

It is significant that the prophet journeyed "forty days and forty nights". The number forty in Scripture often relates to a period of probation and trial (Deut. 8:2-5; Ps. 95:10; Jonah 3:4; Acts 13:18). And as Elijah journeyed he would have recalled how the children of Israel had wandered "in the wilderness forty years" (Num. 14:33). Here we observe the 'day for a year' principle (cf. Ezek. 4:6); for every day Elijah journeyed in the wilderness the children of Israel had suffered a year.

Elijah also took on, as it were, the situation of Moses. Recall how Moses was "with the LORD forty days and forty nights" in Horeb when "he did neither eat bread, nor drink water" (Ex. 34:28). And at the end of this period, as Moses himself informs us, "the LORD gave me the two tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant" (Deut.

9:11). Did Elijah believe that God was going to reveal Himself again in a similar way?

Indeed, the Lord Jesus Christ himself would be "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness" (Mt. 4:1). Like Elijah, he too would not eat for "forty days and forty nights" and would be "an hungry" (v. 2).

How fitting, then, that Moses, Elijah and the Lord Jesus Christ were all in the wilderness for "forty days and forty nights", and both Moses, who represented the Law, and Elijah, who represented the prophets, were also at Christ's transfiguration (Lk. 9:28-31)! It was here that they spoke of "his decease", better rendered "his exodus" (v. 31). And Elijah, during this forty days' wandering, would be educated about the Exodus under Moses to prepare him for the great exodus that he will one day lead (Mal. 4:6).

(To be continued)

## Your Letters

### The plague of Zechariah 14:12

Most students of history and prophecy are familiar with the fact that French crop failures in the 1780s contributed to the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, an event very significant in the fulfilment of prophecy. Many are also aware that these crop failures were brought about by miserable weather, apparently due to the prolonged eruption of Iceland's Laki volcano from June 1783 to February 1784.

A recent publication has added some details about the effects of this eruption, details which may be pertinent regarding a future prophecy against those who will attack Jerusalem. Overall, few were trapped by the slow-moving lava flows from a seventeen-mile (twenty-seven-kilometre) fissure system, flows which were comparable in volume to the flow

of Brazil's Amazon River. However, seventy-five per cent of the sheep and horses, fifty per cent of the cattle and twenty per cent of the human population of Iceland died in the next few years. In all, three cubic miles of lava were expelled, covering almost 200 square miles of territory. The following quotation explains the reason for the deaths:

"Lava and ash were not the only products of the Laki outburst. Huge quantities of noxious gases were also expelled, including sulphur dioxide, hydrogen sulphide, chlorine and fluorine. A blue, foul-smelling haze covered the land, beneath which crops and pastures yellowed and died. Soon livestock began to sicken as they chewed on withered grass contaminated with fluorine. This element took a terrible toll on the island's animals.

Flesh fell from their bodies and manes and tails came off in the hand when pulled. Iceland's human population fared little better, with fluorosis causing their gums to swell, their hair to fall out, and boils and bony deformities to develop all over their bodies".<sup>1</sup>

These effects of fluorine poisoning appear to be very similar to the effects described in Zechariah 14:12: "And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth". Zechariah's prophecy

1. Bill McGuire, *Raging Planet*, p. 47, Barrons Educational Series, New York, ISBN 0-7641-1969-9.

has hitherto been interpreted as describing either a form of radiation sickness aftermath or the effects of direct exposure to thermonuclear, cometary or asteroidal impact blast. If Zechariah is describing the extended results of extensive volcanic activity, then there is the possibility of an extended time frame for the pouring out of God's judgements upon the wicked.

Other aspects of this prophecy may explain why Israel itself does not seem affected by this plague. The volcanically expelled gases afflicting Iceland in the 1780s appear to have been heavier than the earth's atmosphere and would therefore have concentrated in lower areas. Upon the return of our Lord, the great earthquake centred at Jerusalem will not only form a high mountain on the city's site but will also raise the land of Israel to form a high plateau. This would elevate the

Israeli survivors of Armageddon above the miasma affecting surrounding areas, and spare them of most, if not all, the effects of the noxious gases, especially from fluorosis.

It appears that the Jerusalem earthquake will be accompanied by fairly extensive dislocation of the earth's tectonic plates, and probably by the eruptions of numerous volcanoes throughout the world. There is evidence of lava emissions which cover thousands of square miles in the Snake River country of northwestern United States, and in the Deccan of the Indian subcontinent. Similar emissions may occur during the time of Armageddon, not only weakening nations opposing Christ but also allowing Christ and his brethren to organise the internal political and social structure of the kingdom of Israel for the Millennial Age. The return of the Jews to the Land from the Gentile

nations would bring them into more healthy environs, possibly speeding up their recovery from any effects of the eruptions which they may be suffering from.

The spate of earthquakes in various places throughout the globe would seem to be generally weakening the border regions of the world's tectonic plate structure in preparation for the great dislodgements to come at Armageddon. Even now, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes are having noticeable and sometimes catastrophic effects on faraway areas. The simultaneous disruptions throughout the planet will have repercussions beyond any experienced since the Genesis Flood as the age of righteousness is entered with Christ at its head. May we be found worthy to escape these things through the grace of our Lord Jesus.

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## Family life in the Lord — with some cultural connotations

Trevor J. Hughes

**E**ARLIER THIS YEAR I returned with other members of the UK CBM team from our Easter visit to Kenya. This year the Conference and a series of regional Bible Schools focused upon 'Family Life in the Lord'. Our foundation texts were, "a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24; cf. Mt. 19:5) and "Honour your father and your mother" (Ex. 20:12; cf. Mt. 15:4).\*

Development of the theme included character studies, both good and bad examples, from Scripture. The extended family and ecclesial life were considered alongside Paul's teaching on unity and responsibility to Christ and to each other in Ephesians 5 and 6. Much self-examination and heart-searching evoked a spiritual atmosphere,

with exhortation to us all to lead lives worthy of our high calling in Christ Jesus.

We all discovered that we are much more the product of our own culture than we would probably wish to admit. "Why did a man of faith like Abraham have so many wives?", was a question very pertinent to African culture, yet one which would be unlikely to be raised in societies where polygamy is prohibited. Old Testament customs and rites, such as arranged marriages, the setting of a bride price, the redeeming of a brother's seed, and circumcision, are all issues which have to be sensitively considered in a country where such traditions still prevail. For many, obedience to

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\* Quotations from the ESV.