

GOD'S PLEDGE TO ISRAEL

Scriptures cited are to the KJV unless stated otherwise

35 Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: **36** If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. **37** Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD. – *Jer. 31: 35-37*

Q Are we to take this guarantee respecting *today's* Israel literally?

A Here Jehovah God pledges His unconditional and permanent fidelity to both ancient Israel and the modern nation. The root of the Christian faith was laid in Jewish soil. Indeed, the Gospel message of salvation through Christ was prefigured in the ceremonies and laws of ancient Israel. The prophets of Israel are Christianity's prophets, too.

But herein lies a theological conundrum, one which has implications for the earnest Christian man and woman: since God declares Israel to be His covenant people, through whom – as a conduit – He will route the blessings of His coming kingdom on earth, following Israel's conversion. Christians as 'people of the book' are obliged to honour this principle. and are enjoined by Christ to love the neighbour as oneself, and even to love our enemy. Israel falls into one or another of these categories, depending on one's point of view.

We need to recognise that God does not love the Jewish people or Israel on their *own* account or worth, or because they are virtuous and as meek as sheep. As St. Paul explains in Rom. 11: 28, they are loved solely 'for the fathers' sakes' – for the faith, humility and obedience *of the patriarchs* – Abraham, Jacob, Moses and other 'worthies'. Nonetheless, the Jews were lambasted by God for being obstinate and rebellious (Deut. 9: 6; Ezek. 2: 3-5). Such are the contrary manifestations of the truths regarding His beloved people.

The Israel of today, the world's only Hebrew state, surrounded by many who hate it, is committed to defending herself to the death, and will always respond vigorously to any threat to its existence. Israel does not owe its place in the world to favours conferred on it by the United Nations or to the sufferance of any Western power, but to the guarantee of God's care of her, evidenced by the Divine declaration at the head of this article.

The continuation of Israel is a *down-payment on a bright future for the world*. In appealing to the inscrutability of the cosmos, Jehovah negates the possibility that He would ever cease to love and cherish His covenant people.