ISRAEL'S PERSECUTIONS

<u>Hos. 8:8</u> Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure.

God promised Israel that He would bless them if they would be obedient and trust Him, but He promised tremendous suffering if they ignored Him and His Word. [Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26]

Below is a brief summary of the history of Israel's persecutions. Their sufferings were used by God to motivate them to regather back to Israel from all the nations from which He had scattered them.

Persecutions Up To AD 70

The greatest persecution in the history of the world may be pinpointed as that of the Jews.

Jesus Himself said in Matthew 24:9: "ye shall be hated of all nations." And even in the short interval between Matthew 24 and AD 70, insurrections and wars filled Palestine. Over 50,000 were slain in Seleucia and 20,000 died in Caesarea in a battle with the Syrians. Constant rumors of war kept the Jews in an unsettled state. There were threats against them by emperors Caligula, Claudius, and Nero.

In AD 70, the Romans entered Jerusalem under Titus and killed 1,300,000 Jews and took many into captivity. Jerusalem was plowed up as a field. This marked the beginning of the Jewish dispersion.

Up To Time Of Mohammedanism

During the first and second centuries, Jews were flocking to Babylon as their place of refuge. By the year 200, an estimated 2 million Jews were in Babylon.

In the Roman empire, Emperor Constantine outlawed the Jews, cut off their ears, and dispersed them as vagabonds. During the 5th and 6th centuries, restrictions were placed on the Jews, and they were forbidden to hold public office. Many Jewish communities were attacked and thousands killed.

In the 6th century, some 60,000 were slain and more sold into slavery. In the 8th century in Spain, they were horribly abused and persecuted. In France, multitudes were burned to death.

In 622, Mohammed founded Islam. When Jews refused to join the new religion, most of the Jews in Arabia were killed. Islam spread across North Africa, crossing eastern Europe through Spain, and would have engulfed all Europe had not Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours (AD 732) turned them back.

In the 8th century, El Hakim, the veiled Mohammedan leader, ordered Jews to wear bells, or to carry a wooden calf.

Up To End Of Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages, in many lands, a "badge of shame" was placed on the Jews. In some places, it was a patch of red or yellow worn on the breast or arm, on the shoulder or on the hat. They were confined, like corralled beasts in ghettoes.

German states considered them as slaves of the emperor, and they were outrageously taxed and plundered. In most European countries, they were prohibited from owning land, and were excluded from the schools and the universities.

The 9th and 10th centuries were largely an era of peace for Jews in Europe, although England did banish all Jews from the realm in 1020.

The first Crusade began in the 11th century to take the Holy Land from the Moslems. But the crusades turned out to be as much against the Jews of Europe as against Moslems in the Holy Land. "Kill a Jew and save your soul," was the cry.

In the year 1298, great persecution swept Europe and hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed. In 1350, the Black Plague engulfed Europe, killing one-fourth of the population. Jews were blamed and one-half of the Jews in Europe were murdered.

In 1353, Jews were totally banished from France. Spain and Portugal also refused them entrance. Germany banished all Jews from Prague in 1560. Spain in 1492 forced 800,000 Jews into the sea, most of whom died from exposure and drowning.

In 1411, the Roman Catholic church instituted the Inquisition. Tens of thousands died. Jews were scarely considered human beings.

Up To End Of Hitler

During the Russian czars, an estimated 5 million Jews were in Russia. Fierce persecution broke out and tens of thousands were killed. In 1881, Alexander III, head of the Russian Church, publicly stated the Russian policy with regards to Jews: one-third to die, one third to be forced to emigrate, and one-third to join the Russian church.

World War I found the Jews under great suffering. As the Russians advanced into eastern Europe, Jews in the occupied areas were tried as spies and many sent to Siberia. It was also accompanied by pogroms or mass violence. Pogroms took place in Poland, Rumania and Hungary. In the Ukraine alone, over 1,200 pogroms took place.

Most of the Jews in the world were living in eastern Europe at the outbreak of World War II, and about half a million of them were in Germany. It was Hitler's aim not only to exterminate all the German Jews, but to kill all Jews in Europe. His reign of terror, in which five to six million Jews were killed, is one of the blackest in the pages of history. When Hitler was through with them, six out of every 10 Jews in Europe were killed.

[1]Tan, P. L. (1996, c1979). *Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations : A treasury of illustrations, anecdotes, facts and quotations for pastors, teachers and Christian workers*. Garland TX: Bible Communications.