

(v. 15). Did Elijah wait for the angel to speak, or did God ensure that His angel spoke before the prophet had even opened his mouth? What is abundantly clear is that this was a severe test of the prophet's courage, for he was sorely hated by the Omri family. The angel instilled a confidence in Elijah, so that, rather than fleeing as before (1 Kgs. 19:3), he was now prepared to venture into the royal court. Elijah went forth buoyed in the knowledge that "His salvation is nigh them that fear Him" (Ps. 85:9).

The death of Ahaziah

So Elijah journeyed with the officer to Ahaziah's court, where he stood before the wicked king face to face, just as he had done with his father (1 Kgs. 18:16,17). Would he change his message,

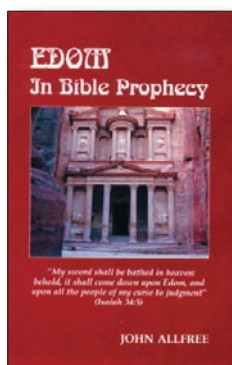
massage his words so that they fell softly upon the king's ears? No. He was a stalwart of the Truth and firmly delivered his message: "thou . . . shalt surely die". And God's verdict upon the monarch appears to have taken immediate effect: "So he died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken" (2 Kgs. 1:16,17). There was no further opportunity for the king to repent; his time had come, he would never commit another act of folly again.

Thus Divine judgement had been passed and fulfilled. Quietly the prophet left the court and departed. There was nothing more to be said or done. Again he had been the vehicle of destruction upon the royal household. But would Israel take notice, repent and change her ways? Only time would tell.

(To be continued)

Israel's ancient enemy

John Nicholls



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John Allfree, 2005. 93
pages.

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payable to John Allfree.

EDOM IN BIBLE PROPHECY is the title of a timely new book by Brother John Allfree, written in the clear and forthright style we have come to expect from him. So much is happening today in the Middle East, Russia and Europe that all who desire to understand the word of prophecy better will be interested in this exposition.

Edom figures in several latter-day prophecies, such as Isaiah 34, Ezekiel 35, Obadiah and Psalm 83, and has been the subject of exposition by many Christadelphian writers, but with varying conclusions. Brother Allfree's exposition struck a satisfying chord with this reviewer in that it relates many recent events in the Arab world to prophecy, without jettisoning very much

of the exposition of prophecy by our pioneer brethren.

Brother Thomas's predictions about the return of the Jews to their land, and the establishment of a colony having no great faith in their God, have proved to be sound. But even he did not visualise the extent of the development of the nation of Israel and its duration prior to the coming of the Lord, and he failed to anticipate the rise of Arab nationalism that has occurred concurrent with the return of Israel from all nations. With the benefit of hindsight, we are "privileged", as Brother Allfree says in his book, to see that God foreknew the bitter and tenacious jealousy and hatred the Arab peoples would bear towards the establishment of Israel in Palestine.

Brother nation to Israel

That animosity has its roots back in the origin of the Arab peoples as descendants of Ishmael, Edom, Moab, Ammon and others. Although the Arabs like to think that they are descended only from Ishmael, the evidence from Scripture does not support them. Esau married into the family of Ishmael (Gen. 28:9), and it seems that several peoples occupied the Arabian Peninsula to give rise to the Arab nations that we know today. Brother Allfree gathers together the Scriptural proof in a useful diagram on page 56 of his book.

In history, that family feud over the Divine blessing has left its mark. The Edomites refused their brother nation Israel passage through their land when Israel was on its wilderness journey. And when the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem, the Edomites had opportunity to assist their brother nation Israel in their distress, but instead took advantage of their calamity (Obad. vv. 10-14). In the Roman siege of Jerusalem, many years later, the same thing happened, although the Bible record is silent about what took place. Today, though blood relatives of the Jews in Israel, the Arab nations around the nation of Israel have shown to varying degrees the same Edomite spirit of jealousy and hostility that has resulted in several wars and acts of terrorism.

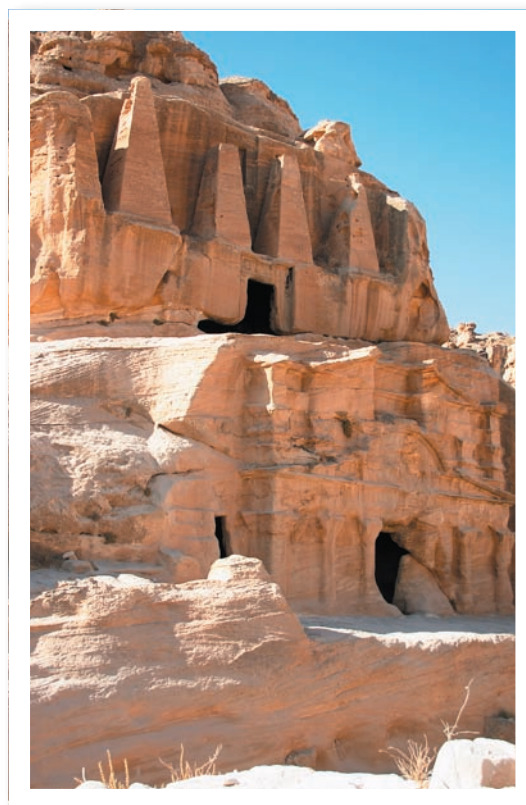
The first three chapters of the book deal with the history of Edom, which came to an end after A.D. 70. The connections with Idumea and Herod the Great prior to that are carefully traced; readers will find this most interesting. Then there is a chapter on unfulfilled prophecies about Edom, with the clear implication that Edom exists in some form in the latter days, associated with other nations that also hate Israel. These prophecies also indicate that Edom will be judged by the people of Israel, and that Edom will then no longer exist as a political entity.

There next follows a synthesis of how Brother Thomas arrived at his conclusion that latter-day Edom represents the Gentile powers that come against Israel as the Gogian confederacy. The author shows that some subsequent supporters of Brother Thomas's views, such as Brother Graham Pearce, began to see the Arabs "as part of Edom of the latter days" (p. 33), whilst other expositors, such as Brother H. Whittaker, saw Edom and the Arabs as conquering Israel before the return of Jesus.

Edom at the time of the end

As the end-time prophecies of Edom are often linked to the term 'nations', the author next looks at the relevant prophecies to see whether the 'nations' refer to the Gogian confederacy or to hostile Arab nations surrounding Israel. This is a well-reasoned chapter, and it is concluded that the nations associated with Edom in the time of the end are "nations round about" Israel who seek her destruction and are punished by God as a consequence.

A key passage used to support the opposing view, that Edom represents the Gentile nations of the Gogian confederacy who come against Israel,



PICTURE: © iStockphoto.com/PAUL COWAN

Tomb at Petra, the ancient capital of the Nabatean Kingdom which took over Edom several centuries before the time of Christ.

is James's use of Amos 9:11,12 at the Jerusalem Council, as recorded in Acts 15. This is the subject of the next chapter of the book. I have used this key passage myself to defend the traditional view, and I was sceptical about Brother Allfree's exposition, especially the explanation of the building again of the ruins of David's tabernacle. Surely, I thought, this must refer to times yet future. However, on reflection it surely must be the case that James was making an application of the Amos passage to the situation in his day.

I was greatly helped by Brother Allfree's reference to Brother Fred Pearce's comments on Amos in his seminal exposition of the Minor Prophets, *From Hosea to Zephaniah: The Minor Prophets before the Exile*, where Brother Pearce says, "So the fulfilment of Amos' prophecy of the restoration of David's house had *begun*" (p. 76, my emphasis). The manifestation, resurrection and ascension of Jesus were only the *beginning* of the fulfilment of Amos's prophecy, which will be totally fulfilled when Jesus sets up the Kingdom. I thought of

Peter's application of Psalm 2 in Acts 4 to the opposition of the Jewish leaders to the teaching of the apostles as being another prophecy which had an application in the first century, but whose complete fulfilment still lies in the future.

Logical sequel

The remaining chapters are a logical sequel to the main thesis that has been established, that latter-day Edom stands for those Arab nations surrounding Israel who are hostile to her and plot her annihilation. The latter-day revival of Edom in the recent emergence of several Arab nations concurrent with the return of the Jews to their land is one of the unmistakable signs of the times. The fact that Israel has been outnumbered and ringed round by her enemies but never defeated is also taken as support for those Edom prophecies that speak, not of the defeat of Israel, but rather of the protection by God of His people.

Ultimately it will be those Arab nations themselves that will, under the good hand of the Lord Jesus, be brought to their knees and humbled, so that, if they will, they can praise God and be taught of the true Prophet like unto Moses.

Chapter 11, entitled "The final desolation of Edom", is largely a commentary on Obadiah verses 19-21, and is well worth a read. Although Edom as a political entity is to cease for ever, individuals from the Arab nations will undoubtedly submit to Christ, and Brother Allfree examines the relevant scriptures.

There is a short postscript with some thoughts about Ishmael. The book has no index, but there are frequent footnotes and references to works consulted. It is well produced, with maps and tables, and is warmly recommended to all who watch the signs of the times with hope in the Lord's coming, and who desire to understand the sure word of prophecy better.

Your Letters



The tear-bottle

Having just read the "PS" article "The tear-bottle" (Jan. 2006, p. 35), I thought that readers would be interested in the following from a book called *Strange Scriptures that Perplex the Western Mind*, by Barbara M. Bowen of the Bob Jones University, Greenville, South Carolina, USA. She and her husband must have spent several years in Palestine, as she speaks of living with Arab families in Bethlehem in 1933 and later of being in Jerusalem in the winter of 1937-38. This is as the item appears:

"Bathed His Feet With Tears" (Luke 7:38)

"She began to wash his feet with tears, and wipe them with hairs of her head".

We find reference in many books to the custom of collecting the tears of the whole family and preserving them in bottles. Thus King David prays, "Put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?". Tear bottles have been found in very large numbers on opening ancient tombs. They are made of thin glass usually, although the very poor sometimes had just simple pottery bottles,

not even baked or glazed. They were all made with a slender body, broad at the base, with a funnel-shaped top. Every member of the family owned a tear bottle and they collected the tears of the whole family.

When serious trouble or a death occurred in the home, all the relatives came and each one brought his tear bottle with him. As they wept and wailed, the tears rolling down their cheeks, each person took his or her tear bottle and gathered tears from the faces of all present.

This bottle was exceedingly sacred to them. It represented all the heartaches, sorrows and bereavements from the grandparents down to the small child. When a person died, his tear bottle was buried with him, as one of his most treasured possessions.

This helps us to a better understanding of what the woman did for her Master. She noticed the very discourteous way in which Christ was treated as a guest in the house of Simon the Pharisee.

He provided no water to wash the Lord's feet and no oil to anoint his head, so this poor woman, longing for forgiveness and a new life, took her tear bottle, poured the tears over his tired, dusty feet and wiped them with her long hair. A great