

do: to 'take stock' and see how the fruits of the Spirit are growing.

While the Bride is looking at the fruits of the garden she becomes "aware" of something; she says: "my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." Concerning Amminadib, Strong says, "An unknown person noted for the swiftness of his chariots. Or possibly not a person but should be translated 'my willing people.'" There is food for thought in both of these comments. Did she become aware of the swiftness of her time of probation, and that the time to make herself ready was short? Or was she "aware" of the fact that she was not alone but with 'her people'? This is possibly the better explanation, for we know that we are encouraged knowing we are surrounded by 'my willing people,' those who are willing to follow their Lord: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth" (Ps. 110:3).

The daughters of Jerusalem now call to the Bride, "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee" (Song 6:13). They wish to be with her to behold her qualities, as they now know her union with the Beloved will lead to salvation and they wish to

share such blessings. The Beloved replies to them with a question designed to determine what they understand about his Bride: "What will ye see in the Shulamite?" Their reply reflects a good level of understanding: "As it were the company of two armies."

The Bride community consists of two armies, or camps, and yet one. They are one through the sacrifice of their Lord. Paul reminds the Gentile believers in Ephesus, "For he is our peace, who hath made both [Jews and Gentiles] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace" (Eph. 2:14,15).

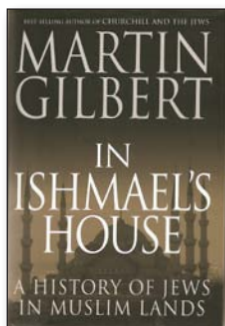
The RV renders the phrase "the company of two armies" as "the dance of Mahanaim." The name Mahanaim means 'two camps,' and the AV word for "company" is also translated as 'dance.' The redeemed will indeed rejoice in the dance when they are united with their Saviour. Regarding the saved from Israel, Jeremiah says: "Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow" (31:13).

(To be continued)

Review

Jews and Arabs together

John Nicholls



***In Ishmael's House:
A History of Jews in
Muslim Lands.***

Martin Gilbert (2010).

**Yale University Press;
ISBN 978-0-300-16715-3.**

**Price: £25.00. The book
can be bought more
cheaply online.**

SIR MARTIN GILBERT is a prolific writer about the Jews, and some of his books are widely read and consulted in Christadelphian circles. His latest book is an intriguing analysis of the history and fate of Jews in Arab lands, both

before and after the prophet Mohammed came on the scene, and right up to the present. Martin Gilbert's style has been to gather the facts together and to make little or no comment on what can be concluded from those facts.

His history of Jews in Muslim lands continues the same approach. From a wide collection of books, memoirs, letters and personal testimonies, the author has compiled a 400-page book which charts the sufferings, and, just occasionally, the good times, of the Jews living in Arab lands. At a time when negotiations between Israel and her Arab neighbours are breaking down yet again, this book helps to separate truth from media propaganda, and to restore the Jews to the history books of the Middle East from which they have been unjustly expunged.

Jews and Arabs in Scripture

Gilbert goes back to the origin of the Arab peoples as related in Genesis, but offers no insight into the enmity between the sons of Abraham. We can read the details in 16:11,12 and 17:18-21. The description of Ishmael as a "wild man" ("a wild ass of a man," RSV), and his hand being against every man and every man's hand against him, is quite fitting of the peoples descended from him, for they do seem to be a quarrelsome race, only united over their hatred for their brother Isaac, from whom Jacob (Israel) came.

The Scripture tells how, to Abraham's evident sorrow, Ishmael was cast out into the desert with Hagar his Egyptian mother (21:10-13). But "of the son of the bondwoman," God told Abraham, "will I make a nation, because he is thy seed." Paul develops from all this the delightful allegory of the Old and New Covenants, and seeks to end the friction between many of the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Galatia.

However, as we well know, the prophecies in Genesis about Ishmael hold literally true to this day. The argument about who will possess the land of Canaan is still there between the present-day descendants of Ishmael and Isaac, and will continue until the "seed, which is Christ" returns to take his inheritance and rule it as has been promised. In that day, as Isaiah prophesies in chapter 19, Israel will continue to be God's inheritance and "a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel Mine inheritance" (vv. 24,25). Ishmael's descendants, humbled by future events, will continue as mortal nations in the Kingdom, occupying land adjacent to Israel and bringing their worship and offerings to Yahweh, the God of Jacob (2:2-4; 60:6,7).

Jews in Arab lands

The author begins by showing the basic truth that the territory now known as Palestine, but prior to this as Judah, was occupied by Jews for many centuries before there were any people who could be described as Muslims. Jerusalem was the capital of Israel for hundreds of years before it was captured by the Babylonians in 605 B.C. It was not until 1,200 years later that Mohammed arrived on the scene in approximately A.D. 600. The *Koran*, which contains the teaching of Mohammed, has, as Gilbert wryly states, "no mention of Jerusalem, but [Jerusalem] is mentioned 654 times in the Hebrew Bible"! From a purely

human standpoint, the alleged 'intransigence' of modern-day Israel over retaining sole custody of Jerusalem seems perfectly reasonable.

The Jews experienced mixed fortunes in Arab lands, both prior to and after the rise of Mohammed, and Gilbert documents it all in this fascinating book. Muslim attitudes to the Jews who came under their rule varied from outright hostility to peaceful coexistence. Under Sharia law, non-Muslims are referred to as *dhimmis*, meaning they are an inferior people. There were twenty-two *dhimmi* regulations imposed on Jews in the Persian city of Hamadan at the end of the nineteenth century, amongst which were the following: "If a Muslim insults a Jew, the latter must drop his head and remain silent . . . Jews are forbidden to wear matching shoes . . . it is forbidden for him to have a house higher than his Muslim neighbour . . . every Jew is obliged to wear a piece of red cloth on his chest . . . he cannot put on his coat; he must be satisfied to carry it rolled under his arm . . . it is forbidden for Jews to leave the town or enjoy the fresh air of the countryside . . ." (pp. 122-3).

Although there were Muslims who lived side by side with Jews in peace, the impression from reading the book is that the reverse was more often the case, even though the author tries to find acts of compassion and rescue by Muslim Arabs.

The rise of Israel in the twentieth century

The emergence of Zionism as a political movement for the building of a Jewish State troubled the Arabs, who were used to the Jews acquiescing to them as the dominant race under the Ottomans; and the wording of the Balfour Declaration made by the Lloyd George government in 1917 recognised the need for the two peoples to be able to live together.

When, in 1947, the British relinquished their League of Nations Mandate to govern Palestine, and two states, Arab and Jewish, were proposed by the United Nations Organisation, the Muslim states fully expected to be able to eliminate the fledgling State of Israel and "drive it into the sea." King Abdullah of Transjordan said, "The Zionist fortress will fall after the first attack," and Azzam Pasha, Secretary of the Arab League, declared, "This will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades."

The reality was that Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and Iraq fought against Israel without achieving their intention, and were humiliated

by the poorly equipped and much smaller Jewish State. Behind the scenes, the Lord God was protecting Israel like a Shepherd, for the honour of His Name and Word (Ps. 83; Jer. 31:10).

Jewish refugees in Arab lands

The remainder of Gilbert's book is concerned with the fate of the 850,000 Jews living in Muslim lands in 1947 and afterwards. Media and Arab propaganda focus almost exclusively on the 726,000 Arabs living in British Mandate Palestine who became homeless in the aftermath of the 1948 War of Independence. But hostility towards the Jews living in Muslim lands greatly intensified in 1947 as nationhood for Israel came closer. In his meticulous way the author surveys what happened to those Jews in each of the fourteen Muslim countries where they lived.

In the four years between 1948 and 1951, a total of 687,739 Jewish refugees reached Israel; yet only 100,000 were Holocaust survivors from Europe; more than half a million were those fleeing from Arab and Muslim lands, giving up all their wealth and property so that they could escape the angry mobs and the hostile governments of those lands. Many of these Jewish refugees escaped to countries other than Israel, to America, Britain and India, for example. The stories of how they escaped are tragic, to say the least, and the persecution has continued right up to our own day.

Iraq after the British Mandate expired became subject to Nazi propaganda, and three Jewish newspapers were closed down in 1936. During World War II a full-scale pogrom (a *farhud*) was waged against the thousands of Jews in Baghdad particularly. Synagogues were looted, as were 586 Jewish shops and 911 Jewish homes. 178 Jews were killed, and several hundred Jewish women and girls were raped. Some of those Jews were able to trace their origins back to the time when Nebuchadnezzar brought captives from Judea to Babylon some 2,500 years ago.

Some 120,000 Jews flourished in Iraq in the early 1930s, but by 1951 only 6,000 remained in the country after persecution, murder and torture. Gilbert devotes several pages to their plight, as he does to all of the Muslim countries with Jews living in them. Surprisingly, Iran, whose president

is so vociferous in calling for the elimination of Israel, has the largest population of Jews in any Muslim country today.

Conclusions

This book follows the pattern of the author's previous histories concerning the Jews. His mission is to record the facts about the history of his race. He has written a comprehensive account of the fate of his people in Arab lands spanning 2,000 years. Reacting to the heavy bias of the media in favour of the Arabs and against Israel, he has helped to restore the true picture of what happened to the Jews at the time of the setting up of the State of Israel, and the treatment of Jews who had lived in Muslim lands for many hundreds and even thousands of years. But because he lacks an understanding of the purpose of God in the earth he can only report on the facts, and can offer no hope for solving the age-old enmity between the offspring of Ishmael and Isaac.

The resolution of this enmity has been outlined in the second paragraph of this review. But it is important for brethren and sisters of Christ who love the Promises and the hope of Israel to remember that making refugees as a result of war is wrong, whether those refugees are Arab or Jewish. Jesus was a refugee and found safety in Egypt! Neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians are 'right,' and we cannot argue the case for either group.

We are under the law of Christ and of God, Who has said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay . . ." (Rom. 12:19). Our Father has committed all judgement to His Son, who will with wisdom and compassion solve the Middle East problem at his coming: "all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight" (Ps. 72:11-14).

This is an absorbing book. It offers some insights into the dubious claims of the *Koran*, and is recommended to all who are interested in Jewish history and the sufferings of God's people, and who look forward to the glories of the Kingdom of God.