



Caravans of frankincense traveling to Europe and Asia from the Arabian peninsula were at times thousands of camels in number. Frankincense was not just for aroma, it was one of the earliest anti-septics. A caravan carrying frankincense might be worth as much as \$12,000,000 US at today's market rate. Taxing such caravans and having authority over the routes caused clashes from surrounding nations. Assyria, the Hittites, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Babylonians all sought either control or to collect revenue for their empires from those using the routes or living near them.

Ezekiel records the results of polytheism in Israel's early history. In chapter 36:16-21, the God of Israel has this to say:

"... when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their conduct and their actions. Their conduct was like a woman's uncleanness in my sight. So I poured out my wrath on them because they had shed blood in the land and because they had defiled it with their idols. I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions. And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name –

(here there must be a pause. In reading Daniel one has to note that God's Name was not defiled as we might think; i.e., through sinfulness. The book of Daniel was about Israelites dragging Babylon to God's throne several times so powerfully that laws were passed that were forbidden to transgress stating that the God of Daniel was the only God to be offered worship. However, the defiling had to do with polytheism. In a sea of nations who had many gods, each city had a prime protector god who topped the others. Therefore, if Israel had been conquered, Jerusalem's protector god must not be as strong as Marduk, Babylon's top god on the ziggurat. That was the defiling as you can see from the rest of that verse).

"... for it was said of them, 'These are the Lord's people, and yet they had to leave his land. I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone.'"

Over the ages Israel has been attacked, conquered, and made a vassal state by many nations. Israel's taxation has supported Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, and others. Only during Solomon's reign did other nations bring revenue to Israel. However, modern Israel stands out in history in that only now, with her sovereignty over God's land, she pays taxes to no one, in fact, nations offer her aid since she is the only democracy in a sea of political turmoil rivaled only by the great clashes of ancient times.

Hopefully, my field reports are a glimpse into the character of our covenant keeping God. Israel's return to her place among the nations in 1948 brought that aspect of our God into focus for those with mental capacity to add up the political elements and come to a worthy conclusion.

How truly the Scripture speaks of ancient Israel when it says:

"... for you are a holy people unto the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth."

Geographical rootedness is an indispensable fact of our faith. It is only reasonable that God's enemy, Satan, would seek in every way possible to change that fact. It is not only in our time that he has sought to detach Israel from her geography. However, Zechariah spells it out magnificently in 3:2.

"The Lord said to Satan, the Lord rebuke you Satan, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!"

Just a few verses before in chapter two the restoration of Judah is prophesied and our Lord said that he would again choose Jerusalem. And as Jerusalem goes, so goes Israel. This study of Israel's geography is so much more than geography. A mundane subject has deep spiritual roots and is worthy of our attention.