

worn by all pious Jews of the period”, Dr Gibson explained in his report, referring to the Biblical blue (*tekelet*)—the thread of blue that God had instructed Moses to command all male Jews to include in the ritual fringes on the corners of their garments:

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments

throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband [thread] of blue [*tekelet*]: and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them . . .” (Num. 15:38,39).

Such fringes are worn by observant Jews to this day, although in

most of them the thread of blue is no longer included, since the precise technology for making the dye has been lost. However, in recent times rabbis have overseen a modern re-creation of the technique for making the blue dye, and some Jews have begun using blue in their fringes again.

Source: *Israel National News*, 30 Jul. 2009.

The most contested city on earth

Nigel Bernard

Jerusalem is the city chosen by God, but both Israelis and Palestinians claim it as their own. The eviction of Palestinian families from two houses in East Jerusalem has highlighted the competing claims to the city, coming as it did in the aftermath of a major diplomatic peace effort by the US in the Middle East.

IN 2 KINGS it is written, “And the LORD [Yahweh] said, I will remove Judah also out of My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there” (23:27). These words came to pass when the Babylonians took the Jews into captivity and burned down the temple and houses of Jerusalem. However, the prophecy that “My name shall be there” still remains to be fulfilled. In the meantime, as the BBC reporter Tim Franks recently stated, Jerusalem is “probably the most contested city on earth”.¹ Nevertheless, Jerusalem is still the city “which”, God says, “I have chosen”.

Franks was speaking after the eviction on 2 August 2009 of nine Palestinian families from two houses in the Sheikh Jarrah district of Jerusalem, an incident which has once more brought to the fore the question of who owns Jerusalem. The Sheikh Jarrah district is in East Jerusalem, which Palestinians regard as being their territory, seeing the presence of Israel as an occupation. Jewish families had claimed that the properties had historically belonged to them, and their claim was

backed up by a ruling of the Israeli Supreme Court. The Arabs who were evicted accused the Jews of using falsified documents to support their claim.

The eviction immediately brought condemnation from around the world. Anger was fuelled by photographs of the belongings of the Palestinians apparently being cast onto the street. The condemnation was led by the United States, which, ironically, had just completed a diplomatic push in the region. George Mitchell, the US special envoy to the Middle East, had meetings in Syria,

1. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8180743.stm.

Typical view of the Old City of Jerusalem, claimed by Palestinians as their territory.

Picture: Ivan Carter



Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Egypt and Bahrain. The Defence Secretary, Robert Gates, visited Israel and Jordan. And James Jones, the National Security Advisor, and Dennis Ross, the US envoy to the Gulf states, both had visits to Israel planned. The evictions and the worldwide reaction to them, coming so soon after the efforts of the Americans, serves to show the immensity of the problem facing those who seek to solve the Israeli-Palestinian question.

In the meeting between George Mitchell and the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, there was little to report in the way of progress. It was anticipated that the issue of Israel's continued building of settlements in so-called occupied territory would be high on the agenda, but, whilst it may have been discussed, no firm decisions were made. The Israeli Prime Minister's Office website made no mention of settlements in its report of the meeting: "At the end of the meeting, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that Israel is doing its utmost to advance the peace process with the Palestinians. Envoy Mitchell expressed the hope that the sides are close to reaching understandings that will constitute a basis for the continuation of the diplomatic process".² Although settlements were not mentioned, they are seen by observers as a major issue that has to be resolved. According to the so-called roadmap of 2003, Israel should halt the building of all new settlements. However, Benjamin Netanyahu argues that what he calls the "natural growth" of settlements must continue. We know from Ezekiel 38 that the "mountains of Israel" (v. 8) will be inhabited by Jews at the time of the end, and this includes the West Bank, so the continued presence of settlements in the West Bank would be in line with this prophecy.

We also know from prophecies such as Zechariah that Jews will very much have a presence in Jerusalem at the time of the end, for, when Jerusalem is taken by the invading armies, "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). In July Mr Netanyahu said, "Our sovereignty over it is unquestionable . . . We cannot accept the idea that Jews will not have the right to live and buy [homes] anywhere in Jerusalem".³ This kind of resolve helps to play a causative role in ensuring that there are indeed Jews present in Jerusalem at the time of the end, despite the Palestinian pressure to have the city for themselves. However, of course the sovereignty



The Israeli settlement of Giló in the West Bank, seen from Bethlehem, with Palestinian olive trees in the foreground.

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over Jerusalem ultimately belongs to God, and to His Son, to whom He has given the right to sit on David's throne.

The claim to sovereignty and the belief in the right to live "anywhere in Jerusalem" is leading to the kind of behaviour seen in the eviction of the Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah. The terrible treatment of Jews in Jerusalem as prophesied by Zechariah will have events such as this as part of its background. When Gog invades, many Palestinians will no doubt remember acts such as this eviction, and this will form part of the motivation leading to half the Jewish population of Jerusalem not only being evicted, but also taken into captivity. Of course, Israel is currently blind to such prophecies. Ironically, however, Israel at present is more concerned with the threat of Iran than the issue of settlements. The irony lies in the fact that Ezekiel 38 shows that Iran ("Persia") will be one of the nations who will ally itself to Gog when the great invasion from the north takes place. Israel's concern with regard to Iran thus has a rationale in Bible prophecy, although Israel has yet to realise that their only ultimate saviour against such threats is the Lord Jesus Christ.

As the battle of Armageddon takes place, and the nations gather against Jerusalem, the statement that Jerusalem is "probably the most contested city on earth" will be seen to be an understatement of massive proportions. However, we can be sure that, truly, our heavenly Father has indeed chosen Jerusalem, and His "name shall be there".

2. <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/EventsDirectory/eventmit280709.htm>.

3. See [1 above](#).