

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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Amos, Weaving the Web

"And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord" (Amos 7:15-16).

THE ARRAIGNMENT OF ISRAEL

Amos the Prophet resided in a small village south of Jerusalem in what is known as the wilderness of Judea. His ministry was during the reign of King Uzziah of the Kingdom of Judah (the two-tribe kingdom of Judah and Benjamin where he lived) and Jeroboam, King of Israel (the northern kingdom principally comprised of the remaining tribes.) Along with his sheep herding, Amos also tended a grove of sycamore trees growing on the slopes leading down to the Dead Sea.

"I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit" (Amos 7:14).

During the course of these two occupations, Amos made numerous visits to the trade center of the northern kingdom in order to sell his produce. These trips were invaluable for they acquainted Amos with that region and gave him direct knowledge of the people and their condition. This period of Israel and Judah's history was marked by great religious activity, yet this religious fervor failed to affect the spiritual quality of their day-by-day living. This period was characterized by injustices, inhumanity, a non-concern for others, as well as unparalleled moral decadence. Such conditions called for a prophet with a strong and courageous voice. This voice was the voice of Amos:

"But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court" (Amos 7:13).

A prophet had to be courageous for this work in denouncing the king and the religious leaders for their part in allowing and encouraging the conditions which existed in Israel. It took no small valor to condemn a king under any condition, yet to condemn him in his royal sanctuary at Bethel was an unheard of thing.

The prophet's condemnation came in the face of threats from religious leaders. It may have endangered his life, yet there was no hesitancy, no compromise. Amos was committed to declaring the word of the Lord, wherever, whenever, and to whomever God directed. Amos' primary tasks were the arraignment of Israel, and to condemn every form of injustice practiced in the northern kingdom.

CONDEMNATION OF CITIES REPRESENTING NATIONS

We might expect that a prophet sent to Israel would ignore the other nations laying roundabout, yet the contrary was true of Amos. He began by condemning the surrounding countries as forthrightly as he did his own. This condemnation was based on violations of God's moral law, for these other nations were not in covenant relationship with God, as were Israel and Judah. These nations were longstanding enemies of the twelve tribes descended from Jacob. During the expansion under David and Solomon many of them had been subject territories.

Hearing this condemnation pronounced must have caused rejoicing among the Israelites as ancient enemies fell under judgment. In so doing Amos gained their favor. Yet this was a part of a deliberate strategy, for Amos was raising the ques-

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tion, “If the sins of these surrounding nations can no longer be ignored; how can Israel expect to go unpunished for their sins?” Thus, he was building a stronger case against his *own* people and *Weaving the Web* about Israel.

In the north the city of Damascus, representing Syria, was the first object of God’s condemnation and judgment. Next were the Philistines as represented in Gaza, these were Israel’s neighbor to the southeast on the Mediterranean Sea. Then Amos turned to Tyre in Phoenicia situated to the west of Israel on the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea. Still weaving the web, judgment was pronounced upon Edom to the south. Amos now moved east once again and turned to Ammon, in present day Jordan. He moved to the south and east fixing his attention on Moab, the sixth nation. At last, he then turned to his own nation of Judah.

THREE TRANSGRESSIONS AND FOUR

These judgment messages all begin with the expression, “For three transgressions and for four”:

“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron” (Amos 1:3).

“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom” (Amos 1:6).

“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant” (Amos 1:9).

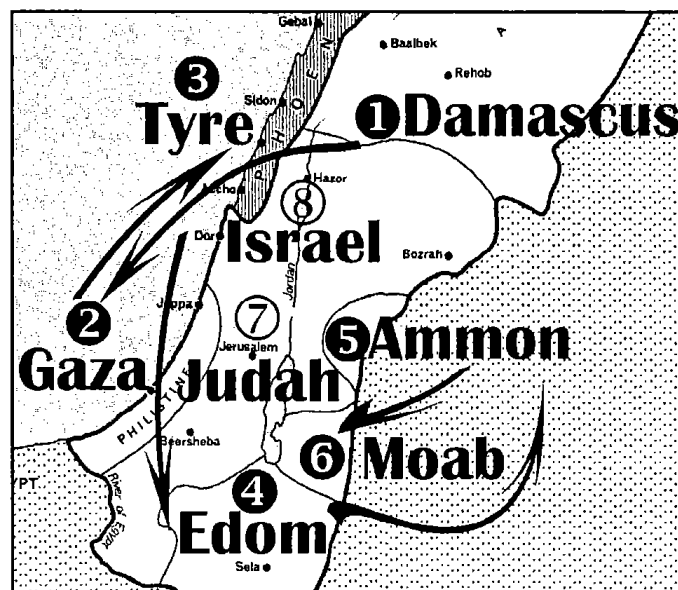
“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever” (Amos 1:11).

“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border” (Amos 1:13).

“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime” (Amos 2:1).

“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked” (Amos 2:4).

The number “three” here is used in the sense of completeness and fullness or the whole measure. The words “and for four” added to the “three” transgressions suggests that the ultimate in sin had been reached; that it was overflowing. Their sin could no longer be tolerated by Jehovah. We find this expression used elsewhere in the Old Testa-



The web of nations, under judgment, surrounding Israel.

ment: “The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough” (Proverbs 30:15).

Note verses of Proverbs 30:18 and 21 as well: “There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not:” “For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear.”

Solomon used the numbers seven and eight in much the same way. “Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth” (Ecclesiastes 11:2).

All these give the thought of reaching a fullness after which punishment cannot be reversed or “turned away.” The Lord speaking through Amos says, “I will surely execute it.” Perhaps Amos’ choice of numbers was influenced as a result of his many years as a “gatherer of sycamore fruit,” or more precisely, “a pincher of sycamore fruit.” The sycamore yields a fruit related to the fig, and in Egypt and Palestine, it was a tree of great importance and in very extensive usage. Three days before gathering, the fruit would be punctured or pinched by some sharp instrument in order to make it edible. Thus Amos would pinch the fruit three days prior to the time when it would be fully ripened to pick on the fourth day ... for three transgressions and for four.

In the case of each nation including Judah, the nature of the moral transgression is described. For the first — Damascus, Syria — the moral transgression was their inhumanity in dealing with their prisoners. In each instance the specific judgment is given. It would be fire, here used symbolically to depict the complete destruction in the devastation of war. For Syria, it was a judgment that was fulfilled when the Assyrians marched against that country and laid the land waste, killing their king, and taking the people captive.

The Israelites must have felt that Damascus deserved all that the Prophet had spoken and they could barely suppress their feelings waiting to see it come to pass. The

same was true as Amos circled from one nation to another on Israel's borders, highlighting their transgressions and delivering the judgment message and the fate that would befall them.

JUDAH AND ISRAEL'S JUDGMENT

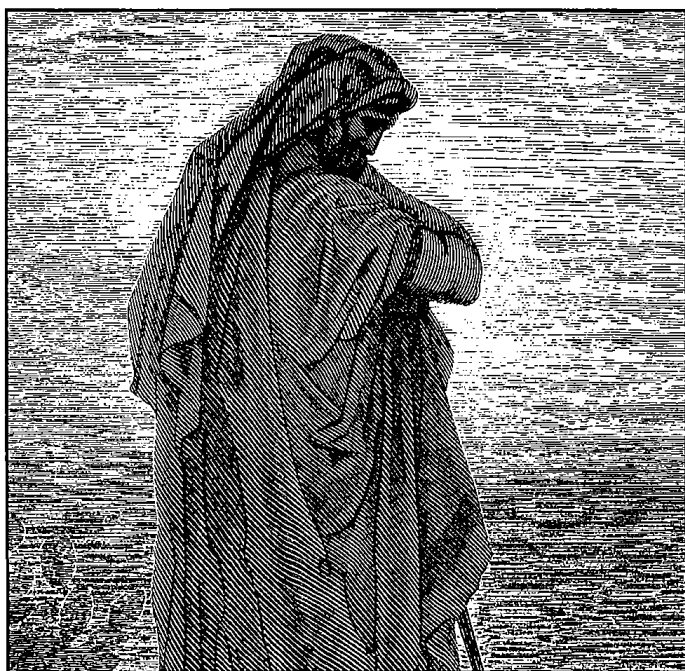
The prophet continues his encircling web. He had woven it around the east, the north, and the west sides of Israel. Now he turns against his own country, Judah, to the south:

“Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked” (Amos 2:4).

Judah's sin had reached a full measure and could no longer be tolerated, nor continue unpunished. In pronouncing this judgment against the two tribe kingdom, Amos had completely circumscribed the web around Israel. We can appreciate the Israelites attentiveness to Amos' message as they heard his description of the impending troubles upon these seven surrounding nations. But as the web contracted tighter and tighter, the Prophet's testimony in sudden finality turned against Israel.

We may be sure that an intense indignation was immediately stirred up. The earlier shouts of, “a true prophet!” now gave place to gnashing of teeth. When the Prophet proceeded to speak openly of the reigning dynasty's fall, a certain Amaziah interfered:

“For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there” (Amos 7:11, 12).



Amos the Prophet, “who was among the herdmen of Tekoa” (Amos 1:3).

Amos refused to yield and go home under the pressures from these religious leaders. He would not return until he accomplished his divinely appointed mission.

LESSONS FOR ANTITYPICAL ISRAEL

We find a lesson here; for throughout the entire history of the Church, the opposition has been from religious leaders. In our Lord's day, it was from the Scribes, Pharisees and the priesthood. Later the opposition came from the leaders of Papacy. After the Reformation, it has been the leaders of the various Protestant denominations and Church Federations in addition to the Papacy. Hence, these lessons also apply to antitypical Israel — the Church of the first-born, for as we compare the conditions which existed during the time of Amos and the conditions which exist today in nominal Christendom the thought of a double application is strengthened.

One reason for typical Israel's fall was their dissatisfaction with the divine arrangements respecting their government. They clamored to have kings as did the surrounding nations. They desired to be popular with their neighbors leading to their laxity respecting divine worship and leading to the thought that everyone should be allowed to choose the kind of religion they wanted for themselves. They desired that each have liberty to blend elements of the various beliefs of their pagan neighbors under the guise of broad mindedness. The foreign dignitaries living in Israel during the reign of Solomon were allowed to bring in and set up their own nation's religious shrines and temples. This had a depraving influence on Israel. Then, once powerful and influential priests such as Zadok had passed off the scene, these influences spread into their priesthood. The ten tribe kingdom took full advantage of this liberal spirit and thus engrafted upon the people a false worship:

“And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger: For they served idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing” (2 Kings 17:9-12).

Israel “secretly” (or more accurately, “hypocritically”) practiced these false religions. The early church in the second and third centuries realized that to gain favor with the civil powers and with the populace in general, they would have to become more liberal. They would have to adapt some of the Pagan ideas and celebrations and incorporate them into the Christian worship. They realized to gain favor and popularity, they would have to turn against Jewry. All know the results of this attitude, not only down through the centuries, but during World War II when religious leaders stood by without a word of protest as European Jews were persecuted and hunted down. To gain favor with the world, nomi-

nal churches realized they would have to seek other counsel than that from the Lord.

In the Laodicean period of the church, we find the same spirit that overtook the early church. We find the same reasons — liberality, broad mindedness, and dissatisfaction with the divine arrangements. The idols worshipped today are “popularity,” “wealth,” “fame,” “self,” and “prestige.” Nor is the true Church completely free from these idols. As the end of the age approaches, the true church must not seek other counsels directing the Church away from the divine counsel as set forth by “that servant.” We are not to heed self-appointed servants, no matter how well intentioned they may be presumed to be. We are not to be as Israel, thereby receiving the divine pronouncement of judgment — “three transgressions and four.”

Let us not neglect the promises of the “High Calling” set before spiritual Israel and become foolish in attempting to be God’s people, while at the same time doing as the world does. It is this disposition to do as the world does that is the seductive point used by the adversary to divert us from being His “peculiar people,” from being “Israelites indeed,” and “heirs of the promise.” Our course of life as a “peculiar people” is to follow a completely different course from that of the world. From the outset, we have known that the paths of the elect and that of the world are different paths, and both have different terminations. Our Lord during his earthly ministry said:

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:18, 19).

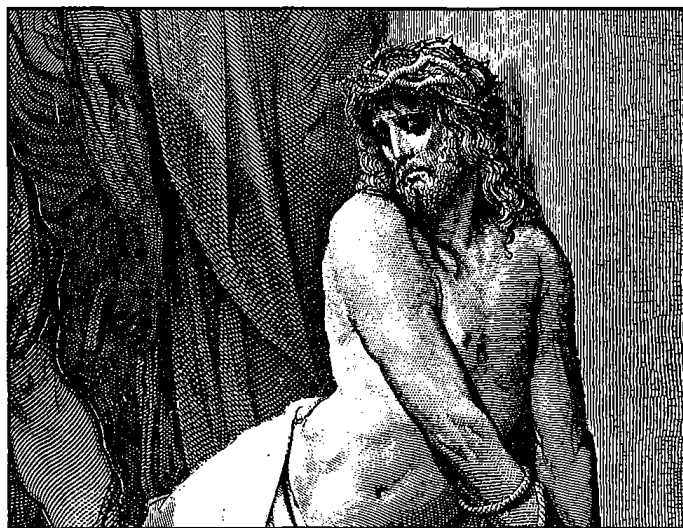
Testings and siftings will continue to the full end of the age. Eventually, the Lord will gather in glory the elect, his holy nation, his peculiar people, his royal priesthood.

NATIONAL DANGER

The Prophet particularizes some of the wrongs bringing national danger of extinction to Israel. Israel had rejected God’s statutes; neglected the covenant; lost sight of both the testimony and the law; they followed vanity and foolishness. During this period of Amos’ prophecy we find great prosperity, however, these riches accumulated into the hands of a few. The Prophet warns these rich and powerful that the poor were being dealt with unjustly. Bribery, wealth and power and influence were rife. If the offender be poor, he would receive the worst of the “justice” then being meted out: “Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth” (Amos 5:7).

God’s power will be with the poor, with the downtrodden, the oppressed, the impoverished, and the destitute. God is with those who strive for righteousness:

“Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of



“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before” (John 15:18).

hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph” (Amos 5:14, 15).

Amos upholds the weak ones, those in the minority, those too timid to speak out against these injustices and oppressions lest they be intimidated by the majority: “Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time” (Amos 5:13).

Let us remember Amos’ special divine commission to reprove and speak with boldness and espouse the cause of the oppressed. Though we see similar injustice about us today, we are not called to be antitypical Amoses! It is not our duty to become public denouncers or public reprovers. *Our* commission is to let our light shine, that others may see our good works and glorify the Father. In His own due time God will see to it that these injustices are set right.

WALKING TOGETHER WITH GOD

The Lord made himself known to no other nation, nor did he recognize any other nation except Israel. Neither did he give his laws to anyone but Israel. However, instead of God’s favor making them loyal of heart to him, they continually resisted this favor. They no longer walked in harmony with his spirit. Thus the Prophet writes in Amos 3:3: “Can two walk together except they be agreed?”

The prophet’s allusion was clear. Everyone knew the dangers of traveling along the highways alone and the need to avoid this if at all possible. To see two men journeying together suggested that they had met by appointment, that they were in accord with each other, that they held each other’s trust and confidence, and that they would aid each other in times of difficulty. This same principle operated when Amos or any prophet spoke the word of God. It meant that the prophet and God were of one mind and of one purpose and that they were “walking together.”

If we become alienated from God, if we seek only for our own counsel, if we do not abide by his precepts, if we no longer commune with him, if we have no fellowship or communication with other of his children, in short, if we no longer

“walk together” then he will cast us aside and the web of rejection will be woven firmly. Hence, Amos continues: “Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:6, 7).

The Lord reveals his intentions to his people for a purpose. This purpose is so that they may profit by these experiences when they recognize them as from his hand. Amos, in foretelling the troubles that the Lord would bring upon Israel, makes clear that these judgments would not be matters of chance, but would be of divine providence. Because these judgments were imminent, there no longer was an opportunity for repentance. Hence, Amos’ message is likened to a “sounded” alarm trumpet warning of dire impending catastrophe:

“Therefore thus saith the Lord God; An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled. Thus saith the Lord; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch. Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord God, the God of hosts, That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground. And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord” (Amos 3:11-15).

The losses Israel would sustain were to reach every aspect of their national life upon which their security depended; their defenses, walls, and fortifications would be destroyed. Dwellings that were memorials to the injustices and oppressions would be pillaged and plundered. The Prophet’s condemnation was particularly directed toward the nobles and leaders who were living in luxury, splendor, and ease. These were the ones who tolerated the injustices and exploitation of the weaker citizens, hence the words, “And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord.” This full destruction is illustrated by a lion pouncing upon a lamb and leaving only a few fragments. The destruction would be of such magnitude and scope that only a small segment of the nation would escape. A faithful few did escape the sword of the Assyrians. A faithful few did flee to refuge in Judah.

THE HORNS OF THE ALTAR

Notice that the priesthood and the religious leaders would not escape this destruction, “in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.”

We recognize that these “horns” represented the protection afforded by the Almighty’s power at his altar. But once

the horns had been cut off from the altar — cut off in judgment — and cast to the ground, there would be no place to flee. The safety once afforded by the law’s provisions for the *Cities of Refuge* would then be gone. No longer could anyone flee to these cities for safety, security, and the protection of the Levites until a fair trial could be held. Not only would this last protection be gone, but the altar itself, the place where all the religious ceremonies centered, would be no more. Bethel, the religious capital or center of Israel’s worship, would perish along with their capital city of Samaria:

“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!” (Amos 6:1).

The invading hosts from the north would shatter this “ease,” or confidence in both the religious leaders pictured by “Zion,” and in the political leaders illustrated by “Samaria.” The same will be true at the end of the harvest, when the great time of trouble engulfs the world and the confidence people have in their religious systems and their political leaders also will shatter, as all go down into destruction. Only a few faithful believers would escape this destruction, as illustrated by the few fragments of the Lamb. We know from the first chapter in the Fourth Volume from the pen of “that servant” that the “treading of the winepress (Amos 9:13) is the last feature of the harvest work.”

And yet, accompanying this final portion of this great time of trouble pictured so vividly by Amos, we read: “In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and will build it as in the days of old” (Amos 9:11).

As he closes the prophecy, Amos shows God’s promise for the restoration of Israel as at the first, and then shows the blessings that will accrue to its entire people.

— Abridged from a discourse by John Trzyna

Myrtle Trees in the Bottom

“I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white. Then said I, O my Lord, what are these?” (Zechariah 1:8-9).

Previously the significance of the horses in this wonderful prophetic picture were considered, but what about the “myrtle trees that were in the bottom?”¹ As a prophetic image, myrtle trees in the bottom suggest something pleasant but uncultivated. The Hebrew name suggests a linkage with their habit of springing up rapidly.² We learn from Nehemiah 8:15 that the myrtle branch was collected to construct booths during the joyful annual camp-out of the feast of booths. From Isaiah’s prophecy we find that the myrtle is



Another of Zechariah's Visions

a favored tree that the Lord promises to plant in the wilderness (Isaiah 41:19) and going further that the myrtle is contrasted with briars (Isaiah 55:13). Where do you get briars? Briars are in an uncultivated field that is unprepared for man. But when the Lord is watching over even an uncultivated field something comes up more pleasant than briars — and those are myrtles. Myrtle has a pleasant odor and it is said that the very axe that cuts the myrtle is perfumed in the act. This characteristic suggests grace under trial and conforms with the noble character of Queen Esther whose Hebrew name “Hadassah,” or “Myrtle” seems to be translated into the Persian as “As tur” or “Fresh Myrtle.”

The book of Revelation speaks of the various trees whose leaves are for the “healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:2). This is literally true for the myrtle. Since ancient times in Egypt and Israel, a healing tea has been brewed from the leaves of the myrtle. This is possible because these leaves contain salicylic acid — the chemical precursor we know today as “Aspirin.”³ Hence, when myrtles appear as a prophetic image they suggest the promise of nascent reform, that is, a promise of better things to come, providential care and protection, grace under trial, and healing.

— Richard Doctor

(1) Doctor, R.D., “Zechariah’s Horses,” *Beauties of the Truth*, (Volume 12, Number 3), August 2001.

(2) “Myrtle,” *McClintock and Strong’s Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Baker, Grand Rapids (1981).

(3) Mehta, A., “Aspirin,” *Chemical and Engineering News* (June 20, 2005) page 46.

Israel’s Cloud

God’s providence on behalf of the children of Israel in their wilderness wanderings through the Sinai desert, the land of Moab, and that of the Ammonites, was manifested by a miraculous cloud formation, which became to them a visible token of His constant care and of His presence in their midst. “And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them in the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light to go by day and night.” (Exodus 13:21, 22, Psalms 78:14).

This cloud and fire pillar seems to have been associated with the Tabernacle in the sense that a branch or foot came down from the cloud to the Tabernacle. When it left, or was lifted up into the main body cloud above, it indicated that the time had come for them to travel. They followed the leading of the cloud: when it stayed they rested, constructed their camp, and a columnar connection, or pillar cloud foot, established itself as before.

“And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up” (Exodus 40:33-38, Numbers 9:15-23).

The thick main body cloud above was not confined merely to the air space above the tabernacle structure itself; but rather was spread as a canopy or awning over the entire nation of journeying Israelites. When they were at rest in their tents it also served as a protective covering. It provided shade from the scorching rays of the noon desert sun, ameliorating the intense heat of the day, lest the multitude below perish in the way. The cloud-cover also had a calming influence upon the wind and blistering sand storms, which arose, suddenly posing, at times, a menace to security, yea, a threat to even survival of the host.

It is also well to realize that although the average annual rate of rainfall in the wilderness area is pitifully small compared to that of other regions, both distant and near, nonetheless a third danger to a wandering desert nomad people would be from the very rare but very real flash floods, produced by a sudden torrential downpour of rain — a cloud-burst — the waters of which would flow down the dry gulches or wadis, in some places figuratively with the speed of an express train. This constituted an inherent peril to those not alerted to and familiar with the necessity of hasty departure from the dry riverbeds, which frequently were used in travel as natural desert highways to known destinations. The covering cloud over the camp of the Israelites, we are informed, minimized the potential hazard accompanying such storms.

Many who are disposed to scoff at such statements of the Biblical narrative, which call attention to God’s dealings with His people of old, apparently are unappreciative of the many miracles performed by nature in every day routine life, which are soon forgotten by reason of their multiplicity and commonness of occurrence. Yet such events are attested to and



The Angel of God, protecting Israel.

by the authority of God's own testimony through the writings of those holy men of the past.

Archaeology, of late, has been instrumental in leading several non-religious men from skepticism by reason of uncovered evidence, to an increased respect for the accuracy and reliability of biblical descriptions of the ancient past, which testimony they were unwilling to recognize formerly. Recent discoveries have put to foolishness the former scorn of some of these critics. Consider the following:

"And the Lord will create [not as previously in a literal manner, but in a figurative sense] upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire [in the Exodus, this

was a spectacular luminous cloud awning or glowing fire-light canopy] by night: for upon all [*i.e.*, the entire nation, every individual household or dwelling place] the Glory [of this cloud formation] shall be a defense [protective covering] and there shall be a [similar though symbolic] tabernacle [replacing the literal, temporary cloud cover accompanying them during their wilderness wanderings] for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a covert from [wind and sand] storm and [overflowing] rain" (Isaiah 4:5, 25:4).¹

"... He spread a cloud for a covering ..." (Psalms 105:39)

It did not take the people long to discern the hand of the Lord in their affairs. This overhead open air cloud tent, without visible cords, on occasion remained stationary for long periods of time before gliding on and directing to a new location deemed suitable to Divine Providence.

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

In one sense the physical or material tabernacle building below comprised of various curtains and skins, supported by boards overlaid with gold, and the shekinah glory light within, was a similar though smaller representation and visible token of God's presence in their midst. The Tabernacle Cloud above reminded them of God's care and Divine Providence in the external affairs of the nation, whereas the Tabernacle Building beneath called attention to the Lord's interest in their spiritual welfare, directing their paths in moral instruction and enlightenment, and in providing for their typical cleansing from sin through its sacrificial services.

The pillar connection between the cloud above and the building below seemed to fill such a vital role in their affairs that it was soon recognized and likened unto the "Angel of God." It protected as well as guided them in the way. Indeed, it appeared to them a certainty that an intelligence emanated from within its enshrouded core. "The Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle and called Aaron" (Numbers 12:5). "For they [the Egyptians] have heard that ... thy cloud standeth over them and thou goest before them, by day in a pillar of the cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night" (Numbers 14:14). "Clouds and darkness are round about Him" (Psalms 97:1-4). "He spoke unto them in the cloudy pillar" (Psalms 99:7).

"And the Angel of God which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them [at the Exodus, the crossing of the Red Sea] and it came between the camp of the [pursuing] Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it [the Pillar] was a cloud and darkness to them [a visually impenetrable barrier to the Egyptians], but [on the front side] it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all night. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud and troubled the host of the Egyptians" (Exodus 14:19, 20, 24). The branch or pillar of the cloud removed, therefore, from before and stood betwixt the fleeing multitude and the pursuing host.

The Apostle Paul, recognizing the importance of God's past dealings with his people, the institution of the tabernacle arrangement with its service as well as the remarkable cloud feature, was not negligent in calling attention to the forceful lessons to be drawn from this. "Moreover brethren I would not that ye be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud and all [the whole nation] passed through the [Red] Sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud [underneath the covenant cloud] and in the sea [the Israelites traveled dry-shod across the Red Sea, as through a tunnel, with the cloud proper as their roof, and the waters heaped up to the left and to the right]" (1 Corinthians 10:1, 2). Yea, even as Moses exultingly sang: "And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea" (Exodus 15:8, cited also in Psalm 33:7 and 78:13).

However, it is not merely to gain a knowledge of Jewish history, its forms, ceremonies and worship that we come to the investigation of this subject, but that we may be edified by understanding the antitype from an examination of the type as God designed in arranging it.

Those familiar with God's overruling providence with respect to the detailed record of certain events in the lives of prominent individuals in the sacred narrative, and some of the historical experiences of that nation recognize that all of these are designed to set forth higher spiritual lessons and future realities based on the former literal (and in a sense typical also) incidents of the past. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the age are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

The cloudy pillar, styled "the angel of God" among other things, pictures in power, demonstration, and judgment, the future work of Messiah on behalf of restored Israel in leading that race and all others of the willing and obedient to the promised rest of eternal security and overflowing happiness — "the desire of all nations which shall come" (Haggai 2:7).

This cloud column, as it were, acted as a cloak or garment concealing the Glory of God from overpowering the people. Thus, figuratively, it concealed from view His awesome presence, which nonetheless sometimes broke out in a fearsome display of light or fire such as that which devoured Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:2). Also on occasion the simulated sound of the voice of the Almighty God came from the midst thereof. We are not to understand that this pillar literally encased the person of the Divine Majesty itself, but rather representatively did so. For this reason it was called the Angel of God.

As the veiled Angel's presence was manifested in the cloudy pillar, so Moses "the Servant of God" similarly communicated special divine oracles to the nation with veiled face (Exodus 34:33-35). These two methods of instructing the people in a measure prefigured the work of Messiah, "the Messenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in" (Malachi 3:1). Of him Moses spoke saying: "The Lord thy

God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren [nationality] like unto me" (Deuteronomy 18:15, Acts 3:22).

Furthermore, if our analogy be correct, the large cloud layer above pictures the shielding of the nation from the burning sun of God's righteousness, and the father like leading of a wayward people to their promised land. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins; return unto Me for I have redeemed thee" (Isaiah 44:22).

It is in this light — the story of the cloud — that the familiar and forceful prophecy of Isaiah concerning Israel should be understood, namely: "Arise! Shine! for thy light is come; and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold the darkness shall cover the earth [in a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation — nor will ever be (Daniel 12:1, Matthew 24:21)] and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His [future] Glory [cloud] shall be seen upon [above] thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light" (Isaiah 60:1, 2).

— Frank Shallieu, from "The Harvest Message" (volume 2:1), January 1970, distributed by the Christian Bible Students Association, Warren, Michigan.

(1) In Isaiah 4:5 the word "defense" is Strong's 2646. It is only used three times in the Old Testament — here, and in Joel 2:16 where it is translated "closet," and in Psalms 19:5 where it is translated "chamber." Literally it means "canopy," such as the Jewish *chuppah* canopy still used in traditional Jewish weddings. The Psalms reference seems to imply that this canopy is the "heavens" and the "firmament" of verse one. Bro. W. A. Baker suggested in a talk many years ago that these "heavens" represent the church and the "firmament" represents the ancient worthies.

Scape Goat and Lord's Goat

When we consider Leviticus 16:8, "And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scape-goat," we ask, "How was this done?" Jewish tradition states that there were two lots made either of wood, stone, or any kind of metal. On one was written *Lassem*, for the sacred name (Jehovah), and on the other was written *Laazazel*, for the Scape-Goat. The two lots were put into a vessel (*kalpey*), the goats standing with their faces toward the west. The priest came, and the goats stood before him, one on the right hand and the other on the left. The vessel (*kalpey*) was then shaken, and the priest put in both his hands, bringing out a lot in each. That which was in his right hand he laid on the goat that was on his right; that in his left hand he laid on the goat that was on his left. According to what was written on the lots, the scape goat and the goat for sacrifice were determined. (See the Mishna, in Tract. Yoma. Ac)

— David Skein