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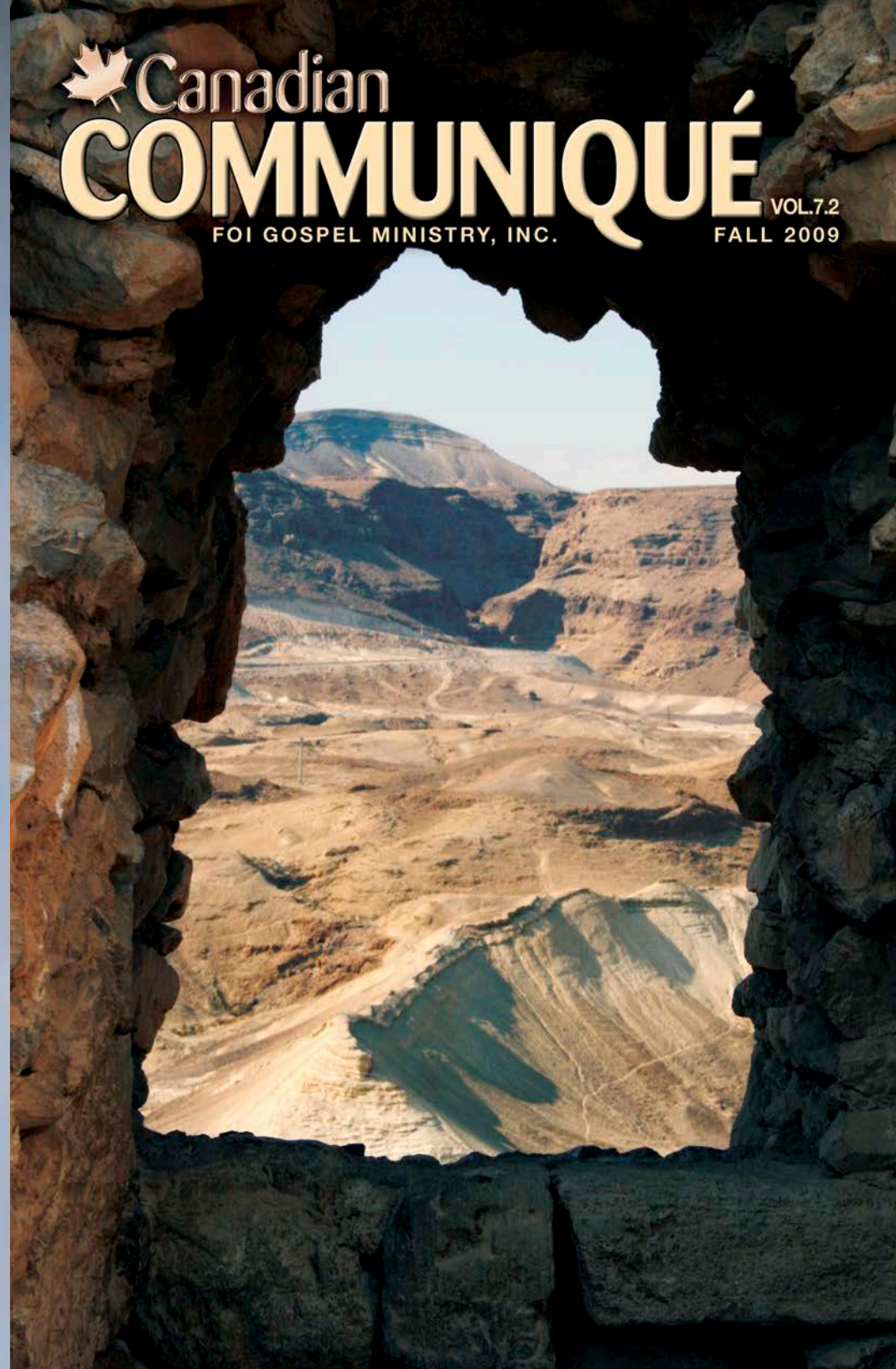
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That “Chunk of Dirt” They Call Home

By Charles McCracken



In 2002, an open letter appeared on the opinion page of the Fox News Web site suggesting that Israel relocate to a remote portion of the Baja Peninsula. Highlighting the obvious benefits of wonderful beaches, a land mass four times greater, an absence of terrorists, along with close proximity to her friendliest ally, it sounds like the perfect solution to Israel’s current state of affairs. Although tongue-in-cheek, the letter highlights a prevalent attitude: “You [Israel] think God cares about what chunk of dirt you call home?”¹

Actually, God does care. As the executor of a covenant promising a specific land to Abraham and his descendents forever, God explicitly



Tandem-cycling in Galilee

spelled out the borders in Scripture, repeatedly underscoring the interconnected relationship between that “chunk of dirt” in the Middle East and the Jewish people (Gen 15:7, 18-21, Jer. 7:7).

Moses predicted,
If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you and...bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it (Deut. 30:4,5).

The consistent and compelling precedent of history underscores that prediction.

Every prophetic book of the Old Testament except Jonah speaks of a future, permanent return to the Land of Israel that will be so spectacular that the Exodus from Egypt will pale by comparison:

It shall no more be said, “The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt”, but, “The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.” For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers (Jer.16:14, 15).



Lake Kinneret shore

The prophet Ezekiel records,
Thus says the Lord God, “I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel” (Ezek. 11:17).

Jeremiah echoes,
“For behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,” says the Lord. “And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it” (Jer. 30:3).

Although spoken at the beginning of the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C., the context of Jeremiah’s prophecy indicates that its fulfillment goes beyond the return from Babylon to a final return from, *all nations where I have scattered you...in the latter days (Jer. 30:11, 24).*

Israel’s return is certain with the prophets suggesting a homecoming in incremental stages.² The impetus



Viewing Judean mountains



Friends picnicking in the hills

GOD'S LAND-GRANT TO ISRAEL

Abraham Called to the Land	God Owns the Land	A Specific Geographic Location	A Blessing to the Jewish People
<p><i>The LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1).</i></p> <p><i>Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." (Gen. 12:7).</i></p>	<p><i>"...the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me" (Lev. 25:23).</i></p> <p><i>"The world is Mine, and all its fullness" (Ps. 50:12)</i></p> <p>Deut. 32:8, 9; Ps. 24:1; I Cor.10:26</p>	<p><i>"Look [Abraham] from the place where you are northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever" (Gen. 13:14-15).</i></p> <p>Gen. 15:18; 17:8; Jer. 7:7; 33:4-16; 50:19; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13-15</p>	<p><i>They also took some of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us...saying, 'It is a good land which the LORD our God is giving us.'</i> (Deut. 1:25).</p> <p>Deut. 1:35; 3:23; 4:21, 22; 6:18; 8:7, 10; 9:6; 11:17; 28:3-13</p>
A Warning for the Nations	A Guarantee for Israel's Final Return	An Irrevocable, Non-transferrable Inheritance	An Eternal Possession
<p><i>"I will also gather all nations...and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up my land" (Joel 3:2).</i></p> <p>Deut. 32:41, 42; Ezek. 36:6, 7; Joel 3:2; Obad. 10; Zech. 12:8, 9</p>	<p><i>"For behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah," says the LORD. "And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it" (Joel 3:3).</i></p> <p>Deut. 30:4-5; Isa. 11:11, 12; 35:10; 60:21; Jer. 16:14, 15; 30:3; Ezek. 11:17; 28:25, 26; 36:24; Amos 9:14, 15; Zech. 8:8</p>	<p><i>The covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac, and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance" (Ps. 105:8-11).</i></p> <p>Deut. 4:21, 38; 12:9; 25:19; 26:1; 30:20; 31:7; Jer. 7:7; 25:5; Rom. 11:29</p>	<p><i>"I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever" (Jer. 7:7).</i></p> <p><i>"Behold, I will make you [Jacob] fruitful and multiply you...and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession" (Gen. 48:4).</i></p> <p>Lev. 25:23, Ezek. 36:5</p>



Artichoke field

stirring the initial phase of the final return to the Land will according to Jeremiah, come from outside influences (Jer.16:16). With this in mind, it is significant that beginning early in the 1800's the, "baying hounds of anti-Semitism", added urgency to the modern Zionist movement.³

Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones reaffirms a two-staged return at the end of the age. The reconstituted lifeless bodies, where previously only bones had been, infer an initial restoration and return in unbelief indicated by the phrase, *there was no breath in them* (Ezek. 37:8). God then promises, *I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land* (Ezek. 37:14).

In the second half of the vision, "breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet an exceedingly great army" (Ezek. 37:10). God reiterates,

Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them

from every side and bring them into their own land. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever (Ezek. 37:21, 25). Reaffirming the promise, Isaiah informs Israel that after an initial and partial regathering of her people to their homeland in unbelief, God will, *set His hand again the second time to...assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth* (Isa. 11:11-12). The modern state of Israel is only a preview of that final regathering.



Harvesting bananas

There is no ambiguity in God's promise. The land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people, and His plan does not include abandoning it for any other geographic location no matter how attractive—including the Baja Peninsula.



Soldier at Western Wall

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Ken Lane, How 'Bout Relocating Israel to Mexico? <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,49353,00.html>
- ² Thomas Ice, Modern Israel's Right to the Land <<http://ldolphin.org/landrights.html>>
- ³ Barbara Tuchman, *Bible and Sword*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1956) 226-227.



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Charles McCracken is the Canadian Director of FOI Gospel Ministry.



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