

BOOK OF ZECHARIAH
THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT-PART 1
ZECHARIAH 9:5-9

Introduction

We can only understand what is happening in Israel's conflicts today with its surrounding neighbors as we look at and consider the Biblical and spiritual background of these conflicts.

The Bible is the Word of God! The Word of God records certain aspects of history that we must look at if we are to understand present day events!

In order to be able to explain the conflict between the Israelis and the so-called Palestinians, we must go right back to the origin of the Jews and their enemies.

I. CONSIDER THE PHILISTINES IN PROPHECY!

Now, we know that the **Philistines** no longer exist in their original form, just as the **Canaanites, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Assyrians, Amelekites, Magog, Meshech**, and others no longer exist.

But their territories have been partly preserved, **their hatreds for Israel have been passed down** and **spiritually, their lines continue to the endtimes**. There are many prophetic statements about nations that have disappeared which will be fulfilled in the endtimes.

We know that people have mingled and through this, in contrast to Israel, the races are not pure-blooded any more. **For instance:**

Moab, Edom and Ammon make up present-day **Jordan**.

Assyria is **Syria**,

Magog is **Central Asia: Islamic southern republics of the former Soviet Union**.

Meshech, Tubal, Gobar, and Togarmah are now **Turkey**.

Persia is present day **Iran**.

Babylon is present day **Iraq**.

Ethiopia or Cush is the area of present day **Sudan**.

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The Bible does not identify them with their current names, but with the names they were known as then.

These are mostly nations today whose people have become Islamic and whose enmity and hatred towards Israel and Judaism have remained and even intensified to the present day.

So, these geographical areas are named in endtime prophecies and play an important part in the consummation of endtime events.

For example, remember the **Moabite King, Balak**, who tried to bribe the **Balaam** to prophecy AGAINST **Israel**. Listen to what **Balaam** said to **Balak**, in *Numbers 24:14*—"*And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people [Israel] shall do to thy people [Moab] in the latter days*".

It is not just a coincidence that **many ancient Biblical sites are in the spotlight today**. We know that locations that rightfully belong to Israel through God's promise to Abraham are hotly-contested by the **Palestinians** and cast great light on the prophetic Word.

Think of **Jericho**, where the conquest of the Promised Land began on the grounds of God's promises. And **Hebron**, the place where Abraham pitched his tent after God had promised him the land (*Genesis 13:14-18*). Or **Bethlehem**, the home-town of David and birthplace of Jesus. **Sichem**, which is present-day **Nablus**, and the **largest Palestinian town in the West Bank**, is the place where God promised Abraham the entire land of Canaan (*Genesis 12:6-7*). The Palestinians consider all of these areas as "**occupied territories**" by Israel that belong to them!

So we can say that the **Palestinians** are the spiritual continuation of the **Philistines** of Biblical times. There are many prophecies that predict judgment upon the Philistines.

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Many threats of judgment have been fulfilled in the course of history. For instance:

1. **David** overcame the **Philistines** when he slew **Goliath**;
2. They also remained subdued under **King Solomon's** reign.
3. But after the division of the kingdom under **King Rehoboam**, the **Philistines** made a comeback. And during **Jehoram's** reign, the **Philistines**, along with the **Arabians**, plundered **Judah and Jerusalem**. (*2 Chronicles 21:16-17*)
4. **King Uzziah of Judah** warred against the **Philistines** with some degree of success according to *2 Chronicles 26:6ff*.
5. But wicked **King Ahaz** caused God to allow the **Philistines** to come against **Judah** once again. (*2 Chronicles 28:16-19*)
6. And, later on, **King Hezekiah**, conquered the **Philistines** again as recorded in **2 Kings 18:1-8**.
7. The **Egyptians** also conquered the **Philistines** at certain times according to the prophecy of **Jeremiah** in *Jeremiah 47*.
8. Later, the Philistines came under Assyrian rule, then under Babylonian and Persian rules. And then they were conquered by the Greeks under Alexander the Great.

In prophecy they appear on the scene again right up to the endtimes. So, there is some actual endtime judgment upon the Philistines that is still unfulfilled. **This is clear from various Scripture:**

1. **Ezekiel 25:15-17**
Here we have an old hatred of the Philistines for Israel, which will only cease when Jesus returns. This line of hatred continues today through the Palestinians.

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It is not by coincidence that the Hebrew word for "Philistine" is identical with the word "Palestinian."

The name "**Philistine**" comes from the **Hebrew** word **Philistia**, and the **Greek** rendering of the name, *palaistinei*, gives us the modern name "**Palestine**."

Of course we know that the devil is behind the hatred. And the hatred will cease only when he is bound during the Millennial Reign of Christ! (**Revelation 20:1-3**)

The terrorism carried out by **Palestinian** organizations will be judged and ended by God.

2. Zephaniah 2:4-7

Here we see that Zephaniah goes beyond the imminent events of his time, such as the destruction of Jerusalem, to proclaim the "**day of the Lord**," which includes the time of the Great Tribulation. (*Zephaniah 1:14-18*)

Concerning the Philistines, look at what it says in **Zephaniah 2:4-7**.

This will be completely fulfilled "*in the latter days*." For look at what it says in the summary of Zephaniah's statements in **Zephaniah 3:20**.

3. We find a similar prophecy in our text of Zechariah 9:5-9.

These words were partially fulfilled through the victory of the Greeks over Tyre. (*Zechariah 9:13*)

All of the surrounding lands were in a state of shock when Alexander the Great destroyed Tyre, a city upon which the Philistines depended. (*Ezekiel 26:15-18*)

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But Zechariah's prophecy extends far beyond this, up to its main, endtime fulfillment!

So, how can we be sure that this refers to the endtimes?:

1. The context shows that at least some of these events are connected with the Messiah's return to Israel, the ultimate restoration of His people, and the establishment of His millennium of peace. (*Zechariah 9:9-10*)

2. In *Zechariah 9:8*, they reveal that the nations will at last bury their weapons of war and never again will an oppressor pass through their land.

Many oppressors passed through Israel after these words were written following the Babylonian captivity.

- a. The Greeks under Alexander the Great,
- b. Antiochus Epiphanes IV, Greek king of the Seleucid Empire
- c. The Romans, The Muslims, The Crusaders, and The Turks.
- g. Then there are the oppressors of our day.
- h. And finally, there will be the oppressors yet to come against Israel during the Tribulation.

If, according to the prophetic Word, no oppressor will ever pass through Israel again, then this has to refer to the time of the Messianic kingdom. They are related to God's abiding protection of Israel in the millennium of peace (verse 8).

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II. CONSIDER THE ORIGIN OF THE PHILISTINES.

The **Philistines** were an **Indo-European**, seafaring people who originally came to the Middle East from the Aegean by way of **Crete and Cyprus**.

They came from **Crete (Caphtor)** to **Egypt** and wandered from there through the wilderness to **Canaan** in the **Gaza Strip**. They possessed the five main cities there: **Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron and Gath**. (*Joshua 13:2-3*)

The origin of the Philistines is mentioned in *Jeremiah 47:4*:
"Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaineth: for the LORD will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphtor."

Amos 9:7—"Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?"

A description of their **stay and exodus** from **Egypt** is found in *Genesis 10:13-14—"And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim, 14 And Pathrusim, and Casluhim, (out of whom came Philistim,) and Caphtorim."*

Mizraim was **Egypt's patriarch**. **Egypt** is still called **Mizraim** today in **Hebrew**. Here we see the various tribes of **Egypt** are mentioned.

The **Philistines** had settled among the **Egyptian tribe of Casluhim** and left from there, *"...and Casluhim, (out of whom came Philis-tim) and Caphtorim ."*

We read of their entrance into the Gaza Strip in *Deuteronomy 2:23—*

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*"And the Avims which dwelt in Hazerim, even unto Azzah, the Caphtorims, which came forth out of Caphtor, **destroyed them, and dwelt in their stead.**"*

III. CONSIDER HOW THE PHILISTINES PARALLEL WITH ISRAEL.

We know that the Philistines were always Israel's most persistent enemies, particularly because they lived in the midst of Israel.

This is no different today. But, in comparing their history, they seem to have a devilish parallel to Israel. The devil always attempts to counterfeit and imitate the true God by creating a similar, yet false, alternative to the truth.

Consider these examples:

- Christ— The Antichrist
- Biblical prophets—false prophets
- Genuine born-again Christianity—false, nominal Christianity
- The Bible—any anti-Bible (Koran, Book of Mormon, and the many perversions of the true Bible in our day!)

The devil takes the **prophecies of the Holy Scriptures** and tries to confuse people with **fortune-telling and clairvoyance!** He takes the true salvation through Jesus Christ and confuses and blinds people with spiritual alternatives through old and new religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, New Age, Esoteric, etc.)

So it is not surprising to discover that the Philistines have certain similarities with the Israelites:

- They came to Egypt just like the Israelites.
- They left Egypt just like the Israelites.
- They came to the land of Canaan just like the Israelites.

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This seems like the devil's blow against God who promised this land to Abraham (*Genesis 12:5-7, 13:15-17, 15:13-14 and 18, and 17:8*). The battle of the Philistines over Israel's promised inheritance has continued throughout history to this present day, but it is coming to its climax one day soon!

Marwan Barghouti, leader of the Fatah terrorists, said that Intifada's first goal of the rebellion is the founding of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. He added that they had big plans to banish the Jews and conquer Israel.

Conclusion

Next we will CONSIDER THE GREAT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PHILISTINES (PALESTINE) AND ISRAEL.

AND CONSIDER THE JUDGMENT UPON THE PHILISTINES (PALESTINE).

But having said all this, we know that the coming of the LORD is drawing near!

Those who are not saved need to get saved!

Those who are saved need to get busy for the LORD!