

Covenant

Answering Service

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QUESTION: Please explain the passage in 1st Chronicles 13:9,10 where Uzzah was slain for putting his hand to the Ark – this story, plus the alternate account in 2nd Samuel 6 puts the LORD in a very petty and poor light which I cannot accept.

ANSWER: Before considering the account of Uzzah and the event “At the threshing floor of Nachon”, it is necessary to consider the story of those who were authorised to carry the Ark as it was moved from place to place. According to the Book of Numbers, the “sons of Kohath” – those descended from one of the three sons of Levi – were given the task of carrying the things associated with the Tabernacle but, as is stated in Numbers 4:15, “... they shall not touch any holy thing lest they die.” It is of course, very difficult to appreciate how the Kohathites could carry the Ark of the Covenant without touching it particularly as the staves, which were used for this purpose, were overlaid with gold thus making direct contact with the Ark unavoidable.

Be that as it may, one finds in the record of 1st Samuel 4 that when the Philistines came up against Israel the elders recommended that the Ark of the Covenant be brought from Shiloh, in the territory of Ephraim where it had been since the days of Joshua, and placed in the camp of the Israelites. As the narrative relates, the presence of the Ark did not give Israel the

victory and after the slaughter of “thirty thousand footmen” of Israel, the Ark was taken by the Philistines and there is no record that *they* handled it in any way different from the manner in which they handled the other spoils of war. Nor is there any record that any of the Philistines who were involved with the transportation of the Ark from Eben-ezer to Ashdod, were suddenly smitten by the LORD. After seven months in the possession of the Philistines during which they suffered catastrophe after catastrophe, it was decided to return the Ark to Israel and it finally ended up in the house of Abinadab in Kirjath-jearim where it remained for twenty years (1st Sam. 7:2).

While certain commentaries express *the opinion* that Abinadab was a Levite, others draw attention to the fact that nowhere in the scriptures is there any means whereby he could be identified as a descendant of Levi. Thus, when David decided to remove the Ark and take it to Jerusalem those entrusted with the transportation of it, cannot be said to be Kohathites which immediately puts the story in an incorrect setting. It should be borne in mind that the sentence of death was applicable to the Kohathites and not to any other – a feature clearly evident in the case of the Philistines who obviously handled the Ark when they transported it and were not killed because of it. Uzzah and his brother Ahio accompanied the Ark on its journey from Kirjath-jearim with Ahio walking in front and Uzzah by the side and the story is told that the oxen drawing the cart on which the Ark rested, either “stumbled” or “slipped” and that to prevent the Ark from falling to the ground, Uzzah put his hand out to steady it whereupon he died on the spot. On the surface, the fact that what Uzzah did “displeased the LORD” would certainly make the LORD appear very petty and while theologians will no doubt argue that the touching of the Ark was a “sin of disobedience against the LORD”, I am of the opinion that this story and account was written in at a much later stage and forms part of the scribal additions which transformed the Israel story into one of superstitious religion. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* is of the same opinion

and contends that Uzzah's act led to an accident — possibly having the Ark fall on him — in which case he would surely have died on the spot. This, after all the pros and cons have been weighed up would appear to be the real story which the scribes changed to their own advantage.

QUESTION: In a booklet which is circulating in the States, it is claimed that the Jews are behaving in exactly the same way as Joseph did when he bought the Egyptians — body and soul — until all Egypt was owned by the Pharaoh. My question is, how do we explain this seeming exploitation by Joseph of the Egyptians? Is this passage interpreted or translated correctly?

ANSWER: From Jewish sources, there appears to be no question about the account in Genesis 47:13-26 — it is claimed as authentic with the English translation in the Authorised Version cited as accurate. *The Jewish Encyclopaedia* has this very brief comment on the story. "As a ruler, Joseph changed the system of land-tenure in Egypt. The famine being severe, the people first expended all their money in the purchase of corn, then they sold their cattle, and finally gave up their land. Thus all the cultivated land in Egypt, except that of the priests, became the property of the crown, and the people farmed it for the king, giving him one-fifth of the produce." Nothing further is said of the story and one is left with a feeling of uncertainty about Joseph's role in the whole event. In turning to the *Pentateuch and Haftorahs* which is edited by Dr. J.H. Hertz, one finds it claimed that the old feudal nobility of Egypt had changed when the land was ruled by the Hyksos but that in the time of national calamity such as in the seven year famine, it was deemed expedient to return to the old way of life in which all things in the land belonged to the Pharaoh or the priests who appointed selected individuals to superintend the administration of the land. While there may be a lot of truth in this contention — the fact that Joseph the Israelite should be involved in the destruction of what appears to have been a free enterprise society and the imposition of total state control is very

much out of keeping with his recorded character.

As one reads in the 41st chapter in the Book of Genesis, Joseph was exalted in Egypt because he interpreted the Pharaoh's dream and in view of his interpretation, Joseph was made second only to the Pharaoh and given charge because of the impending seven-year period of famine. Having been given charge over all the land of Egypt, it was humanly impossible for Joseph to do everything himself and consequently he employed those who, prior to his exaltation had had charge over the various aspects of government. Now, while this may not be recorded in the Bible story, it has the merit of logic about it and could quite possibly account for a behaviour accredited to Joseph but in which only his name was involved. Having been employed by Joseph to administer the land in the time of famine, it is quite possible that those so employed, and in the name of Joseph, did all that is recorded in Genesis 47. It is most significant that the scripture does not say how long this process took and it is quite possible that the nationalisation of all Egypt took most of the seven years of famine.

Whatever the true story of Joseph and the very un-Israelitish behaviour attributed to him in Genesis 47, one thing is very sure and that is that the scriptural account leaves Egypt very much in the control of the Pharaoh with the spotlight switched to Jacob who was nearing his end, his blessing of Joseph's two sons, the subsequent blessing of all the tribes, the death and burial of Jacob and finally, the death and burial of Joseph. Thus, to say that modern Jews are attempting to emulate Joseph because he showed the way of exploitation is, of course, to erroneously equate Joseph with the Jews — an error which is clearly proven by the fact that in those days, the name "Jew" was unknown just as a people, bearing that name too was totally unknown.

QUESTION: The children have queried the story of the good Samaritan — the inevitable "neighbour story". We have discussed with them what we know relating it to the woman at the well for example, but would be glad of an explanation and any informa-

tion on the area called Samaria.

ANSWER: Until the seventh year in the reign of Omri, king of the breakaway northern kingdom of Israel, no such place as Samaria was known in Palestine. Prior to this, Shechem and Tirzah occupy attention as the national centre in the northern kingdom – Shechem because of its intimate connection with the history of Israel and Tirzah because it was chosen as the residence of the kings up to the time of Omri. After living six years in Tirzah, Omri bought a hill from Shemer (1st Kings 16:24) which he named “Shomeron” – the etymology of which, according to the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, appears to be “watch mountain”. It was only when Aramaic was spoken in the land that it was referred to as “Shamerayim” and as must be obvious, this only took place after Zerubbabel led a remnant from Babylon into the territory previously occupied by Judah and Benjamin.

In 2nd Kings 17:24, it is written: “And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.” Whereas formerly “Shomeron” was the administrative centre of the kingdom of Israel, the Aramaic “Shamerayim” or English “Samaria” was applied to all the territory occupied by Israel and the people, irrespective of who they were, were simply called “Samaritans” just as the people who inhabited the territory which came to be known as *Judaea*, were all called “Judaeans” irrespective of their racial origins.

The Assyrian invasions of the kingdom of Israel took place over a considerable period in time – beginning in 741 B.C. and continuing through 721 when Shomeron was taken to 676 B.C. when the final invasion took place. It would be going beyond the historical Biblical narrative to suggest that every single individual Israelite family was removed into the Assyrian captivity – the account in Isaiah 9:1 would refute that most emphatically. This being so, those who were not removed, while being truly of the northern kingdom of the family of Jacob-Israel would be called “Samaritans” or

“Shamerayim” because this was the name given to that territory.

In New Testament times, i.e. some five centuries later, one reads of the Lord Jesus Christ travelling from Judaea to Galilee, in the course of which He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar which has been identified as Shechem and which, as is stated above, had very intimate Israelite connections. It was here, at “Jacob’s well”, that the Lord had the discussion with the woman who is simply identified as “a woman of Samaria” and who claimed Jacob as her “father”. This could not have been the case if she had belonged to that heterogeneous crowd which re-peopled the land after Israel had been removed. A significant feature here when one thinks of the “woman of Samaria” who identified herself as a descendant of Jacob and was not contradicted by the Lord, is that she contrasted herself with the Jews and as she was an undoubted descendant of Jacob – who then were the Jews? From the beginning of the story of “Samaria” right through the story of “the woman of Samaria” at Jacob’s well including the parable of the “good Samaritan”, one is able to see how the true Israel content has been hidden just as the identity of the victim and the Samaritan has been kept hidden too.

QUESTION: Where can I find a positive statement in the Holy Bible that Rome will rise to power in the last days?

ANSWER: It is very difficult to provide a positive answer to this question because in the main, the church of Rome and its various ramifications fall within the framework of the Revelation which, as all will know, is the Lord’s Revelation given to us in symbolism. Insofar as the symbolism of this Book is concerned, while one may speculate over its precise meaning, it is only after events have been fulfilled that one can say with any degree of certainty that this or that symbolism referred to whatever event had been accomplished. In the context of the Roman church, the same thing applies.

The “vials of wrath” recorded in Revelation 16 would appear to have been poured

out upon the Papal States because the history of these States since the 18th century, appear to follow the symbolism of the "vials" until, in the fifth vial, the seat of Papal power in Rome was darkened and despite the anathemas hurled at those who were assaulting the Holy Roman Empire, the Papacy's decline and fall caused that religious hierarchy to "gnaw their tongues for pain". This, of course, is history and, as has been stated above, fulfills the first five "vials of the wrath of God".

In 1929, Benito Mussolini restored to the Pope a limited amount of temporal power and since that time, those who have occupied the Papal throne have tried to regain the complete power which the Papacy enjoyed prior to the outpouring of the vials of the wrath of God. The point — at this moment in time — is that through all the ramifications, the ambition of the Papacy has not been reached yet and for that matter, may never be reached. However, a single page news review under the title of "Britain's Protestants Face Sell-out" and written by Geoffrey Borth, carries a message which needs to be aired here.

The review claims that within the next four years, i.e. by 1988, Britain's Protestants are likely to face a major test of their loyalty and faith — the reason being the decision by the Church of England to unite with the Church of Rome. The news review states: "In order to convince the public that union of the two churches is both desirable and workable, the Roman Catholic Church is masterminding a massive propaganda exercise in Britain through the media. Much of the liaison between the Roman Catholic authorities and British newsmen set up for the Pope's visit to Britain has continued with the new emphasis on the advantages of ecumenism. Both in the press and television mediums a barrage of pro-Papal propaganda is already under way. In addition the film industry has been recruited to help promote features that show the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church in a more liberal light... It should be emphasised that the ecumenical programme was temporarily disrupted by Argentina's 'Operation Rosary' — the invasion of the Falklands. As a result the Pope's visit to Britain failed to achieve one

of its major purposes which was a commitment by the British government to divest itself of its Northern Ireland connection within the period reckoned to be remaining for full unity between the two Churches to be achieved i.e. by 1988.

"Not surprisingly little has been heard or said about a Foreign Office plan in early 1983 which called for a British withdrawal from Ulster within five years, and for resettlement of dissenting Protestants in Australia, Canada, or New Zealand. No one, however, considered that another more acceptable and workable solution would be for Ulster's Catholic population to be resettled in the Republic.

"While union between the Church of England and Rome, and a commitment to pull out of Ulster are two of the main planks of the British Establishment's Rome-oriented policies, there still remains the question of the monarchy. This is the third plank.

"In this matter the plan is for a gradual transition of power from the Queen to Prince Charles, the latter taking on more of the Queen's public and official state duties thus preparing the public for the likely abdication of the Queen in favour of her son. This to be achieved within the next four years.

"The argument in favour of this course is that union with Rome, plus a commitment on Ulster, would provoke a major constitutional crisis in which the future of the monarchy itself would be at stake. To get around this the pro-ecumenists in Church and Parliament plan for the 'back door' solution. They recognise that it will be virtually impossible for the Queen to renounce her Coronation Oath to defend the faith without incurring a revolt by Protestants, possibly allied with political elements desirous of abolishing the monarchy for their own ends. The solution they have chosen is to allow the Queen to abdicate and Charles to succeed to the Throne with the Coronation Oath amended accordingly by Act of Parliament. This would remove the obligation of the monarch to protect the Protestant faith. Thus all members of the Royal Family would in future be able to marry Roman Catholics without any loss of formal rights."
