

The Nation of Hope

by Arno Clemens Gaebelein

Arno Clemens Gaebelein preaches about the unchanging human history and the dying state of 'Christian Civilization,' lacking the essence of Christ. He discusses the hopelessness in politics and economics, the increase of lawlessness, and the failure of man-made solutions. Gaebelein explores the concept of a coming golden age, drawing parallels between mythological traditions and biblical prophecies of a glorious future. He emphasizes the divine origin of Israel's never-dying Hope, rooted in the promises made to Abraham for a Messiah and a land, which find fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Description

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Transcript

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 thumbnailUrl: "" hasTranscript: true oneLinerSummary: "The Hope of Israel is an indestructible promise from God, based on the promises made to Abraham and his seed, which have been partially fulfilled in history." sermonType: "teaching" topics: - name: "Eschatology" slug: "eschatology" - name: "Israel's Hope" slug: "israels-hope" bibleRefs: - text: "Genesis 12:1" bookId: "GEN" chapter: "12" verse: "1" - text: "Psalm 110:1" bookId: "PSA" chapter: "110" verse: "1" - text: "Isaiah 53:2" bookId: "ISA" chapter: "53" verse: "2" - text: "Jeremiah 31:35" bookId: "JER" chapter: "31" verse: "35" - text: "Romans 4:18" bookId: "ROM" chapter: "4" verse: "18" outline: - heading: "The Dying of Our Civilization" - heading: "The Hope of Israel" - heading: "The Comparison with Other Nations" - heading: "The Origin of the Hope of Israel" - heading: "The Promises to Abraham and His Seed" - heading: "The seven promises made to Abraham" - heading: "The partial historical fulfillment of these promises" - heading: "The enlargement of these promises to include the Messiah" faq: - q: "Is there hope left for humanity?" a: "Yes, the Bible promises a glorious future for humanity, where nations will live in peace and righteousness." - q: "What is the source of the Hope of Israel?" a: "The Hope of Israel comes from the Bible, specifically the promises made to Abraham and his seed." - q: "Why is the Hope of Israel indestructible?" a: "The Hope of Israel is indestructible because it is based on the promises of God, which are fulfilled in history." - q: "What is the significance of

the promises made to Abraham?" a: "The promises made to Abraham are the foundation of the Hope of Israel, and they have been partially fulfilled in history." - q: "What is the role of Moses in the origin of the Hope of Israel?" a: "Moses is the instrument of God's revelation, and he records the birth of Israel and the beginning of their Hope in the Bible." quotes: - "The last Age decreed by the Fates is come, And a new frame of all things doth begin; A holy Progeny from heaven descends, Auspicious in His birth, which puts an end To the Iron Age, from which shall rise The Golden Age most glorious to behold." - "Our ruin Thou didst long past see-- Is Thy fiery wrath still unappeased? We sinned in days ago, we suffer now, our wounds are open, Thy oath is quite accomplished, the curse fulfilled;" - "Harken afflicted one, for hope yet lingers. And look to Me, whose angel is preparing My path, for though at night be tears and sadness. Yet in the morning come delight and gladness." applicationPoints: - "The Hope of Israel is a promise from God that has been partially fulfilled in history, and it will be fully fulfilled in the future." - "The Hope of Israel is indestructible because it is based on the promises of God, which are fulfilled in history." - "The Hope of Israel is a reminder that God is faithful to His promises and will fulfill them in due time." keywords: - "Hope of Israel" - "Bible" - "Promises to Abraham" - "Indestructible Hope" - "Moses" - "Genesis" - "Abraham" - "Seed of Abraham" - "Messiah" - "Golden Age" - "Iron Age" ---

Human history has remained basically unchanged for thousands of years. The greatest civilization known in history is our own. We have termed it "Christian Civilization," though it contains little of Christ and the Spirit of Christ. We have seen it upon its deathbed in the foregoing pages. We are witnessing the dying of our civilization. We have seen the hopelessness in politics and economics. We have traced the increase of lawlessness, immoralities, vices and crimes. The efforts of man through laws, human governments, reforms, political combinations, treaties and pacts, have all failed. The one great power which could effect a change is being pushed aside, and the greater part of Christendom no longer believes in "the Gospel of Christ as the power of God unto salvation." The age is dying! It is a lingering death. There may come a seeming recovery; it will be followed by another relapse, but the end of our age is certain.

When our age has died, when the end has come, what will follow?

Is there hope left? Is a great change approaching in human history?

Is there coming another age in which the human race will pass out of the night of hopelessness into a glorious day of a cloudless sky?

Will that coming day end war, bring universal peace, end poverty, starvation, unemployment, dethrone lawlessness and unrighteousness, and establish a uniform government, in which all races form a great, loving brotherhood?

A frequent term found in the mythological traditions of the Greeks and Romans is "The Golden Age" According to this tradition the golden age was the earliest of the four ages. It was pictured as the ideal age, when the earth, under the reign of Saturn, produced fruits, without cultivation, when man had not to earn his bread in the sweat of his brow. It was the age when war was unknown, and man lived in perfect happiness, without hate and strife. It is a faint echo of what is recorded in the Bible, the Edenic conditions, before sin did its awful work and brought the curse upon man and creation.

But the classic pagan writers expressed also a strong belief that this golden age of the past would return some day. Plautus, Lucretius, Catullus, Caesar, Cicero, Sallust, Vergil, Livy, Ovid, Horace, Hesiod and others saw the dawning of the golden age as the hope of humanity.

They looked upward and some expressed the opinion that a divine person, a god, would descend from heaven, and that through his advent the golden age would be restored. Thus Vergil, who lived in the century before Christ's birth, wrote in his Eclogae the following lines:

"The last Age decreed by the Fates is come,
And a new frame of all things doth begin;
A holy Progeny from heaven descends,
Auspicious in His birth, which puts an end
To the Iron Age, from which shall rise
The Golden Age most glorious to behold."

But where did some of these heathen poets get their conception of the coming of such an age of bliss and happiness? Partly by tradition. But the knowledge was also obtained from the Bible.

About 250 B. C. Ptolomy II (called Philadelphus) requested the Jews to have seventy Rabbis come to Alexandria to translate the Old Testament into the widely spoken and widely read Greek language, so that a copy might be put into the celebrated Alexandrian library. This translation is known as the Septuagint. The Hebrew Scriptures were in this way made available to the Greek speaking world and some of these poets like Vergil learned from reading the Prophets that One would come some day from heaven, and that through Him righteousness and peace would come at last, when nations would turn swords into plowshares. This glorious outlook for the earth and for humanity, a coming brotherhood of nations, a coming world-government vested in one King of all kings, a cessation of all injustice and unrighteousness, is found exclusively in the supernatural Scriptures of the Hebrews. In vain do we look for such a sane and glorious optimism in the sacred writings of the East. The Upanishads, the Vedic hymns, the Rig-Veda, the teachings of Buddhism and Confucianism are silent as to such a glorious future. The Hebrew people--call them the people Israel, or the Jewish people, or the seed of Abraham-- no matter what man says, or what even some Jews may deny, are the chosen people of God. In their miraculous history, their miraculous preservation and continued increase, they are the witnesses for God and His sovereign power.

Their illustrious leader of over three thousand five hundred years ago, whom they call "Moishe Rabbinu", Moses our teacher, stood in his eightieth year in the land of Midian before a burning bush. A fire raged in its dry branches, but the bush remained unconsumed. It was a miracle. God's standing miracle, which proves His sovereign power, is the nation whom Moses led out of Egypt through the desert sands into the land of promise. Their history of thousands of years has been a history of burning. The fires of tribulation and persecution have raged. Yet, while other nations with less sufferings passed away, that nation remains. And why was that burning bush not consumed? Because Jehovah, the "I Am" was in the midst of that bush. Because Israel is God's chosen people, God's witness to the Gentile nations, the indestructible nation, the nation of destiny and promise, it is the nation of Hope.

* * * * *

It was many years ago when the writer visited Eastern Europe for several months. After investigating the religious conditions, and the conditions of the Jews in Russia and Poland, he made a brief visit to Rumania. At that time some of our writings had been translated into numerous foreign languages, as well

as in Yiddish and Hebrew. One of our tracts had found its way to a small mountain town in the Rumanian kingdom. A Hebrew corresponded with us. To pay him a visit and become acquainted with him, we made a detour. Unfortunately we had not announced the exact time of our visit, and when we reached the town of Folticeni, we found him absent on a business trip. We tarried over night. Towards evening we asked the way to the synagogue where we found a number of Jews engaged in their usual prayers. We stood aside and after prayers were finished we were noticed at once. We spoke to them and told them of the object of our European visit in their Yiddish dialect, which the writer, though not a Hebrew, had acquired during his ten years activities on the east side of New York. We told them what we had seen in Russia of Jewish suffering, of the rise of Antisemitism, that it was getting worse and worse. Some of their eyes filled with tears. Then we spoke of the future, that the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob, had not forgotten His people. That as He once remembered His covenant in Egypt and sent a deliverer, so He would remember again. There was another deliverer coming, who would bring them back from the land of the North, from Russia and the Balkans and that long looked for deliverance and kingdom would come. That deliverer, we said, will be Messiah, the Son of David. Oh how they listened! How some of the aged men wept and nodded assent! Then tactfully we told them that not a "Ben Abraham" was speaking to them, not a son of Abraham, but only one of the Goyim (Gentiles), who had learned to know and love the true God, through one who is the Son of David, the Messiah. They fell back, but after ending with a brief prayer, they almost embraced the writer, and some kissed his hand.

Later in the evening a delegation visited me in the house where I stopped. They urged me to stay and if I consented they would gather all the Jews in the biggest available place to speak to them the "words of Hope" they had heard a few hours ago. As this was impossible on account of engagements in Galicia we had to leave them in the morning. But here in Rumania the Jewish Hope, the Hope of Israel was a living Hope. It was the Hope of their fathers. We had found it so in Russia also.

How many times, in years gone by, the writer took a walk in the early evening at a certain well known time of the year, through the greatest Ghetto of the world, the east side of New York. Bright lights were seen in the great tenement houses. The streets were deserted. Hardly a soul was to be seen. It was "Erev Pesach," the evening of Passover. They kept in their homes their Passover, seated at the festive table. They read the story of Egypt's deliverance again. The prayers of many generations were read. Once more the Hope was expressed by them "This year here-- next year in Jerusalem."

Their dispersion is world-wide. How well He predicted it, who once wept over Jerusalem the tears of love and pity, when He said: "They shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."--(Luke xxi:24)

And wherever they are in South Africa, in China, in Australia, in Russia, Siberia, in Ethiopia, in Turkey, Persia, Spain, England, France, Italy--everywhere including the islands of the sea, they keep their passover, remember year in and year out the great act of God in the deliverance of their fathers out of the house of bondage, and each time, yes often with tearful eyes, in trembling tones: "This year here-- next year in Jerusalem."

And this has been going on generation after generation, century after century, during the darkest ages, during the times when satanic powers attempted their complete extermination. "This year here--next year in Jerusalem." The Jewish Hope is a never dying Hope. Israel is the nation of Hope.

We call attention to a remarkable fact. The middle age was for Jewry the age of greatest suffering, the age of torture and the stake, the age of the confiscation of their goods and even their children. It was the age of weeping, of groaning and moaning, the age when thousands of hearts were in well nigh hopeless despair. Yet the everlasting Hope of Israel was kept alive through a number of outstanding men, great teachers, and several Hebrew poets who sang the glories of the past and Zion's greater future glory. We mentioned the celebrated Solomon Ben Isaac, commonly known as Rashi, born in 1040 in France. He witnessed the terrible sufferings of his people when the vicious hordes of the first crusade plundered the Jewish communities along the Rhine. He was a great teacher holding strictly to the Messianic prophecies. He taught in burning words that even in the greatest suffering Israel must hold on to the Messianic Hope of a glorious future. In a great penitential Psalm he said:

"Our ruin Thou didst long past see--

Is Thy fiery wrath still unappeased?

We sinned in days agone, we suffer now, our wounds are open,

Thy oath is quite accomplished, the curse fulfilled;

Though long we tarried, we seek Thee now, timid, anxious we,
poor in deeds.

Before we perish, once more unto Thy children join Thyself,

A heavenly sign foretells Thy blessing shall descend upon us.

Brute force is shattered, and around about.

Thy affianced spouse, loving, yearning,

Calls on Thy Faithfulness; she pleads with her eyes and asks--

is she still Thine.

Is hers Thy love for aye?"¹

All the writings of this great, and no doubt pious Jewish commentator testify in assuring tones of Israel's great Hope. His comments on the great image of Nebuchadnezzar are the same as given by the Christian exponents of prophecy known by the name of "Premillennialists." The smiting stone which demolished the image, and which becomes a mountain to fill the whole earth, is, according to Rashi, the Messianic state or kingdom. A great poet was Solomon Ibn Gabirol, who died in Spain in 1070. Besides being a great poet he was a great thinker. He too sang in that dark hour of Israel's woe of the glorious Hope of Zion. Here are samples:

"Harken afflicted one, for hope yet lingers.

And look to Me, whose angel is preparing

My path, for though at night be tears and sadness.

Yet in the morning come delight and gladness.
"Forget thy affliction and cease supplication,
Recall thy release from Egyptian rod;
Thy hand is not short that hath laid earth's foundation;
Who stretched out the heavens remaineth Thy God.
And at Thy due season the glory that dwelleth
In Zion shall rest on thy head that great day.
When moonlight as sunlight in radiance welletth,
And sunlight shall glow with a sevenfold ray."

--Davidson's Translation.

Even more inspiring was the poetry of Judah Halevi of Spain. By profession a physician he lived from 1080-1141. His poetry was altogether Messianic. He was the greatest Jewish Nationalist of the Middle Ages. All these able men were firm believers in the coming of the Messiah and that through Him, not through Israel's activity, the glorious promises of God would be realized.

Another Sephardim scholar of Spain was Abraham Ibn Ezra (1092-1167). Especially interesting is his comment on Psalm lxxx:18: "Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand." While modern Judaism, of the reformed type denies the Messianic interpretation, this scholar endorsed the interpretation, or paraphrase of the Targum, that the King-Messiah is meant.

Other noble scholars followed, such as Maimonides, Hasdai Crescas, Joseph Albo and Isaac Abrabanel. The latter criticized, as we do, the false interpretation, which is so widespread in Christian Commentaries that the term "Israel" in the prophecies does not mean literally Israel, but that "Israel" means the "Church." He contended earnestly for the literal interpretation and the literal fulfillment of all these prophecies of glory, but not till Messiah comes. These men were used in keeping Israel's Hope alive when it looked the blackest in their history.

The never-dying Hope of this nation, a Hope unknown by other nations, demands a closer investigation and examination. How did it originate? Where does it come from? How is it that scores of Gentile nations with their national hopes perished in a forgotten past, but the Hope of Israel never perishes? Is this indestructible Hope carried along from generation to generation an evidence of its reality and future realization, or is it nothing but the expression of an exalted Semitic nationalism?

We turn back to the historical records of the first Bible book, the book of Genesis. Here the origin of all things is made known, not through man's research, but through God's revelation. Here we find also the origin of Israel, the birth of that nation and the beginning of their Hope. The instrument through whom God made known past history was Moses. In saying this we face the modern denials which are not only confined to an apostate Christendom, but are also shared by an apostate Judasim. Both reject the authenticity and reliability of the writings of Moses. There was a time when Gentile and Jewish rationalists claimed that for Moses writing was an impossibility, inasmuch as the art of writing had not yet been

invented. Archeology has long ago exploded this myth, for the art of writing was known many centuries before Moses. He was brought up in the wisdom of Egypt, a land of culture. His education included the art of writing well known then in that ancient land. The same rationalistic school, known as the destructive criticism, invented another theory, which has been adopted by Jews and Gentiles, the theory of a composite authorship of the five books of Moses. According to this theory certain ancient documents and traditions existed which certain men acting as editors gathered up, fused into a consecutive story and then fraudulently claimed that Moses was the author. But over against this theory, rather theories for they are many, we have the ripest scholarship of the ancient synagogue and the great scholarship of the church. Both orthodox Jews and orthodox Christians have always believed in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. And this is still their faith.

One of the outstanding figures of the first book, called by Jews "Bereshith," is the illustrious offspring of Shem, Abram, whose name was changed later to Abraham. There was a time when rationalists also attacked the historicity of this person, saying that he never existed, that he is a fictitious character. If Abraham never lived, if he were the invention of a human brain, the whole revelation of God in His Word would collapse. As every reader of the New Testament knows that the Lord Jesus Christ mentioned Abraham as a real person. He said: "Before Abraham was I am." What becomes of His perfect knowledge and trustworthiness, if Abraham had never existed? Much of the teachings in the New Testament epistles, notably the teachings of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews are based upon the life and experiences of this prominent man. If he never lived, never had the experiences recorded in Genesis the salvation doctrine, that righteousness is by faith, would also be a mere invention.

But there is still more to be said. If Abraham never lived, then the origin of the people Israel and above all the Hope of Israel would be an unsolvable enigma; it would baffle all explanation. Archeology has brought forth, especially in recent years, such astonishing confirmations of the indisputable reliability of the historical statements and records of the entire Old Testament, that only wilful rationalistic enemies of God and His revelation can continue to uphold the views of exploded infidel theories.

Out of the corruption of idolatry God had called this descendant of the family of Shem. God called him aside and Abraham obeyed the heavenly voice and vision. As a result of Abraham's obedience, the Lord who had appeared unto him, gave him a number of promises.²

(1) I will make of thee a great nation. (2) I will bless thee. (3) Make thy name great. (4) Thou shalt be a blessing. (5) I will bless them that bless thee. (6) And curse him that curseth thee. (7) In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

These promises to Abraham and his seed have found their partial historical fulfillment. They were gradually enlarged. God promised to Abraham a seed. The New Testament makes it clear what is meant by the word "seed." "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." Christ is in Hebrew "Messiah" (Galatians iii:16). There was promised him a literal seed, his natural descendants; and one special seed. That is, the Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel, was to come from him. The seed of the woman, the serpent bruiser, was to be Abraham's seed.

The promise of the land to which the Lord led him, the land of Canaan, is the second great promise. When Abraham left Ur in Chaldea to go to the land he did not possess the knowledge that it was to be the land which his seed should inherit. But when he had reached the land the Lord said: "Unto thy seed will I give

this land" (Genesis xii:7). The dimensions of the land were progressively revealed unto him, till in covenant the Lord promised to his seed a far greater territory than the little strip of land called Palestine.

"In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt (the Nile) unto the great river, the river Euphrates (Mesopotamia)" (Genesis xv:18). The foundations of the Hope of Israel, that never dying Hope, are the two promises', the promise of the Messiah and the promise of the land in the dimensions as given above in the covenant.

The revelations and doctrines of the Bible are progressive. And so we find that the two promises, the promise of the Messiah and the promise of the land, are through the messages and visions of the Prophets, including the Psalms, expanded. We find a full description of the one seed, the promised Messiah, as to His Person, His character, His work, down to some of the minutest details. Still greater are the promises relating to the coming of a great Kingdom of righteousness and peace with Jerusalem as its center, a kingdom into which all the nations of the world will be ultimately gathered, a kingdom in which injustice, poverty, want and distress cannot exist.

The nation of Hope possesses a divine, a God-given Hope, and because it is God-given and God-assured it cannot perish, but must some day pass into reality.

We are confronted with other questions. These promises were made, speaking approximately, over four thousand years ago. Why has there not been a fulfillment? Is not the failure of fulfillment an evidence that these promises of Hope are not of a supernatural origin, but are simply human optimistic dreams? And what about the nation of Hope, holding fast to the promised Hope of several millennia, wandering among all the nations, scattered into the four corners of the earth, found in every continent? What about their suffering, their terrible, staggering history of blood and tears? Why is the nation of Hope scattered and suffering, hoping, even as father Abraham did, "against hope?" (Romans iv:18).

Inasmuch as we expect Hebrews to read this book we answer simply and candidly. The covenant keeping God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has kept the promise to send the One, who is the Hope and the Redeemer, as well as the King of Israel. Jesus of Nazareth, as His contemporaries called Him nineteen hundred years ago, the son of David, born in Bethlehem, is the fulfillment of the many promises of the Messiah. Not alone were all the promises of His coming in humiliation, relating to His character, His work and especially His substitutionary suffering, as revealed in the twenty-second Psalm and the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, fulfilled, but He exhibited the credentials of Messiahship and Deity. The blind saw, the deaf heard, the lepers were cleansed, and the dead were raised. Yet when He came to His own, when He appeared as the minister of the circumcision to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, when He presented His credentials, when He came to seek the lost sheep of the House of Israel, His own received Him not. What Isaiah had predicted came to pass:--"He hath no form or comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not" (Isaiah liii:2,5). He was rejected by them, became the rejected stone, and the stone of stumbling and offence. They delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles and He was crucified. In His death He brought the great sacrifice as the Lamb of God, which had been so minutely foreshadowed in Israel's God-given worship, the center of which was the approach into the presence of God through the blood of a sacrifice. Israel's Messiah died. He died as the true Passover Lamb, but He also died for that nation. He was buried, rose again from among the dead according to the Scriptures, He ascended upon high and in fulfillment of David's great prophetic Psalm, has taken His place at the right hand of God. "The

Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at my right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy Footstool" (Psalm cx:1). His rejection from the side of the Jewish people continues, though God in mercy had sent the Gospel, the good news of salvation "to the Jew first." Finally came that which Christ Himself had prophesied. Jerusalem was destroyed. The great Temple went up in smoke. One of the greatest tragedies of history came to pass in which over a million were slain, or died of starvation, while thousands were sold into slavery and the great world-wide Golus, dispersion, took place.

Israel's age-long dispersion and unspeakable suffering, permitted by a righteous God, must have a cause. The cause is their unbelief and the continued rejection of Him, whom God had sent. When Christ stood before Caiaphas, the high priest adjured Him by the living God to "tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt, xxvi :63). How much depended upon the answer! His answer declared that He is the Christ, the Son of God. If He was not the Christ, the Son of God, Caiaphas with the scribes and the elders, was acting in a legitimate way in pronouncing sentence upon Him as a blasphemer and handing Him over to the civil authorities for the execution of the death sentence. More than that. If He was not the Son of God, in condemning Him as an impostor and blasphemer they stood up for God and His glory. But He was the Christ, the Son of God and the evidence that this is true, is the history of suffering of this people. The history of blood and tears which has been their lot bears witness to the Messiahship of Jesus and to His Deity.

In spite of the tragic history of that nation, in spite of the attempts of their Gentile enemies to end their existence, yes, in spite of their own attempts of assimilation, their national existence has continued. When the writer met for the first time the late Moses Alexander, Governor of Idaho, an excellent Hebrew gentleman, he doubted our statement that Israel is still a nation and has a national future. We asked him if he believed the testimony of the prophets and then read to him Jeremiah xxxi :35-36: "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. If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me." He confessed himself convinced.

And the people Israel have been thus preserved because the other great promise of Hope and Glory, the promise of the land, their national restoration, spiritual regeneration, and the promise of future blessing to "all the families of the earth" will have to be fulfilled. Such is Israel's Hope, and, when it is reached, it will mean the Hope and blessing for all the world.

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