

Beauties of the Truth

*A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages

BEAUTIES OF THE TRUTH is published as a service to the brethren to stimulate their consideration and appreciation of the boundless riches of God's Word. It is published free of charge. Subscriptions will be entered for all who request it. Address all correspondence to: Beauties of the Truth, 10034 S.W. 52nd Avenue, Portland, OR 97219. Editorial Board: Brs. Jerry Leslie (Managing Editor), Carl Hagensick, Raymond Luke, Michael Nekora, David Rice, Richard Suraci.

Gog of the Land of Magog

The establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth at the time of the Second Advent is preceded by a final and decisive conflict between the forces of good and evil. Those powers and institutions of this world which have been built upon human greed and injustice launch a concerted attack upon the new rulership which comes to bring peace to the nations, abolish war, pestilence, disease and death, and make the earth a fitting dwelling place for redeemed humanity.

The purpose of God as revealed in the Scriptures makes plain that the Millennial reign of the Lord Christ will effect these ends and usher the human race into a future in which sin and unhappiness finds no place, but it is also equally foretold that before this desirable condition of things comes about there will be stern resistance to the dawning era of righteousness by those whose interests lie in the preservation and perpetuation of the institutions and practices of this present order of world society. The old order of things will not give place without a struggle. The vested interests of this world, depending upon the exploitation of human beings and inordinate possession of earth's resources for private gain, will fiercely oppose the advent of the new era, with its proclamation of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, laying 'justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet,' and rendering to every man - white, black, brown, yellow or red - a place in life and a share of the world's amenities such that he may be able to develop his own abilities to the full and live in everlasting content as a citizen of creation. The conflict will be fought to a finish but the new order will be victorious and use its victory to initiate an era of peace and prosperity during which the human race will be finally and completely fitted for its eternal destiny.

Warfare between the material might of man on the one hand and the unseen, uncomprehended power of the celestial world on the other is difficult to visualize or define in human terms. There must of necessity be many factors in such a conflict which are quite alien to our understanding. That does not detract from the determination of the contestants or the reality of the struggle. It does require that the descriptions or forecasts of related events are framed in language appropriate to normal warfare between nations of the type with which men are familiar. The Bible has many such accounts of the last great conflict, described in the terms of war as it was waged at the time they were written, and these have to be read and understood in the light of this fact and interpreted to reveal the principles enshrined rather than as strictly literal narratives of the events that are to be. Thus considered, the prophetic Scriptures relating to the 'End Time' become wonderfully luminous when viewed in the light of current events. The course of the world for a century past

has been such that there can no longer be any doubt that humanity has reached the crisis so fully foretold in all the Scriptures and that the dawn of the new era is upon us. Heaven is about to take control.

Ezekiel 38, 39

Of some half a dozen vivid descriptions of this last great battle none is so fully detailed and so eloquent as the account in the 38th and 39th chapters of the book of the prophet Ezekiel, popularly known as the story of the invasion of Israel by Gog and Magog. Remembering that a fundamental feature of the Divine order in the Messianic Age is to be the creation of a dedicated Holy Nation, a purified and ideal Israel, in the land which has always been associated with Divine things and Divine government from the dawn of history, and will be the center of Divine administration, it is not surprising that this invasion is pictured directed against that center. The incipient Kingdom of God upon earth is the target of the godless and the apostates, banded together to destroy this threat to their continued power. From this standpoint these chapters in Ezekiel are not only of supreme interest but also vital importance at this present time when world events betoken in no uncertain fashion that the fulfillment of 'all things written' is imminent.

This account was written some six hundred years before Christ; because it deals so much with political events it is 'dressed up' in language borrowed from the political history of that time. Prophecy is not the unaided product of the seer; it is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit of God, operating through a human instrument and using terms capable of comprehension by men. This foreview of the future, written twenty-five hundred years prior to its fulfillment, was possible because the events of today are happening in direct consequence of the course which mankind has been pursuing for far more than that twenty-five hundred years; God in His infinite wisdom knows exactly how the forces which men have set in motion, hundreds or even thousands of years ago, pursued to their logical end, will react upon the generation of men now living. So He is able to record the outcome thus in advance.

Ezekiel the priest was born in Judea and taken captive to Babylon in the third year of Jehoiakim of Judah... eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. He was then thirty years of age, a man devout and zealous, and well versed in the Hebrew Scriptures. The earlier parts of his writings reveal that he was possessed of the reformer's spirit in marked degree; he was certainly a fitting vehicle of the Holy Spirit for the transmission of revelations such as we now have before us. His later writings comprise a prophetic description of Israel's national resurrection at the close of this present age; her regathering to her ancient land and subsequent prosperity; the envy of surrounding but distant barbarous nations and the descent of those nations, under the leadership of Gog of the land of Magog, upon her, their utter defeat and the universal conversion of the regathered nation followed by the promulgation of Divine law and rulership over the earth with the Israel land as the administrative center. The narrative concludes with a 'Temple vision' depicting the settled rule and work of the Millennial Age and its triumphant outcome in the reconciliation of men, 'whosoever will,' to God. The predicted events of chapters 38 and 39 are to be understood in relation to this general picture.

SCYTHIAN INVASION

The physical background of these two chapters was the invasion of the Middle East by Scythians from the north in the reign of Josiah of Judah. Ezekiel was a boy at this time and witnessed this earth-shaking event at first hand. To such an extent must it have impressed him as an example of irresistible and all-conquering force that it remained with him, until years later and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he cast his momentous prophecy of the last great conflict in the mold of that invasion. It is very necessary, therefore, that this physical background be examined closely and an accurate understanding of the situation as it existed in Ezekiel's mind be achieved. There are allusions to ancient nations that no longer exist, these have to be reinterpreted in terms applicable to the present. The Israel people and the Israel land of the prophecy are those of Ezekiel's own day; the extent to which both people and land in the fulfillment must possess

wider attributes and be sketched on a larger canvas has to be determined. The whole conception of the interpretation has to be lifted from the narrow limits of Old Testament Israel's relations with her neighbors to the immeasurably greater sphere of world evil versus God's holiness at the end of the age, even although admittedly there is still an Israel nation occupying the center of the stage, and profoundly affected by all that transpires.

It is necessary first of all to identify the actors in the drama. A noteworthy feature of this prophecy is that Israel's traditional, and usual, enemies do not figure in the account and are not so much as mentioned. Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Egypt, Philistines, Amalekites, Midianites, Amorites, appear time after time on the pages of the Old Testament in combat with Israel. Not one of these appears in this narrative; their place is taken by nations hitherto unknown to Israel and coming from a great distance, from the far corners of the earth in fact. This of itself is a significant factor. It must indicate that the conflict foreseen by Ezekiel has to do with other and far greater issues than those which have traditionally concerned Israel in the past. The situation is not, as formerly, Israel versus her neighbor tribes and peoples, but Israel versus the wider outside world. The battle is not against the Israel that conquered Canaan under the leadership of Joshua but a greater and more dedicated nation which has gathered into a more extensive Holy Land under the headship of God. But before we can understand the details of this Battle of the Great Day in the light of Ezekiel's vision we must first learn our history.

About eight hundred years before Christ the nations of the Middle East - Assyria, Babylon, Elam, Media, Syria, and Israel - became dimly conscious of a new threat to their political interests. A number of strange, warlike and barbarous peoples, hitherto unknown, had appeared in the northern countries of Lydia and Armenia, raiding, killing and taking possession. Within a century they had reached the frontiers of Assyria; the celebrated Sennacherib, and later his son Esarhaddon, led the Assyrian armies against them and with some difficulty forced them back. In the Assyrian historical inscriptions the invaders were called the Mushku, the Tabalu, the Gimirrai and the Til-garimmu; the corresponding Bible names are Meshech, Tubal, Gomer and the House of Togarmah. Meshech and Tubal were Scythian tribes first known in history in what is now southern Russia between the Black Sea and the Caspian, where Tiglath-Pileser I of Assyria fought them in the 12th century BC.



Ezekiel the Prophet

Ezekiel the Prophet

By Sennacherib's time they had moved into Armenia. Gomer and Togarmah were of the race known in history as the Cimmerians and had been forced out of their home in Russia north of the Black Sea into Asia Minor by the pressure of other Scythian tribes. The Scythians originated in Central Asia and about the ninth

BC century were increasing and extending in all directions. Called Ashquzai or Saka by the Assyrians (Ashkenaz in Hebrew) they eventually played a great part in the overthrow of the Assyrian empire. Scythian tribes inhabited the southern areas of European Russia and Siberia from the days of Abraham to those of Malachi and the close of the Old Testament, after which they began to disappear before the impact of other racial types. It was this 'expanding population' pressure which had driven wave after wave of Scythians into the lands bordering the north of Israel and Assyria, resulting in this invasion which forms the background of Ezekiel's prophecy.

Ezekiel 38:2 speaks of 'Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.' The translation is not very exact; literally the passage should read 'set thy face towards Gog, towards the land of Magog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.' There is some doubt about the accuracy of the description 'chief prince.' The accents in the Hebrew text demand that 'rosh' be read in its normal meaning of head or chief, hence the rendering 'chief prince,' but grammatically the expression should not appear in this form and still remain good Hebrew. The Septuagint and a number of ancient authorities such as Symmachus and Theodotion take 'Rosh' as a proper name and render 'prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.' An objection to this is the fact that whereas Meshech and Tubal are frequently found coupled together in the Assyrian inscriptions of the times, no tribe named Rosh appears, either in Assyrian records or the Bible. It is said that some Arab writers of the early Christian centuries mention a Scythian tribe named Ros as living in Cappadocia and that it originated from the Caspian Sea district, where the River Aras (the Arab name for the Araxes) perpetuates the name. This is flimsy evidence in the absence of further corroboration, but there is the possibility that such a tribe did exist in Ezekiel's time in association with the more prominent Meshech and Tubal, without coming under the notice of Assyria.

Magog would appear to be the Gogai of the Tel-el-Amarna letters, at that time, 14th century BC, said to be a land of barbarians in the far north. This might well be a general name for all Scythian tribes and as such the equivalent of the Assyrian Saka and Greek Sacasene, terms for the Scythians generally.

The federal chief of this confederacy of warlike tribesmen is addressed as Gog. This is the man whose name comes down the ages as the 'Northern One,' the dark figure who is to lead the forces of evil against the people of the Lord at the Time of the End. Not only in the Bible - Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Habakkuk - is this shadowy menacing figure seen, but also in the apocryphal books, in Jewish legend, in Arab folk lore. Throughout the ages this dreaded name has persisted and always it is the sign and symbol of the implacable enemy of God who at the last is to meet his doom with all his followers when God rises up to deliver Israel.

Ezekiel obviously referred to a real historical figure and today the identity of Gog is known. He is named in Assyrian records as Gaagi, supreme chief of the Saka or Scythians in the days of Asshur-bani-pal of Assyria, roughly during the reign of Manasseh of Judah. The Greeks at a somewhat later time knew a Scythian tribe which they called the Gogarene, i. e. people of Gog, dwelling at the east of the Black Sea; this is probably the same as Magog, and Gog's own tribe. The two sons of Gog, Sariti and Pariza, were captured by Asshur-bani-pal during his campaigns against Meshech and Tubal and taken prisoner to Nineveh. The great Scythian invasion which spelt the end of Assyria and inspired Ezekiel's prophecy was led by Madyes, the grandson of Gog.

Here then is the setting for **Ezekiel 38** and 39, a confederacy of Scythian and Cimmerian tribes migrating from Southern Russia and making their way across Asia Minor until they stood poised for a mass attack upon the lands of the Bible. Israel, in the center of those lands, was vulnerable and helpless against the threat. She could only wait.

The prophecy goes on to associate with Gog's host certain other nations, from the east and south and west. This had no counterpart in the invasion of Josiah's time and this is one respect in which the prophetic reality differs profoundly from the historic shadow. These nations will be considered a little farther on.

A POPULAR VIEW CONSIDERED

At this point some notice should be taken of a rather popular exposition amongst some students of prophecy which identifies Rosh with Russia, Meshech with Moscow and Tubal with Tobolsk, a city of Western Siberia. These identifications are to be treated with caution. Tobolsk is nearly two thousand miles from the land of Tubal of Ezekiel's day; it is possible that at a much earlier date Scythian tribesmen of the same name migrated from a common center, some in the course of centuries reaching Armenia as Tubal, others settling on the River Tobol which gives the Siberian city its name, but there could have been no connection between the respective peoples. (In much the same way the Cimmerians from Russia appeared in Armenia as Gomer and Togarmah and in Britain as the Cymry, now represented by the Welsh.) In any case Tobolsk was not founded until AD 1587. Moscow, which in Russian is Moskva, from which word Muscovy, the older name for Russia, is derived, was founded in AD 1174 but did not become the capital until several centuries later. Here again there is some similarity with the Assyrian Mushku (Meshech) but Moscow was not founded by Scythians but by invaders from the Baltic.

The identification of Rosh with Russia is incorrect. The word Russia is Rossiya, derived from the Finnish term for the people of Sweden, a corruption of the Swedish 'rothsmenn' meaning seafarers. During the ninth and tenth centuries of the Christian era Scandinavian peoples related to the Swedes, Angles and Norsemen entered Russia from the north and penetrated as far as the southern steppes, where they encountered and fought the Turks - the surviving representatives of the ancient Scythians. These newcomers were called the 'Rus,' or 'Ros,' and, by the Greeks of the time, the 'Norse pirates.' For some two hundred years they colonized European Russia, establishing their capital at Kiev. These were the people from whom Russia takes its modern name but all this was long after the days of Ezekiel. So far as can be gleaned from the writings of ancient historians and geographers, Central and Northern European Russia was uninhabited in Old Testament times and the Baltic invaders were its first inhabitants.

THE SCYTHIAN ADVANCE

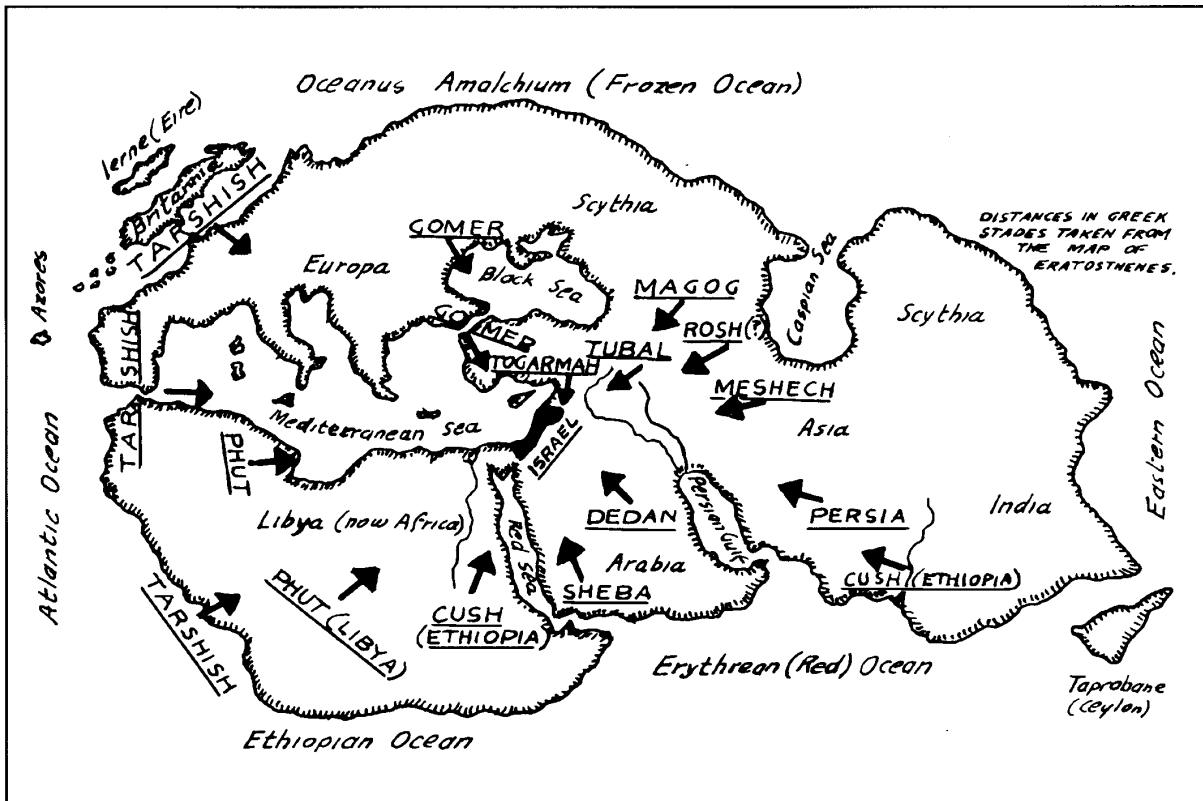
Five years before the death of King Josiah, when Ezekiel was a youth and Jeremiah had spent some ten years on his prophetic ministry, the forces of Gog swept over the lands of the Bible like a mighty avalanche. The old warrior, Asshur-bani-pal of Assyria, was dead. The armies of the Medes and the Babylonians were at the gates of Nineveh, and the Assyrians were fighting for their life. Egypt was biding its time to share in the spoils. Josiah was in the middle of his reforming work aimed at eliminating idolatry from Israel. Ten years earlier, Jeremiah had received his prophetic commission and seen his vision of the seething pot overturned so that its boiling contents flooded over the ground. And the Lord said to him in explanation 'Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land'. (**Jeremiah 1:14-15**) Now the prediction was fulfilled. Along the northern frontiers of Syria, Assyria and Media swarmed the Scythians and Cimmerians in their thousands, intent on conquest and plunder. For generations past Assyria had been the guardian of the north but now their power was at its lowest ebb and there was no strength to resist.

The first onslaught was met by the Medes. If history be true - and the records of this period are confused and contradictory - Cyaxares of Media persuaded the Scythians into a temporary alliance for a joint attack upon Nineveh. It is fairly conclusive that the downfall of Assyria and the destruction of Nineveh was the consequence of such an alliance and that the Scythian wave passed over and obliterated the proud empire that for so long had held the nations of Western Asia in an iron grip. The prophet Nahum describes the coming of this moment. 'He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face' he cries triumphantly, 'the horseman lifteth up the bright sword and the glittering spear, and there is a great multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses... all they that look upon thee shall say, Nineveh is laid waste; who will bemoan her?' That is an eloquent and accurate description of Scythian warfare. The city was so completely blotted out of existence that only two centuries later Xenophon marched his army of ten thousand Greeks right

across its site without any suspicion that what was left of it lay under his feet; not until the middle nineteenth century were its remains brought to light.

From Assyria the raiding hordes swept across Syria, through the plain of Megiddo - the 'Armageddon' of the Book of Revelation - and over the seaward side of Israel and the Philistine land to the frontiers of Egypt. Here, according to Herodotus, they were met by Pharaoh Psamtik I who persuaded their leaders into a treaty which halted further advance. In any case they had now absorbed a very considerable territorial area.

The Scythian occupation lasted probably less than ten years - Herodotus says twenty-eight, but he is certainly mistaken. In the meantime the lawless hosts roamed the countries plundering and slaying at will. Judah seems to have escaped much of the impact; during most of this time Josiah was busy with his reformation and Chronicles and Kings do not yield any hints of untoward interference from outside. After the agreement with Egypt the Scythians seem to have withdrawn from the vicinity of Israel, although they captured and destroyed Askelon of the Philistines on the way, and also established a great military fortress at Beth-shan in the valley of Jezreel not far from Nazareth. Scythians remained in possession of this fortress and town up to the time of Christ, when it was known on that account as Scythopolis. Although within the territory of Israel, the Rabbis would not consider it a Jewish town, but the place of an unholy people. (It has been thought that St. Paul's allusion to Scythians in **Colossians 3:11** in connection with Greeks and Jews as being one in Christ is a reference to the continued presence in Beth-shan of the descendants of the ancient Scythians of Gog's army.)



The world as known in late Old Testament times. The position of Israel and the hostile nations of Ezekiel 38, 39. Land outlines from the maps of Greek geographers Hecateus, Herodotus and Eratosthenes, Circa 500 - 250 BC.

Within a few years of the invasion the Scythians had disappeared. The reason is not clear; the records are scanty and non-informative. By the time that Ezekiel in Babylon was beginning his prophetic ministry they were back in Armenia and Asia Minor, and the lands of the Bible knew them no more. Only the memory of them remained.

This then is the historical basis of Ezekiel's prophecy. It is not a picture in miniature of the future. There are many elements in the ultimate conflict, alluded to in Chapters 38 and 39, which had no counterpart in Josiah's day. Perhaps the most important is that after the cataclysm Israel enters into an era of everlasting peace. That was not true in history. Josiah met his death fighting with Egypt against Babylon, and not long afterwards the entire nation suffered the Babylonian captivity. Ezekiel says that the hosts of Magog will find graves in the land of Israel; in history they went back unimpeded to their own land. So the story of Gog, of the land of Magog, and his great invasion of the Middle East twenty-five centuries ago, was taken up by the Holy Spirit and used as a picture from which the salient features of the prophetic fulfillment might be deduced.

ADDITIONAL NATIONS

Now that picture does include some nations which were not part of the historical Gog's host but are depicted in the prophetic vision as rendering assistance and encouragement. 'Persia, Ethiopia and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet' (38:5) says the prophet. They are to be associated with the prophetic Gog in the latter day conflict. Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish also appear as giving encouragement and approval if not actual help. The inclusion of these additional nations is obviously to complete the prophetic picture in terms of Ezekiel's own day and it is necessary therefore to establish the position of these peoples at that time.

Persia (Hebrew Paras) was only beginning to come into prominence in the days of Ezekiel. Commencing as a small Aryan tribe in the extreme south of modern Iran, having migrated from its home in the far east, it gradually attained equality with the Medes in the north, and under the celebrated Cyrus in the days of Daniel became predominant. Later on Persia had much to do with Israel but to Ezekiel it was still a distant and unknown people with whom Israel had made no contact. It was in fact the weakening of the Medes by this same Scythian invasion that gave Persia the opportunity to assert its position and begin its progress towards domination of the Middle East. In this narrative the name is probably used in a general sense for the unknown tribes to the far east of Israel just as those of Gog denoted those of the far north.

Ethiopia is the Greek term for the widely spread people whose native and Hebrew name was Cush. The Cushites, descended from Ham, became a numerous and powerful race, spreading eastwards towards India and westwards into Africa. Originating from the Euphrates, the eastern branch settled in Baluchistan and the Indus valley of India; the western branch migrated through Arabia and across the Red Sea, and by the days of the Hebrew monarchy built a powerful empire in East Africa. Modern Ethiopians are largely their descendants, mixed now with Semitic blood.

Libya in **Ezekiel 38:5** is not the modern country of that name; the Hebrew word is Phut and has a much wider application. Libya is the Greek form of the Egyptian Lubu and Hebrew Lehabim or Lubim, (**Genesis 10:13, 2 Chronicles 12:3**) a tribe descended from the Egyptians and colonizing to the west of Egypt. Simultaneously with this process the Phutites, a Hamitic race, left their ancestral home on the Euphrates and like the Cushites traversed Arabia into Africa, settling in what is now Somaliland, from whence they spread westwards across tropical Africa to the Atlantic. They were a highly intelligent and virile people and with the natural resources of the tropics at their disposal became a nation of traders - Egypt from the time of Moses carried on a great deal of trade with them and in the Egyptian inscriptions their country is referred to as the Land of Punt. The name of Phut, however, is found right across Africa, to its northwest extremity in present day Morocco. St. Jerome referred to them as late as the Christian era. It seems that they became the

greatest Hamitic people on the African continent, even exceeding Egypt. Until the Christian era the entire continent was known as Libya - the name 'Africa' was that of a Roman colony on the northern coast. From the Old Testament point of view, Ethiopia and Libya defined in a general manner the whole of the little known peoples inhabiting Africa beyond Egypt.

SHEBA, DEDAN, TARSHISH

These are the allies of Gog. There now appear three more names, nations which do not seem to be active participants in the attack but stand to share in the spoils. Describing the situation, Ezekiel says (38:13) 'Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? Hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?' The text needs clarification. The Septuagint and some modern translators render 'villages' instead of 'young lions' which, since Tarshish is a territorial definition, is more logical. The distinction between 'young lion' and 'village' in Hebrew is one of vowels only and in the original there were no vowels. Since the Septuagint is nearly a thousand years earlier than the Hebrew text upon which the A.V is based there seems no reasonable doubt that 'villages' is the correct rendering. The expressions 'Art thou come... Hast thou gathered...' etc., are what is known as the rhetorical interrogative, a statement put in question form but a statement of fact nevertheless, as in **Isaiah 43:19**

'Behold, I will do a new thing; shall ye not know it?' These words should therefore be read in the affirmative; 'Thou art come to take a spoil! Thou hastgathered thy company...' etc. The real point of this verse is that Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish were trading peoples and merchants; they were not warriors. In ancient times merchants from such nations waited on the victors of great battles to purchase what they could of the spoils of victory, which they then disposed of upon terms advantageous to themselves. **Joel 3:3-6** is an allusion to this practice. So the prophetic picture here is drawn to show that commercial interests are waiting to benefit from the anticipated plunder of the land.

Sheba and Dedan were two Cushite peoples - both recorded in **Genesis 10** as sons of Raamah son of Cush - involved in the drift of Cushites into Arabia; whilst the others passed on into Africa these two remained and became notable mercantile peoples, Dedan in the north in what is now Saudi Arabia and Sheba in the extreme south and on the Red Sea coast (the Yemen). This latter is the Sheba whose famous queen came to consult King Solomon some five centuries previously. (Another Biblical Sheba and Dedan, children of Abraham by Keturah, appear in **Genesis 25:3** but there is no connection). Both these peoples traveled long distances with their caravans of goods and brought the produce of Arabia and Africa into the lands of the Middle East.

Tarshish is the name around which so much romance has been woven. Tarshish in the Old Testament is the mysterious land at the ends of the earth to which the great trading vessels of the Phoenicians sailed, returning to Tyre laden with all kinds of strange and valuable goods. The expression 'ships of Tarshish' occurs a number of times in the Old Testament and from the context is seen to denote what we would call large oceangoing merchant vessels irrespective of destination. Mostly they sailed through the Mediterranean westwards, although King Solomon did build 'ships of Tarshish' to go southwards through the Red Sea. From the lists of goods they brought back it is evident they went to widely separated places in both the temperate and tropical zones. Ivory, apes and peacocks (parrots or guineafowl) came from the west coast of Africa; gold from South Africa or Spain; silver and lead from Spain; tin from Britain. 'Tarshish stone,' translated 'beryl' in the A.V, is known to have been Baltic amber - examples found in Assyria and Babylon have been chemically analyzed and found to be of a variety found nowhere in the world apart from the Baltic - and it is believed that the early Britons obtained this product from the Scandinavian lands and traded it with the Phoenicians visiting Britain. 'Tarshish and all her villages' therefore can be taken as standing for the distant countries of the West, the entire West African coast, Spain and Britain. Since it is fairly certain

that the Phoenicians traded with the Azores and there is some evidence that they knew the West Indies - two thousand years before Columbus - even the New World might possibly be included in the term.

TABLE OF NATIONS

It is significant that of this entire catalogue of nations not one is of the Semitic race. Taking the Table of Nations of **Genesis 10** as basis, they all owe their origin either to Japheth or Ham. Shem is not represented. The only names not mentioned in **Genesis 10** are Persia and the rather debatable one of Rosh. Rosh, if it existed at all, was a Scythian tribe and therefore of Japheth. The Persians were Aryans - the ancient native name, Iranian, now adopted again for the modern Persia, preserves this fact, and so they too are of Japheth. Israel's enemies from the north, the east and the west are Japhetic and from the south Hamitic. None are Semitic. This in prophetic metaphor increases the emphasis evidently to be laid on the fact that the enemies of Israel at this momentous crisis are not of their own kindred but the remote hitherto unknown peoples of the wider, world.

PROPHETIC PICTURE COMPLETE

So the prophetic picture is complete. Israel, the people of God, a tiny and apparently defenseless nation at the center of the earth, is locked within an iron ring of implacable enemies arrayed against her from the farthest corners of the earth. Practically every part of the world known to the ancients of Ezekiel's day is represented in the list, from Britain, Spain and Africa in the west to Persia and India in the east, from Turkey and Russia in the north to Arabia in the south. The whole world stands set against the land of unwalled villages. This is the picture which, expanded to take in the greater scale of events and the wider dispersion of nations today, is drawn to reveal the nature of that greater conflict which is to end the dominion of evil in the earth.

We come to our examination of this wonderful prophecy in its relation to the events of our own day with the realization that here we have information and instruction of vital import. We do not expect to find our God represented as a revengeful, war making military conqueror. We do expect to find Him serenely ordering all things after the counsel of His own will, first allowing men in their greed and folly to bring themselves into this welter of blood and fire, and then, by means of His own weapons - not by weapons of man's devising - reducing the plans and devices, the might and the power, of this world to nothing, calmly calling all men to listen to the new voice which is to speak from Heaven. The first outwardly perceptible manifestation of the Kingdom in control will appear when God intervenes to confound the material might of the nations by means of a power they can neither understand nor withstand, and commands them in the words of the Psalmist, 'be still, and know that I am God, I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.'

- Albert O. Hudson, 1968

This is the first chapter of a seven chapter booklet titled 'Jacob's Trouble.' This is still available from: Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9LJ, England

The Cup That Passed

The following is a presentation of scripture evidence that the cup Jesus stated was 'the cup which my Father hath given me, ' and 'the cup that I drink of, ' representing experiences prophesied concerning him, was not the cup he asked if possible might pass, (**John 18:11; Mr 10:38**) but that the cup he asked might pass was the mental conflict and agony of Gethsemane itself.

In the Bible a cup is used both in the usual sense, and in a figurative sense. In the figurative sense it may represent something good or blessed, as in the 23rd Psalm, 'My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.'

More often a cup represents experiences of a more difficult nature, as indicated when Jesus asked two of his disciples, 'Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?' Jesus then refers to his sacrificial life as a baptism and a cup to be drunk - his Father's will for him. (**Matthew 20:22,23,28**)

From Old Testament scriptures Jesus knew and accepted in advance those experiences which would come to him in the drinking of this cup. As an example he stated, 'After two days is the feast of the passover and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified'. (**Matthew 26:2**) He also quotes from **Isaiah 53:12**, relating it to himself being 'numbered with the transgressors,' and further states 'that this that is written must be accomplished in me'. (**Luke 22:37**) The entire 53rd chapter of Isaiah was prophetic of him.

All of these things Jesus knew of in advance and accepted, as we read, 'Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth'. (**John 18:4**) He asks with obvious answer, 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?'. (**John 18:11**) Again his words, 'Now is my soul troubled and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause I came unto this hour'. (**John 12:27**) Jesus was fully dedicated to the doing of his Father's will even where it entailed ignominy, suffering, and death; this he made very plain. He was willing to drink the cup the Father had given him.

In view of this, what then was the cup, the particular cup, which he prayed the night before his death, that his Father would 'remove,' 'take away,' let 'pass' from him? This request was in connection with his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

'LET THIS CUP PASS FROM ME'

Surely this cup which Jesus prayed might be removed is not the same cup concerning which he professed his willingness to drink. Nor can we suppose that he was now changing his statement, 'that this that is written must be accomplished in me,' to a request that it not be accomplished in him. After asking those two disciples if they were able to drink of 'the cup that I shall drink of,' was he now asking that he himself not be required to drink it?

From this it becomes quite apparent that an entirely different cup is what he asked might pass - be removed. We believe the concern, the fear, the deathly mental agony, lest he had failed - constituted the cup he prayed might pass.

We do not believe it was the fear of suffering, but rather a fear lest in some way he might have failed in his mission which caused the excruciating intensity of the agony and anguish which he calls a cup he would have removed, and concerning which he was 'heard in respect to that which he feared's (**Hebrews 5:7**, Young) Literal Translation).

The terrible excruciating intensity of the mental anguish which Jesus experienced in Gethsemane is fully attested by the Gospel writers. **Matthew 26:37,38** - and Jesus 'began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then said he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death.' The Diaglott translates **Matthew 26:38**, 'My soul is surrounded with a deadly anguish.' How reasonable to request that if possible such a 'deadly anguish' pass from him. We feel this was the cup which passed.

Clark's Commentary, on parts of **Matthew 26**: 'Began to be sorrowful,' from a Greek word, to dissolve - exquisite sorrow, such as dissolves the natural vigor and threatens to separate the soul from life. 'And very heavy,' overwhelmed with anguish - this word is used by the Greeks to denote the most extreme anguish which the soul can feel, excruciating anxiety and torture of spirit. 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful (or is surrounded with exceeding sorrow) even unto death.' My soul is so dissolved in sorrow; my spirit is filled with such agony and anguish, that, if speedy succor be not given to my body, death must be the speedy consequence.

There are scriptures which seem to indicate that Satan himself may have been involved in the garden trial of Jesus. After the Devil unsuccessfully tempted Jesus in the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry, we read that then 'he departed from him for a season'. (**Luke 14:13**)

Though he was not now returned at the final hour to say 'If thou be the Son of God,' perhaps he came to tempt with doubt and to suggest failure. This might seem to be implied in **Hebrews 12:3,4**, where we are asked to consider Jesus and what he endured who 'resisted unto blood, striving against sin.' It is interesting to note that the Greek word for striving denotes to struggle against, strive against, to contend with an adversary. Where but in the Garden of Gethsemane was ever such a 'striving against [the very personification of] sin'?

Jesus had come to earth to show God's love, to glorify his heavenly Father, to provide redemption and salvation for the human race. God's divine plan of the ages was centered in him and the work he had come to do. Was there a chance he had failed? Had he fulfilled every jot and tittle of the Law and carried out all of that which had been written beforehand? If he had failed in any particular, then the glory of God, the salvation of the human race and even his hope of a resurrection would be involved. No wonder he wished the cup and all uncertainty to pass, and that he might receive reassurance from his heavenly Father.

Happy we are to learn that he 'who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death (eternal) was heard in that he feared,' or in the thing that he feared. The Greek word for 'heard' signifies favorably heard or answered, and so is shown from the four times this word is used in the New Testament.

It seems quite logical that the most imperative time for Jesus to have some assurance regarding that which concerned him would be this last day. Is this not in harmony with his teaching to take no anxious thought for the morrow? But now the crucial hours were upon him. Could he go through what lay ahead (the cup he would drink of) without assurance of his faithfulness to this point?

It was this fear of possible shortcoming, intensified by all the arts and cunning that the adversary was able to bring to bear, that now weighed upon Jesus and undermined his confidence. This must be allayed in order for him to retain his inner peace and joy. If the cup of which Jesus asked to be relieved and to have pass from him was as here suggested, then he did not ask amiss, nor did its granting call for the change in anything in the Divine Mind or plan, being quite compatible with God's will for Jesus.

Let 'this cup' [of Gethsemane's anguish] pass' seems shown to have passed by the after composure, confidence and fortitude of Jesus as he drank yet of the cup the Father had poured for him.

- Martin Mitchell

I Came to Him

I came to Him, so proud and so sure,
Caught in the web of the world's allure.
Needing no Savior, or so I had thought,
Neither the love nor redemption He bought.

Happy with life and feeling no pain,
Basking in sunshine and warm in the rain.
Yet something was missing - not really there,
Wanting to search, but knowing not where.

I heard a message of salvation for all,
Hope for those condemned in the fall.
An escape from the curse that leads to the grave,
The sick, lame, and halt, and blind ones to save.

A 'ransom for all' sounded so right,
What a way to describe the One through whose might,
Mankind will rise and claim what was lost,
A kingdom forever! - and worthy the cost.

- *Robert Brand*