

The Land, the Promised Land is a critical element throughout the Bible, which has been contentious through the current crisis. I need to make 2 clarifications, before anything further. First historically: The Land Promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Promised Land which Moses searched-for for 40 years, the Israel of King David and Solomon, was destroyed by the Assyrians in 732 BC. The remaining Southern Tribe of Judah was then destroyed in 597 BC by the Babylonians, exiled for decades. The Persians allowed the exiles return, then the land was conquered by the Greeks, the Medes, the Egyptians, there were no longer CAANANITES only Palestinians and Jews then the Roman Empire who levelled Jerusalem in 70 AD. After the Romans, this land was taken by Arab states, then the Byzantines, then the Muslims, when 900 years after Jesus, Christians across Europe went to fight in the CRUSADES which lasted for roughly 400 years. Then the Turks, then the Monguls and Ottoman Empire eventually 1920 to 1948 the Holy Lands were a Colony of Great Britain. In 1948, because of the atrocity of 6,000,000 Jews being killed in the Holocaust, the United Nations gave this land to the dispersed Jewish people, to form a new Jewish State of Israel, which caused the removal of Palestinian people who had lived there for centuries.

Second, we need to make a confession. All of the churches of Green Valley and Sahuarita, Amado and Tubac, made a horrible mistake, especially brought home by the passage from Matthew. When earlier this month Israel was attacked by HAMAS, when 1400 Jewish civilians were massacred, we as Church leaders in each of the churches reached out to our worshippers. We prayed for Israel and Palestine. We welcomed and comforted Jewish neighbors who came to worship with us. We cancelled our tour of the Holy Lands. Last week, some of the churches gathered for a prayer meeting about Israel and Palestine. But none of us, none of us, thought to contact our local Synagogue! We did not contact the Rabbi. We did not seek their input and we did not offer our sorrow or comfort. We worshipped the LORD with all our Hearts and Minds and Strength, and we as the Clergy and the Churches forgot to ask about our Neighbor! So this weekend, for their Sabbath, on our behalf as the Church, I sent a

dozen white roses to Beth Shalom Temple Center, with the message "SHALOM from Valley Presbyterian Church."

It seems anticlimactic, that at the end of the Pentateuch, Moses died not entering into the Promised Land! For 40 years Moses had been part of Pharaoh's Court. Then for 40 years a murderer in exile as a Shepherd. Beginning at age 80 and for 40 years Moses was CALLED to lead the people from Slavery in Egypt thru the Sinai Wilderness to search for the Promised Land. For 40 years Moses was CALLED to resolve disputes between people. For 40 years Moses heard the peoples cries for water and for food. For 40 years Moses was CALLED to accomplish Miracles and to bring the people the 10 Commandments. Moses listened to their anger and frustrations and complaining. For 40 years Moses was CALLED to hold before the people the VISION of entering into a Promised Land. When just as he is able to SEE THE PROMISE, he dies and they go on without him. But that is the POINT. Moses had provided the CONSTANT VISION of The Promised Land for the people; when finally he SEES the fulfillment of the Vision, Moses has done his part in God's plan and Joshua will carry on with bringing the people into the Land.

There is a bit of Poetic License here in Deuteronomy, because standing on the eastern bank of the Jordan River in Moab, Moses was able to see 50 miles across to the Mediterranean Sea, 75 miles north to the Snow-capped mountains and another 75 miles south to the Dead Sea and Masada. The author does state that his eye was not dimmed, but even with my bifocals, that is a lot to take in all at once. This is not about actually seeing all of that, but Realization of the VISION of what the Promised Land IS and Represents.

What the VISION IS and what the VISION REPRESENTS is exactly the problem of the impending war. HAMAS provoked violence with Israel by killing 1400 civilians in the most violent ways possible. In retaliation Israel has killed at least 2800, according to some reports 6800 Palestinians, and Israel's leadership want the elimination of everyone connected with HAMAS; while each of the surrounding Muslim Nations want the elimination of Judaism. What that vision represents is horrific.

As a believer, I have to believe in GOD's sense of humor! Because Jerusalem is most sacred place of Judaism where Abraham took Isaac to be sacrificed to GOD; This is the place

where Jesus was Sacrificed and Resurrected from the Dead; and is the place where Mohammed was when he was transported to Heaven to receive the Koran and return to Jerusalem. In a space no bigger than our Church Building, you have the Holy Sepulcher where Christ was buried, the Wailing Wall the only remnant of the Holy of Holies from Judaism's 2nd Temple, and Islam's Temple Mount. And Jesus COMMANDS us to live our FAITH by Loving our Neighbor as ourselves!

We this morning are in the place of JOSHUA and the Israelites after the burial of MOSES. Especially in this last year, we have witnessed the deaths and resurrection of Charter Members of this Church who have been part of this Church's VISION since the beginning. We have witnessed the faith and lives of Elders and Deacons, Choir Members and Patio Sale Leaders, who did the heavy lifting, to carry this Church through recent decades. Some who led us to find forgiveness and reconciliation for past wounds. Some gave gifts that did not end when their eyes dimmed and strength abated, they left all that they had to this church. The CALLING before us, is how we can carry on, how best to honor their lives, faith and service? Every one of our committees needs to have new members. New persons with vision for Finance, for Worship, for Personnel, for Fellowship, for NOC's and Patio Sale. Their resurrection is a Calling for us to live our faith.