

THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

(Discourse given by Jerry Leslie at the East Los Angeles convention, latter part of May, 1974.)

We take as our task to highlight the history of the fleshly seed of Abraham, and so reassure ourselves of the constancy of God's care for both the seeds.

By the time Titus' army removed the Jewish polity, Israel was almost 2,000 years old. Father Abraham, by faith left his home in Ur to follow God's command to go to a land he would show him. Because of faith and obedience, a promise was left him. These qualities were again demonstrated in his willingness to sacrifice his son through whom the promise was to be fulfilled. (Gen. 22:16-18; 17:7, 8) But Abraham died a sojourner in a strange land, not possessing a foot of it by inheritance—buried in a purchased field.

462 years later God raised up Moses to lead Abraham's captive family from Egypt back to the Promised Land. It was this man that received from God the Law at Sinai and mediated its provisions for this covenanted people. He compiled the first five books of Scripture, later to be canonized as the TORAH (Heb.—Statute Law).

After entering the land, there followed 969 years of wars, Judges, Kings, and even a major division between the ten and two tribes. But all the while, it was a Theocracy, this nation was accountable to God.

In 606 B.C., after many conflicts and assaults, Nebuchadnezzar dethrones Judah's last King and deports the Jewish population to Babylon; but it had not been without warning. About 134 years earlier, Assyria took the ten tribes into captivity. (2 Kings 17:6) The Assyrian policy was to break conquered nations into small fragments, then to disperse them through the empire to destroy their national and ethnic unity. After the fall of Israel (the ten tribes), Judah was divided by bitter factions and idolatry was gaining strength. Intermarriage was diluting the Jewish strain—a threat to religion, morality and racial purity.

Why wasn't Zedekiah's fall the demise of this chosen people? The good King Josiah set himself the task to repair the desecrated temple. The High Priest, Hilkiah, while overseeing the work, discovered the only surviving copy of the Book of the Law, after the idolatrous Kings. (2 Chron. 34:14) Apparently this Book was written by Moses. (Deut. 31:24-26; Reprint page 4850-51.) Josiah was reinvigorated by the covenant theme and had it read before all the people. He rededicated the Kingdom to God and proceeded to purge the false worship. (2 Kings 22 and 23) From this reform the Prophets took inspiration, of whom Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah was not the least. Along with Joel, Amos, Isaiah and others, it was taught that ritual and cult were of no value to God—

humility, justice and morality were superior. The prophetic message changed the Jewish Priest from a performer of ritual to that of Rabbi, Teacher of Judaism.

From Josiah to 606 B.C. a revival of Jewish character and concept of **covenant relation** was forged, even if not with true and general morality. Their identity was preserved. Even so, it was too late to preserve the kingdom. But those who marched off to Babylon to raise a new generation and die, had more than the ten tribes before them. They now carried with them the seeds of a national conscience and inner discipline, bound to higher ideals than that displayed in **Kings, Temples and Festivals**. So God spared a remnant for Abraham's sake.

But think not that Babylon held the same oppression as the slavery in Egypt. On the soil of Babylon the Jews built synagogues for religious assembly, instead of temple for sacrifice. The zealots who wept by the rivers of Babylon were but a **handful**; the rest fell in love with the country. Babylon trade routes took Jews to every part of the known world. In the libraries of Babylon the Jews found a world treasure of manuscripts, and acquired a love for books and a taste for learning.

It is not surprising that little more than 42,000 wished to take advantage of Cyrus' decree and return with Ezra. But those returning faced a problem—they had picked up Aramaic, the vernacular of the Middle East melting-pot of Semitic people as everyday language. Only the Priests and Scribes kept in touch with Hebrew, so that when Ezra read the law to the multitude, he had interpreters to translate to Aramaic and add their explanations. (Neh. 8:7, 8) This repeated year after year until the interpreters were carried away with their own inventiveness. Soon "Midrash" (schools of exposition) were developed. Though no one knew it, the seeds for future Talmudism began to grow.

The Persian Empire fell to Alexander the Great in 334. Instead of resisting him, the High Priest threw open the gate of Jerusalem and strewed his way with flowers. (Vol. 3, p. 26) Alexander was not out so much to establish a Grecian Empire as to expand Hellenic culture the world over, and the Jews were not left untouched. Every Greek city in Asia Minor in the second century B.C. had a considerable Jewish population. Hellenization first infected their language, manners and customs. They assumed Greek names, abandoned Jewish dress for the Greek tunic. Synagogues began to resemble Greek temples. Soon pleasure was pursued as policy and folly soared into philosophy.

Under this environment the sect of the Epicureans sprang up, teaching pursuit of pleasure was man's true goal—still extant in Paul's day. (Acts 17:18) This was countered by anti-Hellenizers who became known as Hasideans. But Judaism was fast being assimilated unless the Hebrew Scripture could find a place in Greek culture. Accordingly the Hasideans acquiesced to the translation of the scriptures into Greek, by Jews in Egypt in about 250 B.C., known as the Septuagint. Though there are certain accommodating

compromises in the text, it was greatly instrumental in pulling many half-assimilated Jews back into the orbit of Judaism. It is also a modern-day tool to compare Hebrew and Greek word meanings.

Nearly 100 years later, Antiochus, King of the Seleucid quarter of the Alexandrian Empire, had the grandiose idea of unifying the entire former Alexandrian Empire under his rule. This drive was largely a success, but ran into a snag in Palestine. Jews bore arms and paid taxes to him, but would not erect statues of him in the Temple. The King agreed, but his son, Antiochus Epiphanes did not. In 176 B.C. he appointed a sympathetic priest named Jason to govern the Jews. He opened the Temple to Pagan rites, Grecian statues were brought into the Holy Sanctuary; Greek games were performed by naked Jewish boys in the Temple courtyards. Reacting Jews from every social strata flocked to the ranks of the Orthodox Hasideans. The Hasidean party struck at the Hellenizers, deposing all Jewish officials and priests, throwing them over the walls, the statues followed.

Incensed, Antiochus marched his army into Jerusalem, senselessly slaughtering 10,000 inhabitants. He installed a new set of statues and priests to tend them. In sheer spite he outlawed the Sabbath and Circumcision. Outside Jerusalem, a Greek official tried to force an aged priest named Matthias to sacrifice to Greek gods. Matthias slew the official. Antiochus ordered new reprisals. The Jewish population rose en masse to the defense of Matthias, who with his five sons took charge of the war. They became known as Maccabees (Hammer blows). Antiochus sent a small crack force to suppress the rebellion. The Jews annihilated it. Amazed Seleucid Greeks watch the Jews fight for ideas, not possessions. Antiochus now assembled a huge, first rate army and marched into Jerusalem. In 164 the Jews shattered his armies and recaptured Jerusalem. The Temple was purged of all idols and rededicated to Jehovah, giving birth to the feast of Hanukkah commemorating the victory.

In 143 a peace treaty was struck. For 76 years Judah enjoyed independence; but all was not tranquil. With the victory over the Seleucids and annihilation being averted, there was nothing to hold the divergent groups of Jews together. Three new parties were formed: the Essenes, Pharisees, and Sadducees. The Essenes had no taste for politics and withdrew to seclusion for religious contemplation. They primarily laid hold on Messianic promises, and were probably the source of current expectation around Christ's birth and later to dominate John the Baptists activities. The Pharisees were what was left of the anti-Hellenizers, standing for Rabbi, Synagogue and Prayer. The Sadducees were formed from pro-Hellenizers, who had joined with the Hasideans only to fight the common enemy. They were now rich aristocrats, mostly philosophers, representing the "Liberal enlightened" political viewpoint.

In the Second century B.C. the Midrash (exposition) had become contaminated with Platonic thought, Aristotelian logic and Euclidean science, adding Greek reason to Jewish revelation. The form was prescribed and repetitive and became known as the “MISHNA.” The Sadducee said the Torah belonged to the Priests, and were content to accept it without explanation; while the Pharisees said the Torah belonged to the people, and the Mishneh was man’s way of searching God’s intent. The Pharisees triumphed. Mishneh became the property of the people. Sages of Torah came from every walk of life. Anyone studying the Torah could become its spokesman. The Jewish populace was dazzled by intellectual commentary. The popularity of Mishneh worried the Rabbis. They were afraid that it would rival the Torah in authority. To prevent this, it was forbidden to write down any Mishneh, and had to be memorized. This became known as the “Oral Law.” This was but one of the strifes in the nation. The rifts were sharp and broke into civil war in 67 B.C., making an easy mark for the Roman Dragon in 63 B.C. (who had already swallowed up the other three horns of the old Grecian empire—Vol. III, page 32). When it marched into the Maccabean Kingdom it conquered and renamed it Judea. It was a Roman protectorate and Herod even began rebuilding their temple in B.C. 20.

We will pass over the years of Roman oppression and Christ’s life—you are familiar with those events. Everything to this point was designed to preserve a people for the faith seed of Abraham. They enjoyed 1845 years of God’s favor; but only a remnant accepted the Messiah and were given the privilege of sharing the inheritance of the heavenly-star seed. For the rest, the favor portion of their double is finished and the disfavor begins—because he came to his own and they received him not. Zech. 9:9, 11, 12.

We ask, what was to become of the earthly seed of Abraham? What are the fruits of the second half of God’s “Mishneh” (double or repetition)?

Without documenting the siege of Jerusalem, there is one important event significant in the preservation of Judaism. The Roman General Vespasian first led his legions against Jerusalem in 68 A.D. From Jerusalem emerged a philosopher-rabbi, Jochanan ben Zakki, convinced the stand of the Zealots was hopeless, he deserted the war. But far from being dubbed a traitor, ben Zakki was acclaimed the Saviour of Judaism. He was a leading Pharisee-intellectual who foresaw the holocaust overtaking the Jew. People were dying by the thousands of starvation and pestilence, yet Zealots threw traitors over the wall. His ruse was to feign death and for a few of his disciples to tear their clothes in the streets, proclaiming that their rabbi ben Zakki had died of the plague. Receiving permission to bury him without the city, and concealing him in a coffin, they carried him to the tent of Vespasian. Ben Zakki boldly steps out—with a prophecy and a request. He prophesied Vespasian would become Emperor. In such an event, would the Emperor grant Jochanan ben Zakki permission to establish a small school of Jewish learning in Palestine where they could study ancient Jewish Scripture in peace? Stunned by the

prophecy and the modest request, Vespasian complied. That same year Nero committed suicide and Vespasian was appointed emperor. The Emperor kept his promise to ben Zakki, who founded the first Yeshiva (Jewish academy for learning).

Before leaving for Rome to assume the purple, Vespasian entrusted his son, Titus, with the responsibility of the war, who completely sealed off Jerusalem. The agony lasted four years. The end was inevitable. Romans spilled into the city, the Temple set aflame, women were violated, the priests were massacred, and the survivors marched to Rome to be slaves. It is estimated that 600,000 civilians were slain in the aftermath of the siege. The Romans earned the grim words of their own historian—“They made a desolation, and call it peace!”

Other rebellions were put down in the years to follow, including Masada in 73 A.D, where the entire community committed suicide rather than submit. The last rebellion exploded in A.D. 132 under Simon Bar Kokhba. Under Hadrian every living thing was systematically slaughtered—men, women, children. It was slow, graceless, bitter fighting. In 135 A.D. Bar Kokhba’s forces surrendered, and Palestine was made off-limits to all Jews. Now the great number of Jews lived under Roman rule. In fact many received Roman citizenship in 212 A.D.

But something strange was happening. The Jews, a “marginal minority” had the inner spiritual strength to reject the “dominant majority.” The secret came from the **locked coffin** smuggled out of dying Jerusalem. Ben Zakki’s Yeshiva for Jewish learning founded at Jabneh was alive and well. It had become a factory for the production of Mosaic dynamos to power the inner-directed Jew. Though these dynamos were certified —“made in Jabneh,” many of the parts were stamped “manufactured in Greece.” The Jews had become **philosophers**.

In the 2nd century, rabbi Judah Hanasi feared the teachers of Mishneh would develop a philosophy of ethics based on reason rather than on the Torah, creating a morality based on science instead of God’s commandments. So he forbade all further development of Mishneh. He died deluded in this hope. Babylonian Yeshivas were just springing up to answer the demand of millions of Diaspora Jews. They developed a new branch of interpretation to the Torah, calling it Gomorra (Supplement). Actually, Gomorra was only warmed over Mishneh, served orally in Aramaic instead of Hebrew. Again nothing was written down, but committed to memory. The man of learning among the Jews began to acquire ever greater social prestige. The graduates of these Yeshivas furnished most of the names in the Jewish “Who’s Who” for seven centuries.

For the next 300 years to 600 A.D., these Babylonian academies nurtured Jewish learning. Then a swift turn of events brought about a drastic change for the Jew, forcing the rabbis to reverse their edict against writing the oral law. In the wake of Mohammed’s

death, he left a religious and nationalistic ambitious people. The Mohammedan and the Byzantine empire (Eastern Rome) were locked in a death grip. People were on the move, old norms were uprooted, new forces seized power, empires crumbled. Rabbis feared Jewish learning was in danger of being wiped out. Every time a Vandal or Saracen sword clove a scholastic skull, 2,500,000 words of Mishnah and Gemara fell dead in the gutter. Against their better judgment, the rabbis permitted the Mishnah and Gemara written down. Their combined text is the TALMUD. The task took over 200 years. Intertwined through 35 volumes and 15,000 pages are complicated brain twisters of law, philosophy, ethics, morals, conduct of piety and tender passages of Bible stories. From the standpoint of the faithful student of the Torah alone, this was truly “Tall-Mud.” And indeed it was part of the spiritual blindness that happened unto Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. On the other hand it touched on medicine, hygiene, astronomy, economics and government, opening new vistas of intellectual expansion. The study of Talmud made Jews physicians, mathematicians, astronomers, grammarians, philosophers, poets and business men. The latent force behind Talmudism was Jewish self-government. Whenever Jews showed they could govern themselves at a greater benefit to their victors, the victors permitted them this government within their community. In the face of warring religions, Jews fled in two directions, taking their Talmud with them—(1) to Mohammedan Arabia and (2) to Papal Europe.

In the century after the death of Mohammed in 632, Arab dominion expanded to the borders of India, China, Persia, Africa and to the Atlantic, until halted in Tours, France in 732. But the golden age of Mohammedanism continued to 1000 A.D. While Europe struggled through the dark ages, the Arab Empire encouraged scholarly learning. While Charlemagne could barely write, Arab scholars in Baghdad were studying Aristotle. But their most important contributions were in developing algebra and logarithms. Arab astronomers were measuring the circumference of the earth, while Europeans thought it flat. In this atmosphere Jew and Arab lived side by side in peace. The Jews contributed and were mentally enriched by this stimulus. But they were still debarred from their land and many were seduced from the simple faith in the law and the prophets by Talmud Intellectualism.

The same period in Papal dominated Europe developed differently. Jews were scattered throughout feudal Europe in the 5th to 8th centuries with ignorance almost universal. But it provided a strange exemption for the Jews. They became merchants, bankers, judges, farmers, jewelers and artisans in every place. Charlemagne encouraged Jews to settle in his cities to foster industries and extend the frontiers of commerce. The feudal system provided for only three social classes: 1. The nobles who did the fighting; 2. The priests who did the praying; 3. The serfs who did the work. There was no merchant class—the field was wide open to the Jews. Not only were the Jews the only non-Christians in the empire, but ironically they lived in freedom outside the feudal system; while the Gentiles were imprisoned within it. The Jews could neither be totally converted and assimilated,

nor could the system do without them. Until the 11th century the Church could take a lenient view toward the obstinate Jew, hoping time would convince him of his error.

Then development of unforeseen consequences took place, changing the fabric of medieval Jewish life. In the wake of the Crusades, Renaissance and the Reformation came humiliating garb, ritual murder, charges of Host desecration and confinement to ghettos. With the failure of the Crusades, frustrations were vented on the Jew. Even so, we note the Renaissance sprang to life in just those areas where Jewish life was most active—not in England or France or Germany, but in Naples where Frederick II had invited Jews to translate the works of the Greeks and to teach Hebrew to Christian scholars. When feudal man realized the superiority of the Jewish way of doing things, he absorbed Jewish know-how, kicked the Jew out to eliminate competition and went into business for himself in the 13th to 15th centuries.

In the Fourth Lateran council called by Innocent III in 1215, three items were on the agenda: 1. a redefinition of dogma; 2. the threat of the Albigensian heresy; 3. the danger of the unconverted Jew. It was decided that Jews must wear a badge on their clothing as identification. Talmud burning and ritual murder followed.

Just prior to the Reformation, Jews were expelled from England, Germany and France. During the Reformation they were expelled from Catholic feudal countries and readmitted to Protestant countries who had economic need of them. Though locked mostly in ghettos, many served the nobles in advisory capacities; but the ghetto-Jew was looked upon with derision and was a social outcast. Even so, they were the most learned men in Europe, the only ethnic group having universal education. Into the ghetto they took their Talmud heritage and Old Testament illumination to comfort a bleak physical existence and kept the ghetto from becoming a slum. They were periodically victimized by social hysteria; and so it was from 1500 to 1800. In this culture, a number of Jewish mystic sects and “isms” and false messiahs sprang up; some of which still dominate Jewish thinking in parts of the world today.

The modern age of Jewish emancipation runs parallel to Christian History. Both fought for democracy, both victims of the same tyrannies, both knelt at the same altars of the new god of Science. The French Revolution began as a revolt against a King whom the people could not understand, and developed into a hysteria their leaders could not contain. Reason beclouded humanity, and terror became the instrument of reason. When the revolution began, the Jews were high on the priority list of enemies. Pure reason explained—the church was an enemy of the revolution, and Jews recognized the same old Testament—it stood to reason the Jews were enemies of the State.

But this began to change with Napoleon Bonaparte. Be it remembered, Jews were almost self-governing, as a state within a state, with their own courts, police, taxation. Napoleon

faced with the problem of the Jewish state, convened the first Great Sanhedrin in 18 centuries and presented them with a list of questions: Do French-born Jews consider themselves Frenchmen? Are they willing to obey French laws? What police powers do the rabbis exercise, etc.? Charged with the great pride in this institution, they replied appropriately that Mosaic laws were religious, not secular; that Jews owed allegiance to the state, and so made it binding on all Jewry. As Napoleon's armies advanced, the walls of the ghettos crumbled.

A similar emancipation was begun under the Czar Alexander in Russia in 1802 but was soon reversed by the fear of subsequent tyrants. Restrictions turned into terror, and terror turned into pogroms of slaughter, while the 19th century stage was set for 20th century racism.

The Reformation dealt a death-blow to feudalism and left the working-class as a de-classed majority. Previous religious precepts were weakened—the masses no longer believed in a Church-oriented society; and for many, religion itself lost its significance. The social breakdown brought insecurity and psychological anxiety.

With the rise of capitalism and communism in the mid 1900s, politicians manipulated this anxiety from both sides. The Jew was held up as the exploiting capitalist or as the plotting communist. This was the beginning of modern **anti-Semitism**. Running parallel to this cancerous growth was the host of social philosophers. It began with Friedrich Nietzsche and Edouard Drumont, proposing theories of white race supremacy—that the Aryan elite blood was being diluted. The Jew was pictured as a conspirator. While conceding the Jew as superior in intellect, learning and skill, these virtues were now evil, for these were the qualities the frayed white-collar class did not possess. Mediocrity was a virtue. By 1870 the first openly anti-Semitic political parties were formed in Germany. In 1893 the French Jew, Alfred Dreyfus was falsely accused of espionage. The case split French political parties and drew world attention. Though later exonerated, his case set the stage for later anti-Semitic politics. Satan was maneuvering for position for the Battle of the Great Day.

For the Jew who could read the writing on the wall, and who was inspired by the bait of early Zionist movements (to move to Palestine), he escaped the hunting process allowed by God, about to rupture from man's most degraded impulses. The Jew who stayed, learned the hard way that it was time to **return**.

For a while it would seem the Jew had finally found acceptance in the new enlightenment of America and western Europe. The Jew, Karl Marx gained world renown with his *Das Kapital* in the 1870s. Sigmund Freud, an Austrian Jew, revolutionized psychiatry at the turn of the century. Albert Einstein was the product of German Jewish enlightenment. Then history took a sudden turn in our own day. In 1933 the house painter, Adolph Hitler

became Chancellor of Germany. Where other racists merely toyed with the idea of making murder a civic virtue, Hitler made it a reality by opening Pandora's box of man's unconscious mind. It was not by accident that drug addicts like Goering, homosexuals like Roehm, sadists like Heydrich, murderers like Himmler rose to the highest parts in Hitler's inner circle. It was Satan's strategy to exterminate the earthly seed of Abraham. No coincidence either, that though as much anti-Christian as anti-Jew, Germany found a cooperative, though suspicious ally in the Vatican and totalitarian Italy under Mussolini.

Dealing with the Jewish problem occupied five stages from harassing Jews to the "Final Solution" instituted in 1941, of systematic extermination of 6,000,000 Jews. At first, they were lined in front of ditches and shot. This being too inefficient, Jews under the pretense of deportation were held in slave labor camps, till herded naked to simulated showers, where Zyklon B gas was introduced behind sealed doors. Other Jews were employed to transport the bodies to the ovens for final processing. The world could not believe it, but the 40,000 Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto died in 1943. Only 7,000 could bear arms. The Nazi S.S. had to burn and destroy building by building. In desperation the Jews appealed to the Polish underground for help, but in vain. What the S.S. hoped to be a one or two day routing, took six weeks. The Poles hoped the Germans would solve their Jewish problem for them. Little did they realize what history had in store when in 1944, the Polish underground staged its own uprising against the Germans. The Poles begged the Russians to come to their aid. Just as they refused to aid the Jews, the Russians refused to aid the Poles. The Germans had solved the Russian-Polish problem for her. Those who curried favor of the Nazis, betrayed their own people. Those who collaborated the most, in the end became their victims. Jews surviving the holocaust were glad to emigrate to Israel after the way—any way, at any cost.

Now let's return to the lull before the storm. The early Zionist intellectuals and motivators were intensely visionary men. In 1862, Moses Hess wrote "Rome and Jerusalem" advocating the return of the Jews to Palestine—to create a spiritual center for diaspora Judaism. In the 1870s Peretz Smolenskin published his essay "The Eternal People." In 1878 the first Jewish pioneer village, "Petach Tikva" (Gate of Hope) was established for Russian immigrants.

* I ask you, was it coincident this occurred just 1845 years after Christ wept over this natural house and abandoned them to a double of disfavor; and that same year, Lord Beaconsfield, England's Jewish Prime Minister, achieved British protectorate for Palestine, whereby Jews could hold real estate?

(* Just when the Divine Right of Kings is broken and nations were falling, earth's new King is establishing his own people.) (Isa. 40:2; Rom. 11:1, 2, 11, 12, 15—life from the dead—sleeping saints raised in 1878.) Theodore Herzl further paved the way for return

with his vision of a Jewish State. Before 1880, 12,000 Jews were in Palestine. By 1914, 115,000 had been motivated by Herzl to return.

During World War II England's brilliant chemist, Chaim Weizmann was called to the British war office to find a way to produce synthetic cordite, an explosive essential to the war effort. Weizmann discovered such a process and turned it over to the war office. Being a man of great personal magnetism, he approached the British government with a request that it assume a protectorate for a Jewish national home in Palestine. The favorable reply in gratitude was the Balfour Declaration in 1917.

Time fails us to discuss Jabotinsky and his Mule Corps and the founding of the Haganah. (First armed forces under national head, Sinne Maccabees.) But in 1939 the British Peel Commission found the Mandate incompatible with the courting of Arab interests, and began to limit Jewish immigration. Terror and rebellion reigned for nine more years, when the United Nations voted for partition in 1947. England pulled out in 1948 and for the first, time since A.D. 70, a Jewish polity lived in Israel.

The whole process in the 70 years since 1878 was a divinely prearranged planned parenthood schedule, fostering five Palestinian immigration waves at the right time and in the right succession: (1) 1880-1900 tillers of the soil to break ground. (2) 1900-1914 scientific farmers and laborers to build the country's agriculture. (3) 1918-1924 young people came and speculators to build cities, found industries and schools. (4) 1924-1939 came the intellectuals, professionals and bureaucrats to draw the blueprints for democracy. (5) After World War II came Jews from every walk of life to fill the ranks. By 1948 nationhood was a natural birth. The rest we have seen in our own day. (Matt. 24:32-35)

The natural seed is nearly ready for what God has for them yet to learn and to be used for the blessing of the human family. (Ezek. 36:9, 10, 21-25; Amos 9:14, 15; Zeph. 3:20; Zech. 8:13; 12:10; 14:8, 9.)

If we as the Spiritual Seed are ready, then earth's weary night will soon be over.