

a foul-tasting, sticky latex to discourage animals and other insects from eating the flesh. They also support colonies of ants that attack intruders, including parasitic wasps that prey on the fig wasps. Within the fig, the grubs hatch and grow rapidly. After two months the wingless males emerge first, from their galls within the figs, and immediately begin to search for females. They are equipped with powerful jaws, and bite their way into the galls in order to impregnate and then free the females. They then chop down the anthers of the male flowers, which have just matured, releasing the pollen for the females to store in their sacs.

The males' final task before dying is to join in a team to chew a hole in the outer layers of the fig to allow the females to escape and begin the cycle again. In one hour, millions of females may emerge from the figs of a single tree. They have only a few hours to find another tree and its figs before they will die. They can, however, be carried by the winds up to a hundred kilometres to find a new tree.

Meanwhile, the pollinated sycamore figs ripen and fall to the ground, providing a feast for many creatures, especially fruit bats. The tree is using these guests for its own purpose, however, because the seeds pass through them undigested and end up being dispersed over a wide area, ensuring that future generations of fig trees will

flourish, thanks to the essential assistance of their tiny insect partners.

An extraordinary partnership

In the fig tree and its tiny pollinators we have an example of an amazing partnership, between a tree which may live for hundreds of years and a minute insect which lives for only a few hours. Yet each is totally dependent upon the other for its continued existence.

Scientists claim that the intimate relationship between fig tree and fig wasp has evolved over a period of 90 or so million years. Indeed, it is referred to as a classic case of 'co-evolution'. However, we look in vain for any credible, detailed explanation as to how such a complex arrangement could have developed in tiny stages, and where the fossil evidence is to be found.

The careful design of each part of the fig fruit, with its narrow entrance and unique internal flowers, the way in which the alternate maturing of the male and female flowers and of the male and female wasps are perfectly synchronised, all speak of forethought and intelligence. Here truly is yet another graphic example of design in nature by the great God of heaven. The tree chosen by Him to represent His people (Hos. 9:10), and as a symbol of the fruitfulness of His Kingdom (Mic. 4:4), bears the unmistakable imprint of His design.

Your Letters



An attack on the Bible

I would like to comment on Brother Rees' letter ([Feb. 2006, p. 45](#)) as follows.

Richard Dawkins' recent media attack on Scripture may well reveal his deepening concern for the growing threat to his cherished belief in evolution, mainly due to recent quite devastating criticism from such highly qualified microbiologists as Denton and Behe. Dawkins now knows that at the biochemical level evolution cannot be defended, hence the familiar ploy of attacking the Bible to deter some of his adherents from reconsidering Intelligent Creation. Thus, as our Lord did with his own adversaries, we could respond: "Please give us your answer to swimming *Flagellums* and

the *Cilliums*,* and we'll answer your Biblical questions". But we shall provide answers anyway.

The questions about Divine severity are only difficulties to people such as Dawkins, whose conception of God is based entirely on human concepts. They have no godly fear. It is the clay advising the potter. Fear of God in Scripture is

* These are referred to in my review of Michael Behe's book, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* ([May 2005, p. 146](#)), which draws attention to the remarkable way in which these cells are able to swim. There is also a video/DVD available from the USA which could be shown at a public lecture on Creation. Try a Google search on 'Darwin's Black Box video'.

obviously very much more than respect, otherwise it would not be said to be "a fearful thing" to fall into His hands, or that He is "a consuming fire" (Heb. 10:31; 12:29). God is most certainly a God of love to all who love to fear Him and do not fear to love Him. The clay and potter concept of Romans 9 is not mere Biblical sentiment. God may do as He wishes with what He has created, and who are we to reply against Him?

In quoting Genesis 18, Dawkins has obviously not considered to what depth of debauchery the people of Sodom had sunk, in wishing to abuse visitors to their town in the way they so roughly demanded. The desperate measure that Lot chose to prevent it would not be defended by any Bible believer, and from that point of view it is no problem, especially since God swiftly interposed to rescue Lot from his acute dilemma.

Regarding the avenging of the Midianites in Numbers 31:17, Moses was only obeying what God had decreed (vv. 1,2). Likewise with Deuteronomy 13:6-11, God's jealousy against idols was not because of what they *were*, but because of what they *did*, for, with idolatry, immorality was almost always involved. Thus, in verse 10, the reason for God's punishment of the idolater is clearly given: "because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God". In rejecting God, Dawkins must then explain the origin of the laws of the universe and why there is mathematics that explains their functions. Besides all this, there is the fact that there is so much in nature that chance and random forces simply cannot explain.

Finally, we can take it as a compliment that Mr Dawkins feels free to attack the Bible openly, for we can be absolutely certain that he will never, as openly, question the Koran!

Malcolm Edwards
Boronia, Australia

Although I did not see the television programme mentioned by Brother Islwyn Rees, I appreciate his expression of distaste at the attack on the Bible and its Divine Author. He lists three passages which Richard Dawkins mentioned on that occasion, and requests a defence. I am sure Brother Rees will have his own defence at the ready, but wishes to encourage readers to think and react. Dealing with the passages in a different order, the following thoughts are my contribution.

Moses' command to Israel to "kill every male among the little ones, and kill every

woman that hath known man by lying with him" (Num. 31:17)

The attack on the Midianites was instigated by the Lord because they had deliberately seduced the Israelites and enticed them to worship the Moabite gods (25:1-3,17,18). This attack was the Lord's vengeance upon the Midianites (31:1-3). He had every right to decide what the punishment of the Midianites should be. The fact that none of the Israelite soldiers died is evidence that He was indeed the power behind this event (v. 49). It is also clear that the ultimate elimination of the Midianites as a nation, which did not come until later, was His aim, and that Moses was not deciding this for himself.

Of course, the Western world in the present generation is appalled by genocide, and this is a reasonable reaction when the genocide is instigated by humans. For believers in God, He is the ultimate authority, and without Him no one would exist. He may therefore decide that He has no further use for a nation that has become corrupt in His eyes.

God's command to stone to death any who taught others to worship false gods (Deut. 13:6-11)

Israel had been chosen by God to serve Him, and as a consequence was rescued from Egypt by the hand of Moses. This command in Deuteronomy is issued against any Israelite who might attempt secretly to undermine God's choice of Israel for Himself. His death was not something which one individual could decide for himself, but it required "the hand of all the people" to be involved (v. 9). This meant that there must have been an enquiry of some kind, such as that described in 17:2-7.

In a society where the presence and power of God had been so clearly demonstrated to their immediate parents, and more recently also to them, it would be perfectly legitimate to demand the sort of loyalty required by this passage.

Lot's action in offering his daughters to the men of Sodom (Gen. 19:8)

The circumstances of Lot's action are very different from the previous two passages, where God was giving a direct command. We must note that in Genesis 19 Lot is not being presented as fully justified in all his actions. Rather he is presented as an ordinary human being. For example, he does not wish to leave Sodom or his wider family while he can see no obvious emergency. When

he has been brought out he negotiates an easier journey to Zoar. Then, when the fire pours upon Sodom and Gomorrah, he is too frightened to stay in Zoar, and reverts to the angels' first suggestion of residing in the mountains.

In the earlier part of the angels' visit to Sodom, Lot began well by taking on a commitment to the visitors to look after them. When the threatening mob assembled outside his door, Lot was very brave to go out to reason with them. But as a man his options were limited. All he could really have done was to have stood before the door until they crushed him and beat the door down, and perhaps he should have left it at that. The mention of his

daughters may have been a ploy to distract the mob's attentions or play for time. Whether this be so or not, Lot's actions are his own responsibility and not God's. They cannot reasonably be used to attack God or the Bible.

Lot is not presented as an example of supreme faith. It is true that he is called "righteous" (2 Pet. 2:7,8). However, Peter goes on to say, "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations" (v. 9). In Lot's extreme dilemma of whether to sacrifice his guests or his daughters, he was delivered by the angelic power of his guests.

Stephen Green
Bracknell

Gleanings from the Land

Tony Benson

Israel expands its ports

ISRAEL'S TWO main ports are Haifa, developed by the British during their period of rulership of Palestine, and Ashdod, developed by Israel in the 1960s. There are ambitious plans for expanding both as part of a programme of improving Israel's infrastructure, which has already led to the opening of a new terminal at Ben-Gurion airport, the building of the Trans-Israel highway and major upgrades to the rail system.

The expansion of port facilities at Ashdod involves the creation of a new port north of the existing one. Work began in 1999 and is due to finish this year. It will more than double the capacity of Ashdod, and there are plans to incorporate up-to-date technology to speed the transit of goods and to provide security safeguards. Haifa already has a capacity greater than the combined capacity of the old and new ports of Ashdod, and plans are to double its capacity in two



PICTURE: TONY BENSON

Haifa, Israel's biggest port.

stages, the first of which has recently started and is scheduled to be completed in 2009. To accompany this doubling of Israel's port capacity along its Mediterranean coast, there is scheduled a development of other facilities, including a free-trade zone designed to encourage the Palestinian Authority and Jordan to trade through these ports.

All this involves an expectation of a period of economic growth in Israel and greater peace and prosperity in the Middle East,

developments in line with our traditional understanding of prophecy, though to an extent far exceeding that anticipated by the Brotherhood 150 years ago.

Source: "A port for all seasons", Hanan Sher, *Jerusalem Report*, 19 September 2005.

Development of the Negev

ANOTHER big development initiative in Israel concerns