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In The Beginning **The Battles of Israel**

After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.--Ezekiel 38:8

Israel's history has been one of warfare. Jerusalem has been dominated by a long string of conquerors:

1. Babylon in 606 B.C.
2. Medo-Persia in 536 B.C.
3. Ptolemies in 270 B.C.
4. Seleucids in 179 B.C.
5. Hasmoneans in 165 B.C.
6. Rome in 66 B.C.
7. Byzantium in 324 A.D.
8. Muslims in 636 A.D.
9. Crusaders in 1099 A.D.
10. Saracens in 1187 A.D.
11. Franks in 1229 A.D.
12. Malamukes in 1258 A.D.
13. Tartars in 1291 A.D.
14. Ottomans in 1516 A.D.
15. Britain in 1878 A.D.

An examination of some of these battles and many that preceded them is the subject of this issue of The Herald. These articles are described in detail in the Table of Contents on the right.

With all the bloody wars of the past, Israel's experiences with conflicts continue. The war of independence in 1948 was followed by armed battles of 1956, 1968, and 1973. Today Israel faces the intifada and scores of suicide bombings by her Palestinian neighbors. Still ahead is the battle predicted in Ezekiel 38 and 39. One of the future wars, prophesied in Psalm 83, is examined in our verse-by-verse selection for this issue.

Despite the struggles ahead we are assured that in the end God will fight for Israel and bring her through victorious, heralding a new age of peace and prosperity, not only for Israel, but for her Arab foes and the rest of the world as well.

The Song of Jahaziel

The Battle Is the Lord's

**Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations,
as when he fought in the day of battle.--Zechariah 14:3**

A verse-by-verse study in Psalm 83

Old Testament prophecies frequently have two fulfillments. One applies to the local situation that inspired the prophecy. The second and larger fulfillment refers to a future event--often associated with the end times. In order to understand the greater fulfillment, one must look at the immediate occasion. The historic event of some prophecies is difficult to discern this far from the story, especially when the connection between the two is not immediately evident.

One clue which connects this psalm with the event which inspired its author is in the inspired title of the Psalm.¹ It is "A Psalm of Asaph." Asaph was one of the three choir directors of King David (1 Chronicles 25:1). The members of this choir in succeeding generations were known as "the sons of Asaph." Chapters in the book of Psalms which appear under the title "A Psalm of Asaph" refer either to songs composed by Asaph, or by one of his sons, or was composed specially to be sung by this choir.

One of the sons of Asaph, who wrote a prophesy concerning a battle which closely resembles that described in this psalm, is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 20:14, "Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation."

The battle described in this chapter took place during the reign of Jehoshaphat and is associated by many students of the Bible with that mentioned in Joel 3:1-3 in "the valley of Jehoshaphat." In that war the forces of Moab and Ammon, confederate with others, sought to invade Israel. While only two allies, Syria and Edom, are named, the account implies a host from many nations joined the invasion.

The invaders took up their position in the area of En-Gedi on the southwest shore of the Dead Sea. Jehoshaphat offers a prayer to Jehovah, pleading the smallness of his forces. He is informed: "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's (2 Chronicles 20:15).

Singers are told to assemble in the plains of Tekoa on the plateau on the other side of the Judean hills. When the enemy advanced by the "cliff of Ziz," at the peak of the pass leading to Jerusalem, the Kohathite singers were to begin singing praise to God. The invading forces turned on each other and the succeeding anarchy in their ranks brought an aborted end to the invasion. This is apparently the background for Psalm 83.

The Prayer--Psalm 83, verses 1-4

“Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God. For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may no more be in remembrance.”

This plea of helplessness against an attack by surrounding nations is mirrored in the prayer of Jehoshaphat recorded in 2 Chronicles 20:11, 12, where he prays in part, “Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt not thou judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.”

The request that God keep not silence manifests a declining faith based on the many times God permitted enemies to conquer because of Israel’s unfaithfulness. These defeats had resulted many times in Israel becoming tributary to surrounding nations. But now, Jehoshaphat fears, the situation is more dire, their very existence as a people is threatened by the invading confederacy.

These same sentiments are echoed in recent times. The pogroms of Israel’s Diaspora and the decimation of the Jews under the Nazi holocaust have brought many Israelis to conclude that they can no longer trust in God for deliverance. Since the formation of the state of Israel in 1948 their repetitive victories over onslaughts by their Arab neighbors have given rise to the thought that they can only trust in their formidable military might and the alliances they have formed, particularly with the United States.

Recent events, however, with the Palestinian intifada, the solidarity of the Arab League, and the guerilla attacks by Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Al Aqsa Martyr brigade, among others, have forced the Israelis to face the fact that their enemies, even while proclaiming a desire to live at peace, may be actually plotting the complete destruction of Israel.

Not only is the desire to cut them off from being a nation, but even includes the revising and rewriting of history to blot out their name from being “in remembrance.”

The League of Ten--Verses 5-8

“For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee: the tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.”

Comparing the confederacy described here with that which is allied against Israel in Ezekiel 38 and 39, it has been noted that this one is all Semitic while that in the Ezekiel passage is largely non-Semitic. Therefore many Bible students understand these two conflicts to be different, the one in this psalm preceding the one in Ezekiel.

There are, however, two main methods of interpreting Bible names in prophecy. The usual method is to treat the names genealogically, tracing the present day descendants of the nations mentioned in prophecy. The alternate method is to trace them geographically, identifying the biblical peoples with the inhabitants of the same regions today. While this approach also reveals many non-Semitic peoples in the Ezekiel list of seven nations, it also demonstrates that the

catalog of nations in both Psalms and Ezekiel describe the main body of Muslim countries which oppose present-day Israel (see map below where dark green areas denote Sunni Muslim majorities; the much darker green areas are dominated by the more fundamentalist Shia Muslims. Note: While India is indicated as being Muslim, most authorities list India as Hindu' though many Muslims do reside there. Map source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/world_maps/muslim_distribution.jpg).



**Sunni [light green] and Shia [darker green]
Muslim Majorities in Europe, Africa, and Asia**

While the confederacy of nations which joined Ammon and Moab in the battle mentions only Edom as a named partner, 2 Chronicles 20:1 mentions "other" besides the Ammonites and the second verse refers to a great multitude "from beyond the sea on this side Syria." The Targum reads "beyond the west side of Syria," referring to the desert lands between Syria and Nineveh.

This matches well with the Hagarenes² (or Hagarites) of 1 Chronicles 5:10, "And in the days of Saul they made war with the Hagarites, who fell by their hand: and they dwelt in their tents throughout all the east land of Gilead."

Thus the coalitions of 2 Chronicles may match well with those in Psalm 83 and, though different than those in Ezekiel 38, may both refer in general to the forces of Islam so adamantly arrayed against Israel today.

Assur, being with them, may imply that Iraq would be aligned with a Jordanian led invasion of Israel. Given the relative neutrality of Jordan today this would appear to be a future conflict.

Historic Defeats--Verses 9-12

“Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna: who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.”

The prayer of the psalmist is reminiscent to that of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20:12, “O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.”

In the psalm the plea for help has two sections. The first calls to mind significant Jewish victories of the past. The second uses agricultural metaphors.

Two great victories are remembered: that of the forces of Gideon against the Midianites and the defeat of the armies of Sisera by Deborah and Barak. Both of these were fought in the plains near Megiddo and are thus suggestive of the prophetic Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16).

Zebah and Zalmunna were kings of Midian, and Oreb and Zeeb were princes thereof. After the initial victory of Gideon’s force of 300 at Megiddo, the rest of the Israelites joined in pursuit of the Midianite host under the command of these rulers and soundly defeated them in the hills east of the river Jordan (Judges 7:25 to 8:13).

In the case of Jabin, king of Hazor, and his general Sisera, Jewish armies under the command of Barak met them in battle in the valley where the river Kishon descended from Mt. Carmel. A flash flood mired the enemy’s chariots in the swollen waters of the stream and Israel was victorious, with the captain of the foe, Sisera, being slaughtered by the Kenite woman, Jael, with a tent peg (Judges 4 and 5).

In both cases Jehovah fought the battle for Israel--through a flash flood in the case of Sisera and by discomfiting the Midianites so that anarchy broke out in their camp as Gideon’s three hundred burst upon them with the midnight trumpet blasts.

Likewise, in the battle of Jehoshaphat, the Jewish armies were told to sit by and let the singers sing while God caused confusion among the invading forces and the Edomites fought against their fellow invaders, giving the victory to Israel.

So it will also be in Israel’s final battle, as the prophet wrote, “Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (Zechariah 14:3).

The Wheel, the Fire, and the Storm--Verses 13-15

“O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.”

The wheel of which the psalmist writes is the threshing wheel. In harvest time, grain was gathered from the fields and laid out on a flat hard surface. A large wheel was then passed over the grain, separating the wheat from the chaff. The separated grains were then winnowed by being flung into the air, letting the light chaff blow away in the wind while the heavier kernels of wheat fell back to the threshing floor.

Thus the invading forces, both in the immediate and long range fulfillments, served two purposes for Israel. First, they were God’s tool to test Israel’s obedience, and then they became as stubble meant for destruction. Of the first purpose we read in Isaiah 10:5,6: “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.” But of the latter end of these tools of the Lord we read: “And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction” (Zechariah 1:15).

Some scholars translate the word for wheel as “rolling thing,” similar to our tumbleweeds. Threshing often took place on the mountain tops to take greater advantage of wind on the higher ground to blow away the chaff. The residue of chaff and tares was then burned, so that the mountains appeared to be on fire during the harvest. This same figure of speech is used of the end-time battles in Isaiah 17:13, “The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.”

The final illustration is that of a storm, a figure often used in the Bible of the final battle of Armageddon (see Psalm 29:4-10).

The Purpose of the Battle--Verses 16-18

“Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.”

The grand object of this final conflict is clearly repeated--”that they [the confederacy of enemies] may seek thy name” and again, “that men may know that thou . . . art the most high over all the earth.” The same purpose is similarly stated when God gives Israel the victory in Ezekiel 39:6,7: “And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.”

The details of how God’s name will be known are spelled out in a description of the aftermath of this final conflict in Isaiah: “For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud [among the nations mentioned in Ezekiel 38], that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles

afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles” (Isaiah 66:18,19).

The fact that the escapees of this battle will declare God’s glory to their native lands leads us to assume that the “perishing” in verse 17 does not mean their annihilation, but their “perishing” as foes by becoming converted to the God of Israel.

Thus we see that all of the battles of Israel, from their founding as a nation, through the chastisement of their Diaspora, to the full return to the Lord in a final victory are all for the purpose of glorifying God’s name, using the instrumentality of his ancient chosen people, the Jews.

1. While the suggestion in this article is that Psalm 83 should be connected with 2 Chronicles 20 and that of Ezekiel 38 and 39, there are many Bible Students who feel this refers to a preliminary conflict in which Israel will be victorious and thus achieve the “peace and safety” which is a prerequisite for the final battle. This view also points to the distinction between the Semitic majority in the psalm and the non-Semitic nature of the hosts mentioned in Ezekiel.

2. The Hagarenes are not to be confused with the Ishmaelites, who also descended from Hagar. It is assumed by most scholars that the Hagarenes were children by Hagar from a second husband after she fled the tent of Abraham and Sarah.

The Promised Land **The Conquest of Canaan**

And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.--Genesis 15:7

Carl Hagensick

It would be some four hundred years later and four generations after beginning their sojourn in Egypt (Genesis 15:13,16, covering the generations of Levi, Kohath, Amram, and Moses) before the promise of inheriting the land would be fulfilled.

God's promises come with a cost. He would give them the land, but they would have to fight to conquer it. He would not fight for them; he would fight with them. This divine aid would, however, only be available if they obeyed him as their Commander-in-Chief (Exodus 23:20-23).

It took a little more than a year after Israel left Egypt before they reached the southern borders of the promised land at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 13:26). From there the spies were sent forth and, when they returned, convinced their fellow countrymen that the inhabitants of the land were too strong to be dispossessed.

Apparently chastised by the message of Moses, they changed their minds and decided to begin their conquest. However, because the spies had brought back a message of fear, God did not go up with them; they were routed by the Amalekites and the Canaanites (Numbers 14:42-45).

It would be some forty years later, after this unbelieving generation had all died, that the final conquest of Canaan would begin.

The Inhabitants of the Land

There are several listings of the inhabitants of the promised land to be dispossessed by the Israelites. There are some interesting variations in these lists as shown in the table below.

Genesis 15:19-21	Exodus 3:8, 17; 23:23 Deuteronomy 20:17 Joshua 12:8 Judges 3:5	Deuteronomy 7:1 Joshua 24:11
Hittites	Hittites	Hittites
Amorites	Amorites	Amorites
Jebusites	Jebusites	Jebusites
Canaanites	Canaanites	Canaanites
Perizzites	Perizzites	Perizzites
	Hivites	Hivites
Girgashites		Girgashites
Kenites		
Kenizzites		
Kadmonites		

Rephaim		
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The discrepancies may be accounted for within the context. The Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, and Rephaim in the Genesis list all resided on the east bank of Jordan and had been defeated before the main conquest of Jordan began. The Hivites, omitted in Genesis, were a small sub-tribe living on the northern outskirts of the promised land, close to Mt. Hermon (Judges 3:3). The Girgashites, omitted in the majority of the lists, while living east of the Jordan, were not conquered until the Israelite invasion of the west bank had commenced.

The Borders of the Promised Land

While many texts give a general description of the promised borders, the most complete description of the land which Abram's seed was to inherit is found in Deuteronomy: "Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites [the Nebo ridge on the east bank of the Jordan], and unto all the places nigh thereunto [the Jordan valley, east of the river itself], in the plain [in Hebrew, *Arabah*, the Great Rift of the Jordan valley south of the Dead Sea], and in the hills [the Judean hills], and in the vale [in Hebrew, *Shephelah*, lying between the coastal plain and the Judean hills], and in the south [the Negev], and by the seaside [the Mediterranean coastal plain], to the land of the Canaanites [particularly the Plain of Sharon and the Jezreel Valley], and unto Lebanon [in the north, but how far north?], unto the Great River, the River Euphrates. Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land¹ which the Lord swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them."-- Deuteronomy 1:7,8

Three Staged Invasion

The conquest of the promised land took some six years and was accomplished in three stages:

1. The territory east of the Jordan river.
2. The southern flank.
3. The land in the north of Canaan.

After being rebuffed by the Amalekites in their abortive attack near Kadesh Barnea in the Negev, the wandering tribes were directed thirty-eight years later up the Great Rift valley northward along the Dead Sea. Here, at the time of the fall harvest, they crossed the river Arnon to do battle with Sihon, King of Heshbon. "And the LORD said unto me, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land" (Deuteronomy 2:31).

Within six months the twelve tribes had taken possession of the trans-Jordan, except for the lands inhabited by Edom, Moab, and Ammon (as well as the isolated sub-tribe of the Girgashites). It was here that Moses died after viewing the promised land from Mt. Nebo, and it was here that Balak, king of Moab, sought to enlist the aid of the prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites. It was shortly after his failure that the tribes of Israel, now under the command of Joshua, amassed themselves at the banks of the Jordan in preparation to pass over.

It was in the spring of the year, just prior to the Jewish feast of Passover, and the river Jordan was in flood stage (Joshua 3:15). These raging flood waters probably gave those dwelling west of Jordan a feeling of security. A landslide upriver at the town of Adam, however, dried up the torrent so that the Israelites could pass over dry shod. Crossing the river, they set up camp in a box canyon by the name of Gilgal.

The crossing of Jordan is seen by many Christians as the passing over of the death sentence when

Christ and his church raise the billions of humanity back to life once again. This erasure of the original curse will also be traced as far back as the first man named Adam.

Gilgal provided an ideal staging ground for the next step of the invasion. Here the nation's dependency on heaven-sent manna ceased (Joshua 5:12), for here there was ample pasturage for their flocks in the fertile Jordan valley, an abundant source of clean water from the river, as well as the protective mountain cul-de-sac for protection from enemies. It was here that they awaited instructions from God as to how to claim their promised heritage.

Jericho

An angel from the Lord instructed Joshua to begin the conquest at Jericho, a prosperous Canaanite city located not far from the Jordan, between the river and the cliffs of Quarantania. It was built on a foundation set in alluvial soil which would have become greatly moistened by the overflowing floods of spring. This geological sub-strata is similar to that of Santa Rosa, California, the city which suffered the greatest damage in the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*).

The tribes of Israel were instructed to march around the city for seven days with the priests blowing a loud blast on seven ram's horn trumpets (Hebrew, *yobel*, from which we derive the word jubilee). This was to be followed on the seventh day by seven encirclements and seven blasts of the seven trumpets. The city had been living in fear of an attack (Joshua 6:1) and it is likely that the unusual events, particularly of the seventh day, would have brought crowds to the city wall to see what was happening. The synchronic noise, the accumulated weight on the walls, and the unstable dampened alluvial foundation may have all contributed to the miracle power of God in bringing down the thick stone walls.

The trumpet soundings of six days followed by seven blasts on the seventh day are suggestive of the picture given in the book of Revelation where seven trumpets appear in parallel with the seven churches and seven seals, followed on the seventh day by the seven plagues which topple the antitypical Jericho, the great Babylon. The further connection with the trumpets being ram's horns, or "jubilee" trumpets, blown by the priests may be of further significance since the great seventh thousand-year day of humanity is known as "the year of jubilee."

Ai

The thrill of victory was soon met with the bitterness of defeat. The sin of covetousness by a single Israelite resulted in a stunning defeat to Joshua's army by the army of the city of Ai. God had commanded that nothing be taken from the spoils of Jericho, but Achan, a man of Judah, took a Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a fifty-shekel wedge of gold. The three items may hold a symbolic meaning relative to the remnant of fallen desires from which mankind needs to rid itself in the kingdom age.

1. **A Babylonian garment** illustrating the ritual ways of attaining justification practiced in antitypical Babylon. The Vulgate translates it as a purple garment while the Septuagint calls it "a garment of different colors." Some suggest that it was the royal robe of the king of Jericho, while others speculate it was a robe kept in the temple for the king of Babylon when he would come on royal visits to this important trade center.

2. **Two hundred shekels of silver** illustrating the greed of Achan and the temptation of materialism. Its placement under the other items (Joshua 7:21) suggests that it is greed

and selfishness which lie at the foundation of all the other faults.

3. **A wedge of gold.** The Hebrew expression is “a tongue of gold” and probably refers to a golden phallic image or idol, representing the difficulty that many will have in the kingdom giving up the many cherished idols of their former lives.

God’s Secret Weapon

Ambush was a standard tactic in Old Testament warfare. It was by one ambush, strategically placed between the cities of Ai and Bethel, that resulted in the fall of both these hilltop strongholds. Their defeat gave Joshua’s forces a foothold in the southern highlands of Samaria. From there a prolonged campaign in the north conquered the territory as far north as Tyre and Sidon on the coasts of present day Lebanon.

Ambush, however, was also a tactic used by the entrenched cities of the land. The lush croplands of the Jezreel and Sharon valleys provided ample hiding places for the armies arrayed against Israel. It was for just such contingencies that God provided Israel with a secret weapon--swarms of hornets: “And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee” (Exodus 23:28). More than just a nuisance, these stinging insects would evoke cries of pain from the hidden enemy forces, revealing their location.

So it will be in Christ’s kingdom when man does battle against his seven spiritual foes (Proverbs 6:16-18). God will reveal the secret sins in man’s heart, but it will be up to him to achieve the victory over them (Psalm 19:12).

A Gradual Conquest

God did not promise swift victory. The land was to be claimed piecemeal. “I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land” (Exodus 23:29,30).

Nature abhors a vacuum. If Israel’s foes had fallen before the invaders were ready to use the land for farming or grazing, the ground would soon be overspread with weeds and inhabited by wild beasts. This further illustrates the methods God uses in helping mankind overcome their fallen propensities. Jesus used a parable to demonstrate this principle: “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first” (Luke 11:24-26).

It is not enough that man rid himself of sinful and impure thoughts, but he must replace these with the principles of righteousness and the desire to implement these.

Caleb and the Conquest of the South

When the spies entered the land at Kadesh Barnea, they penetrated as far as the cities of Hebron, a confederacy of four sheikdoms ruled by Anak and his three sons, Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, all men of gigantic stature (Numbers 13:22). Hebron (whose name means “confederacy”) was then named Kirjath-arba, or Cities of the Four, named for these four rulers.

Now at age 86, Caleb requests permission of Joshua to conquer the city whose inhabitants had earlier struck terror into the hearts of the spies (Joshua 14:13,14). Seeking to inspire others with similar zeal, he offered the hand of his daughter Achsah in marriage to any warrior who would take on the neighboring city of Debir, also known as Kirjath-sepher, or city of the book for its being the center of learning for the Canaanitish culture. Caleb's younger brother, Othniel, accepted the challenge. Because Debir was in the desert of the Negev, he also requested water and was given "the upper and nether springs" (Joshua 15:19). After the death of Joshua, Othniel became the first judge of Israel.

Conquest of the entire south progressed at a rapid pace and soon Israel was master of the entire area, though the failure to drive out pockets of resistance, particularly in the Philistine controlled Gaza strip, became the source for not only continual conflict but a temptation for assimilation and the practice of idolatry.

When Joshua neared the time of his death, the Lord listed the lands yet to be conquered (Joshua 13:1-6), but he was given the task of dividing the land among the nine and a half tribes who were to reside west of the Jordan as though it were all subdued. The actual job of distributing the inheritance was left to Joshua, the leader, and to Eleazar, representing the priesthood (Joshua 14:1).

Two tribes were not given a territorial inheritance: Levi (Joshua 13:14) and Simeon, who was to dwell in the tribal lands of Judah (Joshua 19:1). These two sons of Jacob had been the ringleaders in the slaughter of the Shechemites after the rape of Dinah and were condemned for this act by Jacob on his death bed: "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (Genesis 49:5-7).

The tribe of Levi redeemed itself by standing with Moses after Israel's sin with the golden calf. They received a special inheritance of service to God and were given 42 cities with surrounding pasturage within the tribes of their siblings plus six cities that were to serve as "cities of refuge" for those fleeing punishment in cases of manslaughter.

Simeon, on the other hand, was given no special honor and produced none of the heroes of faith, save perhaps Judith in the Apocryphal account of deliverance from the Assyrian general Holofernes.

The completion of the six years of conquest started Israel in her experiences as an independent nation with her own homeland, an existence that was to continue for nearly a thousand years, first under judges and then under kings, until its termination in the invasions of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

In this warfare of conquest we find a rich treasure trove of lessons applying to mankind's conquest of individual sin and the claiming of their rich and eternal resurrection inheritance -- their "promised land."

1, For a complete discussion of these boundaries, see the booklet *This Land Is Mine*, published by the Chicago Bible Students and distributed by the Pastoral Bible Institute.

A Thorn in Israel's Side

Philistine Conflicts

And there was again war with the Philistines.--2 Samuel 21:19¹.

James Parkinson

The Philistines were usually a source of conflict and oppression to the Israelites, from the time of Isaac until Israel's captivities under the Assyrians and Babylonians, then again until the Romans expelled them in the Diaspora (a Gospel age dispersion among the nations of the globe), and once more since 1878 with their return to the land. Who were the Philistines?

The first mention of the Philistines comes in the Table of the Nations in Genesis 10: "And Mizraim begat Ludim . . . and Lehabim . . . and Pathrusim, and Casluhim (whence went forth the Philistines), and Caphtorim" (Genesis 10:13,14). Egypt (Mizraim: literally, the two Egypts) colonized many regions which subsequently broke away and became independent nations, among them the early Lydians (cf. Lud in Genesis 10:22), Lybians, Pathros in upper (upstream, southern) Egypt, and Caphtor (the Minoan civilization of Crete and the neighboring islands). One of the Egyptian colonizations itself gave rise to the Philistines, who began encroaching on the land of Canaan and spread northward along the Mediterranean coast. In later times, the eruptions of the volcano Thera² displaced many people, eventually resulting in Greek domination of the islands, and subsequent immigration of Minoans to Philistia (Palestine). Rameses III fought a bloody, though likely indecisive, battle to keep them from spreading back into Egypt.

The land of the Philistines was originally in the land of Canaan and not part of Egypt. But the sin of Ham against his father resulted in Noah cursing Ham's youngest son³, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant [or: their servant]. God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant" (Genesis 9:24-27).

Thus, the incursion of the Philistines into Canaan was part of the fulfillment of this curse, as was that of Amraphel king of Shinar with Chedorlaomer king of Elam (Genesis 14),⁴ or Israel nearly five centuries later, or Assyria, or Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and then the Saracen Arabs under Mohammed, followed by the Turks and the British.

In the early record of Genesis 20:1 to 21:34, we see the Philistine capital in Gerar. From Joshua 13:3, we learn that the later Philistines were not a single nation, but were a confederation of five peoples, with capitals at Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron⁵ From Judges 3:3 we see that they stretched from el-Arish in the southwest to nearly the Plain of Sharon; north of them were the Canaanites and then the Sidonians (the first nation to split away from Canaan).

Abraham's slaughter of Elamite and Sumerian, and their allies, freed the Philistines (and the other western nations) from the threat of eastern domination. The early Philistine kings, commonly titled Abi-melech (which means my father was king), were generally favorable to Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 20 and 26), although sometimes their people were not (Genesis 21:25; 26:18-22). Abraham had thought the Philistine king was godless, but was fortunate to find that Abi-melech still upheld a good regard for God.

After the exodus, when Israel came into the land which the Lord had promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, the Israelites took first the land of the hill country and delayed to take the Philistine coastal plain (and also the coastlands farther north). At that time the new Egyptian

dynasty from south Egypt was chasing out the Hykos rulers of the Nile Delta and warring in Philistia. These apparent Egyptian allies of the Israelites were then the greater threat to the Philistines, who consequently gave Israel little trouble before Ehud the Benjamite conquered Moab. Subsequently, Shamgar slew 600 Philistines with an ox-goad (Judges 3:31). After Deborah and Gideon a century later, the Philistines took the offensive, attacking and oppressing Israel (aided by the Ammonites, who conquered the Israelites east of the Jordan River--Judges 10:7). After nearly another century, the Philistines dominated Israel for forty years, until the time of Samson.⁶

The Philistines cheated Samson repeatedly. Samson responded by slaying thirty Philistines for their clothing; he used three hundred foxes to destroy their grain fields and olive orchards, slew those who burned his wife to death, slew another thousand with the jawbone of an ass; and after being blinded and abused, he slew three thousand more by collapsing their temple-house upon them all (Judges 14 to 16).

Some years later, the Philistines slew four thousand Israelites in one battle. Then two priests, sons of Eli, brought the ark of the Lord to the battlefield, but the Lord did not reward their wrong; thirty thousand Israelites were slain in this battle, and even the ark was lost to the Philistines. They took the ark as a spoil into the temple-house of Dagon, the fish-god, to demonstrate Dagon's supposed victory over the Lord. The first night Dagon fell over, the next night Dagon lost its head, hands, and legs, and the people developed hemorrhoidal tumors (said by <I>Smith's Bible Dictionary<I*> to be common in Syria today). Thereupon they twice moved the ark to another city, but in each place the people got tumors or died (likely of mouse-borne bubonic plague). After seven frightful months they sent the ark back to the Israelites with a trespass-offering. Two nursing cows were taken from their calves and attached to a new cart that held the ark of the Lord, but there was no driver to guide them. When the cows chose the most difficult road, going uphill toward Israel, the Philistines knew their plague had come from the Lord of Israel. When the ark came to the Israelite district of Beth-shemesh, the Israelites rejoiced at last (1 Samuel 4 to 6).

Here is a lesson: When the Lord's people willfully do wrong, the Lord may not protect them from the consequences. However, their oppressors cannot appropriate the Lord's blessing to themselves. The Christian learns, "For what glory is it if, when ye sin, and are buffeted for it, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter 2:20).

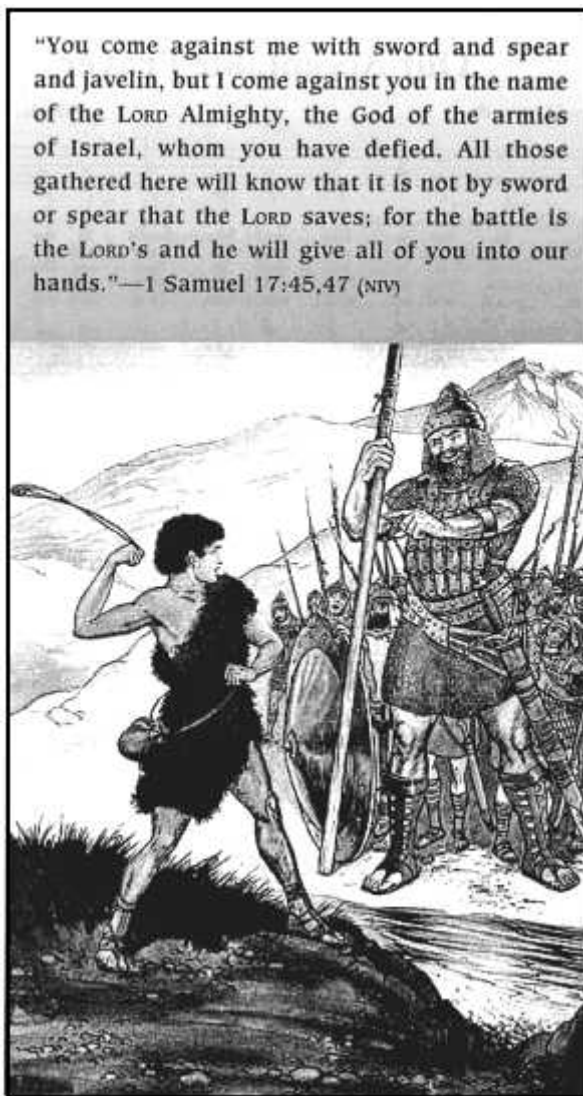
We read of the Philistines as being prime enemies of the Israelites from then on, extending into the reigns of King Saul and King David.

The year after Saul became king, his son Jonathan battled and beat a Philistine garrison at Geba in a valley north of Jerusalem. Preparing for battle, Saul rashly offered a sacrifice rather than wait for Samuel to come as promised; in so doing he lost the right to establish his dynasty. But at this time God gave Jonathan victory over a special force of twenty Philistines. An earthquake turned the worried Philistine army to flight, and so Israel beat them all throughout the upper Aijalon Valley. The Philistines then left Israel alone for many years.

David and Goliath

Some decades later the Philistines attempted a new tactic. There were four warrior-sons of a giant from the city of Gath. The most valiant of the four was Goliath, an armed warrior between two and three meters in height. He offered to avert war by fighting Israel's most valiant man; the loser's people would then serve the winner's people. Goliath thundered his challenge morning and evening for forty days, while the Israelites shrank in terror.

But David, a youth in his twenties and part-time armor-bearer to King Saul, then took up the challenge. David's weapons, slingshot and staff, were unconventional, but nevertheless had been proven against a lion and a bear. Goliath boisterously disdained both the youth and his weapons, but when he charged ahead of his shield-bearer, David armed his slingshot, stunned Goliath with a stone to the forehead, and then seized Goliath's own sword to slay him. Thereupon the Philistines forgot about the agreement to serve Israel and fled.⁷



Later as King Saul's heart drifted toward himself and farther and farther away from the Lord, he became jealous of David and his victory over Goliath. After twice fleeing from Saul for his life, David with six hundred men sought refuge with the Philistine lord at Gath, the city from which Goliath had come. At first David feigned insanity for fear of retribution for Goliath's death, but later he appeared straight-forward. Then the lord of Gath was glad for an ally against King Saul and the nation of Israel; he came to trust David, although some other Philistines did not.

In time the Philistines defeated Israel and slew Saul and his sons. When David went to Hebron to become king of one tribe, Judah, the Philistines were relieved to see Israel breaking up. They seized cities in Israel but warred not against David.

Here is another lesson: many a man has set a trap for others only to be caught in it himself. So it was with Saul. As Song of Solomon 8:6 suggests, “Jealousy is cruel as the grave” (it is no respecter of persons). Samuel reminded the errant Saul, “Though thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel?” (1 Samuel 15:17). A blessing from the Lord should not make us think highly of ourselves, for we too can be rejected by him. One temptation is given in 1 Timothy 6:9,10, “But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil [Greek: evils]: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

A Philistine Change of Heart

When David became king of all Israel, the Philistines came up from the coast into the Valley of Rephaim (Giants), stretching northeastward almost to the Valley of Hinnom on the southwest side of Jerusalem. 1 Chronicles 14:8-17 relates that the Lord told David the first time to “go up” against the Philistines; from the Valley of Hinnom they would have to go uphill before they could go down into the Valley of Rephaim to engage the Philistines in battle. When the Philistines mustered a larger force in that valley the second time, the Lord told David not to go up against them but to circle around behind them, then wait until they heard the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees. Quite possibly, the wind that caused the creaking of the trees also blew up a sandstorm into the eyes of the Philistines; whereupon the Israelite victory was assured. The valley was then taken, even as far as the Philistine city of Gezer. Thereafter the Philistine threat was considerably diminished.

It was in the days of Jehoram, son of Ahab, king of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, that Elisha raised from the dead the son of a woman at Shunem. Later, as a seven-year famine was approaching, he warned the Shunammite lady to take her household away from Israel, and she dwelt seven years in the land of the Philistines. When the time was up, she returned, and the king ordered that her house, her land, and even the harvested fruits, be restored to her (2 Kings 8:1-6). [It seems likely these seven years, as with the seven days of the feast of tabernacles, typify the thousand-year reign of Christ.]

In later times, the Lord used the Philistines to punish Jehoram, an evil king of Judah, but he helped the good king Uzziah (Azariah) against them; yet again he allowed the Philistines to invade the border towns of Judah because of the wickedness of King Ahaz (see 2 Chronicles 21:16; 26:7; 28:18). Thereafter, the Assyrians and the Babylonians became the major oppressors of both Israel and all the surrounding tribes.

A Concluding Lesson

There is yet another lesson for us in the overall experiences of the Lord’s people with the Philistines: Abraham obeyed God and was blessed by him. The Israelites also wanted the blessing, but not if it meant any inconvenience to themselves; so they lost it. “Now these things happened unto them by way of type; and they were written for our admonition” (1 Corinthians 10:11). Likewise they apply to us. If we want the blessing of God, we must bless God.

1. Bible quotations are from editions of the *Revised Version*, except that the name “Jehovah” is replaced by “the LORD.”

2. Tehra (also called Santorini) was the holy island of the Minoan civilization. Its explosive disappearance, likely the source of reports of the lost “continent” of Atlantis, left only a thin ring of islands around the sunken caldera. Its major eruptions, perhaps in B.C. 1615, disrupted the Peoples of the Sea, who for several centuries thereafter immigrated to the Philistine coast, and so added to the numbers of the Philistines.

3. Thus the curse was not upon Cush, Mizraim, or Put (Black Africa, South India, etc.; Egypt; or North Africa); but against the only completely non-African descendants of Ham.

4. Ur-Nammu king of Sumer and Kutir-Lagamer king of Elam (then limited to southwestern Iran), ca. B.C. 2050.

5. It might be inferred that five lieutenant kings had by then conspired to overthrow the king of Gerar.

6. Pharaoh Merneptah of Egypt records on a stone stele, “Israel is laid waste, his seed is not.” It simply means that during the Philistine captivity Israel was not a sovereign nation. Likely dates for the Philistine captivity are B.C. 1246-1207, and the R. A. Parker dates for Merneptah are 1223-1211.

7. David took five smooth stones to the encounter with Goliath, but needed only one. He had three more if needed for Goliath’s three brothers, and still he would not have been left unarmed.

Goliath’s threat, “I will give thy flesh unto the birds of the heavens, and to the beasts of the field,” was returned in kind by David: “I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day unto the birds of the heavens, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD’s” (1 Samuel 17:44-47). The wording is suggestive of Revelation 19:17-21, “And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid heaven, Come and be gathered together unto the great supper of God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of them that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sitteth upon the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with it the false prophet that wrought the signs in its sight . . . and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sitteth upon the horse, even the sword which cometh forth out of his mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh.”

Thus, there appears to be something prophetic of the end of the age in the account of David vs. Goliath.

Darkness at Noonday

The Assyrian Invasion

The end is come upon my people of Israel.--Amos 8:2

David Rice

Before the rise of Babylon under Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar, the scourge of the ancient near east was the kingdom of Assyria. It was this kingdom that brought low the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel with its capital at Samaria. Its last king Hoshea was taken in a three-year siege, ending both his nine-year reign and his kingdom.

The episode is recorded in 2 Kings 17:3-6. "Against [Hoshea] came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria . . . the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." The brief records of this Assyrian king stipulate that in his five-year reign he "ravaged Samaria," and the eponym records suggest years 2, 3, and 4 were the three years of the Hebrew account.

The date of Hoshea's fall was 723 B.C., and just 40 years earlier, in 763 B.C., a well known solar eclipse darkened the sky of the Bible lands. Evidently this was the warning sign Hoshea predicted in Amos 8:9, "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day." This 40-year notice reminds us of a similar period, seven centuries later, between our Lord's death in 33 A.D. when the sky again turned dark at noon, and the end of the wars against Judea in 73 A.D. when Masada fell to the Romans and Israel's national polity was dissipated. Evidently Amos' prophecy, which applied to the fall of Samaria, had a deeper meaning for Israel following the advent of Messiah.

The Samaritans

The deportation of Israelites after the Assyrian conquest apparently was a safeguard against future uprisings. To fill the void, various foreigners were imported into the land. These did not respect Jehovah, and as a consequence God sent lions among them. The Assyrian king sent a captive priest back to the area to teach the new settlers about Jehovah, and he "taught them how they should fear the LORD" (2 Kings 17:28).

This was the beginning of those the New Testament refers to as "Samaritans." They were not Israelites by birth, but they adopted the faith of Israel. They accepted the five books of Moses though they did not equally respect the later writings of the Old Testament. For these reasons there was a distinction between these Samaritans and Jews which is referred to by Jesus in John 4:22, "Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews."

The deficiencies in their faith notwithstanding, our Lord recognized the fruitage of their faith as ready for harvest at his first advent (John 4:35), and after his resurrection he instructed his disciples, after witnessing first in Jerusalem and Judea, to next serve the Samaritans with the gospel (Acts 1:8). This work was initiated shortly after the stoning of Stephen when the brethren of Judea were dispersed "throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1). The deacon Phillip evidently began the work among the Samaritans, later supplemented by Peter and John (Acts 8:5-14).

Thus through the Assyrian conquest of Israel 700 years before our master's time, God overruled to sow seeds of faith among Gentiles which bloomed wonderfully after the advent of Christ. It is noteworthy that Jesus used a Samaritan to represent the virtues of compassion and brotherly kindness in the famous parable of the "Good Samaritan."

Assyrian Kings

The Scriptures mention six consecutive kings of Assyria by name: Tiglath-Pileser, Shalmaneser, Sargon, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal, whose reign ended 18 years before the Assyrians fade from the pages of history in 609 B.C., only three years after the capture of their capital Nineveh (2 Kings 15:29; 18:9; Isaiah 20:1; 2 Chronicles 32:22; Ezra 4:2,10). Together these kings reigned a hundred years, and evidently the importation of Gentiles continued sporadically during these years as indicated in Ezra 4:2,10.

Before Shalmaneser, Tiglath-Pileser had already intruded his authority into the kingdom of Israel by taking captive many Israelites from the northern and eastern tribes (2 Kings 15:29). This precipitated a revolt against the king of Israel, Pekah, and he was replaced by Hoshea in a government coup, nine years before Hoshea's own demise, in 732 B.C.

It is worthy of note that this revolt in 732 B.C. is 2520 years before the date of the French Revolution (1789), and the deposing of Hoshea in 723 B.C. is 2520 years before 1798 when Pope Pius VI was deposed from Rome. If the deportation of Israelites occurred the following year, that would be 2520 years from 1799. Thus seven prophetic "times" from the close of the ten-tribe kingdom bring us to the same point as the end of the 1260 years of Daniel and Revelation when Papacy ruled the Christian world.

Sargon and Sennacherib

Sargon, who followed Shalmaneser, is mentioned in Isaiah 20:1 as king of Assyria at the time his military officer fought against Ashdod of the Philistines and took it. For many years this text was challenged by critics who disputed whether a king named Sargon ruled Assyria at this time. Now, since the mid-1800s, when the ancient records of the Assyrian Empire were unearthed and translated, there is no further dispute on the subject, as his existence and his 17-year reign are amply testified to in the hundred-plus pages of his inscriptions. Among these is Sargon's specific claim: "Ashdod . . . I besieged, I captured" (<I>Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia<I*>, Luckenbill, 1926, vol. 2, p. 32), which vindicates the testimony of Isaiah 20:1.

Sennacherib succeeded Sargon and carried the Assyrian conquest south to Judea. Some of the kings of Judah had made an alliance with Assyria previously which blunted any aggressive moves southward to Jerusalem (2 Kings 16:7). But at the very time of this alliance, Isaiah the prophet predicted that Assyria would subsequently "overflow" into Judah as well. "He shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings [armies] shall fill the breadth of thy land" (Isaiah 8:8). This occurred 22 years after the fall of Samaria when Sennacherib, who succeeded Sargon, invaded Judah, taking one after another fortified city; at last besieging Jerusalem itself, the head of the kingdom, the Assyrian flood having reached "even to the neck."

The account of the siege is recorded both by Sennacherib and Isaiah. Both agree that Jerusalem was not taken, but the devastating depletion of Sennacherib's army is explicit only in the Scriptural account. "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000: and when they arose early in the morning, behold,

they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass [twenty-one years later, at the end of his 24-year reign], as he was worshipping in the house of Nishroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead” (2 Kings 19:35-37).

This deliverance occurred during the service of Isaiah the prophet and is recorded also in the book of Isaiah. The prophecies of part one of Isaiah take us up through the famous chapter 35, the kingdom chapter. Before the next prophetic part of Isaiah beginning with chapter 40 onward, we have a four-chapter historical interlude in chapters 36, 37, 38, 39, which records the Assyrian invasion of Judea and its aftermath.

Here we read of Sennacherib’s false boast that “Jehovah said unto me, Go up against this land [Judea], and destroy it” (Isaiah 36:10). Clearly God had not commissioned him, for God intervened and destroyed Sennacherib’s forces. (We should as well be cautious about crediting Pharaoh Necho’s claim in 2 Chronicles 35:21,22; he also failed in his campaign to assist then faltering Assyria against the Babylonians.)

The prophet Micah was contemporary with Isaiah, and the invasion by Sennacherib was the background for his prophecy in Micah 5:5 which brethren frequently apply to the invasion of Israel by Gog from the north, impending in our day. We believe this application is correct. “This shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight princes [margin] of men.” Shepherds is an idiom for kings and refers prophetically to the Church class who with Christ will intervene for Israel at a critical moment. The eight “princes” represent the ancient worthies who will be raised at this time to point Israel to the source of their deliverance. “Seven” reminds us of the seven stages of the Church followed by period “eight,” the kingdom, during which the ancient worthies will lead Israel and the world.

This deliverance will be at the very height of Israel’s debacle and will introduce the kingdom of Christ among men. This deliverance will come “early in the morning” of that new day as stipulated in 2 Kings 19:35. This picture introducing the kingdom occurred in the 14th year of Hezekiah, which reminds us of the 14 days of feasting when the Temple of Solomon was dedicated (1 Kings 8:65,66; notice the blessing on the “eighth day,” the kingdom).

Isaiah’s Account

Isaiah records the episode in chapters 36 and 37 of his book. Chapter 38 tells us of another crisis Hezekiah faced at the same time. Hezekiah was sick with a boil on his back and the infection evidently threatened his life. When he prayed to God, rehearsing his efforts to walk “before thee in truth and with a perfect heart,” Jehovah heard him and said, “I will add unto thy days fifteen years.” We know that this promise was given at the same time Sennacherib’s army was besieging Jerusalem for Isaiah 38:6 adds to this promise, “And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.”

Thus Israel faces two devastating threats--the invasion from the north, and the systemic infection of sin from within. Only relief from both burdens will save them. We have seen already how God will relieve them from their attackers by the intervention of the saints and the ancient worthies. But how was the infectious boil healed? “Isaiah . . . said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover” (Isaiah 38:21). Figs represent Israelites, and in this case the figs probably represent the leaders of Israel, the Ancient Worthies. Through their

teachings and instruction Israel will learn to apply to Christ their Messiah for healing from sin and its influences, and thus recover.

Hezekiah received an extension of life of 15 years. Of course it would have made a nice picture to have given him everlasting life, but this was impossible for he was still under the Adamic condemnation of death. So the number of years by which his life was extended was chosen to symbolically represent the great deliverance. Micah represented the church by the number seven, and the ancient worthies by eight. The total of these, 15, is the number of years applied to Hezekiah's recovery.

The Shadow of Ten Degrees

A sign was given Hezekiah of his impending deliverance: "This shall be a sign . . . I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down" (Isaiah 38:7,8). This was not a conventional sundial as we know it, but likely a shadow on a stairway, temporarily but remarkably turned back by a perihelion, or unusual configuration of clouds, or both.

Symbolically, the shadow represents the darkness of God's judgments against Israel during the Gospel age. They continued under the bondage of the "ten toes of the image" (Daniel 2), namely the kingdoms of Christendom. But that judgment began to roll away in 1914 when World War I broke apart those "gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder" (Psalms 107:16, cf. Daniel 4:15, Isaiah 45:2). Now Israel is an independent nation again. This fact is a sign to us and to Israel that Jehovah, through Christ, will effect the remainder of their deliverance. He will rescue them from the invasion of Gog from the north, and will heal their sin sickness.

The troubles brought upon Israel will be the instruments of turning them back to Jehovah, causing them to recognize Messiah (Zechariah 12:10). Then no further purpose will be served by the oppressors and they will be stopped. "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks" (Isaiah 10:12)

The Downfall of Judah

The Babylonian Invasion

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.--James 5:16

Richard Doctor

God keeps his own times and purposes. To a thoughtful observer weighing the objective evidence without considering the special operation of Jehovah's overruling providence in the defense of his people, Jerusalem might easily have fallen at least a century before Zedekiah's disastrous rebellion. Approximately 100 years earlier in the 8th century B.C. Assyria under the leadership of Sennacherib possessed sufficient military prowess and resolve to conquer Jerusalem when the city was under siege during the reign of Hezekiah. Yet, as Scripture promises, the prayers of a righteous man availeth much, and so much the more when these prayers are in harmony with the unseen movements of God's chronological reckoning marking the beginning of the Times of Gentile dominion with the year 606 B.C.

Assyria's strengths should not be underreckoned. In the 8th century B.C. Assyria was aggressive and well organized. They had moved the technology of armaments to a new level of sophistication and deadliness which was of great importance. Assyria mastered the artifice for circulating massive volumes of air through a mixture of iron with a large portion of charcoal so that unprecedented high temperatures were reached. The formulation dissolved carbon into the molten iron to render a novel metal with properties far superior to iron. This was the world's first steel, a metal of unsurpassed properties useful for armaments. With this technological superiority, literally, an unbeatable "edge" in warfare, Assyria dominated the Fertile Crescent and held Babylon under its power for nearly a hundred years, until the 7th century B.C. Jeremiah specifically mentions this expertise in steel making (Jeremiah 15:12). Of additional note is Assurbanipal's remarkable library of 22,000 clay tablets. This was one of the great attempts to collect and codify world knowledge. Henceforth, any serious world power would likewise find knowledge and technological skills critical to survival.

As the Assyrians challenged the walls of Jerusalem, the exercise of Jehovah's providence and grace came in response to pious king Hezekiah's prayers. Scripture records the remarkable deliverance of Jerusalem when the angel of the Lord brought a pestilence that smote 185,000 Assyrians in one night. This disaster forced the withdrawal of the invading army (Isaiah 37:36). Putting the proper "spin" on bad news is as old as politics itself, and this process was easier in historic periods without a free press to challenge the official state account. The Assyrians official record implausibly recounts the reason for the withdrawal being that swarms of field mice had come into the camp and eaten the leatherworks and bowstrings of the Assyrian armaments. Admittedly, this may be partly true and point toward any of a number of diseases carried by these mice as the possible vector for the delivery of the pestilence through the intervention of the Lord's angel.

While the two-tribe kingdom of Judah remained unconquered after the fall of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, Judah had hardly prospered. It was not fully independent. Judah had become a tribute-paying vassal state to Assyria, and served in the critical but unenviable role of a buffer state between the powerful empires of Assyria and Egypt.

The Babylonian Challenge

Babylon and the civilizations on the plains of Shinar had been a force in world politics and culture since the flood. After a century of subjugation Babylon was about to take center stage in world affairs. Under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar's father Nabopolassar, Babylon gained independence from Assyria in the last quarter of the 7th century. [For those reading current historical texts, it is important to recognize that the date historians ascribe to this battle of 626 B.C. is on a time-line that differs by 18 years from the chronology employed by Bro. Russell.] Following this, there was a period of prolonged fighting under the able leadership of Nabopolassar in confederacy with the Medes that resulted in Assyrian defeat in battle after battle. Assyria's capital of Nineveh fell fourteen years later and the Assyrian empire was broken. Nabopolassar was now in control of an empire that stretched from Babylon to the borders of the Promised Land. Realizing that his age was working against him for expansive new projects, and recognizing the need to consolidate this new empire, Nabopolassar turned over the military campaign to his son Nebuchadnezzar.

A new world order was about to emerge. Babylon, soon to be the first universal empire, held forth a vision of a united confederacy of states, where an ambitious citizen with talent and education might have an opportunity for advancement in civil government, whatever their ethnic origin. This policy was to benefit Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Such acceptance of ethnic diversity had rarely been attempted before, and its effect was not only to set Babylon as the first among the world's nations, but to set a precedent for all governments to follow. In conformance with this policy, Nebuchadnezzar took the nobles, artisans, as well as the brightest and most promising youth from throughout the conquered lands to learn about Babylonian culture and manners. This policy was not wholly altruistic, for it also impoverished the conquered peoples of the leadership and armament makers--two skills that would be crucial for a successful rebellion. Nevertheless, the Lord, through Jeremiah presents a positive prophetic image of these events:

“The LORD showed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the LORD, after that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jehoiachin [Jehoiachin] the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. . . . Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.”--Jeremiah 24:1-7

The Eclipse of Egypt

Egypt, like Babylon had been a force in world politics for nearly two thousand years and seemingly was favored to go on forever. But Egyptian society and its god kings were living fossils in the new world of the 7th century B.C. Egypt focused its energy on maintaining the status quo in a world where geopolitics was fundamentally changing. Egypt was about to go into an eclipse from which it has never recovered. Although the prophets announced the reality that Egypt would cease as a world power, this seemed inconceivable to human understanding (Isaiah chapters 19 and 20; Jeremiah 43:9-13).

Egypt watched the emergence of Babylon's power with alarm. Following the fall of Nineveh the Egyptians mounted a major campaign to confront Babylon in an effort to relieve their former

enemies now turned allies. Egypt's object was to confederate with the Assyrians at their last stronghold in Haran. Of special importance is the death of good king Josiah, the great reformer, who was pious as good king Hezekiah had been. No doubt, had he lived, Josiah would have attempted to place the nation of Judah out of the path of God's wrath. But the hour of change was now tolling.

Josiah opposed the passage of PharaohNecho and his army on their march north through present-day Syria to near where the river Euphrates flows southward at its confluence with the Chaboras. This ancient fortification called Carchemish is located approximately at the border with present day Turkey. Egypt urged Josiah to desist but he refused (2 Chronicles 35:20). A battle between PharaohNecho and Josiah took place at the auspicious location of Megiddo particularly suited to a smaller force holding at bay a superior force. Here Josiah was fatally wounded by an Egyptian archer and died (2 Chronicles 35:23).

So tragic was this loss of Josiah that we find Jeremiah adding his voice to the lamentations over the death of this powerful moral force for righteousness and unadulterated worship of Jehovah. (2 Chronicles 35:25). Yet even here, the Lord did not leave his people without hope but included this word of encouragement and promise to show his love for his wayward people:

“Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.”--Jeremiah 46:28

This diversion of Egyptian momentum by Josiah was enough to seal the doom of the last Assyrian holdouts. The Egyptians came back against Jerusalem, put it under a relatively light tribute; installed one of Josiah's surviving sons as king and renamed him Jehoiakim. The Egyptians then carried off captive his brother Jehoahaz--the people's choice for ruler (2 Chronicles 36:1-4). Egypt clearly was looking for Judah to continue as a buffer state, and the desire of the people during the next generation to flee to Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem speaks to their general perception of Egypt as the lesser of two evils.

The Battle of Carchemish and the New World Order

Four years later a reorganized Egyptian army was again on the march. This time the fighting at Carchemish, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, marks one of the definitive battles in world history. In a decisive defeat Egypt was broken as a world power. This battle receives notice in the Bible and the Lord's overruling providence against Egypt is recorded in Jeremiah 46:1-13:

“The word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles; Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaohnecho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah. . . . Wherefore have I seen them dismayed and turned away back? . . . Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates . . . For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates. Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured. The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land: for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, and they are fallen both together. The word that the LORD spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come [and] smite the land of Egypt.”

The First Babylonian Assault on Jerusalem--Jehoiakim's 4th Year

“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem and besieged it.” --Daniel 1:1

The convention of referring to the third year of Jehoiakim by Babylon's accession-year reckoning was employed by Daniel in his writings. This is in fact identical to the fourth year of Jehoiakim, referred to in Jeremiah 46:2, using a non-accession year system. In this fourth year, the impious and weak kingdom of Judah now found itself at the center of the world conflict between Egypt and Babylon. Jehoiakim's appointment by the Egyptians left him under a cloud as to his legitimacy. The chroniclers give him little sympathy and he is accounted as reigning and doing evil for eleven years (2 Chronicles 36:5). Following the decisive battle at Carchemish, Babylon moved unopposed through the Promised Land and besieged Jerusalem. Jehoiakim secured a diplomatic rapprochement and transferred his allegiance from Egypt to Babylon. At this time, Babylon's policy of taking the best and brightest of the youth from subject kingdoms for education began. Henceforth, Judaism would learn the heavy task of holding to the promises of Jehovah under the unfavorable tutelage of gentile masters.

The Second Babylonian Assault on Jerusalem--Jehoiakim's 11th Year

Behind the walls of Jerusalem, Jehoiakim chaffed at serving Nebuchadnezzar.

Babylonian forces again crossed into Israel and met the Egyptians in fierce battle, where the Babylonian chronicles admit, “they inflicted heavy losses on each other.” Emboldened by the heavy Babylonian losses, Jehoiakim rebelled in the 8th year of his reign. Here, the Babylonian chronicles shed some light on intermediate events. During Jehoiakim's 9th year, Nebuchadnezzar organized his army and chariots. During the 10th year, he subjugated all of present day Syria and while paying special attention to a pre-emptive strike against the Arabs (Moab and Ammon), where much booty and numerous gods were reported as the trophies. These opportunistic raids during the political breakdown in the region are noted in 2 Kings 24:2.

Possibly the reason for this strategic move was that the camel-mounted Arab raiding parties could emerge in quick strikes over long distances and these were a constant threat to supply lines. At this point, in Jehoiakim's 11th year, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem with the intent of bringing Jehoiakim in fetters to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:6). While the Jewish historian Josephus was confused on these issues, misreading the point of the various texts, we know from the Babylonian records (which Josephus would not have known) that Nebuchadnezzar left Babylon “in the month Kislev” (month 9). Apparently at this point, or shortly after the start of the siege, Jehoiakim died. The testimony of 2 Kings 24:1 does not mention his deportation, and one of two scenarios could harmonize the testimony:

- Jehoiakim died, and his body was cast out in disgust by his subjects near the walls of Jerusalem--thus fulfilling the prophecy of Jeremiah that Jehoiakim be given “the burial of an ass” (Jeremiah 22:19; 36:30). This horrific, unprecedented action against a deceased king might well have been an unsuccessful attempt to placate the besieging Babylonians.
- Jehoiakim died, and his body was interred conforming with 2 Kings 24:6 which says that, “he slept with his fathers.” At the conclusion of the siege, his tomb was desecrated and his body, after being in the tomb for three months and not completely decomposed, was cast forth as prophesied.

The Second Babylonian Capture of Jerusalem--The Short reign of Jehoiachin

With Jehoiakim's death, either his eight year-old, or likelier, eighteen-year old son, Jehoiachin, became king. During his exceedingly short reign of three months and ten days (2 Chronicles 36:9) he also managed to elicit the ire of the chroniclers who noted his evil. Again from the Babylonian chronicles in the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar, on arriving at Jerusalem:

"He [Nebuchadnezzar] encamped against the city of Judah and on the second day of the month Adar [month 12, February-March] he captured the city and seized its king."

From Chronicles: "And when the year was expired, king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 36:10).

The Appointment of Zedekiah and the Loss of Temple Furniture

With Jehoiachin deported to Babylon, his uncle, the twenty-year old Zedekiah, a king to Nebuchadnezzar's "liking" was set up as the king in Jerusalem. What is most important to note here is that with this deportation, the Babylonians also carried off "the goodly vessels of the house of the Lord." Apparently some of the lesser vessels were not taken.

During the reign of Josiah, Jeremiah had already prophesied about the loss of the Ark, and in a note of hope and deep understanding, the ability of God's people to see a blessing beyond this immediate loss (Jeremiah 3:16,17). From 2 Kings 24:13, it is generally concluded that this stripping of temple treasures included all the golden furniture of the temple, or at the least their gold coverings. Specifically this would mean, the Ark of the Covenant, the angels in the Most Holy, the incense altar, the candlesticks and table of showbread. The Hebrew suggests that these were violently torn from their moorings on the floor and removed to Babylon. We are not left to conjecture about the state of the priesthood for we are directly told:

"Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem."--2 Chronicles 36:14

The very place where God once was pleased to set his name and sanctify it now lay stripped of its most precious treasures save minor vessels and the enormous brass pillars and laver of Solomon. It is likely that the very mass of the pillars and the lavers protected them by making them too cumbersome to trundle off to Babylon (Jeremiah 27:19-22). The chroniclers conclude by noting that there was "no remedy" for the nation's apostasy (2 Chronicles 36:16). The worship of Jehovah at his temple had ceased.

The Third Babylonian Assault and Destruction of Jerusalem --Zedekiah's Rebellion

Jeremiah specially entreated Zedekiah to accept Judah's subjugation to Babylon. However, he was generally ignored and reviled as an agent of doom whose words would only serve to discourage a vigorous defense of Jerusalem. Jeremiah continually found himself in open arguments with false prophets who disastrously counseled rebellion against Babylon and spoke of how the vessels of the temple would soon be returned (Jeremiah 27:15,16). One such false prophet named Hananiah broke off from Jeremiah's neck the yoke that Jeremiah had been

instructed to carry by the Lord (Jeremiah 27:2). Hananiah then falsely prophesied that the return of the vessels and the captives would take place within two full years (Jeremiah 28:3).

Urged on by these false prophets, and his nobles, Zedekiah rebelled in the 9th year of his reign and met with swift response from Babylon. The leaders in Jerusalem seriously underestimated the determination and skill of the Babylonians at siege warfare. For example, we know in historical retrospect that the blockade and siege of Tyre by Babylon after the fall of Jerusalem was to continue unabated for 13 years, followed by an economic blockade for the entire remaining period of Babylon's dominion.

In contrast to the pious outpouring of repentance by good king Hezekiah that delivered Jerusalem from outright conquest by the Assyrians, king Zedekiah had no such inclinations toward piety and repentance. Nevertheless, Zedekiah's continual appeals to Jeremiah and his fear of his own noblemen should these conferences be discovered indicate that he was far from fully persuaded of the wisdom of this rebellion (Jeremiah 38:14-23). The defenders at Jerusalem had been promised assistance by Egypt, but the relief force was driven back. At the same time, Edom came in as a Babylonian ally (Obadiah 10-14; Lamentations 4:21; Psalm 137:7).

The horrors of the siege of Jerusalem are graphically related in the book of Jeremiah. The process of ramp construction and breaching walls with the siege engines of the day was slow, and the general strategy was to starve out the inhabitants while the invading force remained strong and well-supplied. In the 11th year of Zedekiah, the invading army broke through on the day of national disaster, the 9th of Ab (July/August) as if to further emphasize the Lord's hand in this matter. Zedekiah's miscalculation brought destruction by fire on Jerusalem, the deliberate wrecking of the city's walls, gates, and main public structures; the destruction of his own family; his personal blindness at the hand of the Nebuchadnezzar's armies; and the near complete deportation of all but the poorest inhabitants. The polity of Israel ceased.

Concluding Question

The difference between the chronology we have learned and the chronology accepted by historians regarding the conquest of Jerusalem is repeatedly raised as a criticism of Bro. Russell's scholarship. Many readers of The Herald are aware that a divisive debate on this question is ongoing within the Bible Student movement regarding this very point.

The question is: Should we agree that Babylon's conquest of the Holy Land began in 607 B.C., 2520 years before 1914 A.D., or should we accept the 19-year difference of the Bowen-Barbour chronology?

The answer to this question moves beyond the merely historical into the realm of organizational psychology and change management. Whatever we may answer in our consciences before the Lord as individuals and organizationally, let us consider this: We today, living in the 21st century are the stewards of the mysteries of God, and it is required of a steward both that he be found faithful (1 Corinthians 4:1-6), that dogmatic zeal not according to knowledge is blinding (Romans 10:2), and that our knowledge must always be interpenetrated with love or we are nothing (1 Corinthians 13:2).

Cleansing the Temple **The Maccabean Revolt**

*It was at Jerusalem the feast of dedication [Hanukkah], and it was winter.
--John 10:22*

Michael Brann

Of all the famous wars involving the nation of Israel described in this issue, only one is still memorialized with an annual day of celebration. It is called the Feast of Hanukkah (or Chanukah). The feast originated with the Maccabean Revolt, also referred to as the Maccabean Wars. It commemorates a great event in the history of the Jewish people--one that left an imprint on the entire future course of Jewish history and, to a certain extent, upon world history.

The feast of Hanukkah commemorates the social and political independence of the Jews. It recalls the period of history when a few zealous people fought to maintain their customs and practices against the oppressive might and strength of invaders who wanted only to destroy them. It is a story of the weak overcoming the strong, another “David” battling “Goliath.”

Historical Setting and Timeline

The Maccabees--a family name also known as the Hasmoneans and historically referred to as the Hasmonean Dynasty--took on national prominence in 168 B.C. There were two significant aspects weighing on Jewish life during this time, one spiritual aspect, the other socio-political.

First, there was a period commonly referred to as “the silent years” or the “silent centuries” where there was no “authorized” prophet from the LORD to give Israel focus and direction. This period of time began with the last prophet Malachi and ended with John the Baptist--a span of nearly 400 years! Malachi lived and prophesied around 400-350 B.C., while John began his ministry in 29 A.D.

Second, the social and political life of the Jews was under intense pressure. Having been under foreign control since their return from Babylonian captivity in the sixth century, Israel now found itself in the midst of a struggle for supremacy between the Greco-Egyptian and the Greco-Syrian empires. First one dominated Israel, then the other according to the fluctuating fortunes of war. The Grecian empire eventually gave way to the conquering power of Rome.

Under these circumstances it was only natural for someone to rise up and lead the people. In fact there were many who made such an attempt, spiritually and politically. It was during these “silent years” that many of the political/religious parties raised their voices in an attempt to be recognized as the mouthpiece of the Lord. The Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Hasidim, and Herodians all emerged during this time. There were also the Maccabees.

The Revolt

The Maccabean Revolt began in 168-167 B.C. when the Romans expelled Antiochus Epiphanes from Egypt, a man who began to vent his rage upon the Jews. He massacred vast numbers of Jews on their Sabbath day, took many captive, erected a fortress on Mt. Zion, and attempted to abolish all vestiges of Jewish worship and practice. The Temple was dedicated to the false god

Zeus, and upon the newly erected altar a pig was sacrificed! (The apocryphal book of Maccabees, apparently quoting Daniel 11:31, calls this act the “abomination of desolation.”)¹

Subsequently, a representative of Antiochus came to Modin, a town 17 miles northwest of Jerusalem, to enforce the new royal edict opposing and obliterating the national Jewish practices of worship. One of the local priests, Mattathias by name, refused the orders. He then publicly declared his determination to live and die in the religion of his fathers. When another Jew sought to profane the altar, Mattathias not only slew him, but the king’s commissioner as well. Then, offering himself as a rallying-point for all that were zealous for the Law, he fled to the mountains. Many families followed his example. He and his five sons led a guerrilla-type war that lasted for several decades, seeking to maintain and enforce the observance of their Jewish life and practice.

Within the first three years, this ragtag army, utilizing only spears plus bows and arrows, fighting against the seemingly endless array of the well-trained and well-equipped mercenary Syrian army, entered Jerusalem in victory. They cleaned out the abandoned and profaned Holy Temple and sought to purify the holy places and restore its worship. Precisely three years to the day of Antiochus’ profaning the temple, the Maccabees, under Judas, one of the five sons of Mattathias, rededicated the altar in the Temple with a great ceremony. The feast lasted eight days with the lighting of the menorah. Tradition has further added that when they entered the Temple, they found just enough holy oil to light the lamp for one day, but miraculously, it lasted for eight days. Several years later, this act was commemorated and fashioned into an annual holiday for the Jews. Legal Jewish worship was now restored to the nation!²

Continuing Conflict

After the death of the fifth son of Mattathias, the Hasmonean Dynasty began a slow descent into ignominy. The Bible had always separated the two offices of priest and king, the former to be from the tribe of Levi, the latter from the tribe of Judah (Numbers 3:6-9; Genesis 49:10). The Maccabean family traced its descent from Levi, not Judah. Now, the Dynasty acted more like a priest-king in Israel. They sought recognition from Rome and engaged in the same kind of political intrigue, self-aggrandizement, and bloodshed as those they had just conquered. Rome became arbiter of many internal disputes, paving the way for the Romans to take matters into their own hands. Finally, Rome came against Jerusalem in A.D. 63, squelching the Jewish revolt of A.D. 66-70, ending the last remnants of Jewish autonomy for which the Maccabees had struggled. Perhaps the last vestige of the original spirit of the Maccabean revolt occurred in 132-135 A.D. under the leadership of Simon bar Kosebah. This resulted in the final expulsion of the Jews from Palestine and Jerusalem became a Roman city. The Jews themselves entered upon a worldwide exodus, living without a state until 1948 when the modern state of Israel was established.

The early triumph of the Hasmonean Dynasty was soon overshadowed by its own corruption. The story of Hanukkah became largely ignored within a few decades after it originated. Soon, however, as Rome’s crushing power started to be felt and the scattering of the Jews began, the people saw in the story of Hanukkah a message of hope that perhaps a new “Maccabean family” would arise and their national independence would be restored.

Today’s Legacy of the Revolt

From the time of the Roman conquest until the nineteenth century, the feast of Hanukkah celebrating the victory of the Maccabees and the lighting of the torches (symbolizing the bringing

of the light of truth into a dark place) was considered as only a secondary festival. Then Zionism appeared on the scene as a major force. While the notion of the miracle of oil fell into disfavor under the age of rationalism and enlightenment, the Maccabees became models of the heroic Jew willing and able to fight for his rights. That initial miracle of the few against the many, the weak gaining victory over the strong, gave Zionists and the early settlers in Israel hope and courage.

Throughout the Holocaust, some salvaged bits of butter to fuel small flames in hollowed potatoes, thanking God for the miracle of Hanukkah, believing like their former comrades, that with him all things were possible. Although six million individual Jews perished during this time, they strongly believed that the Jewish people would survive. In 1948, the new emerging state of Israel was likened to the victorious Maccabees of old, surviving and thriving in spite of the tremendous forces arrayed against them.

Today, and especially in America, Hanukkah is sometimes called the “Jewish Christmas” because of its proximity to December 25. Unfortunately, its real meaning and significance are often overlooked. For the observant Jew, as well as any enlightened assimilated Jew, the feast is gaining new impetus. It is being called by a new name as well: the Hasmonean Festival or the Festival of the Maccabees. In Israel, it is observed as a national patriotic holiday.

Practical Lessons

Although the Feast of Hanukkah and the Maccabean revolt are based in Jewish history and practice, many lessons can be learned from this account. The hope it inspires in anyone who feels a lack of ability to succeed when faced with enormous obstacles is certainly one important lesson. How often we need to put our hope and trust in the Lord and in the power of his might in time of need. How often we have been miraculously rescued from the terror of night or the arrows of enemies, spiritual pestilence and plagues that seem certain to overwhelm us!

We may also see in this story the nation of Israel itself, soon to be cleansed and purified as a people made ready to be used by the Lord. The people will take a stand for the Lord and the truth against the mighty host gathered against them in the battle of the great day of the Lord Almighty. Since they will be walking in the paths of righteousness, on that great Highway leading to holiness and eternal life, all who choose to follow their example will be led to the same condition! (See Isaiah 35; Ezekiel 20:34-38; Joel 1:15; 2:2-11; 3:2,9-17; Acts 15:14-18; Romans 11:25,26.)

On a grander scale we, as Christian students of the Bible, see in these events a story of hope of deliverance from Satan and his host, the great oppressor of mankind. He too, like the Syrian army of old, is well-equipped and well-trained in the art of war, using ignorance, superstition, sin, and death as his main offensive weapons. We see a grander picture of the Maccabean resistors in the form of Jesus Christ, head and body, coming to the rescue of the downtrodden, to liberate all mankind from the shackles of Satan, sin, and death (Psalm 72:11-14; John 5:28,29; Galatians 3:27-29). Praise be to the Lord!

1. Although many similarities exist between Daniel 11:31,36 etc. with the account of Antiochus Epiphanes profaning Jewish rites, we do not agree that this is the correct identification of the “abomination which maketh desolate.” Antiochus IV, who called himself “Epiphanes” or “God manifest among men” was merely a partial fulfillment at best. When our Lord spoke about this “abomination” some 200 years later, he spoke of it as something future from his own day (see Matthew 24:15). For a fuller explanation and application of its true identity to the Roman Catholic institution of the Mass, see *Studies in the Scriptures*, vol. 2, ppg. 267-366.

2. Perhaps due to prejudice, ignorance, apathy or contempt, there is very little documentation regarding the wars and activities of the MaccabI and II Maccabees. The historian Josephus also is heavily relied upon. Apart from this, eans. Most of the information about them is found in the apocryphal literature of not much can be gleaned. Hebrew and other classical writings offer scant fragments. It was not until the second or third century that the Rabbis formulated much of Judaism's ceremonies as they are practiced today, some three to four hundred years after the original event. There is probably some truth and error mixed into the story of Hanukkah, but there is little doubt as to the occurrence of the Maccabean revolt against the desecration of their society.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! **The Fall of Jerusalem to Rome**

They will fall by the edge of the sword and be carried off as captives among all the nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.--Luke 21:24 (International Standard Version)

Leonard Griehs

In the days preceding his arrest, Jesus likely spent more time at the temple in Jerusalem than he had during the entire preceding three years of his ministry. The temple of Jesus' day was not the same temple that Solomon had built. That first temple was destroyed by Babylon when it invaded and ransacked Jerusalem in the early 6th century B.C. This was the second temple, rebuilt when the Israelites returned from Babylon following seventy years of captivity. The temple had been extensively modified and extended by Herod the Great just prior to the time Jesus was born. Josephus reports that the building continued until well into the middle of the first century A.D. It was this renovation of the temple that Jewish leaders referred to when they argued with Jesus early in his ministry: "This Sanctuary has been under construction for forty-six years, and you're going to rebuild it in three days?" (John 2:20).

Jesus' Prophecy of Destruction

The first temple built by Solomon stood for almost 400 years; this second one had stood for almost 600 years. The temple was the glory of Israel. Its splendor rivaled the Pyramids of Egypt, the Parthenon of Greece, and the state buildings of the Roman Forum. In Egypt, Greece, Persia and even in the undiscovered New World, temples adorned the cities as the focal point for the citizenry. Archaeologists have discovered many of these temples still whole, or at least with many of the stones still intact despite so many years. The disciples must have thought it incredible that Jesus would even think that Israel could exist without a temple! It was to the devout Jew the most magnificent spot in the world.

At the center of the land in which Jesus performed his ministry was the holy city of Jerusalem. At the center of city life in Jerusalem stood the temple. This was the last in a series of temples spanning ten centuries of Jewish history. It had been rebuilt by Zerubbabel with 42,000 others who returned from Babylonian captivity. Herod the Great started a further reconstruction in about 20 B.C. He expanded the temple area and extended the large courtyard. To do that Herod built retaining walls over 150 feet high and flattened the top of Mt. Zion, the hill on which it rested.

The attraction of the temple was unquestionable: constructed of wood and polished limestone overlaid with gold and silver, its glory was revealed each day when the sun rose and reflected off the gold. Every devout Jew in Jerusalem looked to Mt. Zion and the temple as a constant reminder of God's presence with them.

Despite their magnificence, Jesus prophesied that both the temple and Jerusalem would be laid waste in the not too distant future. During his last visit there "as Jesus left the temple and was walking away, his disciples came up to him to point out to him the temple buildings. But he said to them, You see all these things, don't you? Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another that will not be torn down" (Matthew 24:1,2).

One authoritative source says: "When the building burned, it is reported the decorative gold on

the walls melted and ran into the seams between the stones. Afterward, in an attempt to recover the gold, Roman soldiers dismantled the stone walls, resulting in the present ruined condition of the esplanade” (*The World History of the Jewish People, Society and Religion in the Second Temple Period Jewish History*, Jerusalem Masada Publishing Ltd., 1977, p. 123).

Roman Changes Impact Israel

The disciples did not realize the impact of Jesus’ words. Not only the temple would fall, but Israel as a nation would cease to exist for over 1800 years. A turn of events in Roman rule provided the impetus that shook the very foundation of Jerusalem polity and began the downward spiral that led to the fulfillment of Jesus’ predictions.

After Herod the Great died, Caesar Augustus divided the territory incorporating Israel into three sections. He appointed each of Herod’s three sons to rule over a portion. Herod’s son Archelaus (Matthew 2:22) was appointed to govern Jerusalem and Judea. He proved so inept that the Romans removed him within a few years. The Emperor Tiberius then assigned a series of Roman governors, or procurators, to rule over the area instead. One of these procurators was Pontius Pilate.

Pilate was a mature man when he received the appointment. He had no claims to greatness though he did have ambition. Pilate had married into Roman royalty. His wife, Claudia Procula, was said to be the granddaughter of Caesar Augustus. Claudia had the unusual enjoyment of accompanying her husband to his governorship, a further indication that her connections may have been instrumental in obtaining his appointment. Since Pilate is not noted in Roman history prior to this appointment, his marriage to Claudia was likely the reason he received this important assignment on the appeal of his friend Sejanus, an aspirant to the throne of Tiberias Caesar.

Sejanus, sole Prefect of the Guard, enjoyed powerful connections to senatorial houses and had gained the position of Tiberius’ closest friend and advisor. As Sejanus’ public profile became more and more pronounced, his statues were erected in public places, and Tiberius openly praised him as “the partner of my labors.”

Sejanus convinced Tiberius that Pilate should be made Governor of the Jews. Pilate despised the Jews. He traveled with a complement of some 500 men who frequently beat or even slew protesting crowds of Jews. Despite his frequent encounters with the priests and rulers, the Jews in Judea enjoyed a fairly peaceful period under Tiberius and Pilate. The peace ended abruptly when a new Emperor, Claudius, came to rule in Rome. During his tenure, Israel came to the brink of destruction.

Claudius Nero Germanicus (41-54 A.D.) was the third emperor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. His reign produced a sea change in Roman rule. Claudius was no supporter of the ruling elite. He promoted administrators who were outside the senatorial and equestrian classes. He initiated the full-scale annexation of Britain as a province of the Roman Empire. However, it was his relationships with his wives and children that highlighted the difficulties of succession faced by all Roman Emperors. Claudius adopted his fourth wife’s son, L. Domitius Ahenobarbus, who was to reign catastrophically as Nero and bring the Julian dynasty to an end.

It was Claudius’ appointments of rulers in Judea and Jerusalem that created the springboard for the destruction of Israel. He appointed the young grandson of Herod the Great, Agrippa I, to rule over Judea and Jerusalem. Agrippa’s reign was short (he died in 44 A.D.--see Acts 25:22 to 26:32) but it stirred up Jewish nationalism which was further inflamed by a series of Roman

procurator political blunders. When the procurator Florus raided the temple treasury in 66 A.D., full-scale rebellion broke out. The revolt went on for four years and ended in the destruction of Jerusalem, the death or capture of its inhabitants, and the fulfillment of Jesus' words about the destruction of the temple. Among the captives taken by the Romans was Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian who recorded the events in *The Wars of the Jews*.

The Siege of Jerusalem Under Titus

In 70 A.D. a newly appointed Emperor, Vespasian (69-79 A.D.), commissioned his son Titus to put an end to the revolt in the Roman province of Judea. On Passover of that year, General Titus surrounded the city crowded with Jews attending the Feast according to the Jewish law. Titus gave orders for his men to construct a wall outside the city gates to prevent those inside from escaping. He then attacked from the northern part of the city, from the Antonio Fortress, and from the north wall of the temple itself. The fighting lasted 143 days. Josephus says that many thousands died --some by famine as the food resources of the city disappeared, and others by the sword in the fierce fighting that took place on the city walls.

The calamities that fell on Jerusalem during the five-month siege were an eerie reminder of the prophecy of Jesus: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then understand that its devastation is near. Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, those inside the city must leave it, and those in the countryside must not go into it. For these are the days of vengeance when all that is written will be fulfilled. How terrible it will be for those women who are pregnant or who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath on this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be carried off as captives among all the nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."--Luke 21:20-24

Because of the huge number of people who were in the city to attend Passover, the stores of provisions inside the city ran out quickly. Fifteen pounds of wheat sold for the equivalent of 15 years' wages. Josephus says that the hunger in the city was so great that men chewed the leather of their belts, sandals, and sword sheaths. At night, hordes of people snuck outside the city walls looking for wild plants. When caught, they were tortured and put to death. Those who returned were robbed of their findings. Famine and pestilence spread quickly. Starvation was the common cause of death. Brother turned against brother as natural affection vanished. Husbands turned against wives; wives turned against husbands. Children were seen grabbing the food from the mouths of their elderly relatives.

The Roman soldiers sought to force the remaining inhabitants of the city to surrender. Prisoners who resisted were scourged, tortured, and crucified in plain view in front of the city walls. Josephus says that hundreds were put to death daily in this manner--so many crosses were erected there was scarcely room to move among them.

Although Josephus was a Jew, he had been adopted by a Roman and was hired by the Romans to write a history of the events of the fall of Jerusalem. Undoubtedly his history was to portray the Romans in a favorable light. Although he claims that Titus would have spared the temple had the Jews surrendered, it is highly doubtful that Titus was that concerned about preserving the temple, as glorious as it was. Josephus himself claims to have made an appeal for the leaders to surrender and save the temple, but even this claim must be viewed with skepticism.

Various histories exist regarding the final days of the siege, many with conflicting accounts of the battle. The most credible reports suggest that the priests had decided they would not extend the

fight past the ninth of Av (equivalent to our month of August), the day that commemorated the fall of Solomon's temple to the Babylonians. When that day came, the Jewish resistors moved to attack the Roman soldiers outside the gate in what would be their final stage of the rebellion. Histories conflict as to whether it was a Roman firebrand hurled by a soldier into the temple proper that ignited the cedar walls, or a Jewish arrow aimed at the Roman garrison that ignited the tar that covered the temple roof, which began the destroying fire that would destroy the temple. As the flames rose skyward, all Jerusalem came alive with the screams of horror at the sight of the once-sacred second temple going up in smoke on the same day in history in which the first one had fallen to the Babylonian invaders. Titus and his troops broke through the walls and the final days of the siege began.

In *The History of the Jews*, book 16, Milman writes: "The slaughter within was even more dreadful than the spectacle from without. Men and women, old and young, insurgents and priests, those who fought and those who entreated mercy, were hewn down in indiscriminate carnage. The number of the slain exceeded that of the slayers. The legionnaires had to clamber over heaps of dead to carry on the work of extermination."

Within two months, the Roman soldiers had hunted down the last holdouts. They systematically laid waste to the towers surrounding the temple mount. Only the outside wall on the western side of Mt. Zion was spared. Every sacred piece within the temple was carried away. The temple was razed and the Holy of Holies was obliterated. It is estimated that 600,000 may have died in the siege and another 90,000 taken captive. In the few years that followed, the last Jewish holdouts, camped on Masada, would take their own lives; Jerusalem's very name would be wiped out through its conversion into a Roman outpost called Aelia Capitolina; and the Jewish people would be scattered and temporarily erased from history. "For these are the days of vengeance when all that is written will be fulfilled" (Luke 21:22).

Poems and Short Features

Babylon Is Fallen

Hail the day so long expected, hail the year of full release.
Zion's walls are now erected, and her watchmen publish peace.
Through our Shiloh's wide dominion, hear the trumpet loudly roar;
Babylon is fallen, is fallen, is fallen, Babylon is fallen to rise no more.

All her merchants stand with wonder, What is this that comes to pass?
Murm'ring like the distant thunder, crying "O, alas, alas."
Swell the sound ye kings and nobles, priest and people rich and poor;
Babylon is fallen, is fallen, is fallen, Babylon is fallen to rise no more.

Blow the trumpet in Mount Zion, Christ has come the second time.
To rule with a rod of iron, all who now as foes combine.
Babel's garments we've rejected, and all our fellowship is o'er;
Babylon is fallen, is fallen, is fallen, Babylon is fallen to rise no more.

The Destruction of Sennacherib

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

—George Gordon, Lord Byron

Our Acceptable Prayer

Words: Andrew Horwood

Music: Theresa Parkinson

1. Our Fa - ther in Hea - ven Who dwells in the light, Whose
2. Thou sen - dest in the rain and the snow from the sky To
3. On Earth is in re - bel - lion: in the Hea - ven Thy law, Where
4. Thy saints in lu - mi - ty here up - on Earth hearts: Seek
5. The world and her prince would from Thee turn our hearts: Oh

name is E - ter - nal, Whose li - mit - less might Did
wa - ter the earth and give men Re - venge their sup - ply Of
an - gels at - tend - ing Thee in what oft snares and call awe. Oh
not for their own - - from his snares and his darts. But
lead us a - way

spread out the Hea - vens a King - dom to own To
grain and the of re - bel - lion, Thy cloth - ing to wear, Oh
crush the ment and is food e - vil for de - liv - rance we store hand pray, Fill the
rai - time it is e - vil for de - liv - rance we store hand pray, Thy

all Thy cre - a - tion Thy glo - ry make known,
send Thy out Thy Truth that Thy the glo - ry hide might hear,
Earth with Thy glo - siness; Thy the Thy face ple no more,
giv' - ness of sins glo - ry that Thy in Christ hide they might stand,
pow - er and glo - ry for ev - er and stand. aye.

News and Views

Pastoral Bible Institute News

Letters

I read the book review of *Philistine* in the May-June Herald and was disappointed by the heavy-handed negative comments. [Ramon Bennett's] comments are substantiated not by news clippings but by significant literary sources. A number of brethren have read the book and found it worthwhile. [Bennett] is reaching people that we are not; and when the stones cry out, the message is there, but not as we might present it. Pastor [Russell] expressed the thought in the Reprints that the Great Company may give a message that will be specifically for the benefit of the Holy Remnant [of Israel]. Might Bennett's writing be a part of this beginning message?

--Mitchell Blicharz, California

World News

Religious

Five U.S. states sued the Vatican in federal court in Mississippi for racketeering, conspiracy and fraud, alleging that financier Martin Frankel tried to use the Catholic Church as a front to acquire insurance companies. The suit names a former Vatican judge, who has been arrested on criminal charges related to the Frankel case, as the Vatican's agent. The suit also claims that several high-ranking Vatican officials had varying degrees of knowledge about Mr. Frankel's attempts to acquire insurance companies through a supposedly Catholic charity he set up in 1998. Mr. Frankel has been charged with looting seven insurance companies he acquired through a trust. He allegedly used the money to acquire two mansions, a fleet of fancy cars, and to support a household of women. He fled the U.S. and was captured in Germany. According to the complaint, Mr. Frankel's plan was to set up a Vatican foundation he would secretly control. He offered to transfer \$55 million to the foundation and allow the Vatican to keep \$5 million. The Vatican denied any association with Frankel.

--The Wall Street Journal, 5/10/2002

36% of Americans believe that the Bible is the word of God and is to be taken literally. 59% believe the prophecies in the Book of Revelation will come true.

--Time, 7/1/2002

People have the right to go door to door to advocate for religious, political or other noncommercial causes without first getting the government's permission, the Supreme Court ruled in a lopsided constitutional victory for the ministry of the Jehovah's Witnesses. While drawing on a series of Supreme Court precedents that found constitutional protection for the nonconformist views of the Jehovah's Witnesses--who refuse to salute the American flag, for example--the decision today was not limited to religious expression. In his majority opinion, Justice John Paul Stevens noted that the ordinance appeared to apply to neighbors ringing one another's doorbells to solicit support for political candidates or improved public services. "It is offensive, not only to the values protected by the First Amendment, but to the very notion of a free society," Justice Stevens said, "that in the context of everyday public discourse a citizen must

first inform the government of her desire to speak to her neighbors and then obtain a permit to do so.”

--New York Times, 6/18/2002

There are a large number of JW pedophiles who have been reported to Watchtower authorities who then investigate and in nearly all cases say nothing to law enforcement agencies. Victims who report being sexually abused are in danger of being disfellowshipped (cutting them off from future eternal life according to church doctrine) if they bring a civil action against a church elder. Based on 1 Timothy 5:19 the church believes no accusation may be lodged against an elder unless there are two or three witnesses, unlikely in most child abuse cases. There are six million JWs worldwide, 16,000 congregations in the U.S., and 77,799 elders.

--Excerpted from Dateline NBC, 5/28/2002

Social

The death toll from a weeklong heat wave that gripped southeastern India rose to 1,030 as reports trickled in from remote villages. Most of the dead were older people unable to bear temperatures that reached 122 degrees. The intense heat turned tin-roofed shanties into ovens. Ponds and rivers dried up, birds fell from the sky, and animals collapsed. The deaths occurred May 9 to May 15. The weekly toll is the highest for any recorded Indian heat wave.

--Los Angeles Times, 5/23/2002

For the first time in a decade, severe hunger is sweeping across southern Africa. The United Nations says that two years of erratic weather--alternating droughts and floods--coupled with mismanagement of food supplies have left seven million people in six countries at risk of starvation. Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Lesotho have already declared national disasters, and Mozambique and Swaziland are also struggling. Four million more people are expected to need emergency aid in the next few months as this season's meager harvest runs out, the United Nations says. The crisis reflects the continuing economic fragility of many African nations, even here in the continent's most prosperous region. Africa's leaders are increasingly demanding greater access to Western markets for their textiles and agricultural goods in the hope of strengthening nations where millions of people remain vulnerable to the vagaries of weather, government missteps and foreign charity. Over the last two years, severe drought, in between bouts of flooding, has battered the region once again. This time, the problem is complicated by the high incidence of H.I.V. infection along with the political turmoil in Zimbabwe and mismanagement in Malawi. The countries of southern Africa have the world's highest rates of H.I.V. infection, leaving millions of people vulnerable to the ravages of hunger.

--New York Times, 6/23/2002

Scientists combating malaria have created genetically engineered mosquitoes that do not transmit the lethal disease, a feat hailed as a milestone in the effort to conquer a pestilence that infects 300 million people every year. There are serious safety concerns and regulatory issues that must be resolved before any of these experimental insects could be released, experts said. There have been no approved releases into the wild of genetically modified insects. The work [was] published today in the scientific journal Nature. Not so long ago, malaria was all but eradicated in many parts of the world, mostly through large-scale public sanitation efforts and the use of prodigious amounts of insecticide. In an evolutionary arms race, however, mosquitoes have grown immune

to pesticides faster than new ones can be found, while the malaria parasite has become immune to most common medications. As the disease's resistance to drugs increases, malaria deaths have soared to 3 million a year. In Africa, where 90% of all malaria cases occur, the disease claims an African child every 30 seconds.

--Los Angeles Times, 5/23/2002

While drought continued to parch the West and fires blazed out of control in Colorado, the upper Midwest was hit this week with record flooding. Thunderstorms of window-rattling ferocity have touched down throughout the Midwest. Northern Minnesota took the worst pounding. In some places nearly 17 inches of rain beat down in 21 days. The Roseau River rose 15 feet in a flash. [It] crested at nearly 24 feet, 8 feet above the official flood stage and almost 3 feet above the previous high-water mark set in 1996. The [Roseau] sheriff said he flicked on the TV news Wednesday morning and watched the wildfires devouring the brittle forests of Colorado. Then he looked out the window at his waterlogged town, and wished, for a moment, that Mother Nature could see fit to even things out.

--Los Angeles Times, 6/13/2002

Civil

Three months ago, the directors of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moved the minute hand of their "Doomsday Clock" from nine minutes to midnight to just seven minutes to, in order to reflect the increased threat of nuclear war. The group, which was founded by scientists who had worked on the first atomic bombs in the Second World War, listed the continuing crisis between India and Pakistan over the disputed region of Kashmir as one of their concerns. The atomic scientists estimate that India has about 30-35 nuclear warheads, which is fewer than Pakistan. Some estimates have put the numbers higher: up to 200-250 warheads in India and around 150 in Pakistan. There are reports that India has enough material stockpiled to make 50-100 more nuclear weapons. Most of the warheads are thought to be below 20 kilotons, equivalent to 20,000 tons of TNT. This means they are comparable to the nuclear bombs detonated by the United States over Hiroshima in 1945. Estimates of the level of destruction that could be wrought by a nuclear war between India and Pakistan vary. However, the New York Times has reported that a recent intelligence assessment carried out by America's Defense Department predicted a frightening number of casualties. It says that in a full-scale nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan, up to 12m people could be killed immediately and up to 7m injured. This would have further cataclysmic consequences, overwhelming hospitals across Asia, and requiring a vast amount of foreign assistance to deal with radioactive contamination and famine and disease. Further deaths would come from the loss of homes, hospitals, water and energy supplies. Then there would be an unknown number of deaths from cancers that would develop in future years.

--The Economist, 5/28/2002

“Our greatest danger now isn’t that Russia is going to attack the U.S. with nuclear missiles,” says Joseph Cirincione, a nuclear expert with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “It’s that some group is going to get its hands on the growing number of nuclear warheads stored in less-than-secure conditions in Russia.” In a little-noticed report sent to Congress in February, the National Intelligence Council, an umbrella panel representing U.S. spy agencies, detailed the threat posed by stored Russian nuclear weapons. Poverty is rampant among Russian nuclear-weapons guards, it noted. Many are homeless, and some have conducted hunger strikes because they have not been paid.

--Time, 5/27/2002

Financial

WorldCom, the nation’s second-largest long-distance carrier, said that it had overstated its cash flow by more than \$3.8 billion during the last five quarters in what appears to be one of the largest cases of false corporate bookkeeping yet. The problem, discovered during an internal audit, throws into doubt the survival of WorldCom and MCI, the long-distance company it acquired in 1998. It may follow the pattern of Enron, Global Crossing and other companies laid low by accounting scandals since last fall. In an effort to avoid that fate, WorldCom said that it would cut one-fifth of its work force. Instead of the profit of \$1.4 billion the company reported in 2001 and \$130 million in this year’s first quarter, WorldCom now says it lost money during those periods. WorldCom’s board said it had fired its chief financial officer after discovering a strategy in which operating costs like basic network maintenance had been booked as capital investments, an accounting gimmick that enabled WorldCom to hide expenses, inflate its cash flow and report profits instead of losses. Particularly disturbing is that WorldCom had manipulated its cash flow statements, not just its reported earnings. Investors used to believe that cash flow was a more reliable indicator of a company’s financial health because the number could not be manipulated as easily as earnings, but that assumption now appears to be wrong.

--New York Times, 6/26/2002

It is known as the domino effect. Once used to describe the spread of communism, the phrase now more commonly refers to the spread of international financial crises, especially in emerging-market economies. But even there, the domino theory was until recently beginning to look dated: the catastrophic collapse of Argentina’s financial system, currency and even government at the end of last year appeared to have virtually no effect on other countries in the region. All that has now changed. As Argentina’s struggle to get to grips with its economic problems has dragged on, doubts are emerging about neighboring economies. Brazil, the largest economy in Latin America, has seen its currency fall, and the cost of servicing its foreign debts has soared. On June 20th, Uruguay abandoned its currency peg and floated its peso, which promptly sank by nearly 10% in two days. Ecuador, whose finance minister resigned on June 23rd in the wake of a bribery scandal, is finding its own corruption problems more difficult to handle because of nervousness about the region as a whole. Many Argentines, dismayed by the collapse of their economy, have blamed the outside world for its failure to help. On June 21st, Brazil’s currency, the real, fell to its lowest level since its creation in 1994 and investors grew nervous about the outcome of the presidential elections in October. Investors are concerned by the country’s public debt, now more than 55% of GDP: interest payments account for 9% of GDP.

--Economist, 6/24/2002

Israel

The construction of a 220-mile long fence along the pre-1967 border in Israel has become a window on Israel's evolving views on what should be done with the West Bank and Gaza lands. The fence, built out of overwhelming fear and insecurity, reflects an important evolution in public opinion. A Gallup poll published in November 2001 in Israel showed 59% of Israelis supported the creation of a Palestinian state. This shifting public opinion in Israel helps explain why Israelis support the fence and its location. It also brought to the fore a question that touches on one of the deepest divides in Israeli society: how much land can Israel cede without jeopardizing national security?

--Wall Street Journal, 6/24/2002

On June 17, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat angrily rejected American criticism of his regime, and he sent a strong message of defiance to the Bush Administration. "We don't take orders from anyone," declared Arafat, whose remarks were headlined and re-broadcast several times over state-run Voice of Palestine radio. Arafat was visibly vexed over newspaper interview remarks by Dr. Condoleeza Rice, the Bush Administration's National Security Advisor, describing Arafat's regime as corrupt. Rice indicated that the Palestinian Authority was incapable of democratic reform under present conditions.

--The Media Line, 6/17/2002

Today people often must wait for months when they need an organ transplant. In the future, they may be able to simply give a tissue sample and then wait a week or two as the sample is used to custom-build the necessary organ, thanks to research conducted by Ph.D. candidate Gadi Pelled, DMD. He is to receive the prestigious Kaye Award for his work. Pelled explained that one of the major difficulties in creating bio-artificial organs is creating a network of blood vessels in the organ that can connect to those in the body. Working under the guidance of Associate Professor Dan Gazit, Dr. Pelled managed to grow and then combine cells from blood vessels and genetically engineered adult stem cells to create a three-dimensional, bio-artificial bone in the lab. Though Dr. Pelled only has conducted research related to bio-artificial bone thus far, the method he invented can be applied to any tissue that has blood vessels, he said. Dr. Pelled's technology has been exclusively licensed to SBT, a start-up company founded by the Yisum Research Development Company of the Hebrew University and Prof. Gazit.

--Hebrew University news release, 6/2/2002

Israeli doctors have cured Tatiana Sofanova, a non-Jewish Russian woman who was blinded when she attempted to uproot a booby-trapped sign reading, "Death to the Jews." She was traveling on a highway near Moscow with her mother and daughter when she saw the sign. Offended by the message of hate, she stopped the car and tried to uproot the sign--and the ensuing explosion sent shrapnel into her right eye and caused bleeding in the left eye, and she was left practically sightless. The Union of Jewish Communities in Russia decided that this humanitarian case was its responsibility, and arranged an all-expenses-paid trip to the Ophthalmologic Department of Tel HaShomer Hospital in Israel, where in fact doctors were able to restore her eyesight.

--Arutz 7, 6/10/2002

Book Review

***Germ: Biological Weapons and America's Secret Wars.* Judith Miller, Stephen Engelberg, William Broad. Simon & Schuster, New York, 2001, 382 pages.**

Scientists recently determined that the anthrax powder sent through the mail in the fall of 2001 was made no more than two years before it was sent. This conclusion cast serious doubt on an alternate theory that the culprit had somehow obtained an old laboratory sample of powdered anthrax from a strain first identified in 1981.

The discovery of that 1981 strain is one of the subjects dealt with in *Germ*. Three New York Times reporters were stirred to investigate the 1997 decision by the Pentagon to vaccinate its 2.4 million soldiers and reservists against anthrax six years after the Gulf War ended. The team of reporters--a science writer, a foreign correspondent and an intelligence agency specialist--not only found their answer but also uncovered a half-century long secret history of germ weapon development. For more than twenty-five years the U.S. and U.S.S.R. competed in a race to develop biological arms--with sometimes devastating consequences. Although a treaty signed in 1972 banned biological weapons, the threat did not vanish. In fact, the Soviet Union expanded its program on a vast, industrial scale even testing its germs on unwitting human subjects.

The interest to Bible students may be best found in the opening chapter to the book titled *The Attack*. It is a thoughtful reminder of the potential of biological weapons in the hands of radical religions. In 1981 followers of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh had paid \$5.8 million for a remote 64,000 acre ranch in Oregon. Pressured by local authorities in September 1984, the group launched a biological siege on the citizens of The Dalles by introducing salmonella into the local restaurant food supply. It was a year later before the source of the salmonella was determined to have been the Rajneeshes. The government played down the attack to avoid panic and copycat strikes.

Germ is a well-documented (there are 50 pages of endnotes), well-written (Broad is a Pulitzer Prize winner), treatise on the horror of past germ warfare, and provides an excellent perspective on the current threat posed by rogue nations with access to the scientists who formerly worked on this decades-long program. Only the knowledge that the Lord is overseeing the affairs of man will prevent the reader from viewing the likelihood of biological warfare as a real possibility for destroying a great portion of the human race.

--Len Griehs