

cannot be certain of her motives, but we do know that Jesus accepted that she had a genuine interest in spiritual matters because he then engaged her in a discussion on the nature of true worship and accorded her a rare privilege by revealing that he was the Messiah.

#### **An evangelist**

Excited by this revelation, the woman left her waterpot, returned to the city and spoke to the men: "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" (v. 30, RSV). It has been suggested that she spoke to the men because the women would have despised her as a whore. But surely the simple explanation is that the men, who sat at the gate of the city, would be the first people she would encounter. Moreover, if her past was so shameful, why did she mention it?

John tells us that many of the Samaritans believed because of her testimony, and that many more believed after Jesus had preached to them. The AV translation of verse 42, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves", appears to belittle her

achievement, but the correct translation is, "It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves" (RSV). Whilst we are not prepared to follow the Greek Orthodox Church in canonising her (as 'St. Photina'), we commend her for her work as an evangelist. Yes, she was a sinner, but there is no record that Jesus condemned her. The narrative concentrates on her conversion, and that is what should engage our attention.

#### **Conclusion**

None of our suggestions regarding the woman at the well has been proved. But our study has shown how easily prejudice can affect our opinion. If we begin with the assumption that Jesus's reference to five husbands was ironic then we can fit the narrative into that mould. On the other hand, if, as seems likely, Jesus was referring to five literal husbands, then the narrative fits into an entirely different mould. So an important lesson from this beautiful story is the fallibility of human judgement. As jurors we may express our verdict on this woman, but to pass judgement is God's prerogative.

## Metals in the Bible

### 4. Gold (Part 2)

Peter Hemingray

**I**N THIS ARTICLE we complete our two-part look at gold in the Bible by considering the art of the goldsmith and the symbolic use of gold in Scripture, including its appearance in the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw and the golden lampstand of the tabernacle.

#### **The goldsmith's art**

Gold's main use was for decoration, for example for jewellery and for the items of worship in the tabernacle and temple. Thus for the tabernacle Bezaleel "made two cherubims of gold, beaten out of one piece made he them, on the two ends of the mercy seat . . . And he made the candlestick of pure gold . . . all of it was one beaten work of pure gold" (Ex. 37:7,17,22). Beaten work was only one of the forms of work carried out by a goldsmith in ancient times; other forms were soldering (the joining of pieces of gold with a gold alloy of lower melting point) and casting. The fame of the ancient Hebrew artisans is car-

ried down to this day, for their names are recorded: Bezaleel the son of Uri (Ex. 31:2), Uzziel the son of Harhaiah (Neh. 3:8) and Malchiah the goldsmith's son (v. 31).

The Egyptians knew two methods of bonding metals: welding and soldering. As early as the Middle Kingdom little pieces of jewellery were welded together. The part which had to be added had a melting point slightly below that of the main part; it was heated until it became malleable and could be affixed. Then the whole artefact was heated over a ceramic furnace. A blowpipe with a clay nozzle was used to increase the heat. Because of the fact that the tongs (see the smith in the top left corner of [Figure 1](#) opposite) were made of bronze, with a melting point of 1030°C, below that of gold (1063°C) and barely above that of silver (950°C), quite a bit of dexterity was required of the artisan. Fast action was needed, before the tool heated up too much.



**Fig. 1 Ancient Egyptian goldsmiths at work**

Soldering was known from the time of the fourth dynasty at least. For soft soldering, tin (melting point 232°C) was used; when hard soldering or brazing pieces of gold, a mixture of gold, silver and frequently copper (melting point 1083°C) was applied. In order to deoxidize the metal surfaces, a flux was needed, possibly natron or lees of wine. Hard soldering was often preferred to the easier process of soft soldering as the artefact could be reheated without the bond melting. A goldsmith soldering can be seen in the top right of [Figure 1](#) above.

Such work is recorded by Isaiah: “The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold” (40:19). This is in the context of idol making, but the same techniques were used for the temple furniture, much of which was solid gold or gold covered (not gold plated—that technique had to await modern chemistry).

**Gold in symbolism**

There are many ways in which the richness, value and non-perishable nature of gold is referred to in the Bible. It is used of faith in perhaps six or seven passages, but in the 360 or so references to gold many other symbolic uses can be discerned, and are helpful when we consider the true message of the Bible. Some of the more significant symbolic uses of gold are in the [table](#).<sup>1</sup>

Thus, whenever we see the term ‘gold’ used, we have to look at the context, and decide if

1. Partially based on the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, under “Gold”.

The symbology of gold		
1	A symbol of the faithful and the trial of their faith	1 Corinthians 3:12; 1 Peter 1:7; Revelation 3:18
2	Stands for earthly riches	Job 3:15; 22:24; Isaiah 2:7; Matthew 10:9; Acts 3:6; 20:33; Revelation 18:12
3	Eternal things even more lasting than gold, normally considered imperishable	Proverbs 3:14; 8:10,19; 16:16; Acts 17:29; James 5:3; 1 Peter 1:18
4	Refining of gold a symbol of purifying of character by trial	Job 23:10; Proverbs 17:3; Malachi 3:3
5	The adornment of saints and angels	Psalm 45:13; Revelation 15:6
6	The head golden, as the most precious part of the body	Ecclesiastes 12:6; Song of Solomon 5:11
7	Babylon the golden city/empire	Isaiah 14:4; Jeremiah 51:7; Daniel 2:38
8	Crown of gold a symbol of royal honour	Revelation 4:4; 14:14
9	Wearing gold typifying lavish adornment and worldly luxury	Jeremiah 4:30; 1 Timothy 2:9; 1 Peter 3:3; Revelation 17:4
10	A symbol of nobility	Lamentations 4:1,2; 2 Timothy 2:20
11	Derisively of idols	Isaiah 2:20; 30:22; 40:19; Jeremiah 10:4; Habakkuk 2:19; Revelation 9:20

there is anything intended behind the simple literal sense, and if so, what. We cannot make a global declaration that gold symbolises tried faith. So let us take two examples—the head of the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw and the golden candlestick—and look in a little more detail at the symbolism involved.

#### The golden head of Daniel's image

The symbolic meaning of the various metals of the image is given in the text: the golden head represents the Babylonian Empire; the silver breast and arms the Medo-Persian Empire; the brass (or copper) torso the Greek Empire; the legs of iron the Roman Empire. However, it has also been suggested that the metals represent a devaluing of the form of their government:

- The Babylonian Empire was totally autocratic; the king was the absolute ruler, whose decrees could never be changed. The golden head represents a form of rule that foreshadows the ideal rule of the future Kingdom, a wise, all-powerful but absolute ruler.
- The Medo-Persian Empire was also ruled by an absolute monarch, but one whose decrees could be changed.\*
- The Macedonian or Greek Empire was governed by one who ruled by agreement between the city states.
- The Roman Empire was ruled by one who was at least nominally subject to the rule of the people via the senate.

#### The golden candlestick

We will look briefly at what is known of the golden candlestick in the tabernacle, and in the temples which succeeded it, before considering its significance.

**In the tabernacle.** The candlestick is described in Exodus 25:31-39 and 37:17-24. It was, with the utensils connected with it (snuffers, snuff dishes etc.), to be made of pure beaten gold, of one piece, a talent in weight (25:39). It consisted of a pedestal or base, a central stem (the term 'candlestick' is specially applied to this), six curving branches, three on each side, and seven lamps resting on the tops of the branches and stem. Stem and branches were ornamented with cups like almond-blossoms, knops and flowers, four of this series on the stem, and three on each of the branches. The shape of the pedestal is uncertain. Jewish tradition suggests three small feet, but the representation on the Arch of Titus in



Figure 2 Relief from the Arch of Titus built to commemorate his victory over Jerusalem

Rome of the candlestick taken from the temple in A.D. 70 (see Figure 2) has a solid, hexagonal base. The position of the candlestick was on the south side of the holy place (40:24).

**In the temple of Solomon.** In Solomon's temple, instead of the single golden candlestick there were ten, and the position was altered. The candlesticks were now placed in front of the holy of holies, five on one side, five on the other (1 Kgs. 7:49; 2 Chron. 4:7). Further details are not given in these texts, from which it may be presumed that the model of the tabernacle candlestick was followed.

**In the temple of Zerubbabel.** According to sources outside the Bible, the second temple reverted to a single golden candlestick. When the temple was plundered by Antiochus Epiphanes the candlestick was taken away (1 Macc. 1:21). After the cleansing of the temple following the successful revolt of the Maccabees, a new one was made by Judas Maccabæus (4:49,50).

**In the temple of Herod.** The same arrangement of a single golden candlestick, placed on the

\* I suggest that the difference between the Babylonian and Persian empires was that the Persian emperor was limited in what he could do by the fact that a decree once made could not be altered (Dan. 6:15), whereas the Babylonian emperor's power was absolute.—T.B.

south side of the holy place, was continued in Herod's temple.<sup>2</sup> It was this which, carried away by Titus, was represented on his arch in Rome.

The immediate object of the candlestick was to give light in the holy place. The lamps were lit in the evening and burned till the morning (Ex. 30:7,8; Lev. 24:3; 1 Sam. 3:3; 2 Chron. 13:11), light being admitted into the temple during the day by the upper windows. Josephus takes the seven lamps to signify the seven planets.<sup>3</sup>

In Zechariah's vision of the golden candlestick (Zech. 4:2) the seven lamps are fed by two olive trees, which are interpreted to be "the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth" (v. 14), Zerubbabel and Joshua, the civil and spiritual representatives of Yahweh.<sup>#</sup> The candlestick here, like the seven candlesticks in Revelation 1:20; 2:1, symbolises the ecclesia of God, then in its Old Testament form, the idea conveyed being that God's ecclesia is set to be a lightstand to the world. Compare Jesus's words in Matthew 5:14-16 and Luke 12:35, and also those of Paul in Philipians 2:15.

### Conclusion

Many passages concerning metals in the Bible are obscure unless one has a basic understanding of the technology behind them. This the writers evidently had, for they accurately reflect the ancient techniques and practices. Unfortunately, this knowledge was not present among most of the translators, nor many of the commentators, so I hope that what has been written in these articles on metals of the Bible has helped clarify some obscure passages. In addition, understanding the use of metals as symbols depends greatly on understanding the context, as has been demonstrated with a few examples. With many hundreds of passages involved in the topic, I have in these articles only scratched the surface of what can be a most interesting as well as a spiritually profitable study.

(Concluded)

2. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book 5, ch. 5.5.

3. *Ibid.*

# Or the two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah.—*D.J.B.*

## The other Jewish state

Tony Benson

IN THE LIFETIME of many of us there has come into existence an independent Jewish nation, the State of Israel, an event inconceivable even to students of Bible prophecy a hundred years earlier, yet a fact we now take for granted. It is truly a remarkable sign of the times.

But how many of us realise that Israel is not the only Jewish state to have come into existence in the twentieth century? Though Israel is the only truly independent Jewish state which has existed in modern times, there was once another Jewish state with a degree of autonomy, though falling short of complete independence. Where was this state and when was it established?

In 1934 the Soviet dictator Josef Stalin set up the Jewish Autonomous Region in eastern Siberia, near the border with China, and so far (5,000 miles) away from the western borders of Russia, where the greater part of the Soviet Union's Jews were living, that it was eight hours ahead in time. It all began in 1928, when Stalin, as part of a programme of setting up semi-autonomous regions (*oblasts* in Russian) for specific ethnic groups, decided to set up one for Jews. He said

it would be "national in form and socialist in content" and was deliberately designed to provide an alternative to Palestine (then under the British mandate and being settled by Jews from Europe) for Soviet Jews.

The territory selected by Stalin was about 36,000 square kilometres in area (Israel is about 22,000 square kilometres) and occupied by fewer than a thousand native people, mostly nomadic hunters. It is hot, humid and mosquito-ridden in summer and bitterly cold in winter. The government gave Jews who wanted to settle there land to cultivate, but they found it very hard work, as indeed did the Jews who settled in Palestine. The difference was that the Jews who emigrated to Palestine, and sought to develop agriculture there, were developing the land of their forefathers, and therefore had a great sense of purpose; the Jews who settled in Siberia had no sense of identity with the land they were working, they were merely trying to survive in inhospitable surroundings.

About 40,000 Jews settled in the area in the first few years, including over a thousand from