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*"Buy the truth and sell it not; Also
wisdom, and instruction, and understanding."*

Proverbs 23:23

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All Eyes On Israel

Piecing Together The Prophetic Puzzle



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Watchman, What of The Night?

All Eyes On Israel - Piecing Together The Prophetic Puzzle

By Bre. Tom Northey and Al Bryan

“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry” (Hab. 2:3).

Israel: The Burdensome Stone

In unbelief of their Messiah, Israel is on a path of imminent danger within the scope of “The New Anti-Semitism”

On July 11, 2006, the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers in the disputed Shebaa Farms region along Israel’s northern border with Lebanon. This move by Hezbollah was apparently designed to upstage the earlier kidnapping of an Israeli by Hamas on the southern border of Israel. This provocation, however, resulted in a prize that Hezbollah did not expect to achieve; they drew Israel into yet another “no win” confrontation with highly trained and well equipped guerilla fighters portrayed by the mass media as helpless heroes fighting against an Israeli aggressor. The war, while technically won on the battlefield by the superior IDF forces, was overwhelmingly lost in the world mass media [much controlled by the Roman Catholic Church] which successfully villainized Israel upon the world stage. Moreover, the crisis was a demonstration of how the media successfully manipulated the Israeli government into giving away land for so-called peace, resulting in more instability all around. Apparently the leaders in Israel are more influenced by the pollsters and dictates of the kingdoms of men, than they are by the Word of the God of Israel who has said, “*The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me*” (Lam. 25:23).

Brethren, despite how frustrating it is for us to watch the culture of lies and the liberal media’s shameful and unfair portrayal of Israel as warmongering murderers of

innocent civilians, we must realize that neither the destiny of Israel, nor that of the Gentile nations near and far is in their own hands. What we have witnessed over the past year between Israel and Hezbollah, therefore, was not just a random confrontation, but a precise Divinely orchestrated conflict that turned the eyes of all nations of this information age evermore upon Israel.

If Russia, Germany, France, Britain and the United States are the “big wheels” of the current political stratum, then Israel is the hub, the very axis upon which all foreign policy is turned. Ever since Napoleon’s interests were magnified in Syria and Palestine in order to check Britain’s access to open trade routes to India, the land of Palestine has become the geo-political proving ground for all nations. It is the proverbial “burdensome stone” upon which the nations will be cut in pieces (Zech. 12:3). Every move that Israel makes, every policy she fashions, every wall that she builds, every product she exports, every exercise to defend her right to exist is under the scrutiny of the nations. **All eyes are upon Israel.**

No more than 24 hours had passed in the recent conflict when the governments of the United States, Great Britain, and Canada, defended Israel’s right to defend herself against foreign aggression, when at the same time throughout Europe and the Middle East, the canvas of anti-Semitic rhetoric (already painted with the blood of millions of Jews over centuries of pogroms, persecutions and massacres) began to unfurl. Can we not see clear evidence of the Word of Yahweh who has declared by His servants the prophets that these things shall be?

Are the nations drinking up and swallowing down (Obadiah 15-16) the lies and hateful rhetoric being spewed out by Hezbollah, Hamas, Syria, and Iran, that

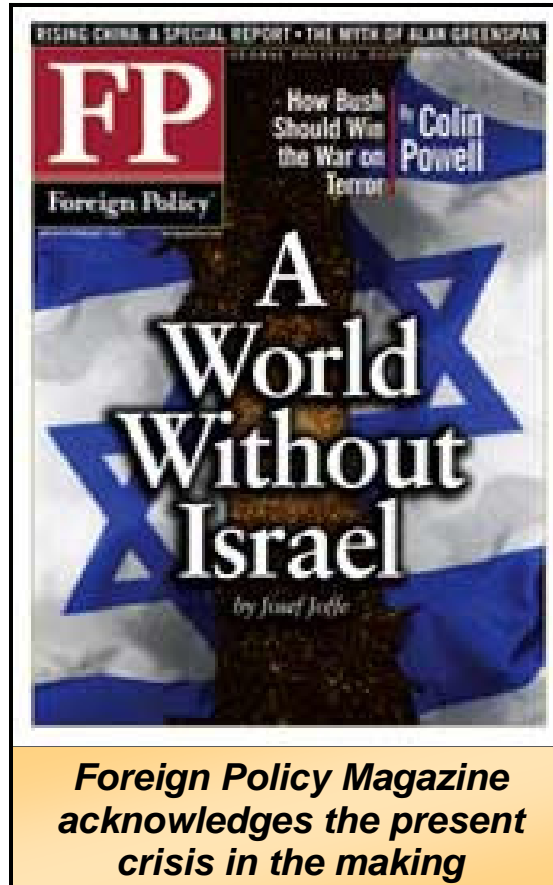
Israel must go? That Sheik Hassan Nasrallah of Hezbollah is really a folk hero, and that Iran only wants nuclear technology for peaceful purposes? The prophetic picture is evermore complex, but the Word of the prophets has given us the key to understand what all these events are leading to. In the remainder of this article we will examine some of the current issues surrounding the recent Israeli-Hezbollah confrontation that confirm the Word of the Prophets as revealed right before our very eyes.

The New Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism is an age's long systemic hatred of the Jews. The lamentation of David is descriptive of the sentiment that has been borne by the Jew for thousands of years, and especially since their scattering in 70 A.D. From Psalm 44:11, 13-14, and 19 we read, *"Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen.... Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people... Thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death."*

The Jews have been the target of the world's hatred, blame and scorn to such an extent that it has become second nature as a permanent mode of thinking resident in the Gentile nations. This we realize is in strict accordance with Yahweh's Word on account of Israel's disobedience: *"Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me"* (Deut. 28:16-20).

Yet this systemic plague that has infected the minds of the heathen plays a major role in making Israel a stumbling block that affects the entire world at the time of the end. What used to be an individualized, racial and religious hatred of Jewry abroad now refocuses upon the entire nation-state of Israel. This mindset, while framed within a veil of so-called "political free speech", is really the new anti-Semitism. Truly, the world now identifies Israel as Zechariah's "burdensome stone" (12:3) as demonstrated in this heightened form of anti-Semitism at the "time of the end."



A quote from an essay on contemporary anti-Zionism by Robert Wistrich reads as follows: *"...It appears to me that there is a basic continuity between classical anti-Semitism and contemporary anti-Zionism. Both ideologies seek in practice to deprive the Jew of his right to an equal place in the world; to limit his activity and freedom of movement; his human civic and political rights, and even his right to exist - at least in the more radical formulation (Iran's idea). Both anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism imply that the Jews have no claim to be a free independent people like other peoples, to define themselves according to universally acceptable criteria of self-determination, or to enjoy the fruits of individual or collective emancipation. Thus both ideologies are built on the negation of Jewish rights and seek to drive the Jews back into the ghetto - whether it is physical (Iran's desire to 'drive them into the sea') or symbolic. The Jews must be confined to the status of a pariah nation. In a word they do not belong."*

In the Middle Ages the main thrust of this hatred and de-legitimization was religious hatred directed by the Catholic Church against Judaism (i.e., "Christ killers"). In the early 20th century, anti-Semitism took a secular "scientific" form where Jews were defined as an inferior race and therefore (regardless of religious faith) did not deserve civil equality. Hitler's regime branded them as being dangerous parasites, a fungus contributing to the racial/moral decomposition of society which must be ex-

cluded or eliminated from the human race. In today's post-war era of the Jewish State, however, delegitimization is no longer primarily racial or religious but is now ideological and political. To be an anti-Zionist shields the individual or nation (in their own mind) from appearing racist (harboring individual hatred of the Jew) and deceptively frames the hatred as an ideological opposition of Israel's policies and practices (i.e., occupied territories). But this nefarious definition is only palatable to the average anti-Semite; it cannot pass a scrutiny of the facts with regard to the history of the Middle East over the last three millennia.

As of this writing we have witnessed the completion of the "Iranian Holocaust Conference", a gathering of Holocaust deniers and anti-Semites from around the world including David Duke of the U.S., Robert Faurisson of France, Jurgen Graf of Switzerland, Michael Renouf of the U.K. and Ahmed Rami of Sweden. While the EU's heads of state issued a letter voicing their displeasure with the conference, the general populous of Europe voices a different sentiment.

Decades of massive social welfare programs paid for by a 70% tax rate is forcing European couples to seek higher paying full time careers and put off raising families. This, in turn, is leaving a void in the work force for lower paying, low skilled jobs that is being filled by literally hundreds of thousands of imported, cheap immigrant-Muslim labor. Herein is one of the key forces to the rising tide of anti-Semitism/anti-Zionism in Europe today. [We watch this situation closely to see when and how the present German Pope will manipulate these sentiments, while furthering his own agenda to reclaim Europe for the "Christian Church" and oust the Jew from dominion over the "Holy Places" coveted by Roman Catholicism and Russian Orthodoxy.]

This virulent combination of political anti-Zionism [resident in white European and American peoples (i.e., James Baker)] with racial and religious anti-Semitism (resident in Islamic peoples), further mixed with all the the ills harbored by Rome and her Protestant daughters

and confidants, has simmered over the last half century in post-WWII democratic Europe and Russia. The resulting anti-Zionist sentiment is preparing the nations to imbibe upon Gog's "evil thought" (Ezek. 38:10-11). Thus, the Russian-led Gogian host will be emboldened by the common ideology of Jewish hatred (among other factors) to justify the invasion and destruction of Israel. In defiance of Yahweh, the king of the north "will plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him" (Dan. 11:45). Despite Gog's ultimate defeat at

the hands of Yahweh Tz'vaoth, the nations will yet wax belligerent against the rightful heir to the dominion of the world when the seventh apocalyptic angel declares "...The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). In opposition to the claims of the Jewish Messiah, the new anti-Semitism will be recast into the anti-Christ doctrine of the Papacy when the Son of David declares his Kingdom and dominion from sea to sea. This will prove to be the final downfall of the kingdom of men.

As a case-in-point of this phenomenon, we witness the growing anti-Zionistic hatred even rising out of obscure areas like Africa (where historically it never existed) and now South America where Venezuela's Chavez has strengthened and formed new alliances with extreme leaders in the Middle East, including Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Chavez was recently quoted as saying, "The genocide they [Jews] executed in Palestine and Lebanon is similar to the Holocaust which the Nazis executed against them; they [Jews] will undergo another Holocaust because of the global hatred they are accumulating" (Diario Vea, July 4, 2006, from the Anti-Defamation League website). Moreover, in the *Economist* (8/17/2006), a 2003 European Union poll revealed that 59% of Europeans considered Israel a greater menace to world peace ahead of Iran, North Korea and Pakistan. Public opinion in Turkey, the one Muslim



country that was once pro-Israel, has turned against it in parallel with its turn against America, especially over the war in Iraq. This sentiment reveals the ground swell or world-wide antipathy against the “capitalistic-imperialistic” “young lions” or Tarshish power (the U.S. & Britain) confederate with that burdensome stone, Israel. When we overlay this picture with the alignment of the Sunni Arab nations (Sheba and Dedan) with the U.S. and Great Britain against the Shiite Persians (Iran) who will be allied with Gog (Ezek. 38:5), we have the pieces that together form the prophetic picture of the “Latter Days”. Thus, the New anti-Semitism takes root around the globe waiting for a unifying impetus.

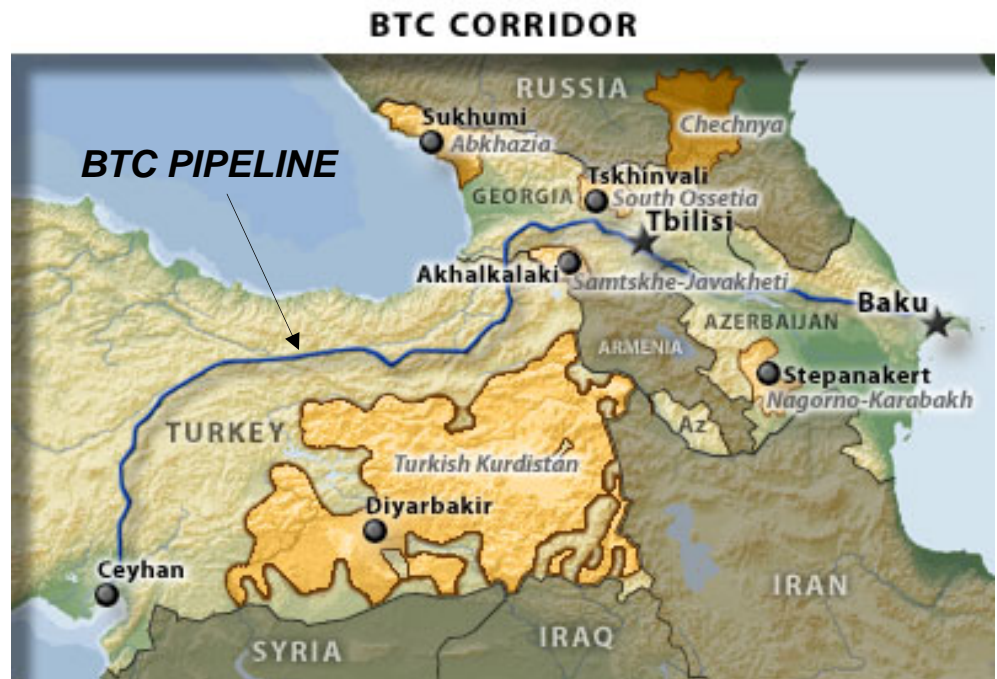
Israel's Path of Imminent Danger

Lost in the shuffle and hidden in the backdrop of these latter days is a little known fact regarding Israel's economy: it's booming. In a recent article from Haaretz.com entitled “*How good are thy tents, O Jacob*”, author Nehemia Shtrasler says, “*There is not an economist in the whole world who could have predicted the current economic situation. After an unsuccessful war in Lebanon and enormous military outlays, accompanied by strategic threats from Iran and Syrian saber-rattling, after missiles on Sderot and a fragile cease-fire despite all of this, the Israeli economy in 2006 is demonstrating extraordinary strength.*”

Historically, the Israeli economy has experienced ruinous inflation rates, a balance of payments crisis and devaluation of the shekel immediately following their wars. But “**Today the shekel is the strongest currency in the world, having long since ceased to be devalued against the dollar. Just the reverse, it is gaining against it. The balance of payments, once the root of all economic crises and the reason for all emergency economic programs, went from being in chronic deficit to a surprising surplus. This year, for the first time in the country's history, combined exports of goods and services outstripped imports of same by \$1.5 billion. And as if that were not enough, this is turning out to be a record year for foreign investments, too. Inflation too has been whipped for good.**” Shtrasler continues, “*This unusual stability has led to another first in the country's history: The issue, about one month ago, of*

a non-linked government bond! It is also becoming clear that Israel's economy is growing faster than all Western economies.”

Contributing to Israel's booming economy is the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline through Turkey and the Trans-Israel pipeline (Tipline built in 1968), a strategic oil conduit through the Negev to Asian markets. An article entitled “*Azerbaijan, Israel: A Win-Win Oil Transport Deal*” (Stratfor 7/21/2006) says that Israel, which depends almost entirely on imports for its oil and currently receives almost 20% of its supply from Azerbaijan, is increasing its oil imports from Azerbaijan using the BTC pipeline. The deal translates into a potential transit-fee windfall for Israel and easier, cheaper oil transportation for Azerbaijan by utilizing Israel's Tipline, which will in turn benefit Azerbaijan's Asian oil customers. The Tipline pipeline runs from the coastal city of Ashkelon to Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba and heretofore has been used to transport Russian oil to the Red Sea for transport on to South and East Asia. Now Israel is cutting a separate deal with Azerbaijan for the same purpose. There are some interesting implications for cutting Russia out of this new transit deal between Azerbaijan and Israel: “*Russia uses its energy sector as an arm of its foreign policy and can manipulate the supply if it suits Moscow's purposes. Moreover, the Caspian crude that flows through the BTC is of considerably higher quality - lower in sulfur and lighter in gravity - than Russian oil. At a time when Israel is embroiled in international conflict, there is the news that it stands to increase its income from transit fees as the demand rises for better-quality Caspian oil set to flow*



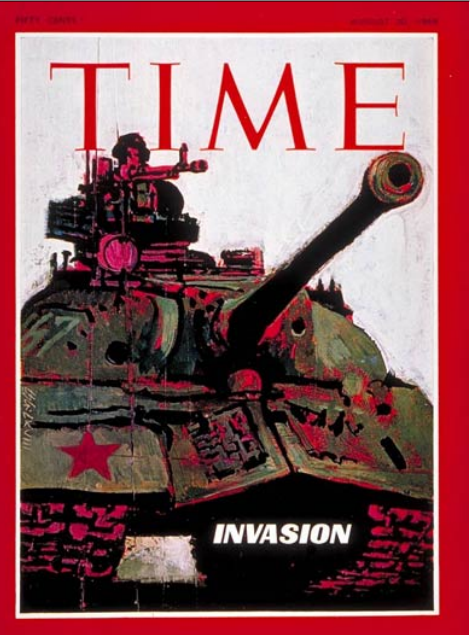
to the Red Sea. BP (British Petroleum), which operates the BTC consortium, is regarded as a reliable supplier. And Azerbaijan, always looking for new customers, will benefit from a deal that bypasses the Russian and Gulf producers.”

The words of Amos (speaking of the Assyrian in an historical as well as a latter day context) aptly describe Israel’s current wealthy (materially fat and lethargic), self-absorbed leaders who are so blinded by their wealth and prosperity that they are incapable of perceiving their own peril as Russia will not allow this strategic energy conduit to continue pumping non-Russian oil at their expense: *“Hear this word, ye kine [fat cows] of Bashan, that are in the mountains of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring and let us drink”* (Amos 4:1). Therefore, as Yahweh has proclaimed, *“An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled”* (Amos 3:11).

In stark contrast to the humiliated, defeated Israel that we see portrayed in the media, the current booming Israeli economy has bought Olmert a measure of “political capital” in warding off a political backlash from the failed Lebanon war. This prosperity in the midst of imminent danger is like a sedative used to pacify the people and to deaden all sensitivity to the surrounding political realities and religious fanaticism. Thus Israel’s careless, self-dependence is bolstered even in the face of calls for Israel’s destruction and the ongoing preparations for war by Syria, Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and even Al Qaeda. Israel and her lack of a coherent, decisive response to these threats against her national security, coupled with her spiritual blindness; further illustrates the words recorded in Hosea 7:9 and 11; **“Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not... Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt and Assyria,”** [For treaties of protection, see Isaiah 30:1-3.] As we have noted, thinly veiled behind the current crises building in Iran, Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza is the Russian bear in a new bid to gain the upper hand in world affairs by hedging all fronts against the U.S./British alliance.

The well-known *Jerusalem Post* journalist Caroline Glick wrote recently, **“The Russian bear awakened after 15 years of hibernation. Under the leadership of former KGB commander President Vladimir Putin, Russia is re-**

After 15 years of hibernation, the Russian bear has been awakened and once again looks south for spoil, conquest, and glory. Her history as a military power has cast the mold; her present course will fulfill her destiny as foretold by the prophets of Israel (Ezek. 38:17).



asserting its traditional hostility towards Israel. On Tuesday (October 2006), Russian military engineers landed in Beirut. (To which the Olmert-Livni-Peretz government had no public reaction.) Their arrival signaled the first time that Russian forces have openly deployed in the Middle East. In the past, Soviet forces in Syria and Egypt (and Iraq) operated under the official cover of ‘military advisors.’ Today those ‘advisors’ are ‘engineers’. The Russian forces, which will officially number some 550 troops, are tasked with rebuilding a number of bridges that the IDF destroyed during the recent war. They will operate under the command of UNIFIL. Mosnews News Service reported on Wednesday that the engineers will be protected by commando platoons from Russia’s 42nd motorized rifle division permanently deployed in Chechnya. With the deployment of former Chechen rebels as Russian military commandos in Lebanon, the report this week exposing Russia’s intelligence support for Hezbollah during the recent war takes on disturbing strategic significance. According to Jane’s Defense Weekly, the Russian listening post on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights provided Hezbollah with a continuous supply of intelligence throughout the conflict.” She continues, “The majority of IDF casualties in the fighting were caused by Russian-made Kornet anti-tank missiles that made their way to Hezbollah fighters through Syria.”

It is interesting to reflect upon history as it regards Russia and the Middle East. In 1967 Russia played a central role in fanning the flames of war in Syria. In the months that preceded the Six Day War, Moscow fed Damascus a steady diet of false intelligence indicating that Israel was planning to invade. In the summer of 1973, the Soviets

also encouraged Syria to join Egypt in invading Israel. What are they telling the Iranians and the Syrians today?

Caroline Glick continues, *“First we have our elected leaders. They contend with the growing threats by denying them, giving in to them and attempting to change the subject. As far as the Israeli government is concerned, the fact that Hezbollah has returned to its pre-war positions and that UNIFIL forces are doing nothing to prevent its rapid rearmament, should be of no interest to the public. As to Syria, rather than crafting a Syria policy, the government argues about the desirability of giving Syria the Golan Heights now or later. Above and beyond all else, as Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Defense Minister Amir Peretz proclaim, from the government’s perspective, the best way to deal with the growing military threats is to ignore them and destroy Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria.”*

DEBKAFfile (10/23/2006) reports, *“Olmert continues to keep up the hollow pretense that the decision to go to war against Hezbollah unprepared and the decisions he took while it was going on were the product of profound political and military wisdom. His feeble attempts to gloss over Israel’s very real loss of strategic credibility in the region, while using both hands to hold his government together, are exceedingly harmful. Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas, convinced that Israel is daydreaming if not half-asleep, are encouraged to march on to a fresh war as long as the Israeli leaders who got their sums wrong in Lebanon remain firmly in place.”*

To summarize the highpoints we need simply read the headlines:

- Hezbollah reconstitutes its pre-war fortified lines and missile positions opposite Israel plus the latest Iranian surveillance systems (DEBKAFfile 10/23/2006).
- Syria is stirring up Lebanese civil strife, stoking two anti-Israel warfronts (DEBKAFfile 10/16/2006).
- Hamas is building a regular military division of tens of thousands of well-trained troops with sophisticated weaponry (DEBKAFfile 10/31/2006).
- Tehran and Damascus are gearing up for a pre-emptive Syrian attack on Israel to ward off a U.S. strike on Iran’s nuclear sites (10/7/2006).
- Syrian military instructors in Gaza for the first time,

there to impart Hezbollah’s combat methods to Hamas terrorists (10/15/2007).

- Tehran arms Hamas for Double-Barreled war option and Gaza as Second Lebanon (10/13/2007).
- Syrian army maintains high war preparedness, continues to smuggle arms to Lebanese Hezbollah (10/15/2006).
- Israel on alert for Syrian attack; “Damascus preparing public for war” (Worldnetdaily 10/9/2006).

And so we await the next moves in the Middle East as Russia continues to train, supply, advise and act the part of the “Guardian” at arms for Iran and Syria on all fronts against Israel and the West. By destabilizing the region through her frog-spirit policies (Rev. 16:13-14) and fanning the flames of rhetoric against Israel (while the U.S. is in a deep quagmire in Iraq), Russia is supporting a strategic “bleeding ulcer” that will not heal, keeping both Israel and the West off balance. Meanwhile, Russia rebuilds her economy, her war machine, and her strategic influence abroad: *“Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled to thee, and be thou a guard unto them”* (Ezek. 38:7).

From a Biblical vantage point we watch to discover what events remain that we may witness before Christ’s return, but there are none required. Ultimately, we anticipate an event that inflames the anti-Zionist world against Israel, and it is possible that a retaliatory or massive pre-emptive strike by Israel (possibly with U.S. assistance or at the very least tacit support) against Syria, Iran, Lebanon, etc. will be the spark that ignites the gathering together of the nations to Armageddon. In this action Israel may “overreach” (disproportionate response) as far as the world is concerned (especially Gog and the EU/ Rome) which means they could be temporarily successful. Yet, any future success by Israel against her enemies will be ammunition for use by the anti-Zionist machine and will contribute to Israel’s further false sense of security and self-determination via the strength of her own hand and not of Yahweh.

We will further dissect the realities of this final prophetic event witnessed by the Saints concurrent with the thief-like advent of Christ (the precursor to Armageddon, see Rev. 16:14-17) later in this edition.

The Sunni/Shiite Split and its Relevance to Ezekiel 38 & Daniel 11



In the aftermath of the Lebanese War, Southern Arabs move toward the Western “Nuclear Umbrella”



Vice President Cheney with King Abdullah in Riyadh in December. (Saudi Press Agency via Associated Press)

“In February 2003, a month before the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, warned President Bush that he would be ‘solving one problem and creating five more’ if he removed Saddam Hussein by force. Had Bush heeded his advice, Iraq would not now be on the brink of full-blown civil war and disintegration.

“One hopes he won’t make the same mistake again by ignoring the counsel of Saudi Arabia’s ambassador to the United States, Prince Turki al-Faisal, who said in a speech last month that “since America came into Iraq uninvited, it should not leave Iraq uninvited.” If it does, one of the first consequences will be massive Saudi intervention to stop Iranian-backed Shiite militias from butchering Iraqi Sunnis.”

(Nawaf Obaid, The Washington Post, Nov. 29th, 2006)

In Ezekiel 38:13 we read, “Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? Hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? To carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?” Brother Thomas makes an interesting comment on the phrase “Art thou come to take a spoil?” In the *Exposition of Daniel* he writes: “Let it be noted that the power does not say, ‘Art thou gone to take a spoil?’ but, ‘Art thou come to take a spoil?’ If it were to say, ‘Art thou gone?’ it would show that the power was beyond the limits of the Holy Land; but in saying ‘Art thou come?’, the conclusion is that the Lion power of Tarshish is in actual possession of, or at least the Protector of, the country.” With the correct understanding of who Tarshish is, including the “merchants of Tarshish with all the young lions” and also Sheba and Dedan, we discover a confirming development in the Divine program: we have witnessed this development over the past sixteen years (Britain and

the U.S. in the Middle East, allied with Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the Persian Gulf states and Egypt since Gulf War 1). This is the same development determined through assiduous Bible study that our pioneer brethren foresaw absent of literal, contemporary events some 150 years ago. It has been understood as the continuous historical interpretation of prophecy, and it has been validated before our eyes. First we determine the prophetic framework from Scripture, then we look to what events fit within that framework. The danger is when we latch on to certain contemporary events and work backwards to create a prophetic view; this is called “profiteering” from current events and it only leads to confusion.

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 gave reason for many believers to alter or look for another interpretation to fit the world scene at the time (just as the Arab-Israeli wars of the 50’s, 60’s and 70’s convinced some that there must be an “Arabs-round-about” interpretation of proph-



sian Gulf alongside U.S. and British ships), possibly India (especially considering the latest nuclear energy deal between the U.S. & India, breaking all existing rules/treaties), Sheba and Dedan (Saudi Arabia and the Arabian peninsula/Gulf State nations), Edom, Moab and Ammon (Jordan), and to a lesser degree (but still included) Egypt. At this writing, Russia has trumped any western influence in Lebanon, and Cush (Shiite Iraq) must be given up to the autocrat to complete his latter day dominion.

With this understanding we observe with a great deal of interest the contemporary divisions (becoming more solidified) of the Sunni/Shiite split in the Middle East today. This fault-line exactly mirrors (as far as the governments are concerned vs. the populace) the division of powers outlined in Ezekiel 38 and Daniel 11.

The question that is begged and needs answering is “How do these (truly) Arabian nations, descendants of Ishmael/Esau, determine to ally themselves with Israel at the time of the end against the Gogian Confederacy?” First of all it must be understood that such a Divine arrangement has nothing to do with a new found Arabic love of Israel or Jews; it is of mere political necessity as Divinely orchestrated. Let’s examine the events and see if they fit.

Sunnis and Shiites

Sunnis and Shiites are the two main sects of Islam, and generally speaking they consider the other group as heresy and worthy of death. Historically they suffered their first split 13 centuries ago when they differed over who was the rightful heir to Muhammad. Historically the Sunnis have been much more political than the Shiites. Devout and fundamentalist Sunnis felt (and feel) that there can be no law above the Koran. That means they feel that government must be a theocracy by necessity. Also, fundamentalist Sunnis consider Shiites to be apostate, which is an even worse thing than being an infidel. Shiites traditionally were relatively non-political. A demonstration of this Shiite philosophy can be seen in action in Iraq today where Ayatollah Sistani supported the formation of a secular government and declined to claim the reins of leadership himself. The Shiite majority countries are Iran and Iraq. The Sunni majority (in terms of population) are everywhere else.

Iran’s recent change to a radical theocratic government needs explaining. The ascension of the Khomenist Shiites in the late 1970’s was a landmark change in direction for the Shiite world. The Khomenists brought theocratic dictates to the Shiite realm. Before that and even after that,

egy). Through patience (which is easier to demonstrate in hindsight) and consistent study we know that Russia as Gog would have to return to an autocratic position of dominance. Russia is without a doubt that entity today.

Brother Thomas wrote that “*The power that comes into possession of ‘Tyre and Sidon, and all the coast of Palestine’ (Joel 3:4), with Edom, Moab and Ammon, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, is the Latter-Day antagonist of Gog.*”

There is a clear delineation of powers at the time of the end or immediately prior to Gog’s invasion. On the one hand, from Ezekiel 38, we have the Gogian/Russian (the land of Magog-Germany) confederacy with Persia (Iran), Ethiopia (Cush – most likely Shiite Iraq, and possibly including radical Islamists in Somalia), Libya, Gomer (France/Western Europe), and Togarmah (Turkey/Crimea). We would undoubtedly include the alliances of Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas (which ever factions remain in anticipation of an Israeli reprisal) as those who applaud the Gogian onslaught as foreshadowed in Edom’s approval of the Babylonian conquest of Judah (Obadiah 11-13). Antagonistic to them all is the present King of the South: Tarshish and all the young lions thereof. The Anglo-Tarshish alliance will include Britain, the U.S., Australia, Canada (with a new conservative government which has deployed Canadian military ships into the Per-

Shiites would have secular leaders like Yassar Arafat who in spite of his multitude of flaws was not considered a religious fanatic. But with the Khomenists' star continuing to rise, the Shiites are becoming every bit as extreme as the most radical Sunnis (i.e. Al Qaeda, Wahhabists). The Shiites, like Iranian President Ahmadinijad, wait for the twelfth Imam and the Mahdi (a figure considered by Shiites to be the ultimate saviour of mankind); the Sunnis, like Bin Laden, consider this view to be apostasy and vice versa. The controlling Baath party (al Assad) in Syria is part of the Shiite Alawi sect. Even though the Alawis make up only 10% of the Syrian population, they are in firm control, hence their cooperation with Iran is a Shiite/Shiite partnership. Why does the predominantly Sunni population tolerate this Syrian/Shiite leadership? Simple, it's a dictatorship. You either tolerate the dictator or suffer persecution or death.

In Iraq we are seeing the fault line emerge in the form of sectarian violence and the not so politically correct term "civil war". Iran, Syria and Hezbollah are aligned together in an attempt to project Shiite hegemony in the region. Sunnis (Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Gulf states) are terrified at this prospect and for political purposes (while being as discreet as possible) they are posturing with the U.S. and Israel to oppose any Iranian dominance of the region. A recent Stratfor article reported, "A group of prominent Saudi clerics released a statement Dec. 11 calling for Sunni Muslims around the world to unite against the Shia in Iraq. The statement was signed by 38 Wahhabi clerics and preachers, including Sheikh Safar al-Hawali, whose ideas influenced al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden."

Another Stratfor article (10/26/06) reported a newly emerging geopolitical trend. "Israel is eager to court what Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has called an axis of moderate Arab states in hopes of countering Iran and its radical allies as they try to exploit the Arab-Israeli conflict to their advantage. The most significant expression of this emerging dynamic is the back-channel contact between Saudi Arabia and Israel." The regional fault line, says Stratfor, "pits Iran, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon on one side, against Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Persian Gulf states on the other... the rise of the Shia in Iraq and Hamas coming to power in the Palestinian National Authority have allowed Iran to play a much more active role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—a development that has the Israelis and the Arabs more or less equally worried."

Truly, the last thing that the Arab monarchs of the South want to see is a Pan Shiite Islamic Revolution on their borders, followed by a revolution on their home turf that would sweep them from power, extinguish their wealth, and hang them all upon the gallows of the infidels. And so political necessity guided by the hidden Elohim of Yahweh, has turned Saudi Arabia and Sunni Arabs back to the Tarshish protectorate (Britain/U.S.) and Iran and Syria back to their Gogian protectorate, Russia. "Politically, the Sunni kingdom of Saudi Arabia is allied with Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and the other Gulf states; the Shiite republic of Iran has allies and proxies in Syria, Iraq and (through Hezbollah) in Lebanon," continues the article. Again, these alliances are very complex and are not to be confused with a new love or tolerance of Jews. They are only emerging to fulfill and perpetuate strategic balances of power in the Middle East, much like the U.S. alliance with Stalin during WWII was viewed as a "necessary evil". We would envision such an alliance (according to Bible prophecy) between Saudi Arabia and Israel as yet another "necessary evil" to hedge against Iranian encroachment. The article summarizes by stating, "Given the alignments and divisions, Israel - in a more perfect world - potentially could develop quiet but workable partnerships with Arab or Muslim states to help check the rise of Iran. And, indeed, pressing concerns might generate fleeting impressions that such alliances, as with Saudi Arabia, are being forged." We know that in the end, Israel's track of self-reliance, as with Saul, will end in failure. Only when they realize that they are not their own Messiah and are humbled by the Gogian invasion will Israel be able to cry to Yahweh with a true heart and experience national redemption as prophesied by Zechariah over 2500 years ago:

"And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God" (Zech. 13:8-9).

In the interim, according to a recent news report, "a meeting between Ehud Olmert and Saudi King Abdullah is not a surprise, given increased tensions in the region caused by the rise of Iran and its Shiite allies. Israel and Saudi Arabia share a common concern, albeit for different reasons, over Iran and its main regional proxy, Hezbollah; both want an agreement on how to deal with the emerging Iranian/Shiite threat."



Political analysts and military strategists agree that the recent conflict in Lebanon was not just an Israel vs. Hezbollah event, or even a Moslem vs. Jew conflict, but it was the battle front where East meets West. On the western front, we have the U.S./UK/Israel alliance. On the eastern front we have what some reports have dubbed **“The Damascus-Tehran-Moscow Axis”**. The title of “Axis” should bring into our minds the last global conflict between the Allies on the one hand and the Axis powers on the other, only this time the mouthpiece for virulent anti-Semitism has moved from Berlin to Tehran. **At the moment, Iran is the supplier, Damascus the middle-man, Hezbollah the foot soldier, and Russia, the strategist.** But this is only for the present. These are the fragile circumstances upon which the matchsticks of the political aerial are constructed; when the fire is lit, the entire political heavens will become a burning flame in the wrath of Yahweh Elohim of Armies:

“I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame” (Dan. 7:11).

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Rev. 19:20).

Let us now review some of the information about recent events through the prophetic lens and see how the Elohim are shaping the nations for the final cog to fall into place, when our Lord will return, the redeemed will be raised from the memorial graves and gathered, the judgment commenced, and the stage set for the battle of Armageddon.

According to a May 11, 2006 *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* report, a high-level Iranian official who held a closed meeting

with a small group of Western diplomats in London emphasized Hezbollah's importance to Iran: *“Hezbollah is one of the pillars of our security strategy,”* he said, *“and forms Iran's first line of defense against Israel. We reject [the claim] that [Hezbollah] must be disarmed...”* Thus, while arms were pouring into Northern Lebanon across the Syrian border fresh from Iran, the United States was airlifting munitions, bunker buster bombs, and spare parts to Israel. Here are the makings of a global conflict to be. East vs. West, North vs. South, Shiites versus Sunni, and Israel is the battle ground in the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:12).

As previously noted, there is a Biblical connection between Syria, Iran, and Russia and its opposition to Israel and the West. The prophet Ezekiel tells us that Russia with Europe (Gog) will be allied with Persia (Iran), all of whom are descendants from Japheth. We see this development taking place in the daily news as Russian support for Iran is not with mere words but in evil deeds. It is no state secret that Iran's nuclear program is built upon Russian know-how. And how does one protect a personal strategic investment? With one's own strategically placed weapons, of course. *The Jerusalem Post* had this report for November 24, 2006:

“Russia has begun delivery of Tor-M1 air defense missile systems to Iran [for the protection of Iran's nuclear facilities against an air strike - picture below], a Defense Ministry official said Friday, confirming that Moscow would proceed with arms deals with Tehran in spite of Western criticism. Ministry officials have previously said Moscow would supply 29 of the sophisticated missile systems to Iran under a US\$700 million contract signed in December, according to Russian media reports. The Tor-M1 deal, involving conventional weapons, does not violate any international agreements. Russian officials say that the missiles are purely defensive weapons with a limited range. According to the Interfax news agency, the Tor-M1 system can identify up to 48 targets and fire at two targets simultaneously at a height of up to 6,000 meters (20,000 feet).”

Iran's Russian sponsored nuclear program has received much unwanted western media



attention that is keeping tabs on Iran's quest for weapons grade uranium enrichment. The spotlight, however, continues to outrage Iran's revolutionary government, which claims to be developing nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. The rest of the western world appears to think otherwise.

We quote from the *Jewish World Review*: "It is not a coincidence that Hezbollah launched its totally unprovoked attack across Israel's internationally recognized border, killing and kidnapping Israeli soldiers and dragging Lebanon and Israel into a war which neither one wanted at exactly the moment when the international community had issued its ultimatum to Iran. That ultimatum was: 'Cease your efforts to develop nuclear weapons or face the sanctions of the International Community.' Iran's response was Hezbollah's war."

This now brings us to a consideration of Syria's place in the "Axis", as the middle-man between Hezbollah and Iran's exported radical Islam. Russia is countering the projection of western power and influence in the region by working directly with Tehran and Damascus in the supply of weapons, technology, as well as planning for a personal presence in the region with a significant military foothold in Syria. Russia, it appears, was directly involved in having Syria accept Iranian Shehab-3 Missiles based upon Soviet missile technology of the Scud B, in a ploy to advance the Russian strategic umbrella over the sphere of western influence in the Middle East.

DEBKA - Net - Weekly for June 23, 2006 reported under the title of "Russian-Iranian collusion":

"The special intelligence report to the U.S. president disclosed that Moscow had prior knowledge of and approved Tehran's intention of inserting the secret missile clause in the pact [that is, deploying missiles in Syria] and that the two acted in collusion on this.

*"Russian president Vladimir Putin was up to his neck in the deal. Some data also indicated that the Russians helped Tehran get the idea across to **Bashar Assad** by hinting that the **future missile placement would fit in with their own deepening strategic plans for Syria.***

"Those ambitions are confirmed on the ground. Our sources have observed the Russians dredging the port of Tartus, Syria's second most important Mediterranean port, with a view to expanding their logistical supply point there to a fully-equipped naval base, possibly to serve the Black Sea Fleet warships when they are rede-

*ployed from the Ukrainian port of Sevastopol. It is designed to be built up into the permanent base for the fleet led by the RFS **Moskva** (Flag Ship) missile cruiser and the RFS **Azov** landing ship within the next three years.*

"The arrival of the Russian task force in Tartus in March marked the opening of the Russian base. Our military experts note that Mosva is armed with the weapons, radar and electronic gear of a carrier hunter.

"The American intelligence briefing for the U.S. president further disclosed that sophisticated Russian air defense systems are to be installed for the dual purpose of protecting the Tartus naval base and the Shehab-3 missile emplacements."

The Daily Telegraph for August 15, 2006, reported:

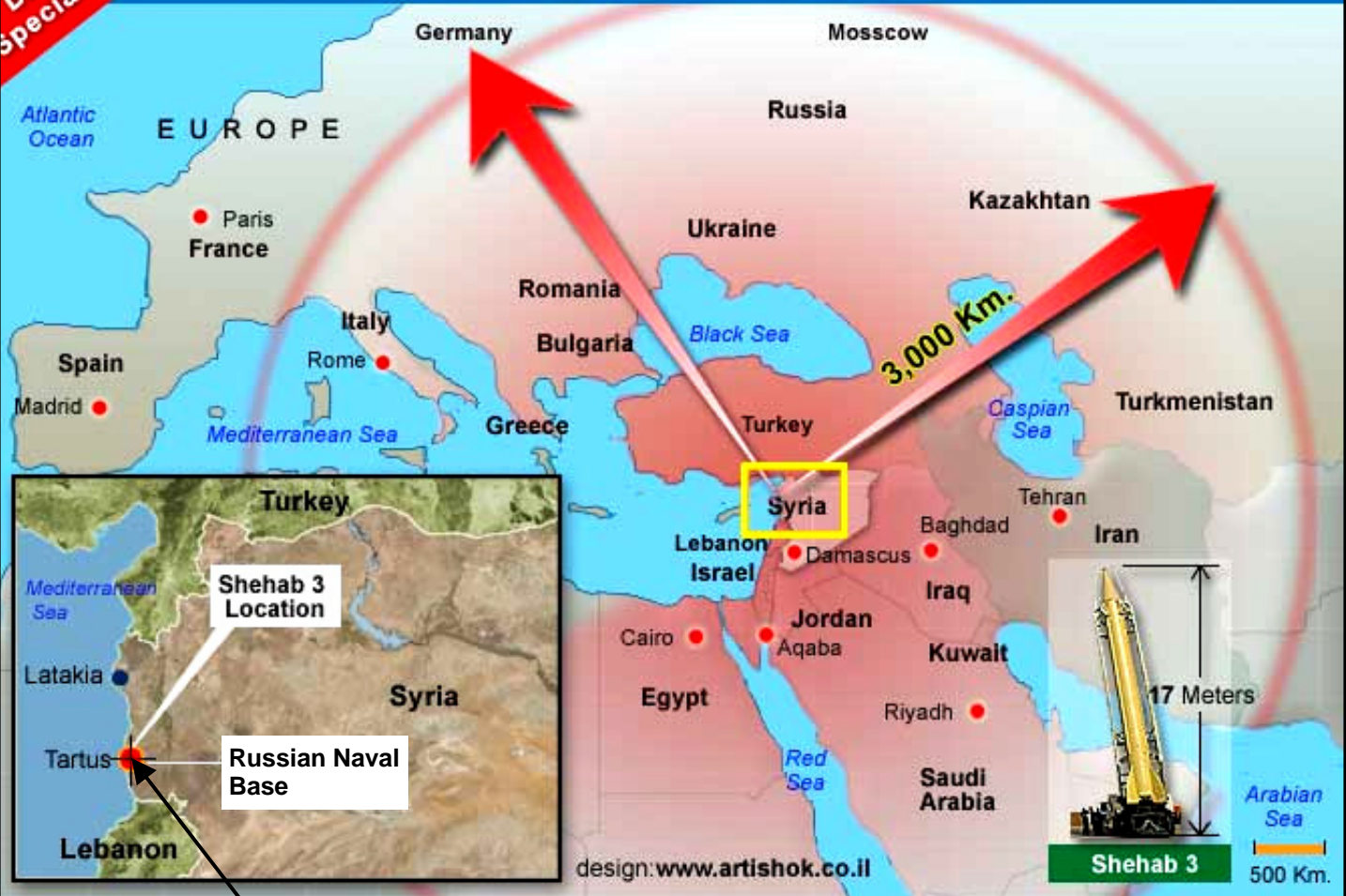
"Abandoned Hezbollah positions in Lebanon yesterday revealed conclusive evidence that Syria - and almost certainly Iran - provided the anti-tank missiles that have blunted the power of Israel's once invincible armour. After one of the fiercest confrontations of the war, Israeli forces took the small town of Ghandouriyeh, east of the southern city of Tyre, on Sunday evening, hours before a ceasefire brokered by the United Nations took effect. Outside one of the town's two mosques a van was found filled with green casings about 6 ft long. The serial numbers identified them as AT-5 Spandrel anti-tank missiles. The wire-guided weapon was developed in Russia but Iran began making a copy in 2000. Beyond no-man's land, in the east of the village, was evidence of Syrian-supplied hardware. In a garden next to a junction used as an outpost by Hezbollah lay eight Kornet anti-tank rockets, described ...as 'some of the best in the world'. Written underneath a contract number on each casing were the words: 'CUSTOMER: MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF SYRIA. SUPPLIER: KBP, TULA, RUSSIA'.

"Brig. Edelstein said: 'If they tell you that Syria knew nothing about this, just look. This is the evidence. Proof, not just talk.' The discovery of the origin of the weapons proved to the Israelis that their enemy was not a ragged and lightly armed militia but a semi-professional army equipped by Syria and Iran to take on Israel. The weapons require serious training to operate and could be beyond the capabilities of some supposedly regular armies in the Middle East. The Kornet was unveiled by Russia in 1994. It is laser-guided, has a range of three miles, and carries a double warhead capable of pene-

The Damascus-Tehran-Moscow Axis: Extending the Sphere of Influence of the Russian Bear by Air, Land, and Sea

**DEBKA
Special Map**

RANGES OF IRANIAN MISSILES TO BE BASED IN SYRIA



***Elements of the famed Russian Black Sea Fleet are to
be relocated to Syrian warm-water ports***

trating the reactive armour on Israeli Merkava tanks. Russia started supplying them to Syria in 1998.”

Nuclear Iran Ahead

What will be the next performance by the players of the Damascus-Tehran-Moscow Axis? According to DEBKAfile reports, Tehran announced on August 24, 2006, that the “*Arak heavy water plant would soon be operational. Iran had thus set its feet squarely on two tracks for achieving the fuel for a nuclear weapon – enriched uranium and plutonium.*” Meanwhile, the southern Arab monarchs of Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the other Gulf emirates are hoping that somebody (anybody including Israel) will deal with the radical Islamic Shiites from Persia before their ambitions get out of hand. How are events shaping up in response to Iran’s quest for nuclear arms?

According to the following information gleaned from DEBKAfile reports, as of today there are four aircraft carrier battle groups within striking distance of Iran's nuclear facilities. In addition, as of December 21, U.S. Middle East Commander Gen. John Abizaid has requested a fifth carrier strike group in the Gulf region as a warning to Syria and Iran. If unexpected events (from man's perspective) lead to a U.S. attack upon Iran, could this precipitate a larger regional conflict, the final “Push” that stirs the ire of the “king of the North”? (Dan 11:40-45; 12:1-3)

October 17, 2006: “*The Iwo Jima Expeditionary Strike Group steamed into the Persian Gulf to join the U.S. naval, air and marine concentration piling up opposite Iran’s shores. It consists of the amphibious transport dock USS Nashville, the guided-missile destroyers USS Cole and USS Bulkeley, the guided-missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea, the attack submarine USS Albuquerque, and the dock landing ship USS Whidbey Island..*”

November 1, 2006: “*The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Eisenhower and its strike group passed through the Suez Canal on Monday, Oct. 30, and arrived in the Red Sea on Tuesday, Oct. 31. It is now cruising off the Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia, together with another aircraft carrier, the USS Enterprise. The presence of the two US aircraft carriers, and their accompanying strike groups, in a body of water as small as the Red Sea is an extraordinary development.*”

November 13, 2006: “*The USS Boxer Strike Group,*

entered the Persian Gulf Thursday, Nov. 9, the largest U.S. landing force to reach this water in a decade.” Meanwhile, the largest armada of European warships to enter the Mediterranean sea since the second world war presently looms off the coast of Lebanon to “monitor the situation”.

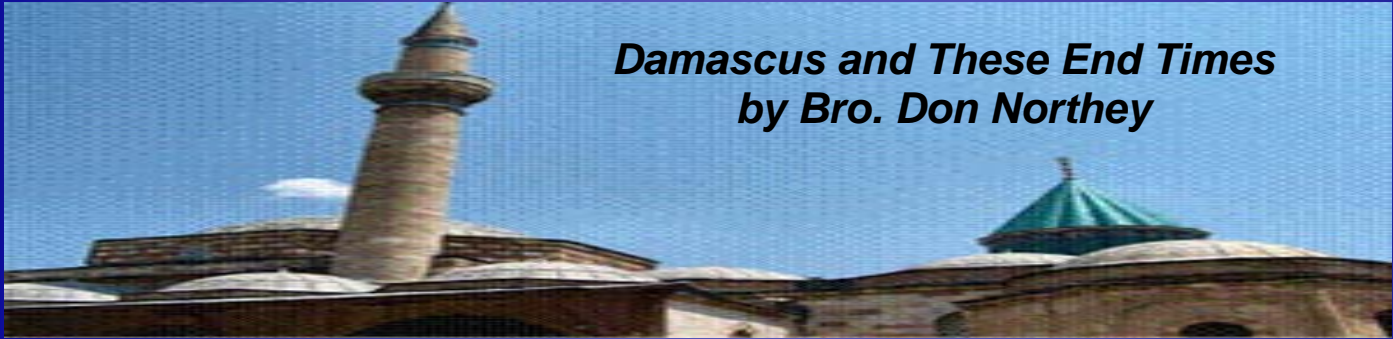
While the presence of U.S. Naval forces within striking distance of Iran may be intended as a warning rather than a prelude to war, Christadelphians recognize that man is not in control of his destiny. Thus, while man may intend to do one thing, Yahweh may very well cause him to do another as suits His purpose; “*...for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation...*” (Zeph. 3:8). Hence, while we are not prophets, **we are watchmen**, called to witness for the tidings that herald the rising of Zion from the present Gentile night. Watch and wait, therefore, for our redemption draweth nigh.

Continued on Page 18

The USS Eisenhower Strike Group joins three other naval strike groups in the Mediterranean, Red Sea and Persian Gulf.



HISTORICAL



Damascus and These End Times by Bro. Don Northey

Damascus, the capital of Syria as well as its largest city, is much in the news today as one of Israel's antagonists, being the seat and benefactor of the region's terrorist activities. As one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, Damascus has paralleled the history of Israel and therefore represents one of the hostile kingdoms of men which is specifically targeted by Yahweh for destruction. As Jerusalem is to ascend, both literally and spiritually, Damascus in its current form is to be destroyed so that Israel may enlarge her holdings to the northern borders of Eden even to the Euphrates River.

The English name is the same as the Greek Damaskos. The Hebrew name is Dammeseq and the Aramaic is Darmeseq. In the Egyptian Tell el-Amarna letters the name is Ti-ma-as-gi and Di-mas-ka. The city of Damascus is situated on the fertile plain of Ghuta at about 2,300 feet above sea level. The river Barada flows through the city and contributes to its fertile and rather lush country side. This fertile valley is rimmed on three sides by bare hills and bordered on the east by desert. The streams and fountains have, over the centuries, resulted in orchards, lush fields bearing innumerable fruit trees and palm groves which have helped preserve Damascus as a pristine Arabian city. Damascus appears to have avoided destruction out of her sheer beauty and economic value. She was a pivotal city on the earliest trade routes from India to Mesopotamia to Egypt and Africa.

Damascus was the main Aramean city from the 10th to the 8th centuries B.C.. The Aramean kingdom was alternately the rival or the situational ally of Israel until the Assyrians incorporated it into their empire in 732 B.C. The Bible recounts (2 Sam. 8) how that David defeated the Arameans near Zorbah and how Solomon retained control over the region until Rezon, a survivor of David's era, captured Damascus (1 Kings 11:23-25) and began the strong Aramean kingdom based there. Damascus remained the dominant city in the region for much of the 9th and 8th centuries.

Bir-hadad I (the Ben-hadad in I Kings 15) subdued Israel in alliance with Judah, and Damascus led the coalition that fought the Assyrians at the battle of Qarqar in 853 B.C. Hazael took control of Damascus around 842 B.C. (II Kgs. 8:7-15). Despite invasions by Shallmaneser III in 841 and 838, Hazael was able to control most of southern Syria and Palestine. In 720 Hamath and Damascus with other Aramean cities rebelled against Assyria. The powerful Assyrian king, Sargon II, defeated this coalition at Qarqar, Hamath was annexed, and no more is heard of an independent Damascus until centuries later.

In 605 B.C. Damascus fell under Chaldean rule, becoming a jewel in the realm of Nebuchadnezzar. As we progress down the time line of the kingdoms of men as represented by Daniel's metallic image, Damascus passed under the control of the Persians and later was prized by Alexander the Great in 301 B.C. Upon the death of Alexander and the division of his empire, the

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Straight Street in Damascus today

Seleucid kingdom of Syria maintained Damascus as its principle city but made Antioch its capital as maritime trade had taken predominance over the interiors. Damascus re-emerged as a capital city under the acquisition of the Nabateans, under the rule of Al-Hareth III in 87 B.C.

Next Damascus and Syria fell into the hands of Roman rule. From 31 B.C. to 33 A.D. its coins bore the images of Augustus or Tiberius. By the time of Nero, Damascus had become an official Roman city. Aside from the early travels of the apostle Paul to the regions of Damascus (to a street called "straight", Acts 9:11, still a very lovely and predominate street in the city), the city of Antioch became the hub of early ecclesial history as often mentioned in the New Testament.

After the dissolution of Pagan Rome, Damascus (like other parts of Syria and the region), came under the rule of the Byzantine Empire ruled from Constantinople. In 635 A.D. the Moslems took over Damascus from the Byzantines, and it once again became the capital of the first Moslem state at the time of the Omayyad caliphs. 650 A.D. marked the beginning of its golden epoch, and for over a century the Omayyads took pride in building the city, organizing its souqs (markets and bazaars), improving its water supply, erecting palaces, hospitals and parks. [Also worthy of note, they built the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.] This period ended in 749 A.D. as Damascus went through periods of decline under various clans including the Abbassid, Tolonian, and the Egyptian Fatemite, and Mamluks. Toward the 11th

century A.D., the Seljuk Turks entered Syria and captured Damascus. During the Crusades, the city was the headquarters of Saladin. In 1300 it was plundered by the Tartars under Timur. In 1516 the Osmanli Turks under Selim conquered Syria, and Damascus once again became the capital of a strategic region within the Ottoman Empire.

Damascus as well as the entire region was finally liberated from Ottoman rule by the campaigns of General Allenby in 1917. Since realizing her total independence in 1946, Syria has since been an antagonist against the Jew in the land.

Nothing has changed: Damascus under President al-Assad has maintained a perpetual hostile mindset toward Israel. Syria's historic roots are as deep as Israel's, and she will once again feel the mighty blows of Abraham and David, only this time as "one of the kings out of a Sun's rising" and as captains in Christ's immortal host directing the end-time judgments upon the nations and shining forth favorably upon Zion. Thus while Israel will yet be refined and arise out of Yahweh's furnace of judgment, Damascus will perish in complete destruction (Isaiah 17).

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Russian President Vladimir Putin continue as expedient partners in their quest for domination of the Middle East.



Watchman Continued...

The Burden of Damascus

Isaiah 17-18



Syria continues to play the part of the “wild card” in Middle East affairs. Ruled by the Ba’ath party, Syria is officially a parliamentary republic with faint echoes of democratic principles. In reality, however, Syria has operated as a secular military dictatorship since 1963, oppressing all political and religious dissenters. The Ba'ath platform is proclaimed in the party's slogan: *"Unity, freedom, and socialism."* Thus, the party is both socialist, advocating state ownership of the means of industrial production and the redistribution of agricultural land, and revolutionary, dedicated to *"carrying a socialist revolution to every part of the Arab world"*. So far, Syria has been unsuccessful in this attempt although she continues to keep neighboring Israel and Iraq off balance by supporting Hezbollah in Lebanon and the insurgency in Iraq. Syria's unique position as a secularist/socialist state, however (as opposed to being either an Islamic republic or an Arabic monarchy), has served to isolate Syria within the Middle East framework of alliances. Without coincidence, perhaps, Syria is also very isolated in prophetic scripture as witnessed by Isaiah's prophecy concerning Damascus.

The prophecy in Isaiah 17 is about Syria and subsequently Israel (called Jacob in vs. 4) whose vine tree (vs. 6) is about to be so severely shaken during the apocalyptic harvest period of Armageddon (vs. 5), that only a small remnant remains – *"four or five in the outmost fruitful branches"*. This is the day when *"the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters"* (vs. 12-13) become an overflowing flood over the land. (Ezekiel 38:9 describes this as covering the land like a cloud.) This is the evening time termed the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7) just before the dawn of the new millennial day. But the nations who come against Israel to spoil her will be rebuked (vs. 13), and they will be rolled back before the whirlwind of Yahweh’s war chariot (Christ and the Saints).

This has been Christadelphian teaching regarding this prophecy since 1852 by Bro. Thomas (*Herald of the Kingdom*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Pg. 6); republished in the pages of the *Christadelphian* in 1892, and by Bro. Robert Roberts and C. C. Walker in 1907 in their book entitled *The Ministry of the Prophets*. But the question remains, what will be the catalyst that precipitates the cognitive reaction of the goat nations to seek Israel’s ouster from the land? The answer we believe is found in the beginning of this prophecy termed *"The burden of Damascus"*. Isaiah informs us that, somehow, Damascus becomes an object of destruction, and that this precipitates an invasion of Israel: *"Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap"* (vs.1).

As we noted, Syria is somewhat isolated in latter day prophecy. Syria, or Damascus, is not named in Ezekiel 38 or in Daniel 11, nor in any other prophecy in Scripture concerning its alliance with one group or the other in the great day of God Almighty, or Armageddon. Is this because Syria’s demise comes prior to the final crisis of the age? If Isaiah’s prophecy is understood to be in chronological order, this is the only logical conclusion that we can render: Damascus is utterly destroyed prior to a massive invasion of Israel by the Gogian Host. There is no doubt that these ominous events will transpire because Yahweh has declared it. As such, the prophecy concerning Damascus and its certain demise is a key stone upon which the prophetic puzzle falls into place.

The players we have identified by the Word of the prophets comprising the northern aggressor against Israel has been well established. In Isaiah 18 we find that another power has been called to the area in favor of the interests of Zion, placing it in opposition to the interests of the northern aggressor and his allies. This power is identified by Ezekiel as *"the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof,"* whose role as protectorate over the land of Israel continues until such time as another “king of the South”, Jesus and his associates, comes to defeat the “king of the North”. Thus, *"the lion-and-merchant-power of Tarshish will not be permitted to usurp the glory of the Lion of the tribe of Judah"* (*Elpis Israel*, pg. 433). Tarshish will be subdued (though not destroyed) beneath the sceptre of Judah because these Gentile nations will play a future role in the restoration of Zion’s glory: *"Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee"* (Isa. 60:9).

Summary

As we stand near the conclusion of the sixth vial epoch which heralds Messiah's return and the gathering of the nations to Armageddon, we realize that the consummation of these great events can not be afar off. The prophetic puzzle is nearly complete. Russia has recast herself as the guardian and protector of all those who will join her in a challenge against Britain and the United States for world dominion. As the end approaches it will be expedient for Russia to become a closer confidant of the Papacy and to honour Rome through all her policies (Dan. 11:38-29). Thus the eastern dragon and western nations of the beast will re-unite the legs of Nebuchadnezzar's image beneath the golden head of the Autocrat after a fashion of the Eastern Roman emperor, Justinian, who aided the Pope in the west. The uniting of this militaristic autocrat in the east with the Papal see in the west will be a power emboldened to extend her influence abroad as suits her purpose. We have demonstrated that the pivotal point or "hub" around which the geo-political wheel of the kingdoms of men is attached is Israel. Israel and the Abrahamic land grant is the front line where the powers of the political heavens will be compelled to focus their attention, ultimately bringing them together in battle, termed the Great Day of God Almighty (Rev. 16:14).

From the *Exposition of Daniel* (pg. 90) we read, "When the northern Gog invades the Holy Land and advances against Jerusalem, there will of course be great alarm among the Jewish inhabitants of the country, whose especial enemy he is. As the power that overshadows them with its protection is compelled to fall back on Edom, Moab, and Ammon, where it will maintain its position, they will retire with it as 'outcasts' from its northern section, which will then be in the hand of Gog the 'spoiler', the 'extortioner', and the 'oppressor' of Judah. The Spirit of God has oracularized the following address to this Moabitish power, saying, 'Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts, betray not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler' (Isa 16:3-4). From this it is evident that in the time of the end the power occupying Moab is antagonistic to the spoiler (Gog), and the protector of Yahweh's outcasts (the scattered Jews); which a Moabitish power has never been before." Bro. Thomas continues, "The power occupying Moab, then, would not be disposed to enter into terms with Gog and to deliver up the refugees; but would be stirred up to make great efforts in hope of more prosperous campaigns than heretofore; assuredly gathering that the overthrow of the enemy was not remote.

"The consumption of the oppressors out of the Holy Land can only be coetaneous with the fall of Gog upon the mountains of Israel by the fury of Adonai Yahweh (Ezek 38:18, 39:3,4); the overthrow of the king of the north by Michael (Dan 8:25; 11:45; 12:1); the smiting of the image on the feet by the stone; the consumption of Paul's Man of Sin; and the beating down of the Assyrian by the Voice of Yahweh (Isa 30:30-31). They are all one in the same event happening to the same power-the treading of the winepress in the day of vengeance, when the hero of Bozrah tramples the people in his anger, and makes them drunk in his fury, and brings down the strength of the earth (Isa 63:4,6)." Even so come quickly Lord!

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"Ask For The Old Paths"

Dedicated to preserving the spirit of our pioneer brethren in doctrine and practice

By Bro. Mike Jasionowski

An Exposition of Truth and Love
 Delivered by "the Elder" unto the "Elect Lady"
 Reading: 2nd Epistle of John



The epistles of the Apostle John were written towards the end of his life when he was of considerable age. Throughout the three epistles we find similar themes and concepts showing that they are very much related. We would like to commence our consideration with a quotation from Bro. H.P. Mansfield's introduction to John's first epistle, which the reader can find in the Expositor Series (Pages 225-226). Bro. Mansfield wrote:

"The general opinion is that the first Epistle of John was written about A.D. 90, and that the succeeding epistles were written some time after that.

"At that time, John would have been the only surviving apostle, and would have been a great age. The tone of the epistle is in keeping with this, for it is paternal both in the endearing expressions he used as well as the authority with which he wrote.

"It was written to correct serious error that was developing among the Ecclesias. John does not name the error, but the general opinion is that it was incipient Gnosticism. The full development of this heresy was not in evidence until about the second century, but in its earlier forms it had been manifested before John, and is referred to by Paul to Timothy when he warned him to be on his guard against the 'oppositions of science (gnosis) falsely so called' (1 Tim. 6:20).

"The theory of Gnosticism threatened the Ecclesia from within, and constituted a more seductive and dangerous doctrine than persecution from without. John wrote to counter the influence of a so-called 'higher form of knowledge' that challenged the foundations of faith. The peril came not from men who were out to destroy the Truth, but from those who thought that they

were improving it, and whose aim was to make it intellectually respectable.

"It is significant that there is a tendency to the same end today, which likewise threatens to destroy the foundations of faith, and against which we must be on our guard.

"A further aspect also emerges that makes the comparison even closer. By the time John wrote (towards the end of his life), many members of Ecclesias were second or even third generation believers, and this is also so today in regard to the latter-day revival of the Truth. Then, as now, the pioneering spirit was being set aside, and more and more time was being given to mere speculating and philosophizing upon Truth.

"Jesus had warned of this. He predicted: 'The love of many shall wax cold' (Matt. 24:12). By John's time, as today, the first thrill of the early establishment of Ecclesias had faded, and, in many instances, the early flame of zeal had dimmed to a flicker. Tradition has it that John ministered at Ephesus, and Christ warned this very Ecclesia: 'I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love' (Rev. 2:4).

"Therefore, whilst John constantly reminded the brethren of their obligations in the sphere of divine love, he also manifested a stern, unyielding attitude towards those who would undermine the faith with their theories. In describing them, he used appellations such as 'liars', 'seducers', 'false prophets', 'deceivers', 'antichrists', and so forth, writing thus in the abundance of his love, in order to help the sheep who, as a good shepherd, he 'knew by name' (3 John 14)."

This introduction constitutes a timely warning for us, and these same principles which manifest themselves in the first epistle carry over into the second and third epistles.

One thing mentioned in Bro. Mansfield's introduction that is particularly worth noting is his reference to what he called "the pioneering spirit". Sadly, his comment on this spirit being set aside is even truer today than when he wrote these words in 1961. If there is one thing that will help stay the ongoing slide back to evangelical Christendom which is occurring in some circles of our community, it is the maintenance within the ecclesias of the spirit of our pioneers in doctrine, in outlook and in practice. And where that is missing, in the longer term, the ecclesias will almost inevitably fail or at least be in need of serious reformation. For the Truth to survive and be passed on to the next generation, we need the pioneer's commitment to Bible study. We need to be prepared to expound the Word to our fellow man as they did. We need their attitude toward wrong doctrine. We need their attitude toward separation from the world. We need their commitment to developing a godly character. We need their attitude toward the religions of the world round about us. In short, we need their commitment in our service to Yahweh. God willing, we will see evidence of that "pioneering spirit" in this second epistle of John.

Both the second and third epistles appear to have been written to individuals. So far as the second epistle is concerned, it has been considered that the expression "the elect lady", as it occurs in verse 1, was a reference to an ecclesia. This idea is based on the fact that Paul speaks of the ecclesia as a "chaste virgin" who will in due time be presented to her Lord. The expression "the elect lady" could very well parallel that. However, upon closer examination we conclude that the expression "the elect lady" in fact refers to an outstanding individual, an outstanding sister, who was known and beloved of John. But whether written to an individual or to an ecclesia, the principles remain exactly the same. An ecclesia is made up of individuals and that ecclesia merely reflects the collective attitude of all its members. While brothers and sisters live in individual homes that should reflect their attitude toward the Truth, so also the ecclesia is our home in a collective sense. So whether written to an individual or to an ecclesia, the second epistle of John might well be captioned "**the Truth in the home**".

Verse 1: *"The elder unto the elect lady and her children whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth."*

In starting this epistle with the words "*the Elder*", John is drawing attention both to his advanced age and to his position in ecclesial life. Today, while we do not have elders with spirit gifts appointed by the Apostles, we do however have elder brethren guided by the Spirit Word (that which is "complete") that we respect because of their knowledge and extensive experience over decades of ecclesial life in the Truth. Their experience in ecclesial matters and many other issues is invaluable. Paul wrote to young Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:17, "*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially*

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they who labor in the word and doctrine." And in reflecting on these words, it is very easy when you are younger and less experienced in the Truth to overlook this principle and in so doing disrespect the "hoary head".

John continues, "*the elder unto the elect lady*". In Paul's epistles on a number of occasions he refers to the brothers and sisters in Christ as "the elect". For example in Romans 8:33 he says: "*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth*". In Colossians 3:12 he said: "*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.*" There are other occasions where he uses this expression as well. So what does the expression mean? Basically, the word *elect* means "*chosen*". In a sense we are all "*chosen*" by Yahweh. He has graciously called us, He has chosen us, and He has taken us out of the Gentiles. But in its application here in 2 John 1, we suggest that it is a special endorsement of this particular sister. This sister displayed the particular characteristics of a person who was "*chosen*" by God. The term implies that she was a proper example of

godliness and that she displayed characteristics to be emulated. But, who was this sister? As already indicated she was an outstanding sister who was known by John, just as it is a faithful individual brother to whom he addresses in the first verse of 3rd John. It is probable that the Greek word translated here “lady” was in fact her proper name. The Diaglott and Young’s literal translation regard it as such and consequently speak of the elect “Cyria” in the sense of a proper name. Mr. Bullinger also supports this idea in his Companion Bible notes. Because there is no mention of her husband it is thought that perhaps she was a widow. She was evidently successful in assuring that the Truth was lived in the home. This makes her even more commendable, as raising a family in the Truth without a spouse to help is not an easy thing to do. The

Biblical peace is not an absence of antagonism or controversy but a welding together or a binding together of individuals in understanding and outlook. Such a peace is indicated in the Hebrew word “Shalom” which implies fellowship as a means to the complete unity that awaits the redeemed in the age to come (John 17:21).

fact that John mentions her children whom he loves along with this faithful sister would indicate that her children were being raised in the nurture and in the admonition of the Lord much to her credit. Not only did John love her in the bonds of the Truth, but that sentiment for Cyria was apparently endorsed in the wider ecclesial world as the closing phrases of verse 1 make plain... “*and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth.*”

Verse 2: “*For the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.*”

Three times in just two verses we have come across the expression THE TRUTH. The word TRUTH is a characteristic word of these epistles. In the three short epistles of John the word TRUTH occurs no less than 19 times. Interestingly, if you look at the four gospel records you will find that the Greek word for truth (*aletheia*) occurs just 7 times total in Matthew, Mark and Luke, but it occurs some 25 times in the gospel written by John. So the word TRUTH is a characteristic word used by the apostle John. Here John uses it in the sense that we do when we talk about “the Truth”. By that expression we mean the sphere of influence in which the Word of God is rightly

understood and sets the standard for our community in both doctrine and practice. So verse 2 tells us that it was “the Truth” that was the bond which tied John and Cyria and her family and all the faithful believers together. Because of this bond she was loved by brethren and sisters both near and far.

There is an important point here that should not be overlooked. If you were to take the Truth away, there would be almost nothing that any of us had in common. We all come from different and diverse backgrounds. We are all of differing ages, our worldly education and accomplishments vary, our interests or hobbies in life vary, the way that each of us makes a living varies, our economic status varies. Thus, if it wasn’t for the Truth, we would have almost nothing in common. Moreover, this illustrates that all of the things just mentioned outside of the Truth count for nothing. *They count for absolutely nothing in the eternal scheme of things!* What counts for everything is THE TRUTH. And notice what verse 2 says: *the Truth “shall be with us for ever”*. Associations, fellowship and friendships based upon the Truth have in them the seeds of eternity. Associations based on the Truth can extend way beyond this life to the Kingdom Age to come.

Now whoever this lady was (or if you like, this ecclesia), she had an outstanding reputation in the Truth. The good that they did in the Truth was known far and wide.

Verse 3: “*Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.*”

Grace is unmerited divine favor which is extended to us on the basis of the Lord’s sacrifice. “*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God*” (Rom 5:1-2).

So the apostle Paul says we stand in grace. He says that by standing in this grace we are able to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. The implication is that in Christ Jesus we live in a sphere of grace, if you will, though this does not exclude “works” as is evident from the remainder of the epistle (particularly verse 6). Is it possible to fall from that high plane of favor to which we have been elevated? We learn that it is certainly possible from such verses as

Galations 5:4. Grace is the position of favor in which Cyria had been elevated in Christ. However, there is another significant aspect of grace that should not be overlooked. You will notice in 2 John, verse 3, that the message is in the future tense of the Greek (Note the marginal rendering: “*Grace shall be with you.*”) Once again the emphasis here is on the benefits of walking in the Truth and staying in the narrow path that will extend into the future, even unto immortal life in the Kingdom Age.

Mercy is a word which signifies kindness and goodwill to those who need it, and it is manifested in the forgiving of sins. Thus mercy is still needed by those who have embraced Christ and have experienced divine favor or grace.

Peace, of course, was promised to the apostles by Christ in John 14:27, “*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*” The word here is a word which at its root means “*to bind together*”. The peace thus indicated here is not an absence of antagonism or controversy, and this is significant in our understanding. Biblical peace is a welding together or a binding together of individuals in understanding and outlook. Such a peace is indicated in the Hebrew word “Shalom” which implies fellowship as a means to the complete unity that awaits the redeemed in the Age to Come (John 17:21). For Biblical peace to be experienced there must be a binding together in like understanding and outlook within the confines or sphere of the Truth. James puts it this way, “*The wisdom [or truth] that is from above is first pure, then peaceable...*” (James 3:17).

Let’s quote 2 John 3 again now with the correct tense: “*Grace shall be with you and mercy and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.*” Clearly we see here that the apostle John knew nothing of the idea of the trinity. He specifically declares Yahweh to be the Father and Jesus to be the Son of the Father. Now we notice that these three things (grace, mercy and peace) can only operate within the confines or circle of truth and love. According to Mr. Bullinger, the Greek word “in” (*en*) denotes “*being or remaining within, with a primary idea of rest and continuance*” (Appendix 104). “*It has regard to place or space or sphere of action,*” he says. So if you picture a circle in your minds eye, *en* conveys the idea of remaining within the circle. We receive grace, mercy,

peace and love **only** while we remain within the circle of TRUTH where the sacrificial love of the Father and Son are operative.

Now while John has a deep spiritual love for Cyria in the bonds of the Truth, he writes this epistle because she is not careful enough about the **boundaries of the Truth**. Her understanding of the circle of love in which she should operate in was somewhat elastic. John has pointed out the boundaries in which the Father and the Son operate in. He will in due course point out in this epistle that Cyria must operate in ecclesial life within the same boundary. She must not be indiscriminate in who she helps and who she invites into her house. We will examine this issue in due course.

In Scripture, children are counted as being a heritage bestowed by Yahweh. This heritage comes with the stipulation that the children must be raised in a manner approved by Yahweh who settles the heritage upon us. However, children must not only be brought up in the Truth, but must be brought up to love the Truth.

Verse 4: “*I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.*”

In verse 4, John commends her for the fact that not only she, but her children as well walk in the Truth. To walk in the Truth is to be actively pursuing a way of life that is consistent with the commandments of Christ and the apostles. We are not exactly sure what is meant by “*as we have received a commandment from the Father.*” It could mean that the children were walking in accordance with the commandments as laid down in the Word of God. Or it could mean that Cyria herself had been faithful to the commandment to raise her children in the fear and admonition of Yahweh. In Scripture, children are counted as being a heritage bestowed by Yahweh. This heritage comes with the stipulation that the children must be raised in a manner approved by Yahweh who settles the heritage upon us. However, children must not only be brought up in the Truth, but must be brought up to love the Truth. If in our respective homes we are constantly talking negatively about our brothers and sisters (constantly talking about their faults), if we are constantly discussing strife and difficulty rather than the positive aspects of the Truth,

then we are not raising them up to love it!

In the next two verses we come to John's exposition of love. It was in this area that Cyria's understanding was faulty. She sincerely exhibited Biblical love in her dealings with her brothers and sisters, no doubt, but she was exhibiting a "love" that was dangerous to her eternal welfare. It was not a wise and discerning love that could set a good example for others. Before he points out the dangers of her actions, however, he first sets out what God-pleasing love really is in verse 5.

Verse 5: "And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another."

Divine love has nothing to do with sloppy sentimentality. It's not an exhibition of fleshly feeling. It's not doing what we may like because we are social creatures. Divine love does not have an open door policy. Unfortunately, Cyria did not yet grasp this point. Cyria, (or the ecclesia), welcomed everybody into her home, and John knew the danger of that.

There are similar statements like this in the first Epistle: "7Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. 8Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. 9He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. 10He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. 11But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." (I John 2:7-11).

The word "brethren" in verse 7 is *agape-tos*, which many versions translate as "beloved." These are brethren who understood and manifested agape love. They were *agape-tos*; they were "beloved". He says, "I write no new commandment unto you." There was nothing new in what John was setting forth in this verse. He says that the commandment was in effect an old commandment: "... For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning,

that we should love one another..." (I John 3:11). This is probably referring to Leviticus 19:18, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself". He is teaching that what he was setting out had been the situation **from the beginning**. Now, it is difficult to know what he means by "from the beginning." It could mean from the beginning of the Mosaic system. It could mean from the days of Adam. It could mean from the beginning of Christ's teaching because the Lord gave added force to the words "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Christ's love for his neighbor extended to the laying down of his life for his friends. Either way it was not a new commandment, just a forgotten one.

John repeated this teaching in 1st John several times, but it is repeated again in the second epistle in verse 5. Now he is going to show that there are restrictions that have to be maintained as we live by the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Verse 6: "And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it."

This verse repeats 1 John 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous". When John says that we should "walk after the commandments" and at the end of the verse that we should walk "in it", the word "walk" implies "activity". Walking after the commandments implies following a course that has been laid down in order that a destination may be reached. We are dealing here with the same Greek preposition "en" that we have already looked at. In the genitive case, it indicates we must stay within the boundaries laid down for the exhibition of divine love.

Divine love has nothing to do with sloppy sentimentality. It's not an exhibition of fleshly feeling. It's not doing what we may like because we are social creatures. Divine love does not have an open door policy. Unfortunately, Cyria did not yet grasp this point. Cyria (or the ecclesia) **welcomed everybody** into her home, and John knew the danger of that. He knew that such a position (albeit with good intentions) was not exhibiting divine love and was not walking after the commandments. **It wasn't walking "in" them.**

Verse 7: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the

flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

When this verse says that many deceivers are entered into the world, this would be better translated as “have gone out into the world” (NIV). It is a reference to what John wrote in 1 John 2:19 when he says, “*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*”

Here were brethren that had departed from the Truth; they went out from the ecclesia into their own world, as John states in the verse before us. In particular they didn’t properly appreciate the flesh nature of the Lord and the implications that flowed from that (see Job 14:4 regarding the nature of Christ), and consequently they were astray on the principles of the atonement. John says they were deceivers. The Greek is *planos* (from which we get our English word “planets”) meaning “to wander, rove, to mislead and hence to lead astray”. It seems they went astray on this important doctrine. John says that they were, in fact, anti-Christ. They claimed to be for him, they claimed to teach him, but they were really against (anti-) him.

Verse 8: “*Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.*”

Here was a personal exhortation given in view of the danger in associating with those who, in doctrine or walk, wander like planets. They were not people to whom divine love should be extended. In the Greek the word “look” signifies to “keep an eye on”. It wasn’t the deceivers they needed to keep an eye on, **it was themselves**. The deceivers had gone out and developed their own belief system apart from the Truth, such as Hymenaeus and Philetus (II Tim. 2:17). Cyria, or the ecclesia, needed to be careful lest she associate with those who would cause her or her household to depart from the faith and lose the reward of eternal life, which they otherwise might receive.

Verse 9: “*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*”

Bullinger says the Greek word translated “transgresseth” means to “lead forward or go in advance”.

So the person who transgresses does not walk after the commandments as required by verse 6, but follows a path of their own choosing. They have their own ideas about right and wrong. They have their own agenda. Instead of the commandments leading, they lead. They lead with their own philosophy concerning the Kingdom of God, the atonement, and so on. They lead with the reasoning of the flesh, and the seriousness of this is illustrated when John says that those that abide not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. On the other hand, the person that abides in the doctrine of Christ hath both the Father and the Son.

The epistles of John are often called the epistles of love, and it is these epistles of love that say more about true

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fellowship than any other section of the New Testament. We must reiterate, therefore, that Divine love has restrictions.

Verse 10 and 11: “*If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*”

Bro. H.P. Mansfield writes the following with regard to these verses: “*Having provided Cyria with a clear and concise definition of love, having warned her of the true character of many who were posing as custodians of the truth, and exhorting her to look unto her own because there was a danger of their wandering out of the way of righteousness, John now gives specific and apostolic advice in regard to the application of these principles. Cyria had allowed mere emotion to govern her conception of love, and in the kindness of her heart had opened her home to the enemy. John sternly warns against such action and clearly shows what it involves.*”

Verse 10 clearly begins with the word “If”: “**If** there come any.” Bullinger says it is in the indicative mood,

that is, it assumes the hypothesis as an actual fact. So the meaning here is, “If there come any unto you **as I know they do...**”. Cyria was known for the warmth of her hospitality, but she was not careful enough about who she entertained in fellowship. She was warned by John that she should not open her home to those who were errorists. We sometimes use the expression “Godspeed” when we are farewelling someone who is going on a long journey, or someone we are not going to see for quite awhile. But John uses the expression for someone who is greeting another and making them welcome. In fact, the word “God” is not in the Greek text at all. Some translations render it in this way: “*If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your home or welcome him.*”

Why should John require that? There are a number of reasons for adopting this sound policy, but the one he states is given in verse 11, “*For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*” John’s point is that if Cyria continued to receive these heretics, she would have to share the responsibility for the harm it would do. Her home should never be allowed to be a base from which error would be spread. **It was essential in manifesting divine love** that those with wrong doctrine should never be made welcome. Not only would Cyria have to share the responsibility for damage done by those with wrong doctrine, but she was endangering herself and her family by making them feel welcome. Wrong doctrine is very often appealing to the flesh because it releases the conscience from the very real restrictions required by the Truth. Keeping company with those who are wrong is likely to have bad consequences. This can be seen by two texts we might briefly consider, one from the New Testament and one from the Old.

The first is 1 Corinthians 15:33: “*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.*” This is better rendered, “Bad company corrupts good morals” or “corrupts good character”. That same principle holds true as far as doctrinal teaching is concerned. There are dangers in associating with those who are a bad influence when it comes to a matter of doctrine. Bad company in doctrinal matters will lead to people being corrupted from

the Truth. This is John’s warning to Cyria. Do not welcome those who are not pure in doctrine. Keep them at bay. **That is what divine love demands.**

The Old Testament reference is Haggai 2:12-13, “*if one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.*” Here we learn from the illustration provided by holy flesh and unclean flesh that **it is far easier to defile than it is to make clean.** Contact with unclean flesh really defiles. But contact with holy flesh does not make clean. That is so true in doctrinal matters as well. It is far easier to defile

It is far easier to defile than it is to make clean... It is far easier to tear down by spreading falsehood than it is to build up by promoting correct teaching. The latter requires diligent effort and study in the Scriptures of truth and the writings of our pioneer brethren; the former just requires the flesh.

than it is to make clean. It is more appealing to philosophize about Biblical concepts than to rightly divide the Word. It is far easier to tear down by spreading falsehood than it is to build up by promoting correct teaching. The latter requires diligent effort and study in the Scriptures of truth and the writings of our pioneer brethren; the former just requires the flesh.

John understood these principles and saw the need to write to his faithful sister. The necessity of writing to Cyria about this serious matter would admit of no delay. In verse 12 he indicates he had many things he would like to discuss with her and hoped to have the opportunity to see her personally. But the matters he discussed in this Epistle were so important that he felt compelled to write to her about them forthwith lest because of her misconception some tragedy would overtake this faithful sister and her family; hence, an “open door policy” with regard to the Truth was an eminent danger.

In summary, the 2nd Epistle of John is an exposition of true love. Moreover, it exhibits the spirit seen in our pioneer brethren, and as mentioned earlier it is the spirit of the pioneers in their way of life, attitudes and dedication that will help deliver us from every evil work, and help preserve us into Christ’s heavenly Kingdom, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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Don Northey

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