

JACOB'S TROUBLE

Gog and Magog at the End of the Age

An exposition of Ezekiel 38/39



A.O. Hudson

Preface

Albert O. Hudson, of Milborne Port England, was a faithful Christian, Bible Student and Scholar of the twentieth century. He was born in 1899 and died in 2000 at 101 years of age. In his early years he worked as an Electrical Engineer for Standard Telephones. His aptitude for detail served him well in researching Biblical details. He had access to the British Museum to reference ancient records in support of this and other studies.

The Bible Fellowship Union began publishing a journal in 1924 "*The Bible Students Monthly*". Some years later the name was changed to "*The Bible Study Monthly*". The journal was headed by Albert O. Hudson since its inception, and included many of his articles. In 1989 he also published "*Bible Students in Britain – The Story of a Hundred Years*".

He had an exceptional memory but also a very methodical filing system to store the fruit of his extensive reading, research and studies. His knowledge of history and the ancient world was outstanding. He loved the study of the Scriptures and sought to clarify doctrinal aspects of the faith. He had a wonderful gift with words, particularly the written word. His treatises contained much valuable information and wisdom.

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Jacob’s Trouble

A.O. Hudson

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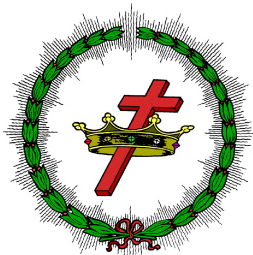
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*The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee*

*Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown;
And the might of Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow, in the glance of the Lord.
(Byron)*

Chapter 1 GOG OF THE LAND OF MAGOG

The establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth at the time of the Second Advent is preceded by a final and decisive conflict between the forces of good and evil. Those powers and institutions of this world which have been built upon human greed and injustice launch a concerted attack upon the new rulership which comes to bring peace to the nations, abolish war, pestilence, disease and death, and make the earth a fitting dwelling-place for redeemed humanity. The purpose of God as revealed in the Scriptures makes plain that the Millennial reign of the Lord Christ will effect these ends and usher the human race into a future in which sin and unhappiness finds no place, but it is also equally foretold that before this desirable condition of things comes about there will be stern resistance to the dawning era of righteousness by those whose interests lie in the preservation and perpetuation of the institutions and practices of this present order of world society. The old order of things will not give place without a struggle. The vested interests of this world, depending upon the exploitation of human beings and inordinate possession of earth's resources for private gain, will fiercely oppose the advent of the new era, with its proclamation of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, laying "justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet", and rendering to every man—white, black, brown, yellow or red—a place in life and a share of the world's amenities such that he may be able to develop his own abilities to the full and live in everlasting content as a citizen of creation. The conflict will be fought to a finish but the new order will be victorious and use its victory to initiate an era of peace and prosperity during which the human race will be finally and completely fitted for its eternal destiny.

Warfare between the material might of man on the one hand and the unseen, uncomprehended power of the celestial world on the other is difficult to visualise or define in human terms. There must of necessity be many factors in such a conflict which are quite alien to our understanding. That does not detract from the determination of the contestants or the reality of the struggle. It does require that the descriptions or forecasts of related events are framed in language appropriate to normal warfare between nations of the type with which men are familiar. The Bible has many such accounts of the last great conflict, described in the terms of war as it was waged at the time they were written, and these have to be read and understood in the light of this fact and interpreted to reveal the principles enshrined rather than as strictly literal narratives of the events that are to be. Thus considered, the prophetic Scriptures relating to the "End Time" become wonderfully luminous when viewed in the light of current events. The course of the world for a century past has been such that there can no longer be any doubt that humanity has reached the crisis so fully foretold in all the Scriptures and that the dawn of the new era is upon us. Heaven is about to take control.

Of some half a dozen vivid descriptions of this last great battle none is so fully detailed and so eloquent as the account in the 38th and 39th chapters of the book of the prophet Ezekiel, popularly known as the story of the invasion of Israel by Gog and Magog. Remembering that a fundamental feature of the Divine order in the Messianic Age is to be the creation of a dedicated Holy Nation, a purified and ideal

Israel, in the land which has already been associated with Divine things and Divine government from the dawn of history, and will be the centre of Divine administration, it is not surprising that this invasion is pictured directed against that centre. The incipient Kingdom of God upon earth is the target of the godless and the apostates, banded together to destroy this threat to their continued power. From this standpoint these chapters in Ezekiel are not only of supreme interest but also vital importance at this present time when world events betoken in no uncertain fashion that the fulfilment of "all things written" is imminent.

This account was written some six hundred years before Christ; because it deals so much with political events it is "dressed up" in language borrowed from the political history of that time. Prophecy is not the unaided product of the seer; it is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit of God, operating through a human instrument and using human terms capable of comprehension by men. This foreview of the future, written more than twenty-five hundred years prior to its fulfilment, was possible because the events of today are happening in direct consequence of the course which mankind has been pursuing for far more than that twenty-five hundred years; God in His infinite wisdom knows exactly how the forces which men have set in motion, hundreds or even thousands of years ago, pursued to their logical end, will react upon the generation of men now living. So He is able to record the outcome thus in advance.

Ezekiel the priest was born in Judea and taken captive to Babylon in the third year of Jehoiakim of Judah, eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. He was then thirty years of age, a man devout and zealous, and well versed in the Hebrew Scriptures. The earlier parts of his writings reveal that he was possessed of the reformer's spirit in marked degree; he was certainly a fitting vehicle of the Holy Spirit for the transmission of revelations such as we now have before us. His later writings comprise a prophetic description of Israel's national resurrection at the close of this present Age; her regathering to her ancient land and subsequent prosperity; the envy of surrounding but distant barbarous nations and the descent of those nations, under the leadership of Gog of the land of Magog, upon her, their utter defeat and the universal conversion of the regathered nation followed by the promulgation of Divine law and rulership over the earth with the Israeli land as the administrative centre. The narrative concludes with a "Temple vision" depicting the settled rule and work of the Millennial Age and its triumphant outcome in the reconciliation of men, "whosoever will", to God. The predicted events of chapters 38 and 39 are to be understood in relation to this general picture.

The physical background of these two chapters was the invasion of the Middle East by Scythians from the north in the reign of Josiah of Judah. Ezekiel was a boy at this time and witnessed this earth-shaking event at first hand. To such an extent must it have impressed him as an example of irresistible and all-conquering force that it remained with him, until years later and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he cast his momentous prophecy of the last great conflict in the mould of that invasion. It is very necessary, therefore, that this physical background be examined closely and an accurate understanding of the situation as it existed in Ezekiel's mind be achieved. There are allusions to ancient nations that no longer exist, these have to be re-

interpreted in terms applicable to the present. The Israeli people and the Israeli land of the prophecy are those of Ezekiel's own day; the extent to which both people and land in the fulfilment must possess wider attributes and be sketched on a larger canvas has to be determined. The whole conception of the interpretation has to be lifted from the narrow limits of Old Testament Israel's relations with her neighbours to the immeasurably greater sphere of world evil versus God's holiness at the end of the Age—even although admittedly there is still a nation of Israel occupying the centre of the stage, and profoundly affected by all that transpires.

It is necessary first of all to identify the actors in the drama. A noteworthy feature of this prophecy is that Israel's traditional—and usual—enemies do not figure in the account and are not so much as mentioned. Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Egypt, Philistines, Amalekites, Midianites, Amorites, appear time after time on the pages of the Old Testament in combat with Israel. Not one of these appears in this narrative; their place is taken by nations hitherto unknown to Israel and coming from a great distance, from the far corners of the earth in fact. This of itself is a significant factor. It must indicate that the conflict foreseen by Ezekiel has to do with other and far greater issues than those which have traditionally concerned Israel in the past. The situation is not, as formerly, Israel versus her neighbouring tribes and peoples, but Israel versus the wider outside world. The battle is not against the Israel that conquered Canaan under the leadership of Joshua but a greater and more dedicated nation which has gathered into a more extensive Holy Land under the headship of God. But before we can understand the details of this Battle of the Great Day in the light of Ezekiel's vision we must first learn our history.

About eight hundred years before Christ the nations of the Middle East—Assyria, Babylon, Elam, Media, Syria, and Israel—became dimly conscious of a new threat to their political interests. A number of strange, warlike and barbarous peoples, hitherto unknown, had appeared in the northern countries of Lydia and Armenia, raiding, killing and taking possession. Within a century they had reached the frontiers of Assyria; the celebrated Sennacherib, and later his son Esarhaddon, led the Assyrian armies against them and with some difficulty forced them back. In the Assyrian historical inscriptions the invaders were called the Mushku, the Tabalu, the Gimirrai and the Til-garimmu; the corresponding Bible names are Meshech, Tubal, Gomer and the House of Togarmah. Meshech and Tubal were Scythian tribes first known in history in what is now southern Russia between the Black Sea and the Caspian, where Tiglath-Pileser I of Assyria fought them in the 12th century B.C. By Sennacherib's time they had moved into Armenia. Gomer and Togarmah were of the race known in history as the Cimmerians and had been forced out of their home in Russia north of the Black Sea into Asia Minor by the pressure of other Scythian tribes. The Scythians originated in Central Asia and about the ninth century B.C. were increasing and extending in all directions. Called Ashquzai or Saka by the Assyrians (Ashkenaz in Hebrew) they eventually played a great part in the overthrow of the Assyrian empire. Scythian tribes inhabited the southern areas of European Russia and Siberia from the days of Abraham to those of Malachi and the close of the Old Testament, after which they began to disappear before the impact of other racial types. It was this “expanding population” pressure which had driven wave after wave

of Scythians into the lands bordering the north of Israel and Assyria, resulting in this invasion which forms the background of Ezekiel's prophecy.

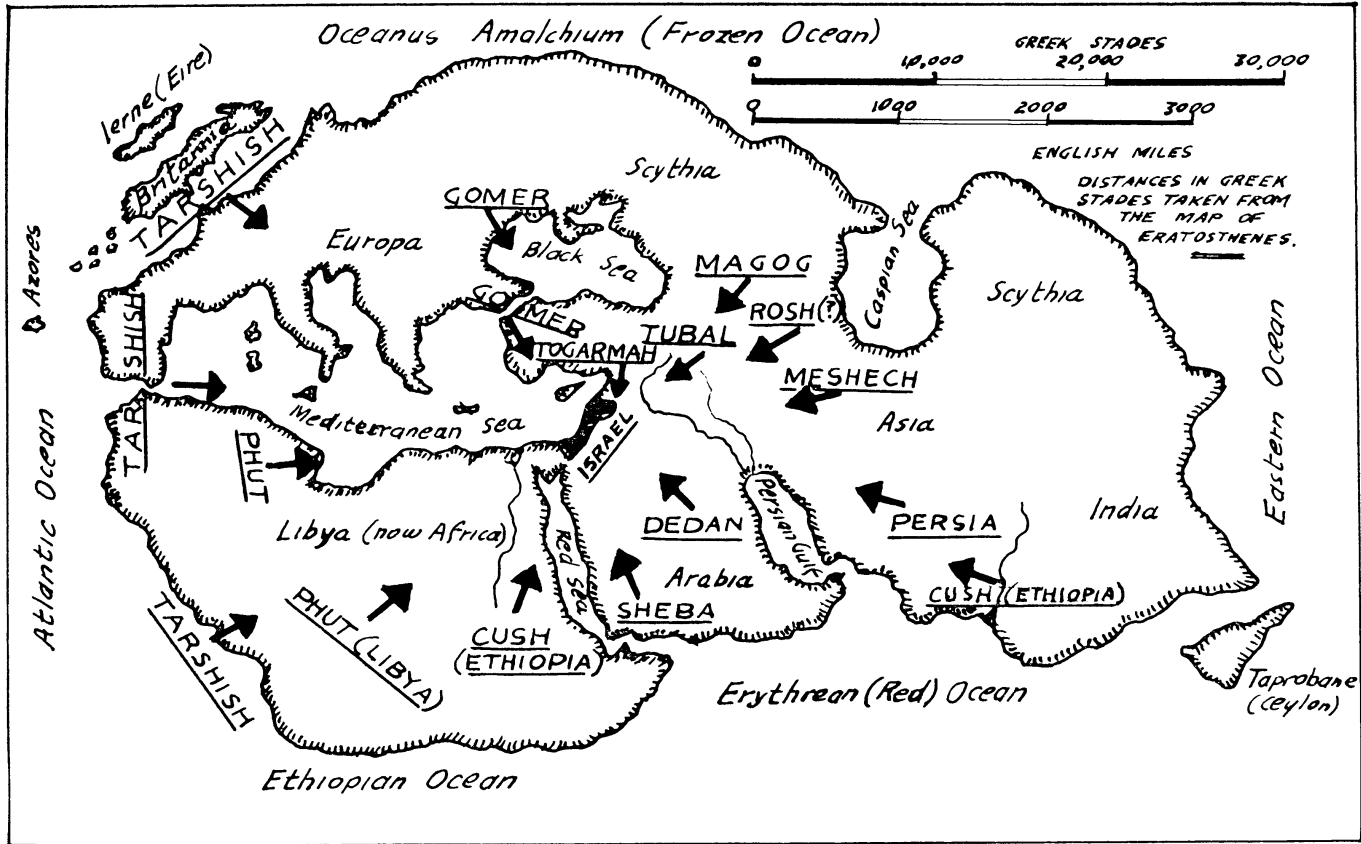
Chapter 38. 2 speaks of "*Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal*". The translation is not very exact; literally the passage should read "*set thy face towards Gog, towards the land of Magog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal*". There is some doubt about the accuracy of the description "chief prince". The accents in the Hebrew text demand that "*rosh*" be read in its normal meaning of head or chief, hence the rendering "chief prince", but grammatically the expression should not appear in this form and still remain good Hebrew. The Septuagint and a number of ancient authorities such as Symmachus and Theodotion take "*Rosh*" as a proper name and render "*prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal*". An objection to this is the fact that whereas Meshech and Tubal are frequently found coupled together in the Assyrian inscriptions of the times, no tribe named Rosh appears, either in Assyrian records or the Bible. It is said that some Arab writers of the early Christian centuries mention a Scythian tribe named Ros as living in Cappadocia and that it originated from the Caspian Sea district, where the River Aras (the Arab name for the Araxes) perpetuates the name. This is flimsy evidence in the absence of further corroboration, but there is the possibility that such a tribe did exist in Ezekiel's time in association with the more prominent Meshech and Tubal, without coming under the notice of Assyria.

Magog would appear to be the Gagaia of the Tel-el-Amarna letters, at that time, 14th century B.C., said to be a land of barbarians in the far north. This might well be a general name for all Scythian tribes and as such the equivalent of the Assyrian Saka and Greek Sacasene, terms for the Scythians generally.

The federal chief of this confederacy of warlike tribesmen is addressed as Gog. This is the man whose name comes down the ages as the "Northern One", the dark figure who is to lead the forces of evil against the people of the Lord at the Time of the End. Not only in the Bible—Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Habakkuk—is this shadowy menacing figure seen, but also in the apocryphal books, in Jewish legend, in Arab folklore. Throughout the ages this dreaded name has persisted and always it is the sign and symbol of the implacable enemy of God who at the last is to meet his doom with all his followers when God rises up to deliver Israel.

Ezekiel obviously referred to a real historical figure and today the identity of Gog is known. He is named in Assyrian records as Gaagi, supreme chief of the Saka or Scythians in the days of Asshur-bani-pal of Assyria, roughly during the reign of Manasseh of Judah. The Greeks at a somewhat later time knew a Scythian tribe which they called the Gogarene, i.e. people of Gog, dwelling at the east of the Black Sea; this is probably the same as Magog, and Gog's own tribe. The two sons of Gog, Sariti and Pariza, were captured by Asshur-bani-pal during his campaigns against Meshech and Tubal and taken prisoner to Nineveh. The great Scythian invasion which spelt the end of Assyria and inspired Ezekiel's prophecy was led by Madyes, the grandson of Gog.

THE WORLD AS KNOWN IN LATE OLD TESTAMENT TIMES



Showing the position of Israel and the hostile nations of Ezekiel 38/39

Land outlines from the maps of Greek Geographers Hecateus, Herodotus & Eratosthenes given—circa 500-250 B.C.

Here then is the setting for Ezek. 38 and 39, a confederacy of Scythian and Cimmerian tribes migrating from Southern Russia and making their way across Asia Minor until they stood poised for a mass attack upon the lands of the Bible. Israel, in the centre of those lands, was vulnerable and helpless against the threat. She could only wait.

The prophecy goes on to associate with Gog's host certain other nations, from the east and south and west. This had no counterpart in the invasion of Josiah's time and this is one respect in which the prophetic reality differs profoundly from the historic shadow. These nations will be considered a little farther on.

At this point some notice should be taken of a rather popular exposition amongst some students of prophecy which identifies Rosh with Russia, Meshech with Moscow and Tubal with Tobolsk, a city of Western Siberia. These identifications are to be treated with caution. Tobolsk is nearly two thousand miles from the land of Tubal of Ezekiel's day; it is possible that at a much earlier date Scythian tribesmen of the same name migrated from a common centre, some in the course of centuries reaching Armenia as Tubal, others settling on the River Tobol which gives the Siberian city its name, but there could have been no connection between the respective peoples. (In much the same way the Cimmerians from Russia appeared in Armenia as Gomer and Togarmah and in Britain as the Cymry, now represented by the Welsh). In any case Tobolsk was not founded until A.D. 1587. Moscow, which in Russian is Moskva, from which word Muscovy, the older name for Russia, is derived, was founded in A.D. 1174 but did not become the capital until several centuries later. Here again there is some similarity with the Assyrian Mushku (Meshech) but Moscow was not founded by Scythians but by invaders from the Baltic.

The identification of Rosh with Russia is incorrect. The word Russia is Rossiya, derived from the Finnish term for the people of Sweden, a corruption of the Swedish "rothsmenn" meaning seafarers. During the ninth and tenth centuries of the Christian era Scandinavian peoples related to the Swedes, Angles and Norsemen entered Russia from the north and penetrated as far as the southern steppes, where they encountered and fought the Turks—the surviving representatives of the ancient Scythians. These newcomers were called the "Rus", or "Ros", and, by the Greeks of the time, the "Norse pirates". For some two hundred years they colonised European Russia, establishing their capital at Kiev. These were the people from whom Russia takes its modern name but all this was long after the days of Ezekiel. So far as can be gleaned from the writings of ancient historians and geographers, Central and Northern European Russia was uninhabited in Old Testament times and the Baltic invaders were its first inhabitants.

Five years before the death of King Josiah, when Ezekiel was a youth and Jeremiah had spent some ten years on his prophetic ministry, the forces of Gog swept over the lands of the Bible like a mighty avalanche. The old warrior, Asshur-bani-pal of Assyria, was dead. The armies of the Medes and the Babylonians were at the gates of Nineveh, and the Assyrians were fighting for their life. Egypt was biding its time to

share in the spoils. Josiah was in the middle of his reforming work aimed at eliminating idolatry from Israel. Ten years earlier, Jeremiah had received his prophetic commission and seen his vision of the seething pot overturned so that its boiling contents flooded over the ground. And the Lord said to him in explanation “*Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land*” (Jer.1. 14-15). Now the prediction was fulfilled. Along the northern frontiers of Syria, Assyria and Media swarmed the Scythians and Cimmerians in their thousands, intent on conquest and plunder. For generations past Assyria had been the guardian of the north but now the power of Assyria was at its lowest ebb and there was no strength to resist.

The first onslaught was met by the Medes. If history be true—and the records of this period are confused and contradictory—Cyxares of Media persuaded the Scythians into a temporary alliance for a joint attack upon Nineveh. It is fairly conclusive that the downfall of Assyria and the destruction of Nineveh was the consequence of such an alliance and that the Scythian wave passed over and obliterated the proud empire that for so long had held the nations of Western Asia in an iron grip. The prophet Nahum describes the coming of this moment. “*He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face*” he cries triumphantly, “*the horseman lifteth up the bright sword and the glittering spear; and there is a great multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses . . . all they that look upon thee shall say, Nineveh is laid waste; who will bemoan her?*” That is an eloquent, accurate description of Scythian warfare. The city was so completely blotted out of existence that only two centuries later Xenophon marched his army of ten thousand Greeks right across its site without any suspicion that what was left of it lay under his feet; not until the middle nineteenth century were its remains brought to light.

From Assyria the raiding hordes swept across Syria, through the plain of Megiddo—the “*Armageddon*” of the Book of Revelation—and over the seaward side of Israel and the Philistine land to the frontiers of Egypt. Here, according to Herodotus, they were met by Pharaoh Psamtik I who persuaded their leaders into a treaty which halted further advance. In any case they had now absorbed a very considerable territorial area.

The Scythian occupation lasted probably less than ten years—Herodotus says twenty-eight, but he is certainly mistaken. In the meantime the lawless hosts roamed the countries plundering and slaying at will. The kingdom of Judah seems to have escaped much of the impact; during most of the time in question Josiah was busy with his reformation and the accounts in Chronicles and Kings do not yield any hints of untoward interference from outside. After the agreement with Egypt the Scythians seem to have withdrawn from the vicinity of Israel, although they captured and destroyed Askelon of the Philistines on the way, and also established a great military fortress at Beth-shan in the valley of Jezreel not far from Nazareth. Scythians remained in possession of this fortress and town up to the time of Christ, when it was known on that account as Scythopolis. Although within the territory of Israel, the Rabbis would not consider it a Jewish town, but the place of an unholy people. (It has been thought that St. Paul’s allusion to Scythians in Col. 3. 11 in connection with

Greeks and Jews as being one in Christ is a reference to the continued presence in Beth-shan of the descendants of the ancient Scythians of Gog's army).

Within a few years of the invasion the Scythians had disappeared. The reason is not clear; the records are scanty and non-informative. By the time that Ezekiel in Babylon was beginning his prophetic ministry they were back in Armenia and Asia Minor, and the lands of the Bible knew them no more. Only the memory of them remained.

This then is the historical basis of Ezekiel's prophecy. It is not a picture in miniature of the future. There are many elements in the ultimate conflict, alluded to in Chapters 38 and 39, which had no counterpart in the events of Josiah's day. Perhaps the most important is that after the cataclysm Israel enters into an era of everlasting peace. That was not true back in history. Josiah met his death fighting with Egypt against Babylon, and not long afterwards the entire nation suffered the Babylonian captivity. Ezekiel says that the hosts of Magog will find graves in the land of Israel; in history they went back unimpeded to their own land. So the story of Gog, of the land of Magog, and his great invasion of the Middle East twenty-six centuries ago, was taken up by the Holy Spirit and used as a picture from which the salient features of the prophetic fulfilment might be deduced.

Now that picture does include some nations which were not part of the historical Gog's host but are depicted in the prophetic vision as rendering assistance and encouragement. "*Persia, Ethiopia and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet*" (38. 5) says the prophet. They are to be associated with the prophetic Gog in the latter day conflict. Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish also appear as giving encouragement and approval if not actual help. The inclusion of these additional nations is obviously to complete the prophetic picture in terms of Ezekiel's own day and it is necessary therefore to establish the position of these peoples at that time.

Persia (Heb. *Paras*) was only beginning to come into prominence in the days of Ezekiel. Commencing as a small Aryan tribe in the extreme south of modern Iran, having migrated from its home in the far east, it gradually attained equality with the Medes in the north, and under the celebrated Cyrus in the days of Daniel became predominant. Later on Persia had much to do with Israel but to Ezekiel it was still a distant and unknown people with whom Israel had made no contact. It was in fact the weakening of the Medes by this same Scythian invasion that gave Persia the opportunity to assert its position and begin its progress towards domination of the Middle East. In this narrative the name is probably used in a general sense for the unknown tribes to the far east of Israel just as those of Gog denoted those of the far north.

Ethiopia is the Greek term for the widely spread people whose native and Hebrew name was Cush. The Cushites, descended from Ham, became a numerous and powerful race, spreading both eastwards towards India and westwards into Africa. Originating from the Euphrates, the eastern branch settled in Baluchistan (the borders of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan) and the Indus valley of India; the western branch

migrated through Arabia and across the Red Sea, and by the days of the Hebrew monarchy had built up a powerful empire in East Africa. The modern Ethiopians are largely their descendants, mixed now with Semitic blood.

Libya in Ezek. 38. 5 is not the modern country of that name; the Hebrew word is Phut and has a much wider application. Libya is the Greek form of the Egyptian Lubu and Hebrew Lehabim or Lubim (Gen. 10. 13; 2 Chron. 12. 3) a tribe descended from the Egyptians and colonising to the west of Egypt. Simultaneously with this process the Phutites, a Hamitic race, left their ancestral home on the Euphrates and like the Cushites traversed Arabia into Africa, settling in what is now Somaliland, from whence they spread westwards across tropical Africa to the Atlantic. They were a highly intelligent and virile people and with the natural resources of the tropics at their disposal became a nation of traders—Egypt from the time of Moses carried on a great deal of trade with them and in the Egyptian inscriptions their country is referred to as the Land of Punt. The name of Phut, however, is found right across Africa, to its northwest extremity in present-day Morocco. St. Jerome referred to them as late as the Christian era. It seems that they became the greatest Hamitic people on the African continent, even exceeding Egypt. Until the Christian era the entire continent was known as Libya—the name “Africa” was that of a Roman colony on the northern coast. From the O.T. point of view, Ethiopia and Libya defined in a general manner the whole of the little-known peoples inhabiting Africa beyond Egypt.

These are the allies of Gog. There now appear three more names, nations which do not seem to be active participants in the attack but stand to share in the spoils. Describing the situation, Ezekiel says (ch. 38. 13) “*Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? Hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?*” The text needs clarification. The Septuagint and some modern translators render “villages” instead of “young lions” which, since Tarshish is a territorial definition, is more logical. The distinction between “young lion” and “village” in Hebrew is one of vowels only and in the original there were no vowels. Since the Septuagint is nearly a thousand years earlier than the Hebrew text upon which the A.V. is based there seems no reasonable doubt that “villages” is the correct rendering. The expressions “*Art thou come . . . Hast thou gathered . . .*” etc., are what is known as the rhetorical interrogative, a statement put in question form but a statement of fact nevertheless, as in Isa. 43. 19 “*Behold, I will do a new thing;... shall ye not know it?*” These words should therefore be read in the affirmative; “*Thou art come to take a spoil! Thou hast gathered thy company . . .*” etc. The real point of this verse is that Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish were trading peoples and merchants; they were not warriors. In ancient times merchants from such nations waited on the victors of great battles to purchase what they could of the spoils of victory, which they then disposed of upon terms advantageous to themselves. Joel 3. 3-6 is an allusion to this practice. So the prophetic picture here is drawn to show that commercial interests are waiting to benefit from the anticipated plunder of the land.

<u>Ezekiel's names</u>		<u>Location (modern names)</u>
Meshech & Tubal Persia	Scythian Tribes	Southern Russia (Black & Baltic sea) Iran
Ethiopia Libya	Cushites	Ethiopia & Indus Valley (India) Africa in general
Gomer & Togarmah	Cimmerians	Asia Minor (Turkey) & Russia
Sheba & Dedan Tarshish	Trading people	Saudia Arabia & Yemen Britain, Spain & West Africa

Sheba and Dedan were two Cushite peoples—both recorded in Gen. 10 as sons of Raamah son of Cush—involved in the drift of Cushites into Arabia; whilst the others passed on into Africa these two remained and became notable mercantile peoples, Dedan in the north in what is now Saudi Arabia and Sheba in the extreme south and on the Red Sea coast (the Yemen). This latter is the Sheba whose famous queen came to consult King Solomon some five centuries previously. (Another Biblical Sheba and Dedan, children of Abraham by Keturah, appear in Gen. 25. 3 but there is no connection). Both these peoples travelled long distances with their caravans of goods and brought the produce of Arabia and Africa into the lands of the Middle East.

Tarshish is the name around which so much romance has been woven. Tarshish in the Old Testament is the mysterious land at the ends of the earth to which the great trading vessels of the Phoenicians sailed, returning to Tyre laden with all kinds of strange and valuable goods. The expression “ships of Tarshish” occurs a number of times in the O.T. and from the context is seen to denote what we would call large ocean-going merchant vessels irrespective of destination. Mostly they sailed through the Mediterranean westwards, although King Solomon did build “ships of Tarshish” to go southwards through the Red Sea. From the lists of goods they brought back it is evident they went to widely separated places in both the temperate and tropical zones. Ivory, apes and peacocks (parrots or guinea-fowl) came from the west coast of Africa; gold from South Africa or Spain; silver and lead from Spain; tin from Britain. “Tarshish stone”, translated “beryl” in the A.V., is known to have been Baltic amber—examples found in Assyria and Babylon have been chemically analysed and found to be of a variety found nowhere in the world apart from the Baltic—and it is believed that the early Britons obtained this product from the Scandinavian lands and traded it with the Phoenicians visiting Britain. “Tarshish and all her villages” therefore can be taken as standing for the distant countries of the West, the entire West African coast, Spain and Britain. Since it is fairly certain that the Phoenicians traded with the Azores and there is some evidence that they knew the West Indies—

two thousand years before Columbus—even the New World might possibly be included in the term.

It is significant that of this entire catalogue of nations not one is of the Semitic race. Taking the Table of Nations of Gen. 10 as basis, they all owe their origin either to Japheth or Ham. Shem is not represented. The only names not mentioned in Gen. 10 are Persia and the rather debatable one of Rosh. Rosh, if it existed at all, was a Scythian tribe and therefore of Japheth. The Persians were Aryans—the ancient native name, Iranian, now adopted again for the modern Persia, preserves this fact, and so they too are of Japheth. Israel's enemies from the north, the east and the west are Japhetic and from the south Hamitic. None are Semitic. This in prophetic metaphor increases the emphasis evidently to be laid on the fact that the enemies of Israel at this momentous crisis are not of their own kindred but the remote hitherto unknown peoples of the wider world.

So the prophetic picture is complete. Israel, the people of God, a tiny and apparently defenceless nation at the centre of the earth, is locked within an iron ring of implacable enemies arrayed against her from the farthest corners of the earth. Practically every part of the world known to the ancients of Ezekiel's day is represented in the list, from Britain, Spain and Africa in the west to Persia and India in the east, from Turkey and Russia in the north to Arabia in the south. The whole world stands set against the land of unwalled villages. This is the picture which, expanded to take in the greater scale of events and the wider dispersion of nations today, is drawn to reveal the nature of that greater conflict which is to end the dominion of evil in the earth.

We come to our examination of this wonderful prophecy in its relation to the events of our own day with the realisation that here we have information and instruction of vital import. We do not expect to find our God represented as a revengeful, war-making military conqueror. We do expect to find Him serenely ordering all things after the counsel of His own will, first allowing men in their greed and folly to bring themselves into this welter of blood and fire, and then, by means of His own weapons—not by weapons of man's devising—reducing the plans and devices, the might and the power, of this world to nothing, calmly calling all men to listen to the new voice which is to speak from Heaven. The first outwardly perceptible manifestation of the Kingdom in control will appear when God intervenes to confound the material might of the nations by means of a power they can neither understand nor withstand, and commands them in the words of the Psalmist "*be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth*".

Chapter 2 TITLE DEEDS OF THE LAND

“In the latter years you will go against the land that is restored from war, the land where people were gathered from many nations upon the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste; its people were brought out from the nations and now dwell securely, all of them . . . and you will devise an evil scheme, and say, I will go up against the land of unwalled villages; I will fall upon the quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having no bars or gates, to seize spoil and carry off plunder; to assail the waste places which are now inhabited, and the people who were gathered from the nations, who have gotten cattle and goods, who dwell at the centre of the earth” (Ezek. 38. 8-12 R.S.V.).

Thus does the prophet Ezekiel describe that fair land of the End Time upon which the nations of earth are to cast envious eyes. No wonder that Christian writers and commentators of past times have interpreted this prophecy as a poetic description of the spiritual conflict between good and evil and the final triumph of good. Unless there is a clear understanding of the Divine purpose in the Second Coming and the Messianic Era for the overthrow of all evil powers and the general conversion and reconciliation of all from among mankind who can be persuaded by the Gospel, it is hardly possible to understand the passage in any other manner. Viewing it as a realistic forecast describing the physical situation at the end of this Age and the challenge to Divine power thrown down by world forces and institutions which are fiercely opposed to the incoming Millennial world government, it is possible to examine the prophecy very critically and realise how true it is that in events now transpiring in the world there are the beginnings of things destined to culminate in the strange yet wondrous acts of Ezekiel 38 and 39.

The invasion of the Holy Land by the hosts of “Gog and Magog” is the last great event of this Age. The overthrow of that great host is the signal for the establishment and announcement of the Kingdom of God upon earth. From that point of time Restitution processes will commence, and the work of world conversion, the restoration of the earth and rehabilitation of the human race, go forward. A clear understanding of the prophecy in the light both of Biblical lore and of contemporary knowledge is an essential for those who desire to keep abreast with the outworking of the Divine Plan.

The central feature of the prophecy is the land and its people, and a question immediately arises “Where is the land and who are the people?” The old time theology, inspired mainly by St. Augustine, declared that the whole passage is symbolic, that it depicts the final triumph of Christ and His Church over the forces of evil. Such explanation will not satisfy students of the Bible who understand and look for the coming of Christ’s Kingdom upon earth. Quite clearly, this passage is directly related to the Divine destiny for the ideal Israel of the End Time and to the establishment of the Kingdom, and must therefore be understood in a dispensational sense and in an earthly setting. Putting it briefly, the time of the prophecy is at the end of this Age and the place of its fulfilment is upon this earth.

The Old Testament, from the Book of Genesis onward, maintains a consistent claim that God promised the patriarch Abraham that of his descendants there would be developed a nation which should possess to all perpetuity the land over which he wandered and in which he lived. In that land this nation is to become the Divine instrument, to be a light to the nations and declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth. The New Testament takes up the promise and shows that it will become reality at the end of the Age. In the meantime Abraham's descendants, whilst admittedly constituting a power for good in history, have never reached up to the standard demanded for this historic destiny, but when the time comes such a nation will be ready in the land thus promised; Ezekiel's prophecy refers to that fulfilment. It is to be taken as a basic principle, therefore, that the land promised to Abraham nearly four thousand years ago, the land in which he spent his life, the land in which his descendants Isaac and Jacob, and the nation of Israel which sprang from Jacob, played their respective parts on the stage of history, is the land of the promise and of the prophecy. There it is that a people will be gathered to fulfil in every respect the description given by Ezekiel. Although the contemporary modern political state of Israel is but a small country the size of Wales the ancient nation of Israel did in fact occupy a larger area; the promises to Abraham and his successors define an even greater expanse of territory destined to form the Holy Land of the Kingdom Age. It has to be accepted that not only modern Israel but a number of other recently created sovereign States in that part of the world will eventually be merged to form the stage upon which this last act in the drama of this "present evil world", to use St. Peter's description, is to be played.

It is noteworthy that God seems to have selected this part of the earth's surface as the scene of those events which mark definite steps or epochs in the development of His purposes. The travels of Abraham, from Ur of the Chaldees in the south-east Euphrates valley, to Haran in the north, down through Canaan into Egypt in the south-west, and back into Canaan, there to settle, mark out a great triangle which roughly defines the area promised to him and to his seed by Divine covenant. Within or immediately adjacent to this triangle practically the whole of the incidents in the Old Testament were enacted, with the three exceptions of the landing of the Ark in the far north-east, Jonah's mission to Nineveh, and the story of Esther. If it should be, in the Messianic Age, that the sites of great events in the story of redemption are excluded from ordinary uses and reserved to the interested gaze of redeemed men visiting the Holy Land from all parts of the world, there is some reason to expect that all this territory will be under the direct care of the Holy Nation.

There is a very significant expression in verse 12 of chapter 38. The regathered nation is said to dwell "*at the centre of the earth*" (RSV). Now this is, geographically, literally true of the land of Israel and its surroundings. Of all the circles of latitude encircling the earth, that passing through the Middle East traverses the greatest length of land, nearly ten thousand miles. Israel is situated at the junction of three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa. It is roughly midway in distance between the West Coast of Africa and the East Coast of China, between the southernmost

limit of Africa and the northernmost of Siberia. If a point had to be selected which could be said to be the centre of the land masses of the earth then Israel would logically be that point, and can claim more than anywhere else to be called the “centre of the earth”. As the administrative seat of the World Government which will be in operation during the Millennial Age no more suitable place could be chosen. It is tempting to think that God deliberately selected this particular part of the earth’s surface for its historic mission because of its physical suitability.

Now the actual extent and boundaries of this future Holy Land are defined in the Scriptures with a certain degree of precision and in good legal form. The ancients of Abraham’s day were quite accustomed to the drawing up of legal documents embodying the title to ownership of land—many such tablets exist today in the British Museum among other places—and the promises of God regarding the land He has set aside for the administration of the Kingdom are set out in precise style. There are four such “title deeds” incorporated in the Old Testament, each defining the land in a different manner, by their united testimony affording the student a very fair idea of the boundaries of the land that is to be.

The first definition was given to Abraham and recorded in Gen. 15. 18-21. The Lord had concluded a covenant with the patriarch under the terms of which his seed was to become the means of blessing all families of the earth. Later events showed that the line of descent to the “seed of blessing” was to be traced through Isaac, Jacob and eventually the twelve tribes of Israel. Said the Lord *“unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaim, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites”*. A significant element in this passage is the list of peoples then existing whose territory is to be included in the Holy Land.

The river Euphrates rises in the mountains of modern Turkey and after traversing northern Syria flows through Iraq into the Persian Gulf. The empires of Sumeria, Assyria, Mari and Babylon rose and fell on its banks. Abraham’s migration from Ur to Haran followed the course of the river for a great part of its length. David and Solomon extended the commercial influence of the Kingdom of Israel to the Euphrates where it now flows through Syria. According to this title deed the eastern frontier of the Holy Land is marked by the Euphrates.

The “river of Egypt” is the Nile. The same expression is used some half dozen times in the Old Testament to describe the Wady-el-Arish, a seasonal stream running down from the middle of the Sinai peninsula into the Mediterranean sea at El-Arish. In these cases the word for river is *“nachal”* meaning a torrent bed dry in summer and flooded in winter—the Arabic “wady”. When the Nile is intended, as in Gen. 15. 18, the word is *“nahar”* meaning a permanent running stream. The Nile delta or its vicinity would therefore appear to be the western frontier of the Holy Land. David’s Kingdom reached as far as the Wedy-el-Arish.

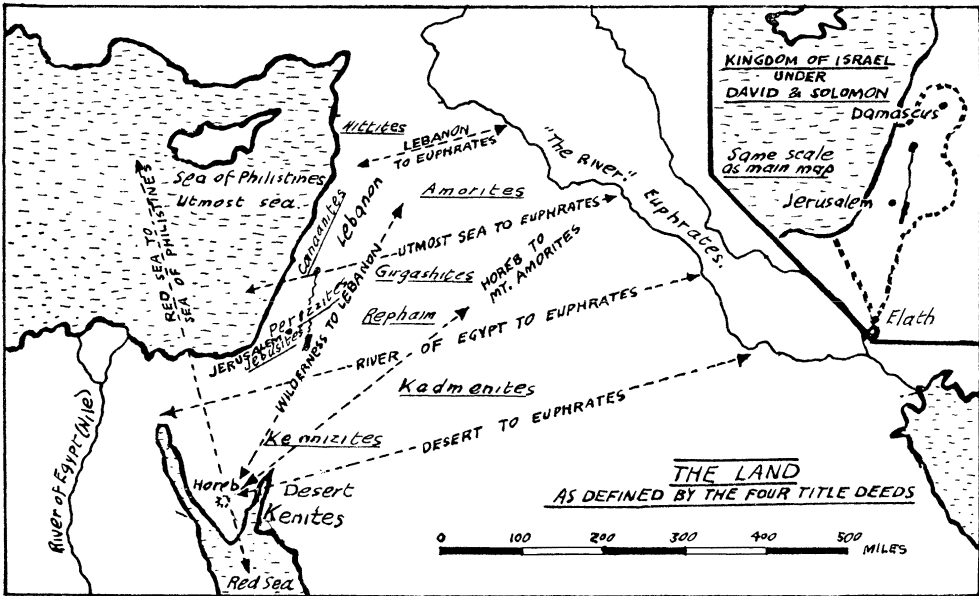
All the ten nations mentioned as occupying this territory in Abraham’s day have long

since disappeared from history, although in most cases a good deal is known about them. The Kenites occupied southern Sinai—Moses during his forty years' exile from Egypt lived with a Kenite tribe—on the eastern side of the Gulf of Akaba. The Kenizzites occupied the Negeb and what afterwards became Edom, the land of Esau. Of the Kadmonites not much is known but it is believed that this was a general term for tribes living to the far east of the Jordan and towards the Euphrates. The Hittites were a very numerous people who established a notable civilisation in Asia Minor; the Hittites of Genesis, however, were a separate and isolated branch of this people occupying sites throughout the country west of Jordan and in Syria. The Perizzites held the mountainous districts of Galilee and eastward across Jordan. The Rephaim were originally from east of Jordan and only at the time of the Exodus were they found in Israel proper. They were men of gigantic stature. The Amorites were the most important of all the peoples named—they inhabited not only Canaan proper but extended northwards into Syria and eastwards to Euphrates. Canaan and Syria were known to the Assyrians and Babylonians as the "Amorite land". Several times in history the Amorites descended the Euphrates in force to attack Babylon, and from time to time the Babylonians were ruled by Amorite kings. The Canaanites were well distributed over the entire land of Canaan; the Gergashites east of the Sea of Galilee, and the Jebusites a powerful tribe in the very centre of Canaan with Salem (Jerusalem) as their capital in Abraham's time. This catalogue of tribal territories covers most of the country between the Nile and the Euphrates from Sinai in the south to Syria in the north.

The second title deed was the gift of God to the emerging nation of Israel at the time of the Exodus. "*I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river*" (Exod. 23.31). This statement defines the north-south and east-west limits of the land. The expression "sea of the Philistines" is in itself an interesting internal proof of the early date of the Book of Genesis. The Philistines were immigrants from Crete (*Caphtor* in the Old Testament, Egyptian *Keftu*—see Jer. 47.4 and Amos 9. 7) and were settled on the coast of Canaan primarily for the purpose of growing corn for their homeland. Crete was the dominant sea power in the Mediterranean in the days of Abraham and that sea was then known as the "sea of the Philistines". Less than a century after the Exodus the supremacy of Crete was broken and her sea power passed to the Phoenicians of Tyre and Sidon. From then the sea was known to the Hebrews and in the Old Testament as the "Great Sea".

From the Red Sea to the Mediterranean; from the desert to the river! "Desert" here is "*midbar*" which defined the desert of Sinai and north-western Arabia, in the former of which Israel was at that moment encamped. "*The river*" when not otherwise qualified, always denotes the Euphrates in the Old Testament. The Red Sea, the Arabian desert, the Euphrates and the Mediterranean coast are declared to be the ultimate boundaries of the land, agreeably to the definition given to Abraham in Gen. 15. 18 four centuries earlier.

The third title deed was awarded a few months later, when Israel was about to leave Sinai. "*Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the Mount of the Amorites, and*



THE LAND AS DEFINED BY THE FOUR TITLE DEEDS

unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the seaside, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them” (Deut. 1. 7-8). The Mount of the Amorites was the elevated region extending for many miles east of the Jordan; the “plain” (*arabah*) the deep valley in which the Jordan flows from Galilee to the Dead Sea; the “hills” (*har*-high peaks) the hill country of Judea and Samaria; the “vale” (*ha-shephelah*) the low plain extending from Joppa southward; the south (*negeb*) the territory toward Sinai and the Gulf of Akaba, the sea-coast in the west, Lebanon in the north, sweeping across to Euphrates in the east. This vast terrain was only partially won, even in the days of David; the full accomplishment of the Divine mandate lies still in the future.

The fourth title deed given forty years later as Israel was at long last about to pass over Jordan into the land, is confirmatory of the third. Said Moses “*Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from, the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be*” (Deut. 11. 24). “Wilderness” here is *midbar*, rendered “desert” in the second title deed, Exodus 23. 31, so that the boundaries here defined also extend

from the Arabian desert in the south to Lebanon in the north, from the Euphrates in the east to the Mediterranean (“uttermost sea” is *acharon*, the “hinder sea” a Hebrew term for that sea) in the west.

So the four declarations, separated from each other, first to last, from the time of Abraham to that of Joshua, agree together on the boundaries of the land as it is finally to be constituted when the Divine purposes come to fruition and the Kingdom of God upon earth is at hand. The fact that Israel of old never possessed more than a part of this great area is immaterial; Israel’s failure to measure up to the conditions of her calling accounts for this as well as many other deficiencies in her attainments in history. This is the land as it will be when the ideal Israel, the Holy Nation of the End Time, takes its stand for God in face of world opposition.

The territory thus defined includes not only contemporary Israel but the whole of the State of Jordan and parts of Egypt, Arabia, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. There must obviously be a considerable political adjustment of frontiers to be effected before the Holy Land assumes the shape foreseen in the Pentateuch, and nothing in the prophetic Scriptures gives ground for thinking this is to be attained by physical force or by aggressive warfare. Any territorial changes achieved by conflicts between the present State of Israel and her Arab neighbours have to do with the fortunes of the kingdoms of this world rather than those of the next. And in any case, the Israel of today is very far removed from that God-believing “Holy Nation” of the future which is going to survive the great attack because it has put its trust in God instead of in armed force. It must be expected therefore that the future holds in prospect a much more peaceful settlement of Arab-Israel problems than at the present time seems possible. It has to be remembered that in the past these two peoples have not always been at variance, that their present antagonism is largely inspired by the conflicting commercial interests of other nations. Most important of all, the same series of Divine promises which set the sons of Isaac apart for a specific destiny also provided specially for the sons of Ishmael. The Arab race originated from a number of sources but for the most part are of Semitic stock, in the main from the thirteen sons of Joktan (Gen. 10. 26-30) and the twelve sons of Ishmael, many of their names surviving as main Arabic divisions to this day. Concerning Ishmael God declared that he would make of him a great nation and multiply him exceedingly, so that he could not be numbered for multitude. Four times in Genesis is this promise reiterated. *“I am with the lad”* said the Most High *“I have blessed him; I will make him a great nation”* (Gen. 16. 10-12; 17. 20; 21. 13; 21. 18). These words are not meaningless and the very significant fact that not one of the Semitic Arab nations appears in Ezekiel’s list of those who join the forces of Gog in the attack provokes the question as to their whereabouts and their attitude at that time. The land of Arabia proper, one-third the size of Europe and something like four times the size of the Holy Land of the End Time, if restored to the fertility it enjoyed in early ages, could support many times the present populations of the Arab nations of the Middle East. Calling to mind the progress now being made in restoring the present land of Israel from its past desolation it is not too fanciful to surmise that something of the same kind might be achieved in Arabia. God said of Ishmael that he was to dwell to the east of his brethren, i.e. of Isaac (Gen. 16.12).

The geographical definitions of the land originally settled by the sons of Joktan (Gen. 10. 30) covers the whole of Arabia to the Indian Ocean. History concurs in pointing to that land as the natural home of the Arab peoples just as Israel is that of the Israelis. It might well be, therefore, that the outlines of the promised Holy Land will begin to take shape in proportion as a hitherto unlooked for settlement of the differences between these two peoples looms on the political horizon.

This is the land, therefore, which is to become the centre of the closing events of this Age and the opening events of the next. It will be literally true that *“Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem”* (Isa. 2. 3). Not for nothing has the Holy City preserved its existence and its name for so many centuries. It was already there when history began—the earliest records we have speak of Urusalim, the City of the God of Peace, a place sacred to the worship of the Most High God. To the three great religions of the world—Judaism, Christianity, Islam—it is still a sacred city. Besieged, overthrown and destroyed at least seventeen times, levelled with the ground and ploughed up more than once, stripped and despoiled of its treasures time after time, always has the city risen again, still it stands, a symbol of the eternal things that can never pass away. Where else in all the world could God find so fitting a land and city to be the centre of administration for the new earth which is to be? *“Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion,... the city of the great King”* (Psa. 48.2). There is much in all the Scriptures which speak of the day when God sets His hand to recover to this land a people which will build up the desolate wastes and raise a standard of righteousness in the eyes of all nations. Here, where Europe, Asia and Africa meet, it is the Divine intention to create a gathering place for that nation which shall enter the most fiery trial that has ever confronted a people—and, in the power of God, emerge victorious.

Chapter 3 THE BIRTH OF A NATION

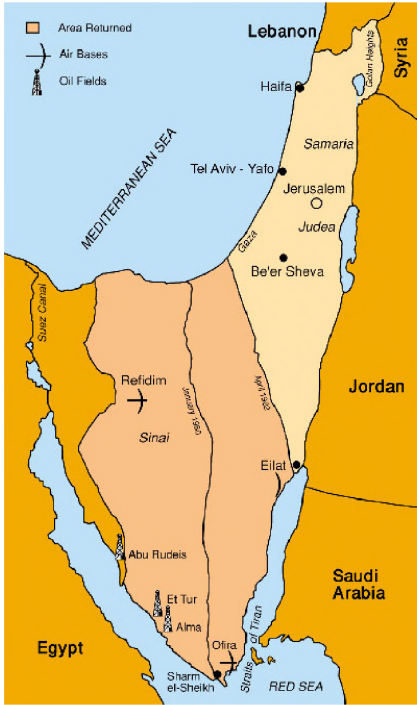
God puts His plans into effect by means of chosen instruments. Of no time in the world's history could it be said that His witnesses were not in the earth, manifesting His standards to a generally heedless world and telling the more thoughtful among them of things that must surely come to pass. In times of crisis His prophets have been ever to the front, and at seasons of disaster His ministers have been there pouring in the oil of comfort and binding up the brokenhearted. (Isa.61. 1).

Who will fill that position when the last great crisis comes upon the nations? The world generally will be in a state of turmoil and in no particular frame of mind to listen to any voice that speaks for God; in any case it will be gathering its forces for the final onslaught on the citadel of God's holiness. Awaiting that onslaught stands the nation which of all the world has pledged itself unreservedly to the standard of Heaven and is prepared to stand or fall by that pledge. Who are these people pictured dwelling at peace in an undefended land awaiting in confidence the advance of their foe?

Old Testament prophecy awards this role to the whole nation of Israel, recovered from all the lands into which, for more than two millenniums past, they have been dispersed. In that manner the prophecies enshrine a vital truth, that God is to plant a "dedicated nation" in the land which is peculiarly His own (Deut. 12. 11) and in that manner reverse the terrible end to which Israel's national existence came when the Roman general Titus captured Jerusalem in A.D.70 and dispersed the people of Judea and Galilee to all parts of the Roman world. But this was not the only dispersal among the nations suffered by Israel and a proper understanding of the regathering can only be had if consideration is given to the history of Israel's exile among the nations.

There have been three major scatterings. The first was due to the Assyrian invasions of the eighth century B.C. when Shalmaneser and Sargon of Assyria between them overran the ten tribe kingdom and carried most of the population into Armenia and Media. A few years later Sennacherib invaded Judea and sent many of its inhabitants to join them. None of these came back. Through the centuries their descendants drifted eastward, across Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and westward into Southern Russia and Europe.

The second dispersal was that of the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in the sixth century B.C. His forces desolated the land, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, and took the greater part of the people captive to Babylon. A few escaped into Egypt and the poorest of the peasantry were allowed to remain to cultivate the land. Seventy years later Cyrus of Persia, conqueror of Babylon, allowed those Jews who so desired to return and rebuild the Temple, and re-establish some sort of national life. The Jewish community in Babylon must have grown quite substantially but only some forty-two thousand accepted the offer and settled in Judea. The rest of the country was populated by Samaritans, Phoenicians



MAP of MODERN ISRAEL and the NATIONS round about



and Edomites and in after years these all became for all practical purposes one nation. Those Jews who remained at Babylon prospered and formed strong communities throughout the Persian Empire and eastward to India. With the growing prosperity of the re-established Jewish State—which at one time achieved virtual independence—there was continual migration of Jews into all the Mediterranean countries so that when St. Peter preached in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost there were Jews among his hearers who hailed from almost every part of the Roman world.

The Jewish nation of the First Advent, therefore, was already very much a mixed people. Jerusalem and the south was populated mainly by full-blooded descendants of Judah and Benjamin with a strain of Edomite blood. Farther north remnants of the other ten tribes persisted with an admixture of Phoenician and Syrian; in the centre of the land, Samaria of the New Testament, alien strains were so pronounced that the rigid Jews of Jerusalem would not count them as Jews; they had *“no dealings with the Samaritans”*.

The third dispersion followed the Jewish rebellion against Rome in A.D.70. Many went eastward to their brethren in Babylon and Persia, or northward to Roman Asia and into Greece. Some penetrated westward into Egypt and along the North African coast. Others penetrated Central Europe, their descendants appearing in Russia, Poland, Germany and finally England. But by far the greater number of those expelled by Titus made their way southward into Arabia where they joined with the native Arab peoples in laying the foundations of a great Judaio-Arab empire.

This fusion of Jews with Arabs is one to which singularly little attention has been given in the study of prophecy. European history books, for obvious reasons, have little to say about the Arab supremacy of the Middle Ages in world affairs, and the part played by the Jews in that supremacy. This influx of Jews into Arabia at the beginning of the Christian era profoundly influenced the Arab population both physically and intellectually. H.G. Wells in his *“Outline of History”* says *“It is difficult to say, in the case of this Arabic culture, where the Jew ends and the Arab begins, so essential and important were its Jewish factors”*. By the eighth century A.D., three hundred years before William the Conqueror landed in England, this Arab empire extended from Spain to China, and was one of the most extensive empires the world has seen. Its builders were learned in the arts and sciences, being particularly well versed in astronomy, medicine, chemistry and mathematics. Much of our modern knowledge in these branches of learning is directly traceable to them, and a great many English technical terms are Arabic words.

The modern Jews are, in the main, descendants of the Second and Third Dispersions, i.e. of those who occupied the land from the days of Cyrus the Persian until the expulsion of Titus. These are the people principally in evidence in the present State of Israel. It must be remembered however, that the promised regathering envisages reunion of the two houses of Israel, separated since the days of Solomon's death. *“I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make*

them one nation in the land . . . and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all" (Ezek. 37.21-22). Says Jeremiah "In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers" (Jer. 3. 18). The schism which resulted in the creation of a ten tribe nation and a two tribe nation at the death of Solomon will be healed and descendants of all the tribes will appear in the regathered people.

There are grounds in the prophetic Scriptures for the expectation that membership of this "Servant Nation" of the end of the Age will not be rigidly confined to the natural sons of Jacob. St. Paul stated an important principle when he said "*they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*" (Rom. 9. 6). Developing this theme he shows that fitness for the purpose in view and above all things sterling loyalty to God counts more with Him than racial descent. Ultimately, he says "*there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, but the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him*" (Rom. 10. 12). The fourth chapter of Hebrews extends this argument to show that so far as the Christian calling of this Age, initiated at Pentecost, is concerned "*they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief*" and the opportunity passed to the wider world and the consequence of that has been that the Christian Church has been predominantly Gentile and only to a minor extent Jewish. The Church is one instrument in the Lord's hand for the conversion of mankind in the next Age, but there is also to be another instrument, restored ideal Israel, the Servant Nation, in the Holy Land, and this is fundamental to the whole structure of Scriptural doctrine. The same principle, of faith and dedication of life to God, is the indispensable pre-requisite. It seems reasonable therefore to expect that men and women sharing the faith and hopes of Israel and prepared to be identified with them, even if not of Israel stock, will not be turned away.

Isaiah's 56th chapter speaks of this. It is addressed to the "son of the stranger" who wishes to identify himself with the dedicated people of God in the land. The imminence of the Millennial Age is indicated in verse 1; the blessing which comes upon the man who already partakes of the spirit of that Age, in verse 2. Verse 3 refers to "*the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord*" and the theme is continued to verse 7. The "son of the stranger" who is consecrated to God is to be brought to His holy mountain and his offerings will be acceptable on God's altar. The "eunuch" (separated man) who has taken hold of God's covenant is given a place and name within God's walls. "*The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him besides those that are gathered to him*" (vs. 8). "*I will yet gather others to him, beside his own scattered outcasts*" says Leeser, and Rotherham "*Yet others will I gather to him besides his own gathered ones*", a clear intimation that when God gathers the scattered outcasts of Israel He is going to gather others, non-Israelites, as well, and give them to Israel as brethren and fellow-citizens.

The vision of the Millennial Israel recorded by Ezekiel (chap. 47) confirms this principle of adoption of the "strangers"—a term for all non-Israelites dwelling with Israel—so that they enjoy full rights of inheritance and are "*as born in the country among the children of Israel*". Although the time here referred to is after the

establishment of the Millennial reign, the passage does afford proof of this element in the constitution of the Servant Nation. The “strangers” are to be received into full fellowship and accorded full rights of citizenship.

The new nation, then, may well find room for individuals of other races, who on the basis of faith in God and belief in the coming earthly kingdom desire to join themselves to the people being gathered together in the Land of Promise. Such will form a valuable contribution to the Nation although we must not lose sight of the fact that the sons of Jacob are certain to be predominant if only because of their past training and experience in the ways and purposes of God. It has frequently been remarked that the Semitic race is the most reflective and spiritually inclined of the races of mankind. The Hebrews are the foremost of Semitic peoples in this same respect and there may therefore be a very sound reason why in the Divine disposition of things they will form the major constituent of the Nation “in that day”. It may well be, however, that this adoption of “strangers” into the commonwealth of Israel proves a feature of the later consolidation into the dedicated Servant Nation rather than the initial gathering into the land. Most of the prophetic foreviews depict the Return as that of the descendants of those who were driven out by the Assyrians and the Babylonians and the Romans. Perhaps therefore a distinction ought to be made between the initial stages of the Return, in unbelief, as an element in the political events characterising the “End Time” of this Age, and the ultimate consolidation of the Servant Nation, in belief and faith, at the climax when the final crisis occurs. Much of the prophetic description is satisfied by current immigration of Jews into Israel and the creation of an independent and virile State in the ancient land. The astounding progress made in over sixty years in face of bitter outside opposition has evoked the wonder of the world and led many to claim evidence of Divine power working on Israel’s behalf. The “fishers and hunters” of Jer. 16. 16 whom the Lord said He would raise up to urge the exiles back to their own land, are doing their work; this is only one of the many textual statements which associate the operative power of God with the social and political forces that for several generations past have made more and more inevitable the establishment of the State of Israel. But this does not imply that the Most High in any way endorses the position or the policies of that State. Israel of today is one of the nations of this world, shaping its course in conformity with the standards and conventions of this world, defending its terrain and its frontiers with the weapons of this world, and no more entitled, at this juncture, to be called a Servant Nation, meet for the Divine purpose, than its fellow nations. Before the fullness of Old Testament prophecy is realised there will have to be a great change, and the immensely important and momentous part which this Servant Nation is to play in the concluding events of this Age renders it imperative that only those who are fitted for God’s purpose be selected. Sterling faith, utter confidence and steadfast loyalty to the cause of Heaven must characterise each member of that Nation. It is clear from the prophecies that this initial regathering, which apart from a relative few is not accompanied by any special profession of faith, and is essentially a return in unbelief, must eventually develop into one that is inspired by faith. Before Israel is ready to play its ultimate glorious role at the end of the Age there has to be seen a stage in which the returning ones come in belief. *“I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the*

earth . . . they shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them . . . I will turn their mourning into joy . . . and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord” (Jer. 31. 8-14). “They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten” (Jer. 50.5). “My supplicants beyond Ethiopia, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering” (Zeph. 3. 10) and Isaiah’s triumphant cry “Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in” (Isa. 26. 2), among a number of related Scripture passages, seem clearly to picture this aspect of the Return. And since the climactic feature of the whole process is the Divine deliverance of Israel from what would appear to be inevitable ruin, and in all recorded history God has delivered Israel only upon repentance and faith, it is clear that the present state of national unbelief must merge into one much more nearly approaching faith and trust, manifestly fulfilling the prophet’s words, before the climax comes.

We should expect, therefore, the eventual emergence of a dedicated and faith-sustained nation in the land of Israel, principally of natural descent from Jacob, but including a sprinkling of others, which awaits, in confidence that God will deliver, a concerted assault upon its achievements and way of life by outside evil influences. That the deliverance comes in consequence of that faith is the consistent testimony of the prophets (Micah Chap. 4 and 5, Zeph. 3. 10, Zech. 12, Jer. 3. 12-25 and 31. 6-9) besides being demanded by the basic principles of Divine dealings with Israel. But inside this general picture there is the insertion of an aspect in which trouble comes on the land, with the cutting off from Israel a section of the people, before the enemy is defeated. In the symbolic language of Zechariah, Jerusalem is not delivered until first it has been surrounded and a portion of its inhabitants sent into exile. Since any question of such fate befalling those who have staked all upon their faith is unthinkable, it follows that this story of capture and exile must denote, even at that late date in the sequence of events, an element in the nation which does not truly believe, and whose true character is only revealed when the fiery trial comes upon the people. This factor in the prophecy constitutes a bridge between the initial regathering of Israel in almost total unbelief and her final stand against the enemy in what is perhaps almost total belief—converted to totality of faith and full deliverance when the unbelieving element has been purged out.

To what extent do the events of our own times point to the imminence of these expectations? At what stage in their development have we arrived? This is where a very real danger exists of becoming prophets instead of prophetic students; nevertheless there is the undisputed fact that a remarkable chain of happenings extending over a century has led to the creation in our own generation of the first independent and self-governing Jewish State for over two thousand years. A glance at the salient peaks in that chain will not be out of place.

The story begins in 1878 when six European powers met under the presidency of Benjamin Disraeli, Jewish Prime Minister of Great Britain, to draft the Treaty of Berlin, mitigating penalties laid upon Turkey by Russia following the Russo-Turkish war. At this time Palestine was, and for four hundred years had been, under

Turkish rule, numbering amongst its inhabitants some 25,000 Jews. This treaty included, for the first time, definite provision for Jewish interests in Palestine and was the first of the successive steps which led to the Israeli State of 1948.

1897 saw the first Zionist Congress headed by Dr. Herzl. By this time there were 55,000 Jewish residents in Palestine but there was now a Turkish ban on new immigrants and this was not lifted until 1906. Until the first World War progress languished.

The situation changed dramatically in 1917 when General Allenby captured Jerusalem and Turkish rule in Palestine came to an end. As far back as 1883 Dr. Grattan Guinness had suggested that the year 1917 would see a noteworthy event in the history of Israel's recovery of Palestine and now the interest of many Christians as well as Jews was aroused. 1917 witnessed the Balfour Declaration, promising British support for a Jewish National Home in Palestine. The granting of the League of Nations mandate to Great Britain in 1922 placed Palestine under British political control and by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 Turkey formally renounced all claims to sovereignty over the country. Palestine became the scene of an increasing flood of Jewish immigrants on the one hand and a mounting wave of Arab opposition to this incursion upon a land they regarded as theirs on the other. By the time of the Second World War the Jewish population had risen, from 84,000 in 1922, to half a million in 1939.

Zechariah, long ages before, had said of this very time *"In that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces"* (Zech.12. 3). That last word means to be hurt or lacerated through trying to lift too heavy a weight. England began to discover the truth of that prediction and in 1948 renounced the Mandate and left the land and its peoples to their own devices. The result, after a short but sharp conflict between Jews and Arabs, was the establishment of a Jewish State, pitifully small in area but at least truly independent for the first time since the short lived Maccabean State of 135-65 B.C.

At once the doors were flung open and Jews from any part of the world granted entrance as by right. The tide of immigration was immense, straining all the resources of the new-born State, but by dint of determination and hard work the newcomers were absorbed and some kind of economic foundation laid for the future. The rest of the story, covering the past sixty years, is well known. Today, Israel is an established nation taking her place among the nations of the world, and in some important respects a leading place. In certain branches of scientific discovery Israeli scientists are in the forefront. Advisers and technicians go from Israel to assist and instruct newly developing nations. In more than one direction there is already to be seen the beginnings of that era spoken of by Isaiah when he said that *"Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit"* (Isa. 27. 6).

But all this is only Stage One of the process. This Israel is as yet one of the

kingdoms of this world and orders its national life according to the standards of this world. In 1948 and in 1956 and in 1967 it demonstrated how well it has learned the arts of war whereby the kingdoms of this world maintain their existence against the assaults of their enemies. It may have to fight again; it may experience reverses. It has yet to pass into that state of national sentiment in which there is acknowledgment of the supremacy of God and faith in His protecting power. There may be further political changes, with ebb and flow of fortune for Israel, before that condition comes into sight. Stage Two is not yet discernible on the horizon—but it will come. Zechariah says of that day that the governors of Israel will perceive the strength of Israel in the Lord of Hosts their God (Zech. 12. 5). Those governors, destined to lead the Servant Nation through the last ordeal, must be remarkable men indeed. Perhaps their appearance on the political stage of the day will be the signal that the preliminary gathering of Israel under the protection of military force is completed and the consolidation of the nation into an assembly of faith is beginning; in consequence the assault of Gog and Magog is imminent.

For we do know this. When there is peace and security in that present troubled land, and that without the aid of military defences, when the people there gathered begin to proclaim their determination to abide by the principles of Divine Law, looking to God as their Leader and Defender; when material prosperity and extension of territory towards the boundaries promised to the patriarchs begin to become evident; when, most wonderful of all, men of supernormal physique and intellect come to the forefront in the affairs of that nation, none knowing whence they come, men who manifest a remarkable grasp of the world situation and a wonderful flair for incorruptible administration; then, without further delay, will the forces of Gog move forward and God rise up to deliver.

8th Century B.C.	Ten tribe kingdom taken to Armenia & Media
6th Century B.C.	Babylonian captivity for 70 years
135-65 B.C.	Maccabean State
A.D. 70	Capture of Jerusalem and dispersal from Judea & Galilee
1878	Treaty of Berlin
1897	First Zionist Congress
1906	Turkish ban on immigration lifted
1917	End of Turkish rule in Palestine
1917	Balfour Declaration
1948	Formation State of Israel

Chapter 4 THE LAND OF UNWALLED VILLAGES

There are two remarkable statements in Ezek. 38 regarding the Servant Nation of the Last Days. One asserts its prosperity in possessions and achievement, and the other its reliance upon Divine power for deliverance from the menace with which it is confronted. There are two significant statements respecting the land; one that it has been delivered from the sword, the curse of war, and the other that it has been made free from the control and oppression of alien powers. The land and the people alike are free, prosperous and secure.

This happy state of affairs must be viewed in the light of the principle of God's dealings with Israel in history. The blessings promised under the covenant concluded at Sinai in the days of the Exodus were contingent upon national trust in Him and endeavour to keep His laws. "*If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit; and your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely*" (Lev. 26. 3-5). This was the ideal, but Israel never fully attained it. The nation experienced alternating periods of prosperity and disaster according to its periodic lapses into apostasy and succeeding repentance and reformation; because of final apostasy it was at length entirely dispossessed of that good land which the Lord God had prepared.

This chapter pictures a time, therefore, when the Servant Nation has entered into possession of the land in faith and trust in God, and is prospering and enjoying safety in consequence. In a sense this is a commencement of Millennial work, although the Millennium proper will not have begun. That momentous event must await the final upsurge of evil forces against the Nation and their defeat by Divine intervention.

"*In the latter years*" says Ezekiel in chapter 38. 8 (R.S.V.) addressing the host of Gog, "*you will go against the land that is restored from war... its people were brought out from the nations and now dwell securely, all of them*". "Restored" here is "*shub*", meaning a complete reversal—the land which had been an almost continuous scene of war and strife for thousands of years has now entered into an era of peace. "Brought out" is "*yatsa*"; the land is delivered in the sense of emerging from a condition of restraint into the freedom of a progressively widening and enlarging space (compare the usage of "*yatsa*" in Ezek.47.8 as applied to the river of life widening and deepening in its passage toward the Dead Sea, where it heals the waters). These expressions obviously apply to a time when the Holy Land is at last freed both from the curse of the sword and from every form of control or oppression by other nations. Jerusalem will no longer be "trodden down of the Gentiles"; the new nation will at long last enjoy admitted and undisputed sovereign rights in its own land. This will imply, in the political jargon of today, the "*de facto*" recognition of territorial and national independence by the nations of the world.

Of this people it is said that they are prosperous. ". . . *the people that are gathered*

out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods” says Ezekiel in chapter 38. 12. The invaders come *“to take a prey, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil”* (ch. 38. 13). It would be rather naive to expect that literal cattle and goods of the nature coveted by despoilers in Old Testament days is really the object of this modern attack. These are the homely symbols employed to denote that temporal prosperity of the Servant Nation which provokes its enemies’ jealousy and covetousness. In fact the Hebrew word for cattle in verses 12 and 13 is not *“behemah”* signifying domestic cattle as such, but *“migneh”* which means valuable property of any kind. To the pastoral people of Bible days cattle constituted the principal source of wealth so that the term came to stand for cattle as the embodiment of wealth. Similarly, the word rendered *“goods”* is *“qinyan”*, which refers to anything that is acquired or achieved, whether concrete or abstract. Achievements of the mind are just as much *“qinyan”* as achievements of trade or industry or conquest—as in Prov. 4.7 *“With all thy getting get understanding”* where *“getting”* is *“qinyan”*. The *“goods”* which the spoilers come to take might well include treasures of knowledge, of scientific research, of *“know-how”*, to use a modern industrial term, and this is the more probable having regard to the leading position that even present-day Israel is attaining in such directions. The expression *“to take a spoil and to take a prey”* in 38. 12 and 13 points to this, for *“spoil”* is *“shalal”* meaning material plunder or *“loot”* of any description, but *“prey”* is *“baz”* which means living persons taken captive, and is not applied to material goods. The idea intended to be conveyed is that not only the seizure of possessions, but also the enslavement of the people, is in the minds of the attacking forces.

An unusual expression, put into the mouth of Gog the invader, occurs in chapter 38. 11. *“I will go up to the land of unwalled villages”*. This term, *“land of unwalled villages”*, is the name given to the land by Gog’s host. It shows that from the viewpoint of the militant powers of that day the land is completely defenceless. Canaan was renowned in its early days for its cities *“walled up to heaven”* (Num. 13. 28, Deut. 1. 28) and these walls made the prospect of conquest a hopeless proposition to the spies who reconnoitred the land at the time of the Exodus. In later days Israel maintained defensive walls around their towns and cities, but in addition to these there were also the *“perazoth”*, villages and settlements without walls, rendered *“open villages”* in Esther 9. 19, Deut. 3. 5 and Judges 5. 7, and here in Ezekiel *“unwalled villages”*. Such settlements were incapable of resistance to an invader, and when war came their inhabitants fled for refuge to the nearest walled town. Ezekiel’s picture is clearly intended to indicate that in the day to come the land will be entirely of *“unwalled villages”*; there will be no material defence at all, no physical means of repelling an invader. But a more certain defence will take its place. *“For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her”* (Zech. 2. 5). Speaking of this same time Isaiah says (60. 18), *“Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise”*. Again in 26.1 he says *“In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks”*. The

significant thing about the invasion, therefore, is that the enemy, seeing no evidence of material defence, will conclude that the Nation is in fact defenceless, and will be an easy prey. Upon the other hand, the Nation itself will be confident in the power of God to deliver without the assistance of man-made offensive or defensive weapons, and will stake its all upon that faith.

A reservation has to be made against that statement at this point. It seems conclusive from a number of passages that in the initial stages of the invasion, at any rate, there will be an element in the regathered Nation which does not share the sterling faith of the majority, is consequently in a state of fear and apprehension, and therefore does not participate in the great deliverance. The attack of Gog's host will have its first effect in the purging of unworthy elements from the ideal Israel. Isaiah, in his 33rd and 66th chapters, both of which are devoted to this crisis, mention the unbelievers and the nature of their fault (33. 14-15; 66. 17-18). Zechariah says plainly (chapter 14) that part of the city shall go forth into exile but the "remnant" shall not be cut off from the city; it is obvious that any who go forth into exile at the very moment of Divine deliverance do so because they do not believe. Jeremiah's 30th chapter pictures the Lord asking why, at the time He is about to manifest His signal power in the eyes of the nations, He finds some of His own people pale-faced through fear. Even Zephaniah sees the Lord taking away the proud and haughty and leaving "*an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord . . . and none shall make them afraid*" (Zeph.3. 11-13). Of those who join themselves to the land during the preceding years, therefore, it must be that some do not really share the high ideals of those whom the Lord ultimately finds fit for his purpose, and when the trial of faith is applied they stand revealed in their true colours. It is significant, though, that nothing in any of the prophetic accounts suggests that this element of non-belief leads to any kind of physical resistance to Gog's host. The land is defenceless in the material sense and remains so; either the non-believing element is so small a proportion of the Nation as to be of no account in its counsels and policies, or events move too fast for them to have any effect upon their course. Logically one would expect that the same consequences incurred by Gog's host will come upon the renegades, for the principal object of the entire process is to nullify and destroy every voice and influence which opposes the incoming Millennial Kingdom. The net result, when all is over, is the emergence of a nation tried in the fire and found pure gold. Faith will have gained her victory. It is not that Israel is delivered, and believes in consequence. It is that Israel believes, and in consequence is delivered.

The Servant Nation stands for Divine principles in national government. It upholds the standards which will go into full effect in the Millennial Age, and will already have begun to put them into limited operation. True to His word, God therefore blesses this people in basket and store, and the nations of the world will not be slow to realise the fact. Whilst the world around is falling into chaos and ruin, the nations approaching that final crisis which marks the transition from this Age to the next, the people in the "land of unwalled villages" will be setting a standard to which men, if they will, may turn, and will already be reaping the fruits in the prosperity of their national life. The attitude of other nations to this development may be well expressed

in the noble phraseology of the Second Psalm "*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us*". Forces of this world which stand obstinately for greed and selfishness and all unrighteousness will fight to the end; but their might will be of no avail against Divine power when the time has come for God to rise up.

Scriptures too numerous to quote refer to this regathered nation of faith as a "remnant". Consistently is the thesis upheld that "a remnant shall return", "in Zion there shall be a remnant", as though ultimately there will be only a considerably diminished following still trusting in God. This is not quite the proper view. The words used for "remnant"—sometimes rendered "residue" as in Zech. 14. 2 include the idea of a portion set aside for a specific purpose, as being of especial value after the loss or rejection of the mass. In this context it obviously applies to that part of the Nation which is fitted for, and quietly awaits, its historic destiny. It would seem, however, that the Nation has not attained its ultimate numerical strength at the time to which Ezek. 38 refers; a number of Scripture passages seem to describe a continuing gathering into the land after the great deliverance but this aspect of the process does not concern the exposition of Ezek. 38, which closes with the overthrow of Gog's host.

At this point the question may be asked to what extent the current position in the land of Israel corresponds with Ezekiel's "land of unwallled villages". Is there any present evidence of the characteristics which alone would justify the application of this title to the political entity now existing?

Quite obviously, not yet. True, the Land of Promise during these past years has slipped from the grasp of the Gentile powers and is now held by the lineal descendants of its ancient owners. But this little piece of territory is only one-thirtieth of the area promised to Abraham and clearly a considerable enlargement must take place before the Scripture requirements are fulfilled.

Of even greater moment is the fact that the people now dwelling there do not conduct their national life on the basis of confidence and reliance upon God. Apart from a small minority, there is no general appreciation as yet that God is going to use the land and its people as a most important element in the outworking of His purposes. Some have returned there in faith and are believers in the promises, but most have no religious faith at all and have returned in a purely nationalistic spirit. The present administration, which bases its policies frankly upon the standards of this world and seeks to support and defend them by armed force, must give place to one of which it can be said, in the words of Zechariah on this very matter, "*the governors of Judah shall say . . . the inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the Lord of Hosts their God*" (Zech. 12. 5). Of this change there are as yet no signs at all.

At the same time it must be admitted that the well-nigh fantastic achievements of this small nation in a country no bigger than Wales is a significant pointer to the even greater things that are to follow. The physical foundations of the "land of unwallled

villages” are being laid now. Some of the earlier successes are already familiar history—the extraction of mineral fertilisers from the Dead Sea, enough to supply the whole world; the irrigation network of underground aqueducts conveying water from the far north to the deserts of the extreme south, and the consequent “deserts blossoming as the rose”; the creation of new cities in the wilderness, such as Arad, where every tree grows in a hole blasted out of the solid rock and filled with earth brought from a great distance; the sea ports of Eilat and Ashdod continue to expand and carry a great deal of world trade.

In many branches of applied knowledge, particularly in the medical and agricultural fields and in some branches of engineering, Israeli scientists are making signal contributions to the world. They achieved success in the breeding of certain strains of wheat immune to a disease that ravages America’s wheatfields. One day—not too far distant—the world’s available coal, oil, gas and even uranium will be exhausted, and energy taken direct from the sun will provide light, heat and power for men. Israel is the unchallenged leader of the world in solar energy research. In these and many similar instances the thoughtful student can discern the beginnings of those factors which will eventually give physical shape and form to the “land of unwalled villages”.

But this change from the small things of today to the great things of tomorrow must await further developments. The political rearrangement following the Second world war and its aftermath of 1948 saw a momentous step on the road leading to Israel’s independence, just as the settlement of the First world war delivered the land from Turkish rule and set it on the way to modern development. 1967 denoted another stride forward. Further steps must be taken before there is manifest to the world a nucleus of a new national power based upon righteous principles in that land. It should be expected too that the experiences through which both Jew and Gentile are now passing, and must continue to endure while these dark days persist, will lead some to realise the Divine call to give themselves to the creation of a people of God, a Holy Nation, in the land then so definitely being opened up. That regathering in faith and supplication of a people eager to learn of the Lord and zealous for the honour of His Name will be the signal that the day has come for men to speak, with meaning, of the “land of unwalled villages”.

Chapter 5 KINGS OF THE EARTH TAKE COUNSEL

The identity of the powers taking part in the great attack is not altogether easy to determine. The only prophet going into detail is Ezekiel, and he represents them in the guise of nations and tribes of his own day which, in the main, no longer exist. His account pictures two confederacies of peoples facing each other across the bounds of the Holy Land. In general, however, most of the Old Testament writers dealing with this subject—Joel, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Zechariah—as well as John in the Revelation, declare that “all nations” will be included in this mass attack on God’s people, and will together experience defeat by Divine intervention. Ezekiel names the leader of the invading hosts as “Gog”; Daniel calls him the “King of the North”, and Micah “the Assyrian”. An interpretation which satisfies all these varied definitions must be sought in the study of this subject.

Joel was first in history. His prophecy contains the seeds of most that the later prophets had to say concerning the Time of the End. Eight hundred years before Christ, he set down his symbolic description of Israel’s chequered history at the time of the great captivities and onward into her final restoration and the establishment of Christ’s Kingdom. Of this latter time he says *“in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat . . . assemble yourselves, and come, all ye nations, and gather yourselves together . . . and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the nations”* (Joel 3. 1-12). This passage tells of a great confederacy of nations, armed to the teeth, even the weak nations hasting to join, bearing down upon the Holy Nation to fight a decisive battle in what God calls the *“valley of decision”*—of judgment, properly, of *“threshing”*. The Lord will *“roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem”* (vs. 16) and Israel will be delivered.

Micah, Daniel and Zechariah—under the guidance of the Holy Spirit—all framed their descriptions of the same event with the historical invasion of Sennacherib as their background. It is important when considering their words to remember the profound impression made upon successive generations of Israel after Sennacherib of Assyria in the year 701 B.C. followed up his predecessor Sargon’s overthrow of the Ten tribe kingdom by invading Judea and besieging Jerusalem, and the ignominious destruction of his army by the angel of the Lord. Analogies between the incidents of his campaign and the events of the final conflict at the end of this Age are drawn by all three prophets and assist both in their interpretation and in discerning the *“shape of things to come”* in respect to that final conflict. But their accounts are necessarily brief and in fact convey little beyond the fact that the invaders threaten the land, that God fights for his people, and Jerusalem is saved. It is left to Ezekiel to offer a more detailed and precise description which maintains all the other prophetic pictures of a military invasion with allusions borrowed from the battlefield, but introducing another aspect which is lacking in the others. The hostile forces of Ezekiel 38 are composed of two confederacies. One is pictured by the most warlike and ruthless peoples of ancient times, the Scythians, Persians, and Ethiopians, the other by the merchant peoples, the travellers and traders from the far

South and West. At the very least this must indicate that commercialism and militarism are twin principles involved in the motive which inspires those who invade the Land. It may appear that there is but flimsy evidence in Ezek. 38 that Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish are to be numbered among the enemies of Israel. It may be argued that there is no direct statement that these three take part in the attack, that they are depicted only as observers of the northern aggressor's inroad (vs. 13 "*Tarshish . . . shall say . . . Thou art come to take a spoil and to take a prey*", etc.). This is perfectly true, and if one considers Ezek. 38 alone it would appear as though the three commercial peoples are either neutral, or even in alliance with threatened Israel. There is, however, no parallel prophecy which indicates the alliance or friendship of any other nation when Israel passes through "Jacob's Trouble". The picture is consistent; all the world is against them, and they alone emerge unscathed and triumphant. Verse 6 of chapter 39 indicates that the Divine retribution reaches out, not only to Magog, but also to "*the isles*"—the coastlands, a term used always to describe those far-off trade coasts to which the proper name "Tarshish" was applied. Tarshish shares in the retribution and must therefore be involved in the crime.

It is much more likely that the relative positions of Tarshish and Gog in Ezekiel's prophecy are analogous to those of Edom and Babylon in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, as recorded by the prophet Obadiah. Edom stood by as a spectator when Babylon ravaged Judah and took her people captive, and then came in to share in the loot and the spoil. They "*looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity*" and they "*laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity*". Therefore, says the prophet, "*in the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them*". In consequence Edom was equally involved in the sin of Babylon and the Divine sentence was "*as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head*" (Obad. 10-15). In just the same fashion, it may be, we are expected to take this reference to Sheba and Dedan and Tarshish as referring to that element in the forces of this world which may not take so active a part in the actual onslaught but looks on with approbation and encouragement, and stands by to obtain a good share of the spoils.

If this be so the whole interpretation of Ezekiel 38 is lifted out of the narrow limits of a purely military campaign in the Middle East—a very favourite interpretation—to something much more vast and menacing, a world-wide effort to crush, by any means, economic or military, this new experiment of a great nation ordering its way of life according to the ways of God, in so doing challenging the whole fabric of present-day organised society. The particular tribes and nations named by Ezekiel are not to be taken as prophetic of their blood descendants of today, or of the present possessors of the lands in which they lived, but, taken as a whole, to represent what that catalogue of names did represent to Ezekiel, the far-flung nations of the whole earth, gathered on all sides in one great alliance to destroy Israel. It is very necessary carefully to perceive that Ezekiel's prophecy does not describe a war between two great powers on Israeli territory for the possession of commercial advantages which lie outside Israeli territory anyway. It is a war of one world united against Israel for the possession of assets or advantages which lie inside Israeli territory. And they

come, not to destroy, but to inherit; not to kill, but to take into slavery. That is the literal meaning of the phrase “*to take a spoil, and to take a prey*” which defines the object of the attack.

The impression given in the 38th chapter is that the invading hosts are undergoing preparation for a relatively long period and move forward in concerted action when the time appears ripe. In verse 8 the word “visited” has the significance of being received by a superior preparatory to being called to action. Leeser says “*after many days thou shalt be ordered forward*” and Rotherham “*after many days shalt thou muster thy forces*”. The Septuagint is similar; “*He shall be prepared after many days and he shall come at the end of years*”. The idea definitely seems to be that of a long time of deliberate planning and preparation, and an organised move forward when the time is ripe. Joel gives the same impression when he describes the mighty men and the men of war assembling, beating their plowshares and pruning-hooks into swords and spears, and crowding in their multitudes into the valley of judgment (Joel 3. 9-16). There is also the fact that the Divine time-table is involved in this. In the counsels of God the “Times of the Gentiles” are fixed and limited, and the various prophetic references picturing God as calling the forces of this world to the final confrontation with Him and His holiness represent a very real thing. “*Except those days should be cut short*” said Jesus on one occasion “*there should be no flesh saved*”, but God will cut those days short at the fore-ordained moment.

This overruling Divine supervision of the timing is shown in Ezek. 38 and 39. That is the real meaning of chapter 38. 8 “*After many days thou shalt be ordered forward*” and again in chapter 39. 2 “*I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel*”. In this latter text “turn thee back” is *bo*, meaning to cause to come in, indicating the actual advance to the attack. The following expression is rendered in the Authorised Version “*leave but the sixth part of thee*” by a false etymology in which *shasha* was read as *shashash*, a sixth, whereas the correct rendering should be “*lead thee on*” which confirms the earlier part of the verse. The idea here is that the Lord accepts the challenge and beckons His opponents forward, but the outcome is characterised by the reverse operation. “*I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army*” (ch. 38. 4) where “*turn thee back*” is *shub*, meaning literally as rendered, to be forcibly returned to the place whence they had come, and “*bring thee forth*” is *yatsa*, to be made to depart or go out. The Assyrians in particular were in the habit of leading their captured notables into exile by means of a hook piercing through the flesh of the lips and this is the allusion “*hooks in thy jaws*”. The Lord Himself will lead them away as defeated enemies.

There are several descriptions of the actual attack in the prophetic Scriptures, each based upon a different historic background, and this fact of itself demonstrates how carefully too literal an interpretation of the pictured details should be avoided. Joel portrays it on a stage decked with the scenery of Jehoshaphat’s triumph. Zechariah describes it in the guise of a united world attack upon the city of Jerusalem in a

manner reminiscent of Sennacherib's venture and defeat. Daniel, too, uses the Sennacherib story and pictures an attack upon Egypt in which Judah is involved and delivered. John the Revelator sees it in terms of a decisive conflict between the powers of earth and Heaven in the Plain of Esdraelon. Ezekiel, like Daniel, sets the whole land as the scene of the conflict but in terms of the Scythian invasion rather than that of Sennacherib. Any attempt to draw a realistic picture in modern terms of what is to be expected has to bring these various viewpoints into one focus which views them all with equal clarity. The differences in the various accounts, all relating to the same event, strengthen the case for supposing that they are, taken together, symbolic of one great reality which stands on an altogether higher level than that of relatively minor battles in one or another part of the Holy Land. Neither in Esdraelon in the north, nor in the Wilderness of Jeruel (Jehoshaphat) in the south, nor yet around the Holy City of Jerusalem itself, will the real conflict be fought. The issues at stake are greater by far than can be decided by a military force, however vast and well equipped, marching into a tract of land no larger than a few English counties. Without much doubt the commencement of the event will be signalled by a colossal commercial offensive aimed at crippling the economic position of the "land of unwalled villages", and that will be engineered in great measure from places far remote from the Middle East.

Most wars of conquest in history were waged with an economic motive, to gain possession of natural advantages or sources of raw materials or the control of trade routes. In the old days, when the problems were less involved, a detachment of armed men marching in was the most effective method. Ezekiel, living in such days, could do naught else than frame his words accordingly. Today, when the fulfilment is all but upon us, the situation is different. The great commercial powers of the world, trained to think only of acquisition and profit, but necessarily having to consider effects upon the human populations involved, who are both their customers and their sources of labour, have other weapons in their armoury which are employed to the full before resource is had to naked force. Terms such as economic sanctions, withholding of credit, tariff barriers, cold war, had no meaning to the Scythian marauders of Ezekiel's time but they do have a meaning today. Perhaps the first sign that Gog's army, drawn from all the world, has begun its march to the place where it is to meet its end might well be the launching of a planned and unprecedented economic aggression aimed at cutting off the Servant Nation's links with the remainder of the world and forcing it to agree to its enemies' terms. A stranglehold upon the trade and production of the Holy Land might be tightened over, perhaps, a period of years. The extent to which such an aggression, especially if after a time it does not appear to be achieving its purpose, will be backed up by increasingly significant military force, can be surmised by any observer of current events who appreciates how closely these two aspects of modern life are interrelated. Most nations will try to get their way by so-called "peaceful" means and when that fails will, if they believe they can do so with impunity, resort to force. Just as there may conceivably be "economic sabotage" inside the boundaries of the Holy Land during the initial stages of this process, so ultimately it may be that the many references to the invaders entering upon the mountains of Israel may become reality. But even so,

it must be realised that the real picture is that of the evil forces from all the world challenging the incipient power of righteousness enshrined in this little nation; the territorial implication is secondary.

Does this mean that the invasion takes the form of a calculated and perhaps quite long drawn out endeavour to wrest compliance to the world's demands from the Servant Nation by steady and unresisting economic pressure allied with all the weapons in the political armouries of the nations including, finally, the employment of force? The pattern of events may be something like this and the battle fought, at first at least, outside the boundaries of the Holy Land. The advance of Gog's host may manifest all the characteristics of modern political and diplomatic intrigue, proposals and counter-proposals, promises and counter-promises, with probably quite an element of mutual suspicion between the component elements of that host, before it is realised that the people in possession of the Holy Land are quite impervious to inducement or threat. So the inevitable progress toward an attempt at open physical warfare with the incipient Kingdom of God upon earth begins.

This is a most difficult thing to visualise in concrete terms. A conflict between the forces of mankind on the one hand and the powers of Heaven on the other involves so many imponderable factors. It is obvious, though, that since man, for his part, knows only the physical and material, his methods and weapons must be of a purely terrestrial nature and he must of necessity regard the Land and its capital city and its human inhabitants as the objects of physical attack and conquest. Beyond this he sees and knows of nothing. It is to be expected, therefore, that so far as the assault forces are concerned, and notwithstanding the world-wide nature of the conspiracy, a literal entry into the Holy Land will be at least one object. Despite the fact, therefore, that much of the prophetic description of these happenings is of a symbolic nature and to be understood metaphorically, the well nigh unanimous insistence of nearly all the prophetic writers that Gog's host will enter upon the mountains of Israel is evidently intended to be taken literally. But this is no ordinary military conflict and there is no indication that the people of the Land are physically affected or involved. The invaders meet a totally new and unknown Power and the resistance they meet is not of the order they had expected. They will advance, knowing not that all their preparations have been in vain, that the weapons in which they trust will be useless in their hands, that the Power they have challenged will frustrate their purpose by agencies they cannot understand. All unwittingly they will fulfil a prophecy uttered two millenniums before their day: *"He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon!"*

Chapter 6 THE VALLEY OF JEHOSEPHAT

“Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.” (Joel 3. 14).

There is an enthralling story in the Second Book of Chronicles; a great alliance of aggressor nations—Moab, Ammon and Edom—had joined together to invade Israel. Great was the distress of the threatened people. Under good king Jehoshaphat they had turned to the Lord in sincerity, and in their land practised the arts of peace. Now it seemed that all their work was to be undone and the horrors of war and captivity again to be let loose upon the fair Judean countryside. In other and less God-fearing times such menace had been met by appeal to arms, and the flower of Israel’s youth had marched out to do battle with the invader. Sometimes they were victorious and sometimes defeated, but whatever the fortunes of war it always meant weeping and heartbreak for those whose menfolk never returned from the conflict, and oftentimes the desolate ones themselves were driven to exile in a strange land and their eyes never looked upon the pleasant fields of Israel again.

These people in the days of Jehoshaphat were of different calibre. They had learned to repose faith in the almighty power of God, and were ready for the test of faith whenever it should be applied. So it was that as the invading hosts swept around the southern shore of the Dead Sea and began to climb the steep ascents to the highlands of Judea all Israel came before God to claim His promised protection. *“We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee. And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.”* (2 Chron. 20. 11-13).

The sequel is thrilling ! They went out to meet the enemy but not to fight ! They went out with the priests of God leading the way, and as they went they sang the high praises of God. *“Ye shall not need to fight in this battle”* cried Jahaziel the prophet. *“Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord”*. So they stood still; as the invaders made their way into the country with eager expectation of pillage and captives their judgment became confused, so that *“Ammon and Moab stood up against Seir”* (Edom) *“utterly to slay and destroy them; and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another... and none escaped”*. That was one of the very few instances where Israel’s faith rose to the occasion, and God delivered. Perhaps not since the days of the Red Sea crossing had there been so mighty a deliverance. So great was the impression left in the minds of those who witnessed this great thing that the story, handed down from father to son, came at length to form the setting in which the prophet Joel framed his description of the last great conflict of this Age.

Joel is the only Bible writer to refer to the “valley of Jehoshaphat”. *“Let the nations be wakened”* he cries *“and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all nations round about”* (Joel 3. 12). There is not, and never has been, any such valley in reality. The valley of the Kidron on the east of Jerusalem is

sometimes marked on Bible maps as the valley of Jehoshaphat but there is no ancient authority for the use of the name. Joel was thinking of this great event and picturing in his mind that mighty host making its way from Engedi past the cliffs of Ziz into the wilderness of Jeruel there to destroy itself with Israel watching from the heights of Tekoa. He christened it the “valley of Jehoshaphat” because of the great thing that had happened there in Jehoshaphat’s time. In prophetic vision he saw a far future day when, once more and for the last time, the holy nation of God would confront its enemies, serene in confidence of Divine protection, and again, this time for all the world to see, there would be enacted the miracle of Jehoshaphat.

There are a few, but sufficient, examples in the history of Israel to show what God can do when the doors of trust and faith are opened for Him to intervene in human affairs. The crossing of the Red Sea (Exod. 14. 13-31), the Philistine invasion in the days of Samuel (1 Sam. 7. 3-12), Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18 & 19) and this in the days of Jehoshaphat, are sufficient to show that what God had done before, He can and will do again under similar conditions. The reverse cases, of the heavy defeat suffered by Israel at the hands of the Canaanites when they essayed to give battle against God’s prohibition (Num. 14. 30-35), the disaster in the days of Eli when the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant (1 Sam. 4. 1-22), and the tragedy of the Babylonian captivity (2 Chron. 36. 14-21) all indicate that there can be no deliverance where there is no repentance and no faith.

From Zechariah’s prophecy particularly it might be deduced that there will be some hardship and suffering at first, destined to test the sincerity of those who are in the Land. His picture, framed around the facts of Sennacherib’s campaign, has as its centrepiece the city of Jerusalem, surrounded by the enemy. “*The city shall be encompassed as in a net*” is a literal rendering of his words in chapter 14. 2 where the A.V. has it “*the city shall be taken*”. Sennacherib declared that he had shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem “like a bird in a cage”—but he never opened the cage! What he did was to take a considerable amount of spoil and lead into exile a large number of captives—artisans, builders, musicians, Hezekiah’s daughters and women of the harem. Only after this did Hezekiah publicly declare his confidence in the Lord with the result that is well-known. Chapter 14 vs. 2-3 of Zechariah constitutes both an allusion back to this aspect of Sennacherib’s campaign and an indication that a similar aspect will characterise the future day of which he is speaking. There will be material loss and there will be some who go into exile. The position of the beleaguered nation will appear hopeless, so hopeless that some who had identified themselves with the Servant Nation will find their hearts fail them and will fall away to the enemy. The nature of their fault is indicated in sundry allusions as unbelief and idolatry, those twin sins which plagued Israel throughout her national history. Ezekiel talked about them in his 20th chapter, in the midst of a glowing description of the Return; “*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*” (chapter 20. 38). Isaiah too, speaks of the same. In the triumphant song of the regathering, the song of faith, “*we have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks*” comes the darker note “*favour is shown to the wicked: he does not learn righteousness. In the land of*

uprightness he deals perversely and does not see the majesty of the Lord. Thy hand is lifted up but they see it not... Let the fire for thine adversaries consume them" (Isa. 26. 1, 10-11). The outlook of all such is eloquently expressed in another of Isaiah's pen pictures of this time. *"The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the goddess. Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?"* (Isa. 33. 14). That is their question as they look upon the advancing foe and because of their unbelief cannot accept that God will deliver. The prophet replies to the question with the calm assurance that the righteous will not only be able to defy the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings but *"will see no more the insolent people, the people of an obscure speech which you cannot comprehend"* (ch. 33. 19 RSV) indicating a barbarian people from a great distance just as pictured by Ezekiel. Thus the *"half cut off from the city"* of Zech. 14 may well be a hint that some whose faith fails them will apostatise from the nations and return, or be taken, to those places from whence they came. The land is thus freed from the incubus (evil spirit) of some within its borders who are not heart and soul in sympathy with its principles. They depart, at a time when the land is suffering from the onslaught, is maintaining faith in God, but there is as yet no sign of deliverance.

At this point the signal is given for the climax. The threatening enemy tightens its grip upon the Holy Land. Whether it is an economic and commercial stranglehold or a military investment—or more likely both—the identity and existence of the people of the Lord is threatened with extinction. The issue is clear-cut; shall the present dominion of evil or the emerging power of good control the destinies of mankind? Evil has had its way for long ages past but now its day is done. This is the moment of Divine intervention, the time that God, at last, commands men to listen to Him. Zechariah describes the event in words of rare eloquence. *"Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations as in the day of his fighting"* (Zech. 14. 3) and Joel *"The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem"* (Joel 3. 16). The attitude of the threatened people is well pictured in Joel 2. 15-18 *"Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders . . . let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, . . . say 'Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them' . . . Then will the Lord be jealous for His land, and pity His people"*.

Swiftly, and with irresistible force, God moves to action. *"I will call for a sword against him through all my mountains, saith the Lord God . . . and I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone"* (Ezek. 38. 21-22) *"And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour"* (Zech. 14. 13). These, and many Scriptures like them, give some idea of the terrible visitation that will fall upon the aggressors. Strife between themselves, mutual jealousies and suspicions, perhaps intensified by unexpected failure to realise their purpose, may commence to dissipate the resources of the besiegers in internecine (deadly) strife. But there may well be another factor.

Perchance they will find that in a totally inexplicable manner the forces of Nature herself are working against them. That impression is given by many of the prophetic Scriptures and is especially suggested by Zech. 14. 12. *“Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their sockets, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth”*. If one interprets the flesh as munitions of war, the substance behind the attack, the eyes as intelligence services, the mouths as powers and avenues of direction, and visualises all these things becoming nullified by a series of unprecedented natural phenomena we have all the materials necessary for a demonstration of “other worldly” interference in the situation sufficient to convince all concerned that the powers of Heaven have taken a hand. After all, it only needs a sufficiently intense magnetic storm in the sun to disrupt all terrestrial radio communication and control for the period of its duration. That would constitute a very effective “consuming away” of “eyes” and “tongue” within the context of Zechariah’s foreview. And many other like examples could be mooted.

Some dawning consciousness that they are contending with a force they cannot understand and against which all their weapons are impotent, then, could well lead to the overwhelming disruption of this entire campaign and the scattering of the component elements in this great multitude which Ezekiel calls Gog’s host and is representative of the whole world. The force of the picture is strengthened by Ezekiel’s reference to birds of prey coming from all quarters to the scene of battle, for a sure sign of a defeated army in ancient times was the horde of carrion birds following its line of retreat and clustering around the dead and wounded left behind. That this is no ordinary defeat is indicated by the prophet’s words *“Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side . . . ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth . . .”* (Ezek. 39. 17-18).

The broken forces, then, abandon their project and retreat in disorder. Retribution follows them even to their own homelands. *“I will send a fire upon Magog, and upon them that dwell confidently in the isles”* (coastlands) *“and they shall know that I am the Lord”* (Ezek. 39. 6). The effects of this momentous happening, felt throughout all the earth, will be one of the agencies compelling men to realise that a new power has assumed control of earth’s affairs. The magnitude of the disaster, unexplainable by any of the accepted laws of commercial manipulation or of military strategy, may well shake the confidence of men, at long last, in the efficacy of the time-honoured methods of fraud and force. The 39th chapter of Ezekiel appears to indicate that the wealth and the implements of the invaders fall into the hands of the Servant Nation; the tables are turned with a vengeance. But the victory will not be followed by revenge; the Lord has smitten only to heal, and hard on the heels of the retreating vanquished come the victors as ambassadors of the Gospel, to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven on earth as an accomplished reality, calling all men away from the evil of the past into the light and life of the future.

Chapter 7 THE CLEANSING OF THE LAND

What now of the “valley of the passengers?” Ezekiel says (ch. 39. 11) that God will provide “*a place of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it the valley of Hamon-Gog*”. On the basis of this verse commentators have looked for a valley on the eastern side of the Dead Sea—where no valleys exist—for the final resting-place of the slain multitudes, but there is much more in the verse than so literal an interpretation would allow. In any case the A.V. rendering here is very poor and needs clarifying. The word “passengers” (*abar*) means primarily a wayfarer or one who passes through, and in this setting can logically mean “invaders” as descriptive of Gog’s host. “*On the east of the sea*” is incorrect; “*gidmah*” is eastward, not east, and the sense of the phrase is that the valley is eastward from Jerusalem in the direction of the Dead Sea, i.e. between the city and the sea. The verb “*stop*” means to muzzle as in the well known text “*Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn*” whilst “*noses*” is not in the Hebrew text at all. “*Hamon*” is multitude. A logical if somewhat free rendering of the verse would be “*I will give to Gog a burial place in Israel, the valley of the invaders eastward toward the sea, and that shall muzzle the invaders. There shall they bury Gog and all his multitude, and they shall call it the valley of the multitude of Gog*”. That last expression is strongly reminiscent of Joel 3. 14 “*multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision*” referring to the same event.

Now this “valley of the invaders” pictured as lying between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea is a prophetic development of the Jehoshaphat deliverance. There is a surprising unanimity between Ezekiel, and Joel as to the site of the aggressor’s overthrow in their respective prophecies and they all stem back to that notable happening in the days of Jehoshaphat. A little attention to the geography of that momentous occurrence can help to illustrate the allusions of these two prophets.

Ten miles south of Jerusalem, on the fringe of the Judean highlands, lies the Wilderness of Tekoa, where the people of Israel stood that day watching the invading forces making their way up the valley from Engedi on the Dead Sea coast four thousand feet below. The account in 2 Chron. 20 is so accurate in its description of the land that it can be reproduced in map form very easily. From Engedi the invaders “*came up by the cliff of Ziz*” (vs. 16) a mountainous outcrop near the sea, and into the “*wilderness of Jeruel*”, a hot and sterile rocky waste which today is called “Midbar Yehuda”—the Desert of Judah. They were following the usual and only practicable route from the Dead Sea to Jerusalem. It was in the midst of this waste that the invaders met their doom, and here appears a striking confirmation of Biblical accuracy. Verse 24 records that when Israel, on Tekoa, came to “*the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped*”. No commentator or scholar seems to have discovered the nature or location of this “watch tower in the wilderness”—no further detail is given in the O.T. or in tradition. But the recently published official



Wilderness of Jeruel, now known as Midbar Yehuda—Desert of Judah.

Valley of Jehoshaphat of Joel 3.

“Land barren and desolate” of Joel 2.

“Between the seas” of Dan. 11.

Valley of passengers of Ezek. 39.

survey map of modern Israel shows, on the rising ground which culminates in the rocky heights of Tekoa, one isolated pinnacle rising some two hundred feet or so above the surrounding plain, and from its position commanding a clear view between the mountains across the plain leading up from Engedi. As a natural “look-out post” commanding the normal invasion route from Edom and Moab its position is unrivalled and there would seem to be no doubt that such a useful eminence was crowned by a watch tower. From that height the observers could easily see the debacle going

on in the plain some seven miles away. As they watched, faith was rewarded; the invaders, turning their arms upon one another, all perished. Here in the valley, between the city and the sea, they died, and the vultures came and took them all away. Then Israel descended the steep slopes to collect the spoil. Three days they collected, and on the fourth day climbed the ravines to the valley of Berachah in the highlands, there to praise God for His mighty act, and from thence returned to Jerusalem.

Now if Joel’s prophecy be examined it seems clear that he has this same locality in mind. “I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea” (Dead Sea) “and his hinder part toward the utmost sea” (Mediterranean) “...and whosoever shall call

upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered” (Joel 2. 20-32). As though to clinch the matter his third chapter mentions this very valley as the place of the last great conflict. His description “a land barren and desolate” well fits the desert of Judah as it was in O.T. times.

There is some possibility that the rather obscure expression in Daniel 11. 45 “*He shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one shall help him*” rests on the same basis as the vision of Joel. The allusion is to the pavilion-tent of the commander-in-chief of an invading army. Sennacherib in Isaiah’s time planted his at Lachish, between these same two seas—and he came to his end and no one helped him. Perhaps Daniel had that in mind.

There seems to be some real significance in the association of that sterile valley seventeen miles south of Jerusalem in connection with the destruction of the enemies of the Lord and it is clear that Ezekiel’s “valley of passengers eastward to the sea” is this same place; just as the invaders in Jehoshaphat’s time left their bones in that valley so he sees the forces of Gog and Magog buried there. No longer shall it be called the valley of Jehoshaphat; from now and for ever it shall be the valley of the multitude of Gog.

“*Seven months shall the house of Israel be burying them, that they may cleanse the land*” (ch. 39. 12). If any further evidence is required that this is a metaphorical picture, not to be understood literally, this expression provides that evidence, for the idea of human bodies lying about for periods up to seven months awaiting burial—especially in that climate—is patently absurd. There is some symbolic meaning associated with this seven months, one that may have been more easily perceived by Israel of Ezekiel’s day than by Christians of today. The statement stands without any following comment which might have elucidated its meaning.

Perhaps Zechariah can help. In his 14th chapter, after concluding his own version of this same conflict and resulting Divine deliverance, he refers to an observance of the Feast of Tabernacles in the land following the deliverance. Now the Feast of Tabernacles was the great feast of rejoicing, commemorating the full ingathering of the year’s crops, and also the time Israel dwelt as wanderers in the wilderness, on which latter account they dwelt the seven days in temporary booths which gave the alternative name, the Feast of Booths. Hence this Feast became the symbol of final settlement in the land in prosperity after all troubles were over, and Zechariah’s usage of the symbol is very apt. Now Ezekiel, in his vision of Millennial Israel (45th chapter) describes the apportionment and dedication to holy use of the land and a process of ceremonial cleansing which commences on the first day of the first month—New Year’s Day—and continues until the end of the Feast of Tabernacles on the twenty first day of the seventh month. Here is a period of virtually seven months during which the land, freed from enemies, is apportioned to its future use, and its priests and people ceremonially cleansed that the way be laid open for the River of Life of chapter 47. Is it possible that in chapter 39 the same symbolic seven

months is indicated, here picturing the cleansing of the land itself? If so, then the interpretation is clear. The seven months burying of the slain in the valley of the invaders indicates the active elimination from the land and people of every remaining taint of the policies or practices or principles of “this present evil world”, to use St. Peter’s term, and the emergence of a completely purified people ready to take up its destined position and work in the new Age then dawning. Verse 15 intensifies this idea. Any wayfarer passing through the land and coming upon a man’s bone is to set up a sign—a cairn of stones—beside it until the buriers have taken it away and buried it in the valley. The smallest diversion from the principles of rectitude and uprightness is to be noted and quickly obliterated. The land is to be truly cleansed.

With a swift transition of thought in verse 16 the valley of the dead becomes a city of the dead; *“name of the city shall be Hamonah”*—Multitudes. There may be some allusion here to the city of the dead of Isa. 14 (9-10) *“Sheol from below is moved to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth. . . they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?”* The hosts of Gog are depicted as “passing through” the land to meet their doom in the valley of death, but behind this we have the implication that evil, and the powers of evil, “pass through” the world only to meet their end in the city of the dead, Sheol, where all that is evil shall be done away for ever. This is the clear import of John’s words in Rev. 20. 14 *“And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire”*. Those misguided men who take part in the great assault on the Holy Land will eventually share in the opportunities of the Millennial reign which is to follow their foredoomed failure, but the evil intent of their hearts, and the evil things they have created, are to be buried for ever in the “valley of the passengers”, remembered for all time, like those carcasses of the transgressors of Isa. 66.24, as an “abhorring to all flesh”, but never again to have power or effect in the earth. This “Hamonah”, this city of the dead, is a place into which all the evil that has afflicted all the world may be gathered and thrust far down underground from whence it can never trouble mankind again.

The seven years during which Israel is said to be occupied in burning the implements of war left behind—shields, bows and arrows, staves, spears—must have some symbolic meaning which is not easily apparent. There may be a connection here with Israel’s first entry into the land under Joshua, when for seven years they battled with the warlike Canaanites and steadily dispossessed them of their power and their weapons until, at the end of that seven years *“the land had rest from war”* (Josh. 14. 15). In those days it was the war-like might of the Canaanites that had to be broken; now it is the war-like might of all the world that must be completely consumed before Israel can rest safely. Perhaps, then, the utter and final breaking of the power of the world to make war is indicated here, likened to Israel’s breaking of Canaanite power during that seven years so long ago. So it might be said that after Israel has burned the weapons seven years as described in chapter 39. 9-10 *“the world had rest from war”*. That at least is the sentiment of Ps. 46. 9 *“He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire”*.

One might well say, therefore, that with the end of the seven months and seven years—whatever period of actual earth years may be occupied by the realities they represent—all resistance to the Kingdom of God upon earth will have ceased and the new order of things is established and accepted. It is important to realise that the story of Gog and Magog ends, not in an orgy of death and destruction, but an era of life and construction. Isaiah declares (ch. 66) that after this spectacular vindication of Divine power, ambassadors will go from the delivered Nation to all the peoples of the world *“and they shall declare my glory among the nations”*. Judgment is followed by blessing; the breaking of evil powers in the world of men is followed by a God-inspired opportunity to build a new world free from fear, injustice, oppression and even death. *“I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come”* says Haggai (2.7). One has to remember that, evil as the hosts of Gog and Magog are depicted, the Divine desire is not for the eternal destruction of the individuals composing those forces, but for their reclamation and reconciliation. *“The Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them”* said Jesus (Luke 9. 56). *“I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked”* said the Lord to Ezekiel *“but that the wicked turn from his way and live”* (Ezek. 33. 11). All too often, consideration of the story of Gog and Magog finishes when the invading hosts are overthrown and destroyed; in truth this is not the end. The evil power and action of those men has been thwarted and brought to an end but they themselves, even although in the course of this great event they may have passed through the gates of physical death, must yet experience the benevolent yet strong discipline of the incoming Age, against which they so blindly fought, and make their decision for eternal life or its alternative. And that the world of man in general, once the first shock of the change is over, will hail this new era in earth’s affairs with enthusiasm is forth shown in the words of Isa. 25. 9 *“It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation”*.

How may these things be related to forces in the world as it is seen today? To what extent is the “evil thought” of Ezek. 38. 10 yet in evidence?

Until the Land of Promise has budded and blossomed there will be no envious thoughts within the meaning of Ezek. 38. Political troubles of which Israel is the storm centre there are today, but these have to do with the mutually antagonistic policies and aims of existing world powers interested in Middle East territories surrounding the present State of Israel rather than the possessions and achievements of that State, and although Israel is perforce involved in present conditions it cannot be said that these are more than a preliminary to the ultimate worldwide confrontation which she is destined to meet. When the *“people collected from the heathen, practising commerce and trade, and residing in the top of the earth”* (Ezek. 38. 12—Farrar Fenton) are beginning to make their mark in the world men may expect to see more plainly the outlines of this great thing. The Servant Nation, rapidly restoring the old wastes and beginning to realise its Divine mission, may well commence, not only to declare its allegiance to principles of life and conduct which the peoples of the earth in general deny, but to promulgate those principles throughout the world at a time when true religious faith is at its lowest ebb. So a double cause of enmity may

loom large in the counsels of the world. Spiritually, this Nation is witnessing for God and the practical application of His laws to a world which is set against such things. Economically, it is prospering whilst the world at large is in the throes of trouble. The land is rich, and it is undefended. The people have no defensive weapons: they stand by their belief that God will defend. So the “evil thought” takes root. At one blow the world will rid itself of this troublesome witness for God and righteousness and at the same time possess itself of material wealth and advantages which by then will have become famous throughout the earth.

An important element in this latter must lie in the direction of scientific knowledge and its practical application. To an ever increasing degree the world is becoming dependent upon technological advancement. The day is long since past when “Adam delved and Eve span”, when the leisurely processes of Nature in food production, and cottage handicrafts in the production of man’s other wants, sufficed for all human needs. The needs and the desires of modern man under the present competitive system can only be satisfied by an increasing reliance upon synthetic production and mass manufacture, and in order that the “profit motive” might also be satisfied there is an accelerating race to discover cheaper and faster and more efficient means of production. Now since the new Nation in the Holy Land is to initiate that new Era of

which it is said that the desert **shall blossom as the rose**, that sustenance and living room in full measure shall be found for every member of Adam’s race, that sickness, disease and death itself shall be abolished, it is logical to expect that the achievements in knowledge and mastery over natural forces and resources which that Nation will attain, increas-



ingly so as the dawn of that new Era approaches, will excite the wonder and envy of the rest of the world. These things, perhaps more than anything else, will constitute the “cattle and goods” which excites the envy of the outside world. But the new Nation will insist upon using its knowledge for human happiness and advancement and not to serve the greed of soulless institutions, and this it is which will surely precipitate the conflict seen by Ezekiel in the guise of a barbarian invasion. Even today contemporary Israel is noted for the services it renders to developing nations,

especially in the African Continent, by the provision of technicians and advisers in many fields of science and technology. When the time comes that the people of the Holy Land have established an obvious lead over all other people in these things, and ominous mutterings begin to be heard from vested interests which see their monopolies and advantages slipping away from them in consequence, it may well be concluded that the clock is about to strike.

All this lies in the future, but it will surely come. *“As truly as I live”* said God upon one notable occasion *“all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord”* (Num. 14. 21). Habakkuk, on his watch tower, heard the Divine Voice saying *“Though it tarry, wait for it; for it will surely come, it will not tarry”*. The time may seem to be prolonged, as men measure time, but the development of the things which now are seen into those that shall be is ordained and irrevocable. This world will one day perceive the reality of that which was presented in pictorial prophetic form by Joel, by Isaiah, by Ezekiel, by Daniel, by Zechariah, by John the Revelator, and in that perception realise that the arena has been cleared for the greatest and most soul-stirring event with which this indifferent and unbelieving modern world could possibly be confronted.

“Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, FOR THE MOUTH OF THE LORD HATH SPOKEN IT.”

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