

# Tarshish – the eighth emirate

Nigel Bernard

*A speech by the British prime minister in Dubai demonstrates the close links between Tarshish and the Arabian Peninsula as seen in Ezekiel 38:13. The speech also links with prophecies concerning peace and safety, Iran, and the call to “wake up”.*

**E**ZEKIEL groups together “Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish” (38:13). Both Sheba and Dedan refer to countries in the Arabian Peninsula. They roughly correspond to Yemen and Saudi Arabia respectively. Tarshish, referring primarily to the United Kingdom (UK), is an apparent anomaly in this list. How can Tarshish be said to be linked with Sheba and Dedan? In a recent speech in Dubai,<sup>1</sup> the British prime minister, Tony Blair, showed just how closely the UK is connected to the Arabian peninsula. His speech also included other items of interest in relation to Bible prophecy.

The speech was given to business leaders in Dubai on 20 December 2006. The prime minister was visiting there as part of a Middle East tour, which had begun a few days earlier. Dubai is a city in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE is a federation of seven emirates: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm al-Qaiwain. To the south and west it borders Saudi Arabia.

Mr Blair began his speech by stressing the close ties between the two countries. He said that “no country has had a deeper involvement” in the UAE than the UK. He pointed out that Dubai was second only to New York as the most popular long-haul destination for people from the UK. He stated that the “UAE is the UK’s ninth largest export market”, and, with regard to investment by the UAE in the UK, he mentioned the takeover by Dubai Ports World of the shipping line P & O. He also highlighted the commitment of banks such as HSBC, Standard Chartered, Lloyds TSB and Barclays to the Dubai International Finance Centre. These economic and financial links match the role of “merchants” as portrayed in Ezekiel 38.

Just how close the ties are between the two countries was shown by the following words: “I understand that London is often referred to here as the eighth Emirate”. So, in the country next to Dedan, Tarshish has established itself so

closely that it is regarded as an ‘emirate’ of that country. Far from being anomalous, the listing of Tarshish with Sheba and Dedan accurately reflects the close relationship between the UK and the Arabian Peninsula at

the time of the end.

The cry of “Peace and safety” (1 Thess. 5:3) is to be a sign that Armageddon is near. In his speech, in speaking of Muslim opinion in the Middle East, Mr Blair said that “the vast bulk of opinion in the wider region is moderate and seeks peace”. He then went on to say, “Our task is to mobilise that desire and harness it to ensure that all people here can have opportunities for safety, security, democracy, freedom and economic prosperity”. The mentioning of safety and security in the context of peace shows that these issues are seen as related and are high on the agenda.



**High-rise buildings on Dubai waterfront**

(Picture: © iStockphoto.com/Aidan Warren)

The prime minister spoke of Iran and the danger it poses to the region. In particular, he noted its support of terrorism in Iraq, its attempts to thwart democracy in Lebanon, its opposition to the international community with regard to peace in Palestine (*sic*), its denial of the holocaust and its efforts to become a nuclear power. This assessment of Iran fits in well with the role which Iran (Persia) will have, as shown in Ezekiel 38.

However, what was really interesting about this section of the speech was the prime minister’s

1. <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page10661.asp>.

assessment of what the international community had to do in response to the threat posed by Iran. He said that “a huge part of world opinion is frankly almost indifferent. It would be bizarre if it weren’t so deadly serious”. He then said, “We have in my view to wake up”. This language should take us straight away to Joel 3: “Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, *wake up* the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up” (v. 9). This prophecy shows that the call to “wake up” will go forth prior to

Armageddon. Mr Blair’s speech can be viewed in that context.

The Apostle Paul commanded his readers to put on “for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8). This hope is “the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20), and “salvation is of the Jews” (Jno. 4:22). Yet, according to Mr Blair, the “two state solution . . . is Palestine’s only hope of salvation”. Although he is ignorant of the hope of Israel, his speech unwittingly shows that the time when the hope will come to pass is near.

## Armageddon (2)

Geoff Henstock

*In Part 1 of this article we looked at the context in Revelation 16 of the only reference in the Bible to ‘Armageddon’. We then looked at the two ideas of what it refers to: firstly that it is a literal place, and secondly that it is symbolic of the judgement of the nations. In the concluding part of the article we will look at the Old Testament background to both these ideas.*

**A**S WE SAW at the end of Part 1 of this study, the word ‘Armageddon’ signifies ‘a heap of sheaves in a valley for judgement’. We would now like to explore in the Old Testament this idea of Armageddon being a symbol of God’s judgements on the nations, a concept for which there is considerable support. We will then look at what the Old Testament says about the geographical location of God’s judgements on the nations.

### Armageddon in the Old Testament

In references sprinkled throughout the prophets there is imagery and language similar to that of the sixth vial. The imagery used in Revelation has been drawn from these places. These include Isaiah 66:15-18, which is a clear statement that God will gather the nations to a terrible, Divinely inflicted judgement, and Zephaniah 3:8, where the prophet uses similarly graphic language about God gathering the nations for judgement.

In Ezekiel 38 God is presented as dragging the nations who invade Israel. They come down with the purpose of taking spoil (v. 13), but verse 4 is explicit about God’s role in the exercise: “and I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army,

horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords”. God puts hooks into their jaws and brings them forth. That God is the One bringing Gog to Israel is repeated in verse 16 and again in 39:2. This is reminiscent of Revelation 16:16, where God gathers the nations to Armageddon.

Daniel 2 contains an element of the imagery of Revelation 16 in a chapter which is the foundation stone for understanding God’s prophetic plan with the nations. Even though the vision in Daniel 2 uses a different metaphor for its basis, there is a link to the imagery of Revelation 16: “Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (v. 35). A metal image pulverised by a rock would be reduced to metal filings. But, in a rare mixing of metaphors, the dust of this ground-up metallic image is transformed into the chaff of the threshing floor, taking up the image of grain being threshed in judgement.

Habakkuk 3:12-14 is another image of judgement at the time of the end that involves threshing and also involves Divine deliverance. Micah 4 takes up this imagery in more detail: “Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they His counsel: