



## Correspondence

Comments on articles appearing in the magazine are always welcome, and should be addressed to the editor in whose section the article appears.

### The future of Israel

The comments in the November issue under the above heading (pp. 413-8) prompt me to make a few points about events at the return of the Lord.

- 1 It is clear from Zechariah 14 that the Jews are in the land when the battle at Jerusalem takes place, for verse 2 tells us that the city is taken by the army from "all nations", and "half of the city" (presumably the eastern half that Arafat and the Arabs want returned) goes "into captivity". It goes on to say: "the residue of the people [Jews] shall not be cut off from the city". It is then that the Lord goes forth to fight, and his feet stand upon the Mount of Olives (vv. 3,4), as prophesied in Acts 1:11. So it is clear that the Jews are in the land at the Lord's return but are then for all practical purposes overwhelmed. It is then, as the parallel passage in Zechariah 12 tells us, that "they shall look upon [him] whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him" (v. 10). The realisation that Jesus is the Messiah will finally dawn, and the repentance will begin.
- 2 Zechariah 14 goes on to say that it is then that the Kingdom will be established (v. 9) and the land will be transformed (v. 10). Verse 11 continues by saying that then "there shall be no more utter destruction [of the land]; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited". So Jerusalem and Israel will only dwell in safety after the return of the Lord Jesus and the defeat of "all nations". This is confirmed by a number of other passages. Jeremiah 23:5,6 clearly states that, following the return of the Jews to the land, the Lord "will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. *In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely*". We have exactly the same terminology also in Jeremiah 33:16. So it is only after the return of the Lord Jesus that Israel dwells safely. Ezekiel 34:23-25 makes exactly the same point: "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David . . . And I will make with them a covenant of peace . . . *and they shall dwell safely*".

How then does one interpret the situation described in Ezekiel 38:8,11: "the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people . . . brought forth out of the nations, *and they shall dwell safely all of them* . . . the land of unwallled villages . . . them that are at rest, *that dwell safely*, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates"? Verse 14 also refers to Israel dwelling safely at that time.

Surely these verses clearly describe a situation occurring after the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom. In other words, the onslaught of the Gogian host will not take place until after the Kingdom has been established, when they have the audacity to attack the new order. If we are going to study it seems right to read the words of Scripture first and dispose of any preconceptions or baggage that we bring with us. The Bible must come first and not the words of the founding fathers, which were not inspired.

- 3 The battle in Zechariah 14, which leads to the return of the Lord Jesus, is clearly between the Jews and "all nations". However, Ezekiel 38 lists specific nations who dare to attack the land of Israel: Gog, the land of Magog, the chief (or Rosh) prince of Meshech and Tubal, Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya, and the house of Togarmah of the north quarters. In other words, there will be specific named nations who will attack Israel. This is an entirely different army from that described in Zechariah.
- 4 The battle in Zechariah 14 clearly takes place at Jerusalem. In Ezekiel it takes place on the mountains of Israel, see 38:8; 39:2,4. In fact, there is no mention of Jerusalem at all, it is a different battle entirely from that of Zechariah 14.
- 5 Scripture leads us to believe that there will not be one battle, but several, when the Lord Jesus returns and conquers the world. Zechariah 14 begins the process; the beast of Revelation needs to be destroyed (most believe that this the EC and the Roman Catholic apostasy); Gog has to be destroyed; and the rainbowed angel will go to the four corners of the earth destroying all opposition. Zechariah

14:16-19 tells us that there will be nations that will not come up to Jerusalem to worship, and that they will suffer drought and plague as a consequence. In other words, the process of subduing opposition will take time; it will not happen overnight. Micah 7:15,16 puts it in these words: "According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things. The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might". In other words, there will be a period of forty years during which the nations will be convinced of the authority and power of the new rulership in Jerusalem.

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### Britain in prophecy

There was a time, not so long ago, that I travelled regularly to Churchill, Manitoba, as Port Warden on behalf of the Canadian Department of Transport to oversee the loading of prairie grain on foreign ships for overseas destinations. In the seventeen years of my annual excursions, never once did I see a vessel registered in a British port. The majority of ships had Greek masters, mates and engineers, and Filipino crew. A good number flew under the Greek flag, but most were Cypriot, Panamanian, or occasionally Liberian or some other flag of convenience. Thirty thousand tons of Canadian wheat was not considered a good financial venture for the European ship owner. The "merchants of Tarshish" are now multi-flagged.

A new international maritime structure is in place. Like cars, ships are leased; Ports of Registry are often enough one-room offices on, for example, some island in the Pacific, with certification being done by the big shipping insurance brokers, such as Lloyds of London or the American Bureau of Shipping (ABS). Chartering is done through ship-brokers, and the financiers are faceless entities in New York, London or Frankfurt. Often enough there are several nationalities named on the cargo manifest, which may easily change as the cargo changes hands, while the ships are at sea. The modern equivalent—international shipping—to the Phoenician identity of the "ships of Tarshish" is far closer to the original than it has ever been.

There is very little doubt that the Biblical "ships of Tarshish" worked out of the Phoeni-

cian coastal ports of the East Mediterranean. These independent city-states, such as Tyre, Sidon, Berytus (Modern Beirut), Aradus (Arvad), Byblos and Ugarit were churning out ships and seamen in the days of the patriarchs. By the time of Solomon they were the pre-eminent merchants of the eastern Mediterranean. Later they became trading partners with the Etruscans of Italy to gain hegemony over the whole inland sea, both exploiting the coal, iron, silver and tin mines of Italy and Spain and forming a trading empire from Tyre to Gibraltar.

Before the days of Nebuchadnezzar they were building colonies on every major island in the Mediterranean and branching out into Spain (Cadiz is of Akkadian origin) and along the North African Coast, Carthage eventually becoming the capital when Tyre was destroyed by Alexander's Macedonians. These ports of call were necessary. The Phoenician fleets consisted mostly of small vessels that rarely left the sight of land, coasting by day and anchoring by night. Eventually their ships increased in size, and trading posts became colonies of a mercantile empire that may have stretched as far as modern Nigeria, and down the east coast of Africa to Zanzibar.

There is a useful parallel between 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles regarding the early days of Phoenician maritime supremacy. We are told in 1 Kings 10:22 that "the king had at sea a *navy of Tarshish* with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tarshish, bringing gold . . .". It is plain from the context that this fleet was based at the north end of the Red Sea (*cf.* 9:26,27). On the other hand, 2 Chronicles 9:21 tells us that "the king's ships *went to Tarshish* with the servants of Hiram: every three years once came the *ships of Tarshish* bringing gold".

The slight differences only emphasise that, regardless of where they traded, the home port—Port of Registry—was Tarshish. But there is no indication at all of where Solomon's ships went; the cargo suggests Yemen or Ethiopia and parts of Africa further south, see Isaiah 60:6-9. Three years might indicate a round trip from Ezion-geber to Tyre and back again.\* We can be sure that Solomon's interest lay in trading with Arabic rather than Mediterranean merchants. Frank

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\* Herodotus records that in the seventh century B.C. Phoenician sailors took three years to journey from Egypt via the Red Sea and round Africa to Tyre.—*T.B.*