

What About God's Chosen People?

Part IV



By Philip E. Busby

Question #21 - *“Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people.”*

We ended our last segment by getting into our third breakdown question of the main question we are dealing with here, which is the question of, are those people we know today as the Jews really the chosen nation God promised to bring through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? In getting into this I made what I believe is a major point in this argument, which is that the Jews are fulfilling the prophesy that God would one day gather His nation back together. In doing this, we talked a bit about the Holocaust and the Jewish fight to reestablish a nation in the land of Israel where Jews could freely emigrate. All this also has deep ramifications to something else we talked about in our last segment, which is the fact God sent Jesus at a time before the nation of Israel fell apart to the point Jesus could not have done what was necessary to show Himself as The Messiah. The nation of Israel is being gathered back together for much that same reason today. Jesus is to return, and there needs to be that prophesied place where His chosen nation resides for us once again, to see He truly is The Messiah!

Now, to truly answer our question of why those we know as Jews are that chosen nation, there are two

main things we must understand and look at. First, we must understand there was and is a point in what God wanted and wants to accomplish through His nation. This cannot be accomplished through allowing man to simply make his own choices while God stands back and takes whatever He can get out of them. Thus, God must interact all along the way to shape, preserve, and use those who are willing to follow His plan. The second thing is to go back and look at the history that shows us this interaction. We do this by studying the history of how God's nation became “the Jews,” which some would insist does not truly encompass all of Israel. In doing this, we will clearly see it is very true, the Jews do not necessarily encompass all of Israel, but they do represent God's chosen nation!

The truth is that the two things we need to understand and look at go hand in hand; and to see them clearly, we can, and really must, go all the way back to Abraham. In doing this, we see what has been a main theme in every part of this writing: which is the understanding that out of all the world, God chose a specific people to be a chosen nation. However, even this was not done by God gathering a group of people together, but by choosing one man to get it all started! That man's name was originally Abram, and God would call him out of his homeland and away from his father's house to go into that land we now know as Israel. There he would dwell among strangers, who at the time lived on the land. These people would be strangers in that after the Tower of Babel and the confounding of the language that took place there, the world divided first and foremost along the family lines of Noah's three sons: Ham, Shem, and Japheth. Abram was of the family of Shem, and the land God called him to sojourn in was held by people descendent from Ham.

Abram would be a stranger among them without having much of any of his family line around. However, God would change Abram's name to Abraham and promise that his descendants - not those of Ham's family - would one day be the possessors of this land. In this, we see God choosing a man from among men to be the father, not just of God's chosen nation, but of many nations! Abraham would have no children through his wife Sarah for many years, and it seemed to the couple that if God's promise was going to come true, they would have to find a way for Abraham to have a son. To do this, they would use Sarah's handmaiden as a surrogate. Abraham would take this woman named Hagar, and with her have a son named Ishmael. In spite of the fact Ishmael was a direct son of Abraham, God made it clear Ishmael was not the one God would choose to create His chosen nation. Nonetheless, Ishmael would

be the father of those we know today as the Arabs. (Gen. 17:15-22) In this, we see God was not just turning things over to the hands of men, but was directly directing what He wanted according to His will.

When the time was right, God would miraculously open Sarah's womb at a time when both she and Abraham were considered way too old to have a child; and together her and Abraham would have a son named Isaac. After Sarah's death, Abraham would take a new wife named Keturah. Together they would have six sons. (Gen. 25:1-6) Again, all these later sons would be direct sons of Abraham and become nations, but none of them the one God chose to be His chosen nation. Isaac, the only son of Abraham and Sarah, alone would be the son of Abraham to be chosen of God for the task!

Isaac's life serves as an even better example of the point I'm trying to get at. Isaac would have a wife given to him by God's direction, and with no surrogates or later marriages to talk about, this couple would have two sons together. In fact, these two boys would be twins. The oldest, by just a few seconds, was named Esau, and the younger Jacob. (Gen. 25:24-28) In spite of the fact these two brothers were both born to Isaac and his wife Rebekah, only one would be chosen to go forward with God's plan to establish a chosen nation. On top of this, it would not be the elder son as tradition would dictate. Why would this happen? Because Esau did not care for the things of God; and Jacob, while by far not a perfect man, would! Thus, Esau, while also becoming a nation later known as the Edomites, would be left out of the direct plan to build a chosen nation. Jacob would go on to have his name changed to the name we primarily know God's chosen nation by - "Israel." (Gen. 32:24-30)

This is our first really good example of the fact God was not just interested in establishing a chosen nation out of just anyone, nor was He establishing it out of all those who were simply of the correct bloodline. Again, God was interested first and foremost in those who desired to be part of His plan. Now, we can in no way make the argument that everyone who ever was and is considered a part of God's chosen nation was/is God fearing and completely sold out to what God wanted to do. If that had been possible, the nation would have been completely successful in everything God wanted it to accomplish. However, these examples tell us something about the argument people make when they say those who are called Jews are not really, or do not entirely represent the nation God established to hold His written Word. To continue seeing this, we can continue down

the historical time line.

Jacob (eventually renamed Israel) would go on to have twelve sons. These sons would actually come through four different women, the details of why and how we will not take the space to cover here. However, as you follow the story, you find Israel as a nation consists of twelve tribes, one derived from each of these twelve sons, and thus, named according to their names. Even in this, there would be one exception, and that was Joseph. Joseph was the one son of Jacob who was really sold out to the plan of God, and this would make a person think, out of all the brothers he would be the one who would really be something special. Well, he was, but not in the way some might have guessed. Instead of becoming one of the tribes of Israel, Joseph would be used very specifically to accomplish and bring about the right circumstances for Jacob's family to truly grow from just a large family into a cohesive nation of specific people. It would be Joseph's two sons who would go on to receive the honor of having tribes in Israel which bore their names. These tribes would be considered half tribes, but considering God eventually separated out the tribe of Levi for the priestly service, both these half tribes would really go on to take their place as just tribes in Israel.

In this, we see again the fact God had a plan and was not simply going by what man chose to do or came up with. After Jacob's family takes time in Egypt to develop into a true nation of people, God would call a man, out of the tribe of Levi, whose life had been specifically directed to make him the perfect man for the job of leading all the nation of Israel out of Egypt and back to that land God had called Abraham to many long years past. This was to fully fulfill the promise God had made to Abraham that his descendants would one day be the possessors of the land, instead of those from Ham's family who then possessed it. I say, fully fulfill the promise, because descendants of Abraham through sons such as Ishmael and Esau, already possessed portions of the land which lay adjacent to that portion God wanted to give to His chosen nation. This fact along with the fact Abraham's nephew Lot, who was originally taken by Abraham into the land, also became two separate nations possessing adjacent land. Israel was truly coming out of Egypt to a land now surrounded by family!

Of course, the man God called to lead Israel was named Moses, and anyone who has read the Bible very much at all is familiar with him, or at least his name. God would use Moses to lead Israel out into the peninsula which lies between Egypt and the land God promised to

Abraham. There we would see another story that really speaks to our point about God directing, not just accepting whatever man did just because they were of the right bloodline. It would be in this desert region of Sinai that God would go on to prove to Israel He was not just capable of freeing them from being Pharaoh's slaves, but continually care for them even under the harshest of circumstances. God would provide drinkable water where there was none, and food for this great multitude of people in a place where there was little to none to be had. The Bible even records that through all the years Israel had wandered in the wilderness, even their clothing had failed to deteriorate as physical circumstances dictate they should have! (Deut. 8:1-6) God was truly showing that earthly circumstances aside, He was going to bring about His chosen nation, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it.

At the same time, God did need people willing to follow; and not long after leaving Egypt there came a day, when out in this wilderness Israel was brought to a mountain where God would speak to them directly. This was the beginning of God laying out His written Word, which He would commit to His chosen nation. The people were scared to hear God's voice for themselves, and eventually Moses was called up into the mountain to commune with God about how this would all move forward and come together. (Ex. 20:18-21) Moses was in that mountain for a long time, too long, according to the people's thinking. Thus, they came to Moses' brother Aaron and said, "we don't know what happened to this Moses who led us out of Egypt into this wilderness. As far as we know he's dead and never coming back." They believed under these circumstances they needed new leadership and a binding tie as a nation. What they chose for this was a common human practice - they developed a religion.

To do this, they broke off the gold they had and gave it to Aaron so he could make them an idol, which was an object they could see and touch. This idol was in the form of a calf, and when Israel saw it, they said, "this is the god which led us out of Egypt and gave us our freedom." Thus, they worshiped this idol; and because idols can't really talk or do anything, it gave them exactly what all people forming false religions really desire - the freedom to make up the rules of life in whatever way they choose. The people began to party and have a good time as they pleased instead of caring about the righteousness God desired from them. As this takes place, God tells Moses to get down out of the mountain, so God's anger could consume the people for their actions without Moses being taken along with

them. Moses did not, at the time, know what the people had done, but he wondered how God's promise to establish a chosen nation was going to happen if God killed the entire congregation of Israel. God tells Moses He would simply begin again with Moses!

Now, if this had happened, we can't say for sure by what name we would call God's chosen nation as a people; but we know there would not have been the twelve tribes of Israel, named for the sons of Jacob, as there ended up being. The point here is that if God had done this, it would have shown, in a way far greater than any other example, just how much God was willing to put quality before just taking whatever man came up with. As it happened, Moses would put himself in the very dangerous place of standing in the gap between Israel and God. Moses would beg God not to destroy the people. In doing this, Moses was committing himself to a far greater task of taking on the responsibility of teaching and leading the people into what God wanted them to be, than God had ever asked of him in the first place!

Because the people continued to doubt God's promise, Moses would eventually lead the people through forty years of wandering in the wilderness. This specifically comes upon the people because they did not believe they could take the land of promise, after spies had been sent to observe the land firsthand. Thus, the adults who left Egypt would not enter the promised land, and Moses would turn over a new generation of Israelites to one of the two spies, who forty years before had come back and believed they should not hesitate to take the land. This man's name was Joshua, and he was the man God chose to take Moses' place and lead the next generation of Israel into the land. However, even after many great victories under his leadership, when the time came for Joshua to go home to glory, the job of taking full possession of the land had not been completed, and God was not turning the leadership of the nation over to another individual. Joshua reminded the people that it was still their responsibility to continue to take the land as God directed them. Joshua knew this would be a long-term task; for one thing, God had instructed Israel not to take the entire land until they, as a people, were large enough to possess it, but they were certainly not to live intermingled with the Canaanite population. They were to drive them out so as to separate themselves and the work of God. (Ex. 23:27-33)

Joshua understood it would be up to the people to do what was right from then on without having such a direct human leader as they had with Moses and himself.

All Joshua could do was commit to the fact he had led and taught his house to serve The Lord! (Joshua 24) It would be up to the collective people and individual tribes to stick to the plan from there. Israel would fail to do this, and many would take on the practices of the ungodly people they had failed to drive out. Through this period, Israel would even find themselves at times being oppressed by those around them, and God would send judges to help lead Israel and/or show them the way they were suppose to handle the situation in order to get back on track. These men God called were referred to as judges because it was not God's intent for Israel to have a king. The better way to put it is to say God did not want Israel to have a man as their king because God was to be their King!

Now, God had said early on the people would not go for this situation, and would eventually want an earthly king like other nations, (Deut.17:14-20) and this is really where we start to get down to the part of the history that takes us to the issue of Israel eventually becoming known as just the Jews. The last judge of Israel was a man named Samuel, and it was this judge, more than ever before, that would live in the time when Israel demanded they have a king as other nations had a king. God told Samuel to warn the people about what it would mean to have a king, but God also told Samuel the people wouldn't listen. This is all part of what we talked about last time when discussing how God's righteousness gives us the chance to do what is right, even when He knows we will not take that path. After warning the people about how God had done nothing but provide for them, where as a human king would lay heavy taxes and burdens on them, the people would do as God said they would and demand an earthly king anyway. Samuel would be led of God to anoint a man by the name of Saul to be king. Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin, and he was the kind of tall and strong specimen of a man that people would desire and readily accept as a king.

God would also choose Saul because Saul was a humble man who in no way sought the job. In fact, Saul would try to run from the job at first; but in the end, Saul would prove that the old adage - power corrupts - is true. Saul, like the general population, would fail to serve God. He would fail to be a king who was to translate God's desire for the nation unto the people. He would eventually become so puffed up with pride, that even before Samuel died, God would send Samuel to inform Saul the kingdom was to be taken away from him and given to another. (I Sam. 15:10-29) God would also send Samuel to anoint the next king, and that would be the

youngest son of a man named Jesse; who, out of all his sons, it would be a surprise Samuel was sent to anoint his youngest, named David. (I Sam. 16:1-13)

Israel would spend many more years of sorrow and war with Saul as king, but eventually the day would come when Saul and his sons would fall in battle to Israel's enemies. (I Sam. 31:1-13) This would pave the way for David to take the throne. This would not just be a change in what man was leading Israel, but what tribe the person came from! David was from the tribe of Judah, and this is the next very important point in understanding why the people of the chosen nation became known as Jews! David would be a man very pleasing to God; and for the most part he followed God's direction, leading the nation in that direction with him. It would be David who would drive out the Jebusites from a place called Salem, in the time of Abraham, (Gen. 14:17-20, II Sam. 5:4-13) and which was directly adjacent to the hill God told Abraham to take his son Isaac to, in the story where we get the message directly from Abraham that true believers before the time of Jesus, and even the Law, believed God would provide Himself a Lamb. (Gen. 22:1-14) This hill would also eventually be the building site for the temple!

David would make this place Israel's capital, and it would be known as the city of peace - or Jerusalem! David would desire to build that more permanent structure to replace the mobile tabernacle Israel had traveled through the wilderness with, but God would tell him no. David was a man of war and known for his might in battle. God did not want the temple to be looked at as some crowning jewel of David's victories over Israel's enemies. However, God would promise David that when his son set on the throne of Israel there would be peace on every side, and this son would be the one God would allow to build the temple in Jerusalem. God would also promise another important item to our discussion of Jews being the chosen nation. God would promise David there would not fail a man from his descendants to set on the throne. (II Sam. 7:12-17)

This is a very important point, in that what God was really promising David was not that his lineage would continue to be the kings of all the tribes of Israel, no matter what Israel chose to do. God's promise was that David's throne would rule over God's chosen nation. Some might think there is no difference, but there is, and this is what we have been driving at through this look back at how God established His nation and the history of it. The fact we need to see these things are the reason we have much more than just the Torah to call the

Bible, with maybe a few prophetic books, but we also have a large historical account that tells us the chosen nation's history right up to the time man began to keep some much better historical records for himself. We also now have what we call the New Testament, which shows us how this promise is ultimately fulfilled through Jesus, The Messiah, Who was of the line and lineage of David! (Matt. 1:1-16, Luke 2:1-21)

We clearly see the intent of God's promise to David and his house as David's son's reign as king of Israel is coming to an end. It would be at this point the people of Israel would become dissatisfied with a king for just the things God had told Samuel to warn them about back when they so readily desired one! As Solomon's life came to an end and his son Rehoboam was ready to take the throne, the people came to Rehoboam and complained that his father had asked too much of them and taxed them too much. Before they would make Rehoboam king they wanted to know if he would ease this burden. Rehoboam would ask counsel of his father's advisers who were older and wiser, and they would tell him to lighten the burden and the people would serve him all his life. Rehoboam would then ask his younger and more contemporary advisers what he should do, and they said, "you tell the people that if they thought your father was heavy on them, they haven't seen anything yet." They believed this was the way to maintain law and order in the kingdom and establish Rehoboam's authority over the land.

The older advisers were right, but Rehoboam went with the advise of the young and foolish. Thus, in spite of God's promise to David, ten tribes of Israel would, at this point, break away from the throne of David and become the northern kingdom of Israel. God would show who should be the king of this new kingdom even before Solomon's death, and God would send prophets and judgments upon it throughout its history, because its people were still suppose to be part of God's chosen nation. (I Kin. 11:26-40) Officially, the throne of David would be left with only two tribes under its rule, those being that of Benjamin and the tribe of Judah, which is the tribe David was from. Together they would become known as the southern kingdom of Judah!

Now, here's the crucial point of understanding. This separation was not strictly a house by house division down tribal lines. While this may have been true on an official and territorial level, there were people from all the tribes who chose to stay in the southern kingdom of Judah, some because they already lived on that side of the dividing line, and some because, through the years,

they chose to move to the south. These stayed with David's lineage as their king and Jerusalem as their capital. (I Kin. 12:16-17) This, in no small part, affected those who desired to retain free access to the temple in Jerusalem and the Laws of God, which were only able to appropriately be performed there. Even many who lived in the northern kingdom of Israel would cross the border on a regular basis in order to continue accessing the temple. God had told the northern king, named Jeroboam, if he followed Him, God would establish his throne; but as Jeroboam viewed the trend, he became far more concerned with maintaining the northern kingdom's independent nation and power on his own, instead of trusting God.

This resulted in the development of a religion in the northern kingdom which was meant to replace the Laws of God, Israel, as a whole, was to be committed to. "And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan." I Kings 12:26-30 Now, Jerusalem was no further away from these people than it had ever been, and Jeroboam knew he could not simply abolish the historic tradition of following God's Law, over night. Thus, to truly separate Israel from Judah, he made a religion of convenience, putting one false temple in the north of the country and one pretty much on the border with the southern kingdom, in a place with historical significance to all of Israel! (Gen. 28:10-22)

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

