

## Israel's National Consciousness

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August 1974



I imagine that nowhere else in the world is there such a "National consciousness" as exists in Israel. The primary cause for this is very clear. In history, carrying the key position in God's providence, she received special consideration. That people grew from an individual, to a family, tribe, and finally to a great nation, all according to God's restoration plan.

Approximately 2,000 years ago, that nation seemingly disappeared as it was dispersed throughout all other nations. A religious Jew feels that this was the result of his ancestors' failing to live by God's commandments to man. This, in fact, is not altogether wrong, for if his ancestors had really lived up to the requirements set by God at that time, and if they had listened carefully to God's messengers, the prophets, then they probably would have recognized the most important central figure since Adam in God's work of creation and restoration.

It was the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus that sealed the fate of the Jewish nation of a homeless future. However, the circumstances at that time, the intense confusion, the many different conceptions of how the Messiah would make his appearance, and the failure of the central personage who was to prepare the way of the Lord made it very difficult for the people chosen in God's providence to accept their promised Messiah. Very probably, if we had lived in that time we also would have rejected him, due to such unfavorable circumstances.

Without a home, they became a minority in every country in which they settled. Yet a flame burned deeply within the chest of every devout Jew, seeking the time when the many prayers would be answered in a return to their homeland. Their strict observance of the Jewish traditions kept them alive even through the gas chambers of the Second World War. The almost consistent persecution throughout history and the present has strengthened their character in such a way that they have been able to meet all who oppose

them even when the odds are very much against them. It has kept them together as a people, and now, again, as a nation.

In 1948, they returned once again to establish a Jewish state, in which the battle fought was for literal survival. Even today, to the average citizen, existence is day-to-day. After the outbreak of war last October, everyone knows that war could again start at any time. They do not expect too much help from anyone; therefore, they must be ready for any renewed conflict.

In conversation with many persons, there is revealed a kind of acceptance of this battle. Some point to history and say that there will always be fighting, so there is no realistic hope for a future of peace; and seeing a kind of situation where no one really lends them full support, they are drawn closer together and more separate from the world. Yet ties remain, in the form of exports to the world, especially fruits, to other items, and the aid she has received from the United States.

Now, people are living and working without really knowing how to act. Politically they want peace, but are divided between various views of how to achieve that desired peace. They suffer a spiritual state of uncertainty, even though there is a very deep expression of heart. This comes out in the close family life, songs, and festivals. Even the older children keep close contact with the family.

For the Arabs who live in Israel, it is a very difficult situation, as they are torn between reaping the benefits of Israel's incredible growth and development in the past few decades, and their own people who are opposing Israel's very existence. Although there is a varying opinion, most wish only to be able to raise their families in peace. Their family has also very deep ties. Both Arab and Jew must come out of the past and renew their relationship to God as it pertains to this age. A new way of relating to God must stand between these peoples to unite them into one, as Abraham's grandsons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob's task was a most difficult one, yet nothing could prevent him from achieving the goal. Both religions can hinder their development when God is put far far away and their practice becomes only automatic. We were created by God as His children. Should we not be able to relate to our Father?

In this time must come a new understanding that will stand as a mediator between Arab and Jew. And they must be able to be free from merely conventional beliefs, and seek God through humble prayers and ask, "God, what is your solution to the Middle East conflict?" And when they are willing to act accordingly, God will once more dwell with His people Israel.