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BRIDGES FOR PEACE

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When **I AM** Says
I Will

"I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you and make your name
great; and you shall be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
and **I will** curse him who curses you;
and in you all the families of the earth
shall be blessed." Genesis 12:2-3



When **I AM** Says

I Will

ALONG WITH OVER A BILLION PEOPLE WORLDWIDE, I watched the wedding of Prince William to Catherine Middleton. It was wonderful to see the way God was a central part of their very Christian wedding. At the crucial moment in the ceremony, I clearly heard William and then Catherine say “I will,” and upon hearing those words of covenant, they were pronounced husband and wife. We pray for their happiness and that their commitment to one another will last a lifetime just as they pledged “till death do us part.” Happily about half of all marriages do last a lifetime. The other half sadly ends in divorce. It seems that many people today have a problem with commitment. Their “I wills” aren’t always forever.

How often have you experienced disappointment when someone told you they would do something, or be somewhere and then they let you down? It used to be common that business deals were sealed with a handshake. Today, lengthy legal contracts are very normal. It seems that our standards for integrity have slipped. Today we don’t know if we can trust someone’s “I will.”

God’s Pledges During Passover

In April, we celebrated Passover when we remember the deliverance of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. During the telling of the story there is a Scripture which is read: “*Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will rescue you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as My own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD’*” (Exodus 6:6-8, emphasis mine). In this short passage of Scripture we find God (I AM) making seven declarations which all start with “I will.” These are some amazing statements of God’s intention and of His commitment to the children of Israel.

I will bring you out (from bondage)
I will rescue you (freedom)
I will redeem you
I will take you as My own people
I will be your God
I will bring you to the land (Israel)
I will give it to you as a possession (heritage)

Since noticing that passage during Passover, I have been thinking about what it means when God says, "I Will." In this Teaching Letter I want to look at the concept of the character of God, and how He has proved it to His children from generation to generation. It is my prayer that we will all have a renewed faith and trust in God, which we desperately need in order to triumph in these often difficult times.

God's Integrity

God doesn't change. The Scriptures say that He remains the same. We are encouraged over and over to believe that what He says, He will do. *"Indeed before the day was, I am He; and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?"* (Isaiah 43:13). *"For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,'...indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it"* (Isaiah 46:9-11). *"God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"* (Numbers 23:19). *"For I am the LORD. I speak, and the word which I speak will come to pass; it will no more be postponed; for in your days, O rebellious house, I will say the word and perform it," says the Lord GOD* (Ezekiel 12:25). *"Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the LORD, have spoken it, and I will do it"* (Ezekiel 36:36). In the Bible there are hundreds of examples of God saying "I will." So, for this teaching letter I have been systematically reading through them. It has become apparent to me that when God says "I will," we should pay attention. Usually it is a momentous occasion, or God is talking to a larger than life hero of the Bible, or He is warning of future judgment.

As I began this study, it became obvious to me that God's interaction with Israel is key in these "I will" statements. Many refer to His covenant relationship, His judgments including dispersion among the Gentiles and their eventual return to Israel and Him. As I read this story of God's love for His people, the descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, I am thrilled as I realize that God's promises are being clearly fulfilled in front of our eyes. I want to shout to the nations. I want to call out and say: "Can't you see that He is a God who keeps His word! Please acknowledge Him! He is proving to the world right now, who He is and how we should understand His integrity and character. He is showing us that He will keep His covenants even when we are not faithful to keep our word."



What is a Covenant?

Dictionaries define a covenant as: 1. A legally binding obligation, 2. A legal disposition, 3. An agreement, usually formal, between 2 or more persons. The Hebrew word is *brit* and my modern Hebrew dictionary defines it as a covenant or a treaty. One of the most common usages of the word *brit* today is the term *brit milah* (circumcision). Jewish males are generally circumcised as 8-day old infants and with this act they become part of the covenant relationship of the Jewish people with God. "This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male child among you shall be circumcised and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between you and Me" (Genesis 17:10-11). (Sometimes Jewish men, or converts to Judaism, are circumcised later in life, but this is not the norm.) This is a serious sign of the covenant relationship requiring blood and pain. It seems that God takes covenant seriously.

The word covenant is found almost 300 times in the Bible and 190 of these incidents are between God and Man. 146 of these are between Israel and God, 18 between God and individuals (other than Abraham Isaac and Jacob), 11 talk of God's covenant nature and 14 in the Newer Testament talk of the new covenant, or covenant of blood. One reference refers to covenant breakers. Forty-three times the arc of the covenant is mentioned, that is the box that held the tablets which God had written the ten commandments on or the written covenant. Fourteen times the Bible is cited as the book of the covenant. So, 247 times in the Bible the word covenant is used to relate to the relationship between God and man, and most of those are between God and Israel. The remaining instances are between nations, leaders, families (Jacob and Laben), friends, the anti-Christ, objects, yourself and one reference to wife.

In the Bible there are several major covenants that God made with men.

- The NOAHIC covenant, which was an unconditional covenant found in Gen. 9:1-18. Today we are still reminded of this promise God made to never again flood the entire earth when we see the sign of the rainbow.
- The ABRAHAMIC covenant which was an unconditional covenant, found in Gen. 12:1-4; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-8.
- The MOSAIC covenant which was a conditional covenant, Ex. 20:1-31:18
- The DAVIDIC covenant found in 2 Sam. 7:4-16; 1Chron. 17:3-15.
- The NEW COVENANT first found in Jer. 31:31-40. It is a new covenant with Israel in contrast with the old conditional Mosaic covenant, "which they broke" (Jer. 31:32). As Christians we are partakers in the New Covenant as a gracious gift of our savior, Yeshua (Jesus).

Abrahamic Covenant

God entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham. This covenant was different from most. Usually a covenant is a mutual contract between two parties. The covenant with Abraham was different. When the covenant ceremony was enacted, God put Abraham to sleep, and walked between the sacrificed animals by Himself. In the ancient world the accepted way of enacting this contractual agreement was for both parties to walk between the sacrificed animals. By putting Abraham to sleep, I believe God was making it very clear that this covenant was in effect solely at the will of God. We call this an unconditional covenant. Please don't confuse the Abrahamic covenant with the later Mosaic covenant which did have some conditions. God made a commitment, a covenant when He said to Abraham, "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:2-3).



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*"Then I will remember
My covenant with Jacob,
and My covenant with
Isaac and My covenant
with Abraham
I will remember;
I will remember the land."
Leviticus 26:28*



Repeatedly in the Scripture we see this covenant reaffirmed by God:

- TO ISAAC: *“Dwell in the land, and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and your descendants I give all these lands; and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father; and I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven, I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed”* (Genesis 26:3–4).
- TO JACOB: *“The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land”* (Genesis 35:12).
In the Law of Moses, God promises to remember His covenant after a future time of judgment and dispersion: *“Then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land”* (Leviticus 26:28).
- JOSHUA’S TIME: *“Then the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bolchim, and said; ‘I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers;’ and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you’”* (Judges 2:1).

God’s covenant, His will, His integrity to His promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are not breakable. He will keep them, even though the children of Israel may be unfaithful. We see this clearly stated in the book of Ezekiel when God says that He is keeping His promises to bring the children of Israel back to their homeland, even though they profaned His name in the nations. He says He is doing it *“for My holy name’s sake”* (Ezekiel 36). In Hebraic thought this means for the sake of His character, or His integrity.

Israel is His Wife

Growing up under my father’s (Dr. David Allen Lewis) ministry, I often heard him refer to Israel as the wife of God, while the Church was known as the Bride of Christ (Anointed One, AKA Messiah). The prophet Jeremiah refers to God as the husband of Israel when he says, *“Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD”* (Jeremiah 31:32). Israel was compared to a wife who departed from her husband, *“surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel,” says the LORD* (Jeremiah 3:20). *“Return, O backsliding children,” says the LORD; ‘for I am married to you. I will take you...and I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding’”* (Jeremiah 3:14–15).

In considering this marriage, the relationship between God and His wife, Israel was often strained. The book of Hosea is an amazing pictorial view of this marriage relationship between God and Israel. Hosea, one of the Minor Prophets, was given an unthinkable assignment—marry a prostitute. Hosea in obedience marries Gomer. She proves herself unfaithful, doesn’t love him, and even leaves him. Hosea is understandably heartbroken. Certainly it would seem that he would be justified in divorcing this unfaithful wife. But, Hosea, under direction from God goes and brings her back and restores her to the marriage. Hosea and Gomer are human examples of God and Israel. God married Israel, she was unfaithful, He then sent Israel out of her homeland into the nations of the world. God was greatly distressed and angry, but in the end His commitment was to His wife and He says He will in love and faithfulness restore her. *“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall grow like the lily, and lengthen his roots like Lebanon”* (Hosea 14:4–5).



*“I do not do this for your sake,
O house of Israel,
but for My holy name’s sake...”*
Ezekiel 36:22





God makes it clear in Malachi that He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). Can a God who says that He does not lie, and that He will keep His promises, divorce His wife? I believe not. Does the fact that God is a husband to Israel take anything away from the Church? No! We have a glorious position as the Bride of Christ.

How Do We Know God is Faithful?

Certainly that is a fair question. Living in the midst of unfaithful people, many find it difficult to have faith in the promises of God. As we look at the “I will” statements of God to the people of Israel, and then look at historical events we can see that God has kept His word. Remember He said He can not lie! Not all of God’s “I will” statements are positive. When He says He will punish, He does so, unlike some parents who threaten punishment but fail to follow through.

*The signs of the heavens
and the earth declares
the faithfulness of God*
(See Jeremiah 31:33b-37)



Israel Scattered

Deuteronomy chapter 28 outlines the conditions of the Mosaic covenant. I am sure you remember the account of Moses giving the children of Israel choices between blessings and curses. If the people obeyed the LORD they could expect amazing blessings (Deut. 28:1–14). But, if they did not obey His commandments and statutes, they could expect curses (Deut. 28:15–68). Among other horrible curses is the curse to be scattered among the nations. “Then the LORD

will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods...and among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place” (Deut. 28:64–65). Tragically the children of Israel did not remain faithful to the Mosaic covenant. The prophets were full of warnings which they did not heed. They worshipped other gods, even



offering infants in sacrifice to false gods. Eventually God reached the end of His patience and the curses of Deut. 28 come upon them. It is easy to document the fact that the Jewish people were scattered abroad. Nearly every country in the world has a Jewish population. But, in most of the places they dwelled, they did not find rest. I am reminded of the poignant scene in the movie, *Fiddler on the Roof*, in which Tevye, his family and the entire Jewish community of Anatevka, were required to leave with just three days notice. I wish this was just a story, but it isn't. The Jewish people endured persecution, and exile on an unbearable level. They were dispersed to the nations of the world, but never forgotten by God.

The Land Will Become Desolate

One of the consequences of God's judgment was that the land of Israel—the inheritance of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants would become desolate. *"Then the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall become desolate; and you shall know that I am the LORD"* (Ezekiel 12:20). *"Thus I will make the land desolate, because they have persisted in unfaithfulness," says the Lord GOD* (Ezekiel 15:8). *"For I will make the land most desolate, her arrogant strength shall cease, and the mountains of Israel shall be so desolate that no one will pass through. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have made the land most desolate because of all the abominations which they have committed"* (Ezekiel 33:28–29).

This also literally came to pass, and is historically verifiable. Many visitors to the land wrote of their experiences in travelogues and journals. We have a number on the shelves of the David Allen Lewis Memorial Library in Jerusalem. All wrote of an empty, desolate, depleted land. Refer to my *Teaching Letter* entitled, *Living the Book of Ezekiel* (May 2011) for quotes from their writings.

Aliyah – the Return of the Jewish People to their homeland

The prophets proclaimed that God would remember His covenant with the Jewish people and bring them back to their own land. We have talked often about the miracle of the return of the Jewish people to their homeland, but I feel it would be remiss to omit such a great example of God doing what He says He will. Millions have come from over 100 nations of the world in fulfillment of God's promise. *"For behold the days are coming," says the LORD, "that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah," says the LORD. 'And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it'"* (Jeremiah 30:3).

Ezekiel 36–37

I have often taught about God's plans for Israel from Ezekiel 36-37. So, I found it quite interesting that these two chapters have a concentration of God's "I will" statements—thirty-six times! God states the facts that the land had become desolate and that He had scattered the people because of their idolatry and sin. But, primarily this passage is one of hope. God, the faithful husband, is saying that even though His wife had been unfaithful, even profaned His name in the nations, that He



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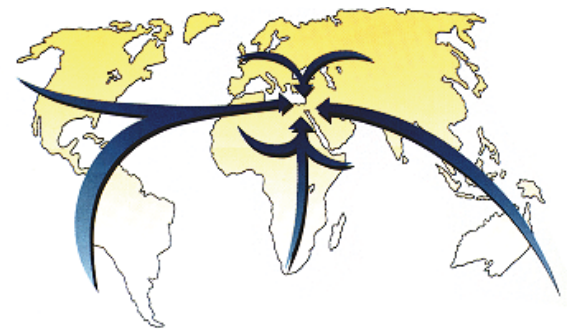



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would restore her. He says that He is restoring her because of His integrity. *"I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake..."* (Ezekiel 36:22). He is faithful even when the one He loves is not. He goes on and gives a series of wonderful promises. Some of which we are seeing fulfilled. We believe the rest will come because of God's faithfulness to His covenant and His word.

"For I will take you from among the nations gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you for all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you will dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, you shall be My people and I will be your God. I will deliver you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations" (Ezekiel 36:24-30).

In chapter 37 we find the vision of the Dry Bones. The nation of Israel is depicted as dried out dead bones that are resurrected! *"Then He said to me, 'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD, have spoken it and performed it,' says the LORD'"* (Ezekiel 37:11-14).

What wonderful promises for deliverance, forgiveness, restoration, health and prosperity. My prayer for you is that you have been encouraged to trust God to keep His promises in your life. When He says something, He does it! He never lies!

By Rev. Rebecca J Brimmer
International President and CEO

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*...you shall be My people
and I will be your God...*



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