

command, no single plan, no single ambition and no single spirit among the Arabs". Unlike the Jews, the Arab residents of Palestine had no real incentive to fight. Many of them fled to neighbouring countries to get out of the way of the fighting, after assurances from the leaders of the armies that they would soon defeat the Jews and then they could return and take over all their property. On a number of occasions in Scripture it is recorded that Israel's enemies fell out among themselves, and the same will happen in the last days (Ezek. 38:21). Open miracles were

not required to give the Jews victory; it would appear that God achieved it by causing lack of unity amongst her enemies and by ensuring that the Jews were well prepared.

Thus at 4.00 pm on 14 May 1948, at a gathering of many of the leaders of the Jews in Tel Aviv museum, David Ben-Gurion stood up, with, appropriately, a portrait of Theodore Herzl on the wall behind him, and read the Declaration of the Independence of the State of Israel. It was surely the most significant moment in the modern history of the Jews.

Israel—a coming curse and a curse prevented

Nigel Bernard

After sixty years, Israel is confident and its Arab neighbours are divided. Yet, like A.D. 70, destruction is soon to come upon Israel. Some Jews will flee, as Christ had previously advised with regard to A.D. 70. Meanwhile, Elijah will be preparing the Jews scattered in Europe and elsewhere.

GOD SAID of Ishmael, "And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" (Gen. 16:12). When the State of Israel was declared sixty years ago this month, the Arabs, who sought to strangle it at birth, manifested these characteristics prophesied by God. The lack of unity amongst the Arabs was one of the factors which hindered them. Truly, their hands were "against every man".

Sixty years later, a similar situation obtains. Shimon Peres, the President of Israel, recently commented on the possibilities for a negotiated peace in the Middle East. He identified as a problem the weakness of the Arabs because of their lack of unity. He said, "The problem is that the Palestinians are split . . . They are weak and they are getting weaker".¹ This split is primarily seen in the divide between Fatah and Hamas. Of Hamas, he said, "They don't want to talk; they want to get rid of Israel".

Since 1948, Israel has achieved several stunning victories against its enemies. Yet we know

this will not go on indefinitely. What does the future hold for Israel? In this article we will consider this question by thinking how the advice Christ gave to the Jews on how to escape the destruction of A.D. 70 can be applied to the time of the end.

Destruction

Concerning what was to happen to Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Lord Jesus said, "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled" (Lk. 21:20-22). These words, when considered in the light of prophecies relating to the time of the end, although they applied to A.D. 70, provide instruction today for Jews living in Jerusalem and in Israel as a whole.

Concerning Israel at the time of Armageddon, God said through Zechariah, "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD [Yahweh], two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will

1. Buck, T. (2008), "Peres blames 'weak' Palestinians", *Financial Times*, 15 Apr., p. 8.

refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, The LORD [Yahweh] is my God" (13:8,9). So, whilst a third in the Land will survive, two thirds will die.

With regard to Jerusalem, God said, "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city" (14:2). As with the Land as a whole, many Jews who live in Jerusalem will suffer.

What is the advice for Jews in the Land of Israel and Jerusalem, living in the days in which we live? Surely, in the light of these prophecies, the wise thing to do will be to flee, when it becomes apparent that these things are about to happen. But where should they flee? The only possible escape route will be east. Isaiah shows that some Jews will take this option: "Let Mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land" (16:4).

Elijah

Later on in Zechariah 14 it is written, "And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited" (v. 11). The Hebrew word for "utter destruction" is *cherem*. This is the same Hebrew word found in Malachi 4, where it is translated "curse": "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD [Yahweh]: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a *curse*" (vv. 5,6).

Zechariah 14:11 shows that a "curse" will have been upon Jerusalem. The terrible things spoken of in Zechariah 13 and 14 about the Land and Jerusalem will not be prevented by the work of Elijah. Therefore, the "curse" spoken of in Malachi 4 must relate to something else.

A passage that helps us to understand Malachi 4 is the account relating to Achan in the book of Joshua. As the Israelites prepared to take Jericho, Joshua said, "And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing [*cherem*], lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing [*cherem*], and make the camp of Israel a curse [*cherem*], and trouble it" (6:18).

Unbeknown to Israel, Achan did take of the accursed thing. Just as Malachi speaks of the possibility that God might "smite the earth", so Israel were smitten by Ai: "And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water" (7:5).

Achan made a full confession of his sins to Joshua. One of the things he confessed to taking was "a goodly Babylonish garment" (v. 21). The word "Babylonish" is 'belonging to Shinar' in Hebrew. The land of Shinar was where Babylon was located. It was in Shinar that Nebuchadnezzar had "the treasure house of his god" (Dan. 1:2). In Zechariah 5, Shinar is used to symbolise Rome, where apostasy would be established, for when Zechariah asked the angel where the ephah of wickedness in which a woman sat was to be transported, he replied, "To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base" (v. 11).

Purged in the wilderness

When Christ returns, the Jews who are scattered outside the Land of Israel will be commanded to return to the Land of Israel. Many will come from Europe, described in Revelation as a wilderness: "So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns" (17:3). This woman, representing Rome, would be Babylonian in character: "and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (v. 5). The Jews, God's people, will be commanded to come out from spiritual Babylon, from Roman Catholic Europe: "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (18:4). Elijah will be involved in this work.

Ezekiel spoke of the journey that the Jews will make through this spiritual wilderness: "And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face" (20:35). Like Achan, some Jews will not really forsake the spiritual Shinar. They will rebel and bring with them, at least in their heart, if not in their actual possessions, reminders of spiritual Babylon. If they were to bring the things of spiritual Babylon into the Land, then this would bring

upon the Land more curse and destruction. Yet this will not happen. All rebels will be removed before they enter the land: "and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against Me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD [Yahweh]" (v. 38).

As a final point on Malachi and Achan, it is relevant to note that Joshua addressed Achan as "My son" (Josh. 7:19). This fatherly language is reflected in Malachi 4, where the "fathers" and "children" are mentioned.

Conclusion

Soon the proud and confident State of Israel will be brought to the brink of destruction by the invasion of Gog. As in A.D. 70, many Jews will perish and suffer. Some of those who understand Bible prophecy, if not the one faith, will flee east to Jordan. Those who survive in the Land will be refined and humbled. Those who are scattered will have the opportunity to enter the new covenant, and hence the Land. It behoves us to ensure that we have no accursed thing that will be exposed at the day of judgement, so that we too can enter the Land.

Moses: earth's meekest man

20. Show me Thy glory

John Mitchell

After the disappointment of the golden calf incident, Moses is encouraged by being given a revelation of God's glory greater than anything given to any other man.

MOSSES' HARROWING experience in the matter of the golden calf, whilst intensifying the loneliness of his leadership, served only to strengthen his relationship with the Lord his God. But, conversely, despite Moses' pleadings for them, Yahweh's relations with the children of Israel had markedly declined. Hitherto they had had the privilege of God in their midst, with the pillar of cloud and of fire signifying His presence. Now, for their own safety and because of their sinful nature, such intimacy would be withdrawn for the rest of their journey to the promised land.

"I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way".* The Lord's decision, coming on top of the slaughter and the plague in the aftermath of their great sin, filled the people with remorse. "When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments", those symbols of victory over the Egyptians whom, with God's almighty power, they had spoiled. The same Lord who

had told them to put them on had now told them to take them off again. For, whereas Yahweh had triumphed over the gods of Egypt on their behalf, they had allowed the gods of Egypt to

rule over them in the matter of the golden calf, towards which they had contributed from the ornaments Yahweh had given them. In this they had deserted the Lord, so now He would distance Himself from them.

Moses moves his tent

In token of this partial separation, Moses moved what many have assumed to have been his tent in the centre of the camp (wrongly translated as "the tabernacle" in the AV) and pitched it some distance away, outside the camp, calling it "the tent of meeting". As such, in view of what had gone before, the place assumed a new and tremendous significance in the lives of the people. For when anyone enquired of the Lord he would go out to it, and the tent acquired a respect and reverence it had not known before. And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching him as he entered it, and the pillar of cloud came down while the Lord spoke with Moses.

What they had before taken for granted, the people now made a focus for communion with

* Quotations from Exodus 33 are taken from the NIV.