

It is a natural loaf containing all the elements that we need in our food, and so well-balanced that, if men will refrain from tampering with it, it will give us complete sustenance. A selected sheaf of wheat cut at the beginning of harvest is a perfect type of a Divine gift, free from corruption and able to give us life. It was fitting that such a sheaf as the firstfruits of harvest should be waved before the Lord in thankfulness to the Giver before men should eat anything from the new crop.

THE harvest in which men are so vitally interested is often used in Scripture as a type of that great harvest of souls which is being prepared by God. Readers will remember too that Christ is spoken of as "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20). They will also remember that James speaks of himself and his brethren as "a kind of firstfruits of [God's] creatures" (Jas. 1:18). As we

mentioned last month in dealing with the feast of Passover, all who believe the New Testament will realise that Christ could be appropriately symbolised either by something perfect or by something with the principle of corruption in it, according to whether we contemplate his perfect character or the corruptible nature which he bore, and from which he effected a deliverance. Such perfection could never be used as a symbol for ordinary men, for they are imperfect in both nature and character.

So, under the Law, the absolute firstfruits of the natural wheat harvest were presented as a single sheaf, free from defilement and able to give life. Seven weeks later the firstfruits of prepared bread were presented as two loaves baked with leaven. Surely the number two indicates plurality, and the leaven symbolises faulty men and women who will be presented before God at the gathering of the great harvest of humanity.



Watchman

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Anti-Turkish lobbies in Russia

Nigel Bernard

DANIEL 11:40 states: "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over".

In this verse there is a third party, "him", which finds itself under pressure first from the king of the south and then from the king of the north. This third power which developed between the king of the south and the king of the north came to be centred in the area of Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul). Originally it was the eastern part of the Roman Empire, but, following the capture of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453, the mantle of power in this region was taken over by the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Empire received a major blow from the south at the time of the end when the

Turkish forces were defeated and ousted from Palestine by the British under General Allenby in 1917. Today all that is left of the original Ottoman Empire is the country of Turkey, but even this will eventually disappear as when a river dries up (Rev. 16:12). This will happen when the overwhelming invasion of the "king of the north" takes place.

We expect Russia, therefore, as the latter-day king of the north, to invade Turkey, thus wiping away the final remnants of the Euphrates power that originally asserted itself in the years leading up to 1453 (Rev. 9:14). The relationship between Russia and Turkey at the time of the end will thus be very different from, for example, its relations with allies such as Persia and Libya (Ezek. 38:5). Can we see signs of this at the present time?

In the recent past the perception of the Russians towards Turkey appears to have been that

of a traditional enemy. Andrei Gromyko, the former Soviet foreign minister, wrote: "If you ask Soviet citizens what they know about Turkey, ninety-nine out of a hundred will tell you: 'It is a neighbouring country with which tsarist Russia was at war on and off for at least two hundred years'".¹

This perception of Turkey as a long-standing opponent has perhaps lessened somewhat since the end of the Soviet era but underlying antagonisms remain. In an interview for a Turkish newspaper, the Russian Ambassador to Turkey, Aleksander Lebedev, spoke of this:

"To be frank, there is an anti-Turkish lobby in Russia, as well as an anti-Russian lobby in Turkey. So what?! We have to withstand those lobbies, to neutralise their influence for the benefit of both countries' interests. Those who are in favour of ever closer cooperation and multidimensional partnership between Russia and Turkey are, no doubt, more numerous and influential than the mentioned lobbies. We are no longer living in the times when the Zaporozhe Kozaks [from Ukraine] were writing to the Turkish Sultan very unpleasant and even insulting words".²

The ambassador gives an upbeat analysis of the prospects for future relationships between the two countries, but this is to be expected. However, his admission of the existence of the anti-Turkish and anti-Russian lobbies shows that there are underlying tensions present between

the two countries. His analysis contrasts sharply, for example, with his assessment of the relationship of Russia with Armenia (Togarmah in Ezekiel 38): "We have excellent relations with Armenia".

Whilst there may be attempts to "neutralise" the influence of those who would increase enmity between the two countries, nevertheless it seems that these attempts will eventually be swept away in the whirlwind of invasion. If God decrees that two should be against each other then He can bring this to pass. Indeed, this will happen at Armageddon: "And I will call for a sword against him throughout all My mountains, saith the Lord GOD [Yahweh]: every man's sword shall be against his brother" (Ezek. 38:21). However, when in any case we see signs of enmity where enmity is prophesied this should provide us with the assurance that the time is near when Christ will return to judge the nations and deliver God's people.

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1. Gromyko, Andrei (1989), *Memories*, London, Hutchinson, p. 233.
 2. Söylemez, Yüksel (2002), "Lebedev: There is an anti-Turkish lobby in Russia and an anti-Russian lobby in Turkey", *Turkish Daily News*, Wednesday 31 July, p. 5. I am grateful to Brother Trevor Maher for forwarding me the newspaper containing this article following a visit to Turkey. The article can also be found at http://www.turkishdailynews.com/old_editions/07_31_02/for.htm#f6.

The Captive Conscience

This new book, by Brother John Botten, has been produced by The Christadelphian on behalf of the Christadelphian Military Service Committee. It provides an updated account of the Christadelphians' consistent stance against military service over the past 150 years. The main topics considered are:

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- The believer's conscience from the first century to the present
- The American Civil War and the origin of our name
- Accounts of persecution and trial for conscience' sake in different parts of the ecclesial world
- The need for consistency of conscience in every walk of life
- Are we ready for a present or future conflict?

In the present threat of imminent war, this is a book that all brethren and sisters should obtain and read, especially younger members, not forgetting also the unbaptized older members of Sunday Schools and Youth Groups.

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