

An Ensign

Zion: צִיּוֹן a waymark or a place in the wilderness from *Tzyh* ציה meaning desert/wilderness (where all is clearly seen). *Tzy-on* is the 'place mark of the wilderness'.

Nês: נֵס a flag, a signal,ensign: figuratively a token. From נָסַס *nâsas* to gleam from afar, that is, to be conspicuous as a signal.

The Controversy

Many leaders around the world have given verbal support to the formation later this year of a 'palestinian' state in the 1967 borders (despite Gaza and Jordan being de-facto states already and though they know it means relocating Jews).

Though we know that the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men and gives it to whom he will (Daniel 4:17), we know also that Peter and the Apostles when speaking to their God appointed rulers, said,

We ought to obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:28-29)

Our hope, for which Paul was happy to be bound with a chain, is called the Hope of Israel. And it can be proved beyond doubt that the controversy *this year* is over a *core part* of that very hope.

The places of the Giving of our Hope

For believing the promise of Isaac, the promised seed, Abraham was accounted righteous (Romans 4:3). But as yet Abraham, Isaac & Jacob

(and the fathers) have not inherited '*the promise*', which is the hope of Israel,

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:39-40)

The promise which has not yet been received, the hope of Israel, has political implications today.

The Bible is very clear on what has been promised and *where* it was promised.

Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD. (Genesis 12:6-7)

Therefore, for perpetuity, Shechem and the environs are given to the offspring of Abraham through Isaac and Israel.

He (Abram) went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, ..between Bethel and Hai; ..the LORD said unto Abram, "Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed for ever. And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth:.. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the width of it; for I will give it unto you. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD. (Genesis 13:3-18)

For perpetuity the land of Canaan, as far as Abram could see with the naked eye *from Bethel*, is Abram's and also his offspring's. It is clear Abram could see to **Hebron** as he obeys God 'arising' to walk through the land given to him and goes there.

Later at the valley of Shaveh (the kings valley) near Salem (Jerusalem), God says,

"I am the LORD that brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give you this land to inherit it. ...In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto your seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: (Genesis 15:7,18)

The last description determined the maximum *length*. The Euphrates was

the river Abraham crossed from Haran to the *North* to enter the Land. The centre of the area called 'the Land' was to be from Bethel to Hebron. Later Ishmael was specifically excluded from the inheritance of the offspring (Genesis 21:12). It is with Isaac, near Salem (Jerusalem), that Abram is promised that his offspring (through Isaac) will inherit the gate of their enemies (Genesis22:11).

It is in Hebron that Abraham buys land from the Hittites. Isaac is promised land while in Gerar, on the border of modern Gaza, bordering the land of the Philistines,

Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for unto you and unto your seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. And Isaac dwelt in Gerar: (Genesis 26:3-6)

If Isaac was promised Gerar, Jacob was promised Bethel. There God said “I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon you lie, to you will I give it, and to your seed;.. “

And he (Jacob) was afraid, and said, “How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” ... And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. (Genesis 28:13-19)

Therefore for perpetuity the land of Bethel is promised to Jacob and to the offspring of Jacob. Jacob's name is changed to Israel at Bethel, and he is again promised the land. God said,

“Your name is Jacob: ...Israel shall be your name”: and he called his name Israel.” And God said unto him, “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of you, and kings shall come out of your loins; And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to you I will give it, and to your seed after you will I give the land.” (Genesis 35:9-12)

Paul says a non-Jewish believer is 'adopted' as an Israelite, and the land belongs to those born to Israel. We are 'grafted in' (Romans11:17-24). Paul re-iterates this to the Ephesians, saying that the servants of Christ

must regard themselves as attached to the covenants of promise, which belong to Israel.

That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: (Ephesians 2:12)

This implies there is no hope except in the covenants of promise. Paul said he was bound in chains for the hope of Israel (Acts 28:20).

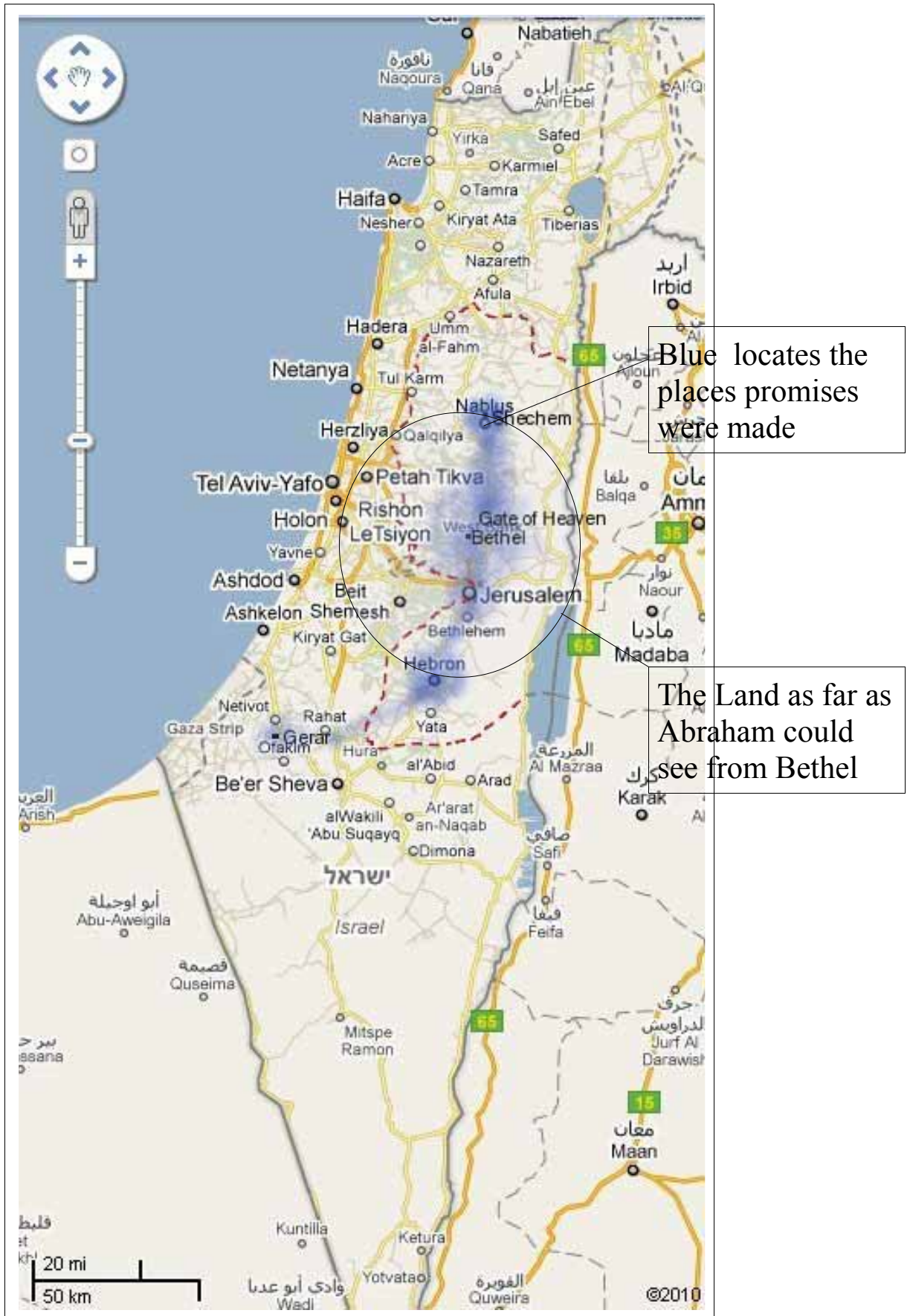
The issue of the fathers is so important to Paul he devotes long discourses to it. He speaks of 'the promise(s)' 36 times, 'the Fathers' 5 times, Abraham 29 times, Isaac 7 times and Jacob 5 times. Because Paul in his discussions reinforces the promises as being literal, we have no choice but to understand that the promises given at Shechem, Bethel, Salem (Jerusalem), Hebron and Gerar relate to a perpetual promise of this land at these particular spots to the natural sons of Israel.

That others may occupy it is clearly possible, as the Canaanites did so. While a building, or a piece of land is left vacant, many squatters may inhabit it and even destroy the building or the productivity of the land. Merely gaining temporary possession does not make them the owner of the land. In this case the God of the Bible says the land, in particular, Shechem, Bethel, Jerusalem environs, Hebron and Gerar is given to the offspring of Israel for-ever.

This presents one awkward factor to the modern world and one that Christadelphians must consider. Whereas Israel's possession of Tel Aviv, Haifa, Mt Carmel, Ceasarea, Akko, Tiberias and the Jezreel Valley are not disputed internationally, the very area at the centre of Paul's beloved promises to the Fathers of Israel is.

In fact the only places where God gave the fathers of Israel promises for the land for their offspring is the *heart* of all the so called 'occupied territories'.

See the map following



Map locating the places of the promises and the disputed territory.

Following is a table listing every promise ever given for the Land in the entire Bible. Jesus implies we have eternal life through these promises,

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. (John 5:39) and

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. (John 8:56)

The apostles reinforce this. Paul wrote,

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all nations be blessed.' (Galatians 3:8)

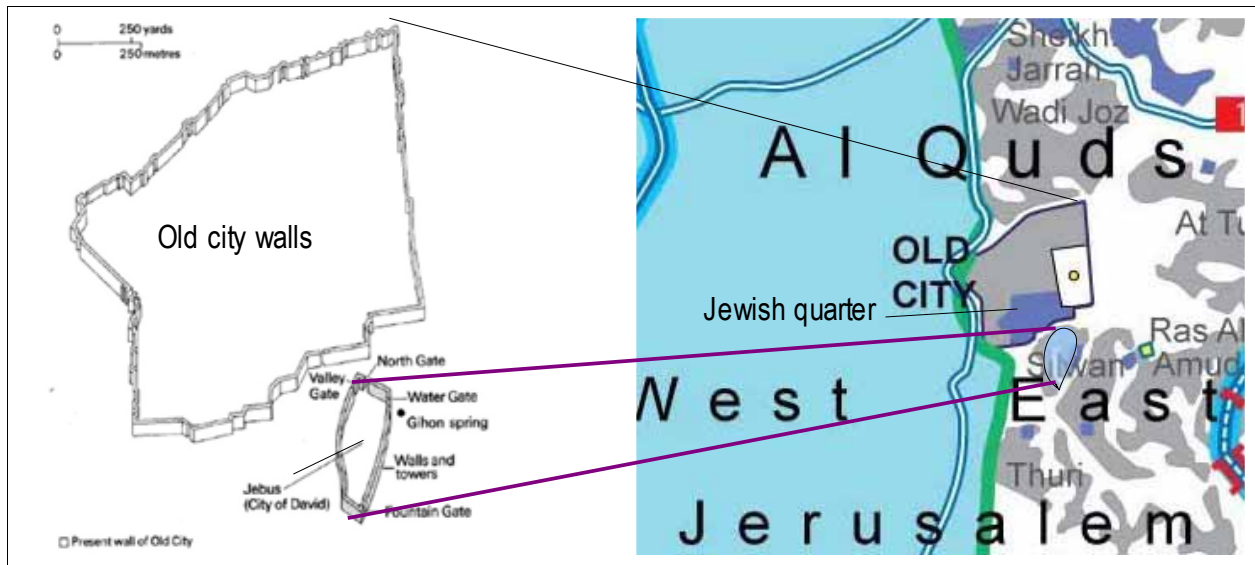
Promise to	Passage	Location	Comment
Abraham	Gen. 12-1-3	Haran	Not considered part of Land
Abraham	Gen. 13:14-17	Shechem	Disputed
Abraham	Gen. 15:7-18	Shaveh near Jerusalem	Hotly Disputed
Abraham	Gen. 18:18	Hebron	Hotly Disputed
Abraham	Gen. 22:18	Mt Moriah Jerusalem	Hotly Disputed
Isaac	Gen. 26:2-4	Gerar	Location unknown near Gaza
Jacob	Gen. 28:13-15	Bethel	Disputed
Jacob	Gen. 35:9-12	Bethel	Disputed
David	2 Samuel 7:8-16	Zion Jerusalem	Hotly Disputed
O.T affirms	Isaiah 9:6-7, 22:22. Jeremiah 23:5-6, Micah 7:18-20, Ezek. 16:60-62		
N.T affirms	Luke 1:32-33, 69-73, 13:28. Acts 3:25,7:5,13:23-26,32, 26:6-8. Romans 1:3, 4:11-16, 9:8, 15:8 Galatians 3:6-9, 26-29. Hebrews 6:12-15, 8:6-12, 11:8-10,39-40. Revelation 3:7, 5:5		

Summary Table of Promises of Land and their location

God keeps his promises! As God is righteous he will ensure that the land is given to those who he promised it to, which was the sons of Israel.

To David is promised the land of his throne and a son who builds a house on that land. David bought the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, on

which Solomon's temple was located. David was promised this land, his throne and son for perpetuity, implying his resurrection to receive it.



Map of Jerusalem and David's city where the promise was made- **Disputed**
Green line 1948 border. Grey areas are Arab. Purple areas are Jewish

The city of Zion, David's city is in a Arab area (grey) and is hotly disputed. Anything to the right of the green line is called "East Jerusalem." This is the "East Jerusalem" the leaders of many nations desire to give as the capital of the new Arab state to be called 'Palestine'.

David's city of Zion for the moment is a ruin mostly surrounded by Arabs. This is the city of which at a critical point James speaks of, quoting Amos 9: 11-12 to prove that Israel would again be rebuilt,

Simeon has declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 'After this I will return, and *will build again the tabernacle of David*, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, says the Lord, who does all these things.' (Acts 15: 14-17)

As Jews were to be taught to desire their hope, this area has been left until now to be returned to Jewish hands. Both Zion and Hebron are sought now by many Jews, looking for their Messiah. Do we seek also that the City of David, the physical basis of the Kingdom, be set up?

Our Lord made a prophecy that spoke of events into the modern era. In that prophecy he makes a prediction regarding Jerusalem. One witness recorded,

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. ..For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. ...*And then* shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (Luke 21:20-24,27)

The trampling of Jerusalem by Gentiles began after 66-70CE. However, our Lord said that there would a be a time when, as in his day, Jews would rule Jerusalem again.

It is to be noted that in the day of Jesus (approx.30CE), the Jews ruled Jerusalem but were in turn overseen by Rome, the empire of the day. The situation is analogous to the Jewish rule of Jerusalem since 1967 where Jews determine much of what goes on in the city, but are subject to UN sanctions and American influence. The post-1967 situation where Jews control Jerusalem as they did in Jesus' day, is a fulfilment that we may know that it will not again be divided and possessed by oppressing Arabs, before his triumphant return.

Though stones now remain at the Western wall, and are revered, Jesus said that not one stone will remain standing on another. We know that the land is to be prepared for Ezekiel's temple, and the landscape re-arranged dramatically at the time of the earthquake of Zechariah's prophecy where, the Saints in faith will say of the Mt of Olives "Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea" (Matt. 21:21, Zech. 14:4)

But the first open revealing of the God of Israel that we so desire to this generation is not at Jerusalem, but in Judah (Judea).

Modern Judah (Judea) & Place of Armageddon

All nations are to be brought to battle to a place that will be called 'Armageddon' in Hebrew. The implication of Revelation is that this is the first open revealing of the power of Yahweh Elohim, before the nations.

There is, as yet, no place on the map in Hebrew called Armageddon.

The word in Revelation has now been translated in a Hebrew version of the New Testament. That version has

Har meg'don הר מגדון

In Hebrew 'Har' (הר) means “mountain” and *gedad* גַּדַּד cut down, from, *gadad* גַּדַּד to crowd; also to gash (as if by pressing into): assemble (selves by troops), gather (selves together, in troops), cut selves and *gādâh* גָּדָה to cut off. *Gadud*-גַּדּוּד a crowd - army, band (of men), company, troop (of robbers). *And*

גַּדִּישׁ -a stack of sheaves;

gâda' גָּדַע to fell a tree; generally to destroy anything: - cut (asunder, in sunder, down, off), hew down & *gideon* גִּדְעוֹן- one who cuts down.

גִּדְעוֹם- *gidom* - a cutting (that is, desolation) a place in Israel.

The prefix 'm' and the suffix 'on' speaks of the place of the 'cutting down'

The Hebrew translation of Revelation 16:16 directly connects to Zechariah 12:11. In context it speaks also of the great day of Yahweh Almighty.

In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad Rimmon in the valley Megiddon.
(Zechariah 12:11)

In Israel's history there was a great weeping before the tabernacle for the lost brother tribe of Benjamin. After the rape and death of the Levite's concubine in Gibeah of Benjamin, all the tribes rose against the unrepentant Benjamin-ites. After initially losing against the brilliant warriors of Benjamin they prevail and all but destroy the tribe,

And they (*Benjamin's last warriors*) turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men; and pursued hard after them

unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them. (Judges 20:45).

Gidom is not on any map. It was called Gidom or 'a cutting' or a 'desolation' as they slew there the *last 2,000 of the 25,000 slain of the tribe of Benjamin*.

All of Israel weeps very much, then they act,
And the whole congregation sent some to speak to the children of Benjamin that were in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them. (Judges 21:13)

In Hebrew '*to stretch forth the hand unto*' is Hadah or הדה which in written Hebrew looks very like Hadad הדד. (Hadad is not a Hebrew word at all!) There is evidence that we may say that,

In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of stretching the hand unto Rimmon in the valley of (*M^e* in Hebrew is 'of') *Gidon*. (Zechariah 12:11)

In Hebrew the place 'Gidom' is also known as 'Megidon' or in Hebrew,

מגדון

Rimmon in Zechariah 14 is located *South* of Jerusalem.

All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses. (Zechariah 14:10)

The place of Megidon or, 'of those cut down', is located by Zechariah close to Rimmon which is to the *south* of Jerusalem. This is in the area of the wildness of *Judah*.

It seems this place is referenced in the events of the great day of God Almighty. The place where Yahweh gathers the nations together is called in the Hebrew tongue 'mountain of the place of cutting causing utter desolation', or, 'mountain of place of harvest of an army'.

This connects to Joel's prophecy and a specific place, the valley of Jehoshaphat.

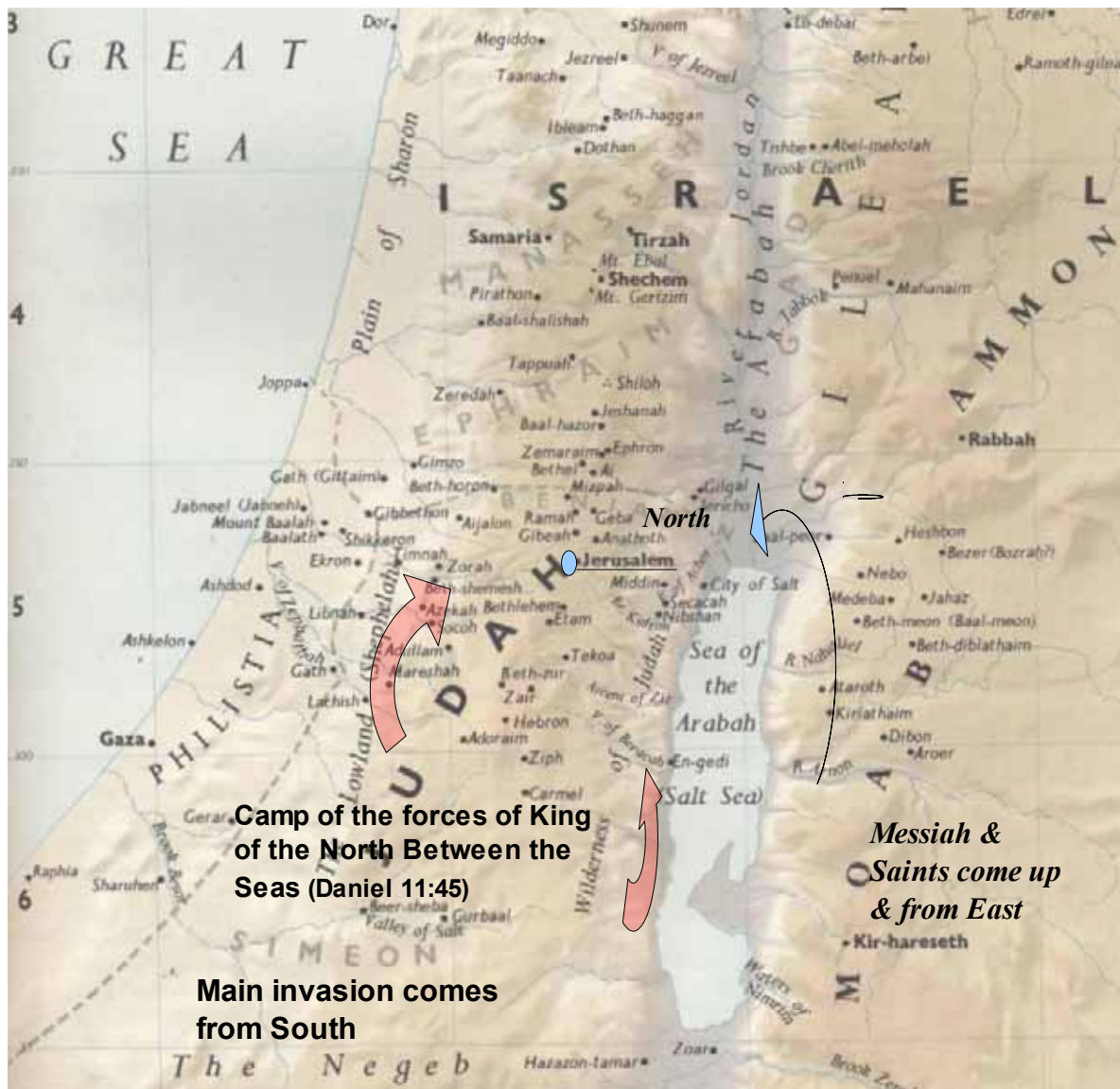
Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye nations, and gather yourselves together round about: there cause your mighty ones to come down, O LORD. Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision (threshing sledge): for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision (threshing sledge). (Joel 3:9-15)

The valley of Jehoshaphat is also called here the valley of threshing or 'the sharp point of cutting'. The nations' mighty men are challenged to 'come down', but they then *go up* to this place, to this valley

The valley of Jehoshaphat is not on any map. It was the place where the people of Israel led by King Jehoshaphat, in faith, watched the destruction of their enemies. It was called the valley of Berachah. The combined enemy force approached from Engedi and the Ascent of Ziz and the open field, where they cut each other down. This area is seen from the wilderness of Tekoa. Tekoa means 'trumpet' and Joel begins his prophecy by the blowing of a trumpet. This area precisely fits the detail of every prophecy of the first open revealing of the power of Yahweh Elohim Tzavoth:

Ezekiel adds specifically that Gog with all his army from the North shall fall in the mountains in an open field, on the mountains of Israel

You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you, and all your bands, and the people that is with you: I will give you unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. You shall fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, says the Lord Yahweh. (Ezekiel 39:4-5)



Daniel wrote

The king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land, 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. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. But tidings *out of the east and out of the north* shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the

tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him. (Daniel 11:40-45)

The location of the place of destruction of the hosts of the Northern army between the two seas is confirmed by Joel, when speaking of those who come against the Holy Mountain of Zion

But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he has done great things. (Joel 2:20)

Zechariah adds a crucial piece of detail

Yahweh also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. (Zechariah 12:2-7)

From the map, visualise Jerusalem is under siege, and half of the city taken, with the forces of Gog, king of the North dominating the South and the plain from Be'er Sheva, but the Jews are not cut off from the (old) city. For the Jews to not be cut off from 'the city' their forces must be holding the mountains, and the mountain roads to the North.

Which brings us to strategy in modern Israel now and their strategic building of clusters of defensible mini-cities or settlements. This strategy is used because, more than any nation, they know this is how they hold the most land with minimum people. So if we look at where they build the clusters we can know *where the battle will be*. Israel has one city that it cannot lose, Jerusalem.

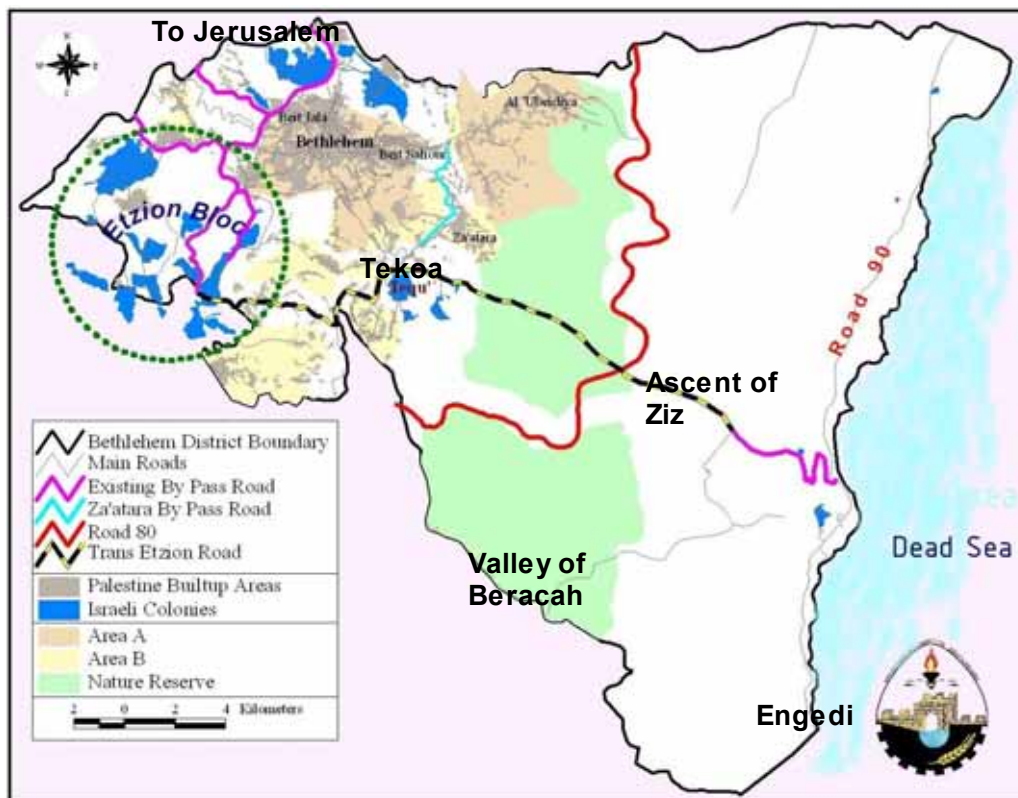
In 1967 Kfar Etzion was the first settlement established in the West Bank after Israel's victory in the Six Day War. Why? The Jewish Virtual Library states,

The Etzion Bloc ("Gush Etzion" in Hebrew), which today consists of 18 communities and nearly 40,000 residents, is located between Jerusalem and Hebron. Because of its strategic location, the Bloc was heavily contested during Israel's War of

Independence in 1947 and 1948. Although the area was not granted to Israel under the 1947 partition plan, the commanders of the Haganah considered it an essential buffer against a southern attack on Jerusalem.

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/geo/Etzion.html

Gush Etzion features a number of small communities made of temporary dwellings, or modern 'tents'. And Gush Etzion now may be approached by a road up from Engedi on the Dead Sea. This road is near the wilderness outside Tekoa. That very area is, approximately, it seems, the Valley of Jehoshaphat called the valley of Berachah.



An Ensign

Already Jews are planted on the mountains,

"I will cause them to dwell safely ... yea ... **I will plant them in this land** assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul" (Jeremiah 32:37-41).

"I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel"- "it shall be in the latter days" (Ezekiel 38:8,12,16).

No less than the God of Israel says he wants to feed his people Israel on the mountains. The mountains of Israel are Judea and Samaria. This is the area where Jews are most vocal about the promises to the Fathers of Israel. Amongst a godless generation those choosing to live on the mountains in Judea are reading their prophets. Before the return of Messiah, Judah is raised to prominence and is named with Israel

Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days **Judah shall be saved**, and **Israel shall dwell safely**: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. (Jeremiah 23: 5-8)

Judah (Judea) is emerging as a distinct area in modern Israel, with its *focus* the Land of the promise to the Fathers of Israel. Messiah comes to the wilderness of Judah, and first saves the people in temporary dwellings in Judah, then is received into Jerusalem.

We might believe these things, but if we do nothing, how are we different to the many others in the world who don't care either way and who will watch also?

Can we do something to show faith in the many prophecies of our day?

A building as an ensign

The land on the mountains of Israel in Judea is state owned. But a building is a marker in a wilderness. At night it shines as a beacon. The Israeli government has legislated that all school children must go to the mountains to learn of their Biblical history, especially to Hebron. One place they go to is Gush Etzion. Also many programs are run to bring Jewish youth from Diaspora to Israel to teach them, in the hope they make Aliyah. For this a hostel building is needed so they may stay. Already the Kfar Etzion Field School is beginning this work but would benefit by another building to house another 10 more people, and they have been approached on our behalf and are keen for such a building.

The Kfar Etzion Field School leads walking tours of the valleys to the Dead Sea, the place where Yahweh “will bring the nations down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there...for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations and parted my land.” (Joel 3:2-3)

It would be of great significance to build an ensign as a witness of the Truth in Etzion as we speak of the sign of the fig tree of Israel. Etzion means 'the place of trees' where etz means 'wood'. Its symbol is an oak. It is written, "O mountains of Israel (Judea & Samaria), ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel." (Ezekiel 36:6-8). We may help bring to pass the prophecy that, "In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood" (Zechariah 12:5-7).

The word for wood is 'etz'. Etzion is the place of 'the wood'. The building proposed would be a demountable 'log cabin'. It points to fulfilling that prophecy that the governors of Judah are to be made as a hearth of fire among the *wood*. A hostel as a temporary dwelling is like a 'tent'. It would be good to affirm as a fact that we know that the tents of Judah shall be saved first (Zechariah 12:7).

Initial sketch plans are attached.

The project for a Christadelphian ensign would be budgeted at about 250,000 AUD which is very achievable even if only 1/3 of Christadelphians from the more affluent areas contribute a small amount each. The people of the Kfar Etzion Field School would buy the building from us for a symbolic 17 NIS to affirm as Jeremiah, God's word that

Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, .. I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: ...And I will give them one heart..I will plant them in this land.. And ..Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 32:37-44)

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