

Jewish settlers leave the Gaza Strip

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Bible prophecies show that the Gaza Strip at the time of the end will be controlled by the enemies of Israel. The recent withdrawal of Jews from this area is a sign that these prophecies are being fulfilled.

IN 2 CHRONICLES 28 an invasion by the Philistines into the territory of Judah during the wicked reign of Ahaz is recorded: "The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shochu with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there" (v. 18). Those of the "low country", and other areas affected by the invasion, were later delivered by Hezekiah: "He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city" (2 Kgs. 18:8). The victory of Hezekiah over the Philistines, and the Philistine oppression that had preceded it, provide a pattern for the last days.

The witness of Joel

In Joel 3 God says:

"Yea, and what have ye to do with Me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render Me a recompence? and if ye recompense Me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head; because ye have taken My silver and My gold, and have carried into your temples My goodly pleasant things: the children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border" (vv. 4-6).

Joel 3 is a prophecy that speaks about the time of the end. The "coasts of Palestine" are spoken of as spoiling Israel at that time when God will "gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat" (v. 2). The "coasts of Palestine [Philistia]" were where the Philistines dwelt. Today this area is known as the Gaza Strip. These verses reveal that the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip will take advantage of Israel's predicament when Gog invades.

Joel 3 shows that the Palestinians will be involved in the selling of Jews "unto the Grecians".

Many of these will no doubt be Jews taken captive in Jerusalem, as spoken of by Zechariah: "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city" (14:2). They will be brought down to the "low country" and taken to the "coasts of Palestine", from whence they will be "sold unto the Grecians", expelled from the land by ship across the Mediterranean.

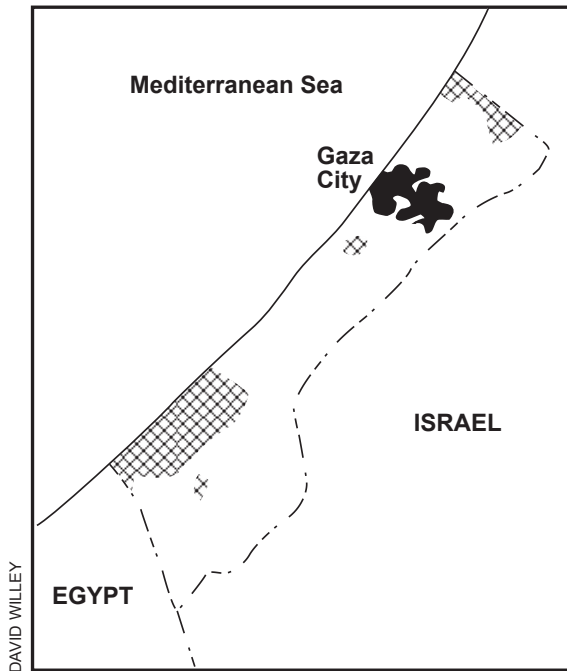
The witness of Obadiah

Towards the end of his prophecy, Obadiah writes of the time when there will be deliverance and holiness in Zion (v. 17). This will occur when the Kingdom is established. At this time we read that the Jews "of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines" (v. 19). The Hebrew word for "plain" is the same word translated "low country" in 2 Chronicles 28:18. Jews in the lower areas of Israel will move westwards to the coast to occupy the current Gaza Strip. As it is written in Isaiah: "But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west" (11:14).

The prophecies seem to imply that the area known today as the Gaza Strip will not be a Jewish area when Christ returns. For the Jews to "fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines" implies, as with the prophecies in Joel and Obadiah, that the land occupied in Old Testament times by the Philistines will likewise be occupied and controlled at the time of the end by a people who will reflect the spirit of the Philistines. The evacuation of Jewish settlers in August 2005 has further enhanced the Palestinian dominance of the Gaza Strip. Therefore the evacuation has helped to develop the situation whereby these prophecies might be fulfilled.

Palestinian hatred

We know from Ezekiel 38 that Israel will enjoy a period of safety, a false sense of security, prior to the invasion of Gog. But the hatred towards Israel from within the Gaza Strip will always be present. The prophets show that it will be there when Christ returns. That hatred is present now.



The Gaza Strip. The hatched blocks show the main areas of Israeli occupancy before the recent pullout.

As the Jewish settlers withdrew, the journalist Con Coughlin reported in the *Sunday Telegraph* that poetry and art competitions were being organised by the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip to reflect on the significance of the events. One poem which was particularly commended was by a Palestinian called Ibtisam Mustafa. In this poem he wrote:

“O brigades, be prepared, Gaza has been restored. Start preparing to liberate the rest of the land. Drive the Zionists out. O Hamas, let’s liberate Jerusalem with the help of your soldiers and glorious rockets”.¹

When we compare the sentiments expressed in this poem with the prophecies relating to the Gaza Strip at the time of the end we can see that their fulfilment cannot be far away. The prophecies in Zechariah and Joel, which speak of Jews being taken captive in Jerusalem, and of Jews being expelled from the Gaza Strip to lands across the Mediterranean, match the desire shown in this poem. There may also turn out to be an ironic link between the removal of Jewish settlers from their homes and the fulfilment of these prophecies, for, according, to the BBC reporter Martin Asser, there is a plan to build “a sea port in Gaza (using rubble from the settlers’ homes)”.²

However, whatever the humiliation of the Jews being taken into captivity, even if this involves walking over the remains of their homes as they make their way to waiting ships, ultimately the Jewish people will be delivered. For when Christ returns he will be a latter-day Hezekiah, and will smite “the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof” (2 Kgs. 18:8) so that “they of the plain” might possess the land of “the Philistines” (Obad. v. 19).

1. Coughlin, C. (2005), “Hamas claims evacuation is victory for the suicide bombers”, *Sunday Telegraph*, 21 Aug., p. 25.
2. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4160026.stm.

Your Letters



The translation of Enoch

When considering Enoch (Aug. 2005, p. 322), the only other person who is said to have “walked with God” is Noah (Gen. 6:9). Much is said about him in contrast with the brief notice of Enoch. Noah was saved from death at the age of 600. This was achieved when God invited him into the Ark and then shut him in (7:1,16). He later died at the age of 950 (9:29).

The ages at death recorded in Genesis 5 were great, but of Enoch it says, “he was not; for God took him” (v. 24), which leaves the matter open with reference to whether he lived for only 365 years. In the Letter to the Hebrews the writer seems to quote from the Septuagint; compare “Enoch . . . was not found, because God translated him” (Gen. 5:24, LXX) with “Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him” (Heb. 11:5).