

God's Word. God has called us to be a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6; Rev. 1:6), and baptism is vital in explaining this to us. This should, perhaps, be our conclusion: that there are some things that words cannot adequately describe. How can we comprehend God's love for us, or what it means to be completely surrounded and covered by Christ (Rom. 8:38,39; Eph. 3:17-19; 1 Cor. 2:9)? We are all familiar with Romans 6, but how can we understand what death and resurrection actually feel like? How can we understand what it means to be clothed with righteousness or to be washed from our sins? It is almost like trying to understand infinity.

And so we have this simple command; God asks us to experience this complete submersion

"But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:14,15).

Your Letters



Joseph's "mother" in Genesis 37:10

In "By faith . . . : Leah" (Feb. 2005, p. 38), Sister Ray Walker states that the "mother" referred to in Genesis 37:10 "must have been Leah". I share the view of Brother Harry Whittaker (*Joseph the Saviour*, p. 10) that it is difficult to come to this conclusion since Leah apparently died in Hebron before Jacob went into Egypt (49:31) and would not have been in the company that went down into Egypt and bowed down to Joseph.

Old Testament words of relationship such as 'son', 'wife', 'brother', etc. often have a wider connotation. In Genesis 30 the handmaids of Leah and Rachel were both given to Jacob "to wife" (vv. 4,9). If, as is reasonable, we assume that Rachel's handmaid Bilhah was younger than her mistress, it is possible she could have lived to see Joseph in Egypt. Perhaps Genesis 37:2 reveals that Joseph had a special relationship with the sons of the handmaids, here called "wives".

Some woman had to nurse baby Benjamin and care for his brother. May not Genesis 37:2 be a clue that Rachel's handmaid became mother to the motherless boys of her dead mistress? Bilhah might by the time of Joseph's dream have been

in water to help describe all these things. Baptism is not a mystical act, nor can it save us on its own. Naaman was saved by Elisha's power, the Israelites by Moses' power, and the power of these two individuals came from God. It can, however, teach us.

It can teach us about humility and God's grace. It shows our faith and willingness to do God's will. It shows our desire for the spirit of God to dwell in us. We share these things with Noah, Israel, Naaman, Jonah, David, the priests, Jesus and others. Now it falls to us to make good the spiritual aspect of our baptism, the washing of the Word in our lives and our consciences. We can show the mind of Christ in our lives, with God's strength.

regarded by Jacob as Joseph's stepmother, as we would term her. She could have entered Egypt and fulfilled the dream.

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Britain and Tarshish

I would like to comment on the article "[Britain in Bible Prophecy](#)" (Jan. 2005, p. 17). It was encouraging to see the author, Brother Nigel Bernard, observe that Tarshish had clear connections to the Phoenicians and Tyre, ancient trade powers. In my opinion, when it comes to identifying Tarshish and her role in prophecy, this is about the only thing we can say with certainty.

While Brother Bernard's premise was that Britain is included in Bible prophecy through a link with Tarshish/Phoenicia, in my view he struggled to present us with substantive evidence for a connection, admitting that the archaeological evidence for a trade link between them was "understandably sparse". Yet in the same paragraph he asserts, "there is little doubt that it [Tarshish] relates to Britain". I find this overstated and unconvincing.

Let us assume that the ancient Phoenicians did trade for metals in Cornwall—the only possible link between Phoenicia/Tarshish and Britain—as Brother Bernard tries to establish in his article. What would this signify? The Phoenicians traded with numerous other areas around the globe as well. Apes, peacocks, spices, metals and ivory indicate quite a diversity and distance in their trading. There is even some evidence that they reached the Americas. But just because the Phoenicians traded somewhere it does not mean we can identify that location as modern Tarshish; there would be a myriad of Tarshishes if this were the criterion. We could argue for Tyre, India, parts of Africa and probably Brazil being Tarshish on the same basis.

If a Norwegian ship picks up goods in Egypt it does not mean the Egyptians are suddenly Norwegians. Yet if the ancient ships of Tarshish acquired tin from Britain we are being asked to believe that modern Britain is to be identified as Tarshish, and further interpretations of prophecy are based on this uncertain foundation.

It seems to me that it was simple and convenient for the ‘pioneers’ (along with most of their theological contemporaries) to identify the maritime power of Britain with Tarshish. They looked for fulfilment of Bible prophecy in their own time and sought things in their daily lives as prophetic indicators. No wonder Christadelphians of those times looked to the British Empire; they lived almost exclusively in British colonies. Why is it that we do not speak much about China, Peru or Indonesia fulfilling Bible prophecy? It is because any such interpretation would not relate to us in any significant way.

As time has gone on, and the world powers have shifted, we have had to make adjustments in our expectations. With the decline of the British Empire during the World Wars there has been a tendency to look more to the United States or the UN, the world’s police, as Tarshish, emphasising the terms “young lions”. Why? Because these new powers became relevant instead.

As the Cold War developed, it was easy to expect Communist Russia (the dark, looming bad guys) and the West (the people who look like us) to have a big showdown. Ezekiel 38, where Gog

and Tarshish are mentioned together, fits the bill. Why did we come up with this interpretation? Because it fits our world scene and our expectations.

But is this really a sound way of interpreting the Bible—on the basis of how it relates to *us*? Is not the Bible almost entirely about Israel and other nations that relate to her throughout history? Since Israel did not exist as a nation in the mid-1800s, the ‘pioneers’ seem to have overlooked this. The Bible is not about our Gentile nationalism or what is relevant to us. It is about Israel, how we might become a part of that “commonwealth”, and how other nations treat her. Just because Britain may be important in *our* lives does not mean that it is in Scripture. To me, grasping at ancient trade links between Phoenicians and Cornwall to support our personalised system of Biblical interpretation seems like a far cry from the real focus of the Bible.

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I thank Brother Pursell for his letter. It is true that just because the Phoenicians traded somewhere it does not mean we can identify that location as modern Tarshish. However, there are other criteria of identity, for example, the presence of iron, tin, silver and lead, a family of “young lions” and a close association with Sheba and Dedan. These and other criteria in my opinion point to Britain as Tarshish. Countries such as Peru or Indonesia are not referred to in the Bible and that is why they are not discussed by brethren in the context of prophecy. Some think China is referred to as Sinim, but this is by no means certain.

The suggestion that the pioneer brethren concentrated on countries such as Britain while Israel was “overlooked” is not correct. This is seen in the way Brother Thomas showed that Britain would play a role in the return of the Jews to the Land: “The possession, or ascendancy of Britain in Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, will naturally lead to the colonization of Palestine by the Jews” (Elpis Israel, p. 445). He was able to make such stunning predictions as this because of a correct understanding of prophecy, not least in relation to Britain as the latter-day Tarshish.—N.B.

Britain’s part in opening up the Land to the Jews is an abiding fact, witnessed by the existence of the State and having its continuing effects today. And the concern of the English-speaking world with the Middle East is far from being at an end.

John Carter, *God’s Way*, p. 223.