

## **WHY ISRAEL MATTERS**

### **1. God has chosen Israel**

Simply put, Israel matters because God has chosen Israel.

#### **Deuteronomy 7:6–8 (NKJV)**

**6** “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

**7** The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;

**8** but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

God chose Israel for two simple reasons: 1) Because He loved Israel, and 2) because He swore an oath to its forefathers, referring to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But we might ask “why” did God love Israel? Or “why” did God swear an oath to the patriarchs? We are not told why. God’s choice is His prerogative. He is God, and as God He can do whatever He wants.

Sometimes parents give the reason “BECAUSE” to children. The children may want more of an answer; but for whatever reason, the parent simply says “BECAUSE”. And so it is with God on Israel.

After the long section in Romans 9-11 discussing how Israel fits with God’s sovereign plan in Rom. 11:33, Paul says that God’s “ways are past finding out”. Paul then concludes in Romans 11:36 by saying:

#### **Romans 11:36 (NKJV)**

**36** For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Note, however, that Deut. 7:7 makes special reference to the fact that Israel was not chosen because they were large in number, and in fact, it says they were the least of all peoples. God likes to take that which the world considers totally “*insignificant*” and then use it for His glory.

Gideon was an OT judge that God called in weakness. Most everything about Gideon comes off “**weak**”. Even he could not see why God would ever choose Him. In Judges 6:15 he said:

**Judges 6:15 (NKJV)**

15 So he said to Him, “O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the **weakest** in Manasseh, and I am the **least** in my father’s house.”

Finally, after much encouragement, Gideon agreed to go against the Midianites. He had 32,000 men to assist him. But then Lord said:

**Judges 7:2 (NKJV)**

2 And the Lord said to Gideon, “The people who are with you are **too many** for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, **lest Israel claim glory for itself** against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’

So, 22,000 who were afraid went home, leaving Gideon with only 10,000 men. Still, God said, it was too many. He reduced them down to 300 men and said with that small number He would deliver the Midianites into Gideon’s hand.

Armed with trumpets and torches inside pitchers, they scared the Midianites to death. The result was that God was glorified through their weakness in a most unusual way.

God often uses WEAK instruments so that He alone gets the glory. Thus, Israel has consistently been a weak country, humanly speaking. In Jesus’ day, it is estimated that the total world population was about 300 million, with the Jews comprising about 1% of the population (3 million). Today, with about 7 billion people on the planet, the Jews, with about 14 million people, make up only 0.2% of the total population.

The Jews are a very SMALL percentage of the world’s population, and yet God’s plan of redemption and prophetic truth swirls around them in a LARGE WAY to the glory of God.

In Deut. 17, Israel was told that their king was not to multiply horses, wives, or money (cf. Deut. 17:14-17). The king’s reliance was to be upon God alone! The glory of Israel was to be their God and nothing else. In this, God is glorified.

In the NT, in 1 Cor. 1:26-29, God says that He has chosen the foolish, weak, base, despised, nothings, so that no flesh should glory in His presence. Israel, in many respects, fits into each one of these categories.

The thing that makes Israel GREAT is God alone, and this redounds to the glory of God.

## 2. *Israel illustrates God's faithful character*

In marriage, you choose whom you will love, and then after the vows you are married. You must then love whom you have chosen. And your character will be displayed in your commitment. And so it is with God. God has chosen to love Israel, and He is eternally faithful to that covenant commitment.

Even when Israel is extremely UNFAITHFUL, God remains ever faithful.

Israel's history in the OT is largely one of being unfaithful to her God. Under King Manasseh, they became more wicked than the pagan nations around them (cf. 2 Kg. 21:9, 2 Chron. 33:9). Ezek. 5:6-7 says that Israel became more wicked than any of her surrounding nations. From the days of Moses on, the Hebrews were referred to as a "stiff-necked" people who were constantly rebellious (cf. Ex. 32:9, Acts 7:51).

And yet, God ever remained FAITHFUL! Yes, He disciplined them, but He never fully and finally cast them away. Jeremiah wrote just prior to the Babylonian captivity. Throughout the book, God warns the Jews of coming judgment and yet He repeatedly says that He will not make a FULL end of them (cf. Jer. 4:27, 5:10, 18, 30:11, 46:28, also: Lev. 26:44, Neh. 9:31, Amos 9:8).

In the OT, there is a special word that defines the character of God. It is the Hebrew word "**hesed**". It is used 248 times in the OT. It is a very rich word. **Hesed** has been called an undefinable word. It is so glorious it is hard to get your mind around it. It refers to God's loyal covenant-keeping love. It emphasizes the FAITHFULNESS of God. **Hesed** is the kind of love expressed in God's COVENANT relationship with Israel. **Hesed** goes right along with the Name **YHWH**, as both stress His covenant faithfulness. God's reputation is at stake in His covenant relationship with Israel.

If God could abandon Israel, that would make Him an altogether different kind of a God. It would mean He cannot be fully trusted to carry out His Word. It would mean that God is not faithful to His promises to Israel. But indeed He is 100% faithful and trustworthy – all the time.

Israel matters because the UNFAITHFULNESS of the Jews serves to highlight the utter FAITHFULNESS of God. God's great depths of faithfulness is demonstrated the more unfaithful Israel has been.

This is illustrated in the book of Hosea. Hosea's wife was terribly unfaithful, and yet Hosea played the role of an ever-faithful husband (cf. Rom. 5:20).

After about 1,000 years of UNFAITHFULNESS on the part of Israel, in the last book of the OT, God says this in Mal. 3:6:

**Malachi 3:6 (NKJV)**

**6** "For I am the Lord, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

YHWH is the eternal, unchanging God. His character never changes.

**LORD** here is "YHWH", which is the covenant Name for God. As the covenant God of Israel, He is ever-faithful and unchanging. And it is purely for this reason that Israel is not destroyed.

**Lamentations 3:22–23 (NKJV)**

**22** Through the Lord's mercies [*hesed*] we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.

**23** They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

Israel serves to demonstrate the extreme faithfulness of God's character. Israel also demonstrates the holiness of God's character in the fact of her being severely disciplined for her sin. So, in Israel, we see both the reality of God's holiness and His faithfulness.