture – even to proving that YHVH is indeed God. In the above passage,

I intentionally used the JPS translation of Deuteronomy 19:15 in order to show that the spoken words are what convicts a person¹. The New King James version helps convey another important precept in this passage.

NKJ Deuteronomy 19:15 " One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; **by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.**

This is a fundamental truth that must be applied to everything Biblical. It is referenced many times in scripture, even in the New Testament. Paul used it over and over again². Before accepting anything as truth, there must be at least two witnesses to its veracity. This extends beyond criminal law because the word used in this passage for matter is the Hebrew word *dabar* (דָּבָר) which means *words* or *speech*. Thus, everything that's said must be verified by the testimony of two witnesses – even a statement such as this:

NKJ Genesis 17:1 . . . "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless."

YHVH didn't expect Israel to just believe He was God. He showed them He was God by the many miracles He performed in their presence – be it bringing water from rocks or by causing their enemies to flee before them. But many of us have never seen a miracle outside the miracle of the creation itself. For the most part, we depend on the written words of other people to prove YHVH is God. But God has prepared an event that will prove to us that He is indeed El Shaddai, the Almighty God, and that event will be played out, and is being played out by His people – Israel.

God called Israel for a purpose, a purpose they are yet to completely fulfill. They are to be witnesses to the greatness of God.

NKJ Isaiah 43:1-12 But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine . . . ¹⁰ "You are My witnesses," says the LORD, "And My servant whom I have chosen . . . ¹² I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, And there was no foreign god among you; Therefore you are My witnesses," Says the LORD, "that I am God.

A similar passage in Isaiah says:

ESV Isaiah 44:6-8 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. ⁷ Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen. ⁸ Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any."

In this passage, Israel is again called God's witnesses – witnesses that YHVH is God. Isaiah penned these words nearly two hundred years after the northern tribes were taken into captivity. How could it be that a nation that had been sent away because of idolatry can still be a witness to God's greatness. If God has given up on Israel, then how can they be witnesses. God says that Israel will "*declare what is to come, and what will happen*", but how can they do it if they have been *demoted* to a state of insignificance?

The answer is that Israel is a witness that God can take a rebellious people, use them for 3500 years, and finally lead them to understand that they are suffering because of their rebellion - which will cause them to repent and be taken back as a husband would do for an adulterous wife. This is the story of Israel.

¹ The Hebrew word is *peh* which means *mouth*.

² 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 10:28

Many, if not all, churches teach that because Israel "could not" keep the Torah (a concept that is contrary to scripture³) God cast them off and started a new plan – Plan B – by raising up "the church". This concept is called *Replacement Theology* and is the basis for creation of the term "spiritual Israel" by which "the church" can claim many of the promises given directly to Israel. Besides being just plain wrong, this concept plays into the hands of HaSatan, the deceiver, by indicating that YHVH was not able to deliver Israel, thus denying Him the means to prove He is God. Instead of Israel becoming a witness to YHVH's greatness, she becomes a witness to His failure.

As we've shown before, God caused Israel to split into two kingdoms. Thus they become *two witnesses*. YHVH has led them down different paths by which they both teach the nations different lessons, one being that you must not take away from God's law (as Christianity has done), and the other that you may not add to God's law (as Judaism has done)⁴.

What makes Israel and Judah⁵ witnesses? What do they do that causes them to testify of God's greatness? It's really quite simple – they, through their actions, fulfill the prophecies about them, especially those in Deuteronomy.

The book of Deuteronomy has what I would consider, the most concise group of prophecies about Israel in the entire Bible. Though they speak of the many blessings Israel would receive – and did receive – while they followed YHVH, they also tell of the punishment that would come upon them for disobedience. Though the punishment for disobedience includes many physical problems they will have while in their own land, the ultimate curse comes when they are driven out of the land. – and when they are driven out of the land – the nations will take notice. Notice these passages from Deuteronomy:

ESV Deuteronomy 28:36 – 37 "The LORD will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known.³⁷ And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone. And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples where the LORD will lead you away.

ESV Deuteronomy 28:63 - 64 And as the LORD took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the LORD will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it.⁶⁴ And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known.

These and other passages in Deuteronomy, as well as rest of the Tnakh, testify to the fact that Israel would be driven out of the land as a result of disobedience. YHVH wanted to make it so clear that they understand the ramifications of disobedience that He called for witnesses to His word . . .

Deuteronomy 4:23-27 Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you.²⁵ . . . if you act corruptly by making a carved image in the form of anything, and by doing what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God . . .²⁶ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess . . .²⁷ And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you.

³ Deut. 30:11-16

⁴ Deut. 12:32

⁵ An explanation of the difference between Israel (Ephraim) and Judah is made in part

It is so important that we understand that for ancient Israel, the punishment for disobedience to YHVH is being driven out of the land. It is the ultimate punishment, but it sets YHVH up for the most massive and recognizable miracle of all times. A miracle that will keep the TV and cable networks buzzing for months – even years. That event, that miracle, is the restoration of Israel back to the land.

Most Christians and Jews know that Israel was driven out of the land for disobedience, but what is not often discussed is that Israel, both Jewish and non-Jewish Israel, will be gathered together again at the end of days. Notice the prophecy that immediately follows Moses' discussion of the blessings and curses:

ESV Deuteronomy 30:1-7 "And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, ² and return to the LORD your God . . . ³ then the LORD your God . . . will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you . . . ⁵ And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed . . . ⁶ And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. ⁷ And the LORD your God will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecuted you.

Not only will the nations see thousands, possibly millions of people abandon their homes as they literally march toward Israel, they will also begin to feel the heat of the persecution they had previously put on the people of God.

The end of Deuteronomy contains a second *Song of Moses*. Unlike the first⁶, this *Song of Moses* includes prophecies of Israel's departure from YHVH and the subsequent curses that come upon her. This song begins by again calling on the two witnesses – heaven and earth –

NKJ Deuteronomy 32:1 "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

Who will also testify that YHVH will avenge the blood of his people⁷ -

NKJ Deuteronomy 32:43 "Rejoice, O Gentiles, *with* His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people.

According to this passage, *heaven* and *earth* must also testify to YHVH's redemption of Israel. Thus it's not enough for God to fulfill His promise to scatter Israel through the nations; If YHVH is God, He must also gather Israel back to Himself in the last days.

Let's take a look at some of those passages, for they predict the event that will prove to the nations that there is a God in Israel:

ESV Jeremiah 30:8-11 ⁸ "And it shall come to pass in that day, declares the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and I will burst your bonds, and foreigners shall no more make a servant of him. ⁹ But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. ¹⁰ "Then fear not, O Jacob my servant, declares the LORD, nor be dismayed, O

⁶ Exodus 15

⁷ You will notice that in verse 43 the word *with* is italicized. It was added by the translators to *clarify* the meaning. This is an unfortunate error because, with a proper understanding that the northern tribes of Israel would be considered Gentiles in the last days, this passage makes perfect sense.

Israel; for behold, I will save you from far away, and your offspring from the land of their captivity . . .¹¹ For I am with you to save you, declares the LORD; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end.

This passage speaks of Israel being gathered while in the midst of *Jacob's Trouble* (the Tribulation). In that day, YHVH will remove the curse that's been on Israel for over 2000 years. He will release Israel from her captives and deliver her. This is a comforting passage because Israel will be saved just as she was in the Exodus⁸. And what's more, the nations will be destroyed in the process, again, as it was in the Exodus.

The book of Ezekiel has a number of references to the gathering of Israel – the *dry bones* prophecy and the *two sticks* prophecy being the most recognizable. But the one passage that puts it all in a nutshell – the place that more clearly shows Israel's role as a witness to YHVH's greatness – is in chapter 36, just before the dry bones prophecy:

ESV Ezekiel 36:17-36 "Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds . . .¹⁸ So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it.¹⁹ I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries . . .²⁰ But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that people said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD, and yet they had to go out of his land.'²¹ But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came.²² "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.²³ And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.²⁴ I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.²⁸ You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.²⁹ And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you.³⁰ I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations.³¹ Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations.³² It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.³³ "Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt.³⁴ And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by.³⁵ And they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.'³⁶ Then the nations that are left all

⁸ The Hebrew word used here is *yasha*, the same word used when Israel was saved from the Egyptian army.

around you shall know that I am the LORD; I have rebuilt the ruined places and replanted that which was desolate. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it.

This passage tells it all. Israel was cast out of the land for disobedience, and the nations who saw it said it was because YHVH was unable to get them to follow Him. But when Israel's punishment is fulfilled, when the curse of the law described in Deuteronomy is complete, Israel will be a changed people – a people receptive to their God. Now the blessings of obedience are poured out on Israel and the nations notice. Thus YHVH will be glorified when He returns Israel to the land.

Thus, the story of Israel is, and will be, a testimony to the greatness of YHVH. Israel and Judah are the witnesses that YHVH can and will perform what He said. The various religions who have moved themselves to the front row and put Israel in the back, claiming that God is no longer working through Israel, will see YHVH tell Israel "You are My People, and I am your God". HaSatan can no longer claim that God's plans for Israel have failed. The great deception is over. All nations will flow to Israel and her God, and HaSatan's plan is foiled.

This is the Mystery of the Gospel.

Shalom Alechem