

Beauties of the Truth

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Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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Balaam's Fourth Prophecy

Balaam is an enigma. That he was greedy seems clear. That he had some courage is also in evidence. That he was an enemy of Israel is certainly implied. He was honest enough to warn Balak that he would speak no more and no less than he was authorized by God. The passage does not imply he was a false prophet, for his predictions came true. He spoke for God; and God, through an angel, spoke with him.

He served as an oracle of God, and he understood the principles by which God operated. Thus he knew how to turn God's favor away from his chosen people by inducing them "to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab". (**Numbers 25:1**)

He is, perhaps, the only non-Jewish prophet of God since Israel became a covenant people. Though the derivation of his name is unclear, most authorities say it means "the son of the foreigner." This may indicate he was a non-Jew or, conversely, that the Japhethites who were the main inhabitants of Aramea considered him a foreigner, possibly a Semite.

The question naturally arises how he had established his position with God. All we know about his background is that he came from the Mesopotamian village of Pethor. His fame was wide spread. Pethor is about 375 miles north of Moab. **Numbers 23:7** indicates he probably migrated to the "mountains of the east" in Aram, which rise just east of the Tigris, about 300 miles east of Pethor.

The Bible indicates only two geographic areas of the worship of Jehovah: (1) Wherever the Jewish people were, whether in Egypt, the wilderness, or Canaan; (2) Haran, the temporary home of Abraham, where some of his relatives remained after he came to Canaan, and where Isaac and Jacob resorted for their wives. As Pethor is only 17 miles from Haran, Balaam may have received his knowledge of God from the family of Abraham. He is called a "soothsayer" in **Joshua 13:22**. This may indicate his prophetic talents were intermingled with incantations. Or, more likely, perhaps Joshua used the term as a pejorative to diminish Balaam to his audience.

FOUR PROPHECIES

Balak, king of Moab, probably went to such great lengths to import Balaam because he felt a prophet of Israel's own God would be more effective in cursing the Jewish people than a follower of the Moabite gods. The story of Balaam's journey and the incident with the talking ass are well-known. Probably this experience gave rise to the later, repeated description of Balaam as the man "whose eyes are open."

At this time Israel was camped on the broad alluvial flood plain of the Jordan at the foot of the pass that goes to Amman. Steep hills to the east rise sharply from this plain in what is now the country of Jordan. To the south the tallest hills are Mount Pisgah and Mount Nebo. To the north is Mount Peor. When Balaam prophesied prosperity for Israel from Mount Nebo, Balak took him to Pisgah to get a better view of the size of the camp (about two million persons). Failing there, he was taken to Peor, fifteen miles north, to show him the vast extension. After these three prophecies failed to curse Israel, Balaam uttered a fourth prophecy. (**Numbers 24:14-24**) This prophecy differs from the first three in that it particularly refers to events "of the latter days" (verse 14).

This fourth prophecy is itself divided into four sections, each starting with the phrase "he took up his parable."

THE FIRST PARABLE

The first parable is Messianic in nature. Almost all commentators, both Christian and Jewish, agree with this interpretation. Most also see a dual application, both to King David and to the Messiah whom he represents. Pastor Russell adds a third application, to the second advent. We concur with this addition.

The predictions of verse 17 are specifically mentioned as applying to a future time. "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh." The fulfillment belongs to another time and place. The ingredients of the vision are twofold: (1) a star out of Jacob, and (2) a scepter out of Israel.

The famous Jewish Rabbi, Maimonides, sees a striking parallelism here.

"I shall see him but not now. This is David. I shall behold him, but not nigh. This is the king Messiah. A star shall come out of Jacob. This is David. A scepter shall rise out of Israel. This is the king Messiah. And shall smite the corners of Moab. This is David, as it is written (**2 Samuel 8:2**) `And he smote Moab, casting them down to the ground: And shall destroy all the children of Sheth. This is the king Messiah of whom it is written, (**Psalms 72:8**) `He shall have dominion from sea to sea.' "

The scepter symbol is easy to identify. David was the first to hold the scepter in Judah. (**Genesis 49:10**) It passed to Jesus, as Shiloh, at his first advent (Volume 2, page 82). In a larger sense it is descriptive of his second advent. (**Hebrews 1:8**)

THE STAR OF DAVID

The star is more problematic. The expression "star of David" is a common one. It is also an ancient symbol. Archaeologists have found traces of it in carvings as far back as the times of Solomon. There is an explanation of the origin of this symbol which appeals to us.

When David first became king in Hebron, the kingdom had been rent in two. The ten northern tribes were loyal to the house of Saul and sought a succession from his household. Judah and Benjamin supported David's claim to the throne. After seven years of strife, David succeeded in uniting the two kingdoms. It was a union not destined to last. In less than a hundred years, in the beginning of the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam, the nation split again into the same division as existed when David reigned from Hebron.

The star of David is composed of two interlocking triangles. The triangle has long been identified with strength, and is therefore used architecturally in trusses. David joined the southern and northern kingdoms, represented by facing triangles, and produced the "star of David." Note that the resulting shape has 12 exterior surfaces, one for each of the tribes of Israel.



The Star of David

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

A star figures prominently in the narrative of Jesus' birth. The wise men from the east followed a star (or some astral phenomenon) to Jerusalem where they were directed to the village of Bethlehem. They received confirmation of this direction by the star, hidden for awhile, reappearing.

Much has been written about this star, and we will not repeat the various theories here. Three observations from these discussions will suffice. (1) The function of the star was to point to Messiah. (2) The star led them first to Jerusalem, the city where David earlier had joined the two kingdoms to produce a united nation, as represented in his star. (3) The star was likely the planet Jupiter, involved in a series of conjunctions with Venus, Mars, Mercury and Regulus, in 3 BC and 2 BC (see "What Was the Star of Bethlehem?;" *Beauties of the Truth*, December, 1980).

THE MORNING STAR

The star symbol is also associated with the second advent of Christ. "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star". (**Revelation 22:16**) Two other texts also bear on this subject. (1) Revelation 2:26-28, "And he that overcometh... I will give him the morning star:" (2) 2 Peter 1:19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

In the two Revelation texts, the Morning Star represents Jesus. Yet Jesus is also the Sun of Righteousness. (**Malachi 4:2**) Is he both? The morning star is not the sun. It is the indicator of the rising sun. It is not even really a star. The morning star is a planet. It is the planet Venus. A star (and the sun is a star) originates light; a planet reflects light.

Beauties of the Truth, February, 1982, cites an article by C. E. Stewart on "The Glory of Jehovah in Our Solar System;" in which the symbology of the planets is considered. This article suggests Venus represents the church and gives nine points in support. This thought is bolstered further by the only Biblical reference to Venus. The Persian word for Venus is Hishtar (or, as we know it better, Esther, the Jewish queen of Persia, Reprint page 4900). Esther is generally conceded to be a picture of the Church.

Since the star of the first advent was a pointer to Messiah, it is logical that the star of the second advent be a pointer to his return. An approach that harmonizes the two thoughts - that the star represents Jesus or a

pointer to Jesus - is found on page 92 of the Reprints. "Christ is called both the Morning Star and the Sun of Righteousness, and these seem to be related to each other as the day dawn and the 'perfect day.' When Christ rose from the dead, on the first day of the week, it was early, 'when it was yet dark'. (**John 20:1**) It was in the dawn of the day, and this together with the many evidences, seems to show that the same is to be true of the church in the dawn of the great day... Then, indeed, they would have the Morning Star, and it would be very early in the morning, while it is yet dark, to the world."

In other words the Morning Star refers to the proclamation of Christ's return during the secret "parousia;" and the Sun of Righteousness refers to the revealing of that presence during the "apokalupsis." As the church shares in the Sun of Righteousness, they also share in the Morning Star, spreading forth the early announcement of the returned Lord.

Recapping this parable, we see both of the symbols Balaam introduces - star and scepter - are aptly chosen for King David, and the first and second advents of the Messiah.

EDOM, A POSSESSION

The thought in verse 18, of Edom becoming a possession, is similar to that given in the prophecy of **Am 9:11,12**, which says the restored "tabernacle of David" shall "possess the remnant of Edom." When the Apostle James quoted this text in **Acts 15:16,17** he used the Septuagint, which has "the residue of men" instead of "the remnant of Edom:" Both words are possible from the Hebrew by a mere switch of the vowel points. In this case Edom may represent the race of Adam. A similar case is in **Ob 21**.

The American Standard and other reliable translations use "sons of tumult" in place of "sons of Sheth" in verse seventeen, translating the Hebrew word instead of making it a proper noun. For this reason Maimonides interprets the text as Messiah having dominion from "sea to sea."



The Angel Appearing to Balaam

THE SECOND PARABLE

Balaam's second parable is found in verse twenty: "And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever."

In this verse the first verb is in the past tense. He is referring back to the victory over the Amalekites when Joshua fought them in the wilderness while Aaron and Hur upheld the arms of Moses. In the immediate context Balaam is showing that Amalek was only the first of the nations which would fall to the Israelitish forces. There would be at least ten more that would similarly fall. (**Genesis 15:19-21**)

However, the latter verb in this parallel is in the future tense, indicating that there were to be yet more victories over Amalek. This may look forward to the slaughter of Amalek by King Saul, which was made complete with the slaying of their king Agag by Samuel. We are not to get the thought, though, that every Amalekite was slain in that battle, only the Amalekites of that region, for in the book of Esther we meet another Amalekite, perhaps a descendant of Agag, or more likely one who inherited his royal title - Haman the Agagite.

The title of the Amalekite kings, Agag, suggests a deeper level of interpretation. Literally the Amalekites were not the "first of the nations:" Many national groups preceded them, though they were the first of Israel's enemies to fall to them in battle. But the consonants in the word "Agag;" with a change of vowel points, gives a clue to truly the first enemy. The word "Gog" uses not only the same consonants but has the same meaning as "Agag;" namely "roof, or that which covers." The only "Gog" who can oppose Israel at the beginning of the Millennium, and be around to "encompass the camp of the saints" at the end of the Millennium, is Satan. And his end, too, is "to perish forever."

THE THIRD PARABLE

The third parable, surprisingly, is against the Kenites. It is also a parable of destruction. It is surprising because the Kenites, though one of the ten nations to be dispossessed, was the one which treated Israel the most kindly. Their chief guide in the wilderness wanderings was Hobab, a Kenite. They granted Israel free passage through their land at the head of the Red Sea. Jael, the wife of the Kenite Heber, drove the tent peg through the skull of Sisera in the days of Deborah and Barak.

To grasp the import of this parable we must look briefly at who the Kenites were. Translated into English, they would be the Smith family, for they were smiths (as in blacksmith), workers in metals. They fashioned tools and weapons from iron, and images, utensils and jewelry from copper. They lived as itinerants among other tribes. They had three main locations - one in southwest Sinai, where Hobab originated; their main encampment around the present city of Eilat at the head of the Red Sea where they smelted copper; and among the Edomites where they supplied the flourishing caravan trade with tools for sale. It is this third group of Kenites, who were not friendly to Israel, that Balaam is focusing on. This is evident from his expression that they made their nest ("ken" in Hebrew, a word play with "Kenite") in the rock. The Septuagint, a Greek translation, says they made their nest in Petra. Petra (or Seir as it was then known) was the capital city of the Edomites and is referred to with similar designations in Obadiah.

In describing their end, Balaam looks nearly a thousand years down the stream of time to when the invading Assyrians would not only take Edom and the Kenites of that region captive, but also the tent-tribe kingdom of Israel.

THE FOURTH PARABLE

Alfred Edersheim, in his Old Testament History, has this to say about the fourth parable. "This latter may, indeed, be characterized as the most wonderful of prophecies. More than a thousand years before the event, not only the rising of the great world-empire of the West is here predicted, with its conquest of Asshur and Eber (i.e. of the descendants of Eber, **Genesis 10:21**), but far beyond this the final destruction of that world-empire is foretold! In fact, we have here a series of prophecies, commencing with the appearance of the Messiah and closing with the destruction of Anti-Christ. To this there is no parallel in Scripture, except in the visions of Daniel. No ingenuity of hostile criticism can take from, or explain away the import of this marvelous prediction" (Volume 3, page 28).

The fact that this prophecy would be of far distant fulfillment is implied in the words "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this." In other words, who of you would be alive when this will occur - No one!

Daniel's prophecies focused on the four universal empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Assyria was the forerunner of Babylon and the most powerful kingdom in the world until overrun by the Babylonian army. In the third parable, Balaam saw the conquest of the Assyrian hordes. Now he sees that nation fall to the "ships of Chittim."

A clear identification of Chittim can be found in 1 Maccabees 1:1, "And it happened, after that Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came out of the land of Kittim, had smitten Darius the king of the Persians and Medes, that he reigned in his stead, the first over Greece." Alexander came from Macedonia, where Kittim, the son of Javan, settled. (**Genesis 10:4**) Later they moved on to Cyprus and thence to Italy. Their intense maritime activities came in time to make the word Chittim a byword for all the seacoast countries of the west.

Thus Balaam, in his prophecy, not only foresees the conquests of Assyria, but the rise of the Greek and Roman empires that would follow.

Though Edersheim, in the quote above, treats Eber as meaning his descendants, which would include the Hebrews (in fact, the name Hebrew is derived from the word Eber), we are more inclined to look at the use of Eber as it was used contemporarily with Balaam - those from "across the river:" This would be a fitting designation for the Babylonians whose capital was east of the Euphrates. Thus treated, Balaam is showing the fall of not only Assyria, but their conquerors Babylon, and their conquerors Persia, to the forces of Alexander of Chittim and his successors, Rome.

But Balaam is not through yet. Of Chittim he says, "and he also shall perish forever:" Here, in capsule form, Balaam sees what Daniel sees - the four universal empires falling together. The four parables now come full circle. As Daniel had foreseen the collapse of the fourth empire to be by the smiting of the stone of Messiah's Kingdom, so the Messianic first parable concluded with the results of this fourth parable - "Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city."

As Edersheim remarks, Balaam has uttered quite a remarkable prophecy indeed and as Maimonides correctly quoted, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river [Euphrates] to the ends of the earth". (**Psalms 72:8**)

- *Carl Hagensick*

Let This Cup Pass From Me

There are a few words of Jesus in the garden that should be most sobering for us. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt... O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done". (**Matthew 26:39,42**)

We do not question the application that these words could apply to the weight of the world's redemption laying on his shoulders; to the ignominy and shame attaching to the most noble offering of him as the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world and that he would bear his last moments forsaken, corresponding to Adam. However, we want to offer an additional perspective that gives an answer to this request; one that puts it in a context which makes the prayer legitimate and one that the Father could and did answer.

In his early ministry he was fully aware of the severe cup he was to drink. To the request of the mother of Zebedee's children, Jesus answered in **Matthew 20:22**, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" An hour or two before his words in the garden, Jesus asked the disciples and us to drink of his cup. Minutes after his prayer in Gethsemane, Peter drew his sword and Jesus said "Put up thy sword into the sheath. The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (**John 18:11**)

So what was his state of mind in his prayer in **Matthew 26**, "If possible, let this cup pass from me"? Notice, after passing the cup in the upper room (verses 28, 29), he notes that when the shepherd is smitten, the sheep shall be scattered (verse 31). He knows Peter will deny him thrice (verse 34). Now in the garden, even with the three most close to his cause, he finds them asleep.

Jesus repeated the request for the cup to pass after each time he found the disciples sleeping. (**Matthew 26:39,42,44**) The words are translated: "Let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt... if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done... he... prayed the third time, saying the same words." Mark's record says "all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me... again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words". (**Mark 14:36,39**) Luke's record: "if thou be willing, remove this cup from me". (**Luke 22:42**) **Matthew 26:41** and **Mark 14:38** record the solemn words, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak:"

The word "pass" in **Matthew 26:39,42** and **Mark 14:35** is Strong's number 3928. In **Mark 14:36** and **Luke 22:42** it is Strong's number 3911, and the only places where this word is used. Strong defines 113911 as primarily "to bear along or aside, *i.e.* carry off." Vine's explains this word, *paraphero*, as from *para*: to bring to or before, and *phero*: to carry, *i.e.*, to carry beside Yet the word is used to mean "to go or depart or remove." Strong defines 113928 as "to come near or aside, *i.e.* to approach (arrive), or go by (or away):" Thayer renders it "1. to go past, pass by or 2. to come near, come forward, arrive." Notice that Jesus does not say "Let me not drink of the cup;" but "Let this cup *pass* from me:" Jesus knew his hour was at hand. *Let the cup* comb let the final drinking *approach*. But to whom would it pass? To whom would it go after him? Who would bear these final hours beside him. Would any carry the cross? Would it be Peter? Would it be the three sleeping disciples, or all those who would flee? Or could it be the young man in **Mark 14:51** who may have been the only one awake to record Jesus' words? He too fled. Jesus had shortly before asked them all to drink of it. But in this dark hour, would any appreciate the struggle of his mission? He wanted most a bride, a church to inherit the mighty vision he was about to conclude. He wanted a church moved with the same compassion and hope that moved him to lay down his life. Now in dark Gethsemane, to whom would it pass?

The words of Jesus found in **Matthew 26:42** are rendered in the Greek, according to Westcott and Hort, Nestle Aland 26th edition and the Diaglott as: *TaTy /LOU ft ou 6VPC17UL TovTO 7raQWBwv Eav IA-q auro ww -yevr76r7TCa To BeXrua aou*. This can be rendered literally: "My Father, if cannot this to pass

except it I drink, let be done the will of thee." We suggest Jesus' words of resignation could be read as, "If this [cup] may not pass [to others, or shared now], except I drink it [first alone], thy will be done."

Adam Clarke notes "a very ancient method of punishing criminals. A cup of poison was put into their hands, and they were obliged to drink it. Socrates was killed thus, being obliged by the magistrates of Athens to drink a cup of the juice of hemlock." Perhaps there is an allusion here to several accused standing in a row, who are all to drink of the same cup. The cup passes from the first to the next.

This leaves us with the question in **Mark 14:35** where Mark describes the request for the "hour" to pass (#3928) from him, and in the next verse, quoting Jesus, uses the stronger word (113911), "take away this cup from me." **Luke 22:42** also uses "remove 03911) this cup from me."

It will be noticed that the mention of the hour passing is only found in Mark and is Mark's narrative and not the words he quotes in verse 36. We may suppose that Mark's understanding was that Jesus was praying that the crisis hour would come near or arrive, that he would pass through it quickly and resolutely. This is in accord with the definitions given above. We also note Jesus' use of the word "hour" in this same context. In verse 37 he was concerned about the disciples watching with him one hour. In verse 41 he announces "the hour is come... the Son of man is betrayed:" These were the events that opened the hour of tribulation that marked Jesus' last day, including the betrayal, the trial, the mocking, the scourging, the cross, the grave.

Now what of the word #3911, "take away or remove" found in **Mark 14:36** and **Luke 22:42**? These are the only two places where this word is used in the New Testament. Turning to Liddell and Scott for the general use of this word, we read: "1. to bear, bring or carry along to, to hand to, serve up. 2. generally, to bring forward, produce. 3. to turn aside or away, to carry past or beyond." It appears the King James used the third definition in rendering it "remove:" Using the first two definitions, we could see that Jesus is asking that the cup be borne "from" him. It was his cup, but to be shared or passed to others. In fact Rotherham renders these texts "bear aside this cup from me." It was his cup and asking for it to be borne, carried along side, agrees with the first definition from Liddell and Scott and is a complementary idea to the idea of "pass" in Matthew.

We know that the Father always heard Jesus, **John 11:42**. Of this experience Paul says "In the days of his flesh... he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard because of his devotion". (**Hebrews 5:7**) Was his request honored by the father? He was not asking to be spared from death or its manner, but to be delivered by a resurrection as he asked in **John 17:5**. This was realized.

We propose that Jesus was seeking to be assured that this cup would be shared, and pass to others, after he drank it, not asking that he not be required to drink it himself. The answer was assured at Pentecost, and in each generation, each year of the Memorial since. The cup has passed from him to us. If we drink all of it with him, his prayer will soon be fully answered. (**Colossians 1:24**)

- Jerry Leslie

Jacob at the Ford Jabbok

Long ago a great scenario of the plan of God was enacted through the lifetimes of four generations. In Abraham's life we glimpse the age of faith leading up to the coming of the seed of promise. The first stage was from Eden to the flood, suggested by the death of Terah, when Abraham passed over the river from the old order and began his pilgrim walk until the seed appeared. Then there is the offering on Moriah of that special child of promise, Abraham receiving Isaac, as it were, from the dead. Then we have Isaac's experiences, and the call of the church in the mission of Eliezer. Finally there is Joseph, the special and dear son of his father, after his release from the prison-house [of death], bringing, in picture, blessings of life for mankind.

Yet something would be missing, except that Jacob fills the gap. Jacob highlights the restoration of Israel, and her preparation to fulfill the Lord's purposes in and through them. We suggest that his experience at the ford Jabbok represents Israel today. Shortly after Joseph was born, "the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred, and I will be with thee". (**Genesis 31:3**) Jacob moved forward. "He rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok". (**Genesis 32:22**) In the Hebrew, as in English, the name Jabbok is a phonetic wordplay on the name Jacob. It denotes "wrestling," an appropriate meaning for the struggle to follow. It is here that the Lord's work on human trust and faith is to reach its peak. Jacob is to leave that place a changed man.

For the moment Jacob sits there at sundown, after laboring to get his family and flocks across those troublous waters. He sits alone with his thoughts, his conflicts, and his fears of what awaits him and his seed. Perhaps he remembers the night years ago when he laid down in lonely foreboding after fleeing for his life from the wrath of Esau.

Jacob was not defiant of the divine promises, nor did he undervalue them. The promise was his. The blessing would be his. But he lacked faith the Lord could fulfill them without human scheming and cunning. Jacob trusted his own wiles, and for lack of faith in God to accomplish the blessing, Jacob found himself running for his life, cast out of the land of promise.

LADDER TO HEAVEN

Yet even this was overruled. The first night of his exile the Lord granted Jacob the first of seven visions of heavenly involvement in Jacob's life. There in weariness he fell asleep, a pile of small stones for a pillow in that rugged place. Then, in his dream, he had seen stone laid against stone, ascending and ascending upward till the topmost stone reached, it seemed, into heaven itself. As he watched with awe, angels appeared. First he noticed their ascent up that stairway, then that others came down to replace them below, next to where he lay. He heard the voice of God, and received a message from His own lips, personal and reassuring.

"I am the LORD God of Abraham... and Isaac: the land whereon thou Best, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth... in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed... I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of". (**Genesis 28:13-15**)

Certainly the Lord had fulfilled His word thus far. Jacob had spent years in servitude, exiled from the land. He had known no place of his own, serving Laban, and that was the story behind the dark tanned face of Jacob. There was an awful moment too, so recently behind him, when Laban's animosity threatened to wipe out the chosen race. Only the Lord's providence allowed Jacob's escape. "It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not

to Jacob either good or bad". (**Genesis 31:1,2**) We cannot miss the parallel here to a similar attempt by Hitler in our day, after the Lord prompted Jacob to return to the land of promise.

Seven years he had known servitude (2520 days), and at its close the expected bliss had not come. The deceiver had been deceived. His works were in vain. Israel did not obtain that which he sought. Then seven years more, but the fruition of his hopes were still not realized.

Now one great crisis was past; Laban and his host had retreated. As Jacob went on his way "The angels of God met him". (**Genesis 32:1**) Everything now seemed to be working for Jacob. Yet in the eyes of Esau, Jacob was still the usurper, still pushing him out. Jacob poured out his plea to God. "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau". (**Genesis 32:11**) Jacob's mind divided between two possible tactics: one aggressive like a hawk, another conciliatory like a dove. He could not go on forever fighting his brother.

Today Israel faces a crisis even deeper than that realized by the Knesset. The flow of Jews from eastern Europe flooding into that little land brings in its wake a crisis for Israel. The Great Powers pressure Israel to compromise for peace. The Palestinians fear the influx, and tensions increase. Jacob was ready to share much of his own possessions with his brother, but the Lord has a more enduring solution. The struggle will go on until the Lord's purpose is achieved. Jacob will become a changed man. Israel, at last, will be worthy the name: "God prevails:"

WRESTLING WITH THE ANGEL

Jacob begins his struggle believing he is wrestling with a human foe, and schemes accordingly. But sooner or later he recognizes in himself the chief opponent, for he realizes he is **fighting God**. This moment of truth brings a great loss of confidence, for at the Lord's touch he becomes weak as a **little child**. Now all he can do is cling to his opponent. He no longer resists. Now he is wrestling in prayer, and will not let go **until he has the blessing of God he longs for...** and we are watching it now!



Jacob Wrestling with the Angel

The Lord then speaks, and asks "What is your name?" How well the Lord knew Jacob's name and his character: usurper, schemer. Jacob confesses it. His life has been one long career of crafty cunning, greed and reliance on self. "And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed". (**Genesis 32:28**)

A profound Hebrew scholar tells us that in names compounded with "el" it is the "ell" or God, that is the doer, if the rest of the name is a verb. (eg. Daniel = God judges, Gabriel = God is my strength, etc.) Thus Israel means God rules, prevails, or commands.

"And he blessed him there". (**Genesis 32:29**) It was "there" in Jacob's tears. "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him". (**Ho 12:4**) He blessed him in the attitude of deep contrition. Even as the Lord blessed him, the sun rose. As his eyes adjusted to its warming rays and glory, he realized he had looked upon the face of God and survived. Now he could see God's face everywhere, even in the face of his brother, Esau, when they met. "Receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me". (**Genesis 33:10**)

This was not the end of the story. At Shechem he paid the price of disobedience. The Lord reminded him of his vow at Bethel. He had to dispose of his strange gods and idols, build an altar to the Lord at Bethel, weep over the "Savior of the world" as his own son, the greater Joseph.

Today our hearts go out to the chosen race in the land of promise, so near yet so far from realizing the Lord's purpose for them. Morning indeed comes for Israel, but also night. The struggle with the enemy without will turn to dark wrestling with the enemy within, and the Lord will yet touch Jacob's prided human glory so that it fails him. Then Jacob will cling to God. Today he sits at Jabbok's ford, contemplating those torrents that threaten to engulf him.

- Donald Holliday

Foxes

In an article titled "Samson" (*Beauties of the Truth*, May, 1997), we observed that the 300 foxes Samson set running through the fields of the Philistines, tails ablaze with torches, represented God's burning judgments against the Roman power (compare **Revelation 8:8**). This is consistent with **Luke 13:32** which records Jesus' designation of Herod, the ruler appointed by Rome, as "that fox."

Recently two other instances of this symbol have come to our attention which support the connection of "fox" with Rome. One of these appears in **Psalms 63**. It is a psalm of David, and like others of his psalms refers not only to David's personal distresses, but prophetically to those of Christ. When it speaks of his enemies, verses 9 and 10 say: "But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes." Indeed, the nation of Israel who delivered Jesus over for death did fall by the sword, and were a prey for Rome, "a portion for foxes."

The other is a familiar text from Song of Solomon 2:15, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes." The lovely manna comment of July 30 is introduced by this text, exhorting us to carefulness respecting "little violations" which can eat away at our resolve, and undermine victories in greater things.

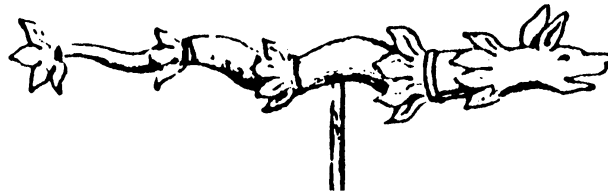
The text also has a meaning in its prophetic context which is consistent with the other fox texts mentioned above. The fuller narrative is **Song of Solomon 2:8-17**, and it describes the harvest of the Gospel Age, beginning with the return of Christ to take away his beloved church to be with him.

"The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice [of prophesied events]. My beloved spake, and said unto me, `Rise up, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle[dove] is heard in our land. [It is springtime, the harvest time.] "The fig tree [Israel] putteth forth her green figs, and the vines [the church] with the tender grapes give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away" (verses 8-13).

The harvest is a time for gathering home our Lord's bride, his loved one, and a time of preparing the new agencies of blessing for the kingdom. But it is also a time of removing the old influences, and in this context verse 15 says "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes:"

The word "take" does not mean to take as an example, to consider, but rather to catch or trap, to remove this influence, so destructive of the vine. We suggest the foxes represent the powers which have done damage to the vine for so long, the governments of Christendom who, as the agent of the false church, have afflicted and persecuted the true vine. Those governments are elsewhere represented as the ten toes of Daniel's image, and the ten horns on Daniel's fourth beast, which in both cases are the remnants of the Roman Empire, sometimes termed the "Holy Roman Empire."

The harvest is a time of judgment, when these destructive agents are to be eliminated.



Roman Imperial Ensign of the Dragon

It is interesting to note that an early symbol of Rome, the Roman Imperial Ensign of the Dragon, was a peculiar blend of a snake-like body with a canine head. Perhaps this is the reason the scriptures use "fox" as an emblem of the Roman power.

- David Rice