

OATH OF MIZPAH: SYRIA IN PROPHECY



(Homs, Syria, May 2, 2002)

PRAYER

The war in Syria: whole cities leveled to the ground by bombardments; refugees risking their lives on small rafts to seek safety across the ocean; atrocity; starvation; siege; innocent deaths: gas attacks; a quarter of a million people killed; millions of people squatting in squalid refugee camps in nearby countries. We pause to consider, this pain is ongoing as we write these words. We hope none of the thoughts in this paper will be interpreted in any way as disrespectful to the people who have died or are suffering at this time. We pray the conflict will end soon. Amen.

SUMMARY

Why has devastation on this scale come to Syria?

Our explanation: it is a divine recompense which past leaders in Syria brought on their heads and the heads of their people by ignoring a sworn duty to God.

These will not be pleasant words for people to hear. We will put forth our case in this paper. Let the reader decide what is the holy truth.

Our purpose here is not to trumpet an ideology or a religion. People from all faiths have suffered in Syria.

We will consider the historical facts. Ideology and religion played no part in this story. It was a family matter.

God above hears when leaders of families and peoples swear in His Name. God keeps score.

God is not a captive. God is not your ideology's God; or your religion's God. God is above all ideology and religion. God is Judge of All the Earth.¹

Because God is so high, God is able to keep watch over all agreements and all covenants; made between all parties, of all ideologies, of all religions, of all nations.

That is the lesson of Syria.

¹ But while God is far, he is also near. Ideologies and religions can't know God personally because they are not persons; however, individual humans are persons, and we can personally know him (Isa.48:16). This was the experience of Abraham (Rom.4:1-3) and David (Rom. 4:5-8). It is also the experience of all those who believe in Him who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 4:24-25).

IT IS WRITTEN

Isaiah predicted this day would come in every detail. This is what he wrote: (*Isaiah 17: 1-9*)

"An oracle concerning **Damascus**:"

"See **Damascus** will no longer be a city but will become a heap of ruins"

"The **cities** of Aroer will be deserted and left to flocks, which will lie down, with no one to make them afraid."

"The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim and **royal power from Damascus**; the remnant of **Aram** [Syria] will be like the glory of the Israelites declares the LORD Almighty"

"In that day men will look to their Maker and turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel."

"They will not look to the altars, the work of their hands, and they will have no regard for Asherah poles and the incense altars their fingers have made"

"In that day **their strong cities**, which they left because of the Israelites will be like places abandoned to thickets and underbrush."

"And all will be desolation"

Isaiah was certain. **Syria** and **Damascus** would be in ruins. The royal throne of **Syria** will be no more.

All the temples of religion would be torn down.

The people would flee the land. Cities and towns would be evacuated and empty.

Isn't this exactly what we see in **Syria** today? Prophecy has been fulfilled right before our eyes. Without doubt the civil war in **Syria** is a Sign of the Last Time.

Why all this devastation? Why all this woe? How could Isaiah be so sure?

Isaiah tells us: "**because of the Israelites**"

What? Servant mark, are you saying the State of Israel caused this mess?

No I am not saying that at all. Isaiah did not say that.

Listen carefully. And learn about the God you serve. The LORD is a Covenant Maker. He is the Faithful Witness to every sworn agreement. Don't idly say anything before the LORD.

You may forget what you said, but the LORD does not forget what you said. He will hold you accountable to it.

Swearing an oath before God is a serious matter. Jesus us warned us: "**But I say unto you: swear not at all... but let your communication be: 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no': whatsoever is more than these comes from evil.**"



(Jacob's sheep)

THE HISTORICAL FACTS

Jacob served **Laban** the **Syrian** 14 years for his two wives. Then he served another 6 years to earn himself his own flock. **Laban's** sons began to grumble that **Jacob's** riches had come at their father's expense. **Jacob** took his two wives into the fields and told them it was no longer safe for them in **Syria** - it was time to leave.

At the heart of the matter was mistrust based on a history of **Laban** not keeping his word when he made agreements. **Jacob** explained this to his wives: (Genesis 31: 6-9)

“And you know that with all my power I have served your father. And your father deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. If he said: ‘The speckled shall be thy wages’; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said: ‘The striped shall be thy hire’; then bare all the cattle striped.”

So, while **Laban** was sheering his sheep, **Jacob** stole away.

After three days **Laban** heard of it. He took his armed men and gave chase.

After seven days he caught up to **Jacob** in a place called **Mizpah** on the foothills of **Mt Hermon** in Gilead. There **Laban** made accusations against **Jacob** (which were not proved true).



(Jacob and his family flee Syria)

They made a Covenant by vow before God. **Jacob** set up a stone pillar and a heap of stones:



(a typical pile of stones)

This is what they agreed: (*Genesis 31*)

Laban the **Syrian** said

"This heap is a witness between you and me today.

May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other:

If you mistreat my daughters or if you take any wives beside my daughters,

even though no one is with us, remember that God is a witness between you and me.

Here is the heap and here is this pillar that I have set up between you and me.

This heap is a witness and this pillar is a witness that:

I will not go past this heap to your side to harm you and that

you will not go past this heap and pillar to my side to harm me.

May the God of Abraham, the God of Nahor the God of their father, judge between us.

Jacob took the oath in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac."

WHAT WAS THE OATH?

The parties to the oath pledged personal safety for all concerned. **Jacob** would not mistreat his wives. (Note: taking other wives is considered mistreatment). **Jacob** would not attack **Laban's** territory. **Laban** would not attack **Jacob's** territory. The place **Mizpah**, marked by the pillar, was mutually recognized as the border.

WHAT WAS THE PENALTY FOR VIOLATING THE OATH?

All that you build with stones (e.g. houses, walls, fortifications, temples) will become a heap of stones.

WHO WILL ADMINISTER THE PENALTY?

God is witness. He will determine who breaks the oath. He will administer the penalty.

WAS THE OATH BINDING?

The oath was binding on **Laban**. He swore his oath in the name of the God of Abraham.

Jacob did not swear in the name of God, but in the name of the 'Fear of his father Isaac'.

Jacob deceived **Laban** and left him with the impression he was co-party to the oath.²

Whether the other party swears is not the issue. If you swore in the Name of God, then your oath is binding.

Jacob feared God too much to swear in His Name, just as Jesus taught us.

But the oath was binding on **Laban**. He made an oath in God's name.

COULD THE OATH EXPIRE?

The nature of the agreement suggests it was to pertain to all generations of descendants of **Laban** and **Jacob**.

Laban was no ordinary Syrian. **Jacob** was no ordinary Canaanite. They spoke on behalf of their families, which would become in time the people who inhabited the lands north and south of **Mizpah** respectively.

When the heads of peoples swear oaths it is binding on those peoples forever, unless specified otherwise³.

FAST FORWARD IN HISTORY

Now, we scroll ahead in history. How far do we scroll ahead? **Jacob** served Laban 20 years. The Jews were aliens in Gentile lands for how long? For 20 centuries.

Israel became a nation in **1948**. **Jacob** met with his wives in the field, in the 20th Century and decided it was time for his family to be "independent" of **Laban** (the owner of the Gentile fields in which Jacob wandered) and return to the Promised Land (the land of Canaan).

When does the disaster in **Syria** happen? **Laban** put up chase on the 3rd day. In the third millennium (day) after the Cross, **Syria** descended into civil war: **2011**.

But the Bible also says on the 7th day Laban caught up with Jacob. According to the chronology of the patriarchs, **Seth** was born in 3991 BC, shortly after the **Fall**. So, the destruction of **Syria** occurred in the 7th millennium of the history of mankind.

Note: For those who are not familiar with interpreting time in prophecy, please see our papers: [A Day is a Thousand Years](#); [Time Wheel of History](#); and [Bible History: Sabbaticals, Jubilees, and Generations](#).⁴

² In case the reader does not know, **Jacob** means 'He Supplants' or 'He Lies'. **Jacob** accused **Laban** of lies and not keeping his word. But **Jacob** was not innocent. He was an expert deceiver. This he learned from his mother **Rebecca** who was a relative of **Laban**!

³ An example would be the Oath of Bathsheba between **Abraham** and the Philistine King and his Chief General. That oath was binding on all generations of the children of **Abraham** and Gentile rulers in whose lands they sojourn. See our papers: [Oath of Beersheba](#) and [Oath of Beersheba 2](#).



(Pres. Hafez al-Assad, 1973)

WHEN WAS THE OATH VIOLATED?

The Syrian Army attacked **Israel** three times: in **1948**, **1967**, and **1973**.

In **1948**, the Syrians attacked Israel but not with great forces or effect. That was the year **Jacob** "stole away".

In **1967** the Syrians attacked Israel with much superior forces. They lost that war.

In **1973** the Syrians attacked Israel yet again. They lost the war as well.

Israel was victorious in all three wars in which **Syria** was an aggressor. God is a Witness. They could not win. God is Judge.

YES, BUT DID THE SYRIANS PASS THE PILLAR?

The very astute reader might say 'Yes the Syrians attacked but they never got over the Jordan'. So, the question remains: how could the Syrians violate the Oath if they did not pass the pillar?

It is true in all three wars the Syrians never made it across the Jordan in tanks. However, at the onset of the **1973** war Syrian commandos dropped by helicopter on an Israeli stronghold on the foothills of Mount Hermon, which had a variety of surveillance equipment. They controlled this site for a number of days.

The site the Syrian commandos landed was in the general location of the legendary **Mizpah** oath. The account in Genesis says: "**Jacob pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead**"⁵ (which corresponds to the Golan Heights). But it also says the oath was taken "**on the mountain**" (likely Mt. Hermon)⁶. (This could be near **Metula** (33.28 N, 35.41 E) the northernmost town in Israel). Since we don't know the exact location of the pillar we can't be certain. But the events in the Syrian Civil War suggest the Oath was broken. The intent to pass the pillar was certainly there. The Syrians overran the Golan Heights. God is Judge. God is Witness.

⁴ (Note: All Jacob's sons were born outside Canaan and are prophetic of Gentile nations. The sons of Leah point to European nations; Ephraim and Manasseh point to the United States and the United Kingdom. But Benjamin was born in Canaan; therefore, Benjamin is prophetic of the modern State of Israel.)

⁵ Genesis 31:25

⁶ Genesis 31: 54

IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS

Is it because the **State of Israel** is a holier-than-thou sacred vessel among all the nations of the earth that this judgment has fallen on **Syria** for attacking **Israel**?

No.

Is the **State of Israel** like a holy thing to God such that if anyone who touches her they will suffer an apocalypse like the Syrian Civil War?

No.

Will you teachers, Jewish or Christian, please stop saying that because it is infuriating to every other people on Earth that God also made and also loves. All people everywhere are required to fulfill their oaths to God.

All such spouting misses the whole point: a lesson for all peoples, all ideologies, all religions for all time.

The oath that **Laban** made before God is the holy thing.

That is the sacred thing which **Syria** violated when they attacked **Israel** three times with intent to wipe them off the face of the earth.

It is for the sin of breaking an oath before God that the people of **Syria** are suffering in this crisis.

PROOF – THE SAME THING HAPPENED TO DAVID

David sinned when he counted the soldiers in Israel. This was insolence of the highest order because he was reckoning the armies of the LORD to be his. Even his own general Joab begged him not to do such a thing.

As a result of David's sin, God brought a terrible plague on Israel. 70,000 of the people died.

“And David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.” (2 Samuel 24:17)

When the rulers sin the people of the nation pay for the sin. It doesn't matter if the nation is Israel or **Syria**.

When the King of **Syria**, Hafez Assad, attacked **Israel** he broke the oath of Laban. The people of **Syria** have had to pay the price for this insolence against the God of Abraham.

It is ghastly what can happen to innocent people. As David said **‘but these sheep, what have they done?’**

But, is it not better for us to understand these things than to deny our obligations to God?

To grasp the whole world lies under the scrutiny of the living God? God is the Witness. God is the Judge of All the Earth. Oh by the mercy of God, that we might learn the fear of Him!