

fig from the fig tree" (v. 4). The context here is the fall of Idumea.

The symbol of the sun, moon and stars falling to the earth is, as Brother Tony Benson pointed out in his reply to Brother Alleyne, used in Isaiah 14 regarding the demise of Babylon and in Ezekiel 32 regarding the fall of Egypt. Including Brother Alleyne's Olivet Prophecy links, links have now been established between the symbology of the sixth seal and the fall of the following nations: Israel, Assyria, Idumea, Babylon and Egypt. This leaves a confusing picture, to say the least; the confusion arises because the symbology is linked to an event, such as the fall of Israel or the fall of Egypt.

A different method of using Scripture to interpret the symbols removes this confusion. The four Old Testament examples given above are all describing the demise of a political power; therefore the symbology of the sixth seal also describes the fall of a political power. However, the symbology does not reveal *which* power. The power to which the symbology relates is discovered from looking at the main framework of the prophecy. The beasts who dominate much of the Apocalypse are all closely linked with the fourth beast of Daniel 7. This beast represents Rome, therefore the prophecy is about Rome.

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## The Gaza Strip

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**I**N JOEL 3 the gathering of the nations at Armageddon is described: "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for My people and for My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted My land. And they have cast lots for My people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink" (vv. 2,3).

Certain places are then mentioned in particular in relation to the way they have treated the possessions and people of Israel: "Yea, and what have ye to do with Me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render Me a recompence? and if ye recompense Me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head; because ye have taken My silver and My gold, and have carried into your temples My goodly pleasant things: the children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border" (vv. 4-6). Together with Tyre and Zidon, we see that "the coasts of Palestine" will apparently take advantage of the

initial gains of the northern invader and will play their part in the pillage of Israel.

"The coasts of Palestine [or Philistia]" correspond to the area known today as the Gaza Strip. The prophecy of Joel shows that this area will be against Israel at the time of the return of Christ. This is confirmed by another passage, Psalm 83, which lists "the Philistines" (v. 7) as one of the enemies of Israel at the time of the end.

Under the Declaration of Principles signed in 1993, Israel agreed to hand over certain powers and responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority in relation to the Gaza Strip. Permanent status of the Gaza Strip and other territories has yet to be established. There are over 1.1 million people in the Gaza Strip, but less than 7,000 of these are Jews.

In Acts 8 we read: "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert" (v. 26). The term "desert" aptly describes the Gaza Strip. Indeed, desertification, together with salination of fresh water, inadequate sewage treatment, water-borne disease and soil degradation, is one

of the main environmental issues facing the area today.<sup>1</sup> There are no permanent pastures, in contrast to the West Bank, where thirty-two per cent of the land is permanent pasture. The highest point is 105 metres, the land mostly being sand and dune-covered plain. It has little strategic value. The Gaza Strip has little to tempt Israel to retain control over it, and this is significant given the Palestinian dominance of this area at the time of the end as indicated in Bible prophecy.

The writer David Makovsky, in a book on the events leading up to the Oslo Accord, discussed the Israeli attitude towards the Gaza Strip. In writing of Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin (eventually a government minister who played a key role in the peace negotiations) he said:

“For more than a decade, Peres and Beilin had advocated a ‘Gaza First’ approach in which Israel would cede control of the teeming, poverty-ridden Gaza Strip to the Palestinians before tackling the more difficult issue of the West Bank. Like most Israelis, the two men saw Gaza as a burden to be jettisoned”.<sup>2</sup>

This attitude fits in with the requirement of prophecy for “the coasts of Palestine” to be under the control of Palestinians and not Jews at the time of the end.

This attitude was also held by the then prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin. Makovsky further wrote: “Rabin’s view of Gaza was unambiguous: ‘I want Gaza to sink into the sea’, he told a delegation from the Washington Institute for

Near East Policy in Jerusalem on September 2, 1992. Israelis stress that he did not mean the remark literally but simply saw Gaza as strategically unimportant and even a liability. Rabin quickly added that since Gaza will not disappear, Israel must deal with it”.<sup>3</sup>

There is nothing to suggest that Israeli attitudes today are much different. However, Israel remains keen to defend its settlers there, and is cracking down hard on what it perceives as threats to its security. According to the Israeli rights group B’Tselem, the Israeli army has demolished hundreds of homes in the Gaza Strip.<sup>4</sup> The army claims that this has been necessary because some houses near the southern border have been hiding entrances to tunnels, allowing weapons to be smuggled in from Egypt. It is also rumoured that some al-Qaeda terrorists have entered the Gaza Strip this way.

The Palestinian presence in “the coasts of Palestine” will remain strong, and military incursions by the Israelis will only serve to fuel hatred, which will see its full expression in the events prophesied in Joel 3:4-6.

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1. <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/gz.html>.
  2. Makovsky, D. (1996), *Making Peace with the PLO*, Colorado, Westview Press, p. 34.
  3. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
  4. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/middle\\_east/newsid\\_1801000/1801254.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/middle_east/newsid_1801000/1801254.stm).

### Nazareth mosque scheme

The Israeli Government decided recently to stop the construction of a giant mosque in Nazareth that would have rivalled the Basilica of the Annunciation, one of the holiest places in Christendom. The controversy has deeply soured relations between Christians and Muslims in Nazareth.—*Joan Brooks*

### US acts against Iranian terrorism

The US is treating “very seriously” reports that Iran has tried to launch anti-Israeli terrorist operations from Jordan and Lebanon, Colin Powell, the US secretary of state said recently. Mr Powell said the US was investigating a broad range of Iranian terrorist activities, underscoring its view that Iran is part of an “axis of evil” that includes Iraq and North Korea. Vice President Dick Cheney plans to visit Arab allies, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Egypt, soon, to build support for the next phase of the war on terrorism. Israeli officials have also raised concerns that Iran is moving troops into southern Lebanon and supplying rockets to Hizbullah terrorists in the area. “We are taking it seriously”, Mr Powell said. “We are gathering our own intelligence with respect to activities within Jordan and Lebanon and we are going to make sure that the Iranians understand that this is inappropriate and that there are consequences to bear”.—

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