

DEREK PRINCE
MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Teaching Letter

Our Debt to Israel



Teaching Letter
By Derek Prince

In His conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, Jesus told her:

> "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22)

By "ye" Jesus was referring to the Samaritans; by "we" He was referring to the Jews. Thus He identified Himself with the Jews; He spoke as one of them. In the last book of the Bible—Revelation 5:5—Jesus is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." "Judah" is the name from which the word "Jew" is taken. It is important for us all to understand that there is a way in which Jesus is specially identified with the Jews; and that this identification did not cease with His earthly life, but is still continued by Scripture after His death, burial and resurrection—on into eternity.

It is equally important for us all to acknowledge the truth of what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman—"salvation is of the Jews." This is an indisputable, historical fact. Without the Jews we would have no patriarchs, no prophets, no apostles, no Bible—and no Savior! Deprived of all these, how much salvation would we have left to us? None!

All other nations of the earth owe all that is most precious in their spiritual inheritance to the Jews. This is true of all of us—whether we be Arabs, Africans, Asians or Europeans—Russians, Americans or Chinese. We all owe a spiritual debt to the Jews that cannot be calculated.

The Bible makes it clear that God requires the Christians of all other nations to acknowledge their debt to the Jews and to do what they can to repay it. In Romans chapter 11 Paul is writing primarily to Christians of Gentile origin. In verse 13 he says, "For I speak to you Gentiles..." He reminds the Gentiles of their debt to the Jews and warns them against adopting an arrogant or unthankful attitude toward Israel. An analysis of this chapter will show that Paul uses the name "Israel" to refer to those who are Jews by natural descent and to distinguish them from Christians of Gentile descent. In other words, he does not use "Israel" as a synonym of the Church.

In Romans 11:30–31 Paul sums up what he has been saying about the debt and the responsibility of the Gentile Christians toward Israel. (For the sake of clarity I have

© 1970 - Derek Prince Ministries, International, Inc.

inserted the appropriate words—either "Israel" or "the Gentiles"—in brackets beside the pronouns):

> "For as ye [Gentiles] in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their [Israel's] unbelief: Even so have these [Israel] also now not believed God, that through your [Gentiles'] mercy they [Israel] may also obtain mercy."

In other words, because of the mercy of God that has come to us as Gentile Christians through Israel, God requires us in our turn to show mercy to Israel. How shall we fulfill this obligation? The following are four practical ways that we may do so.

First, we can cultivate and express an attitude of sincere love for Jewish people. Most standard forms of "witnessing" or "preaching" practiced by Christians do not reach the heart of the Jewish people at all. In fact, they frequently anger them and alienate them. But it is amazing how the apparently hard exterior of a Jew will melt when confronted by warm unfeigned love. In nineteen centuries of dispersion among the other nations there is one thing that the Jews have seldom encountered—and that is love! For the Lord's own sake, let us stop trying to make "converts" out of the Jewish people and let us begin to repay the debt of love we have owed them for so many centuries.

Secondly, in Romans 11:11 Paul says that:

> "...salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them [Israel] to jealousy."

This is another significant way in which we can repay our debt to the Jews—by enjoying and demonstrating the abundance of God's blessings in Christ in such a way that the Jews may be made jealous and desire what they see us enjoying. These blessings should be seen in every area of our lives—spiritual, physical, financial, material. But above all they should be expressed in our corporate life as believers together—a life of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Alas! Over the centuries the Jews have seen little among the Christians that would provoke their jealousy. Mainly they have seen innumerable sects, all laying claim to the title "Christian," criticizing one another, even killing one another—all in the name of Christianity. Nowhere has Christian disunity been more blatantly demonstrated than in the city held sacred by Christians and Jews alike—Jerusalem. Frequently, at the so-called "sacred sites" of Christendom, representatives of different Christian sects have come to blows and shed one another's blood—in proof of their orthodoxy and in defense of their shrines and their privileges. On more than one occasion since the state of Israel came into being, missionaries from one Christian group have complained to the (Jewish) minister of religion concerning the representatives of another Christian group and requested that they be deported. All this is scarcely calculated to make the Jews exclaim, "Behold, how these Christians love one another!"

Thirdly, the Bible exhorts us to seek the good of Israel by our prayers:

> "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee." (Psalm 122:6)

To pray effectively in this way we need to search out from the Scriptures the purposes of God for Israel and for Jerusalem, and then set ourselves to pray intelligently and consistently for the outworking and fulfillment of those purposes. As we make this scriptural study, we will discover that, ultimately, righteousness and peace are ordained to flow forth from Jerusalem to all the nations of the earth; and so the well-being of all nations is included in this prayer for Jerusalem and is dependant upon its fulfillment.

A challenging, scriptural pattern of this kind of praying is provided by Daniel, who set himself to pray three times daily with his window open toward Jerusalem. Daniel's prayers so disturbed Satan and threatened his kingdom that he used the jealousy of evil men to bring about a change in the laws of the entire Persian Empire that would make Daniel's prayers illegal. On the other hand, praying for Jerusalem meant so much to Daniel that he preferred to be cast into the lions' den rather than give up his praying. Ultimately, Daniel's faith and courage overcame the satanic opposition and he emerged triumphant from the lions' den—to go on praying for Jerusalem (see Daniel chapter 6).

From my own experience, extending over many years, I would like to add a personal comment at this point. I have discovered that making a commitment of this kind to pray for Jerusalem and Israel will definitely stir up a special measure of opposition from satanically inspired forces. On the other hand, I have also discovered that God's promise given to those who pray in this way will hold true—"they shall prosper that love thee." This is a scriptural pathway to prosperity—not merely in a financial or material sense, but

as embracing an abiding assurance of God's favor, provision and protection.

Fourthly, we can seek to repay our debt to Israel by practical acts of kindness and mercy. In Romans 12:6–8 Paul lists seven different gifts (charismata) which Christians should cultivate and exercise. The last one he mentions is that of "showing mercy." I believe it is appropriate that we Christians exercise this gift not merely toward individual Jews, but toward Israel as a nation. Thus we would in some measure expiate the countless acts of injustice, cruelty and barbarity which have over the centuries been inflicted upon the Jews—often in the name of Christianity.

Few Gentile Christians are aware of the deeply ingrained, but seldom stated, attitude of the Jews toward them. The Jews have suffered persecution in many different forms from many different people, but—in their view of history—their cruelest and most consistent persecutors have been the Christians. Before we reject this view as untrue or unfair, let us glance briefly at the kind of historical facts upon which it is based.

In the Middle Ages the Crusaders, on their way through Europe to "liberate" the Holy Land, massacred entire Jewish communities—men, women and children—numbering many hundreds. Later, when they did succeed in capturing Jerusalem, they shed more blood and displayed more cruelty than any of Jerusalem's many conquerors before them—except perhaps the Romans under Titus. All this they did in the name of Christ and with the cross as their sacred emblem. (For this reason I personally am never happy to see any genuine presentation of the gospel described by the word "crusade.")

Later still, in the ghettos of Europe and Russia, it was Christian priests carrying crucifixes who led the mobs against the Jewish communities—pillaging and burning their homes and their synagogues, raping their women and murdering those who sought to defend themselves. Their justification for this was that it was the Jews who had "murdered Christ."

Again, within living memory, the Nazis—in their systematic extermination of six million Jews in Europe—used as their instruments men who were professing Christians—mainly Lutherans or Catholics. Furthermore, no major Christian group, in Europe or elsewhere, raised their voices to protest or condemn the Nazi policy against the Jews. In the eyes of the Jews, multitudes of Christians stand condemned merely by their silence.

To undo the effect upon the Jewish people of these experiences—and countless others like them—will take more than tracts or sermons. It will require acts—both individual and collective—that are manifestly as kind and merciful as the previous acts were unjust and cruel.

Finally, we need to bear in mind that one major factor in God's judgment of all other nations will be their treatment of the Jews. In Matthew 25:31–46 we have a picture of Christ as King at the end of this age on the throne of His glory, with all nations arraigned before Him for judgment. They are separated into two categories—the "sheep," who are accepted into Christ's kingdom, and the "goats," who are rejected from His kingdom. In each case, the reason given by Christ is, "Inasmuch as ye did it—or did it not—unto one of the least of these my brethren." The nations who show mercy to the Jews will receive mercy from God; the nations who deny mercy to the Jews will be denied mercy from God.

In a measure, this has already been proved true many times in history. For example, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Spain was the dominant nation of Europe, with a high level of culture, a powerful army and navy, and an empire that spanned both hemispheres. But within a century of expelling all Jews from her territories, Spain decline to a struggling, second-rate power.

In my personal memory and experience, much the same happened to my own motherland, Britain. Britain emerged victorious from two World Wars, retaining intact an empire that was perhaps the most extensive in human history. But in 1947–8, as the mandatory power over Palestine, Britain opposed and attempted to thwart the rebirth of Israel as a sovereign nation with her own state. (Since I was living in Jerusalem throughout this period, I make this statement as an eyewitness of what actually took place). From that very moment in history, Britain's empire underwent a process of decline and disintegration so rapid and total that it cannot be accounted for merely by the relevant political, military or economic factors. Today, less than a generation later, Britain—like Spain—is a struggling, second-rate power.

This represents, in part at least, the outworking of a divine principle stated in Isaiah 60:12:

> "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."

God here promises Israel, and also warns all the Gentiles, that He will bring judgment on any nation that opposes His purposes of redemption and restoration for Israel. Therefore, in seeking and praying for the good of Israel,

Gentile Christians need to remind themselves that they are serving not merely the interests of Israel, but even more those of their own nation.

