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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

and a warning against the deception in the last days
foretold by Christ

"Take heed ye be not deceived"

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At the Table of the Lord

“Take thereof a few . . . and bind them in thy skirts”

HOW HELPFUL are the words of Ezekiel written so many years ago. He was a prophet to the people of God, captive in Babylon; but his words speak just as clearly today to those who seek to serve God in difficult circumstances. Discerning Ezekiel's situation may be a help to knowing his work, his responsibility to God. He was probably among those taken from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in the time of Jehoiachin, about 600 B.C., as we read in II Kings 24:14:

“And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour . . . and all the craftsmen and smiths; none remained, save the poorest sort of the people . . .”

Ezekiel 1:2-3 tells us further:

“In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,

“The word of the LORD came *expressly* unto Ezekiel . . . and *the hand of the LORD was there upon him.*”

After five years of captivity under the hand of the Lord, Ezekiel saw the vision of the cherubim. There was no question who spoke to Ezekiel, or under whose hand he was. This hand of God brought great responsibility to Ezekiel, for he was commanded to be a watchman, to warn the captives in Babylon what God required. In doing so, he suffered great hardships as signs to his brethren; yet, he was sustained by that “hand of the LORD,” by God's speaking to him in visions. As Ezekiel responded to God's commission as a watchman, he probably was not very popular with his countrymen in Babylon, for he warned of God's wrath to come. His prophecy was more than this, however, for he also foretold of blessings, even in the midst of trial, captivity, and, no doubt, at times, despair.

For example, we read of his warning of the famine, pestilence and sword to come upon all those who would not obey God's commands (chapter 5). He was to take a sharp knife, and with it cut off the hair of his head and his beard. He was, then, to weigh the shorn hair into three equal parts: one part was to be burned; one to be scattered in the wind; and one part put to the sword. Thus, he signified famine, pestilence, and the sword to come upon Jerusalem, a prospect that spoke only of destruction and, desolation for His city. But, we find in verse 3 a few words that gave hope in the midst of this devastating

prophesy. The comfort and strength to a few also can give hope to us today.

“Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts.”

A small number of these hairs of his head, for a sign, were to be bound in his skirt. What did this act signify? This message was to a few. How many are a few? It is not a specific number, but indicates a small number in comparison to the many hairs cut from his head. These selected few were to be bound in his skirt. What does this say to us, brethren and sisters? Perhaps, help can be found in Ezekiel 16:6-8. Here God was again speaking through His faithful prophet to His people, reminding how He had taken them to Himself:

“. . . when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee . . . *Live*.

“I have caused thee to multiply . . .

“. . . and I *spread my skirt* over thee . . . yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.”

A covering, a covenant, a becoming His. How great the blessing, and how needful for us if we are to live!

Further, we read of Ruth who sought the help of Boaz:

“. . . I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.” (Ruth 3:9)

The Hebrew word for “near kinsman” is often used as “redeemer”, “ransomer”, “deliverer” — a covering for one in need. Ruth was in great need and sought the protection of one who could be a redeemer to her.

Perhaps this helps us to perceive what it would mean to those in captivity as Ezekiel spoke of taking a few of these hairs, destined otherwise to destruction, and binding them in his skirt, where they were protected and covered. It would give them, a few only, the hope of redemption and salvation from the destruction to come. This covering was much like the ark which was the means of deliverance to a few (eight souls) in the time of Noah. These few believed and feared God, looking for deliverance from the destruction to come. The redemption was granted only to those who, in faith, sought God, and by long witnessing proved their belief in His promise.

Almost eighty years after the time of Ezekiel, another prophet of God spoke, during the time of the restoration of the temple and Jerusalem. Zechariah encouraged a few in this work:

“... Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets . . .” (Chapter 8:9)

To those that heard the promise was spoken:

“... I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.” (verse 12)

Again — a remnant, a few, who, as in Ezekiel’s time heard. Further, in Zechariah we read in verse 23:

“... In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men (not many) shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.”

Take hold, we find, means “to seize”, “to fasten upon”, “to be strengthened”. Indeed, this word is a part of the name of the prophet Ezekiel, meaning “*strengthened* of God”. Here, again, a few seek, fasten upon the covering of Him that is a Jew, believing in salvation. How much this simple act of Ezekiel, of binding the hair in his skirt, must have meant to the distressed and faithful few in Babylon!

When we think about this carefully, the example of a little child clinging to his mother’s skirt comes to mind. When a little child is frightened, in need, lonely or shy, where does he find comfort and refuge? Clinging to the skirts of his mother. This enables us more closely to feel the tender protective love of our Father. What a shelter and blessing we have in the midst of fear and weakness! But, as the child grows and becomes more self-sufficient, more confident in his own strength, the young one now is less inclined to seek the shelter of those skirts. Does this help us to comprehend more fully Jesus’ words:

“... Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 18:3)

Under His Wings

To enlarge our understanding, we find the Hebrew word for skirt is also used as wings, again implying a covering. Jesus spoke of such a covering as He wept over Jerusalem in her refusal to hear:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her wings*, and ye would not!”

(Matt. 23:37)

Again, only a few sought the covering of His wings, His skirt, for there were “many called but few chosen”. Who were the chosen ones? Those who sought and valued the covert of His wings, recognising their urgent need.

Pondering further, we think of the figure of the cherubims in the most holy place of the tabernacle:

“... the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings”

(Exodus 25:20)

And, God tells us of His purpose in this:

“... the mercy seat that is over the testimony, *where I will meet with thee.*” (Exodus 30:6)

What a volume of meaning this holds for us! It was only those who were covered, bound in His skirt, under the shadow of His wings, who had the blessing of communication with Him, and the mediatorship of the high priest who went once a year into the most holy place.

Can we see why David prayed:

“Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,” (Psalm 17:8)

What a great hope and blessing it is, brethren and sisters, to be one of the few who can be bound in the skirt! Can we see how it would speak to the faithful few in captivity, and how much it can mean to us today, can help us seek that covering, to strive to abide under the wings of Him that will gather a few to Himself?

Yet, how easily that precious covering can be lost. We have an example in David’s seeking of vengeance upon Nabal, a natural thing to do, yet displeasing to God who has said: “Vengeance is mine”. David was helped through Abigail who came and pleaded with him to restrain himself, even though Nabal was deserving only of death. We remember Abigail’s words in I Samuel 25:29-31:

“Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be *bound in the bundle of life with the LORD* thy God

“And it shall come to pass

“That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself”

What love and courage Abigail showed — a true friend. She recognised that David was one of those few “*bound in the bundle of life with the Lord,*” and was in danger of losing that covering by taking matters

into his own hand. So she was quick to plead with him, lest he be brought to grief and shame.

We know how few there are that are bound in the skirts and, thus, separated from the world and sheltered from the judgments of God. Perhaps, then, these words of Ezekiel, spoken to comfort a few, can help us today, brethren and sisters, to fasten upon His redemption, hoping to escape the devastation we know will come upon the earth.

We look for the time of the Lord Jesus' return, a time of deliverance, and escape from death for the faithful. To encourage us, another of God's prophets wrote:

“. . . behold the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

“But unto you that fear my name shall the *Sun* of righteousness arise *with healing in his wings*; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.” (Malachi 4:1-2)

This is the same hope that Ezekiel revealed to the few who were bound in his skirts as a symbol of being under the covering of the Almighty.

How is such possible? Only through God's mercy, and our awareness of His love, as we struggle to help each other seek Him.

“Then they that *feared the LORD* spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened . . .” (Malachi 3:16)

What would these speak one to another? Pleasantries, gossip, idle conversation? No, like Abigail, they would seek to help one another, to strengthen each other, seeking to remain bound in His skirts. Remember, “. . . The Lord hearkened and heard it . . .” He does know our every word and, if our speaking together pleases Him, it will uplift each other and strengthen the bonds. So, we are told:

“. . . a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

“And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” (verses 16-17)

We hope to be spared. We hope to be precious to Him, like jewels, but can only be as we fear God and serve Him with oneness of heart. So, we can hope to be found in that bundle of life, written in the book of remembrance — the book of life which will be opened when He returns.

J.A.DeF.

Hidden “from the wise” and “revealed unto babes”

“Hearken unto me, my people, my righteousness is near”.

“I have put my words in thy mouth and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundation of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.”

(Isaiah 51:16)

THE PORTION OF ISAIAH from which the above is taken has been exhibited in the British Museum in the past. There the scroll could be seen, carefully penned in the original Hebrew language upon leather, yellow and brown with age, but with the writing still clearly legible. This scroll is so old that it could have been handled by the Lord Jesus or indeed may have been amongst those preserved in the time of Jeremiah. As one stood by the case in which the scroll was exhibited and watched class after class of students with their teachers coming along to inspect this remarkable exhibit, it was difficult to restrain oneself from speaking upon the glorious things hidden in the prophet’s messages. It made us feel that it was an unspeakable privilege to hear the voice of the Almighty calling unto us and saying — “Hearken unto me.”

Why is it that so very few are permitted to hear the Wonders of His Voice? There is no lack of the written Word which contains His voice; no lack of evidence (as the discovery of the Judean Scrolls reminds us) that the Word is true. It is as the Lord Jesus said in Israel in His day: “Their ears are dull of hearing and their hearts are heavy.” This dreadful condition also applies to the latter-day apostates who say they cannot judge, which is the same as saying they cannot hear His voice. Great has been His mercy towards us; great is His loving kindness who (in the words of our subject) says — “Thou art my people”; and great is His promise of unending glory in addressing us as “Zion”.

We who are living in the latter days can feel the truth of what the prophet is telling us is to happen in the end — the removal of the old heavens and earth and the establishment of the new. Speaking of the present heaven the prophet says they are to vanish like smoke and the earth is to become “old as a garment”. The sisters will appreciate this descriptive figure — how the earth has become “rotten” — with no strength to hold together. A generation ago a faint perception of godliness kept society together. Now, even that small influence has

gone. Married life, family life, is breaking down. Society is corrupt and unashamed and signs of its dissolution appear. What is to take its place? The Spirit shows that a people is being prepared for this great work, who receive His words in their mouth; and concerning whom it is written:

“Say unto Zion, Thou art my people.”

“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.”

(Psalm 50:2)

We are given a glimpse of the glorious work of God which is to take the place of prevailing corruption. God's people, declared to be “Zion”, are styled as the “perfection of beauty”. Nothing can surpass perfection: nothing can transcend the glory which is to be given to God's children. This work begins in a simple and humble way, as it did with Abraham; but how great was the power of the Spirit working unseen. The birth of Isaac and also the birth of the nation of Israel are wonderful witnesses to the sufficiency of this power. This same power is now present in our midst — working to fit His words into our lips. This cannot be achieved instantly. Such words to be sincere must come right from our heart and express the inner man, the man of God, which is being developed. The prophet shows how this is to be achieved:

“The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth (me) morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord hath opened mine ear and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.”

(Isaiah 50:4-5)

If only every one could say the same! We all confess that sometimes in our probation we have resented the word of exhortation and wanted to go our own way. We have felt the word speaking clearly, but have shut it out and turned our back. In the mercy of God something has happened, and we have been “plucked as a brand from the burning,” and delivered from the perils which might have overtaken us. When we look back on the past and see how nearly our feet had slipped, let us be thankful to the Almighty, and never allow ourselves to be in that position again. Next the prophet shows how the Lord Jesus learned obedience —

“I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” (Isaiah 50:6)

It is experiences similar to these that teach the flesh its own weakness and make the man of God rely absolutely upon the power of the Spirit. As we pass through trials our hearts learn to depend upon

God. Then His words are not merely sayings to us but necessary daily food. The heart becomes furnished with the beauties of the Spirit, and the mouth fitted with the excellence of His words. And so the promise is fulfilled:

“I will give you a mouth which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.”

He who created man's mouth is able to give to it words of wisdom, it is the work of His Spirit operating upon the heart, and by which grace is poured into the lips.

So we journey to Zion. Mount Zion is still on the street plan of Jerusalem, reminding us of the Psalm:

“They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion which cannot be removed for ever.” (Psalm 125:1)

We are “living stones” which are to make up the city of Zion, to be founded in glory upon the mountains of Zion. Before the whole earth the veil is soon to be drawn aside. Zion will appear in great glory. Universally it will be recognised the time has come when God has broken His long silence — and —

“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.”

(Psalm 50:2)

W.V.B.



In the “Others” - those who once had the Truth

ALTHOUGH THE *‘others’* are divided into five major sects and many smaller ones, they are confederate on the same principle as Christendom in recognising each other as part of the “Brotherhood”. It is because of this tenuous connection between them, constituting them as one, or as they themselves would say the “One Body”, that the heresies arising in any one of the sects affects the whole. They all bear the same name. They all recognise each other as “brethren of Christ”.

The *‘others’* have also failed to realise the importance of applying the doctrine of fellowship — to “put away evil from among them”. Disobedient to these divine requirements, some of their leaders say that it is wrong to withdraw from them. What is so incomprehensible is that while they seem to give a feeble assent to the need of withdrawal from an individual who is evil and will not repent, when the evil spreads to a number then withdrawal must not take place.

It has even been argued that to withdraw from a number is like the hireling who flees from protecting his flock when the wolf comes. A gross perversion of the divine figure. Safeguarding the flock certainly requires the shepherd to stay with it, but no true shepherd would stand idly by while wolves devoured his flock. He would have the wolves slain and removed. Those who are evil and will not repent may appear like sheep; may seem as part of the flock, but as the Apostle says they are really wolves in sheeps’ clothing. How distressed the Lord Jesus must be that some claiming to belong to Him should use His teaching to keep wolves masquerading as sheep within the flock, destroying the flock.

“Grievous wolves . . . not sparing the flock.” Acts 20:29.

These are the words of the inspired Apostle Paul used to describe those who would “arise” speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

So important was this message to those in Ephesus that the Apostle said:

“Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears.”

Amongst the *‘others’* many wolves have entered destroying what was once the flock of God. The leaders who should have been shepherds have failed to carry out the divine requirements to deliver the

flock from the prey of the grievous wolves. The Spirit says concerning these:

“Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherd search for my flock

“Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. Behold I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand.” Ezekiel 34:7-10

Let it be clearly understood that “grievous wolves entering the flock” are those who speak things contrary to the Word of God, and so destroy those who may be led away by them.



The Birth of the Spirit (John 3)

THE READING FROM JOHN CHAPTER 3 brings to mind the time when the children of God are called to the Truth and are born again of water by baptism in their desire to endorse the teaching of the Spirit which they have imbibed.

However, there is implied in these verses that a continuance is part of the birth of the Spirit. In any case, it would seem to be a mistake to read the first twenty one verses — ending with the section on those who do evil hating the Light, and those who do truth coming to the Light, as applying to the past only: the time when we either choose to embrace the Light, or turn away from the Light, preferring to remain in the darkness. In addition, there is an illustration of what is meant by being born of the Spirit in verse 8, as distinct from being born of water, showing there needs to be a continuance of life in the Spirit after the initial birth of the child of God by the Spirit:

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

Does not this teaching take us right to the present? The blowing of the wind is a regular occurrence — month in, month out, year after year. Not an experience that we witnessed in the distant past, but the sound of the wind is an ever present witness to its existence. “So is everyone that is born of the spirit,” Jesus says.

Why did He refer to the sound of the wind, rather than to its visible effects, such as the raising of dust and leaves, and sometimes the crashing down of trees and branches? Must it not be that such spectacles are not an appropriate description of those who are born of the Spirit? These, the children of the Spirit, are not the strong and powerful in this dispensation, who can overthrow the mighty (high ones, like trees); neither do they whip up the dust and rubbish of the earth to vex people with the irritations of controversy and strife. So, as it is the sound of the wind that depicts the children of God, is it not by their conversation, to use the broad scriptural term, that the children of the Spirit are manifested? It is not by their appearance; it is not by world shaking works — at least in this age, but it is by their good confession of Christ and the Father, in the general sense — and daily — that it is seen who are the children born of the Spirit.

Perhaps we should analyse what is this good confession which sets the standard of our daily conversation, or manner of life; bearing in mind that we are still in the flesh, and will never be perfect as long as

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we are in this mortal body. Does that mean we can allow ten or twenty per cent self-indulgence: to have our fling on occasion, and then return like a prodigal child to behave properly for a while? Indeed it does not allow this: the parable of the prodigal son does not concern one who has already come to the Truth and been born of the Spirit.

As viewed from heaven, all peoples of the earth come under one of two categories, as implied by verse 6:

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

This means that everyone born into the word, being flesh, bears the condemnation of flesh along with the beasts, unless he becomes Spirit. A fundamental fact confirmed by the Psalm 49:12:

“Man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish.”

In verses 20 and 21 of John 3 we can see the beginning of that vital change that has to take place in everyone before they can be regarded by God as Spirit, or spiritual.

“For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.”

It is difficult to imagine a more incisive, yet terse declaration in verse 20 of the true condemnation of all who are not, and will not be born of the Spirit. However in verse 21 is shown the difference in those who are led by the Spirit, who become the sons and daughters of God, being born again of the Spirit. Here, in “Doing Truth” is the desire to submit to the whole of God’s arrangement, and walk according to all His ways. This will reveal a dreadful contrast with the way of the flesh which is so familiar to all.

This contrast must produce a conflict, otherwise known as “the enmity”, in those who are of the spirit, or spiritual; and must arouse self-condemnation or repentance. It is only by realising what we should be like, and realising what we are like, that repentance can be real and effectual.

May we, at this juncture, look at a practical example, conveniently placed in the same day’s readings, showing how one can be in the flesh, yet spiritual, born of the Spirit. How the same one sinned through weakness, yet his repentance showed that he did not allow sin as something excusable in certain circumstances.

In verse one of I Chron. 21 we are told how King David came to enforce the fateful numbering of Israel:-

“And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.”

Who the Satan was, we are not told; whether a threatening enemy such as the Philistines, with whom they were in conflict, or one of Israel, we do not know. Whoever it was, it was the thinking of the flesh to derive pride and confidence in the now very large army of Israel. David was given help against this adversary in the opposition of Joab and his captains, who warned David that it would be a cause of trespass. Unfortunately David was not to be entreated on this occasion, but imposed his will on the people, to their acute suffering. The fact that God was displeased with many in Israel in any case did not mitigate David's sin; so how do we see David a man born of the Spirit in this time of trouble and folly?

Do we not see David as a man that doeth truth and cometh to the Light in his forthright condemnation of his own wrong? Though he was the King, and the one who insisted that the numbering should be carried out, we read in verse 8 and in the rest of the chapter that he made no concessions to pride, in trying to save his face, or defend his action.

“And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.”

Had David been yet of the flesh and not of the Spirit, he would have kicked against the rebuke; either defending or excusing his action, or objecting to the retribution, which is such a familiar pattern in all who are not born of the Spirit: hating the Light, and will not come to it. David's repentance is confirmed in v. 7 and the fruits meet for his repentance are seen in his willingness to offer the burnt offerings at his own expense, showing his condemnation of his own flesh.

“And David said unto God, is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? Even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray, O Lord my God, be upon me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.”

What a testimony to the divine way of salvation that David's mind was substantially akin to those who were bitten by the serpent in Moses' day; who “Looked upon” the condemned serpent upon a pole and lived, though they had the sting of death in them, that is sin.

They lived because they saw in that cursed serpent, that their iniquity condemned them.

Even Jesus also, in associating Himself with that serpent that hanged upon a tree showed the very same confession and condemnation of His iniquity that tempted Him to sin. Then coming right to the present day we see how he that doeth truth, and comes to the Light, is born of the same Spirit and will live, and not perish. He will "Look upon" Jesus condemned on the tree, believing in Him, or as He believed, saying with all who belong to Christ: My iniquity condemns me, rather than "My righteousness saves me."

A.E.I.



“The Signs of His Coming and of the end of the World”

“ . . . Dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.”
(Ezekiel 38:11)

DR. THOMAS DID PERCEIVE THE SIGNIFICATION of the above prophecy, but of course could not see what is now so evident. His words were:

“Now any person acquainted with the present insecure condition of Palestine . . . must be satisfied from the testimony, that some other power friendly to Israel must then have become paramount over the land, which is able to guarantee protection to them, and to put the surrounding tribes in fear. This is all that is needed, namely, security for life and property . . .”

Since 1948 Israel has trodden a tight-rope existence. In conflicts with the surrounding nations and against Palestinian guerillas she has striven for life having little or no real political support. Standing alone she has waged war against the immediate threat, though American materials and finance have been a great help to her.

Opposition from Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Jordan seemed to be intransigent. But the Jews were determined to hold on. In the words of one of them, an immigrant from California, their philosophy is summed up as follows:

“This is the land of my Jewish ancestors. We don’t have to justify our presence here to anyone in the world. I will fight for this land and if necessary die for it.”

This Jew was speaking particularly about the West Bank of the Jordan River, which Israel has occupied and settled since the 1967 war. It is the home of 720,000 Arabs, and not particularly inviting country, being rough and hot terrain, yet has been the cause of four wars and 50,000 deaths. In this occupied area, and the Gaza strip, and the Golan Heights, 55,000 Jews now live, in 77 settlements, in land which previous to the 1967 war, the Arabs had held.

There is a great determination in these settlers to go on building rather than retreat from their endeavours. This is evident in additional remarks from the immigrant already mentioned as follows:

“Who is occupying what? Did the world call it occupation when the Jordanians were here? What right did they have to this land? And did one of them ever consider himself a Palestinian in those 20 years? This is our land, our claim is biblical and logical. There isn’t a single man in Israel who doesn’t feel that this is his by inheritance or right. We will care for it and defend it and we are not going to give it up. We are not going to commit suicide to make the world say what good Jews we are.”

Before the new Israeli Prime Minister was elected to office, his campaign was that everything West of the Jordan was Israel’s by divine right. Since then the Egyptian President took a major diplomatic initiative in visiting Israel to begin a process of negotiations. This has been followed by Israel’s President visiting Egypt to continue these negotiations.

The rapprochement of the two nations has been somewhat veiled, no doubt particularly for the sake of the Egyptian President’s standing in the Arab world, for the Arabs will not be likely to adjust too readily to a peace formulae. But the hints of the drawing together of Israel and Egypt are evident. For example when the Israeli Prime Minister visited London in December he said that Israel had never suggested concluding a separate peace agreement with Egypt, but if Egypt concluded that other Arab states would not join them and therefore suggested the signing of an Egyptian-Israeli treaty, then “we would not refuse to do so.”

At an appropriate later date the Egyptian President revealed that Israel had offered to withdraw from all Egyptian territory occupied in the 1967 war. His words were “. . . the official Israeli decision is that there are no difference on Egypt’s international borders, although I did not ask for this” So far the Israeli proposition to solve the Arab Palestinian problem by giving West Bank Arabs self-rule has not been acceptable to the Egyptian political stance. This was not enough concession said the Egyptian President. He wanted the Arab part of Jerusalem to return to the Arabs, and the establishment of a Palestinian state which would include the Gaza Strip. No doubt bearing in mind his counterparts in other Arab countries he stated that contrary to the allegations of several hostile Arab leaders he was not seeking a separate peace with Israel. But peace he wants, and peace he is seeking for.

Israel has now offered to abolish the existing military administration of the territories captured in 1967 to be replaced by a civilian one elected by all the inhabitants over eighteen years of age in those territories, Bethlehem to be the seat of such civil administration.

People of the territories being given the choice of having either Israeli or Jordanian citizenship. Special arrangements to be made concerning Jerusalem, giving freedom of access to the ancient place and monuments. So steps are being taken, and ideas are emerging that are leading towards a period of peace.

Concerning Sinai, Israel has suggested a United Nations base in that area to keep the peace. A permanent arrangement that could only be altered by the U.N.O. Security Council, or by a joint Egyptian-Israeli decision.

The Egyptian leader has stated that "understanding on the broad lines of an agreement" for Middle East peace has been secured, not only for Egypt but also Jordan and Syria. Such an outcome from the initial approach of Egypt to Israel has been described as a "historic event". Indeed it is. It could be the beginning of a great change in Israel's circumstances.

That Egypt means to try for such a peace is shown in its determined action against Russia. The Soviet cultural centres and Soviet consulates outside Cairo have been caused to be closed by the Egyptian Government. The Egyptian leader has called it a "lesson" for the Soviet Union "because it created the Arab Rejection Front." Included in such a far reaching decision have been the so called cultural centres of East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria. Some of these Russian satellites also have consulates outside Cairo, which have been closed. The Russian consulate in Alexandria has been affected, also at Port Said and at Aswan in Upper Egypt. The Egyptian President was specific in saying these places were disseminating propaganda and "inciting their agents within the country to subversion against the Egyptian President's peace initiative."

America has been very interested in these developments. The United States President's visiting Saudi Arabia and Egypt in January to discuss these events no doubt has leant weight to Israeli views which might promote general acceptance short of a separate Palestinian state, which could become a Soviet satellite in the heart of the Middle East, thus preventing what Israel and Egypt, particularly are now seeking.

America, it seems, is indicating, or going to indicate, that it will become a guarantor to Israel if it will co-operate with the Arabs. So a very evident trend is emerging.

That which the prophecy showed would be when written all those many years ago. That the Northern Power would descend upon a

people who had achieved some form of peace.

“In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it?

“And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts . . . against my people of Israel” (Ezek. 38:14-16)

D.L.



News from the Ecclesias

EDEN, NEW YORK: Grange Hall, Church Street,

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.30 a.m., Sunday School 1.30 p.m., Bible Class: Midweek: Forestville, Buffalo, Hamburg, and Orchard Park. Alternative Week: Revelation Study.

Response to recent advertising in Buffalo, New York, is most encouraging. As replies are sent to those inquiring, we pray for His help and guidance in this work.

We are grateful for the care and protection granted in recent heavy snow storms, reminders of His great power.

Thoughts and supplications are with those in travail and anguish. The comfort in every circumstance is that He knows our every need and is ready to provide.

J.A.DeF.

“PENTRIP”, Black Rock, Portmadoc,

Breaking of Bread: Sundays, 11.30 a.m.
Bible Class: Mid-Week.

Recently a visitor at Beddgelert in passing saw our poster in the window and made enquiries. A talk ensued and a leaflet was taken.

We do look forward to the spring in the expectation of seeing brethren and sisters.

Meanwhile we continue our studies, hoping that we shall be able to continue faithfully unto the end, which seems very near.

per D.L.

MANCHESTER: Ryecroft Hall Annexe, Audenshaw, Manchester.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread: 11.30 a.m.

Bible Class: 7.30 p.m. in the ante room to large hall,
Wednesday evening.

“At the end” the vision “shall speak, and not lie”. This is a comfort from Him, in a time of difficulty and infirmity. The spirit also declares, “though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come”. How precious the Truth really is; not giving the flesh confidence, as numbers and the mundane success of a high circulation of publications might give to some.

But giving that simplicity and clarity, which is the hallmark of “the still small voice”.

May such thoughts from Him, buoy up our hearts and minds in times of trial and sadness.

D.L.

