

However, there is one aspect of the ear that many people regard with some distaste, and that is earwax, especially if excess production means frequent visits to a doctor to have the ears syringed.

A recent article by a doctor⁹ draws attention to “nature’s brilliance and economy [which] is apparent in even the most mundane aspects of human biology—such as earwax”. The writer points out that the ear canal, being dark, moist and confined, is an ideal breeding ground for infective germs and could also be easily blocked by pollutant particles.

It is the sticky earwax secreted by thousands of tiny glands that traps incoming debris and contains natural antiseptic chemicals to kill invading organisms. And so the infinitely subtle and complex sensation of hearing is dependent upon the presence of this often maligned substance. Interestingly, it seems that deaf people often produce wax in excessive amounts, as though the ear is trying to compensate for the lack of hearing by keeping the canal as clean as possible.

This natural defence mechanism is remarkable enough, but the author also points out that the wax itself would accumulate and block the ear canal were it not for a further extraordinary phenomenon: every movement of the jaw, opening or closing as we talk or eat, jolts the interior of the canal, forcing the wax outwards. Thus the cleansing action of the wax depends upon an entirely unrelated anatomical mechanism in the form of the jaw joint to clear it from the canal.

Remarkably, the author concludes that the jaw’s jolting action cannot simply be coincidence, leaving little alternative than to speculate that this feature has been *designed*. “Do we”, he asks, “perhaps see in earwax the hand of God?”. It is rare indeed to read such sentiments by a scientist in a national newspaper, but this is an indication of the inescapable evidence of the Creator’s work in the human frame, which is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14).

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9. Dr James Le Fanu, “Now hear some good news about earwax”, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 8 Jun. 2003, kindly submitted by a reader.



Watchman

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Physical and political tremors in Gaza

Nigel Bernard

ON 11 FEBRUARY 2004 an earthquake measuring 4.5 on the Richter scale hit parts of Israel, Gaza and the West Bank. The epicentre was in the northern part of the Dead Sea. There were no casualties or major structural damage but it was sufficient to cause people to flee offices. Cable television and wireless transmissions were interrupted. The BBC reported Israel radio as saying that “it caused MPs in the Israeli parliament to rush out of committee meetings into the corridors fearing a large bomb had gone off”.¹ The tremors were also felt in Amman in Jordan and in Beirut in Lebanon. Although not a serious earthquake, it is a reminder that Israel is indeed in an earthquake zone and that this tremor is just a harbinger of the much greater earthquake to come when

“there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel” (Ezek. 38:19).

In the days leading up to this earthquake, Gaza and the West Bank had been the focus of attention in relation to proposals made by Ariel Sharon concerning the future of the Jewish settlements in these areas. These proposals are of particular interest because of their implications for Bible prophecy.

In Bible prophecy the two areas known today as the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have distinct roles at the time of the end. With regard to the Gaza Strip, Joel indicates that this area, what

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1. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3471689.stm.



The Gaza Strip. Hatched blocks indicate main Israeli settlement areas.

he calls “the coasts of Palestine”, will be punished for its wickedness towards 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” (3:4). On the other hand, Ezekiel shows that the West Bank, what he calls “the mountains of Israel”, will be inhabited by Jews at the time of the end and will be a primary target of the invasion of Gog: “After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them” (38:8).

At the present time there are Jewish settlements in both these areas. The Arabs would like to see the Jews removed from both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Conversely, many Jews, especially those on the extreme political right in Israel, would like to see the number of settle-

ments increase in these areas. Recently, the Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon, put forward a tentative plan relating to these areas. An article in the *Sunday Telegraph* described the plan as follows: “Under plans presented in Washington by Ehud Olmert, Mr Sharon’s deputy, some of the 7,500 Jewish inhabitants of Gaza could be relocated to enlarged settlements in the West Bank that would be protected by Israel’s new security barrier”.²

This proposed plan, and it is only a proposal, links with both the prophecies quoted above. Firstly, if the Jews were removed from Gaza then this would help it to become more independent of Israel. It would have more opportunity to develop further as an enemy of Israel, as portrayed in Joel. Secondly, if some of the Jews who leave Gaza move to the West Bank then this will help the situation depicted in Ezekiel 38 to develop. The mountains of Israel will become further populated with Israelis.

There are a number of possible motives which may lie behind Sharon’s plan to reduce settlements in Gaza. These include winning over the many Israelis who feel that occupying territory in Palestinian areas is wrong, and perhaps gaining approval from the Americans. However, another motive may relate to acquiring land in the West Bank. As the BBC stated: “Commentators also say that Mr Sharon could be banking on the fact that by appearing to give up so much in Gaza, it will make it easier to take from elsewhere, such as the West Bank. This is what many Palestinians fear”.³

The exact motives of Sharon, of course, are not known, and in any case his plan may not be carried out. However, at the very least, the existence of the plan shows that current Israeli thinking is contemplating reducing its presence in Gaza and increasing its presence in the West Bank. The plan may not constitute a political earthquake, but the BBC described it as a “political bombshell”. Such political tremors, together with physical tremors, are likely to increase as the return of Christ approaches.

2. Harnden, T. (2004), “‘Nobody is going to take us out of here’”, *Sunday Telegraph*, 8 Feb., p. 27.

3. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3462461.stm.

We are sorry to hear of the falling asleep of Brother Arthur Jones of Newport. Brother Arthur conducted the Book Exchange from March 1987 until failing health forced him to give up at the end of 1999, during which time he provided the Brotherhood with a very useful service.