

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
CXXII. A Biblical Stance On The Middle East
(Psalm 122:1-9 et al.)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

The Middle East Gaza War is creating ongoing problems for the world with a widening impact that affects us:

(1) On October 7, 2023, “ Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel, killing 1,200 people and taking about 250 hostages . . . (and) Israel says it will not agree to end the war until Hamas’ governing and military capabilities are dismantled.” (“Israel plans to seize Gaza under new plan, officials say,” Republican-American, May 6, 2025, p. A11)

(2) Consequently, this war has come to affect other nations: (a) An “Israeli plan to seize the Gaza Strip and expand the military operation has alarmed many in the region.” (AP, “Israeli plan to seize the Gaza Strip is met with alarm in region,” *Ibid.*, May 7, 2025, p. A10) (b) “A missile launched by Iranian-backed rebels in Yemen briefly halted flights and commuter traffic at Israel’s main international airport . . . after its impact on open ground . . . caused panic among passengers.” (Ohad Zwigenberg and Tia Goldenberg, “Missile from Yemen halts flights in Israel,” *Ibid.*, May 5, 2025, p. A9) (c) In response, “Israel’s military . . . launched airstrikes against Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen that fully disabled the country’s international airport at the capital.” (AP, “Israel says it has disabled Yemen’s main airport with airstrikes against rebels,” *Ibid.*, May 7, 2025, p. A10) (d) “The Trump administration has cut off money to” several “elite colleges . . . over issues including the handling of pro-Palestinian activism.” (Jocelyn Gecker and Linley Sanders, “Most Americans disapprove of Trump’s treatment of colleges, AP-NORC poll finds,” *Ibid.*, May 10, 2025, p. A10) As a result, “(m)ore than half of Americans . . . disapprove of the Republican president’s approach on higher education . . . (where) Republicans” generally “see college campuses as places where conservatives are silenced and liberal ideas run unchecked.” (*Ibid.*)

(3) The Gaza War now affects our society at the local level: According to the Anti-Defamation League, there were “30 antisemitic incidents . . . in Connecticut schools in 2024 . . . ‘Kids are bringing a lot of hate that they’re probably hearing on the internet and in gaming with them into schools and the schools are really reflecting what’s going on in the larger society,’ said Stacey Sobel, ADL Connecticut’s regional director.” (Jessica Simms, “‘There’s a lot of hate,’” Republican-American, May 13, 2025, p. A1) In one case, “a Jewish Greenwich middle school student was punched in the face at a party by a peer who reportedly said, ‘I am a Christian, and I normally wouldn’t punch anyone, but I had to punch you because you are a Jew.’” (*Ibid.*)

(4) Evangelical Christians have historically supported the right of the Hebrew people to possess the land marked by the ancient national boundaries of Israel. However, on December 14, 2007, The Berean Call website (thebereancall.org) reported a shift in some evangelicals who sought to see Palestinians have their own state within Israel’s past Biblical boundaries. The website reported on “An Evangelical Statement on Israel/Palestine” that stated: “‘We are encouraged that Israeli and Palestinian governments have officially endorsed a two state solution,’” and “‘(w)e call on all evangelicals . . . to join us . . . to work diligently toward this goal.’” The statement was signed by several evangelical leaders (*Ibid.*), but the Hamas-led October 7, 2023, attack on Israel now leaves the two state solution idea appear to be an unrealistic goal.

Need: *So, we ask, “How does God want us to respond to the Middle East crisis that continues to affect us?”*

- I. David’s pilgrim psalm of Psalm 122:1-9 strongly upholds the Biblical view that God gave the entire Holy Land to the Hebrew people as their national homeland in accord with the Abrahamic Covenant:**
- A. The psalmist reported on his joyful pilgrimage to Jerusalem in Psalm 122:1-2, and in Psalm 122:3-5, he praised the city “as the spiritual and civic center of the nation” (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Ps. 122:1).
 - 1. The description of Jerusalem as a city built “compact together” (KJV) literally translates the intensive Pual stem of *habar*, what means “joined together for itself” (B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 287-288) along with the adverb *yahdav*, meaning “together” (*Ibid.*, p. 403).
 - 2. The psalmist thus conveyed that Jerusalem “unifies the people” of Israel (Ryrie, loc. cit, ftn. to Psa. 122:3).
 - B. To explain this unifying impact of Jerusalem, David added that Israel’s twelve tribes, the tribes of the Lord, went up to Jerusalem to praise the name of the Lord in obedience to the Law at Exodus 34:23-24. (Ps. 122:4)
 - C. David added that not only did Jerusalem unify the people spiritually, but it unified their society, for in this city the thrones of David’s administration were set to pass judgments upholding the nation’s law and order, v. 5.
 - D. For these reasons, David called for God’s people to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, Psalm 122:6-9:

1. He called them to pray for the peace of the city, suggesting that those who loved her might be “quiet, at ease” (*shalah*, B. D. B., loc. cit., p. 1017), a blessing promised to those who blessed Israel in fulfillment of the Genesis 12:1-3 Abrahamic Covenant (Psalm 122:6).
 2. David hope for peace within Jerusalem’s walls and “quietness, ease” [security from attack] (Ibid., *shalvah*) within her citadels, Psalm 122:7.
 3. For the welfare of his kinsmen and friends, David said he would say of the city, “Peace be in you,” v. 8.
 4. Finally, for the welfare of the temple of the Lord their God, David said he would seek Jerusalem’s *tob*, its “welfare, security” (B. D. B., loc. cit., p. 375), Psalm 122:9.
- II. However, many Arabs claim Abraham’s eldest son Ishmael by Sarah’s maid Hagar “as their forefather and thus Palestine as their land” (Ryrie, loc. cit., ftn. to Gen. 16:11). This claim explains the great conflict between Hebrews and Arabs over who has the right to possess the Holy Land.**
- III. Nevertheless, Genesis 17:18-22 clearly testifies of God’s choice of Isaac to be Abraham’s heir of the Abrahamic Covenant over Ishmael even against the will of Abraham himself! Since Isaac is the man through whom the nation Israel came (Matthew 1:2-6), God chose Israel to possess the Holy Land.**
- IV. Besides, God told Abraham that He planned for Israel to possess all the land from the Nile River in Egypt to the Euphrates River in Syria, what will occur in Christ’s Kingdom (Ibid., ftn. to Gen. 15:18-21).**
- V. The cause of the Middle East crisis is God’s punishment of Israel for rejecting her Messiah, Christ (Dan. 9:25-26), a punishment that will persist as war and desolations in Israel until the rapture of the Church.**

Lesson: God wants us to recognize Israel as having right to possess the entire Holy Land, and for us to pray for and to seek Israel’s welfare for God’s blessing in accord with the Abrahamic Covenant.

Application: (1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) Though many Hebrew people do not believe in Christ as their Savior, Romans 11:26 predicts that one day “all Israel shall be saved,” and we must seek the welfare of all Hebrews and all Gentiles (Romans 13:8), supporting the right of Israel to possess all of the Holy Land.

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and/or provide additional guidance . . .)

Though Genesis 17:18-22 asserts that God chose Isaac over Ishmael to be heir of God’s Abrahamic Covenant, Muslims “recognize the Law of Moses, the Psalms of David, and the Gospel of Jesus, but usually consider them abrogated (retracted) or corrupted” (“Basic Islamic Beliefs,” *SIM NOW*, July-August, 1989, p. 5) Rather, Muslims hold to the “Qur’an” as “a perfect copy of an eternal book” that “was delivered piecemeal through (the angel) Gabriel to Muhammad during his twenty-three-year prophetic career” (Robert Spencer, *The Truth About Muhammad*, 2006, p. 20) Muslims thus view Genesis 17:18-22 as corrupt and Ishmael as the son of God’s Abrahamic Covenant.

However, (1) today’s Qur’an has credibility problems: “According to the hadith (traditions of Muhammad)” of Sahih Bukhari, vol. 6, “Muhammad named four men as the best teachers of the Quran . . . but . . . (t)hey did not even agree with each other” (Nabeel Qureshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, 2014, p. 239 (237-239). Also, “(m)ultiple early Muslims documented the differences between the many Qur’ans of the early Muslim world” (Ibid., p. 240). Islamic scholars thus defended the Qur’an, saying “that Allah intended the many changes that came to it . . . (So, t)he Quran’s perfect preservation, far from defending the faith, needed to be defended by faith” (Ibid., p. 240-241).

(2) As for the credibility of the Old Testament that Muslims usually treat as corrupt, the 1947 discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed “that between the first and ninth centuries A. D., the Jewish scribal copying of the Old Testament Scriptures was accomplished with remarkably few errors. With the exception of minute copying errors here and there, the Dead Sea manuscripts exhibited virtually identical readings to their counterparts of the ninth century . . . Millar Burrows, a scholar of exceptional stature reveals his attitude toward the Dead Sea Scrolls,” noting, ““(A)s a liberal Protestant I do not share all the beliefs of my more conservative brethren. It is my considered conclusion, however, that if one will go through any of the historic statements of the Christian faith he will find nothing that has been or can be disproved by the Dead Sea Scrolls.”” (Josh McDowell, *A Ready Defense*, 1991, p. 107, citing Millar Burrows, *More Light On The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1958, p. 39)

Viewing the surpassing documentary credibility of the Hebrew Old Testament as compared to the Qur’an, we view the Genesis 17:18-22 testimony that God wanted Isaac and not Ishmael to be heir of the Abrahamic Covenant as the truth. Accordingly, the Hebrew people are God’s choice of the people group to possess the Holy Land.

May we trust in Christ as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life.
May we seek the welfare of all people while supporting Israel’s right to possess all of the Holy Land.