**Middle East Peace**

**How? When?**

**Chapter 7**

**Time of Israel’s Restoration (1)**

**Israel’s Return to the Land of Her Possession**

*Whoever kills a person*, *the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses*; *but one witness is not sufficient testimony against a person for the death penalty*.

*Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death*, *but he shall surely be put to death*.

*And you shall take no ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge*, *that he may return to dwell in the land before the death of the priest* [the high priest (v. 25)].

*So you shall not pollute the land where you are*; *for blood defiles the land*, *and no atonement can be made for the land*, *for the blood that is shed on it*, *except by the blood of him who shed it*. (**Numbers 35:30-33**)

For over six decades, since May 14, 1948 — for the first time in almost nineteen centuries, dating back to the days when Rome ruled the world — a Jewish nation has again existed in the Middle East. The Old Testament is filled with prophecies pertaining to a future time when God would restore His people to their land (e.g., **Deuteronomy 30:1-3**; **Isaiah 2:1-5**; **54:1ff**; **Ezekiel 36:24ff**; **37:1ff**; **39:25ff**; **Zechariah 8:1ff**). But can this present restoration be seen as any type of fulfillment of God’s numerous promises to one day restore His people to their land?

As seen in past chapters in this book, many Bible students have understood the present restoration of a remnant of the Jewish people to be a progressive beginning fulfillment of these numerous prophecies. But, as also seen in these past chapters, this restoration of a remnant during modern times can have nothing to do with God’s promises to one day not only restore His people to the land but to restore their land as well. Not only will the Jewish nation be healed in that day, but the land itself will be healed. A repentant and converted Jewish people will be removed from the nations and placed back in a land that is going to “*blossom as the rose*” (**Isaiah 35:1ff**; **Joel 2:18-32**; **3:17-21**).

It is rather amazing that anyone with an open Bible would equate what has been happening over the past six decades in the Middle East with God restoring both the Jewish people and their land in accordance with His numerous promises to do so. But they do, completely ignoring what is so clearly taught in the Word.

Scripture lays the whole matter out, as is seen in previous chapters in this book — in numerous ways and places, in a clear and understandable manner — providing sufficient information (actually, an abundance of information) surrounding different things having to do with Israel’s prophesied return that no one should ever go wrong in this realm of biblical study; and **Numbers** chapter **thirty-five** is another place in Scripture that deals with the matter in a clear and easy-to-understand manner.

The matter is dealt with in **Numbers** chapter **thirty-five** after a manner that is not really seen elsewhere in Scripture, though remaining completely in line with all other places in Scripture where the fulfillment of God’s promises to one day restore His people and their land are dealt with. This chapter in **Numbers** simply presents additional information for a developing word picture on the subject.

In this chapter, “a time” during Man’s Day, during the 6,000 years allotted to man, is given *when Israel can return*. Until this “time” arrives, *Israel cannot return*; but after this “time” arrives, *Israel can and will return*, though only following certain other revealed events first coming to pass.

The “time” dealt with in this chapter is only *one part* of the overall equation, though *a very important part*. Thus, one can understand one necessary facet of the matter from that which is revealed in this section of Scripture.

The Cities of Refuge

**Numbers** chapter **thirty-five** relates the account of God instructing the children of Israel to set aside six cities to be “*cities of refuge*.” And within this account one will find central truths pertaining to that future time — which is dealt with in **Hebrews** chapter **five** — when the present high priestly ministry of Christ, *after the order of Aaron*, is concluded and Christ comes forth from the heavenly sanctuary as the great King-Priest, *after the order of Melchizedek*.

Three of the cities of refuge were to be located on the east side of Jordan, and the three remaining were to be located on the west side of Jordan (**Numbers 35:14**). The three cities on the east side of Jordan were selected by Moses, prior to his death and the subsequent entrance of the Israelites into the land of Canaan (**Deuteronomy 4:41-43**); and the three cities on the west side of Jordan were selected by the children of Israel under the leadership of Joshua, following their entrance into the land (**Joshua 20:1-7**).

1) A Sanctuary

These cities were set aside to provide *a sanctuary* for any man who killed another man by an unpremeditated act. The divine decree given to Noah and his sons following the Flood required *the death of the slayer* at the hands of man:

*Whoever sheds man*’*s* *blood, by man his blood shall be shed*; *for in the image of God He made man*. (**Genesis 9:6**)

And God’s injunction concerning capital punishment for a capital crime was later reiterated to Moses and is part of the Mosaic Economy as well (**Exodus 20:13**; **21:12ff**).

The command concerning capital punishment for a capital crime was thus given to Noah and his sons over eight hundred years before it was delivered to the children of Israel under Moses.

Consequently, man not being under the Mosaic Economy today has *nothing* to do with the validity or non-validity of capital punishment for a capital crime, for not only does the biblical origin of this injunction *precede* the giving of the Law through Moses but the command given to Noah and his sons (approx. 2,300 B.C.) *has never been repealed*.

Although capital punishment for a capital offense has never been repealed, provision was later made for a man who killed another man unintentionally. This was the divinely established purpose for setting aside the six cities of refuge (cf. **Exodus 21:12**, **13**).

These cities were to be located at places where at least one city would be easily accessible to any Israelite living in the land of Canaan. And should one Israelite kill another Israelite through accidental means — unintentionally — he could flee to the nearest city of refuge and be provided a sanctuary from the near kinsman of the person who had been slain.

It fell to the lot of the near kinsman to fulfill God’s injunction concerning capital punishment for a capital crime. The near kinsman was to confront the slayer and, in turn, *slay him*. God’s requirement in the matter was *blood for blood* (**Numbers 35:16-21**; cf. **Deuteronomy 19:21**).

God’s previous instructions to Noah and his sons remained *unchanged* within the framework of God’s instructions to Moses.

Something though was added to these instructions within the Mosaic Economy. Provision was made for the person guilty of accidental, unpremeditated manslaughter — a city of refuge. And once the Israelite guilty of such an act had taken advantage of that provision — once the slayer had fled to and was inside the walls of one of the six designated cities of refuge — the near kinsman, as long as the slayer remained in this place, couldn’t touch him.

Any individual though who fled to one of the cities of refuge must, at a later time, be returned to the area where the slaying occurred and appear before a judicial court. And, in order for that individual to be found guilty of willful murder, at least two witnesses were required to testify against the man in this respect.

If the slayer was found to be *guilty of willful murder*, he would be turned over to the near kinsman to be slain; and the near kinsman, slaying the man, would not be guilty of blood himself.

But if the slayer, on the other hand, was found *guilty only of involuntary manslaughter*, he would be delivered out of the hands of the near kinsman and be returned to the safety of the city of refuge to which he had previously fled (**Numbers 35:22-28**).

2) A Ransom

Then there was the matter of *a ransom*.

This ransom constituted a payment for the life of the one found to have committed involuntary manslaughter. No ransom though was provided for the life of a person found guilty of willful murder. Rather, he was to forfeit his own life (*blood for blood*), apart from a ransom.

But though the ransom was a provision for the one having committed involuntary manslaughter, there was a stipulation: *The slayer could not avail himself of the ransom until the death of the high priest* (**Numbers 35:28**, **32**).

Once the high priest in the camp of Israel had died and the ransom had been paid, the individual who had previously been found guilty only of involuntary manslaughter was then *free to leave the particular city of refuge where he had been provided a sanctuary and return to the land of his possession*. *And once this had occurred*, *the near kinsman no longer had any claim on that individual*.

Israel, the Slayer

In the Old Testament (in the type) it was *individual Israelites* who found themselves guilty of manslaughter (premeditated or involuntary) and, consequently, in a position where they would either be slain or be granted protection in a city of refuge.

Today (in the antitype) it is *the entire nation of Israel* that finds itself guilty of manslaughter and in a position to either be slain or be granted protection.

1) Premeditated or Involuntary

The nation of Israel is guilty of *blood*. The nation is guilty of *the death of their Messiah*, *the Lord Jesus Christ*.

The paschal lamb was given to Israel, and *only Israel* *could slay this lamb* (**Exodus 12:1ff**). “Jesus” was *the Paschal Lamb* (**1 Corinthians 5:7**), to whom all the sacrificial lambs in the Old Testament pointed; and *only Israel could have slain Jesus*,which is exactly what, according to Scripture, occurred (**Acts 2:23**, **36**; **3:12-15**).

Israel today is *unclean* due to its contact with the dead body of God’s Son, with cleansing to be provided *on the seventh day* — the seventh 1,000-year period, the Messianic Era (**Numbers 19:11**, **12**).

But how is Israel’s act, as the slayer, to be reckoned? Was it *a premeditated act*? Or was it *an involuntary act*?

If it was a premeditated act, the nation would have to be cut off. No ransom could be provided (it would have to be *blood for blood*; the nation would have to pay with its own life); nor, if *a premeditated act*, could the nation *ever* be allowed to return to the land of her possession (which would mean, in the final analysis, that God’s promises to Abraham, beginning with **Genesis** **12:1-3**, could *never* be realized).

However, if Jesus was delivered into Israel’s hands after a manner that would allow the nation’s act of crucifying her Messiah to be looked upon as *involuntary manslaughter* — i.e., allowing the nation’s act to be looked upon as having been done through *ignorance* — then Israel could be granted protection and a ransom could be provided.

And beyond that, the nation could one day avail itself of the ransom, at which time Israel would be free to return to the land of her possession (allowing God’s promises to Abraham, beginning with **Genesis 12:1-3**, to be fulfilled).

2) The Biblical Testimony

The biblical testimony concerning the manner in which the nation’s act must be viewed was given by Jesus Himself at Golgotha; and the same testimony was later provided by Peter, following the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

Note the words of Jesus:

. . . *Father*, *forgive them*, *for they do not know what they do*. . . .” (**Luke 23:34a**).

Then note the words of Peter:

*Men of Israel* . . .

*But you denied the Holy One and the Just*, *and asked for a murderer to be granted to you*,

*and killed the Prince of life*, *whom God raised from the dead*, *of which we are witnesses*. .

*Yet now*, *brethren*, *I know that you did it in ignorance*, *as did also your rulers*.

(**Acts 3:12a**, **14**, **15**, **17**)

Thus, Jesus was delivered into Israel’s hands (cf. **Exodus 21:13**; **Acts 2:23**) after a manner that not only allowed the Jewish people to actafter the described fashion but also prevented them from acting after any other fashion as well. Consequently, *Israel is to be granted protection*, *a ransom will be provided*, *and the Jewish people will be free to one day avail themselves of this ransom and return to the land of their possession*.

But this will occur *only after* *the antitype of the death of the high priest*. And it will be at this time — not before — *that all of God*’*s promises to Abraham through Isaac*, *Jacob*, *and Jacob*’*s twelve sons*, *beginning with* ***Genesis 12:1-3***, *will be fulfilled*.

Christ’s Present High Priestly Ministry

Patterned After the Order of Aaron, or Melchizedek?

Christ’s present ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is often associated with that of Melchizedek rather than Aaron, though Christ exercising a ministry after the other of Melchizedek today is not possible. As well, associating Christ’s present ministry in the sanctuary with Melchizedek will close the door to a proper understanding of the typology seen in **Numbers** chapter **thirty-five**.

1) Aaron

Aaron was a minister in the sanctuary during that period when the children of Israel, under Moses, traversed the wilderness on their pilgrim journey from Egypt to Canaan. These Israelites constituted a nation that had experienced *death* (via a substitute) in Egypt, *burial* as they moved down into the divide between the waters of the Red Sea from the Sea’s western banks in Egypt, and *resurrection* as they moved up out of this divide between the waters on the Sea’s eastern banks in the wilderness. *The first had been set aside and the second established* (**Hebrews 10:9**); and this nation, under Moses, passed through these experiences for *one central purpose*.

This nation was to be established within *a theocracy in the land of Canaan as God*’*s firstborn son*; and, occupying this position, the Gentile nations of the earth were to be both subject to and blessed through Israel.

God had previously made certain promises to Abraham, and He had established a covenant with Abraham concerning the land wherein these promises were to be realized. Before Abraham ever left Ur of the Chaldees, God revealed His plans and purposes in relation to Abraham, his progeny, and the Gentile nations of the earth. Then, once Abraham had left Ur and entered into the land of Canaan, God established a covenant with him concerning the land itself (**Genesis 12:1-3**; **13:14-17**; **15:18-21**; **17:7**, **8**).

Within God’s plans and purposes, a nation, separate and distinct from the Gentile nations, was to be brought into existence through Abraham. The descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob (**Genesis 17:18**, **19**; **21:12**; **27:29**), comprising this separate and distinct nation, would come under God’s *direct* *blessing*; but such would not be the case with any Gentile nation. The Gentile nations of the earth were to be blessed *only through* the nation emanating from the loins of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, the nation of Israel.

And these blessings were to be realized by and through Israel *only* as this nation dwelled in a particular land — the land of Canaan, to which Abraham had been called when he left Ur. God, through an unconditional and everlasting covenant gave this land to Abraham and his seed (**Genesis 13:14-17**; **15:18-21**; **17:7**, **8**; **26:3**, **4**; **28:13**, **14**); and the seed of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob holds (and will always hold) the title deed to this land for one central purpose, recorded in **Genesis 12:1-3**.

Then, in keeping with **Deuteronomy 28:1-14**, the Gentile nations being blessed through Israel were also to be subject to Israel. Israel was to be placed at the head of the nations (cf. **Genesis 22:17**, **18**; **Exodus 19:5**; **Deuteronomy 7:6**), within a theocracy. God Himself was to dwell in the midst of His people (cf. **Exodus 40:34-38**; **Leviticus 26:11**, **12**; **Joel 2:27-32**), blessings were to be poured out on the people of Israel (**Deuteronomy 28:2-14**), and these blessings were to flow through Israel to the nations of the earth (**Genesis 12:3**). That is, *the nations of the earth were to be subject to Israel — God*’*s firstborn son*, *a kingdom of priests — and*, *in this manner*, *be blessed through Israel*.

This is how it was to have been under the old covenant during the days of Moses, and later Joshua; and this is how it one day will be when God makes a new covenant with the house of Israel during the days of the Son of Man.

Then, in that coming day, God, in the person of His Son, will dwell among the Jewish people, in a theocracy (cf.**Joel 2:27-32**).

During Moses’ day, Aaron was a minister in the sanctuary on behalf of a people who had been redeemed from Egypt for the purpose at hand. This was *an* *earthly* sanctuary, and the purpose at hand was *earthly*. The Israelites had been redeemed and called out from one part of the earth to occupy a particular position in another part of the earth, within a theocracy.

In the antitype, Christ is presently ministering in *a* *heavenly* sanctuary (after which the earthly was patterned), and He is ministering on behalf of a people who have been redeemed from the present world for a particular purpose. Christians are presently being called out from this world to one day occupy positions in *heavenly places* (paralleling Israel’s earthly calling in a type-antitype framework [called to be “*kings and priests*,” “*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation*, *His own special people*]), within a theocracy (**1 Peter 2:9**; **Revelation 5:10**; cf. **Exodus 19:5**, **6**).

And Christ, ministering in the heavenly sanctuary today, is ministering *after the order of Aaron*. He is ministering on the basis of shed blood on behalf of a redeemed people removed from this world for a purpose, paralleling Israel’s removal from Egypt for a purpose.

(Note that Christ can minister in the sanctuary in this manner today, though not of the Levitical line, because He is not ministering as High Priest to individuals under the Mosaic Economy. Rather, He is ministering on behalf of those who form *the one new man* “*in Christ*.”

But in that coming day when Israel is brought back into the picture, Christ’s priesthood, of necessity, will have to change. In that day Christ will be the great King-Priest after the order of Melchizedek, a priesthood of an entirely different order [**Hebrews 7:11ff**].)

2) Melchizedek

Melchizedek is mentioned eleven times in Scripture — two times in the Old Testament (**Genesis 14:18**; **Psalm 110:4**) and nine times in the book of **Hebrews** (chapters **5-7**). And the manner in which Melchizedek is presented in the Old Testament will govern the manner in which he *must* be viewed in the book of **Hebrews**.

Melchizedek first appears in Scripture when Abraham was returning from the battle of the kings (**Genesis 14:18**, **19**). Melchizedek was “*king of Salem* [‘king of Jerusalem’ (**Psalm 76:2**)]” and “*priest of God Most High*” (v. **18**). Thus, he was a king-priest in Jerusalem.

Meeting Abraham, following the battle of the kings, he brought forth bread and wine and blessed Abraham, saying, “*Blessed be Abram of God Most High*, *Possessor of heaven and earth*” (vv. **18**, **19**).

It is evident that Melchizedek’s actions in the type during the days of Abraham were Messianic in their scope of fulfillment in the antitype. Immediately prior to Christ’s death at Calvary, He partook of the Passover with His disciples (**Matthew 26:19ff**). And at the end of the Passover feast — after Jesus had participated with His disciples in the breaking of bread and drinking from the cup, along with His instructions to them concerning both (vv. **26-28**) — Jesus said:

. . . *I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father*’*s kingdom*. (v. **29b**)

This could only be an allusion to one thing — that future day when Christ will come forth in the antitype of Melchizedek as he is presented in **Genesis 14:18**, **19**, with bread and wine to bless Abraham and his descendants, both *heavenly* and *earthly* (cf. **Genesis 22:17**, **18**). And this is an event that will occur following the battle of the kings (cf. **Revelation 19:17-21**).

The **one hundred tenth Psalm**, where Melchizedek is referred to in the only other time in the entire Old Testament is also Messianic in its scope of fulfillment. It must be, for this is the way Melchizedek is presented in **Genesis**, and there can be no change when one comes to the book of **Psalms**.

In this **Psalm**, the Son is told to sit on the Father’s right hand until such a time as His enemies are made His “*footstool*” (v. **1**). Then, after His enemies have been made His footstool, He is going to *rule* “*in the midst*” of His enemies (v. **2**). He is going to “*strike through kings*” and “*judge among the heathen* [Gentiles]” in that coming day of His “*power*” (vv. **3**, **5**, **6**), a day when He will be revealed as the great King-Priest in Jerusalem, “*after the order of Melchizedek*” (v. **4**).

*The LORD said to my Lord*, “*Sit at My right hand*, *till I make Your enemies Your footstool*.”

*The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion*. *Rule in the midst of Your enemies*! . . .

*The LORD has sworn and will not relent* [will not change His mind], *You are a priest forever* [Hebrews, *olam*, ‘a long period of time,’ not ‘forever,’ which, contextually, can only refer to the Messianic Era] *according* [after] *the order of Melchizedek*.

(**Psalm 110:1**, **2**, **4**)

Then the subject matter in the book of **Hebrews** has been established in and through seven Messianic quotations from the Old Testament in the first chapter, introducing the book (with the last of the seven quotations taken from **Psalm 110:1** [v. **13**]).

And the same subject matter is seen after a continuing fashion in the **second chapter** of **Hebrews** where it is stated that the world to come — the Messianic Era, dealt with in chapter **one** — will be governed *by man*, not by angels [as the present world is governed (v. **5**; cf. **Daniel 10:12ff**; **Ephesians 3:10**; **6:12ff**)]. These are the individuals seen at the end of chapter **one** (v. **14**), who are “*about to inherit salvation*” (literal rendering of the verse from the Greek text) — a salvation having to do with *rulership in the world to come*.

Then, with the introduction of Melchizedek in chapter **five**, this same Messianic setting MUST continue in view, which is in perfect keeping with that which is stated about Melchizedek in the Old Testament or elsewhere in the book of **Hebrews**:

*You* [Christ] *are a priest forever* [Gk., *eis ton aiona*, ‘with respect to the age’ (singular, *one age*, not ‘forever’), which can only refer to *the Messianic Era*] *according* to [after] *the order of Melchizedek*. (**Hebrews 5:6**; cf. **7:17**, **21**)*.*

**Genesis 14** and **Psalm 110** *must* be understood in the light of one another (actually, **Psalm 110** draws from **Genesis 14**), and **Hebrews 5-7** *must* be understood in the light of both Old Testament references, along with the subject matter of the book as is set forth in the opening chapter. Thus, all eleven references to Melchizedek in Scripture can only be looked upon after one fashion — *as Messianic in their scope of fulfillment*.

(Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary on the basis of His own blood on the mercy seat, is something that is seen in connection with Aaron, not with Melchizedek. This is not to say that Melchizedek ministered as a priest apart from a sanctuary and shed blood. Rather, it is to say that there is no mention of a sanctuary or shed blood in connection with his ministry in Scripture.

This is seen solely in connection with Aaron’s ministry, forming the basis for his past high priestly ministry, as it forms the basis for Christ’s present high priestly ministry.

Concerning the absence of the mention of *a sanctuary and shed blood* in connection with Melchizedek, this would not be the case as matters are seen in the antitype, in that future day, when Christ comes forth as the great King-Priest after the order of Melchizedek and a new covenant is made with the House of Israel. The new covenant, as the Mosaic covenant, is associated with *death and shed blood* in Scripture [cf. **Genesis 15:9-21**; **Jeremiah 34:18**; **Matthew 26:28**].

There is an allusion to this in **Hebrews 7:21**, **22**:

*The LORD has sworn and will not relent*, *You are a priest forever* [a priest with respect to the age] *according to* [after] *the order of Melchizedek*.

*by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant*.

Then, when Christ deals with Israel in relation to sin at the time of His return [fulfilling that which is foreshadowed by events on the Day of Atonement], of necessity, *shed blood and a sanctuary will have to be in view*. And also, of necessity, Jesus will have to be exercising *the Melchizedek priesthood* at this time.

Thus, in the preceding respect, one could find *death and shed blood*, *along with a sanctuary*, *associated with the Melchizedek priesthood*. But that is solely future, it involves Israel alone, and it has nothing to do with Christ’s present priestly ministry on behalf of Christians.)