

The Middle East & Prophecy #2

by: Ronald L. Dart

Who owns the Middle East?

Is the real battle going on in the Middle East about who owns the land, or is it about religion or what?

You would think when you hear people talk about them wanting peace, it's all about real estate, but it's not, even though there are some real estate issues involved.

We know who held the original land grant to the land of Palestine, not only Palestine, we know that all the land of the Nile River in Egypt to the Euphrates River in Iraq was granted to a man named Abraham and it was granted to him in perpetuity forever.

That includes all of Egypt on the east side of the Nile River. All of the Sinai Peninsula. All of Israel. All of Palestine, Jordan, Libya, Syria and Iraq, all the way to the river Euphrates, plus the Arabian Peninsula. All of that to Abraham in perpetuity. So we know who had the original grant. We established that in the last article

Deed of Covenant

Abraham had the deed of covenant. If you have ever bought a house, you know there's a contract first and then there's a closing. Sometimes possession takes place at the closing and sometimes at another date specified in the contract. We know that Abraham's first son was Ishmael. The sons of Ishmael are the Arabs of today.

We also know that the first distribution of property, out of Abraham's estate was the Arabian Peninsula to the sons of Ishmael, and they may have also gotten part of Iraq.

In addition to Ishmael there were the two sons of Lot. Moab and Ammon were born out of an incestuous relationship between Lot and his two daughters. These families lived on that part of the land just on the other side of the Jordan River.

If you could imagine a map of Palestine just across the Jordan River at the level of Jerusalem was Ammon. Just south of Ammon on the other side of the Dead Sea was Moab. If you take a look at the maps in the back of your Bible, you can probably find them there easily enough, but you may also notice another name on that map, just south of Moab and Ammon, sitting astride the area just south of the Dead Sea. The name is Edom.

Edom is the last serious claimant to the land apart from the Israelites themselves and the story is a fascinating one.

Abraham held the deed to everything from the Nile to the Euphrates. Ishmael had the Arabian Peninsula and possibly Iraq. Isaac, the other son of Abraham, his true son, if you will, in the Bible had everything else.

In terms of land Ishmael got the lion share but a lot of what he got was sand and rock and I'll have to add, oil

Isaac, then had two sons, Jacob and Esau.

Distribution of Land between the Sons of Isaac

The question is, if you're attacking this from a real estate point of view, with the real distribution of the land taking place, how is the remainder of it going to be divided between the sons of Isaac, Jacob and Esau?

The story begins to develop in the 25th chapter of the book of Genesis.

Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebecca.

Isaac actually went to God begging for his wife to have a child because for some time after they were married they didn't have any children. God heard him and Rebekah conceived and the children struggled inside her and she said "Why is this this way? I don't understand this," so she went to inquire of God. Now remember, this is back in the days before ultrasounds. She had no idea at this point that she was carrying twins and the twins were already fighting before they were born.

She inquired of God, and God said to her, "There are two nations in your womb, two manner of people, two different kinds of people are going to be separated from you, the one people will be stronger than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger." When it came time to deliver the children, behold, it turned out there were twins. The first one came out, red all over, like a hairy garment and a very unusual looking child. They called his name Esau. After that came his brother out. He grabbed hold of Esau's heel, and his name was called Jacob, which basically means supplanter.

Isaac was sixty years old when these boys were born. One of them, red and hairy, and the other smooth, but grabbing hold of the heel of his brother, an implication of what was later to come. The boys grew up different altogether, Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field, an outdoors man. Jacob was a plain man living in tents.

As is often the case among parents, Isaac loved Esau, he loved to eat his venison, but Rebecca, the mother, she loved Jacob. Jacob, I gather, must've been a man who stayed home a lot, lived in his tent and took care of business. He also was apparently a first-class chef.

A Bowl of Soup

One day he was cooking a red soup and Esau came in from the field and he was faint with hunger, and he said to Jacob, "Give me some of that red pottage that you have because I'm about to pass out from hunger", therefore, was his name called Edom. This is where that third name on the map, that I mentioned, comes from. From the map we know roughly what territory he got.

The next thing we want to know is, why it was that he got that rather sorry piece of real estate to the south of the Dead Sea. If you have ever visited the Middle East or seen travelogues of the area, you will know that this is not a place that you would necessarily like to live.

So Jacob, having been asked for some soup, said solemnly, "Sell me this day your birthright" and Esau said, "I'm at the point of dying, what good shall this birthright be to me?" and Jacob said, "Swear, right now, today." And Esau swore to him and he sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave him pottage of lentils. He did eat and drink and rose up, and went his way, thus Esau despised his birthright.

What was the Birthright Worth?

Now, just what does this mean in real terms? What was this birthright worth? Remember, the birthright of the first born son of Isaac was everything in the Middle East that the Arabs didn't get, a lot of land, a lot of very important land, and Esau didn't think it was very important to him.

Later, it came to pass, this is a Genesis 27, It came to pass, when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son and he said "My son, I'm old and I don't know what day I'm going to die. It could happen almost anytime now. I want you to go out with your weapons, your quiver and your bow. I want you to go out in the field and take me some venison, Make me some of that savory meat that I love and bring it to me so I can eat it, so that my soul may bless you, before I die."

Now along with the birthright came the blessing of the father. It is not entirely clear how all these things connect up, but you will begin to understand as you read down through this, the implication of his decision to sell his birthright to his brother.

Rebecca overheard Isaac talking to Esau and when Esau went out to the field to hunt for venison, she went and got Jacob and said, "Look, I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, get me some venison and make some savory meat that I may eat and bless you, before I die."

"Now, Jacob, listen to me, go to the flock and fetch me from there two kids of the goats, and I will make them savory meat for your father, such that he loves. He won't know the

difference between goat and venison and you shall take it in to your father that he shall eat it, that he may bless you before his death." In fact, the blessing was due to Jacob because he had purchased the birthright for a bowl of soup.

Jacob said his mother, "Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I'm a smooth man. If my father feels me, if he so much as gives me a hug, he will realize I am a deceiver, and he will bring a curse on me and not a blessing." Jacob was not stupid.

His mother said to him, "Upon me be your curse, my son, just listen and do what I tell you." The means of deception were prepared and delivered, and Isaac received the pseudo-venison. Isaac said, "Are you my very son, Esau." Jacob said, "Yes, I am." Isaac said, "Bring it near to me so that I may eat of my son's venison and my soul may bless you," and he brought it near to him and he ate. And he brought him wine and he drank. His father Isaac said, "Come near and kiss me, my son," and this was the moment of truth. Now the way they decided to get around this was, he had put on Esau's clothes, and he had put goat skins on the back of his hands, and on the back of his neck so that it would feel to his father like Esau.

Does this give you any idea of the kind of skin and hairy body that Esau must have had.

Jacob came near Isaac and kissed him. Isaac smelled the smell of his clothing, and he blessed him, and said "See my son is as the smell of the field which the Lord has blessed."

The Blessing of the Birthright

Now follows the blessing that came with the birthright. The birthright that Esau had despised.

The formal passing on of the blessing to the firstborn son in a situation like this, is where the father actually bestows the birthright in the blessing and what he told Jacob on this occasion, and what he'll later tell Esau, is very important in the establishment of the covenant deed to the property that we are going to discuss in the title history.

Isaac said, "Therefore, God will give you the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth and plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve you and nations shall bow down to you, be Lord over your brother, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you and blessed be he that blesses you." Wow, that's quite a blessing, especially when you think about Esau being his brother.

It came to pass, about as soon as Isaac finished blessing Jacob and Jacob was hardly gone out of his presence, in comes Esau from hunting. He had already made the savory meat. He brought it to his father and said, "Let my father rise and eat his son's venison that your soul may bless me." And Isaac his father said, "Who are you." Esau said, "I'm your son, I am your firstborn, I'm Esau."

Isaac began to tremble all over because he realized that something terrible had happened. He said, "Who?, Where is he who has taken venison and brought it to me and I ate before you came and I blessed him. Yes, he shall be blessed." When Esau heard the words of his father he began to realize what had happened to him. He cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, "Bless me, even me, also my father." He realized the importance of what happened. He realized that it was irrevocable, and that the result was inevitable.

And his father said, "Your brother came in with subtlety and he has taken away your blessing," and Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times and he took away my birthright, and now he is taken away my blessing, and he said, "Haven't you reserved a blessing for me, my father." Of course, there is no recognition in his part here that he had despised his birthright and thought it worth a bowl of red soup.

Isaac answered and said, "Behold, I have made him your Lord and all his brethren, I have given to him for servants and with corn and wine I sustained him. So what in the world do you think I can do for you, my son." Esau said to his father, "My father, do you have but one blessing, bless me, even so, my father." Esau lifted up his voice and he cried out loud.

The King James version is wrong here. So I'm going to switch to the New International Version for the blessing that Isaac gave to Esau. He said this, "Your dwelling will be away from the earth's richness, and away from the dew of heaven above, you will live by the sword. You will serve your brother, but when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck."

Now take a look again at that map in the back of your Bible. The location of the sons of Ammon and Moab, look at the location of Edom and think in terms of all those people who lived down there who are restless and are trying to throw the yoke of the Israelis from off their neck, and you might begin to wonder about the origins of the conflict that we have there, and how they may be playing out in the very last days.

That's the blessing, if you want to call it that, that Isaac gave Esau and it counts for Esau's inheritance of that land far to the south of Israel.

So it tells us Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given to him, and he said to himself "In the days of mourning for my father are near, and then I'm going to kill my brother Jacob." Generations later, at the time of the Exodus, Esau called Edom, lives in the harsh desert south of the Dead Sea on both sides of the Wadi Araba, his land including, perhaps, the Sinai Peninsula. The remainder of the land, was left to Jacob and will be deeded out to the twelve tribes of Israel, after the Exodus when they reenter Palestine.

Remember the deed that was given to Abraham had a time of possession on it, and that time of possession was 400 years after God cut the covenant with Abraham. All of the descendants of Esau, who is called Edom, are laid out in Genesis 36 if you're into that sort of

study. It begins by saying, and "Now these are the generations of Esau, who is Edom," and that accounts again for the name at the bottom of your map. "Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan," which of itself is interesting because all sorts of people were taking their wives of the daughters of Canaan. There are lots of attractive ladies over there and it was not a very good idea to marry your cousins or your sisters.

In another passage it tells us that he took wives from Ishmael's daughters and that figures as well, the Arabian girls.

Who Owns What?

Now you have a lot of possibilities when you begin to intermarry between tribes and clans like this, with different kinds of claims to be made on different lands. It makes it very difficult to know with any kind of certainty who owns what, down through different times of history and perhaps who owns what today, because of all the interconnections of all those middle eastern tribes.

Genesis 36 goes on to tell us in verse six, "Esau took his wives and his sons and his daughters and all the persons of his house, his cattle and beasts and all of his substance. He gathered it all up that he had gotten in the land of Canaan, and he went into the country from the face of his brother, Jacob, for their riches were too great for them to dwell together. Esau is hardly to be pitied. He is a very wealthy man, and the land where they were strangers could not bear them because of their cattle, thus dwelt Esau in Mount Seir. Esau is Edom. The Seir range of mountains is roughly in the area of Petra in South Jordan today and you can find it on most maps that deals with the Bible.

Are These the Same People in that Region Today?

Now comes an important question. Are these the same people who are in that region today? It is impossible to say with certainty. There has certainly been intermarriages and melting of populations and a lot of migration, wars have swept back and forth through the land. Yet these peoples seem to be spoken of in end time prophecies and seem to be spoken of in the same part of the world so they must be there.

There is a curious prophecy in Daniel the 11th chapter. It is often cited by people who talk about the end time. It is one of the most definitive statements about the end times in the Old Testament. It is Daniel 11:40.

"At the time of the end shall the King of the South push at the King of the North and the King of the North shall come against him as a whirlwind with chariots and horsemen, and many ships. He will enter into the countries and overflow and pass over. He will also enter into the glorious land. (Everybody takes that to mean Palestine.) Many countries shall be overthrown. But these shall escape out of his hand, Edom, Moab and the chief of the children of Ammon. He will stretch out his hand against many countries, even the land of

Egypt shall not escape." So we're looking at the end time when a major Northern power comes roaring down in here but Edom, Moab and Ammon, for the most part, escape out of his hand.

Now this was fulfilled in part in the time between the Old Testament and the New Testament. There was a battle going on between two generals who succeeded Alexander the great and possessed the kingdom of the North and the kingdom of the South, just North and South of Israel. They were in combat with one another from time to time, so this was fulfilled and in part these nations were clearly still there at that late date, and in fact all the way down to the time of Christ, and having lasted that long, why should we assume that they have moved very far in the time in between?

There's a short statement in Jeremiah 48 about Moab. It says in verse 11 "Moab has been in ease from his youth, and he is settled on his lees. He has not been empty from vessel to vessel, nor has he gone into captivity, and so his taste remains in him and his scent has not changed." This is colorful language that he uses, but basically he's saying that these people have hunkered down and have stayed there through every kind of invasion, every kind of captivity that has swept through the area. They just seem to stay put. Jeremiah goes on to prophesy of a captivity for them, but then a return from captivity again for them right back to their own land.

People are Tribal

It's a fact of life that people are tribal. Birds of a feather flock together. Try as we might, in this country, to be a melting pot, we still have strong ethnic communities. We have Italian Americans, Irish-Americans, German-Americans and of course African Americans and Asian Americans. We have a strong sense of ethnic identity, even when we live in a melting pot.

We also have a strong geographical sense of Homeland. I was born in the Arkansas Ozarks and I still look at that as home, no matter where I have gone. It is not easy to break those ties. So consequently, I think you can trust, for the most part, in the Middle East, a lot of those people have been taken away from their homes and have gone back to their homes, but their strong sense of ethnic identity has maintained Ammon, Moab and Edom along the other side of Jordan from Israel in the Middle East.

We have to be cautious in interpreting Biblical prophecy as it relates to people and nations, but if we pay no attention to history at all, then we have no hope of understanding anything in the Bible.

History Repeats Itself

History repeats itself. How do we know that? We have learned it from experience. Someone has said "If we don't learn the lessons of history then we are doomed to repeat them." Yeah,

we have learned that from experience too. Now all of these things we have learned from experience.

Now when it comes to reading the Bible we have Isaiah, who makes this interesting statement in chapter 41, verse 21, "Produce your cause, saith the Lord, bring forth your strong reasons saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring forth and show us what's going to happen." "Okay, that's what we want to know. We want to know what is going to happen in the Middle East, as all this stuff plays out. Well God, challenging the false prophets and false gods says, "Bring out your reasons. Let them show us what is going to happen", but then He says this, "Let them show the former things what they may be that we may consider them and know the latter end of them; or declare for us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter that we may know that you are gods."

Prophecy is Dual

Now it has been said, that prophecy is dual, and what that means is, this is a simple way of acknowledging that there is something called type an anti-type in the Bible. The type are the former things, the antitypes are the latter things. Isaiah said, "If you don't understand the former things, you will probably not consider and understand the latter end of them" (Isaiah 41:22). Types and anti-types are technical terms which are best understood as a historical fulfillment of a prophecy which prefigures a later fulfillment of the same prophecy. In other words, a prophet speaks and foretells the future, it happens. The happening, the event is actually prefiguring a much later fulfillment of the same prophecy again.

One of the most classic examples in the Bible is the abomination of desolation, that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24. He referred to the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet. Daniel the prophet said that there would be an abomination of desolation in the Temple placed by somebody. There was, by one Antiochus Epiphanes. Now along comes Jesus and says you better look at that and consider it and understand that there is still going to be an abomination of desolation again in your future.

Type and anti-type and possibly in this case, as many as three times in total an abomination of desolation may be set up, and we, poor souls, are left to figure out all of this, what does the future hold?

Players in the End Time Drama

So we have the beginnings of an answer here as to who the players are in the end time drama. We will see Israel, Moab, Ammon, and Edom, figuring strangely in the prophecies in the latter days, and we have a beginning of an answer already now as to who owns the land. It is the descendants of Abraham, who owns it. The chain of title lets us know who actually inherited what. I'm not sure if we can establish all of the survey markers, identify all the peoples with certainty. Marriages, alliances and wars make absolute identities very difficult in that part of the world, but these are the people of the Middle East.

The Bible speaks of them at the end time and lays down the issues that men will fight over for generations to come. The truth is, the sad truth is, a lot of the reasons for fighting have long since faded into obscurity, but the hatred hasn't faded at all.

The Story of the Exodus

The next phase develops at the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt. Generations have passed, all of the original patriarchs of these tribes have long since died off, but the stories have been told again and again around the campfires and cultures have long memories.

In the biblical story of the Exodus, we learn a few very important things having to do with the distribution of Abraham's estate, and who owns what lot of land, which might be important as we come down to the very last days.

The story of the Exodus has been told and retold. It is in the movie the 'Prince of Egypt' and is in the movie the 'Ten Commandments' with Charlton Heston playing Moses but there are some important details that didn't make good drama and so neither movie really deals with this particular question.

When Israel came out of Egypt, they initially tried to enter the promised land, and they refused to go and God said "Okay, you won't go into the promised land., you are going to wander 40 years in the wilderness." of which they then did.

At the end of that 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, Moses made a long impassioned speech to the children of Israel, in which he recounted many of the things they had gone through and the important events and instructions from God, now that the moment has arrived in time they will make the move north and into the promised land and the process of giving them these instructions, several very important things for the chain of title, on who owns the Middle East are included. You'll find the story in the second chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, but I'll have to let you read that between now and the next article, and until then, I'm Ronald L. Dart, and like the Israelites, you were born to win.

This article was transcribed with minor editing from a message given by
Ronald L. Dart titled: "The Middle East & Prophecy #2" (MEP2) 12/11/01
Transcribed by: bb 11/18/10

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