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Verses 21-24 **I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them.**

So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day forward.

The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword.

According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them.

Verses 21-24 explain how God will be glorified in this Battle, not only by manifesting His great power through His judgments on the *"nations"*, but also through what happens to the Israeli nation. The passage explains, not only the fact that Israel gets rescued, but also why she had to get punished before getting rescued.

So, it is not only the *"nations"* who are going to know God is God, but who else needs to learn that? – The Jewish people! They're going to get a real manifestation – to see their Messiah whom they rejected long ago

descending *"with power and great glory"* into the earthly realm to save them! (Matthew 24:30) They're going to find out they can't save themselves; God finally had to come down and have mercy on the remnant of them to save them. *"So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD."* Then the Jewish people will know that Jesus is the Lord.

"Israel went into captivity." **In Ezekiel's time the Jews were living quite literally as captives in a strange land (Babylon). However, the prophecy here refers to modern Israel being held "captive" by the Antichrist and his forces. And why do they have to go *"into captivity"*? *"Because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies."* Just as today the Israelis hold captive the people of Palestine, so the Antichrist will come in and turn the tables. The Israelis will become the captives, and there will be a great slaughter from the sounds of it in the next phrase:**

"And they all fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them." **Here we learn that these woes will come on the Israelis because of their *"uncleanness and… transgressions"*. Since this subject was dealt with earlier in this study, there is no need to go on about it here. But one thing that it does help to understand is what God says here, *"I have… hidden My face."***

God is not the one who will be afflicting the Israelites. It will be the forces of Gog who are being driven by the powers of Darkness. From certain Scriptures we learn that this world, for the time being, has been given over to Satan. (Luke 4:6, John 12:31, 14:30, Revelation 13:2,7) And if it were not for God's guardian angels holding back the spirits of evil, the earth would be in a much bigger mess than it is already.

Until the Creator re-claims dominion over His creation, as will happen at the Battle of Armageddon, Satan and his legions will dominate during this present era. So in this time when the Jewish people are suffering so much, it is the forces of Satan that, we could say, are doing God's "dirty work". God has *"hidden His face"*. That is to say, He has withdrawn His protection, and the forces of evil are only too happy for the license to ride roughshod over a people who have the reputation of being "God's people".

So, although the forces of God are not carrying out the persecution themselves, nevertheless, indirectly God is responsible. But as the passage states clearly, He has His reasons for allowing it to happen.

<u>Verses 25-29</u> Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name –

after they have borne their shame, and all their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, when they dwelt safely in their own land and no one made them afraid.

When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations,

then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any longer.

And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel, says the Lord GOD.

Verses 25-29 describe God's mercy on the Israelites who will continue to dwell in their land. That doesn't mean they will become the rulers of the world in the Millenium, but at least they'll be allowed to dwell in the land of Israel, which, from what many Scriptures seem to indicate, will become the world's center of government during the Age to come.

The rulers of the world then will be chosen by Christ Himself: *"He who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations."* (Revelation 2:26) The *"power"* spoken of here is not the power gained through wealth or fame but is simply that which manifests God's Love to the world. Jesus Himself said, *"Blessed are the <u>meek</u>, for <u>they</u> shall inherit the earth."* (Matthew 5:5)

***"Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel."* This seems to refer to God's reversal of the captivity that the modern Israelis will experience under the Antichrist's heavy hand of persecution. Of course, Ezekiel was thinking also of the hoped-for return of his ancient Israelis from their captivity in Babylon to the land of Israel. And that could be understood as an intermediate fulfillment of this prophetic message – which the Lord intended as an**

encouragement to Ezekiel. But the ultimate fulfillment is yet to come.

"And I will be jealous for My holy name." **Although the Israelis of today have gone far astray from the ways of God, we still should not forget ancient history entirely and just cast it all aside. They were a chosen people and they were put in a chosen land by God. He did it that way in those days because people didn't understand very well the principle of spiritual worship. Jesus hadn't come yet to promote the understanding that *"the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him."* (John 4:23).**

So He raised up an actual nation of people who worshiped Him. (Isaiah 49:6) All the other nations had gods, had kings; they each had their religions. He had to try to get a cluster of people to worship Him, and He started off with just one man (Abraham) and his family, which eventually became the nation of Israel. In light of all this ancient heritage, and while the forces of Gog are trampling all over Israel, and while the Antichrist is there *"showing himself that he is God"* (2Thessalonians 2:4), it is no wonder that the Lord says here, *"I will be jealous for My holy name"*.

"After that they have borne their shame, and all their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me." **But before Messiah can come to rescue the people in whose land and nation He had once lived long ago, there has to be this time of purging, this humbling, this realization of how far they have strayed from the ways of their God. Through this process – *"after that they have borne their shame"* – they will come to realize that they are no more special than any other people on the earth. And the rest of the peoples on earth will see that too.**

When that has become obvious through Gog's persecution, then the Israelis will be ready to re-gain the blessings of God, starting with the Messiah's rescue of them from the Antichrist's oppression. Of course, it won't only be the Israelis whom He will come to rescue, but all the anti-Antichrist forces that have arisen during those times.

"When they dwelt safely in their own land and no one made them afraid." **This recalls the passage earlier about modern Israel, *"and now all of them dwell safely."* (38:8) Since 1948 the Israelis have been dwelling for the first time in their own country after 1,900 years of being rather**

insecure and dwelling as strangers in other lands. In Israel now, they haven't been perfectly safe all the time; they've had several wars, but most of the time they've been holding their own and dwelling safely enough amongst all the Arabs. They've won most of their wars against the Arabs so far. And with the unshakeable backing and guarantee of American might and resources behind them, they have at this present time little to worry about regarding their security.

Paradoxically, it is their present over-concern with security that will prove to be their undoing. Their policy of keeping such a tight lid on the Palestinians, along with belligerence towards their Arab neighbors, all in the name of security, is only serving to isolate themselves, alienate them from would-be friends, and plant the seeds for the catastrophic war that will eventually come as a result, as Ezekiel foresaw long ago.

"When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies' lands." **The Jewish people had returned from exile in previous history, but only from Babylon, one nation. Here they are shown, as in previous verses (38:8,12) to have returned from many nations: *"they were brought out of the nations… a people gathered from the nations."* (38:8,12) And this is a feature of modern Israel, more than of ancient Israel – another little indication that the prophecy was foretelling what would happen in this present day and age.**

This remarkable return of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland in modern times has been a sign of God's enduring faithfulness to those who were once His chosen people. And He says here, when they are re-gathered, that *"I am hallowed* [honored] *in them in the sight of many nations".*

But to complete the picture so that God is fully glorified, the world must see that He is not playing favorites and that Israel must suffer retribution for her sins of injustice and cruelty against the strangers in her land (the Palestinians). This, as we learn in Daniel 11, is part of the process of refining and making them worthy of the privilege of being called the people of God: *"they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering… to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end."* (verses 33, 35) This message, by the way, applies just as much to Christians and any of the peoples of God who will be

around during this tumultuous time in Earth's history.

"Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations **(during the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman invasions)*, but also brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any longer."*** **The Jewish people were given, after World War 2, a land of their own to go to if they wanted. God *"brought them back to their land;"* they didn't have to be left *"captive"* in other lands if they didn't want to be.**

They were, of course, captives in the Nazi German empire, but in reality, aside from those few years of European history, most Jews would hardly consider themselves "captives" in the lands where they live. But to Ezekiel, who was living as a captive in the land of Babylon, this was how he would look at it, and the prophecy seems to reflect his outlook to some extent here.

"And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel, says the Lord GOD." **As with any chastisement, once the lessons have been learned, the Spirit of reconciliation and mercy follows the Spirit of judgment. Once more the Spirit of God will dwell on the *"house of Israel"* as it did long ago in the days of the Old Testament.**

~ THE END ~