“For the hope of Israel
I am bound with this chain”
“O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.”
Jeremiah 17:13,14.

WRITTEN OVER 100 YEARS AGO
Interesting extracts from the book Elpis Israel PAGE 3

DOCTRINE
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BACK PAGE FEATURE
Weaving baskets by instinct!

“The return to the earth of the exiles from Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian Empire symbolizes God’s promise to Israel to return” — Paul. Acts 28:20

ZIONISM AND THE RETURN TO THE LAND
Ken Loveridge traces the rise of modern political Zionism that led to the establishment of the State of Israel.

Winston Churchill said of the Jews: “I am their friend.” Brian Luke reviews his relationship to them in this article.
The book “Elpis Israel” published in 1849 bears a title which is a Greek form of words meaning “Israel’s Hope.” Our editorial on page 24 gives some of the background to it. Below we reproduce several extracts as “eyeopeners” to this exposition of the Gospel—Editor.

To the Bible, then, all must come at last if they would be truly wise in spiritual things. This is a great truth which few of the sons of men have learned to appreciate according to its importance. A man may be a theologian profoundly skilled in all questions of “divinity;” he may be well versed in the mythology of the heathen world; be able to speak all languages of the nations; compute the distances of orb from orb, and weigh them in the scales of rigid calculation; he may know all science and be able to solve all mysteries,—but if, with all this, he be ignorant of “the things of the spirit;” if he know not the true meaning of the Bible; he seemeth only to be wise, while he is, in fact, a fool. Therefore, the apostle saith, “let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, he taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men’s sight, for all things are yours; whether sons of Abraham through faith or through the flesh. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.” (1 Cor. 2:9,10,13). If our contemporaries could only attain to the adoption of this great precept, “let no man glory in men,” they would have overleaped a barrier which as a fatal obstacle prevents myriads from understanding and obeying the truth.

“Gospel” is a word which signifies good news, or glad tidings; and the gospel some particular good news. “Blessed,” say the scriptures, “are they who know the joyful sound,” or the gospel; and the reason is, because it makes known the “blessedness” which is to come upon the nations, and will give every one an interest in it who believes and accepts it. The gospel of God is the good news of blessedness promised in the scriptures of the prophets, and summarily expressed in the saying, “In thee, Abraham, shall all nations of the earth be blessed.” The making of this promise to Abraham is termed by Paul the preaching of the gospel to Abraham; for, says he, “The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed” (Gal. 3:8). This he styles “the blessing of Abraham,” which is to come upon the nations through Jesus Christ.

The gospel, then, was preached to Abraham by the angel of the Lord; and it was preached by Jesus to his own nation, and to them only; for “he was not sent, save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). Paul also declares that it was preached to that generation of Israelites whose carcasses fell in the wilderness; but it did not profit them because they did not believe it (Heb. 4:2). Therefore, God sware in His wrath that they should not enter into the rest it proclaimed (Heb. 3:18, 19). Before he suffered on the accursed tree, Jesus sent his apostles, and seventy others throughout the land, to “preach the kingdom of God.” In recording their obedience to his command, Luke says, “They went through the towns preaching the gospel” (Luke 9:2, 6); so that it is clear, that to preach the kingdom is to preach the gospel; and to preach the gospel is to preach the kingdom of God.

Now, it is worthy of remark, that the subjects of a kingdom do not possess the kingdom. They are simply the inhabitants of the territory, who are defended against external aggression, and protected as civilians by the power, and laws of the State. The possessors of the kingdom are the king, and those with whom he is pleased to share his authority. This is an important distinction, and must not be forgotten in studying “the things of the kingdom of God.” The subjects of the kingdom and empire, are a totally different class from the heirs, or possessors, of the dominion.

From this brief view, then, of the nature and constitution of a kingdom, its elements may be stated as consisting of:

1. A territory;
2. Subjects;
3. A king;
4. A constitution;
5. Laws, civil and ecclesiastical;
6. Aristocracy;
7. Attributes, or, prerogatives; rights, privileges, etc.

Now, “the kingdom of God and of his Christ” will consist of all these things; and will be as material an institution—as real and terrestrial a monarchy as those of Great Britain, Belgium, or Spain.

The hope of the promise made to the fathers, was, and, indeed, is to this day, the Hope of Israel; and for preaching this hope, and inviting the Gentiles to a participation in it without other circumcision than that of the heart, he (Paul) was denounced as a pestilent fellow, and unfit to live.

But what was the hope of Israel about? The answer to this question is easy. Having made the chief of the Jews at Rome acquainted with the cause of his appeal to Caesar, they remarked to him, that they should like to hear of him what he thought upon the question of the national hope, as so strenuously contended for by the sect of the Nazarenes. As it was not, however, convenient then, they appointed a future day when they would meet him, and hear what he had to say upon the subject. Accordingly, at the time appointed, they came together at Paul’s lodging, and he proceeded to lay before them his thoughts upon the subject of Israel’s hope. But I cannot do better than to state what he did in the words of Luke; who says that, “He expounded and testified to them the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, from morning till evening” (Acts 28:23).

Now who can be so dim of vision as not to perceive, that the subject-matter of the hope of Israel is the Kingdom of God? And observe, that in giving his thoughts of the national hope, the apostle’s persuasions turned upon things concerning Jesus. The Kingdom of God and Jesus were the subjects of Paul’s testimony, when he preached “the hope of Israel,” or “the hope of the promise made of God unto the fathers.” Having begun his testimony with the chiefs of the Jews, some of whom received it, he continued to publish it for two years in his own hired house to all that

WRITTEN OVER 150 YEARS AGO:

“Elpis Israel” Published in 1849 by John Thomas
A Book for the Times

The Bible Magazine Vol. 21 ISSUE No.2
Page 3
visited him, "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence" (Acts 28:30-31). In this way he bore witness for Jesus in Rome, as he had done before in Jerusalem.

We have, then, arrived at a great truth, namely, that the "one hope of the gospel" preached by the apostles to the Jew first, and afterwards to the Greek, was "the hope of Israel," that the subject of it was the kingdom of God and Shiloh; and that these were the matter of promise made to the fathers.

The study of the promise unconnected with the study of the fathers is impossible. Those who are ignorant of the biographies of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must be ignorant of the gospel; for these patriarchs were the depositories of the promises (Heb. 11:17), which constitute the gospel.

Greek, was "the gospel of God, and died and rose again for sin. It is the name of Jesus Christ, is sufficient for salvation. Salvation in the God and Israel. The tribes have rebelled against the king He has provided to rule over them (Rev. 11:15). But even then, the kingdom founded at the beginning of the ages, the kingdom of Israel, will be His "peculiar treasure above them all." If, then, we would understand "the things of the kingdom of God," we must never lose sight of Israel in connection with the kingdom. Indeed, without them there is no kingdom of God; and to affirm the contrary is to believe in a kingdom of which there is no nation to rule! No misconduct of Israel can dissolve the covenant entered into between them and God. The rebellion of a nation does not do away with the rights of the king. If they set his laws and government at defiance it becomes a question of might. If the rebellion triumph the king is dethroned; but if the rights of the throne prevail, the rebel nation has no alternative but to submit to whatever terms the conqueror may prescribe.

This is precisely the state of things between God and Israel. The tribes have rebelled against Him. He has anointed Jesus of Nazareth to be King of the Jews.

It is a great mistake to suppose that the belief in the sacrificial part of the name of Jesus Christ, is sufficient for salvation. Salvation in the kingdom is not promised to those who only believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and died and rose again for sin. It is equally necessary to believe in the promises of the covenants; not more so, but equally so: for if one believed the things of the kingdom, but rejected the sacrifice of Jesus, and his resurrection, he could not be saved. The gospel must be taken as a whole, and not cut up into pieces, and one or two selected which suit the taste, and the rest set aside as unimportant and non-essential. Without the sacrificial ingredient of the name, there would be no means of justification by the name; but then Jesus as a sin-offering is not the end of faith; but a means to the end, which is the inheritance of the kingdom with him in all his glory.

The restoration of Israel is a most important feature in the divine economy. It is indispensable to the setting up of the Kingdom of God; for they are the kingdom, having been constituted such by the covenant of Sinai, as it is written, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:6). The apostles understood this well enough, and so do all who understand the Gospel of the Kingdom. After his resurrection, Jesus conversed with them during forty days, "speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." This was certainly long enough, under the instruction of such a teacher, to enable them to understand the subject well. It took possession of their minds and hearts, and created in them a desire for its immediate establishment. Hence, they put the question to him, saying, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:3, 6).

It is evident from this, that they regarded Israel as having once possessed the kingdom, and expected the same Israel to possess it again. No other meaning can be put upon their words; for to restore a thing "again" to a party implies that they had once possessed it before. When Israel had the kingdom, they were ruled by Israelites, and not by Gentiles, for a foreigner could hold no office under their law. This was not the case in the days of the apostles, for they were ruled by the Roman Senate, and kings of its appointment. But it will not be so when the kingdom is restored to them again. The horns of the Gentiles will then be cast out of the land, and they will be ruled by "Israelites indeed," who will have become Jews by adoption; for no Jews or Gentiles after the flesh can have any part in the government of Israel and the Israelitish empire, which will embrace all nations, unless their Jewish citizenship is based upon a higher principle than natural birth. The flesh constitutes a Jew a subject of the kingdom, but confers on him no right to sit and rule upon the thrones of the house of David. This is reserved for Christ and his apostles, who "shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel," when he sits upon the throne of his glory; and for all other Jews and Gentiles who shall have become "Jews inwardly," for whom the dominion under the whole heaven is decreed in the benevolence of God.

The truth is, there are two stages in the restoration of the Jews, the first is before the battle of Armageddon; and the second, after it; but both pre-millennial. God has said, "I will save the tents of Judah first." This is the first stage of restoration... There is, then, a partial and primary restoration of Jews before the manifestation, which is to serve as the nucleus, or basis, of future operations in the restoration of the rest of the tribes after he has appeared in the kingdom. The providential colonisation of Palestine will be on purely political principles; and the Jewish colonists will return in unbelief of the Messiahship of Jesus, and of the truth as it is in him. They will emigrate thither as agriculturists and traders, in the hope of ultimately establishing their commonwealth, but more immediately of getting rich in silver and gold by commerce with India, and in cattle and goods by their industry at home under the efficient protection of the British power.

Before a person or a nation, or a multitude of nations could be said to be in the man Abraham, and in the man Christ Jesus, it is equally clear that they must pass into Abraham, and into Christ... When therefore, nations and individuals are said to be in Abraham and in Christ, it is manifest it must be in a figurative sense. Hence, "in thee", "in him", and "in Christ" are figurative expressions, or terms of constitution... But the formula of national, or political, adoption has not yet been promulgated to the world. No people has ever been politically in God but Israel. The natural descendants of Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob became the people of God in a national sense by the adoption provided in the Mosaic law. But no other nation before or since has ever stood in the same relationship to Him. Neither Egypt of old, nor Britain and America of modern times, can say, "We are the people of the Lord." God has never called these nations "My people", for they have never been the subjects of political adoption as Israel were.
Building the Cities of Judah
in the Face of World Opposition

By David Billington  Brantford, On.

The world keeps trying to get the Jews out of the West Bank—out of Judah and Samaria, but they just don’t seem to be able to achieve their goals.

Israel’s government has recently approved the building of a new neighborhood in the area. Why? When the world will condemn them and when Ehud Olmert is promising to remove West Bank Jewish communities why is this happening? The answer is in the makeup of the Israeli government. In Israel, governments are made up of several parties cobbled together to form a ruling coalition, as no one party is large enough to form a government alone. If one party pulls out of the coalition the government could fall. Such is the current situation: a religious party called Shas is threatening to leave the coalition. Shas represents Ultra-Orthodox or Haredi Jews who are very traditional in their Judaism. They do not necessarily advocate even holding onto Judea and Samaria. However, quite a number of their constituents do, and they have been under pressure to leave the government. Shas has declared that if Olmert begins negotiating on Jerusalem they will leave the government.

The current government coalition is made up of four parties; Kadima with 29 seats, Labor with 19, Shas with 12 and the Pensioner’s Party with 7, for a total of 67 seats. If Shas were to leave the government they would have 55 seats left. Now there are 120 of 67 seats. If Shas were to leave the government the Pensioner’s Party with 7, for a total of 67 seats. If Shas were to leave the government they would have 55 seats left. Now there are 120 seats in order to function without help from they would have 55 seats left. Now there are 120 seats in order to function without help from the United States, and they shall dwell safely all of them... To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.” Ezekiel places the regathering and the object of Gog’s invasion on the mountains of Israel in the midst of the land.

In Ezekiel 34:13-14 we note the same emphasis: “And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.” In Ezekiel 34 the regathered Jews are to be fed on the mountains of Israel by good shepherds, in other words they are to be instructed in the truth of God’s word on the mountains of Israel.

When we compare this with Isaiah chapter 40 we can be even more sure that these mountains are the mountainous region in particular, of Judea and Jerusalem. Isaiah 40 is a chapter that is rightly applied to the work of John Baptist as both John and Matthew show. However, Jesus, in Matthew 17:11, pointed out that the work of John Baptist was only a precursor to the greater work of the restoration of all things by Elijah the prophet. We can see that Isaiah 40 while having an application to John, also has a future application to the restoration of all things. In verses 10-11 we read, “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.” This is a time when “his arm shall rule for him!” Notice also the metaphor of the shepherd again that we saw in Ezekiel 34. When we go back to verse 9 of Isaiah 40 we see that this shepherd is also feeding on the mountains of Israel, but here it is more specific (This is from the JPS translation which catches the proper sense also given in the AV margin): “O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah: ‘Behold your God!’” Here the feeding is taking place on the mountains of Israel, even the cities of Judah, the area which today is the center of a worldwide controversy—the West Bank. It is amazing how the controversy of Zion is being focused on this area.

Meanwhile, First Temple building remains have been found near the Temple Mount, in a dig near the Western Wall plaza close to the staircase leading up towards the Jaffa Gate. Israel National News reports that: “A vast amount of pottery vessels was also discovered, among them three jar handles that bear similar stamped impressions. An inscription written in ancient Hebrew script is preserved on one of these impressions, reading “Belonging to the King of Hevron.” I can only think of one ancient Hebrew king who ruled in Hebron.

“Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days” (Hosea 3:5).
Russia continues to make grand moves in empire building, a sign of the end of all things!

By Don Pearce

Russia-Libya plan Tech-Military Co-operation

“The visit of the Russian vessel to Libya could be seen as a revival of contacts with the country’s navy in the interest of strengthening mutual understanding and building trust in the Mediterranean region,” Capt. Igor Dygalo, the commander of Ivan Bubnov, said. “Libya, which owes $3.5 billion to Moscow, was a major ally of the former Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s. Russia has sought to modernize Libya’s defense and energy sectors” (World Tribune 11-1-08).

At the end of last year there was this report on a visit to Libya by the Russian Foreign Minister.

Ethiopia and Libya

It is always heartening to witness what could be another piece of the prophetic jigsaw slip into place! The item that had caught my eye was entitled:

Iran-Sudan: Iran Acquires a Strategic Foothold in Africa—up to Chad

We recall the list of nations recorded in Ezekiel chapter 38 as companions of Gog included the African nations of Libya and Ethiopia (see map, right). One often wondered why these two were singled out as being on Gog’s side. In fact the matter is reinforced by a phrase of Daniel, who when describing the same matters as Ezekiel, but using the symbol of a King of the North invading the territory of the King of the South, says that

“He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps” (heels NKJV; Dan 11:42,43).

Ethiopia today is to the east of modern Sudan, but in ancient times Ethiopia (or Cush in the Hebrew) seems to have encompassed the general area of Ethiopia and Sudan of modern times. Sudan is a huge country—the 10th biggest in area in the world! (Israel in contrast is number 153!)

Russia is involved with Libya as our next item shows, so the fact that Iran, or Persia of Ezekiel 38, which is ranked first of Gog’s companion nations, should be involved with ancient Cush seems significant.

The Debka article (14-3-08) stated:—

“On Saturday, March 8, Iran and Sudan signed a string of military cooperation pacts in Tehran that stretch Iran’s military and intelligence presence in Sudan up to the borders of Chad.

“The horrendous Darfur tragedy and Khartoum’s backing for Chad rebels finally led Sudan’s traditional arms suppliers, Russia, China and Libya, to back away from arming Sudan’s 120,000—strong forces.

“At a loss for arms suppliers, President Omar al-Bashir turned to Tehran, with a request for a package that included arms and training for the Sudanese army.

“Iran jumped in with gusto. For years Tehran has been gradually building up its military ties with Khartoum with an eye on its geopolitical assets: a long coast on the Red Sea, a main sea lane to the Persian Gulf, a Muslim nation located opposite Saudi Arabia and next door to Egypt; Sudan’s command of oil resources and the White Nile, a major water source for an entire African region.

Russia continues to make grand moves in empire building, a sign of the end of all things!

By Don Pearce

W e ended our last update with a piece on Egypt reaching out to Russia. We know in the final picture that Egypt is invaded and spoiled by the Gogian forces, just prior to Gog’s taking of the nation of Israel. Egypt has been in the Western fold for many years after making peace with Israel and leaving the Soviet sphere of influence. Russia is very keen to rebuild her former influence in the Middle East and the Russians have just been hosting President Mubarak on his State visit to Russia in March. The leaders have signed a nuclear agreement so that Russia builds nuclear power stations in Egypt.

Egypt, however does not appear to be turning away from the West, as we shall see in our concluding item with an interesting Debka article on what might unfold in the situation between Israel and the Palestinians.

MILESTONES UPDATE

THE NATIONS ACCORDING TO GENESIS 10 & EZEKIEL 38

“The visit of the Russian vessel to Libya could be seen as a revival of contacts with the country’s navy in the interest of strengthening mutual understanding and building trust in the Mediterranean region,” Capt. Igor Dygalo, the commander of Ivan Bubnov, said. “Libya, which owes $3.5 billion to Moscow, was a major ally of the former Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s. Russia has sought to modernize Libya’s defense and energy sectors” (World Tribune 11-1-08).

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“Russia and Libya are agreeing on Monday
upon intergovernmental cooperation agreements in the technical-military and peaceful nuclear use sectors, and have already agreed on projects in other economic fields.

“The Business Council formed by both countries agreed to start implementing deals on energy, transportation, industrial, housing and railway construction, said Russian Foreign Minister Serguei Lavrov, who concluded a visit to that Arab nation today” (Prensa Latina 24-12-07).

Agreed, not earth-shattering events, but pointers that, at the time of the end, there will be the partnership between these nations as spoken of by Ezekiel.

Russia—Iran

Russia continues to support Iran in defiance of America’s wishes. The delivery of nuclear fuel for the nuclear reactor in Bushehr has now been completed, and Iran is pushing ahead with her nuclear weapons plans as an article in the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem news report (28-1-08) made clear under the headline:

Final nuclear fuel shipment to Iran arrives from Russia

Naturally, Israel is very worried and there are many articles indicating that if America decides not to act, she will take action herself to stop the continuing move to achieving nuclear weapons.

Russia “turned back”

Ezekiel chapter 38 speaks of Russia being “turned-back” and led on a pathway which brings her against the nation of Israel.

“And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords” (Ezekiel 38:4).

Russia had set out on a pathway of democratic reforms—quite a contrast to Russia’s Imperial past or the period under Communism. That is a pathway she has now turned back from.

Under Putin’s 8 years as President, the old autocratic spirit now rules, with any opposition ruthlessly dealt with. The press has been effectively brought under control and critics have been silenced—several have been found dead in mysterious circumstances!

Yet most Russians are happy—their living standards have gone up considerably due to the wealth that pours into Russia from her resources.

Energy Earnings Near $1 Bln a Day was a headline 13-3-08 on the Rian.ru news website. The high oil prices have proved to be a golden windfall for Russia. Some of that wealth is being used to rebuild her navy. Although she put on a show of strength with her Mediterranean fleet, her one and only aircraft carrier is old and obsolete by American standards, as are many of her ships. Putin is determined to put this right. His aim is not only for Russia to have a strong navy, to show that she is a global power once more, but, according to Stratfor (24-3-08) “Russia said that it plans to increase its production of conventional weapons by 120 percent by the year 2015.”

Putin has also re-instituted the traditional May-Day parades that were a feature of communist Russia. A mock up of the Red Square in Moscow has been constructed and troops are busy practising their manoeuvres for this display of Russia’s military might.

Kremlin ready to resume Red Square Show of Force

“Thousands of Russian troops are in intensive training as the Kremlin prepares to resurrect full-scale military parades on Red Square for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

“The parade on May 9, Russia’s Victory Day commemorating the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945, will come just two days after Dmitri Medvedev is sworn in as President Vladimir Putin’s successor.

“Analysts say the display of military might is designed to send a message to the West: Russia’s new assertive foreign policy will continue under Medvedev” (Sunday Herald 22-3-08).

The picture painted by Ezekiel of a powerful Russia, the head of a military alliance of nations, is certainly one that we can see taking shape before our eyes. The focus of their attention will be Israel and her elimination as a nation. It has been interesting to see Russia’s growing assertiveness in the Middle East Peace Talks after years of being the neglected partner in the Middle East Quartet.

“The Quartet on the Middle East is a foursome of nations and international and supranational entities involved in mediating the peace process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Quartet are the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations. The group was established in Madrid in 2002. Tony Blair is the Quartet’s current Special Envoy” (Wikipedia).

The following headline and cartoon in the gulfnews.com (23-3-08) caught my eye. My father had always remarked that the Russians are chess masters. They are ready to sacrifice pieces if necessary, in order to gain the unexpected advantage!

A Tactical Move on the Chessboard

“Russia’s announcement that it is working to host a Middle East peace conference to be held some time this year is an interesting development in the muddled high-powered political chess game between Moscow and Washington. The idea was first put forward in Annapolis last November, when more than 30 countries gathered in the US Naval base at the behest of the Bush administration to kickstart the ailing Palestinian-Israeli peace process.

“But last week Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov repeated the suggestion in Syria and later on in Ramallah. As a member of the international Quartet and co-sponsor (then as the USSR) of the Madrid peace conference, Moscow’s initiative should neither be surprising nor suspicious. But for some it is both.

“Russia has been sucked into the Arab-Israeli conflict since the early days of the Cold War. As Washington leaned heavily in favour of the nascent Jewish state, the so-called progressive Arab regimes sought to adjust the balance of power by allying themselves with America’s strategic foe, the Soviet Union.”

The author, Osama Al Sharif described how step-by-step the Soviet had gained and then lost its influence in the Middle East. But no longer! “Under Vladimir Putin, the Russians found a strong leader who was willing to act tough in Chechnya and in Europe to protect the remaining assets of the defunct Soviet empire. The invasion of Iraq by the US and Britain in 2003 was seen by many in Moscow as the first step in a grand design by Washington’s neo-conservatives to encircle and isolate Russia. Regardless of the efficacy of such concerns, the Kremlin was slowly coming back into the old game of the Cold War.

“Moscow’s recent interest in the Middle East must be seen in that context. Russia has carefully sided with Iran over its nuclear programme, and it has reinvigorated its role in the Quartet while normalising relations with moderate Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia. Lavrov’s visit to Syria at this stage, a few days before the convening of the Arab summit in Damascus, is symbolic but important.

“There is no doubt that Russia’s renewed interest in the Middle East is part of a new power struggle that is now taking place between Russia and the US...

“Against such a backdrop, Lavrov’s call for a peace conference to be held in Moscow can be viewed either as a tactical move on the high-powered chess board, or as a genuine attempt to further the peace process. My guess is it is the former, at least for now.”

Israel is suspicious of Russia’s motives and doesn’t want to see the progress that is being made, sideline by Russia’s proposed conference. The Russian Foreign Minister’s visit to Israel was marked by “angry” talks. This article by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (26-3-08), continued the chess theme,
Petersburg. He was Putin's campaign manager for "bear"! is a lawyer and a protégé of Putin, indicate that he does not intend to fade into the majority. Putin will step into Medvedev's shoes on May 7th. Putin's recent speeches suggest the conference could also deal with the Middle East. Although friendly with Iran, Putin is alarmed at the threat of Iranian influence in the region. Putin's recent Iranian advances in the region. Like the West, Moscow sees the Hamas takeover in Gaza, Hizbullah's paralysis of Lebanon's political system, and the lingering Iraqi conflict as all strengthening Iran. "They are afraid of Iran's strides here," one official told The Jerusalem Post. Israel does not want to hold the international meet in Russia and sees it as pointless since bilateral Israeli-Palestinian talks have already started. But Russia's goal of stopping Iran's advances in the Middle East also dovetails with Israeli interests, so this could persuade the Jewish State to attend the parley. "According to a government source, 'For the Russians, we are just a small pawn in the greater game…. They are going to go ahead with the conference no matter what we say, greater game…. They are going to go ahead with the conference no matter what we say, greater game…. They are going to go ahead with the conference no matter what we say, greater game…. They are going to go ahead with the conference no matter what we say," one official told The Jerusalem Post. Israel does not want to hold the international meet in Russia and sees it as pointless since bilateral Israeli-Palestinian talks have already started. But Russia's goal of stopping Iran's advances in the Middle East also dovetails with Israeli interests, so this could persuade the Jewish State to attend the parley. "According to a government source, 'For the Russians, we are just a small pawn in the greater game…. They are going to go ahead with the conference no matter what we say, greater game…. They are going to go ahead with the conference no matter what we say, greater game…. They are going to go ahead with the conference no matter what we say,'" one official told The Jerusalem Post.

The Two-Headed Tsar: Who Will Really be in Charge in Russia?

This was a headline in the Russian news-site RFERL (2-3-08) on the day of the Russian presidential elections. Their out-come was a forgone conclusion. Putin is stepping down, as the Russian legislation requires after 8 years in office. He has promoted the existing Prime Minister, Dmitry Medvedev, as the party’s candidate, who was duly elected with a large majority. Putin will step into Medvedev’s shoes and become Prime Minister when the hand-over takes place on May 7th. Putin’s recent speeches indicate that he does not intend to fade into the background! Medvedev (from the Russian word for “bear”) is a lawyer and a protégé of Putin, who helped Putin when he was mayor of St Petersburg. He was Putin’s campaign manager in the successful presidential elections in 2000 and served under him, being promoted to the office of first deputy Prime Minister in 2005, a post Putin created for him. He is also the chairman of Gazprom, the mighty state-owned energy company.

It is interesting to see the difficulties that Europe is facing at the moment over their relationships with Russia. We know that in the final outcome, Europe and Russia will be partners together in their invasion of Israel, brought together very largely by the Vatican. Traditionally the great pillar of Europe has been the French-German partnership, with France being the dominant partner and Germany happy to play number two. However, the further we have moved from the events of WWII, the more Germany has begun to reassert herself. A new generation of politicians, not burdened by the deeds of that dreadful war, have sought to put Germany in the position that she has always dreamed of—the leader of Europe once more.

The new French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, was in Britain in March for the first French full state visit here for 12 years. He trumpeted a new French-British relationship. ‘Instead of the famed “Entente Cordiale”, he said there should now be an “Entente Amicale”, marking the friendship of the two nations’ (BBC News 26-3-08).

It is doubtful that Britain is ready for such close relations! It was probably driven by the increasing divisions between France and Germany, and Sarkozy was looking for new partners to hold back what they see as Germany’s growing dominance. Stratfor (27-2-08) carried an informative article headed: —France, Germany: The Rift Widens

“On Feb. 25, Germany said the March 3 minisummit between Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Germany was postponed because of Sarkozy’s “busy agenda.” The two sides had been in disagreement over France’s proposal to create a Mediterranean Union, a concept that Germany, which would be left out of the project, said would eventually fracture the European Union. “But a further Franco-German split was revealed when German Finance Minister Peer Steinbruck said Feb. 26 his biannual meeting with his French counterpart Christine Lagarde was canceled as well. The finance ministers’ rift reveals a split between the two countries on how the European Union should handle a strong euro and struggling countries. "Currently, the euro is at record strength, stoking controversy among the 15 countries that share the currency, but especially between France and Germany. France is the eurozone’s second-largest economy, but that economy is not in good shape. French companies’ exports have become less competitive on the international market due to the euro’s strength, and the French trade deficit has swollen in the past year to more than $59 billion.

"As much as this rift looks like a series of tit-for-tat exchanges, it is much more serious than that. It is a sign of a generational shift in two highly competitive European superpowers that have different visions for how to run Europe. "France’s Gaullist dreams of becoming a global superpower have undergone a much-needed correction under Sarkozy, and Paris’ sphere of influence has shrunk to more realistically encompass only Europe and the Mediterranean. But in its diminished sphere, France is no less ambitious than before—and it could be more likely to find success. "However, Paris' chances of success will be diminished by Berlin’s emergence from half a century characterized by internal division, introspection and guilt. Reunified and prosperous, Germany now wishes to exercise its new confidence and take its place as the leader of Europe.

"So the two powers have returned to their historically familiar roles as contenders for Continental dominance, and the rift will ripple through Europe for the foreseeable future.”

Germany was the leader of the “beast of the earth” system that controlled Europe in the past. This symbolic creature is described in Revelation as being like a lamb yet having two horns.

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth: and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed” (Rev. 13:11-12).

Historically this was the Holy Roman Empire, when a Germanic Emperor ruled Europe with the help of the Pope. These are the 2 horns; it looked innocent enough—lamb-like—but in reality it symbolically spoke like a dragon—a persecuting power against those “heretics” who dared speak out against its tyrannical rule. The papacy used many cruel means to force people to accept its teachings. This beast of the earth came to its end with the work of the French Revolution and the work of the Russian Revolution, and the work of the British Empire, which has eventually seen the beast of the earth brought to its knees. Today, France is dominant in the European Union, with Germany second in line. But Sarkozy and Merkel are the new generation of politicians who must hold back the growth of Germany’s dominance and crack the code of the beast of the earth. The freedom of the church is not far away as the beast of the earth begins to fall. 

"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and thirty days. These are the two olive trees, and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the whole earth. They shall both bleed and die together; and men shall wonder of them a day and an half." (Rev. 11:1-10)
Napoleon, which broke the HRE and the power of the papacy. But Revelation chapter 17 indicates a final reconstruction of a similar beast-church power under the symbol of the “harlot woman”—the Roman Catholic Church—riding the European “beast.” We are encouraged to see that these are the last days as we not only see the revival of the papacy, but the re-emergence of Germany as a strong power. And not just this, we are seeing how the papacy is working with Germany and Europe to achieve its foretold end goal of sitting upon the beast (Rev. 17:3). This indicates that once more the papacy will heavily influence European policy.

Under Pope John Paul II and now Benedict XVI, the Roman Church is making great strides to re-assert her authority in a secular Europe. After many years when men like President Chirac of France and President Schröder of Germany guided Europe, keeping church and state apart, the situation has radically changed. Both Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy are keen on putting religion back into politics.

“Religion is not a Danger to the State but a Resource”

At the end of December, Sarkozy was at the Vatican to be given honorary membership in the Lateran Chapter, which traditionally was offered to the King of France and now to the presidents of the republic. It originally was to thank the French for their continued suppression of the Protestants—but of course that objective has been quietly buried—for the present anyway! He gave a forthright speech.

“Religion is not a danger to the state but a resource, the French president Nicolas Sarkozy said yesterday in his speech after a ceremony at the Basilica of St John Lateran. In his speech, he underlined that secularism has no power to separate France from its Christian roots, cutting the roots—he added—means losing the meaning, weakening the national identity and draining the social relations of the country that are in desperate need of the symbols of memory” (h2onews.tv 21-12-07).

A year earlier, Merkel had promised the Pope to do her best to promote a mention of Christianity in what has now become the Lisbon Treaty. The secular tide seems to be turning in much of Europe. The Pope has shown himself to be the leader who is prepared to put his head above the parapet in his warnings against the growing influence of Muslim teaching in Europe as the number of Muslim refugees grows in Europe. His very public “baptism” of a Moslem convert, Magdi Allam, in “St Peter’s” at an “Easter Vigil” just days after Osama bin Laden in an audio message released over the internet, had accused “the pope of the Vatican” of having “a significant role” in fighting a “new crusade” against Islam, was all part of his grand strategy. As The Trumpet (27-3-08) put it under the headline Benedict's Strategy for Expanding Vatican Power.

“Pope Benedict XVI may be stirring the anger of Muslims, Jews and secularists through his controversial decisions and remarks. But the way he sees it, sacrificing the Vatican’s relationship with these groups (all historic enemies of Catholicism) is a small price to pay if it means igniting the sympathies and rallying the support of Catholics, conservatives and all Europeans looking for guidance and protection.

“The pope knows that the more he can arouse the sympathies of Europeans—and the more he can cause Europeans to look to the Vatican for leadership—the more powerful and influential the Vatican will become. Through these controversies, which are becoming more and more common, Benedict is establishing the Vatican as the bulwark of conservatism and the champion of Western civilization.

“It’s a masterful strategy. There is a gaping need in Europe, and the Western world in general, for solutions, for guidance, for leadership, for protection against all-too-real external threats. Slowly but steadily Pope Benedict XVI—the white-haired, soft-spoken scholar who regularly calls for peace between Catholics, Muslims and Jews—is positioning the Vatican to fill that need. He is promoting it as an institution of strength and fortitude, of solutions and answers—an institution possessing the will to confront the imperialistic motives of “more violent” western influence and eastern influence in Europe is going to fall. President Bush and President Putin are shortly to meet for talks following the NATO 2-4th April summit in Romania. America wants to contain Russia to prevent her aggressive expansion of power, a matter that Russia now feels strong enough to resist. The Vatican with Germany’s cooperation wants to extend EU’s influence in the Balkans, hence their recognition of Kosovo. The Russian’s have resisted this poaching of her territory. Further to the east the Ukraine has been subject to US, EU and Russian pressures. The US wants the Ukraine to join NATO as well as hosting a NATO base and thus being drawn into the orbit of the west. Ukraine still is a major “bread-basket” for Russia, and Putin has vigorously resisted such moves. Medvedev was elected Russian President-elect on a Sunday; on Monday he had reduced gas supplies to the Ukraine by 25%, and on Tuesday by 50%! This intimidation appears to have worked.

It would appear that some compromise has been reached, though this will only be made clear in the next few days and weeks. Stratfor reported (28-3-08) that not only had the Ukraine abandoned its bid for NATO membership, but that she would not allow any NATO bases on her territory. Germany too has indicated she would not support Ukraine’s membership application. The suggested trade off is that she has obtained Russia’s agreement not to oppose Kosovo’s move to the EU. It would appear that final stages of determining the beast’s territory and the dragon’s are taking place before our eyes.

Egypt, Gaza and Israel

We have nearly run out of space to look at the interesting developments in Israel that I mentioned at the start, with the prospect of the Young Lions (Ezek. 38:13) being drawn into this region. Debka (29-3-08) detailed that president Mubarak is due to visit the White House in the second half of April, and Bush to visit Egypt after he has been to the 60 years celebrations in Israel in May. Egypt is being pressured to take a much bigger role in the running of Gaza, and there are urgent, behind the scenes talks taking place between America, Egypt and Israel, which if successful could transform the present situation between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

Safeguarding Suez shipping

America is keen to see the Sinai region cleared of the many terrorist organisations that operate there, threatening the security of the Suez. According to Debka, the Egyptian military have drawn up a new plan for Sinai-Suez security, involving the area being cleared by Egyptian forces. There would then be set up joint US-Egyptian naval and air forces, which would secure Sinai’s Suez, Red Sea and Mediterranean coastlines. They would cooperate in operations to purge the smuggling racketeers, missile and firearms gunrunners and the bands of terrorists entering and exiting Sinai at will.

God Willing, these may be matters to report on in the next update, if our Master has not returned in the meantime. Surely that day is very, very close and in this we rejoice.
The context in which the city of Hebron is first mentioned in the Bible is a very significant one. In Genesis 13:14-18 we read these words:

“And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.”

After Abram viewed the land of promise it must surely mean something that he immediately moved to Hebron (Hebron means “fellowship”). It is clear that this place became a focus for his faith and hope, for Abraham believing in the literal resurrection of the dead (see Genesis 22:5; Hebrews 11:19) purchased a burying place there. Abram had been told: “...all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.” Here was a literal visible land that he would be given — and as he was to be “buried” (Genesis 15:15), his physical resurrection was essential in order for him to receive the Land promised to him.

When Sarah died therefore (Genesis 23) Abraham took steps in order to bury her in this place of hope:

“And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city. And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan. And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying-place by the sons of Heth” (verses 17-20).

Later we read of Abraham being laid to rest in the same place:

“The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife” (Gen. 25:10).

Above: David Wilder, Jewish Community spokesman at the cave of Machpela in Hebron

Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city. And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan. And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying-place by the sons of Heth” (verses 17-20).

Left: Abraham purchased Machpelah “before all that went in at the gate of his city.” Here is the gate of the city of Hebron dating back to the time of Abraham. The narrowing passage provided the means of controlling entrance to the city.
Abraham and his wife Sarah will certainly awake to life again in this place (see Daniel 12:2) and the promise of God to him will be fulfilled—as it is written: “Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old” (Micah 7:20).

The Challenge of Faith

Hebron is not only a focus for the Hope of the Promises, it is also a place that challenges faith. In Numbers chapter 13 twelve men were appointed to search out the promised land, “they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron...” (verse 22). We then read:

“And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.”

Caleb opposed those whose trust did not extend beyond themselves and their own strength.

“And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (vs. 30).

Democracy prevailed over faith and trust in God however, and in chapter 14:11 we see the Lord’s reaction to this:

“And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?”

All the miracles of the Exodus went for naught! The ten plagues and the overthrow of the Egyptian superior forces seemed to make no impact whatsoever on these people. The challenge to faith in Hebron today is before modern Israel, just as it was back in the 13th century B.C.

Lack of faith and courage in ancient times cost Israel 40 years wandering in the wilderness. And the fact is that those who were faithful (Joshua and Caleb) had to pay the forty year price along with the faithless—except that their lives were spared (Joshua 14:13,14).

Times may change, but principles do not.
of Israel’s government today, there is the powerful pressures coming from the United States, Europe and more importantly, Russia. Unable to resist these pressures, Israel at present adopts policies that are seen to be massive concessions to the so-called Palestinians. Leaning heavily upon the United States and Europe—but unseen by most—is the Vatican. Ultimately this will lead the world into a crisis and into those events that are described in Ezekiel chapter 38. Meanwhile it is the settlers—such as those who were expelled from Gush Katif, Amona and other smaller settlements who are required to suffer the cost of it. In a certain sense, they may be compared to the two spies who had to suffer the hardships of the wilderness due to the unbelief and lack of faith in their fellow Jews.

Jewish communities have existed in Hebron for centuries—previous to the present one, Jews lived in Hebron from 1540 up until 1929 when Arabs rioted and brutally murdered over 60 of them. The British did not prevent that pogrom, but evacuated survivors to a clinic in Jerusalem. In 1948 the Jordanians occupied Hebron, destroyed Jewish property and desecrated the synagogue.

Following the 1967 war, the return to Hebron began when Moshe and Miriam Levinger, together with several supporters spent Passover there in 1968. It was a beginning! Another courageous step forward was taken in 1979 when Miriam Levinger, together with ten women and forty children moved into another building (Beit Ha Shalom) and established themselves there in spite of appalling conditions and no running water.

In a short documentary film made in 1976 (Who is a Jew: A People Chosen) Miriam Levinger explained her reasons for wanting to settle in Hebron. She saw it as continuing the settlement that Abraham started. “We are continuing in his way,” she said; “In his way of life; in his whole attitude towards life and towards God.” She recalled the early move into Hebron:

“When we first came to Hebron—those of us who came and lived through the first three years which was a very difficult experience—most of us were religious. And we had this very deep religious conviction—we felt that this was the logical outcome of everything that had been ever written in the Prophets... It was a very strong feeling in us, that all these prophecies were coming true in our time. We felt that it was a very great reward to be able to live in this day and this time...”

Today there is evidence of a substantial and yet uncanny nature that Miriam Levinger is continuing the ancient settlement, for the apartment building in which she now lives is built directly above the Hebron Archaeological Park (Tel Hebron) containing a wall and the entrance to the gate of the city dating from the time of Abraham.

There are now some 800 Jews who live in the city of Hebron (apart from the Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba which has a population of around 7,000). A main problem for the community is the severe restrictions on building and expansion imposed by the government of Israel. As families grow and children become adults, getting married and needing their own homes and living space, they are bottled up under impossible conditions due to a government policy that is clearly designed to squeeze out the settlers. Yet it would seem that the determination of these people and their religious convictions are strong enough to withstand all the attempts to move them on. It is now forty years since the Levingers and their supporters took up their initial residence in Hebron. The constant challenges and pressures that are experienced only serve to strengthen resolve. The Jewish people have returned to Hebron, and they are there to stay.

One example of the sheer resolve and tenacity of the people of Hebron today is seen from a visit to Beit Ha Shalom (“Peace House”). The house was legally bought for $700,000, but in keeping with its repressive policy against the Jewish Religious Zionist settlers, a court order was issued preventing the families who lived there from installing windows, insulating the roof or connecting an electric power supply in preparation for winter. The Jewish community of Hebron managed to bring in two generators and the families rationed the available power between them. Then winter came—Hebron was a challenge to faith yet again! It was very cold; the wind took out the plastic from the window sockets and rain leaked in—but leaving was not even an option for these people! One man was asked, “Why don’t you find somewhere else to live?” He replied:

“This is my home, I live here. Just like anyone...”
else in their home can install windows, so too I should be able to. We haven’t asked for very much, just to replace these plastic sheets with something a little more solid to offer us protection, on humanitarian grounds.”

The real challenge to the Jews of Hebron today is not so much Arab terrorism—though that is real enough—it is from their own government. The Israeli government today has no belief in the Biblical promises or in its prophecies—like the ten unbelieving spies they see no reason to be in Hebron—or in the rest of Judea and Samaria; or even in Jerusalem! They are more interested in keeping the Americans and Europeans happy than they are in keeping the children of Israel warm.

When we visited Hebron earlier this year we spoke with David Wilder who is the spokesman for the Jewish Community there. A transcript of part of our recorded conversation is reproduced below.

B.M. (Bible Magazine Editor) To what extent do you and the Jewish Community believe this to be a fulfillment of what we can read in our Bibles?

D.W. (David Wilder) Look; we have absolutely no doubt that our return to Israel in the last hundred years is the fulfillment of the prophecies and the Divine Promise that we would come back to our Land, that we would come back to our cities. What has happened in Israel—we can say from 1948—what has happened here in Hebron, could never have happened without Divine assistance...

B.M. Could you just give an indication to me of the extent to which the local Jewish Community would be Bible readers (the Tannach or Old Testament)?

D.W. People here are what you would call ‘Believers.’ The people who live in Hebron are all observant—what we would call, I guess—Orthodox Jews. Many of the men here are Torah scholars, there are many Rabbis here. There are people that are very learned—both men and women. There are many teachers that live in Hebron, and of course the roots of our existence starts with God and starts with the Torah—the Bible. This is the pillar and the roots of our very existence here. When we read those words we know that they have a Divine source—and we are trying to live those commandments and to live the Torah and the Bible.

B.M. Do your people see the approach of the promised kingdom—the restoration of the kingdom of David?

D.W. ...Our Hope and our desire—our belief—is in the restoration of the entire Land of Israel—all of Eretz Yisrael—and in Jerusalem the rebuilding of the temple, and with that the restoration of the kingdom of David. This is what we pray for in our prayers three times a day. And we know that we are well advanced in that process, but to pin-point a time or a day is difficult... I believe in the coming of Messiah whenever he should come...

The return to Hebron today is a reality and a fact. While Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sleep close by these developments are taking place and will no doubt continue. There may well be severe trials ahead and there is a great deal to learn. Jeremiah 3:14,15 promises those shepherds who will feed the people with knowledge:

“Turn, O backsliding children, saith the L ORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.”

In Isaiah chapter 40 we read of the “good tidings” that are to be announced “unto the cities of Judah”—one of which is Hebron:

“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” (Isa. 40:10,11).

Who are these “Mighty Ones” who will come as shepherds feeding their flock? It may well be that Abraham himself will be among them as a shepherd—teacher, having been raised to life again to inherit the Land as he was promised. In Genesis 18:19 we read that the L ORD said of Abraham:

“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the L ORD, to do justice and judgment; that the L ORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”

May it be that in God’s great mercy, the Jewish community in Hebron will yet learn the Truth from their father Abraham.
A recent Israel evening held in Pinetown (Natal) South Africa, brought out over 80 visitors to the Christadelphian Hall where it was held. Visitors, who included both Jews and nominal Christians, came together for Jewish food, discussion and to hear three presentations about Israel and the Bible.

This well organized event succeeded as a result of the enthusiastic effort put into it by the Pinetown Christadelphians who personally handed out invitations to friends and acquaintances. The invitation read:

“The Christadelphians (Brothers & Sisters in Christ) have the pleasure of inviting you to our Israel evening, including a 3 course Jewish meal and international guest speakers.”

The three half-hour presentations were:
1. Israel, the West Bank & the Bible
2. Israel Today: The Amazing Nation Thriving in its own Land.
3. The Future of Israel & You!

The first and last presentations were given by the editor of the Bible Magazine who had just visited Israel and the West Bank. The second presentation was given from a secular viewpoint by Ofer Dahan, Director of the Israel Centre S.A.

Should there be interest in holding a similar event elsewhere, contact the editor of the Bible Magazine who would be pleased to help with suggestions. This event is a splendid opportunity to share views and discuss the meaning of events in Israel today.

Invited guests enjoy Jewish fare at the Pinetown ‘Israel Evening’ while learning about what is really going on in the Middle East, and how events happening today fulfill the purpose of God as it is revealed to us in the Bible. Illustrated presentations and video clips took the audience behind the news headlines.

Challah bread (shown above), falafel, Israeli music mingled with other dainties make an environment that is conducive to good conversation about the people of the Bible and the Land of the Bible.

The real food however is of a more “spiritual” nature, as the Bible itself is opened up so that we can digest what has been written therein. Israel is a nation that identifies with the Bible and it is virtually impossible to talk about one without the other!
“Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.”

Proverbs 7:24-27

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

Proverbs 14:12

“All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.”

Isaiah 18:3

“Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.”

Isaiah 43:9

“Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?”

Proverbs 22:20,21

“I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets..”

Hosea 12:10
“And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, the brightness of thy rising.” — Isaia

By Paul Billington BRANTFORD, ON

The creation of light in a world of darkness brought division; it brought separation. As Genesis 1:4 records it: “God divided the light from the darkness.” This principle is inviolable. As the apostle Paul expresses it in 2 Corinthians 6:14,15, “What communion hath light with darkness... or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”

From the very beginning this principle has separated between the believers of God’s word and those who were hardened against it. It was a division that brought enmity, hostility, hatred and strife. The antagonism that Cain felt toward his brother Abel resulted in murder—and the descendants of Cain followed in the violent ways of their father (Genesis 4:23), corrupting the earth before God and filling it with violence (chapter 6:11). The Divine judgement of the situation was that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth.”

A Homeland for sons of God

There were others in that ancient world however, who chose to associate themselves with the Name of God (Genesis 4:26). These were called “sons of God” (Genesis 6:1), “for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Romans 8:14). In other words they were led by the truth, for “the spirit is truth” (1 John 5:6); or putting it another way, these sons of God were led and motivated by the word of God, for “thy word is truth” says Jesus (John 17:17).

Unlike their violent and wicked enemies, these sons of God “walked with God” and included both Enoch and Noah. “These all” says Hebrews 11:13, confessed themselves to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth, thus declaring that they sought a country—literally a “fatherland”—a society or community in which they could feel at home. This was their hope; the hope of the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world—Matthew 25:34.

In the age before the flood there were no nations or countries as such, apart from the “dominion” referred to in Genesis 1 verses 26 and 28. The word used here, according to Gesenius, literally means to tread down and carries the idea of subdue and rule over. It is most frequently translated “rule,” and the passage is clearly telling us that man, created in the image and likeness of God, was appointed to be Ruler for God. There can be little doubt that Adam would have understood it that way. That this is the true sense in which to understand the words of Genesis chapter 1 is seen from other Scriptures that refer to it. In a clear reference back to the creation of man, the 8th Psalm speaks of man, and “the son of man,” having dominion over the work of God’s hands. This is taken up in Hebrews chapter 2 where the words are applied to “the world to come, whereof we speak” (verse 5). So the words are interpreted as referring to the Kingdom Age when all things are put in subjection under the feet of the Lord’s Anointed.
ones. This is also seen from Daniel 7:27, “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

This is the purpose of God as it was stated in Genesis chapter 1. A new creation was to be appointed as Ruler for God. Although not named as such in the creation record, that happens to be the meaning of the name Israel—see Young’s Analytical Concordance. Also compare Strong’s “he will rule as God.” Gesenius has “wrestler with God” (note, not against God). The KJV margin has “a prince with God.” So the one kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world was this dominion. It had been created as an ideal homeland for the sons of God, but when “all flesh had corrupted His Way upon the earth” (chapter 6:12), the rebellious citizens were destroyed by the great flood.

That catastrophe did not mean that God’s purpose had failed, or that sons of God would never rule the dominion. The hope of a homeland being based upon the promise of God, that ultimate victory would be gained by a seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15) continued to enlighten the minds of men after the deluge.

The Hope Renewed

The existence of other nations did not occur until we read of them in Genesis 10:1-5. This is the first occurrence of the world “Gentiles” (Goy), and it is clear from the context that they had not existed previously. There had been but one dominion, and that had been entrusted to men who would rule it for (or with) God. But men wanted their independence; they wanted their own kingdom:

“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4).

This rebellion resulted in the confusion of languages and the scattering of the peoples. Having thus become “divided in their lands” we find that Nimrod arose from among them as a mighty hunter against the LORD, “and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel...” This was the kingdom of men, and from that day to this it has stood in opposition to the sons of God who confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. These declared plainly that they desired a homeland of their own—“a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10).

Among the Gentile nations there was no such homeland as this, and like the dove which “found no rest for the sole of her foot” the sons of God “wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.” Where could they find a country or city that was built upon moral and godly principles—a nation that feared God and which was ruled in righteousness?

Some 300 years after the flood Abram was called out of the Gentiles to a land of promise, and he was told by God: “I will make of thee a great nation” (Genesis 12:2). From the first three verses of Genesis chapter 12 we learn the basis and substance of the Hope which Abram embraced. It involved:

1. A land
2. A national development
3. Blessing
4. A great name
5. A future blessing for all nations

Other details were added in further promises recorded in Genesis, but the idea of a national homeland for Abraham and his seed is clearly stated. This we may term the Hope of Abraham.

God’s National Son

In Hosea 11:1, God says through the prophet; “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.” Now whatever future application may be built upon these words, we cannot ignore the obvious reference back to Exodus when God called Israel out of the Gentiles for His Name. In Exodus 4:22, 23 we have the words of Moses to the ruler of Egypt. Moses was commanded:

“And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn” (Exodus 4:22-23).

So Israel was called out of the Gentiles for a purpose, and the reason given was: “that he may serve me.”

Here again we see that the principle of division and separation is at work; the light was being divided from the darkness, for when God sent a thick darkness over Egypt “all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings” (Exodus 10:22,23). Light is essential for faithful service—a man or woman cannot serve God acceptably whilst walking in darkness. So in harmony with the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Israel was promised a homeland in which they might serve their heavenly Father, they were to possess the land of the Canaanites:

“But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people... And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine” (Leviticus 20:24-26).

Separation and holiness were the conditions of faithful sonship. There could no peace with darkness! There could be no inter-marriage or assimilation (for that had brought about the great apostasy before the flood—Genesis 6:1-4). A son must respect his father’s instruction,
in the ordinances of night and day we see evidence of God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. Night is the season when the light of Israel is withdrawn, and day is the season when her light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon her (Isaiah 60:1).

The judgements which befell the nation are to be followed by regathering. Jeremiah 33:6-8 makes a remarkable prediction:

"Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth. And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me."

This cleansing of Israel's iniquity is a promise that demonstrates the faithfulness and mercy of the God of Israel. As He says through Ezekiel:

"Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went" (Ezek. 36:22).

God has no obligation to restore Israel, but Scripture makes it clear that He will do so. As we can read in Romans 11:25-27,

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

**Trying the Spirits**

Once we come to understand what Christendom and its scribes have done with the New Testament, in corrupting its teaching and message, we soon see why the Jews want none of it. The words of Paul to Timothy have come to pass when he predicted the future development of Christian doctrine. He wrote:

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (Tim. 4:3-4).

In addition to these fables and the mythology that the Church taught, we must note the fact that it was so-called "Christians" who murdered and butchered the Jewish people for centuries. The crusades, the inquisition, the forcible "conversions" and even the holocaust—there is none of it that reflects the true teaching of the New Testament. Neither does the doctrine or the history of the Christian Church harmonise with the religion of the Old Testament. The test was clear:

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

And it was Jesus himself who told his contemporaries:

"For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:46, 47).

This statement is important. It means that the true teachings of Jesus must be understood in harmony with the writings of Moses. There can be no real contradiction between them. So what was the teaching of Jesus and his followers all about?

**The Good News!**

So what is the New Testament really about? Few could argue against the suggestion that it has to do with something called "the Gospel." But what is this Gospel (the word means "glad tidings" or "good news")?

In the New Testament the word first appears in Matthew 4:23, "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." So this "gospel" is in the first place "good news of the kingdom." That is what Jesus taught in the synagogues of Galilee. From Matthew 9:35 we learn the same thing. If we ask what "kingdom?"—the answer of Mark 1:14 is "the gospel of the kingdom of
God.”

Now it is obvious that this kingdom of God is none other than that which was spoken of in the Old Testament, and as we can learn from 1 Chronicles 28:5 Solomon occupied “the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.” So the throne of David and of Solomon was the throne of the kingdom of the LORD; it was the kingdom of God in the hands of men. This is the throne and the kingdom that the New Testament promises to Jesus the son of Mary:

“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life” (Luke 1:68-75).

We must surely pause and think what this would mean for Israel! If true, then it would be “good news” indeed! If it was not true, then it would be just one more false Messiah.

A False Christ

The great mistake made by the vast majority of people is in assuming that the “Christ” of the Christian churches is the Messiah spoken of in the New Testament. They are not the same.

Jesus (and that is the Greek form of the name that most Christians prefer above the actual name of Yehoshua; Jesus himself had warned: “For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ Messiah; the Anointed One; and shall deceive many” (Matthew 24:5; see also verse 24). Those disciples of Jesus who later taught the good news of the kingdom in Gentile nations issued the same warning. For example, Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth saying:

“But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if some one comes and preaches another Jesus than the one we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough” (2 Cor. 11:3-4 RSV).

The church teaching of a Jesus who had not come in the flesh, and who was “very God,” has no support in the New Testament. The Messiah of Israel was never represented as the third person in some impossible and illogical “Trinity.” This really is “another Jesus.”

As we have seen the Biblical Jesus had to be, and was, a descendant of David (Psalm 132:11). His nature was that of flesh and blood like everyone else:

“For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb. 2:16-18).

This Jesus was tempted—whereas James 1:13 tells us “God cannot be tempted with evil.” So Jesus cannot be God can he? It is one thing to say that “God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16) and another to say He was flesh (Read Phanerosis by John Thomas).

Much more could be said about this matter but it is surely clear that the Jesus of the New Testament is not the one being worshipped by deceived Christians of today.

Israel’s Saviour

Concerning David the son of Jesse we read in Acts 13:23,

“Of this man’s seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus.”

And of Jesus, we read in Acts 5:31

“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”

“But,” it may be reasonably argued, “the Jesus of the New Testament did not save Israel.”

The nation was overthrown by the Romans and suffered some 2,000 years persecution (mainly from Christians!).

Two points must be made here. First, although the restoration of the kingdom to Israel did not come to pass at that time, it is certainly taught throughout the New Testament. It is a matter of promise for the future. And secondly, although Israel’s redemption and salvation is clearly taught in the Old Testament, it has not yet been realized. Salvation has not arisen from anywhere else during the long centuries of the exile—but does that mean that it never will?

Let us look deeper.

In Acts chapter 1 we are told that Jesus spent forty days (well over a month) speaking with his followers “of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” This led to a natural question from the disciples: “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (verse 6). The answer given was that it was not for them to know the times or the seasons at that point, but that their task was to become witnesses for Jesus. Then, when he had been parted from them there was the angelic statement:

“...Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up”— James 1:13.
(Acts 1:11). But this promise of the return is tied to something else. In Acts 3:20, 21 we read: “And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”

This “restitution of all things” is the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (compare what Jesus had said in Matthew 17:11). It was what the Gospel (the Good News) was about! This is saying that the real Jesus will come to earth during the period of Israel’s restoration. According to Psalm 102:16, “When the LORD (the “I SHALL BE WHO I SHALL BE”) shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.”

There was no need to repeat all the Old Testament prophecies of the restoration of Israel in the New Testament. The words “...which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” are sufficient.

What the New Testament does, when rightly understood, is to open up further details which were previously kept secret. See for example Colossians 1:26. The identity of Israel’s Saviour and Messiah is but one of those details—and even that has little meaning in the absence of an appreciation of his whole redemptive work. But that is another subject and another aspect of the Gospel that we must consider on a different occasion.

Rejoicing with His People

The Gospel of the kingdom of Israel was to be taught to Gentiles by the immediate apostles of Jesus (see Matthew 24:4), inviting them to participate in the national homeland. Very few Gentiles have ever really understood this, fulfilling the words of Jesus when he said “Many are called, but few are chosen.” By the end of his life the apostle Paul had very few ready to support him (see 2 Timothy 4:10-16), and John tells us that many had withdrawn from the apostles’ fellowship (1 John 2:18, 19). By the end of the first century of the Christian era, it would have been a very small remnant who adhered to what Paul had called “the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20). What history and the world knows as “Christianity” or “Christendom” is nothing other than that “falling away” (literally, apostasy) spoken of in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2.

But there will have been some who kept the faith, understanding the revealed mystery spoken of by Paul in Ephesians chapter 3. This “mystery” he says, “Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. 3:5-6).

The true believer in the gospel of the kingdom of Israel sees that, as a Gentile, he is an alien from the commonwealth (Politeuma) of Israel, a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world—Ephesians 2:12. He must therefore change citizenship so as to become a fellow-citizen with the saints (or holy people)—verse 19.

This citizenship has nothing to do with the State of Israel as we know it today, but is based upon the faith that anticipates the restoration of the kingdom again to Israel by the Anointed Jesus or Yehoshua.

“Our conversation,” the word is politeuma, literally “citizenship”—“Our citizenship is in heaven” says Paul in Philippians 3:20. This is because it is a citizenship of “the kingdom of heaven,” which of course is the kingdom of God (for so the term is used in Matthew). Not that this kingdom is in heaven; it is of heaven, and is to be established upon earth. Paul says: “For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20).

Now because of this association, Gentile believers of the Hope of Israel have rejoiced and do rejoice as they see the restoration of Israel in progress today, for in the national redemption of Israel the believer anticipates the approach of his own redemption and of life in the restored kingdom of God.

In all Israel’s affliction, the true believer is afflicted, for he shares in the feelings of his people. He knows their grief and shares their losses. He feels intensely the enmity of those who desire the destruction of Israel. Whilst not participating in current politics the believer is very interested in them, and especially in those issues that concern the Biblical lands and the city of Jerusalem. As the religious Zionist Jew prays for the coming of Moshiaic three times a day, so the believer in Israel’s Hope prays for the Lord’s Anointed to return to his people (Malachi 3:7).

Israel must Rule for God, must fulfill the command to subdue and have dominion over the earth (Genesis 1), and this will be accomplished under Messiah in the Age to Come.

The good news concerning the coming kingdom of Israel is a blessing to the whole world. It involves the establishment of a Divine society upon this earth—one that will shine forth the light of Truth unto all nations:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:2, 3).

May the words of the prophet help us to see the vision of it, and to pray the Lord for His mercy towards Israel and the nations, that they may all be blessed in Abraham and his seed:

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isa. 60:1-3).
The status of Sir Winston Churchill among English-speaking peoples is so high that many would believe him to be the greatest leader England ever had. Another significant fact about Sir Winston Churchill is that he was probably the British statesman most trusted and loved by the Jewish people. In the preface to a recent book “Winston Churchill and the Jews.” Sir Martin Gilbert writes as follows:

“In a world where Jews were often the objects of scorn, dislike, distrust and hostility, Churchill held them in high esteem, and wanted them to have their rightful place in the world. At a time when he was criticising Jewish terrorist acts against the British in Palestine, he told a Jewish friend who was uneasy about his criticisms: ‘The Jewish people know well enough that I am their friend.’ This was true: he was both a friend in their hours of need, and a friend in deed.”

Winston Churchill was born in 1874 in the privileged line of the House of Marlborough, in Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire. His family became famous in British history when Sir John Churchill defeated the armies of King Louis 14th of France, in the early years of the 18th century. Winston’s father, Lord Randolph Churchill was in the direct line of this dukedom; his mother was the daughter of a New York financier, Leonard Jerome. The blood of both sides of the Atlantic ran in his veins which is both interesting and symbolic for much of his political life featured the consistent theme of unity between Britain and the United States. Winston Churchill directed and inspired the allies through World War II, his pugnacious courage yet paternal warmth providing grand inspiration to the British Empire and its friends from the darkest hour of 1940 when invasion of Britain looked certain, to the final conquest of Nazi Germany in May, 1945.

In many ways he was a quintessential Englishman of the lordly kind, yet one of his very close friends when asked for information about Sir Winston’s remarkable life, had this comment to make, “Even Winston had a fault. He was too fond of Jews!” This was not a common characteristic in the ranks of British aristocracy of the 19th or 20th centuries.

An Amazing Quotation

Yet in the 19th century there was increased interest in Britain for the destiny of the Jewish people. Occasionally, just occasionally, this interest lodged in the heart of a few of the hierarchy, even if not in a very public way. It was only in the reforms of Napoleon (1795-1815) that the Jew began to find an equal place in society and across the channel in Britain he may have the vote but his company was rarely sort by others, the prevailing sentiment being an unspoken but tangible discrimination. Few would risk their standing in society to make a public show of fondness for Jews! It seemed that a “good Christian” kept a rightful distance from “unbelieving Jews.”

However, in the year 1848 a Doctor John Thomas wrote a book in London entitled Elpis Israel. On page 442 this is what he stated:

“I know not whether the men, who at present contrive the foreign policy of Britain, entertain the idea of assuming the sovereignty of the Holy Land, and of promoting its colonization by the Jews; their present intentions however, are of no importance one way or the other, because they will be compelled, by events soon to happen, to do what, under existing circumstances, heaven and earth combined could not move them to attempt. The present decisions of 'statesmen' are destitute of stability. A shooting star in the political firmament is sufficient to disturb all the forces of their system and to stultify all the theories of their political astronomy. The finger of God has indicated a course to be pursued by Britain which cannot be evaded, and which her counsellors will not only be willing, but eager, to adopt when the crisis comes upon them.”

The Core of the Matter

Dr Thomas was no political activist or man of foreign policy debate. He wrote the amazing words above simply from his comprehension of what the Bible said upon the topic of Britain and the restoration of Jews to the land of Israel. Among faithful Bible students there had been recognition for centuries that God had declared...
that Jews, scattered into all lands for 1800 years, would return to their ancient homeland of Palestine. But there were many questions as to how this would occur, what would be their attitude to Christ when they returned, what nation would ever be interested to take up the cause and make it happen in the world of power and politics?

Dr. Thomas answered these questions in a clear and unequivocal manner and the above quotation is a sample of this. He said it will be Britain who would make this restoration possible, of “assuming the sovereignty of the Holy Land, and of promoting its colonisation by the Jews.” He fully appreciated that this concept was far from the natural interests and fancies of British statesmen, yet when opportunity presented they would be “eager” to take up the cause of Jewish restoration. These were amazing words and only possible because of his study and respect for Bible prophecy. Time has proven their accuracy. Winston Churchill was a prominent and consistent activist in Britain’s providing of a homeland for the Jewish people.

Early Days

Winston Churchill was no early student of distinction. His results at Harrow and later at Sandhurst Military College were quite ordinary; in fact only on the third application was he accepted into Sandhurst, his father sending him there because his school results seemed to limit him for anything else than the military!

Yet even in his preparatory schooling an interest, perhaps a fascination, was developing for the Old Testament, both its stories and its moral teaching, for these were standard studies in the curriculum of Harrow. An early essay requested a not too censorious attitude to the Jewish religious sect of the Pharisees and another remaining essay is upon “Palestine in the time of John the Baptist.” After the Second World War, when on a victorious visit to Europe, he was offered some residence on the Continent. His spontaneous response was couched in the words of an obscure woman of Shunem mentioned in the Second Book of Kings, chapter 4, verse 13. “I dwell among mine own people.” How would this prompt a profound and busy man memory of such a specific passage of the Old Testament? He fully appreciated that this concept was far from the natural interests and fancies of British statesmen, yet when opportunity presented they would be “eager” to take up the cause of Jewish restoration. These were amazing words and only possible because of his study and respect for Bible prophecy. Time has proven their accuracy. Winston Churchill was a prominent and consistent activist in Britain’s providing of a homeland for the Jewish people.

His Father’s Friends

It is here that we find another strong link with the Jewish people, for Lord Randolph Churchill did have many eminent Jews in the circle of his friends. In fact a popular jibe against him was that he only had Jewish friends! They were frequently invited to the Churchill home and among them were distinguished names such as Lord Nathan Rothschild, Sir Ernest Cassel and Baron de Hirsch of publishing fame. These contacts influenced the youth of Winston in many ways. He not only had the acquaintance of these prominent Jewish family friends, but learnt of their community and of their Judaistic manners; he enjoyed many vacations in their various holiday homes both in Britain and abroad. Ernest Cassel was a famous banker and he cared for Winston’s finances as he had for his father. The Rothschilds took interest in this exceptional young Churchill boy and could see potential in his vigour and enthusiasm and growing maturity.

Throughout his life these men of the Jewish community were significant friends and confidants. How his father had leaned this way is not recorded but there is no doubt it deeply influenced at a young age the interest and respect that Winston Churchill would have to the Jewish cause. God works in wondrous ways.

Manchester

As a politician Churchill was his own man. He was born into a Conservative family in politics and that suited him well in many ways but he was often rankled with their slowness to respond to the needs of the down and out. He also loved freedom, whether it was for the Irish or the Jews or South African Boers (after the new member for Manchester North-West who to his credit fought the Bill with eloquence and courage. Britain’s non-British segment represented less than 1% of the population!—so where was the problem in helping out some humiliated refugees fleeing for their lives? Despite the conservative Government the Aliens Bill was lost and its true purpose exposed. This whole matter had much to do with the great respect that British Jews, throughout the land, had for Winston Churchill. He was their champion and they loved him for his courage and for his willingness to stand up for their destitute refugees. The following is a summary from Martin Gilbert’s book.

“Churchill had supported the Jews, and prevailed. He had helped forestall legislation that would have posed a serious impediment to large numbers of Jews seeking to enter Britain; Jews who within a few decades were to make their contribution to Jewish life in Britain, and to the defence of Britain in both world wars, the second under Churchill’s leadership.”

Meeting Chaim Weizmann

The further relevance of the Aliens Bill is seen in the acquaintance made with Dr. Chaim Weizmann. The Bill had particular interest to Dr. Weizmann because he had only recently come to Manchester from Russia. This man was as his name sounds, a wise man! More than any other single person he was to play a huge role in the Zionist cause a fact acknowledged in 1948 when he was made first President of Israel! He and Churchill became great friends for almost 50 years and it was at this rally-meeting in Manchester, on the subject of the Aliens Bill, that they were first together.

“Among those present on the platform when Churchill spoke was a Jewish chemist and active Zionist, Russian born Dr. Chaim Weizmann, who had come from Geneva, where he was a lecturer in chemistry, to Manchester a year earlier. The two men, who were born three days apart, were to become closely associated in the evolution of Zionist needs and policies” (Churchill and the Jews pg 11 Martin Gilbert).

We see the hand of God going right throughout this story.

“30,000 Tons of Acetone”

Some years later in the earlier days of World War 1, things were very grim for Britain. The Germans had smokeless gun powder but the allies exposed their own positions every time they fired their guns or artillery. Dr. Weizmann was a chemist for the war effort and the minister of his department was none other than Winston Churchill. The Minister for Munitions paid a visit to the laboratory and this is the account of the chemist.

“Mr Churchill, then a much younger man, was brisk, fascinating, charming and energetic. Almost his first words were: ‘Well, Dr. Weizmann, we need thirty thousand tons of acetone. Can you make it?’ I was so terrified by this lordly request that I almost turned tail. But Weizmann did answer, telling
Churchill: ‘So far I have succeeded in making a few hundred cubic centimetres of acetone at a time by the fermentation process. I do my work in a laboratory. But, if I were somehow able to produce a ton of acetone, I would be able to multiply that by any factor you choose.’

**Churchill and the Balfour Declaration**

It was as Minister of Munitions that Churchill was present in the British World War I Cabinet. The British army in 1917 was working their way north from Egypt up through the Holy Land. The Turks had occupied Palestine for four centuries but they were falling back before the forces of the British Empire. The question arose, what will Britain do with the Holy Land? On 31st October a revolutionary idea was presented to the cabinet by the foreign minister, James Balfour! The idea proposed by the Foreign Minister was that the Land be used as a homeland for the Jews, a place they could inhabit as home. Historically it was a remarkable suggestion, reversing the fortunes of the Jews for the previous 1800 years. Besides, the political complications for Britain were enormous. Jewish immigration was already causing great consternation among their Arab neighbours. Oil was beginning to fuel the mobility of the world and the Arabs possessed the great bulk of supplies. Why should the Cabinet accept such a loaded proposal as this?

"His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object….."

This proposal became known as the Balfour Declaration and was unanimously accepted by the Cabinet and sent to Dr. Weizmann, then president of the Zionist Congress, on 2nd November 1917. However did the British government make this profound decision? The simple truth is that at least five of the leading figures were sincere Bible students. Arthur Balfour was a daily reader of the Bible, Field-Marshall Smuts had close contact with the Bible (as his retained library still shows!), the Prime Minister Lloyd George was a fervent Welsh evangelical, Sir Herbert Samuel was a Jew and Winston Churchill was a friend of the Jews and a lover of the Old Testament.

Never would such a group of Britain’s political gentility have been so disposed to support the fortunes of the Jews—and at the same time to jeopardise the peace and goodwill of their Empire. Yet they were “eager” to do it, just as Dr Thomas wrote 70 years before!

**Churchill’s Mind**

One may be excused for imagining that the Cabinet just didn’t see what they were getting themselves in for. The truth is that these amazing men were moved by the hope, so often portrayed in the Bible, of the regathering of the Jews to their land and prospering before the return of Christ and that it was Britain’s destiny, as in the Bible, to use its resources to promote that cause. Here is the vision of Winston Churchill:

“But if, as may well happen, there should be created in our own lifetime by the banks of the Jordan a Jewish State under the protection of the British Crown, which might comprise three or four millions of Jews, an event would have occurred in the history of the world which would, from every point of view, be beneficial, and would be especially in harmony with the truest interests of the British Empire” (Sunday Herald 1920).

What debt did he feel that he owed to the Bible and its people?

“‘We owe to the Jews in the Christian revelation’ he wrote, ‘a system of ethics which, even if it were entirely separated from the supernatural, would be incomparably the most precious possession of mankind, worth in fact the fruits of all other wisdom and learning put together. On that system and by that faith there has been built out of the wreck of the Roman empire the whole of our existing civilisation’” (Sunday Herald 1920).

What did he think about Jerusalem?

“Shuckburgh noted that Churchill also said to him: ‘You ought to let the Jews have Jerusalem; it is they who made it famous.’ He also said that large numbers of the refugees ought to be settled in the Negev. I’m not sure whether he was aware that this is something the Israelis are resisting.

The exhortation ‘You ought to let the Jews have Jerusalem; it is they who made it famous’ was one of Churchill’s last pronouncements before he retired as Prime Minister. He had been a supporter of Jewish national aspirations for more than fifty years.”

**Victory over the House of Lords**

When the League of nations was, in June 1922, debating the granting of the mandate of government over Palestine to Britain, the House of Lords sought to reverse the intent of the Balfour Declaration. They took a vote and it was 69 against the Declaration and 29 in favour! The Hope seemed to be crushed before it was born!

Ten days later, Minister Churchill addressed the House of Commons and reversed the vote by a factor of 10 to 1! The Balfour Declaration was saved, the Hope was there and Britain went on to foster immigration of Jews in the Holy Land till 1948. The Lords of aristocracy were defeated by the magnificent speech of this one man!—because the Word of God had declared that Israel would go home before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**A Modern-Day Cyrus**

In the year BC 536 the great Persian King Cyrus overturned the kingdom of Babylon and in the same year, mysteriously, gave liberty to the Jews scattered in her territory. For 70 years these Jews had been in captivity in Babylon and now they left in their many thousands to return to the land of Israel. Cyrus allowed them to return richly endowed with the wealth of their neighbours and with materials by which they could rebuild their temple in Jerusalem and make sacrifices unto their God. It was a strange chapter in history and the reader wonders why such favours were granted to these captive Jews. The Bible answers in this manner, “In the first year of Cyrus the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia that he made a proclamation” of liberty for the Jews in his new territories (2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-4). That’s how he was “stirred up” and that is what happened in 1917!

“I am their Friend”

So in Winston Churchill we have the strange phenomenon of a man of lordly heritage who bent his mind and powers to the Jewish cause, despite his high office and this because of his reading of the Word of God. He was proud to say in the highest counsels, “I am a Zionist” (Eisenhower Papers, 1956). Despite growing and bitter criticism he remained so throughout his long life of 96 years.

“Churchill was proud to have been an early supporter of the Zionist enterprise. He held in high regard both the Jewish religious ethic and the Zionist ideal. The Biblical story of the Israelites had always moved and inspired him. The struggle of the Jews through the centuries had much impressed him. During the war he had been deeply affected by the fate of the Jews and had sought the means to combat it, over and above the overriding imperative of the defeat of Germany on the battlefield. He had Jewish colleagues, Jewish helpers, and Jews whom he admired. As he himself had said, during discussion of Jewish terrorism in Palestine: ‘The Jewish people know well enough that I am their friend’” (Sir Martin Gilbert, p.309).
The Discovery of the Truth

Almost 160 years ago a book was published carrying the title *Elpis Israel* (a Greek form of wording meaning “The Hope of Israel” or *Israel’s Hope*). The full title was: “Elpis Israel. An Exposition of the Kingdom of God with reference to the time of the End and Age to Come.” The book sets forth the Gospel as it was defined by the apostle Paul when he told the visitors to his Roman prison-house, “...for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain” (Acts 28:20).

The author of *Elpis Israel*, John Thomas, not only drew attention to the remarkable prophecies of Israel’s restoration and outlined from them the political and practical aid of Great Britain in that early process—he also laid bare and exposed the falsehood that formed the rotten core of that system which masqueraded as Christianity in the 19th century. But more important than any of these areas, he brought to light again the true Gospel as it had been expressed in the Faith of Christ preached by the apostles during the first century.

We can do little better than to reproduce the words of the author himself as they appear in his preface to his book:

“The nature of the work is indicated on the title-page. It is a work showing what the Bible teaches as a whole, and not the elaboration of a new or fantastical theological theory, or the new vamping of an old one. It demonstrates the great subject of the Scriptures, namely: “the Kingdom of God and of His Anointed,” without which they would be as a nut whose kernel had perished. It is a book for all classes, lay and clerical, without respect of persons, for all are concluded under sin, being all ignorant of “this gospel of the kingdom.”

He says further:

“It is named ELPIS ISRAEL, or Israel’s Hope: for the kingdom of which it treats is that which is longed for by all intelligent Israelites, and for which, said Paul, “I am bound with this chain.”

*Elpis Israel*’s subject-matter is national, not sectarian. It treats of a nation, and of its civil and ecclesiastical institutions in a past and future age. It is designed to enlighten both Jews and Gentiles in Israel’s Hope, that by conforming to the proclamation of their king, they may be prepared for the administration of its affairs in concert with him, when all nations shall be as politically subject to his dominion, as ...” was the British Empire to Victoria...

The book was not—and did not claim to be—inspired or faultless. It was the result of over 15 years diligent searching of the Scriptures so as to learn the truth of the Bible. It was a gradual learning process the details of which can be read in *Dr. Thomas: His Life and Work* by Robert Roberts.

The author of “Elpis Israel”

mid 19th Century

It may seem a small point now, but as John Thomas considered the words of Paul recorded in Romans 8:24 they raised a question in his mind. Let his own words explain:

“This was the turning point. ‘Saved by hope,’ said we. ‘What hope?’ Hope may comprehend a multitude of general matters—saved by hope of what? Did the apostle not express himself more definitely than this? We will look into this. Accordingly we turned to the original, and found that he had said, ‘THE HOPE;’ and not only so, but affirms this salvation by the hope in time past—we WERE SAVED BY THE HOPE. This was very definite. A number of passages now crowded in upon us, and we perceived that the time when the Roman brethren were saved by the hope, was when ‘they obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered unto them.’ They were then saved from sin, ‘being made free from it.’ The question immediately flashed within us, ‘When you were buried in baptism, were you saved by the hope?’

He had to confess that he had had nothing of “the Hope” referred to by Paul, and was therefore ignorant of the Faith at the time of his immersion. It had been nothing more than his introduction into a sect! Coming to realize that the saving Hope was the Hope of the literal kingdom of God, John Thomas confessed his faith in the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12) and was added to the Name through baptism. He wrote:

Thus “after a journey of fourteen years, I found the truth, which, on the ocean I declared I would not rest till I had found, should I be permitted again to tread on terra ferma; but, in all this journey, I had been directed in a course very different from what I would have selected if I had been left to map it out for myself. I had been entangled into preaching and editing, and taking part in distasteful theological controversies, which, however, in their combined influence, brought me to a knowledge of the one faith, and the obedience which it demands.”

*Elpis Israel* became the means of informing others about the hope of the kingdom of Israel, and of participation in it through the Name of Jesus Christ.

There are few people who read *Elpis Israel* today however, and many that do seriously attempt it soon stumble over some minor detail such as a questionable date, a premature expectation, or a concept that is foreign to their own established views. Some have difficulty with the language because of their own limited vocabulary, and yet others are offended by the blunt and forthright style. For one reason or another many abandon the book never having really grasped the essence of its message—let alone the Hope that it sets forth. Yet another reason why some fail to get at the heart of the matters presented is that they give it insufficient concentration. A shallow read will not engage the mind upon the issues that are dealt with. The appeal of the author made in the preface to the book should be noted:

“...the reader must, in justice to himself and the truth, study it with the Bible at his right hand, for he will find but few pages in which frequent reference is not made to its authority, and without which nothing can or ought to be determined.”

It is a book to be “studied,” with the Bible itself being used as the authority in the matters treated of. As a later writer (John Carter, 1949) put it: “Dr. Thomas’s writings make his readers into Bible students, who while retaining a lively sense of indebtedness to him find confirmation in their own independent study.”

Today, an understanding of the Hope of Israel as the one true Gospel, and in the sense that John Thomas presented it in the mid-19th century, is rarely found. For many “Christians” *Israel* is understood as being their own church community, while the idea that the name might have something to do with the actual nation of *Israel* is looked upon with horror and as being a Judaising apostasy! Thus the highmindedness of which the apostle Paul warned in Romans 11:20,21 becomes manifested.

There can be no hope of salvation for anyone who does not understand what the Gospel of the Kingdom is, or who does not appreciate the fact that “the Kingdom” is the Jewish commonwealth of Israel—or that this Kingdom is to be restored “as at the first” (Isaiah 1:25-27; Jeremiah 33:7,8).

As John Thomas put it in *Elpis Israel*:
“The restoration of the divine economy is a most important feature in the divine economy. It is indispensable to the setting up of the Kingdom of God; for they are the kingdom, having been constituted such by the covenant of Sinai, as it is written, “Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.” The apostles understood this well enough, and so do all who understand the Gospel of the Kingdom.”

This explains the importance and the relevance of what we are seeing today in the regathering of the Jewish nation in their ancient homeland. We are seeing preparations being made as materials are assembled for the work of restoring the Kingdom. This is exactly as John Thomas expected it. In *Elpis Israel* he wrote:

“There is, then, a partial and primary restoration of Jews before the manifestation, (of Messiah), which is to serve as the nucleus, or basis, of future operations in the restoration of the rest of the tribes after he has appeared in the kingdom.”

This “nucleus” or “basis” is now forming, and it will continue to develop until the Divine Hand becomes more directly involved in restoring and establishing the kingdom. As it is written in Isaiah 59:20,

“And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.”

In Israel today there are those among the religious Zionists who not only look for the Redemption and expect the manifestation of “Moshiach ben-David,” but they are also calling for a religious revolution in the nation. This religious force can be expected to experience many hardships and trials; it is being and will be strongly opposed by the secular authorities of Israel, as well as by outside Gentile powers. But it is a force that will not be crushed—we can expect it to grow in strength and influence. At length it will lead things to an international crisis, and to the great conflict between the world and Zion.

In describing this clash of power, John Thomas brought together two main prophecies—Ezekiel chapter 38 and Daniel chapter 2. His words are extremely relevant to the modern world—and to all of us. He wrote:

“The future movements of Russia are notable signs of the times, because they are predicted in the Scriptures of truth. The Russian Autocracy in its plenitude, and on the verge of its dissolution, is the Image of Nebuchadnezzar standing upon the Mountains of Israel, ready to be smitten by the Stone. When Russia makes its grand move for the building-up of its Image-empire, then let the reader know that the end of all things, as at present constituted, is at hand. The long-expected, but stealthy advent of the King of Israel, will be on the eve of becoming a fact; and salvation will be to those who not only looked for it, but have trimmed their lamps by believing the gospel of the kingdom unto the obedience of faith, and the perfection thereof in “fruits meet for repentance.”

Hoxton Square London where John Thomas lived when he wrote his book

Salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22). And this salvation, which is very great, is announced through the Gospel of God’s Jewish kingdom. The salvation is national—or kosmical rather—and individual.

John Thomas, *Herald of The Kingdom*, written in 1852

Now the nearer we approach to the apocalypse of Jesus, the less influence will the word be found to exercise over the mind of the general public.

John Thomas, *Herald of The Kingdom*, written in 1858

You cannot reject Moses while accepting Christ. Christ endorsed the writings of Moses.

Robert Roberts, *Christendom Astray*, written in 1862

On no subject will Christendom be found to have gone more astray than on the subject of the Kingdom of God—a subject which, without exaggeration may be said to constitute the very backbone of the divine purpose with the earth...

Robert Roberts, *Christendom Astray*, written in 1862

...a belief in the reality of the Kingdom of God to be established on earth was universal among the early disciples of Christ. Gradually it came to be discarded. The “spiritualizing” method of interpreting prophecy grew in favour. Some... put forth the theory that the Church was the Kingdom, and that through the Church Christ had begun his reign on earth.

Islip Collyer

*Vox Dei* published in 1942
How Readest Thou?

“As also in all his (Paul’s) epistles...in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16).

(4) I and the Father are One

By Ron Kidd LONDON, ON.

Defining the terms

No other subject has created more controversy than that of the Trinity. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia it is “the term employed to signify the central doctrine of the Christian religion—the truth that in the unity of the Godhead there are Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, these Three Persons being truly distinct one from another.”

Another definition states, “In the nature of the one God there are three centers of consciousness, which we call persons, and these three are equal. Though the term “trinity” is not found in the Bible, the doctrine is nevertheless taught there. “Trinity” is merely the term employed by theologians and church historians in order to describe the phenomena of God they find in the Bible.”

In our discussions with those that hold this doctrine, it has often been said that the Trinity is a mystery and can be accepted only in faith. Again we quote the Catholic Encyclopedia which supports this idea: “The Vatican Council has explained the meaning to be attributed to the term mystery in theology. It lays down that a mystery is a truth which we are not merely incapable of discovering apart from Divine Revelation, but which, even when revealed, remains “hidden by the veil of faith and enveloped, so to speak, by a kind of darkness.” In other words, our understanding of it remains only partial, even after we have accepted it as part of the Divine message.”

This is a very strange statement indeed because according to the Lord Jesus Christ the blessing of eternal life is predicated on an understanding of God and His son: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 10:33).

Is then the subject a mystery, or can we by examining the word of God come to know God and appreciate His real relationship with His son Jesus Christ?

As with previous articles in this series, our intention is not to examine the Trinity in detail. Rather we want to consider just one verse which is put forward as a prime example of trinitarian teaching in the Bible.

I and the Father are one

On one occasion Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). The immediate response of the Jews was to stone Jesus because they believed he was making himself equal with God, “For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God” (John 10:33).

What did Jesus mean? Was he really claiming to be God? The only way to understand what Jesus actually meant is to examine Jesus’ words in their context, and this is something that most people rarely do.

The first question to ask is why did Jesus make this statement in the first place? Reading the whole chapter will make this evident. Jesus was speaking about his work as a shepherd; twice he said, “I am the good shepherd” (verses 11, 14).

In the Old Testament the shepherd of Israel was God Himself. The psalmist wrote, “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1). But God had delegated that responsibility to the leaders of Israel, who in turn had neglected the flock (Ezekiel 34:1-9). Because of this God promised to correct the problem. He said, “For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out” (Ezekiel 34:11). But how would God accomplish this? By promising to raise up a shepherd who would feed them:

“And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them: I the LORD have spoken it” (Ezekiel 34:23).

By this time in Israel’s history David was dead and buried. His name however means “beloved” and it is an allusion to the Lord Jesus Christ who is called God’s beloved in Matthew 12:18.

When Jesus began his ministry Israel were still without a faithful shepherd (Matthew 9:36), and the leaders of Israel continued to devour the flock (John 10:8-13). Jesus therefore was continuing His Father’s work in fulfillment of the prophet Ezekiel—“...for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me” (John 5:36).

This leads us to the next question; did Jesus affirm that he was equal with God or did his answer offer an entirely different conclusion?

Notice how Jesus responds to their accusation: “Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods?” (verse 34). He directs them to the Old Testament by quoting from Psalm 82:6. Who are these “gods” that the psalmist is referring to? A little bit of patient research with a concordance will reveal that the Hebrew word for “gods” is the plural word “elohim,” which means “mighty ones,” conveying the idea of many. Throughout the Old Testament it is the most common title attributed to God, occurring 2470 times: “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God (Elohim) beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me” (Isaiah 45:6). It is evident, however, that the psalmist, in using the term “gods,” is not speaking about the God of heaven.

A closer look at a concordance reveals that the translation of the word “elohim” into English is not restricted to God alone, consider the...
following:

Pagan idols are called God
Moses was called a God
Human officials were called God
Angels are called God

“Asheroth the goddess (Elohim) of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god (Elohim) of the Moabites, and Milcom the god (Elohim) of the children of Ammon” (1 Kings 11:33).

“And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god (Elohim) to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet” (Exodus 7:1).

“They are upbraiding the judges (the Elohim) for their unfaithfulness—“How long (says the Creator) will ye judge unjustly…” (verse 2). They had abused their office and the poor and the needy of Israel (Numbers 11:17). The psalmist is painting a word picture of all Israel (the Elohim) who were appointed by God to oversee the affairs of Israel (Numbers 11:17). The psalmist is upbraiding the judges (the Elohim) for their unfaithfulness—“How long (says the Creator) will ye judge unjustly…” (verse 2). They had abused their office and the poor and the needy of Israel were suffering as a result (verse 3-5). These judges were walking in darkness (verse 5), and because of their unfaithfulness they would “die like men” (verse 7).

Verse 6 holds the key to Jesus’ comment; God had appointed these men to be “elohim” or “gods”—“I said, ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High” (verse 6). In other words these “gods” or judges of Israel as well as being God’s mouth piece to the people, were also God’s children.

The thrust of Jesus words becomes very clear—“If he (God) called them gods (the judges), unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” (John 10:35, 36). Jesus was simply claiming to be what every messenger of God was, a child of the most High God.

The ancient Egyptians worshipped triune gods—compare Exodus 32:4. One of these is seen above. The false gods of the nations surrounding Israel were likewise devoted to composite gods and the concept of a triinity. When Jesus was asked about the commandments he replied “The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord…” (Mark 12:29).

Unity and the Believer

Returning to John 10, there is another factor which needs to be emphasized. Whilst Jesus claimed to be one with the Father he also emphasized the Father’s superiority over himself. Just one verse prior to the one under consideration Jesus said, “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all” (John 10:29). Jesus is not excluded from this comment for he later told his disciples, “…my Father is greater than I” (John 14:28).

The scriptures are at great pains to emphasize that Jesus occupies a different position to that of his Father. We read that “the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3); we also read after the resurrection that Jesus said he was ascending to “my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:17). Wherever we look in John’s gospel Jesus always attributes his knowledge and power to his Father. God gave him the spirit (John 3:34); God committed to him all judgment (John 5:19); God taught Jesus the things that he spoke (John 8:28). In fact Jesus made it very clear, “I can of mine own self do nothing” (John 5:30).

In what sense could Jesus claim to be one with his Father? In the sense that Jesus was of one heart, one purpose, one determination, and one mind.

Neither is this oneness restricted to the Father and son. Before his betrayal and crucifixion Jesus prayed to his Father for those that would be left, not only his immediate disciples but those that would believe the word in subsequent generations (John 17:20). His prayer concerned the believer’s relationship, not only with the son, but also with the Father, and is as follows:

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:20-23).

There is no mistaking the import of the language in this beautiful prayer. The oneness of the believer must be patterned on that of the Father and son; and not only so but the believers oneness must become incorporated into the oneness experienced by the Father and the son—“that they may be one in us.”

This is not the language of a Trinitarian deity but a beautiful expression of the ultimate purpose of God, when the children of God by faith shall be incorporated into the Father and God shall be all in all.

THE BIBLE MAGAZINE NOTICE BOARD

PROPHECY DAYS IN 2008

At press time we have been made aware of the following plans for prophecy days later this year God willing.

UNITED KINGDOM
South West Wales Prophecy Day
Saturday June 28th, 08, God Wiling
Contact Brian Woodall
01269 596973
Email. brwoodall@tiscali.co.uk

THE BIBLE IN THE NEWS:
Commentary on the news from a Bible perspective can be either read or listened to every week:
www.Bibleinthenews.com

Northern Prophecy Day Saturday Oct 25th, 08, God willing. For venue and further details please contact Philip Jones. Phone 01226-286026 or see information published in our next issue.

CANADA Brantford Special Prophecy Day Saturday November 8th 2008 will focus upon “Sixty Years of the State of Israel: What does it mean to us?” The venue is Copetown Community Hall (between Brantford & Hamilton) Speakers: Roger Long (UK), Don Pearce (UK), Paul Billington (Brantford). For further information contact Gary Smith (519) 758-0362 or e-mail hgarysmith@sympatico.ca
From the days of Abram and Melchizedek, the Jews have had a special relationship with Jerusalem and Zion. David identifies Zion in 2 Samuel 5:7 “Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion: the same is the city of David.” And records in Psalm 2:6 “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” In Micah 4 we read “But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”

So we have scripture equating Zion with the City of David, and Jerusalem. There are two hills lying south of the Old City of Jerusalem. Until just over a hundred years ago, scholars believed that the western hill was Zion. The re-discovery of Hezekiah’s tunnel under the eastern hill by Edward Robinson in 1838, and subsequent archaeological discoveries, first cast doubt on that theory, and then confirmed that the original Zion was the eastern hill. After the construction of the Temple, the Temple Mount also came to be designated as Zion.

Zion, in many ways, is more than a strict geographical setting. Before they entered the land, Moses wrote in the book of Deuteronomy 12:10,11 “But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there;” Zion became a symbol of everything that had been lost when they were expelled and exiled from the land, as well as the future mountain of the LORD.

A love of Zion and a desire to return have been a major theme in Judaism since those days. Since AD 70 there have been numerous attempts by individuals and small groups to go up to the Land and settle it. Organized efforts in the 19th and 20th centuries we link with Zionism. Zionism was a revolutionary movement aimed at moving a large part of the Jewish people back to its land. This year, the 60th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel is being celebrated, but many problems remain, and we know that the Return is still a work in progress, as they await their Messiah, and we await the return of our Lord.

Zionism in its modern sense was first used in August 1897, with the First Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland. Theodore Herzl declared that “Zionism seeks to secure for the Jewish people a publicly recognized, legally secured home in Palestine.” But Herzl did not start from scratch. He was preceded by earlier 19th century writers who broached the idea of the return of the Jews to their ancient homeland and even by...
the land:

are the promises of a re-gathering and a return to the Land. In Deuteronomy and the Prophets the promises to Abraham are inextricably linked to colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. Some modest beginnings of practical colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. The promises to Abraham are inextricably linked to colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. Some modest beginnings of practical colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. The promises to Abraham are inextricably linked to colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. Some modest beginnings of practical colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. The promises to Abraham are inextricably linked to colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. Some modest beginnings of practical colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. The promises to Abraham are inextricably linked to colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. Some modest beginnings of practical colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. The promises to Abraham are inextricably linked to colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. Some modest beginnings of practical colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. The promises to Abraham are inextricably linked to colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. Some modest beginnings of practical colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. The promises to Abraham are inextricably linked to colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. Some modest beginnings of practical colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. The promises to Abraham are inextricably linked to colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. Some modest beginnings of practical colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. The promises to Abraham are inextricably linked to colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. Some modest beginnings of practical colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. The promises to Abraham are inextricably linked to colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. Some modest beginnings of practical colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. The promises to Abraham are inextricably linked to colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. Some modest beginnings of practical colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. The promises to Abraham are inextricably linked to colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. Some modest beginnings of practical colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. The promises to Abraham are inextricably linked to colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. Some modest beginnings of practical colonization in Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel.
and were primarily Orthodox Jews. They were not prepared to change their traditional way of life.

The New Yishuv had an unfavourable view of the Old. They did not want charity from abroad, and wanted to change their way of life, and that of their children. It wasn’t until 1897 that they gained the right to lead their secular, nationalist lives side by side with the strictly religious circles. Hebrew elementary schools and Jewish studies in Hebrew had been established. 1903 saw the end of the First Aliyah, but the community was still not self-reliant. The World Zionist Organization had been formed in 1897 but as yet had little effect in Eretz Israel.

Theodore Herzl was one of those assimilated Jews in Europe who was shocked out of his comfortable position by the Dreyfus Affair in France, and the anti-Semitism he witnessed in Germany. These and many other things brought him to conclude that the Jews could not be assimilated—but must resettle in a territory of their own. In 1896 he put his arguments before the public in his book—Der Judenstaat—The Jew’s State. His ideas about assimilation, anti-Semitism and Jewish prospects were to help set the foundations of the World Zionist Organization. He felt the only way to change the existing situation for the Jews in Europe was to establish an independent state with the consent of the great powers. While the Lovers of Zion and Zionist students responded enthusiastically, most other Jews rejected his plan. Herzl became a Zionist in the full sense when he came to believe that Eretz Israel was the only possible location for this new territory.

Viewing the Jewish question as an international one, Herzl organized the First Zionist Congress as if it was a session of a Jewish Parliament. A Zionist flag with the traditional colours of the prayer shawl—blue and white—and a star of David, was prominently hung in the auditorium, and a bank was organized, along with an official press to help give substance to the idea of a Jewish State. A statement of the aims of Zionism was adopted by the Congress as the Basle program. The opening sentence read—“Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured under public law.” The first thing needed was a charter granting Jews sovereign rights in the territory they were to settle. He fought against turning the Zionist movement into an instrument of piecemeal colonization by the “practical Zionists.” “Political Zionists” like Herzl, saw the primary need for a charter securing rights to the land, followed by immigration and settlement. “Practical Zionists” believed that Jewish rights to Eretz Israel were self-evident, and that modest and persistent immigration would win the day. Herzl’s failure to gain sufficient financial support from the Jewish capitalists was the greatest obstacle to his work.

Before the Congress took place, Herzl travelled through Europe looking for leaders who could help and support his cause. Although he was acclaimed by many, he failed to gain the support of the leaders of British Jewry. His proposal to the Ottoman Empire that the Jews would help to correct their grave financial situation could not be pursued without financial support from the Jews. Herzl offered a solution to the British government for their immigration problem in suggesting that they provide a territory for an independent settlement. His suggestions of Cyprus or El Arish were rejected, and Uganda was proposed by Britain.

Yet another Russian pogrom in Kishinev in 1903 pointed out the need for urgent relief. Herzl hoped that Uganda might be able to provide a haven, but he continued to negotiate for Palestine. The Second Congress in 1903 was vigorously opposed to Uganda, and it threatened to split the movement. For Herzl, Zionism existed for one purpose: the transfer of “a people without a land” to some “land without a people.” He died on July 3, 1904 in the midst of the struggle. Under his leadership, Zionism had been transformed from an insignificant movement into a world organization and a political entity. A ten year upsurge in pioneering fervour followed Herzl’s death.

The Second Aliyah was sparked by Russian pogroms and lasted until WW1. Many of these returned or re-emigrated—2 million going on to the USA. By 1914 there were 85,000 in Palestine. The young immigrants wanted a new society—a worker’s commonwealth—and were prepared to do any kind of work to build it. They thought the salvation of the Jewish people lay in the efforts of the individual to change himself.

The young workers wanted to work, and they competed with the Arabs. The worker’s parties fought for their rights. After a few years the Jews were capable of defending their lives and property. Just before WW1, thousands of Yemenite Jews made aliyah. The work on the national farms came to be entrusted to groups of workers on their own responsibility. The first experiment was at Deganyah in 1909. The result was the kibbutz (after WW1)—a unique form of communal living and working. By 1918 there were 29. A kibbutz is a voluntary collective community, mainly agricultural, in which there is no private wealth and which is responsible for all the needs of the members and their families. They obtained the bulk of their manpower from the pioneering youth movements abroad. They served as bases for the Hagahah defence forces, and later for the Palmach. Most new villages were kibbutzim.

It was during the 2nd Aliyah period that Hebrew increasingly became the daily language. Eliezer Ben Yehuda was the father of modern Hebrew. He believed that the Jews could never be a united people in their own land unless their children revived Hebrew. His national and political goals for Hebrew put him at odds with the Orthodox Jews who had knowledge of written Hebrew.

During WW1, Palestine served as the Turkish base for attacks on Egypt and the Suez Canal. The population suffered heavy taxes, compulsory labour, and confiscation of property, and there was a mass exodus of foreign Jews. Thousands died of starvation as the Old Yishuv in particular was exposed to great hardship. In
late 1917 the British took the offensive and when Allenby entered Jerusalem in December, Ottoman rule was ended. The Jewish population saw their liberation as a miracle.

Herzl had worked for the recognition of the British because he believed it was their best hope, and would lead to the fulfillment of Zionist aims. The contacts with the Zionists before the War were an important part of the background of the Balfour Declaration.

British support for the Zionists was increased when Turkey joined the Central powers at the outbreak of WW1. Herbert Samuel a cabinet member and Zionist supporter advocated the idea of a common interest in detaching Palestine from the Turkish empire. These ideas had a strong appeal to another government member, Lloyd George. Chaim Weizmann had meanwhile also become convinced of the benefits. The three got together, and found sympathetic support from former Prime Minister Arthur Balfour.

In 1916, Weizmann’s position was enhanced by his discovery of a process for producing acetone, a key ingredient in munition production. He had contact with Churchill, the minister of munitions, and a change of government in Dec. 1916 brought back Lloyd George as Prime Minister with Balfour as his foreign secretary. The government at this time decided on an invasion of Palestine. After the March 1917 Russian Revolution, Britain hoped Russian Zionists would support the allied effort and help counter Russia’s withdrawal from the war. In April 1917 the British Government began to display an active interest in the idea of a Jewish National Home, or a Jewish Commonwealth, in Palestine, under British protection. Nathan Sokolow, a member of the Zionist executive living in Britain headed the committee that prepared the wording of the Balfour Declaration.

The main opposition in Britain to government sympathy came from upper class anti-Zionist Jews. They feared that the recognition of Jewish nationhood would cast a shadow on the allegiance of Jews to countries where they were citizens. This group was represented in cabinet by Edwin Montagu, secretary of state for India, who succeeded in watering down the language of the Declaration.

Balfour issued his well-known Declaration in a letter to Lord Rothschild on November 2, 1917. It was approved on April 24, 1920 at the Allies’ Conference at San Remo, and incorporated in the Mandate on Palestine conferred on Great Britain by the League of Nations in 1922. The Declaration was received enthusiastically by the Jews and there were huge demonstrations around the world. This was the first time since 539 BC that a great power had given recognition to Jewish claims to Eretz Israel. It was compared to the edict of Cyrus which ended the Babylonian exile. This was Herzl’s charter. Practical implementation of the Declaration was a struggle for the 30 years of the mandate until the creation of the State of Israel.

THE CAVE OF MACHPELA HEBRON

In 1968, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan lowered a slender girl name Michal through the “Lamp Aperture.” Under the aperture, the girl discovered an underground room containing three monuments. Only in 1981 however did a group of local Jews succeed in entering the cave, a unique and an unforgettable experience for them. This led, for the first time in modern history, to the discovery of the double cave hidden under the enormous edifice. It turned out that there are two floors beneath the area. On the upper floor are the “Lamp room” and the corridor leading to it. Under them, on a deeper level still, is the cave.

The cave is double (Hebrew “kefulah,” hence “Machpela”). It is composed of two caves, connected to each other by a narrow passageway. This form of burial is characteristic of the Patriarchal period (the Middle Bronze Age) and fits the Torah description. Today, the caves are packed with earth almost to their full height, covering the ancient graves. On top of this earth, broken bones and pieces of various pottery have been discovered, dating back to the Judean Kings (the “Ancient Israelite Period,” about 2,900 years ago).

This discovery proves the existence of the double burial cave which has been there since ancient times, going back to the patriarchal period. This cave was known to the Jews during that period. Then, bones and earthenware vessels were placed inside there, after the cave had been filled with dirt, (apparently out of respect for the Patriarchs’ graves). There are probably additional caves and discoveries hidden at the site, yet at this stage it is impossible to research these things and to discover all of its secrets.

From a Hebron Community Guide Book
First, you have to build the best nest ever, or you won’t attract a lady friend. So you start by making a hanger—something to hang your house on. Then you weave the house (from the top down) and lovingly plaster it with mud. No one teaches you how to do this, you just do it! Instinct you know. Someone made a test once, depriving the weaver bird of materials for FIVE generations—then made material available again. They began to build immediately—and the ladies came to inspect. It was OK!

How does this work? How did the mental blueprint get into the bird’s brain to start with—why build a hanger; and if you didn’t have one where are you going to put your wife’s residence? Well, it’s all in the Bible! Look at Exodus 35:30-35. God can put the skill into a person, including “the weaver” or any other “cunning work.” In the Bible of course these skills were given so that the house (or sanctuary) could be built. And that’s enough to make any evolutionist into a basket case!