



King's Kids

on the move

The story about the first prisoner convoy
and the adventures of the Prophet

Daniel

and his friends during
the march from Jerusalem to Babylon 605 B.C.

Nils Ibstedt

Nils Ibstedt

King's Kids

on the move

The story about the first prisoner convoy
and the adventures of the Prophet

Daniel

and his friends during
the march from Jerusalem to Babylon 605 B.C.

Publishing firm
IBE-art
© Text & illustrations
Nils Ibstedt
2034 Glimminge
280 60 Broby, Sweden
Tel +46 44 47187

Email: post@nils-ibstedt.com
Web: www.nils-ibstedt.com

Many quotations are taken from
The Living Bible Copyright © 1971
by Tyndale House Publishers,
Wheaton, Illinois 60187,
and from the NIV Study Bible
Copyright © 1985 by The Zondervan Corporation.

"King's Kids on the move"
has been translated from the Swedish original
"Kungasönerna på marsch"
by the late **Rev Birigitta Jonsson**, England

IBE-forlaget 2010
ISBN 978 91-974474-8-X

*To these four young men God gave
knowledge and understanding of all kinds
of literature and learning.
And Daniel could understand visions
and dreams of all kinds.
Dan 1:17 (NIV)*

”But now Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took some of the most noble of the Jews that were children, and the kinsmen of Zedekiah their king, such as were remarkable for the beauty of their bodies and the comeliness of their countenances, and delivered them into the hands of tutors, and to the improvement to be made by them. He also made some of them to be eunuchs; which course he took also with those of other nations whom he had taken in the flower of their age, and offered them their diet from his own table, and had them instructed in the institutes of the country, and taught the learning of the Chaldeans; and they had now exercised themselves sufficiently in that wisdom which he had ordered they should apply themselves to.

Now among these there were four of the family of Zedekiah, of most excellent disposition; the one of whom was called Daniel, another Ananias, another Misael, and the fourth Azarias; and the king of Babylon changed their names, and commanded that they should make use of other names. Daniel he called Baltasar; Ananias, Shadrach; Mishaël, Meshach; and Azarias, Abednego. These the king had in esteem, and continued to love, because of the very excellent temper they were of, and because of their application to learning, and the progress they had made in wisdom.

So they readily understood all the learning that was among the Hebrews, and among the Chaldeans, as especially did Daniel, who, being already skilled in wisdom, was very busy about the interpretation of dreams: and God manifested himself to him.”*

Flavius Josephus

**This text is quoted from "Josephus Complete Works", a Kregel publication, first published 1960, this extract from the edition reprinted in 1984*

Preface

Having had the opportunity and privilege to read through Nils Ibstedt's manuscript it is a joy to conclude that the text as well as the pictures he has produced throughout are of very high quality.

The language is simple and fluent, and the content shows a good teaching ability in that he is able to blend into the story a multitude of historical facts. The biblical history becomes accessible in the manuscript, coming alive as it does in the account of Daniel's and his friends' journey to Babylon and their stay there.

The manuscript also provides a good survey of the contemporary secular history, who the rulers were, their historical standing and significance at the various times. Also who were the contemporary prophets active at the time and well known from the Bible. This is in my view an excellent piece of work that Ibstedt has produced.

Alf Lindberg, Doctor of Divinity, Tranås, Sweden

With God's help for His glory

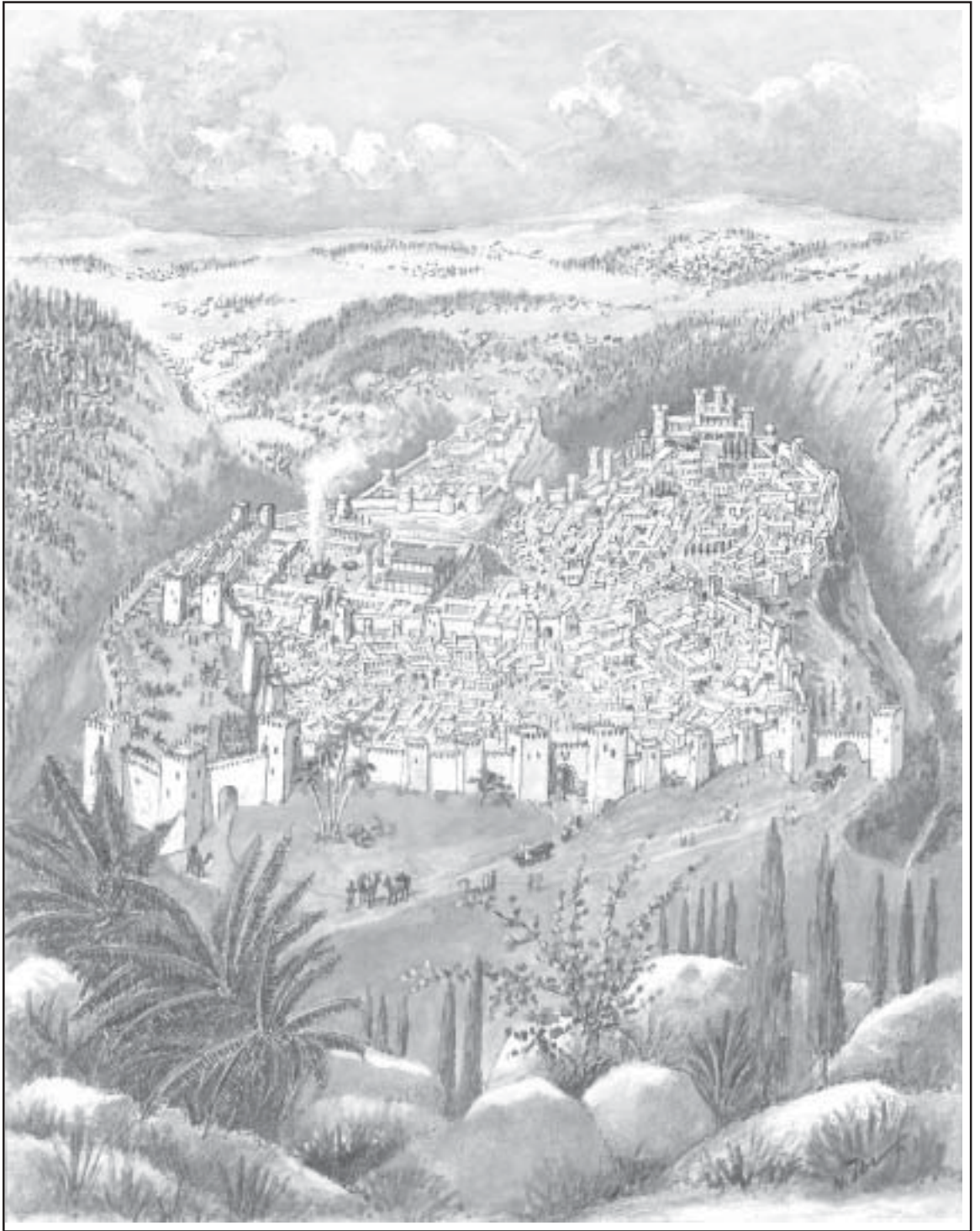
The help God gives includes the help of
good friends and other kind people.
I want to express my gratitude and appreciation to
Dr. Sven Ahdrian, Dr. Alf Lindberg, D.D.
and **Samuel Svensson, B.A.**
who have examined the facts
and provided many valuable comments
on the historical and theological material.
Sadly it is not possible to mention
all those, clergy as well as laity,
literary experts and critics,
who have encouraged and inspired me.

My thanks to you all!

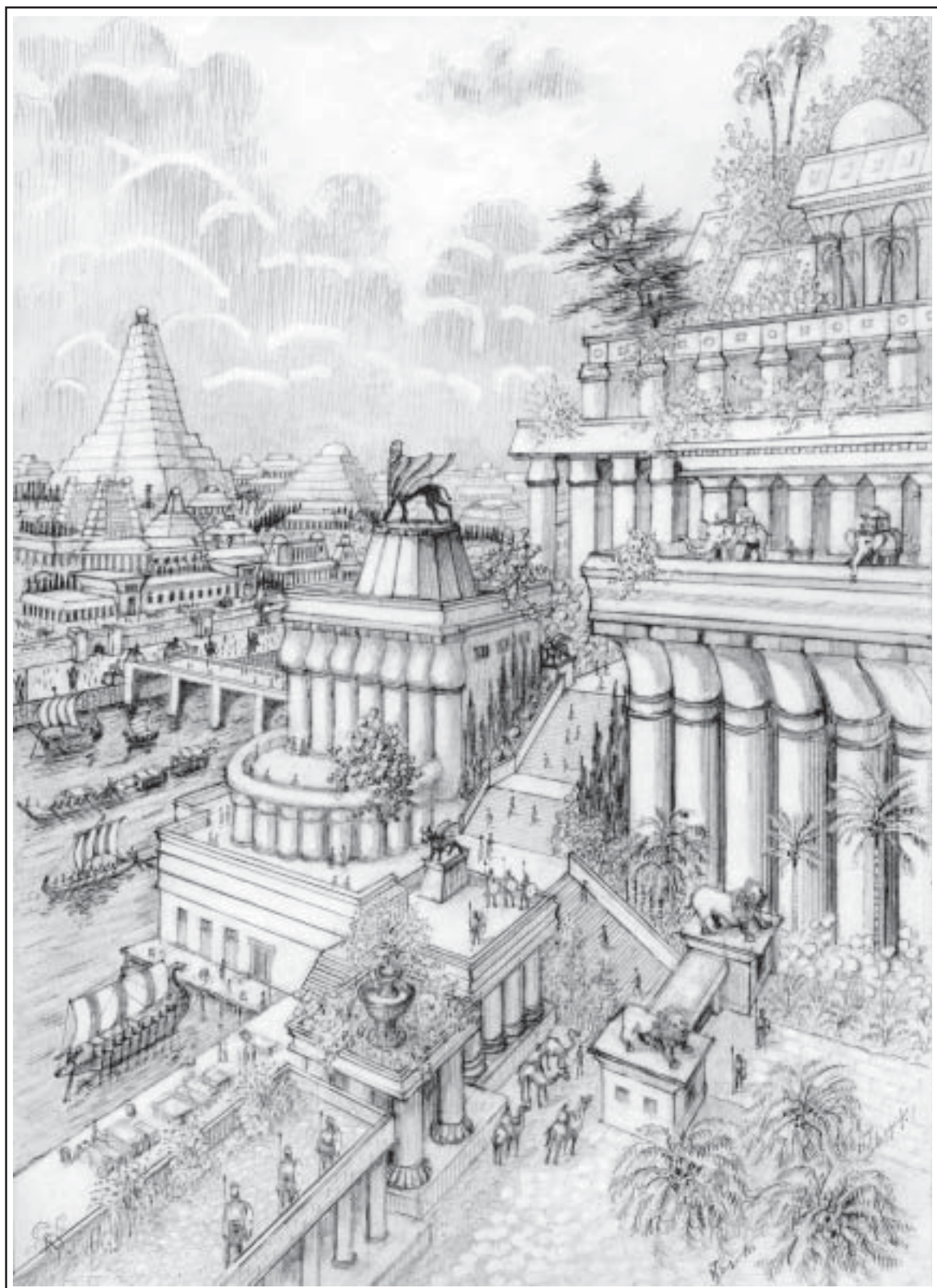
Contents

Chapter	Page	List of illustrations:	Page
Preface	4	1. Jerusalem at Daniel's time	6
Introduction	8	2. Babylon – the world metropolis	7
1. The march to captivity	10	3. Prisoners leaving Jerusalem	9
2. Ruined future plans	16	4. Daniel bids farewell to Miriam	13
3. Why were we taken captive?	22	5. Surveying plan of Jerusalem	19
4. By the campfire	27	6. Jerusalem	20
5. Daniel's dream at Bethel	32	7. Map of the route	23
6. Samaria	40	8. Talks at the camp fire	29
7. The Lord's Sabbath	48	9. The ladder to heaven	34
8. Prophet of Judgement	54	10. The tabernacle in the desert	37
9. The weeping prophet	59	11. Pastoral scene near Samaria	41
10. King's Kids	65	12. The ruins of Samaria	46
<i>Kings and prophets in Israel</i>	70	13. Four musicians	51
11. The arrow at Megiddo	71	14. Jeremiah at the templegate	56
12. The cedars of Lebanon	77	15. Jeremiah breaks a precious jar of clay	61
13. Bridgebuilding	85	16. Horses on the plain of Megiddo	67
14. The dream of Paradise	93	17. Solomon's Temple	73
15. Azariah's agony	99	18. The arrow in Megiddo	75
16. Numerical values	107	19. The new shot	79
17. Brothers reconciled	114	20. The fluteplayer	82
18. Towards Carchemish	119	21. Encounter at the well	87
19. Celebration at Carchemish	125	22. Christ trampling on the serpent	95
20. Towards Haran	133	23. Onions - a symbol of new life	97
21. Without statue and amulets	139	24. Between the fires - despair	102
22. Abraham in Egypt	141	25. The inauguration of the bridge	117
23. An unexpected visit	148	26. The javelin thrower	128
24. Among the pine trees	154	27. Nimrod and Hammurabi's kingdom	132
25. Egypt – the first world power	161	28. Pyramids of Egypt	145
26. The ambush	168	29. An unexpected visitor	150
27. Assyria and the prophets of Israel	176	30. The crooked pine trees	156
28. The lion hunt	184	31. Glory of the Lord	159
29. The fall of Samaria and Assyria	192	32. Map of Egypt - Crocodile	165
30. Havlat's conversion	196	33. Hananiah hit by an arrow	170
31. Towards Nineveh	199	34. Map of Assyria - a lion	179
32. The swansong of Nineveh	202	35. The David sling	188
33. Mystery of numerical values	209	36. A ride along the walls of Nineveh	204
34. Babylonia	218	37. Map of Babylon - an eagle	220
35. Toward Babylon	226	38. Along the Euphrates river banks	227
36. The Palace	238	39. Babylon, the world's largest city	229
37. Ten colour-gouache	246	40. The entrance to the palace in Babylon	234
Appendix		41. The tower of Babylon	237
1. Archeological discoveries	256	42. The Kings's treasure	239
2. Jerusalem – centre of the earth	262	Ten colours – in gouache	
3. The chronology of the Bible	265	43. Jerusalem at the time of Daniel	246
4. Flavius Josephus – short biography	271	44. The ruins of Samaria	247
5. Sources & Literature	272	45. The plain of Megiddo	248
6. Headings and comments	273	46. King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem	249
		47. A new shot of cedar	250
		48. The flutist – in view of Mt Hermon	251
		49. Abraham came to Egypt	252
		50. The ride along the high walls of Nineveh	253
		51. Along the banks of the Euphrates	254
		52. Babylon – the metropolis of the world	255

Indexnumbers within the text refer to sources and comments at the end of the book on pages 273-288.



Jerusalem at the time of Daniel, the Prophet (author's image)



Babylon – a metropolis

Introduction

King's Kids *on the move*

When Chaldean troops conquered Jerusalem in 605 BC a group of prisoners were removed to Babylon as slaves. Among them were Daniel and his friends. All their youthful dreams and hopes for the future were shattered as through a cruel twist of fate they were forced to abandon their plans as well as their girlfriends to become servants to the Babylonian king.

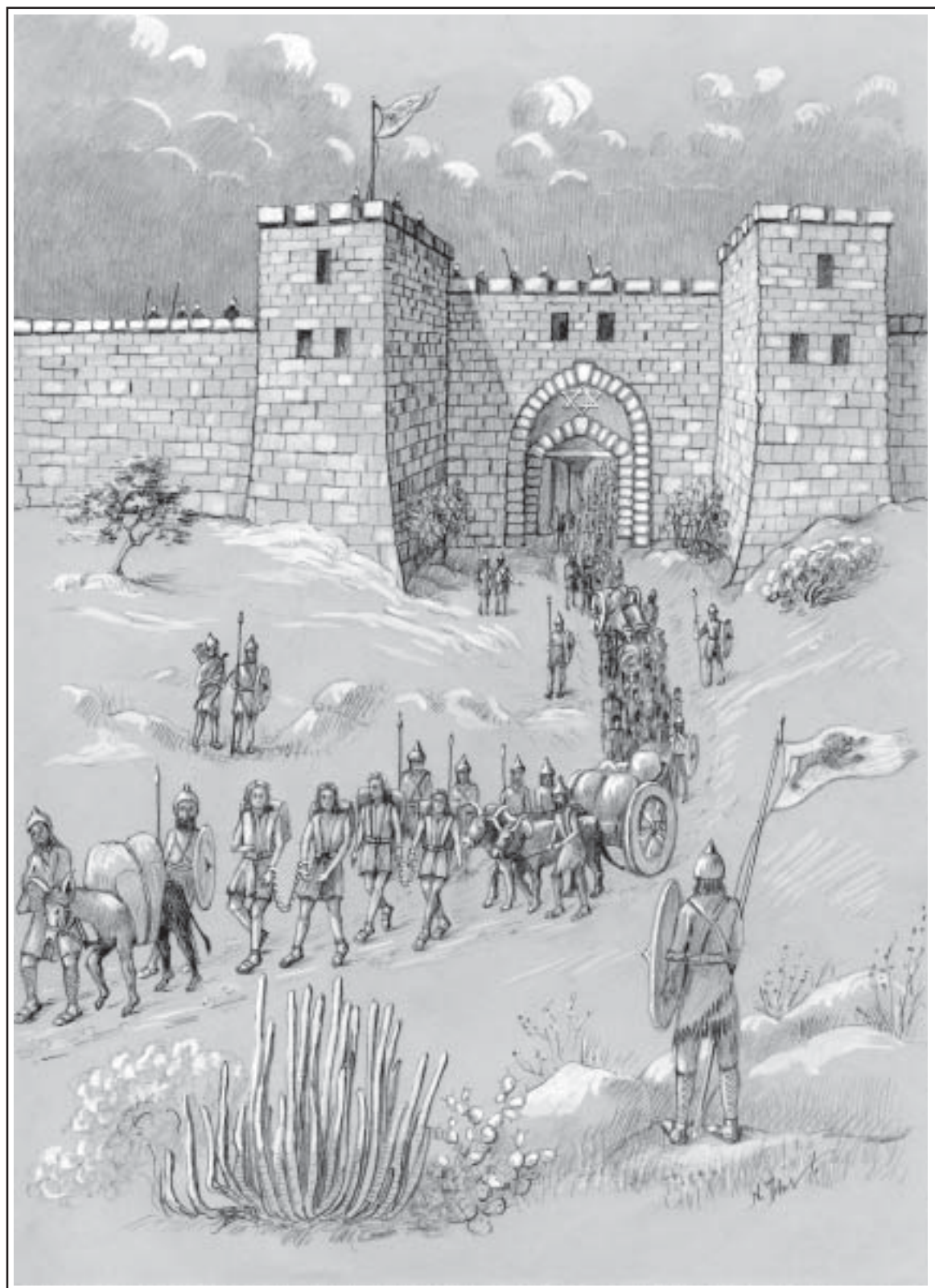
Nevertheless they conquered one difficulty after another through courage, intelligence, sheer zest for life and not least faith in God. Their long march from Jerusalem to Carchemish through the forests of Lebanon and on through the Armenian mountains was full of adventures and surprises. During the journey they had many lively discussions about why they had been taken prisoners. They also talked together about the writings of Moses and the prophecies about the Messiah in whom they put their hope.

The intention is to give the reader insight into what the Bible and Jewish tradition teach about human early history and its importance for our times. The reality behind the Biblical account has always been tested and is still subject for debate. The fact remains however that there are many archeological findings confirming the Biblical account about the great flood and early civilisation in the Euphrates-Tigris area.

The historical information is gathered from many sources, mainly from the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, 37 - 93 AD, but also from modern encyclopedias and Bible commentaries. The four prisoners' many adventures and their discussions in the various subjects are purely fictional in order to make the account come alive. Their experiences are entirely plausible and give insight into the level of education, culture and prevalent world views of the time.

This book will open the world of the Bible to contemporary readers and make it easier to understand current happenings in Israel and Jerusalem. It will also show that the ethics and teaching of the Bible how to love your neighbour as yourself, has played an important part in the development of current thoughts on human rights and true democracy and is the very foundation of our Western civilisation.

Glimminge, Broby, Sweden 2011
www.nils-ibstedt.com



The train of prisoners are leaving Jerusalem

King's Kids

on the move

Chapter 1

The march to captivity

People lined the streets – the whole city seemed to be on the move this disastrous morning. Daniel searched the crowd intently for his fiancée and finally caught sight of her in the midst of the throng. She called his name and waved with tears streaming down her face. Daniel waved back with his free hand, biting his lips in an effort to control his emotions.

Farewell Jerusalem!

The long chain¹ of prisoners soon wound its way out of the city through the north gate, the Gate of Ephraim towards Mount Moriah. The incline was steep, the view breath-taking. Would this be the last time Daniel saw Jerusalem²: the city known to be the most beautiful city on earth – Beauty itself? It glimmered in the morning sun like a jewel. The white buildings, the majestic walls with their high towers and the Temple buildings shone with ethereal brilliance.

On top of the mountain Daniel dared to turn around for a final look. The last he saw of Jerusalem was Zion Castle with the Tower of David glistening like red rubies far away in the haze...

Violence breeds violence

Daniel was in danger of tumbling head first to the ground, finding himself pushed hard from behind at the same time as he received a blow to his shins. He managed to maintain his balance by taking several quick steps forward, but his fellow-prisoner took the brunt of it. As Daniel yanked the chain joining them together Hananiah fell headlong, grazing both arms and legs badly. Daniel quickly helped him to his feet. The soldier snorted at them and shouted to Daniel to look straight ahead and to keep up.

Daniel, who understood Aramaic, immediately considered giving the soldier a piece of his mind. But he stopped himself – what was the point? Hadn't he seen the endless spiral of hatred breeding violence and violence breeding even more hatred? The only way to break such a vicious circle was to show kindness to the offender. Daniel looked at the soldier and said amicably: *Sorry!* The soldier stared at Daniel in amazement.

Daniel wondered why the soldier was so ill tempered. Perhaps he was afraid of being reprimanded if he did not keep order among the prisoners. The soldiers used more force than necessary to frighten them. If fear motivated them, how could you get rid of it? Did they want power – or did they think they would gain respect by abuse and force? How do you deal with those who are hungry for power and abuse their position?

What was it that they had been taught at the school of prophecy? Oh, yes – if you met evil with goodness and kindness, you could turn your enemy away from wickedness. The command to *love your neighbour as yourself*⁸: didn't that mean that you overcame evil with good? But why was it so terribly difficult to do in practice?

It was not long before Daniel was to see worse things than he himself had encountered. A prisoner, who walked in front of them, grabbed a leafy branch to use as a fan to cool himself, but he dropped the twig when a soldier hit his hand with a cane. Furious, the prisoner bent down to retrieve his branch and was beaten by the incensed soldier until his back bled.

Daniel's first encounter with violence had been when he was pushed from behind. He and his friends were of royal descent and he had spent all his life in a very sheltered environment. He had no memory of ever being hit or beaten by his parents or any of his teachers. They had had the best education available in Jerusalem. People had treated them well and they were respected everywhere. Now they had been taken prisoners by the Chaldeans and were discovering that life could be hard and cruel.

The start of the long march

Depressed and shocked, Daniel⁴ and Hananiah⁵ walked side by side, their wrists chained together by a copper chain. They were silent as they walked on hour after hour, up hill and down dale on narrow winding roads, through dark woods and deep valleys, across the top of steep hills with magnificent views. They were shaken by their experiences and did not know whether they dare talk. Behind them walked their friends and fellow prisoners, Mishael⁶ and Azariah⁷.

There were soldiers everywhere – probably outnumbering the prisoners, who were kept under constant surveillance. The soldiers' sharp spearheads glistened in the sun. Their lances with their frightening two-edged sickles at the top could easily cut the throat of any rebellious prisoner. In the soldiers' minds human life was of little value. Their commands were short and shot through the air like sharp darts.

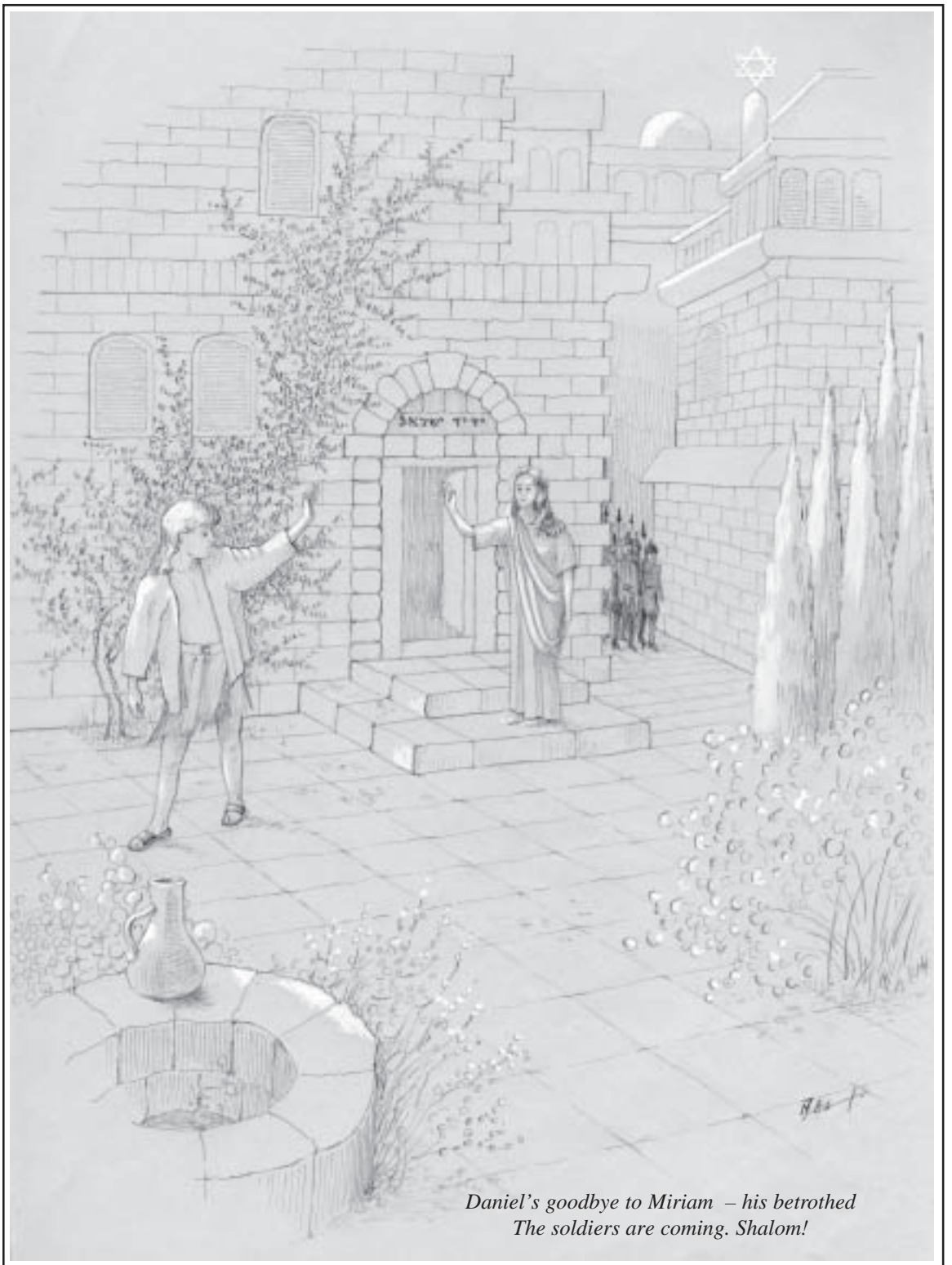
As they reached the top of a hill Daniel dared to glance behind him, as there were no soldiers nearby. He saw no end to the living mass of prisoners and soldiers with their well packed carts and overloaded donkeys. There were no women and children, but he assumed they must be at the back. The convoy of prisoners looked like a big snake that wriggled both in front of and behind them.

Daniel and his friends were privileged to be just manacled – other prisoners had their feet chained together as well. They were in groups of up to twenty prisoners, all held together by a long rope which the soldiers took turns to pull, directing the march with loud commands.

The Farewell

Daniel was brooding over how he had been forced to say goodbye to his relatives and fiancée. It had been a heartbreaking experience. He had got out of bed very early – before sunrise – and had hurried to see Miriam⁸ once more before reporting to Temple Square. As they said their goodbyes, they knew their love for one another to be stronger than ever. It was so hard to leave – would they ever see each other again? Miriam had sobbed her heart out. Their beautiful dreams for the future were in ruins, but nobody could take away from them the song of pure love in their hearts.

Knowing that they were about to be separated, Daniel discovered the depth of Miriam's love for him and how much he himself loved her. The knowledge of being loved gave him energy and courage to endure



*Daniel's goodbye to Miriam – his betrothed
The soldiers are coming. Shalom!*

the worst hardships and ordeals. Miriam was Daniel's first and only love. Theirs had been love at first sight and he had felt the magic, irresistible pull of it. He knew the truth of the words:

– *Love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.*⁹

They had to say goodbye quickly when some soldiers appeared in an alley. But even so, the hope of a reunion some day was like a flickering flame giving light and warmth to the very thoughts and feelings of Daniel's soul.

He could still hear Miriam's broken, beautiful voice cry out:

– *Daniel... Daniel...*

The Chaldeans conquer Jerusalem

What a change in such a short time! The Chaldean conquest¹⁰ of Jerusalem had been quick and brutal. Who would have believed that enemies would be allowed to force their way into the Holy City? Who would have believed that King Jehoiakim¹¹ would be such a coward and open the gates to the enemy at such an early stage? The siege by Nebuchadnezzar¹² and his big army of Medes and Chaldeans had lasted only a week when Jehoiakim surrendered. The Babylonian soldiers were drunk with victory after conquering the Egyptian army at Carchemis.¹³ After that there was nothing to stop them turning south, although Jehoiakim to start with refused to give way to the demands of Nebuchadnezzar.

During the siege by the Chaldean army the people had swung between hope and despair. In whom should they put their trust? Did the king expect help from Egypt? Or had they just been left to surrender to a superior power? Could they expect God to intervene as some of the prophets were saying, as in the time of King Hezekiah and the prophet Jeremiah¹⁴? At that time the King had cried out to God with tears for help against the Assyrians, who surrounded the city. God's message to the people through the prophet Isaiah told them not to fear. The Angel of the Lord then struck the Assyrians with a plague the following night, so they returned home.

Or should they believe the prophets Micah¹⁵ and Jeremiah who predicted the total destruction of Jerusalem? The present King Jehoiakim could not be compared with the godly King Hezekiah, who could move the forces of heaven by his prayers.

To begin with Jehoiakim trusted in the high walls and fortifications of Jerusalem, but when he saw the superiority of the invading troops and how the big war machines and battering rams had been put in place aro-

und the city, his courage failed. He was surrounded by the world's strongest army. And then, when he heard Nebuchadnezzar the commander threaten total war if he did not surrender, he opened the gates for the enemy.

The first caravan of prisoners

Then came the dreadful day when the Chaldeans broke through into their holy city. Never before in the history of Judah had enemy soldiers tramped through the streets of Jerusalem. Of course, Nebuchadnezzar had been forced to leave Jerusalem in a hurry and return to Babylon¹⁶ to protect his claim to the throne, having received word of the sudden death of his father, King Nabopolassar.

But he left the command in the hands of his skilled generals, which did not make life easier for the Jews. On the contrary, it made it harder, as the generals were all desperate to succeed in crushing the Jews and gain the approval of their future king.

The following weeks of violence struck terror into the Jews. Hundreds of their most honoured men, even some of Daniel's friends and contemporaries, were killed without reason.

At first they did not realise what was happening, when many of their most skilled scribes, smiths, carpenters, carriagemakers and mosaiclayers were picked out by the Chaldeans and told to line up in Temple Square. But they soon discovered the reason – they were to be removed to Babylon as prisoners.

The Chaldean commander Rabsaris also decreed that the most gifted of the young men from the Royal Family were to be brought to serve at the Babylonian court. Together with Daniel, his cousins Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah formed their own little group within the caravan of prisoners. It was with some relief that they received the decree that they were to be taken to Babylon – at least they would survive.

King Jehoiakim had to promise to pay a yearly tribute to Nebuchadnezzar, and some of the valuable golden vessels from the Temple were taken to Babylon.

Thus Judah became a province under Babylonian domain.

Ruined future plans

A busy road

The road to the distant Babylon was busy with traffic. The prisoners encountered caravans of traders as well as military transport. The most common beasts of burden were donkeys and mules with heavy loads, while the stronger oxen usually pulled the carriages. One could also see chariots drawn by several pairs of horses. Altogether there were many different kinds of conveyance. The finest chariots were made in Jerusalem, where there was a tradition of expert chariot builders dating back to the time of King Solomon.

Now King Nebuchadnezzar was bringing these craftsmen to Babylon. Wealthy and prominent people used camels which offered a good view and a comfortable seat. There were also a few elephants with small tents on their backs, for this was how kings and their families often travelled. At the passing places everybody had to step aside and make way for the elephants, so as to avoid being crushed by their heavy feet.

Commerce was lively in the camps where they stopped, the locals shouting their offers of goods and merchandise. You could buy anything provided you had a good supply of copper, silver and gold coins. The Israeli shekel made of pure silver, had a high value. Sleeping bags of sheep's wool and water and wineskins sold well. Cloaks and sandals, all kinds of foodstuff, souvenirs and amulets were displayed in the stalls by the roadside. But the prisoners from Jerusalem had hardly any opportunity to shop as they were carefully guarded by the Chaldean soldiers.

Strict discipline was the order of the day: those who tried to escape were immediately struck down. Each soldier made sure that the caravan covered the intended distance without incident. Whenever they stopped, the prisoners were required to consume their entire food ration so that they would have enough strength to carry on. No other stops were allowed during the march.

Pleasant memories

It was hot in the midday sun. Sweat poured out from the prisoners and there was dust everywhere. Sad as they were, the four friends continued walking on in silence hour after hour. Daniel helped Hananiah chase away the flies from his sores. Behind them walked Mishael and Azariah dangling their chain as they marched.

Daniel thought of his happy, carefree childhood. Still in shock, he saw the whole of his life as if on a screen in front of him. The uncertainty of the future made everything he had previously experienced seem more important than ever. His recollections became vivid and clear, he had so many lovely memories.

What fun we had, thought Daniel, when we played in the courtyard and in the vineyards of the king's gardens. We had competitions¹ in longjump and slingshot, tightrope walking and archery. Even chopping wood became a game. Azariah was the strongest of us all. A superb athlete, he won most of the time, particularly in throwing the javelin. Year after year he was the champion of the great competitions in which youth from all over the country took part.

Daniel laughed to himself. He remembered the many pranks they had played when they were children. Like the time when they threw rotten figs from the top of the city wall at the pagan priests, offering their sacrifices in the Hinnom Valley. They had scored many direct hits. But when they discovered that some of the student priests had been divided into two teams to catch them, one team in each tower, they became really scared. Their legs were faster than those of their pursuers, and they managed to hide in a vault under one of the towers. They did not think that the pagan priests were worth more than rotten figs. Everybody knew that on some nights, at full moon, the priests even used to sacrifice children alive to their god Chemosh². As they sat there in the vault, a horrible thought came to them, if they were caught, they could become food for that cruel god at the next full moon.

His train of thought moved on. Remember the horses, he reflected, and how we looked after them! We had to learn to ride when we were very young, and horses and competitions became part of our lives. We had such fun! Sometimes we spent most of the day on horseback. What splendid creatures we had! It was so hard to leave my horse Bravo. He was so attached to me that it seemed like abandoning a child. Now I might never see him again.

The Sabbath – a day of praise³

The Sabbath was always a quiet day. Competitions were not allowed, and even games were banned. But there was one thing that we could do though: sing and play musical instruments. For those who belonged to the royal household there was a choir and a music group. Mishael was our natural leader, a child prodigy.

Every year there was a big music festival in Jerusalem. In the last

performance I played a short piece on my flute. But Mishael surprised us all. We knew of course, that he had practiced for along time, but nobody thought that at the tender age of sixteen he would win first prize. He knew the whole of Solomon's Song of Songs by heart, and played it on his harp with such skill and sensitivity that all were amazed. His prize was a genuine "David-harp".

How we all shared in Mishael's joy! This morning he told me that he had asked the soldier in charge of our belongings to bring the harp. It was well protected, packed away in a box. I am sure that even now, as he walks along, Mishael is longing for the day when he will be able to play his beloved harp again.

For the Easter celebrations last Spring, Mishael wrote music and lyrics for the big Temple choir and the great orchestra with its harps, bassoons and drums. He borrowed the words from the prophecies of the Prophet Isaiah taking the theme:

– *With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation*⁴ .

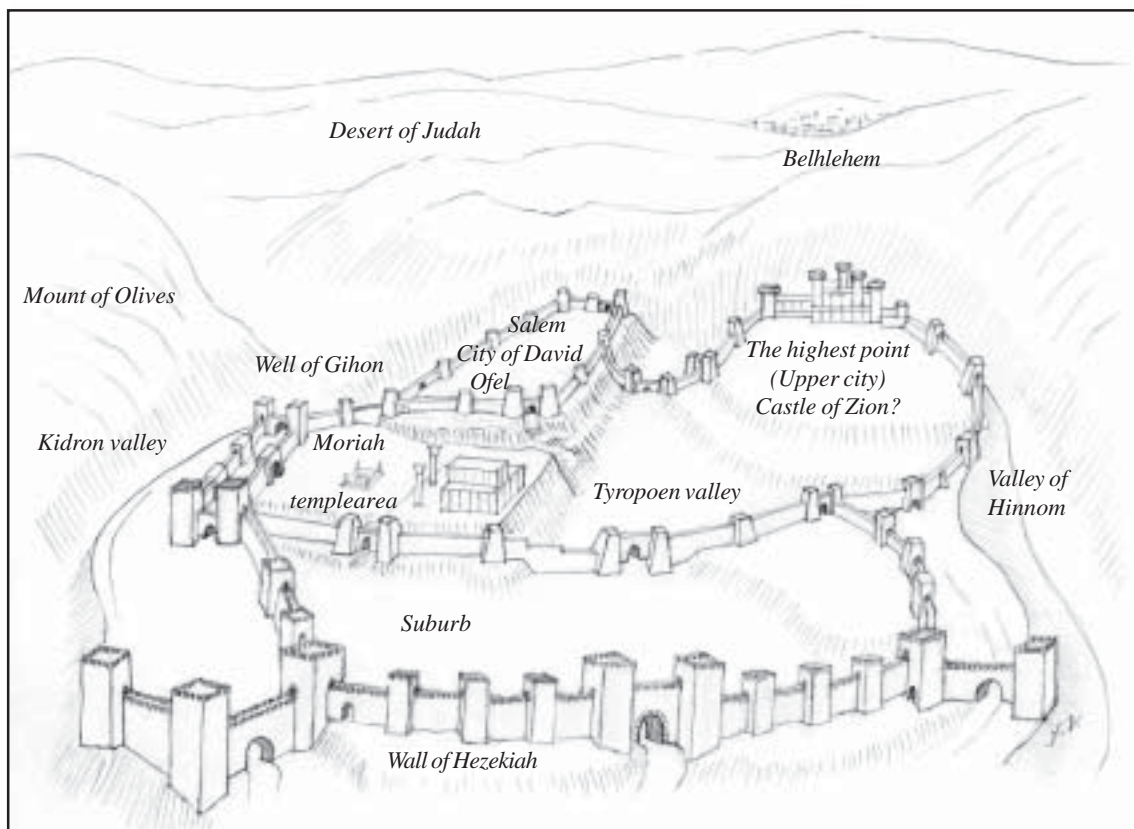
There really was a *drawing* of joy and praise in that music, and it was sheer joy to sing with Mishael as the conductor. The music had several wonderful tunes which we simply couldn't stop humming. Without doubt Mishael would have had a brilliant future as a composer and musician in the Jerusalem Temple. But now such dreams are in ruins. How will he cope with the separation from his fiancée, with whom he is so much in love that they are hardly ever apart? Hannah⁵ was a stunning beauty and a wonderful soloist in the Choir of David.

How sad it all is! Behind me walks a genius who writes music to lift your spirit and turn the dross of life to gold, and nobody cares about his hardship. Just imagine if something happened to him! What a great loss that would be – not just for us, but for the whole world!

The School of Prophecy

Much of our childhood of course was filled with studies. We had to learn to read at the age of five and then to write the following year. At twelve Hananiah and I began our studies at the Hilkiyah⁶ School of Prophecy. The Law, the Prophets and the history of Israel were the main subjects.

It was at the School of Prophecy that Hananiah and I became intimate friends. How tragic, how ridiculous that we should be walking along like this, bound together in chains. Haven't we always been together? Hananiah is a relative to the High Priest Hilkiyah on his mother's side. He knows the writings of Moses, the *Torah*⁷ by heart. What a good memory he has. Nobody can quote from the Torah like Hananiah – not just rattling it off,

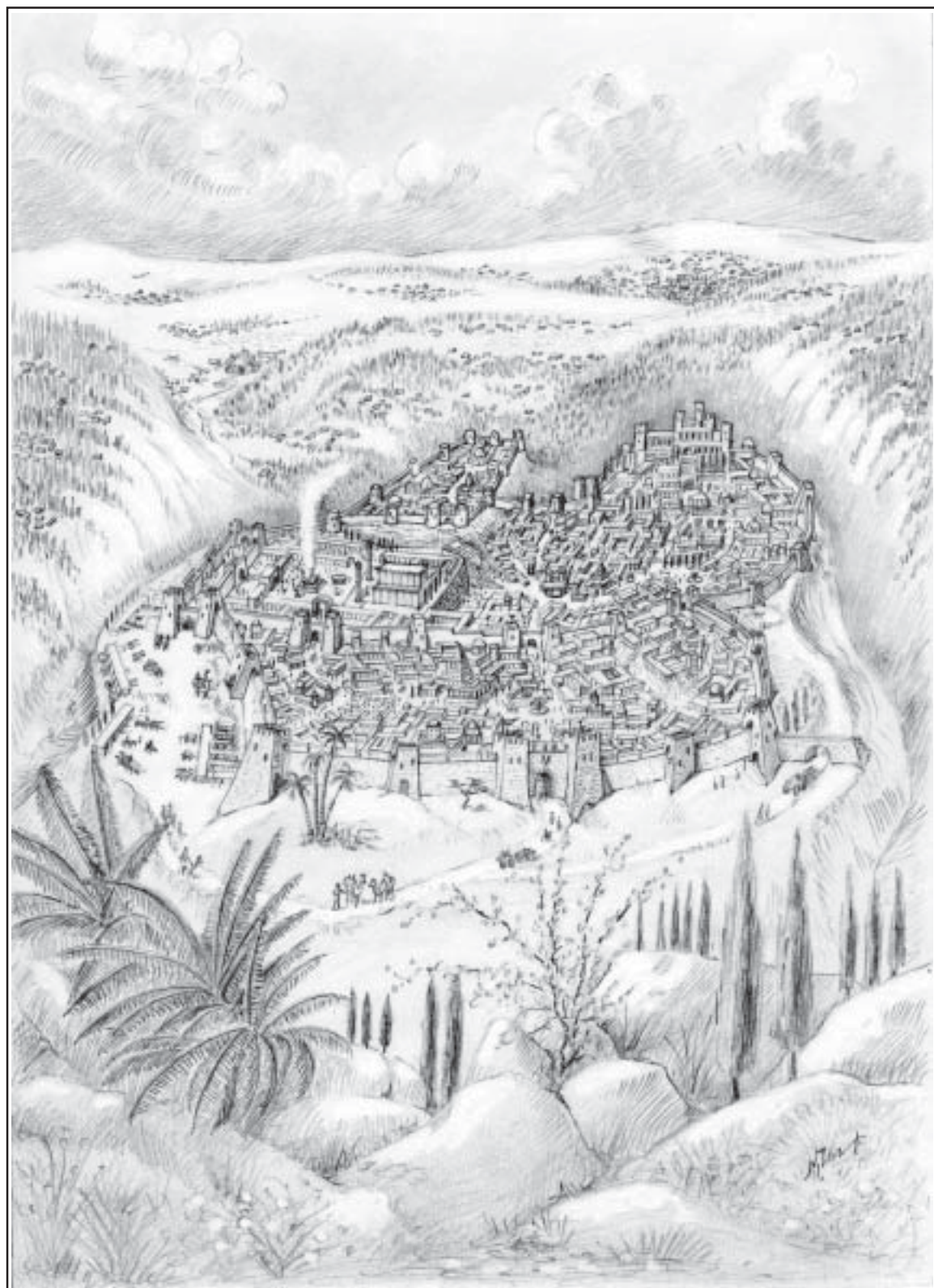


An imagined bird's eye view of Jerusalem from the north at the time of Daniel.

The original city was built on Mount Ophel to the south east, it was called Salem, later Jeru-Salem (Judges 10:1) and Jebus (Judges 19:10) an inhabited by the Jebusites, a Canaanite people. At the time of Abraham Melchizedek was king of Salem and a priest of God most High (Genesis 14:18,20). When David conquered Jerusalem in about year 1000 BC, he called the city Zion – the city of David. Some historians suggest that Zion also included the mountaintop opposite Ophel to the southwest on the other side of the valley of Tyropoeon.

The Temple was situated on a third mountain, Mount Moriah, the place to which Abraham took his son Isaac to offer him to the Lord (Genesis 22:2). Originally this was the threshing floor belonging to the Jebusée Araunah which King David bought in order to build an altar to the Lord. Here King Solomon built the first Temple. Bethlehem, King David's birth place, and several smaller cities and villages can be seen beyond Jerusalem and on the horizon the contours of the Judean Wilderness.

Jerusalem was surrounded by deep ravines on three sides, the Kidron Valley to the east between the city and the Mount Olives, the Hinnon Valleys (Hebrew: ge hinnom, Greek: Gehenna) to the south and to the west. These deep ravines made it almost impossible to conquer the city. Only from the north, along Mount Moriah, was it possible to get near to the city by natural means. King Hezekiah erected an extra wall in order to defend the city against attackers from the north. Ancient Jerusalem was the most beautiful of cities. A contemporary of David described Zion as the perfection of beauty.



Jerusalem at the time of Daniel

but quoting the text with that calm authority which makes listening such a delight. What will happen to him? He had great plans for a future as a Scribe – a Professor of Theology. Now all such plans are smashed to pieces. But perhaps he has not given up entirely. He whispered to me as we lined up that he had got both the *Torah* and the *Psalms of David*, the Tanakh⁸, among his belongings, he had copied them himself.

But what will happen to his secret love for Rachel⁹, so much younger than himself? They met when Hananiah was training to become a landscape gardener but he kept their love quiet because he knew that his parents and family would never accept his engagement to a simple peasant girl...

And so Daniel thought about the past – one pleasant memory after another brightened his thoughts. But shouts and the sound of beating soon brought him back to the cruel reality of the present. One of his fellow prisoners was getting the worst of the soldiers' whips and lashes. No, Daniel and his friends were no longer free. Bound with copper chains, they were on their way to an uncertain future in a hostile country. What a destiny! Why should it happen just to them?

Four friends

Well, Isaiah, the Prophet, had prophesied and said to King Hezekiah: – *Hear the word of the Lord Almighty¹⁰: the time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs¹¹ in the palace of the king of Babylon.*

And so it was, Daniel and his three friends were all descendants of King David and fourth generation relatives to King Hezekiah, cousins and second cousins to King Jehoiakim. Clearly the prophecy was being fulfilled. Owing to King Hezekiah illness and subsequent recovery, the King of Babylon had sent a delegation bringing him greetings and gifts. In a fit of pride and self-importance, Hezekiah had shown the Chaldean envoys all his treasures and riches.

The Chaldeans had been given orders to select the best and most gifted of the king's relatives. The royal family was large and there were many from which to choose. After careful consideration the four friends had been selected. They had shown great aptitude and intelligence, and had also received the very best education to be found in Jerusalem. They were also well built and handsome, as the king had requested.

Why were we taken captive?

On unfamiliar roads

To begin with they took the great trading route north of Jerusalem. There were shortcuts to Babylon via the desert, but they were highly dangerous and many had lost their lives trying to conquer the desert conditions. There was no place to get provisions along the road, if you could even talk of a road. Many traders had told stories of all those who had lost their lives in the blazing heat of the desert – their skeletons left in the sand. On the other hand it was not without danger taking the northern route either through the great forests and big mountains.

They did not know which route they were going to follow to Babylon. If they were to go through the desert or take the road through the forests in Lebanon to upper Euphrates. Would they have to suffer the burning sun and dry heat of the desert or would they have to fight wild animals in the mountains and large forests? They could just imagine it all.

Towards an uncertain future

The future uncertain, Daniel thought that maybe he and his friends had already lived the best part of their lives. Perhaps they would end up as slaves in a coppermine or sweeping the streets in Babylon? Those who ended up in the sulfur mines never lived beyond the age of thirty. Maybe they would become galley-slaves¹ with the toughest job in the world!

Would all their studies have been in vain? All the energy he had spent studying. It had been fun as well though, his thirst for knowledge had been the driving force throughout his entire youth.

Daniel had studied history and the constitutions of the world besides his studies at the School of Prophecy, but would he have any use for that now? Just think, I have even dreamt of becoming a member of the King's Council, he thought to himself. And all the hours I have spent getting to know the numerical mystery² of our sacred writings? Not many people know that each consonant in our alphabet has a numerical value, the numerology of our Scriptures is amazing. But who would be interested in this kind of mystery in Babylon?

What will happen now to all I learnt about land and landscape surveying, my chosen occupation? It was interesting to learn the art of



Map of the route

measuring, levelling and triangulation of areas and surfaces. In my spare time I also learnt all I could about calligraphy in Baruk's Calligraphy Workshop. Baruk³ was the Prophet Jeremiah's Scribe. He knew it all, how to make papyrus⁴ and ink, brushes and pens. Will there be any opportunity for me to do any writings in Babylon? Perhaps I will not even be able to get hold of any papyrus or ink when my supply is finished? And I love to write!

I got to know the Prophet Jeremiah when I was a student scribe. I treasure those memories! Listening to the prophet recite the word of the Lord were highlights during those days. Beginning with the Book of the Prophet Isaiah I copied the Scriptures in the workshop. Then Jeremiah allowed me to copy his prophecies too. I am so pleased to have these treasures with me. Surely nobody can stop me reading? or will they take away everything? It would be like tearing my heart out if they took the scroll of the Book of Isaiah away from me. I would rather lose my sandals and walk barefoot with sore and bleeding feet than lose even one of Jeremiah's prophecies.

Daniel was a gifted linguist. His mother tongue was Hebrew, the written language had twenty-two consonants and no vowels. He spoke Aramaic, the common language of Babylon, as well as his own language and he could read both the old Akkadian cuneiform script and the modern alphabetical writing. He understood quite a lot of the Egyptian language and he could interpret the ancient symbolic writings – the hieroglyphs.

Much of what I learnt I might never use, he thought, but surely I will be able to use Aramaic which I have spent so many years studying and practicing.

Jerusalem – a city of culture

Jerusalem was a city of culture. It had the world's most beautiful temple buildings, many palaces and magnificent buildings built by rocks hewn from the local white sandstone. There was music and song, literature and art. Azariah was one of the most promising young artists. His charcoal sketches were admired by many and he had already added to the beauty of many buildings by his mosaic pictures. He had studied architecture and civil engineering. Now he had been taken away from all that he had worked and hoped for.

Daniel remembered the antagonism between the people who had been part of the revival during the reign of King Josiah and those worshipping other gods. All members of the Temple Choir worshipped *Yahweh** and were heirs to the revival following the reformation of the Temple worship

* *Yahweh*, Hebrew "I AM", Exodus 3:6,14

by King Josiah. But even among the people who belonged to the revival movement there were conflicts. The young people seemed to think that there were too many rules and regulations which they had to follow. Daniel himself thought that it was odd that you could read as much as you liked on the Sabbath, but writing was regarded work so that was not allowed. He remembered what an uproar Azariah had caused when he went out with his sketch block on the Sabbath. He was not allowed to draw pictures. He stood his ground as he defended himself, he could not see that there was any difference between making music which was allowed throughout the entire Sabbath and drawing pictures. The answer he got was that making music and singing in the Temple glorified God on the Sabbath. Azariah was not lost for words as he addressed his accusers:

– Don't you understand that drawing pictures of God's wonderful creation, trees and bushes, men and animals, is my way of glorifying God! Why is that not allowed on the Sabbath?

Jerusalem – a decadent city

Daniel thought of the present state of affairs in Jerusalem. The people of the revival were in minority. The majority of the population worshipped other gods than Yahweh – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The worship of Baal and Ashtaroth⁵ flourished accompanied by immorality. Violence had increased at an alarming rate. Assault, rape and murder occurred every day. Jerusalem had become a city of lawlessness. The Prophet Jeremiah warned the people time and again that there would be catastrophic consequences unless they repented.

But many young people in the revival movement felt that those youngsters who had parents worshipping Baal and Ashtaroth had more freedom. They only had to go to the place of worship⁶ once in a while and sacrifice to the pagan priests. Then they were free to do as they pleased even on the Sabbath. They could live as they liked without fear of being scolded or told off. The men could satisfy their desires with the women serving in the temple.⁶ There were drawbacks though, at night nobody was safe, great gangs of noisy youngsters roamed the streets on their way to their orgies. Jerusalem was a decadent city.

Daniel knew that their idol worship did not give them any real happiness, while he and his friends time and again had experienced the Lord's blessing and a deep inner contentment. They had chosen to follow the Lord and His ways and this was the only way to gain real satisfaction in life. Daniel reasoned and consoled himself with those pleasant memories as he walked.

Nothing could compare with the great times before the Lord, when the whole Temple Square was full of people and the thousand members of the

choir dressed in their national colours sang praise to God. The men in their blue capes stood on one side in Solomon's arcades, the women in white dresses on the other side. They often used to sing alternately!

The women's choir asked:

– *Who is this King of glory?*⁷ On the other side the male choir responded: *The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.* Then the women's choir: *Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.* Again the women's choir asked: *Who is he, this King of glory?* The male choir answered: *The Lord Almighty – he is the King of glory.* Together we sang: *Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.*

The people who stood in the forecourt between the choirs had a wonderful experience of praise – surrounded by music and song. What an encounter! What joy! What a glorious experience of the presence of God. Surely the idol worshippers singing their vulgar songs in their rowdy and noisy orgies, could never experience this kind of happiness!

Daniel could not understand why just he and his friends should be singled out for captivity. Why? Has God abandoned us? Why have we become prisoners while many of those who lived in immorality and orgies have got scot free?

The first campsite

At last their first day of captivity came to an end. Even though they were tired they had managed quite well thanks to their fitness. They wondered what the first night would be like. They were used to the comfort of soft beds in lovely bedrooms, now they had to sleep out in the open in bags made of sheep-skin.

They struck camp before dark and the prisoners were divided into groups. Because of the wild beasts in the forest, they had to have campfires. No matter how many people there were, they could not sleep safely without the protection of fire. The wolves were the greatest danger and both lion and bear roamed around. The wolves were pack animals, by yourself you did not stand much chance of survival if you were attacked by a pack of wolves.

The people from the nearby village had provided long piles of firewood and there was much bargaining until a price for the wood was agreed. All the prisoners had to help carry the wood to the places marked out for the fires. Supervised by the soldier in charge, they had to take turns to keep the fire going throughout the night.

It felt good to be free from their chains for a while as they fetched firewood with the soldiers. Once by the fire the soldiers seemed to let their vigilance go a little. The cousins began talking quietly in Hebrew.

By the campfire

Mishael wondered: – Do you know where we are now?

Azariah looked up and said: – Just on the outskirts of Bethel.

– Then we're on holy ground. It was here Jacob, our ancestor, saw a ladder¹ reaching all the way to heaven and God's angels going up and down on it, said Hananiah.

Daniel added: – Yes, God was very real to Jacob. God gave him the name Israel, which means *he struggles with God or God strives*². Judah, to whose tribe we belong, was the most prominent of Jacob's twelve sons. We have the promise that the Messiah will be born out of this tribe, added Daniel.

Azariah exclaimed: – Jacob! He was a warrior for God and very brave! I feel more like a dog, with those soldiers whipping us. How could this happen to us?

– Didn't someone say something once about *a live dog³ being better off than a dead lion?* wondered Hananiah.

Mishael commented on this very seriously: – That is one of Solomon's many proverbs. Very apt, too. Although the soldiers treat us like dogs, at least we are still alive. All of us could have been killed. Just think about it!

– Do you realise that Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, the father of us all, once came from the Chaldean Ur, where we're going. Isn't it odd that we have to march back there now, after fifteen hundred years. Our roots are actually in the old Babylon, said Daniel thoughtfully.

– Yes, you really have to ask yourself whether this is the will of God, or just coincidence that we are forced to go back there? asked Mishael.

Azariah said what he thought: – I don't believe it could possibly be the will of God that we should go back there as prisoners and slaves.

Daniel replied: – Perhaps we still have to acknowledge that all this is happening with God's permission. Apparently the Prophet Jeremiah has heard from the Lord, that the falling away of the Jewish people will be punished by seventy years⁴ of captivity.

With disappointment in his voice Azariah exclaimed: – Seventy years! This is terrible! I will be an old man of nearly ninety before I see Jerusalem again!

– Look at Jerusalem! You will never see Jerusalem again, not even the Temple! Jeremiah says that the Temple and the entire city will be burnt by fire and laid waste, explained Hananiah.

– Can you really believe that such a prophecy can be from God? Our holy Temple destroyed and Jerusalem burnt? Can these uncircumcised heathens really gain such power over God’s chosen people? asked Axaiah very distressed.

Daniel declared his belief: – I don’t think they would have any power at all if it had not been given them from above.

– Do you really mean that it is God who is permitting all this terrible suffering? Don’t you believe that God is good and that he loves us as a father loves his children? wondered Azariah.

Daniel answered: – Yes, I believe God is both good and merciful. David says in one of his psalms:

– *As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him*⁵. Jeremiah has been assured that, in spite of all that is going on, the Lord loves us with an *everlasting love*⁶.

– But if he loves us, how can God then permit this? We have tried to obey the Law, haven’t we? asked Mishael.

– Perhaps we don’t really understand God’s purpose in all this. We have not yet seen the end of it. The Prophet Isaiah also had a similar message to King David’s:

– *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are my ways higher than your ways, And my thoughts than your thoughts*⁷, added Daniel.

Hananiah continued on the same line: – I don’t think that we really can understand God’s plan for us. God can’t be blamed for the world’s suffering or be the cause of all the misery. Surely it is the prince of darkness – the evil archangel Lucifer – who rebelled against God, and all his fallen angels who are behind the catastrophes and disasters.

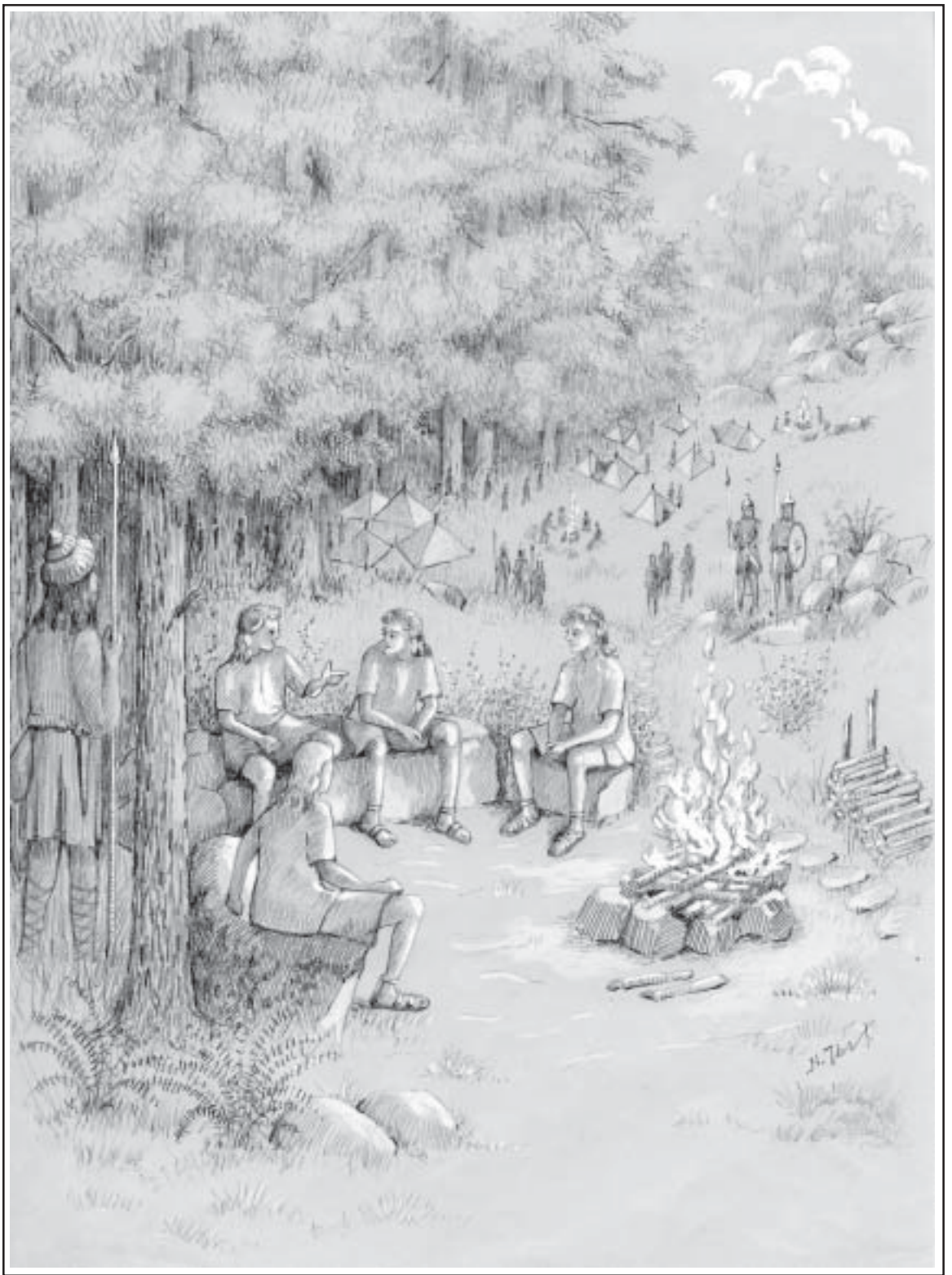
– Yes, but has God then no power at all to stop him? I thought God was almighty, said Azariah.

Firm in his faith Daniel said: – Of course God is almighty!

Scripture says: – *The Lord has established his throne in heaven*⁸, *and his kingdom rules over all. The eternal God is our refuge and underneath are His everlasting arms*⁹. But since this world is a fallen creation, God can not always use his power. When the Messiah comes, then will God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Azariah continued: – I still don’t get it! If God loves us and He is all powerful, then surely He can stop all attacks by Satan on His own chosen people. Why were the Assyrians allowed to remove the ten tribes in the north and why are the Chaldeans allowed to conquer Judah – the apple of God’s eye – in the south, and send us into captivity?

– It’s all because of our falling away from the Lord. The *Torah* says that if we fall away we are to be punished sevenfold and to be driven out¹⁰ to the ends of the earth... said Hannaiah with a said voice.



By the campfire

Daniel continued: – Yes, it certainly is our ancestors' worship of the Ashteroths and the Baal and our own ungodly living which has given Satan power over us. It is not that God wants to do us harm, because he loves us. But when we sin, then we enter into Satan's territory. God's angels can't protect us any more and Satan has the power to hit us with all kinds of misfortunes: wars, pestilence, famine and even captivity.

Mishael asked again: – But why should it happen just to us? None of *us* have worshipped foreign gods?

– Perhaps it is just because we worship the Lord, that He could save us from the terrible massacre when so many of our people were killed. Yes – we were taken captive – but we are still alive, we have food to eat every day and if we behave reasonably we don't get beaten or tortured, said Hananiah.

Daniel tried to explain the problem: – I think it is like this. If we look even deeper into the problem of suffering, we find that there can be either self-inflicted or innocent suffering. Much of the suffering our people have encountered lately is self-inflicted as our kings and our people have fallen away from God. The conflicts between the tribes, which in reality is a conflict between brothers, became so fierce that the superpowers Egypt and Assyria were invited to help the people against their own brothers. This led to the destruction of the nation. And there is another example of obvious self-inflicted suffering: look at King Saul, our first king. Driven by hatred and envy he tried to murder David, and eventually this brought his own premature death.

– Did you say, that there actually is innocent suffering? asked Mishael.

– Yes, there are those who get killed because they stand up for the cause of God, for truth and for justice. Look at our great Prophet Isaiah, whom King Manasseh had sawn in half with a bow saw, like a tree.¹¹ There has been much innocent suffering and much innocent blood spilled on this earth. But God is a God of justice and later on the martyrs will receive a great reward from God, added Daniel.

Mishael wondered: – Is *our* suffering innocent, then?

Daniel said emphatically: – Yes, I believe it is. But even though we ourselves may be innocent when it comes to idolatry and worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, we still suffer because of the misdeeds of our forefathers.

– As God is omnipotent, could He not let the innocent escape?

Daniel asserted: – Yes, He could, but this innocent suffering is a real mystery. Job wrote a whole book, where he tried to resolve this problem. I think it is like this – if the will of God reigned entirely here on earth, then there would not be a single martyr, no one who suffered without cause. If God at this time is not able to stop all evil and all violence then that is because of man's fall into sin and man's free will. If God would intervene

every time a human being is tempted to do wrong then God would have to remove man's free will.

It is like trying to remove the weeds from a field of wheat. You can not do it because you are in danger of pulling up the wheat at the same time¹². You have to let the wheat and the weeds grow together until harvest time. Then you can separate the weeds from the wheat. Sometimes it looks like God is handicapped and prevented from acting to stop evil. In some instances God has a purpose in permitting suffering, a higher purpose of teaching towards increased knowledge and sometimes one person's suffering can benefit someone else. Sometimes the whole thing is a great, big mystery. Not least as there are also powerful forces in the heavenly realm that for a time can hinder God's angels from getting to those who are asking for God's help and assistance.

– I think prayer is very important in this context. Our faith and prayers are like spiritual weapons that we can use, then God is able to intervene and change things. Sometimes it looks like God's power can be released through our prayers and so God's will is revealed through our communication with him. In this evil world God, in order to carry out His will, may actually be more dependent on our prayers than we realise, added Hananiah.

– Would God then be dependent on our prayers? That sounds strange, said Mishael.

Daniel explained: – Well, if we realise that God has created us with a free will, then he does not want to control us like robots. But when we ask him for something our will is engaged and then God can answer our prayer or intervene in a situation without our free will being violated.

Azariah was getting more and more interested in his friends' discussion. As he listened he had got out a papyrus scroll and started to draw a picture of the campfire. Now he could no longer see to draw as darkness settled around them.

The four friends had got louder and more and more excited during the course of their discussion. Suddenly they were interrupted by the harsh voice of a soldier ordering them in Aramaic to stop chattering. Mishael took the first turn to keep the fire going, after two hours he was to awake Azariah to take his turn. While he messed about with the sand-glass, the others got into their warm sheep-skin sleeping-bags, so lovingly made by their mothers and girlfriends during the last days and nights before their departure.

For evening prayer they read silently to themselves David's twenty-third psalm, and were reminded that the Lord was their Shepherd.

Daniel's dream at Bethel

That night Daniel had a wonderful dream, it reminded him of the dream Jacob once had. Daniel saw heaven open and God's angels going up and down an enormous ladder reaching all the way to the gate of heaven. A closer examination revealed the ladder to be a gigantic cross with the cross beam keeping the gate wide open. With angels helping them, many people climbed the ladder without effort and entered heaven through the open gate.

Daniel watched amazed at what was happening. The scene altered and the cross became a majestic human being joining heaven and earth. Dressed in a pure white garment, his face shining with purity and a divine love, he stood with his hands outstretched as if he wanted to embrace all mankind.

Daniel then saw Him as an ordinary human being at work on earth, moving among the people, helping all who were suffering or in distress. In his dream Daniel saw heaven open and God's angels ascending and descending above Him. Apparently nothing hindered the work of the angels around Him. When He spoke the blind received their sight, the lame began to walk¹, the deaf to sing. All manner of sicknesses simply disappeared in His presence, melting away like wax. Everywhere people became happy, not just because they had been made well, but because of his wonderful message of love and eternal life. To all who received His message and put their trust in Him, He gave power to become children of God, and they discovered an entirely new way of life.

Who was He, this strange man so in touch with God, like a stairway reaching all the way into heaven? He was the Messiah – The Anointed One! Daniel realised now that anointing went far beyond the holy ointment prepared by the High Priest in the Temple. This wonderful person was anointed with the very oil of heaven, the Holy Spirit of God. Daniel had been given a glimpse of the perfect will of God revealed in a person – the Messiah – anointed and full of the Holy Spirit. This was God's Servant in whom the will of God would bear fruit, as Isaiah had prophesied...

Suddenly He stood there in front of Daniel, in the dream. He spoke, looking at Daniel, His penetrating eyes reflecting the glory of heaven:

– Fear not Daniel, I will be with you and make you my witness among the heathens – you shall speak of me to kings and to satraps. As I revealed myself to Jacob and went with him into foreign land so I will be with you, I will guide you as you go forward in prayer. Tell you friends, as I protect you, so I will protect them and make you honoured.

Through the land of Benjamin

Camp awoke at sunrise. All were in a hurry to get ready for another day of hardship. Again and again the soldiers urged them on so that they would get going, they were eager to impress their superiors in order to gain promotion. None of them wanted to be last.

They walked on through the land of Benjamin during the morning. As he walked Daniel thought of his lovely dream. In the midst of his distress, having to leave his home and loved ones, facing an unknown future, he had a strange sense of security. God had promised to be with him. In spite of everything life was not meaningless. It was no accident that they were walking towards Babylon. God had a purpose for him and knew exactly where he was. He cared for him and for his friends. They were indeed *in the shelter of the Most High*².

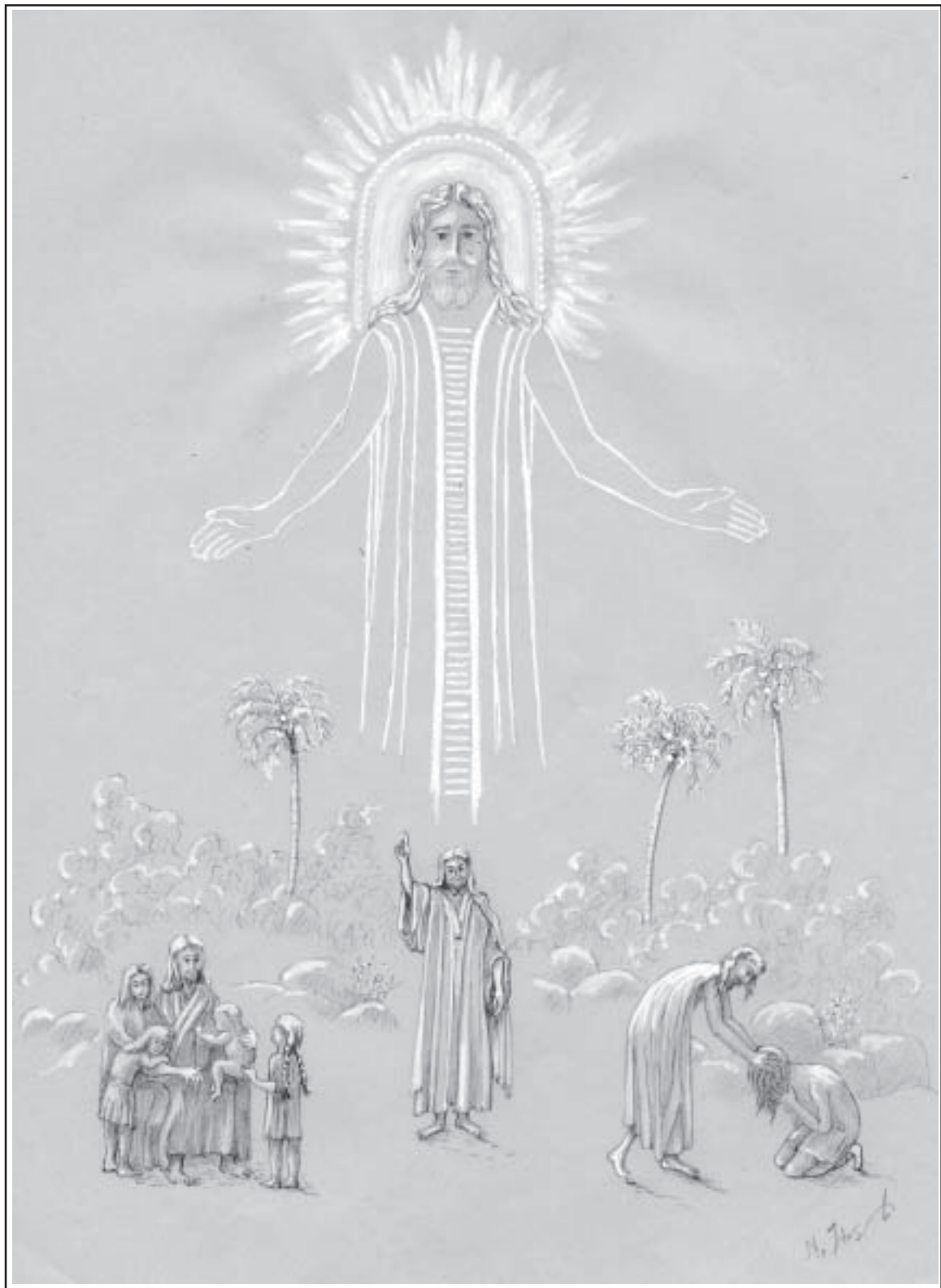
In the evening Daniel told the others of his dream. They were overjoyed, especially as this supernatural person had a message for them too. They had a sense of purpose even though they also felt somewhat confused. They had always believed that the Messiah would be a human being, a mighty prophet, like Moses. But this Messiah, whom Daniel had seen in his dream, was not an ordinary human being at all. No, this had to be God himself in human form, how else could He promise to be with them and protect them and declare that they were to become His witnesses.

Even the hardship of the march was easier to take now that they knew they were singled out for God's special care. The more they could understand of God's purpose for them, the more motivated and steadfast they would become.

As they huddled around the camp-fire, Daniel began to explain God's plan for Israel and Judah and also why they now were on their way to Babylon.

A people of divine revelation

Daniel: – Long ago when God called Abraham out of Old Babylon, His intention was to separate Abraham and his children from their ungodly surroundings and to reveal Himself to him so that through him all the



*The Messiah – the ladder to heaven
Friend of little children – Preacher – Healer*

nations of the world would be blessed. God gave the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants. The accounts of how God revealed himself to Abraham were passed on to Isaac and to Jacob, who with his twelve sons became the nation of Israel. Later through Moses they received God's law and statutes regarding festivals and times of worship.

Through Israel God wants to reveal His will to the world, His purpose and plan for all mankind. His ten commandments³ are meant to be the guidelines to be followed by all people. Through Israel God also reveals His love for the world in that He sends the Messiah to be born among us. He will be the Saviour of the world redeeming all mankind from the effects of the fall into sin, and from the reign of Satan.

God intended our city, Jerusalem, to become a centre of true revelation through the priesthood and the Temple, with its worship of God the Most High. People have come to our Temple from all the corners of the world to experience the presence of God here.

All this you know so well. But here is the big question: If God has chosen us before all others to bear his name and to reveal his will, how come our nation has been split into two and one disaster after another has come upon us? The answer is found in our terrible history – as a nation we went away, astray from God's plan.

The Sanctuary at Shiloh

Mishael wondered:

– What are those towers and walls down in the valley below our camp?

Haniah was quick to answer: – Those are the ruins⁴ of Shiloh, a city destroyed at the time of Eli the High Priest and the Prophet Samuel, when the ark was captured by the Philistines. God's tabernacle was there before the Temple was built in Jerusalem. Shiloh was the first city built by the Jews following the conquest of Canaan. The people came here to worship every year during the three Pilgrim Feasts. The tent where the ark, the lampstand and several other golden vessels were kept, was called the Tent of Revelation. The glory of the Lord God appeared above the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud or fire from time to time.

Daniel added: – Yes, the word revelation is an apt word describing God's plan in choosing the Israelites above all other people to carry the true revelation of God forward.

Azariah asked: – Daniel, in a few words, how would you describe how God has revealed himself to our forefathers?

Daniel thought for a while and said: – God revealed himself first to our ancestor Abraham as Lord God Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Abraham got to know him as the living God who wants to save mankind from the effects of the Fall.

God's plan was further revealed through Moses, acting as intermediary, as he conveyed both God's law and His mercy to the people. King David showed us the importance of participating in praise and worship. Through the prophets we have received warnings and we have been taught submission. Through them we have also received revelation about the future.

Hananiah continued: – The many prophecies about the Messiah are the most important parts of the revelations by the prophets. They foretell that God will send a mighty prophet who will become the Saviour of the world and King of King's. Through the divine revelation we understand that we are intended to become a help and guidance to other nations, a people prepared to receive the Messiah, from the tribe of Judah and line of David, who is to be born in our land.

Azariah asked again: – But how have we discharged our duties? How long will it be before the Messiah comes?

Daniel said with a serious voice: – To answer the first question, there is no doubt that we have failed to discharge the duties God has entrusted to us. Instead of passing on a pure and true divine revelation, our kings and our people have fallen away to worship the same idols as our neighbours, with all the accompanying immorality.

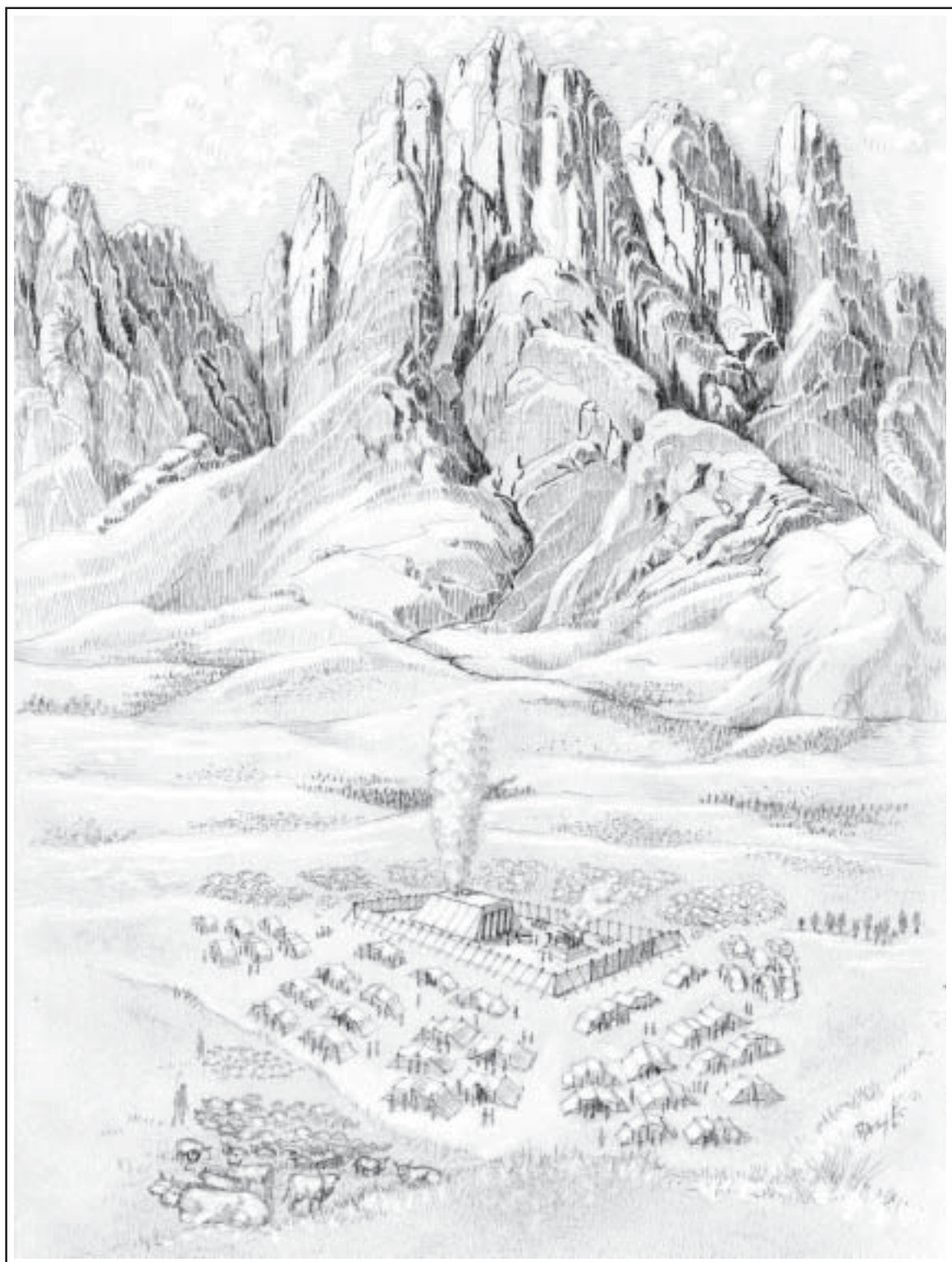
Azariah had one more question: – Has God then abandoned us and chosen another nation to bear the Messiah?

Daniel answered: – No, God can not alter his promises to Abraham, Moses and David. But as our apostacy is very great, God has to punish us and allow us to suffer horribly in order to make us understand our task in this world and enable us to fulfil his plan.

Mishael said with disappointment in his voice: – How can it be that our kings and leaders fell into sin to such an extent that almost the whole of our nation is destroyed now and only Jerusalem left?

Azariah had a suggestion: – Daniel, you have read a lot and you know our history. Tell us more so that we can understand what is happening now. Tell us what you learnt at Hilkiah's School of Prophecy. You met Jeremiah the Prophet many times, tell us what the prophets have foretold.

Daniel said: – I suppose I should try to explain the more important incidents leading to the degradation of Israel. We must not forget though, all the wonderful promises God has given us concerning the future. Hananiah knows at least as much of the prophecies as I do, so we can explain it together.



The Tabernacle

The Tabernacle at the Center of the camp in front of Mount Sinai. On top of Mount Horeb Moses received tablets of stone with the Ten Comandments – a code of ethics since sprred all over the world.

During their conversation Azariah had fetched his drawing material. He could never just sit there idle – he had to capture the beauty he saw around him. In his sketches he could preserve some of his impressions. As he had said good-bye to his father he had promised that he would continue to draw, one picture each day if he could. Now he drew the landscape in front of him, the view of old Shiloh, in ruins, in the foreground a shepherd calling his flock into the safety of the sheepfold.

As Daniel told them about the tent of revelation. Azariah drew a picture of the mountains at Sinai as he imagined them, with Horeb, the mountain-top where Moses once received the Law – God’s ten commandments.

In front of the mountains he drew the place where the children of Israel had camped in the desert after their exodus from Egypt. In the centre was the Tabernacle with the pillar of cloud above it – the *Shekinah* glory.

The beginning of the great apostacy

Daniel and Hananiah tell the story:

Daniel started: – The great apostacy began during the last years of the reign of King Solomon, when our nation was at the height of its power and might. King Solomon’s wisdom and riches were greater than those of any of his royal contemporaries. The palace and the Temple which he built were regarded as the most beautiful in the whole world. Gold was as common as silver in Jerusalem and Solomon had made three hundred golden shields, which he displayed in the house of Lebanon. He denied himself nothing of comfort and luxury and owned a great many horses and chariots.

– Apart from having the daughter of Pharaoh for his wife, he married no less than 700 women, daughters of princes and respected people, and built fine palaces for them. Crazy in his lust for women, for his amusement he also had 300 concubines⁵, among which were many foreign women: Sidonians, Hittites, Ammonites and Edomites, all of whom he was prohibited from marrying according the Law of Moses.

– To please his wives he began worshipping other gods, both Ashtoreth and Milcom and built high places, one for Chemosh – the detestable god of the Moabites and one for Molech, the equally detestable god of the children of Ammon, whose worship required child sacrifices and sexual rites.

Hananiah continued: – Plainly speaking, Solomon became the victim of the contemporary sex-cults and sex mania prevalent among the pagans. When he began to realise how short life is, he wanted to make the most of

it, living out his sexual lust while he still could. His father David⁶ had succumbed to the same temptation, but he rose from his failure and broken and repentant sought the Lord's forgiveness. David was entirely restored, but Solomon sank deeper and deeper. In the end he could not distinguish between clean and unclean, between holy and unholy, light and darkness. Solomon could no longer hear God's voice in his old age, in spite of having received the Lord's revelation in his youth. He began in Spirit but ended in the flesh.

Azariah said resentful: – A thousand wives. Why did he have so many? Leaving out the Sabbaths he had to visit three wives each night in order to get around them all at least once per year. What a rake, he lived like an animal - like a bullock.

Hananiah was very upset when he added: – Worst was his idol worship with the inherent sex-cults.

Daniel said in closing:

– And the consequences? Well, the Lord sent a prophet who told Solomon that, due to his apostasy, the nation would be divided⁷, his son would only rule over a small part of Israel, the land of Judah and Benjamin⁸.

But we have to continue another evening. We'd better finish here before we're told off again.

Mishael pointed and said: – But what's happening over there? That soldier is sick, he's shivering and his forehead is dripping of sweat. Can't we do anything?

Hananiah had an advice: – I have a herbal tea for reducing fever. I can make some for him on the fire.

Azariah said: – He'll have to keep warm to recover from a fever like that. I'll give him my sleeping bag.

The soldiers were grateful and surprised to find such kindness from the Jewish prisoners towards their captors. The sick soldier drank the warm herbal tea, and with a smile on his lips, crawled into the warm sheep-skin bag that Azariah had offered him.

Samaria

The following morning they made room for the soldier on the ox-cart carrying some of their belongings, so that he could continue travelling bedded down in the sheep-skin bag. He was still very hot from fever. By now they had arrived in Samaria and at noon they came to Jacob's Well at Sychar, where they filled their water-skins.

They walked all day through the beautiful Samaria. It was much easier to walk now than the first few days. The knowledge of God's protection and presence with them which Daniel had conveyed to them, gave them courage and confidence. Mishael started humming a melody in step with their marching and together they found the lyrics.

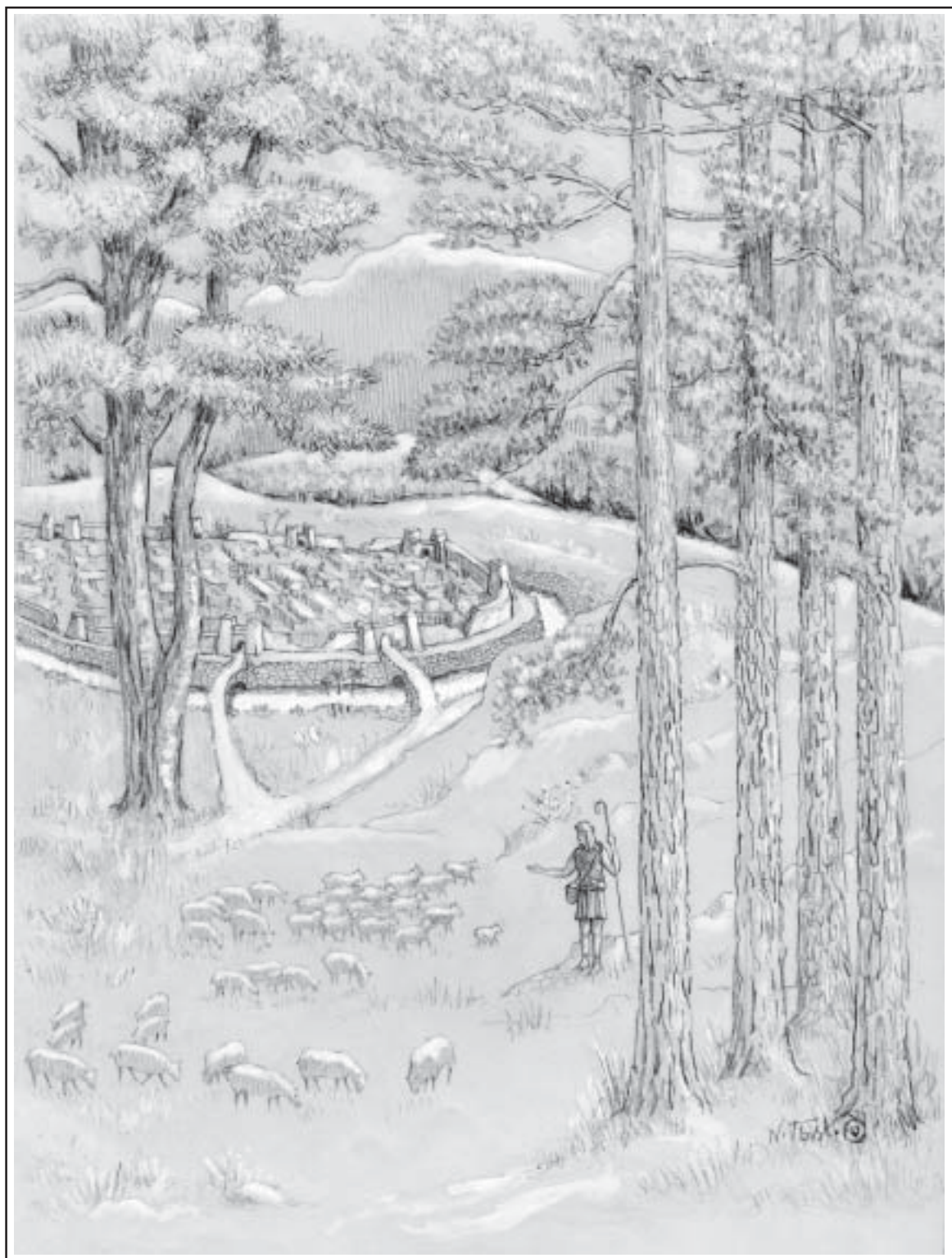
*From Jerusalem and the house of God,
On stony paths and gravel roads we trod.
Prisoners, trudging to Babylon –
That foreign city – on and on.*

*But in the Lord we trust:
He who parries the enemy's thrust;
Ever watching¹ through our strife
And struggle in this life.*

*In God's name we have the victory
Every step of our living story.
Victory, victory, God's mighty victory.
The Lord guides us with His glory.*

By evening they reached Samaria, once the capital, now mostly in ruins. The Chaldeans had a storage place here and the royal prisoners were given their own tent which they soon pitched by the camp-fire. With everything prepared for the night, Daniel and Hananiah continued reflecting on the history of Israel.

Whilst Daniel delved into the chronicles of the kings, Azariah turned to look at Samaria, so beautiful in the sunset in spite of its torn down walls. It was like a queen without her crown. Azariah knew that in days to come, the sketches he drew on his papyrus would be a delight to them all, reminding them of their time together around the camp-fire. It was easy to listen and draw at the same time.



Pastoral scene near the ruins of Samaria

Solomon – the cause of the nation’s division

Daniel began by quoting one of Solomon’s many proverbs:

– I turned my mind to understand², to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly. I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap and whose hands are chains.

Solomon is not saying this about his first great love to a woman, which he praises in his Songs of Songs. This proverb shows Solomon’s experience of the many women who surrounded him at the end of his life. They became a snare not just to him, they were a disaster to all Israel.

Another of Solomon’s sayings declares this:

– Because God does not³ punish sinners instantly, people feel it is safe to do wrong. But though a man sins a hundred times and still lives, I know very well that those who fear God will be better off.

The apostacy in Solomon’s life did not happen at once. Little by little he began to worship foreign gods. Because he did not experience any immediate ill effects he continued, ever more ready to comply with the requests of the women and to sacrifice to their gods.

Another consequence of his lust after women was the provision of palace-like homes for them. He built the Temple first, then his own large palace which took thirteen years to build, it was so incredibly luxurious. Every man in the country was conscripted to serve every third month on these building enterprises. On top of that the people were burdened by very high taxes, there was the tithe to the Levites and their temple-service, and taxes payable towards the cost of the king’s army and his building projects. When Solomon, on top of this, demanded more tax in order to build palaces for his foreign wives, the people grumbled and, especially among the northern tribes, the thought of getting rid of this kind of slavery became deeply rooted.

Thus Solomon’s apostacy was the direct cause of the split of the nation. His son Rehoboam received only the inheritance of Judah, south of Jerusalem, and part of the inheritance of Benjamin just north of Jerusalem. The tribe of Simeon had earlier been incorporated into the tribe of Judah while the tribe of Levi, whose duty it was to serve in the temple, living mostly in Jerusalem and its surroundings, also became subject to Rehoboam. But the rest of the tribes, those in the north, formed a kingdom of their own under the rule of one of Solomon’s officials, Jeroboam.

Until this time all the people of Israel had gone to Jerusalem to sacrifice in the Temple. But when Jeroboam had declared himself king of the northern tribes, the people under his rule were no longer allowed to go to Jerusalem. Instead Jeroboam had two golden calves made and told the people:

– *It is too much⁴ for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt.*

One calf was placed in Bethel, the other one in Dan. This then caused a dreadful apostasy within the Northern Kingdom, sometimes called Israel, sometimes Ephraim after the largest tribe.

Mishael wondered: – Had they completely forgotten the golden calf in the Sinai desert, the one they danced around when they were on their way from Egypt to the land of Canaan, the one Moses condemned? Were they that ignorant of their history? What happened next?

Daniel answered: – First Judah tried to conquer the Northern Kingdom but failed completely. No less than 180 thousand men gathered in Judah to recapture the kingdom for Rehoboam, Solomon's son. But a man of God by the name of Shemaiah received this word from the Lord:

– *Do not go up⁵ to fight against your brothers, the Israelites.* And they obeyed the word of the Lord and turned away, as the Lord had ordered.

Mishael exclaimed in surprise: –180 thousand soldiers, a great army. How many people were there at the time?

Daniel explained: – When David took a census⁶ about 50 years before the division of the kingdom there were no less than 500 thousand able-bodied men in Judah alone who could handle a sword, in the rest of Israel there were 800 thousand men. So the total population in both countries ought to have been between six and seven million people.

Hananiah added: – In spite of the command of the Lord not to fight their brothers the two kingdoms were in constant conflict, weakening both nations and lowering morale. Our Chronicles state that Rehoboam and Jeroboam were fighting each other as long as they lived, and the same is said of Rehoboam's grandson Asa and Israel's King Baasha.

Eventually Samaria became the capital of the Northern Kingdom. There were nineteen kings in the whole of Israel, all really wicked. Ahab, one of the worst, took a Sidonian woman by the name of Jezebel for his wife. She established the Phoenician worship of Baal and Ashtoreth as state religion in Israel. Ahab built a great temple for Baal in Samaria, instituting 450 men as prophets of this pagan religion and he made an Asherah pole which was served by 400 prophets⁷ of Asherah. An Asherah⁸, as you well know, is a tall pole raised between thickly wooded trees underneath which Asherah is worshipped by all kinds of sexual rites. On the green hills everywhere in the land of Canaan these poles were raised.

The population of the Northern Kingdom did not want to be inferior to the people of Jerusalem. Now that they had their own temple and priests they broke completely with their forefather's worship of *Jahve*. There was a period of national revival at the time of Elijah⁹, the mighty prophet, who proved on Mount Carmel that the Lord was God, but sadly Israel soon returned to Baal worship.

Idol worship in Canaan

Azariah had continued drawing, but he was interested in the conversation and interrupted:

– What did it mean to worship Baal?

Daniel answered: – According to religious tradition amongst pagans Ashtoreth was Baal's wife and the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth¹⁰ often went together. The Lord God had commanded the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites living in the land of Canaan who worshipped these gods.

Azariah wondered: – I always wondered if God really commanded that we should kill the Canaanites and take their land. It sounds very cruel.

Daniel consented but gave at the same time an intelligible explanation to God's actions: – Yes it does, but you have to recognise what a terrible religious practice this worship of Baal is. Men and women worship these idols by performing sexual acts in front of them and worse, many of them sacrificed their firstborn children. There was the piece de resistance, a terrible custom – *the foundation sacrifice* – which meant that a living child was bricked into the foundation of the house to ensure that it would go well with the family living there.

Haniah added: – I know that many clay-pots have been found containing bodies of newborn babies sacrificed in this way.

Daniel continued: – Another reason why God wanted to extinguish the Canaanites could be their widespread homosexuality¹¹. Already at the time of Lot the greater part of the population of both Sodom and Gomorrah were perverse. Baalworship¹² was a Sodomite cult with the priests practising sodomy while the priestesses in the temples of Ashtoreth were temple prostitutes. Young women were forced to serve in the temples. To begin with the Lord let judgment fall only over Sodom and Gomorrah, but at the time of Joshua's conquest of Canaan the whole nation was rotten to the core through their perverse practices. If this way of life had spread throughout the whole world, the future of mankind would have been in jeopardy. So sin had reached *its full measure*¹³ the Lord decided that the entire population of the land of Canaan had to be destroyed. Sadly our forefathers did not obey the Lord's instructions in full and so today the cult of Baal is prevalent everywhere.

Haniah explained God's action with an illustration: – Of course it could be seen as very cruel to extinguish the whole population in the land of Canaan. But compare it to an abscess which is not removed with the result that the infection spreads to the whole body. Or think of someone with gangrene in the leg, which has to be amputated. It may sound cruel to cut off the whole leg, but if this is not done the whole body is in danger.

Mishael commented: – Put like that, you can see why a righteous God

would have to act and stop the innocent suffering and the evil practices.

Daniel said with grief in his voice: – The tragedy is that these cruel pagan religions, which should have been extinguished by the Israelites, were allowed to take root among the Israelites themselves. If, at the time of Elijah, there were just seven thousand who were not following Baal, then at the time of Israel's destruction there were probably only a few left worshipping the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Civil war in Israel¹⁴

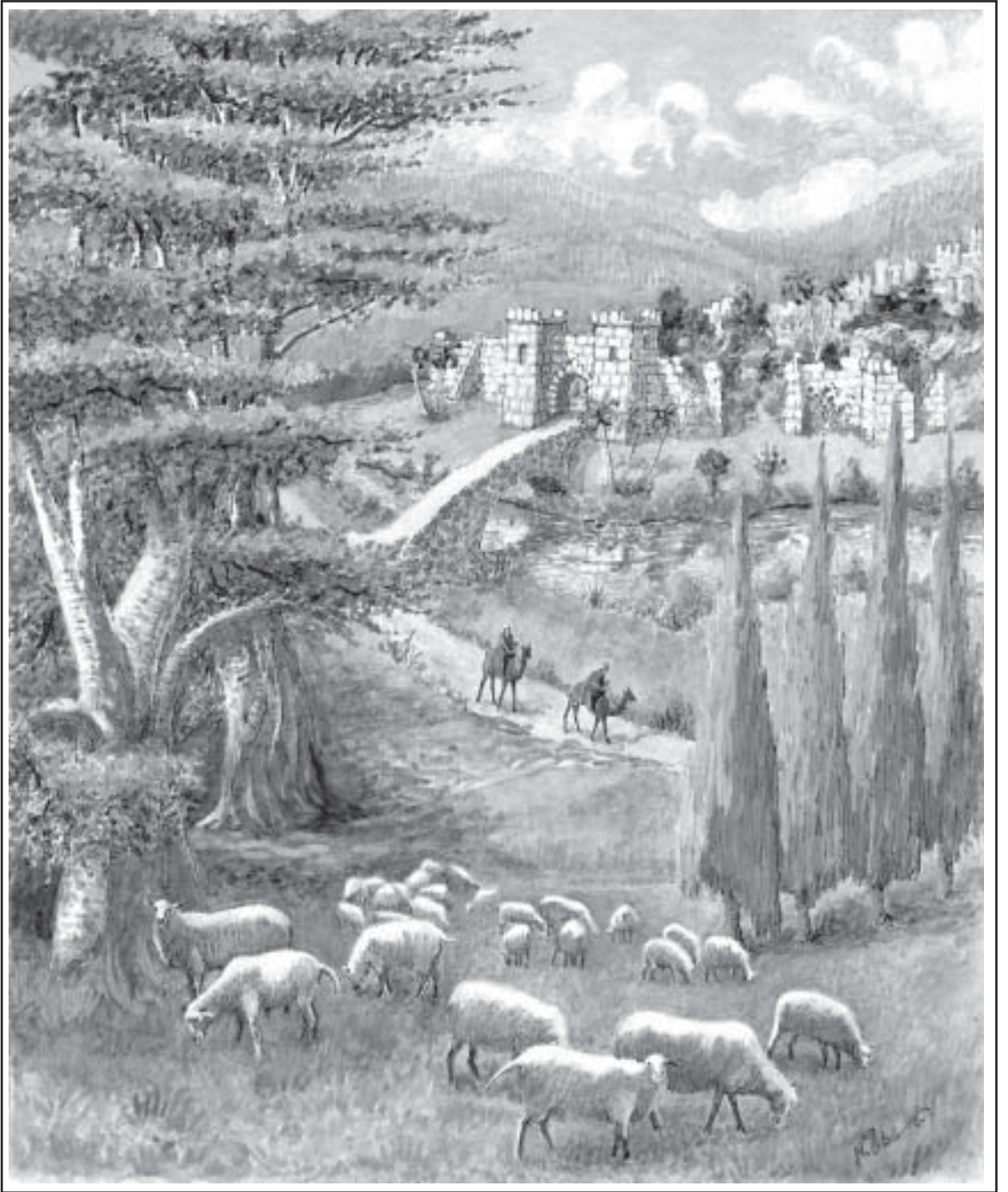
Hananiah continued the lesson in history: – The final cause of the Northern Kingdom's political ruin was their constant attempts to take Jerusalem and bring Judah into submission. When Pekah, king of Israel, with the help of the king of Damascus in Aram made his assault on Jerusalem, it left Ahaz, king of Judah, in difficulties as the Philistines and the Edomites took the opportunity to attack. Remember that the apostasy was great also in Judah. Ahaz made cast idols for worshipping the Baals and sacrificed his own sons in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, following the same detestable ways of the nations that the Lord had driven out.

In the attack from the north, Judah suffered a terrible defeat, 120 thousand of their fighting men were killed in one day. The Israelites took captive and removed to Samaria 200 thousand Jewish prisoners together with a large plunder of costly items. On the outskirts of the city, however, they met the Lord's prophet by the name of Obed who ordered them to set the prisoners free. So powerful was his message that they did not dare keep the prisoners but took them to Jericho.

Daniel told what happens after that: – At the time of the defeat, King Ahaz of Judah sent a message to the powerful Assyrians asking them for help to conquer his brothers in the north. This proved fatal for Israel, as the Assyrians made one attack after another against the Northern Kingdom. The Assyrians had attacked Israel already before King Ahaz asked for help and king Menahem of Israel had had to give King Pul 1 000 talents of silver in order to avoid war. During King Pekah's first reign Tiglath-Pileser from Assyria conquered the whole land of Naphtali and removed the people to Assyria.

When Ahaz now requested assistance from Tiglath-Pileser the Assyrians immediately continued their attacks on Israel resulting in the total destruction of the Northern Kingdom¹⁵. Tiglath-Pileser first conquered Israel's ally in Damascus and soon afterward took all the land belonging to Israel east of Jordan and north of the Lake Genesareth. The people were removed into captivity.

The new king of Assyria, Shalmaneser, attacked next. He conquered King Hoshea, Israel's heir to the throne, and forced him to send annual gifts to Assyria.



The ruins of Samaria

The fall of the Northern Kingdom

Hananiah continued: – Finally Shalmaneser and his commander Sargon returned with a great army to punish King Hoshea, who had stopped sending gifts and had entered into a covenant with Egypt. This was the fifth and final attack. It seems that the Lord let the destruction happen in stages¹⁶ giving the people time to repent. The end of the Northern Kingdom came when Sargon II took the city of Samaria after a siege lasting three whole years and all ten tribes went into captivity in Assyria. It is now more than a hundred years since that happened but none of the tribes have returned, they live in Halah and by the Habor River as well as in the towns of the Medes.

Azariah asked: – How many were taken captive and removed to Assyria?

Daniel answered: – No-one knows for certain. But the population in Israel had been decimated since the time of Solomon, when there were about four million people. The many wars, plagues and famines, the countless infanticides and the homosexuality had all taken their toll on the tribes. At the fall of Samaria there were only about 28 thousand who finally marched into captivity.

Mishael wondered: – What happened to Judah after the fall of the Northern Kingdom?

Hananiah gave more insight in the history of that time: – Ahaz, one of the most ungodly kings of Judah¹⁷, gathered all the vessels in the House of God and broke them, he shut the doors to the House of the Lord and built altars to his idols in every corner of Jerusalem, thinking the foreign gods would help him. However, when Ahaz was succeeded by his son, a new era began in Judah. Already during his first year on the throne Hezekiah purified and rededicated the Temple. He reigned for many years and amassed riches, building treasuries for silver, gold and precious stones and large storages for grain, wine and oil.

It was late by the time Daniel and Hananiah finished their stories. They heard the sick soldier, still very ill, moaning as he lay on the ox-cart. Autumn had come to the mountains, the nights were cold. For a while they discussed what to do, then Daniel went to the soldier on duty to ask permission in Aramaic to bring the soldier to their tent. Permission granted they made him a comfortable bed, gave him dried figs to eat and warm tea to drink. Rest, warmth and plenty to drink was their golden rule for curing fever. They reminded one another of one of Solomon's proverbs and added kindness, trying their best to practice what they had been taught:

If your enemy is hungry¹⁸, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.

The Lord's Sabbath

Next morning there was great commotion in the Camp, shouts and commands, soldiers running to and fro. What was happening? Soon a senior officer approached the tent belonging to the royal Hebrews and asked for Daniel, an interpreter was needed.

Daniel soon discovered what the problem was as he saw some of his compatriots on their knees shouting: "*The Lord's Sabbath, the Lord's Sabbath*" over and over again. A couple of older Jews had been brought in to the officers' tent for questioning, but they had difficulties in making themselves understood. Before long Daniel had interpreted the request of the Elders and reported to the officers. Today was the Lord's Sabbath and they refused to march. The request to observe the Sabbath was well organised and had spread by word of mouth amongst all the prisoners. This united action by the prisoners surprised the officers at the same time as they were impressed by their devotion to worship God just this day and after some negotiation the Jews were allowed to keep the Sabbath. The decree by King Nebuchadnezzar not to hinder the Jews from worshipping God, was the real reason.

Daniel and his friends were relieved to have a day of rest, they really needed it. Even the soldiers were pleased to take it easy for a day and it gave the sick soldier a chance to regain his strength.

Morning prayers were part of the daily routine. The four young men stood turning their faces towards Jerusalem and prayed using words of Moses, a psalm of David or one of the Prophet Isaiah's prayers, and finally they said the blessing together. Today maybe they would be allowed to sing and play as they used to do when they worshipped in Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. They asked the guard who referred to his superior, there was no problem.

With joy they got out their instruments, Daniel played the flute, Haniah the zither and Azariah beat the time on the kettle-drum. Mishael conducted it all by playing his ten-string psaltery. He was the master. They forgot everything, played and sung praises to the Lord, one psalm after another. Some of the officers who were free to walk around, soon came to listen and after a while the friends were summoned to General Rabsaris tent to play for him. They thought it was fantastic that in this way they could make the fear of the Lord known amongst the uncircumcised heathen.

The result of having played for the General was a decision that there would be an open air concert by the river bank in the afternoon for all male prisoners. This was to be their Sabbath.

Songs of praise on the mountain

The concert became a real celebration. The prisoners were delighted to be free of their chains for a few hours. Mishael found a small choir in the audience who knew his music to Isaiah' prophecy:

– *With joy you will draw water from the wells of Salvation*
and many of the usual psalms.

The atmosphere amongst the prisoners was electric, sometimes they were weeping loudly, sometimes rejoicing in the Lord as praises rang out over the hillside of Mount Samaria to Him who lives forever. On and on they played during the beautiful sunset until fires were lit here and there as dusk settled. They celebrated the Sabbath with the unseen glory of the Lord in their midst, a Sabbath they would never forget. Many of the prisoners experienced the presence of the Lord through the message of their immortal songs. They sang using the words of Abraham:

– *I am a guest and pilgrim, this is not my country, I long for the great white city whose foundation is in heaven.*

The Lord had not abandoned them. The Lord was their God and he would be with them and keep them in all the unknown and fearful time ahead of them. They had never ever experienced anything like this before. Not even in the Temple in Jerusalem had they known the glory of the Lord in their midst in this way.

The four musicians rested by the camp-fire and gathered their impressions of the day.

Misael said enthusiastically: – This has truly been the day that the Lord has made, we can rejoice and be glad for it! Hallelujah!

– We must thank the Lord for our Elders, who stood firm and immovable in their trust in the Lord and his Sabbath, said Hananiah in agreement.

Azariah inserted: – I got the impression that most of the prisoners are people belonging to the new revival movement, children and grand-children of Josiah's reformation. At least they were totally united about honouring the Sabbath.

– Yes, it is odd when you think about how we have neglected honouring the Sabbath¹ for so many years, commented Hananiah.

Daniel said: – I remember the Prophet Jeremiah saying that our captivity would last for the same length of time as our people have neglected the Sabbath¹ and the Year of Jubilee. That would be seventy years altogether.

Jeremiah – their contemporary Prophet²

– It would be interesting to know a little more about Jeremiah and his prophecies, said Mishael.

Mishael's wish became a startpoint for a disskusion about Jeremiah and his prophecies. Mishael and Azaiah had many questions and Daniel and Hananiah who had studded in the school of prophets answered in turns.

Daniel started by saying: – Jeremiah is a living legend, a human being of incredible courage and integrity. Most people are against him because of his impopular prophecies. He has been hated and despised by most and there has have threats to kill him several times. He has had to stand firm, like *a bronze wall³* , against the king, the Elders and the whole nation.

But those who think and can see a little deeper, realise that all that Jeremiah has said is true and that his message is from God. Eventually everyone will realise this. The most difficult for Jeremiah has been resisting the herd of false prophets in Judah, those who prophecy to the King and his men what they want to hear, that all is well and that no judgment will come upon them.

– Who is this Jeremiah?

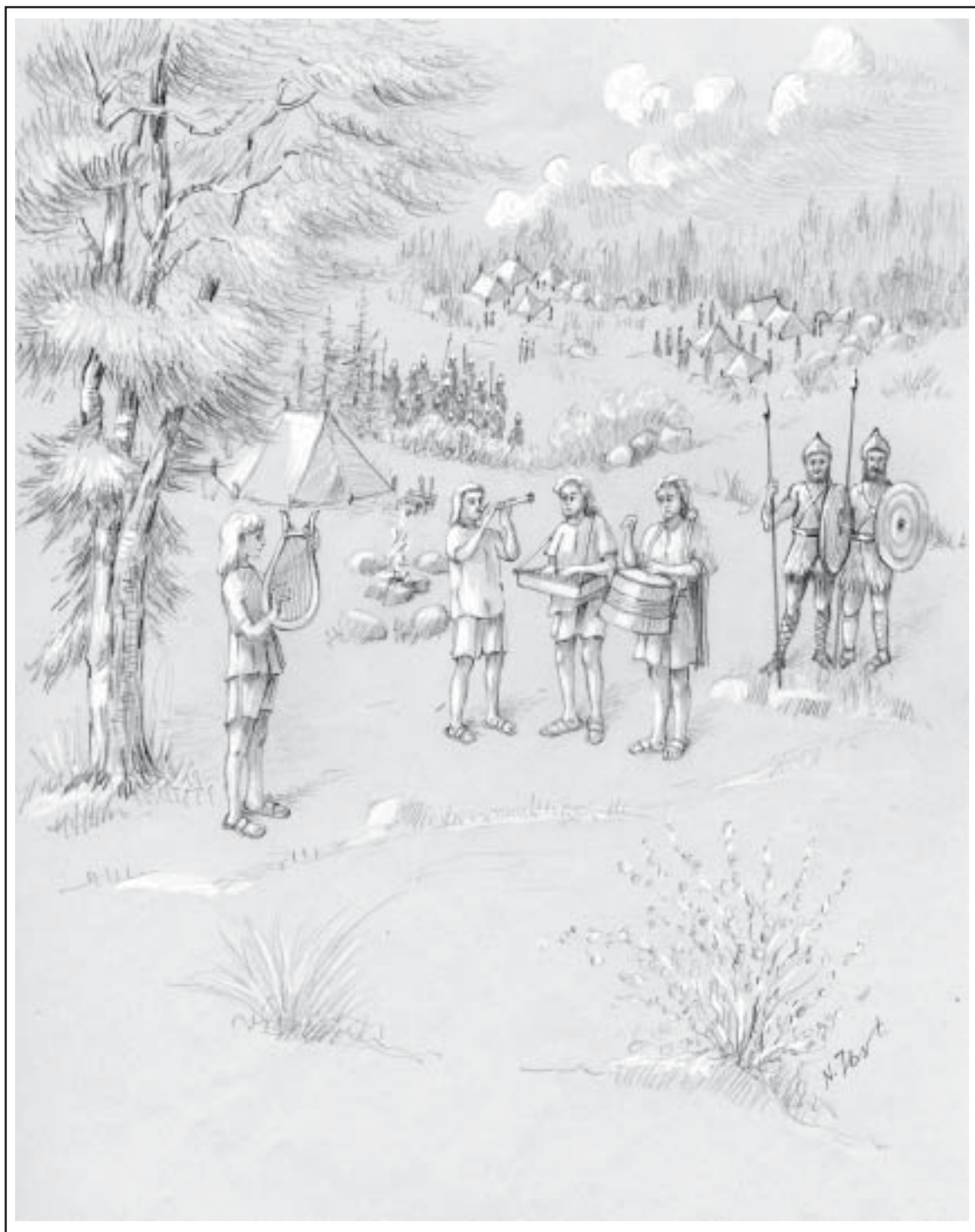
– Jeremiah is the son of Hilkiyah of Anathoth – a few hours walk north-east of Jerusalem. His father was a priest, not to be mistaken for Hilkiyah, the priest who found the book of the Law at the time of King Josiah and the one who started our School of Prophecy. Jeremiah means *The Lord exalts*. According to his own account he received his call twenty-four years ago during the thirteenth year of King Josiah's reign. He regarded himself far too young to be a prophet of the Lord and said:

– *Ah, Sovereign Lord, I do not know how to speak. I am only a child⁴. But the Lord said: Do not say 'I am only a child'. You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I'm with you and will rescue you.*

– What was his message?

– He had several visions given by the Lord. In one he was a pot with boiling water which came from the north and was poured out over Judah. The Lord gave him the following message:

– *From the north disaster will be poured⁵ out on all who live in the land. I am about to summon all the prophets of the northern kingdoms. Their kings will come and set up their thrones in the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, they will come against all her surrounding walls and against all the towns of Judah. I will pronounce my judgments on my people because*



The four musicians

of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods and in worshipping what their hands have made.

– But was there not revival in Judah during the time of King Josiah when, Hilkiah the High Priest found the book of the Law.

– Yes it was in the 18th year of Josiah's reign that Hilkiah found the book of the Law⁶. By then Jeremiah had already prophesied and warned the people for more than five years, preparing them for the revival. When King Josiah gathered together all the leaders in Judah, priests and prophets, and read from the book of the Law, Jeremiah was there in their midst. But the spiritual reformation in Judah had no lasting consequences among the ordinary people. Only a few were converted committing themselves wholeheartedly to following the Lord's commandments. Before long Jeremiah had to continue his warnings, said Hananiah.

Initially Jeremiah had a message of repentance

– Didn't Jeremiah have a message of hope, saying that if the people repented God would save them?

– Oh yes, in the beginning Jeremiah had such a message:

– *O Jerusalem, wash the evil⁷ from your heart and be saved. How long will you harbour wicked thoughts?*

He also received several messages about Israel's wonderful future:

– *At that time they will call Jerusalem⁸ The Throne of the Lord, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honour the name of the Lord. No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts. In those days the house of Judah will join the house of Israel, and together they will come from a northern land to the land I gave your forefathers as an inheritance. How gladly would I treat you like sons and give you a desirable land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation.*

Mishael said in triumph: – That's a lovely prophecy. It means then that the ten lost tribes will return to Israel some time in the future.

– Well, it looks like it could take a long time. As the people did not heed the warnings, there were various prophecies of judgment from the Lord:

– *Announce in Judah⁹ and proclaim in Jerusalem and say: 'Sound the trumpet throughout the land!' Cry out aloud and say: 'Gather together! Let us flee to the fortified cities!' Raise the signal to go to Zion! Flee for safety without delay! For I am bringing disaster from the north, even terrible destruction. A lion has come out of his lair: a destroyer of nations has set out. He has left his place to lay to waste your land. Your towns will be into ruins without inhabitants.*

– This destruction has not yet happened, has it? Is there still hope for our land?

– You know yourselves how much wickedness and ungodliness there is in our country. Jeremiah pointed this out:

– *You are trusting in deceptive words¹⁰ that are worthless. Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name and say, “we are safe” – safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord.*

– Jeremiah continued, prophesying that the Temple in Jerusalem will be destroyed:

– *Go now to the place in Shiloh¹¹ where I first made a dwelling for my Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel. Therefore, what I did to Shiloh I will now do to the house that bears my Name, the temple you trust in, the place I gave to you and your fathers.*

– Evidently there must be a real national conversion to the Lord, for judgment to be averted.

– Yes, if that’s possible. The Lord says through Jeremiah:

– *You have as many gods¹² as you have towns, o Judah, and the altars you have set up to burn incense to that shameful god Baal are as many as the streets of Jerusalem.*

– *Jeremiah, do not pray¹³ for this people nor offer any plea or petition for them, because I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their distress. “What is my beloved doing in my temple as she works out her evil schemes with many? Can consecrated meat avert your punishment?”*

– It’s when you hear things like this that you suspect that our people has already passed the limit for the Lord’s patience, said Hananiah with disappointment in his voice.

Jeremiah - Prophet of Judgment

Child sacrifice in the Valley of Ben Hinnom

Daniel and Hananiah continued the story about Jeremiah and conditions in Judah.

– The worst atrocity is the child sacrifices taking place in the valley of Ben Hinnom. Daniel quoted from Jeremiah's prophecies:

– *Jerusalem, cut off your hair¹ and throw it away; take up a lament on the barren heights, for the Lord has rejected and abandoned this generation that is under his wrath. The people of Judah have done evil in my eyes, declares the Lord. They have set up their detestable idols in the house that bears my Name and have defiled it. They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire – something I did not command, nor did it enter my mind.*

– Yes, it's terrible that the tiny innocent children suffer. The pagan priests tell the parents that child sacrifice will bring happiness, success and favour with the gods, added Hananiah.

– Since the people did not repent but continued burning incense to Baal on top of their houses everywhere in Jerusalem and sacrificing children, Jeremiah's message got stronger and stronger. After the death of King Josiah the situation got worse with idol ceremonies and much immorality in the name of religion, young girls being violated, men often exchanging wives, Jeremiah: *They are well-fed, lusty stallions², each neighing for another man's wife.*

Evidently Jeremiah continued to pray for revival and salvation for our people, but he again receives a message to stop interceding, the people have gone too far on the road to destruction. The Lord said to Jeremiah:

– *So do not pray³ for this people nor offer any plea or petition for them; do not plead with me, for I will not listen to you. Do you not see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, the father lights the fire, and the women knead the dough and make cakes of bread for the Queen of Heaven. They pour out drink offerings to other gods to provoke me to anger.*

Jeremiah has coined the phrase *god's of atrocity* and that is a pertinent expression for the immorality linked to idolatry.

Jeremiah exclaims:

– Ah, that my head⁴ were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people. Oh, that I had in the desert a lodging place for travellers, so that I might leave my people and go away from them; for they are all adulterers, a crowd of unfaithful people.

When you read these personal notes in Jeremiah's scroll you can understand what a difficult and thankless task he had, he wasn't even allowed to pray for change.

Jeremiah – Prophet of destruction

– Yes, he became the prophet of destruction. The Lord said to Jeremiah:

– *Even if Moses and Samuel⁵ were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to them. Send them away from my presence.*

– God established judgment and Jeremiah is told that enemy armies will besiege Jerusalem: *Tell this to the nations⁶, proclaim it to Jerusalem: A besieging army is coming from a distant land, raising a war cry against the cities of Judah.*

– *Cut down the trees and build siege ramps⁷ against Jerusalem. The city must be punished; it is filled with oppression. As a well pours out its water, so she pours out her wickedness. Violence and destruction resound in her; her sickness and wounds are ever before me.*

Jeremiah also receives the first message about captivity at about the same time:

– *As you have⁸ forsaken me and served foreign gods in your own land, so now you will serve foreigners in a land not your own.*

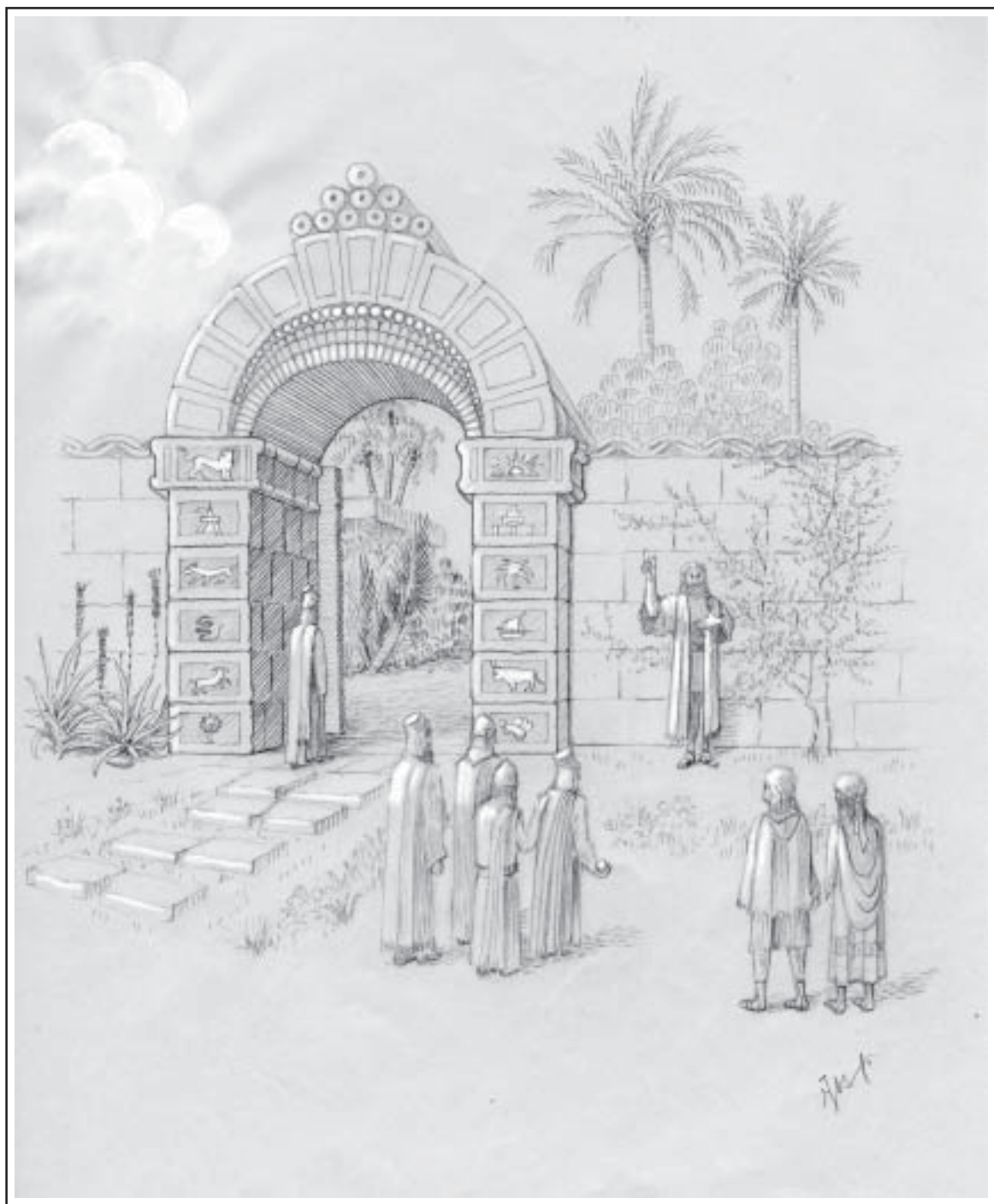
As apostasy just continued, he receives the same message about Jerusalem as Micah had received much earlier:

– *I will make⁹ Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals; and I will lay waste the towns of Judah so that no-one can live there.*

– *This is what the Lord Almighty says: Consider now!¹⁰ Call for the wailing women to come. Send for the most skillful of them. Let them come quickly and wail over us till our eyes overflow with tears and water streams from our eyelids. The sound of wailing is heard from Zion: "How ruined we are! How great is our shame! We must leave our land because our houses are in ruin.*

– Is it not just the cities out in the country that will be laid to waste but also our beautiful Jerusalem? asked Asariah.

Daniel answered: – Yes, like a pot of clay is destroyed so Jerusalem will be destroyed. As you know I met Jeremiah several times and listened to him at Baruk's calligraphy shop. On one occasion he said that the Lord



Jeremiah preaching at the templegate

had told him to go to the potter's house.¹¹ Jeremiah said:

– *So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel¹². But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot shaping it as it seemed best to him.*

In order to start again and create something new God must break and destroy Israel. The idolatry and immorality has damaged our people so badly that only radical surgery will save them.

Hananiah added: – The prophecies relating to captivity has already been fulfilled. We ourselves are the fulfillment of that prophecy. A miracle must take place in our people in order to save Jerusalem from destruction.

Daniel continued: – Yes, and Jeremiah used drastic measures to make the people listen, like repeatedly crushing pots of clay to emphasize his message. Once he set out on a long march and spoke about how God had told him to walk all the way to the river Euphrates, where he dug a hole and hid an entirely new linen belt¹³ in it. Some people think that he is deranged, going all the way to Charchemis to hide a belt! But Jeremiah did not spare any effort in fulfilling what God had told him to do and finding things to illustrate his message so people would understand.

– Does Jeremiah say anything about the terrible drought? asked Mishael.

– Many shake their fists against God and blame him for the lack of rain. But we know from Jeremiah's prophecies that the real reason for the weather going wrong is the sins of our people and their perverse ways, answered Daniel and quoted Jeremiah again:

– *They do not say to themselves¹⁴: "Let us fear the Lord our God, who gives autumn and spring rains in season; who assures us of rains in season, who assures us of regular weeks of harvest." Your wrong doings have kept these away; your sins have deprived you of good."*

– It seems that idolatry gives Satan the power to change weather and wind. You get the impression that when man sins, the evil one will gain power over both human beings and nature.

At Death's door

They heard the voice of the sick soldier and Daniel and Hananiah went into the tent. Poor man! He looked so ill – as if he could be dying. Would this fever never let go?

– I heard your songs about Zion and about your God who is merciful and gracious. I will soon die, thank you for your kindness...

A long silence followed. Daniel and Hananiah stood speechless. Could they pray for him and rely on God's promises and grace also for him – a heathen? They had no time to think about this as the soldier moved to tears held out his weak hand and said:

– Please pray to your God for me!

He had asked for help from the God of Israel! Had not other heathens done the same and received help! Of course, they remembered that Naaman from Syria had been cured from leprosy as he washed himself seven times in the river Jordan as he was told to by the prophet Elisha. Their sick friend had now asked for help from their God, he ought not to be disappointed.

They took his outstretched hand and prayed to the Lord for help and healing. Immediately they experienced the loving kindness of the Lord surrounding them and they were filled with great joy. They had been able to convey something from God in heaven to this poor, lonely and dying soldier.

Jeremiah - the weeping prophet

The Sabbath evening was lovely. It was almost dark, but all the campfires lit up the sky giving warmth and comfort to the chilly autumn air. Still not tired, the four friends continued talking about Jeremiah.

– Could Jeremiah be a cruel man full of revenge, wanting the destruction of the people, like many of his slanderers say? asked Asariah. His messages of judgment are very harsh.

Daniel made it very clear what kind of person Jeremiah was:

– No, I don't believe he is. Jeremiah is just the opposite, a fine and very sensitive human being. When I met him in the calligraphy shop I was always moved by his noble personality. I knew what opposition he had, how many wanted to finish him off and I was surprised at his love for the people. He brought his messages in agony with many tears. He cried out:

– Since my people are crushed¹, I am crushed; I mourn, and horror grips me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wounds of my people?

– What beautiful poetic language he uses! He speaks of the people like they were his beloved daughter. We heard Jeremiah speak at the Temple Gate, he was eloquent and gave an impression of authority. He appeared quite lonely though and there was a kind of resignation in his voice. Many of his listeners mocked him and sometimes a stone or two were thrown at him, exclaimed Hananiah.

Asariah and Mishael had many more questions and Daniel and Hananiah tried to answer them:

– Why is Jeremiah so lonely? Is there no other prophet who has received the same message as he has?

– Yes, Uriah², the son of Shemaiah, spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem just like Jeremiah does. When King Jehoiakim with his officers and officials heard what he said, the king wanted to kill him, so he fled to Egypt. But Jehoiakim fetched him from Egypt and had him slain by the sword.

– But there are many who claim to be prophets.

– Yes, there are many who call themselves prophets but all of them do not bring God's message. Jeremiah had to exclaim:

– From the least³ to the greatest, all are greedy for gain, prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of my people as

though it were not serious. "Peace, peace", they say, when there is no peace. Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush.

– Did Jeremiah dare to give a message direct to King Jehoiakim?

– Yes he did, in danger of his own life and at the command of the Lord he gave the king an opportunity to repent. He warned him of pride and arrogance:

– If you do not listen⁴, I will weep in secret because of your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly, overflowing with tears, because the Lord's flock will be taken captive.

This is the prophetic vision that Jeremiah proclaimed to the king and queen at the command of the Lord. I copied it in Baruch's calligraphy shop just before the siege. Jeremiah prophesied as if their crowns had already been removed from them:

– Say to the king⁵ and queen mother: "Come down from your thrones, for your glorious crowns will fall from your heads. The cities in the Negev will be shut up, and there will be no one to open them. All Judah will be carried away into exile, carried completely away.

I will scatter you like chaff driven by the desert wind. This is your lot, the portion I have decreed for you," declares the Lord, "because you have forgotten me and trusted in false gods.

I will pull up your skirts⁶ over your face that your shame may be seen – your adulteries and lustful neighing, your shameless prostitution! I have seen your detestable acts on the hills and in the fields. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! How long will you be unclean?

– What a message! How did he dare!

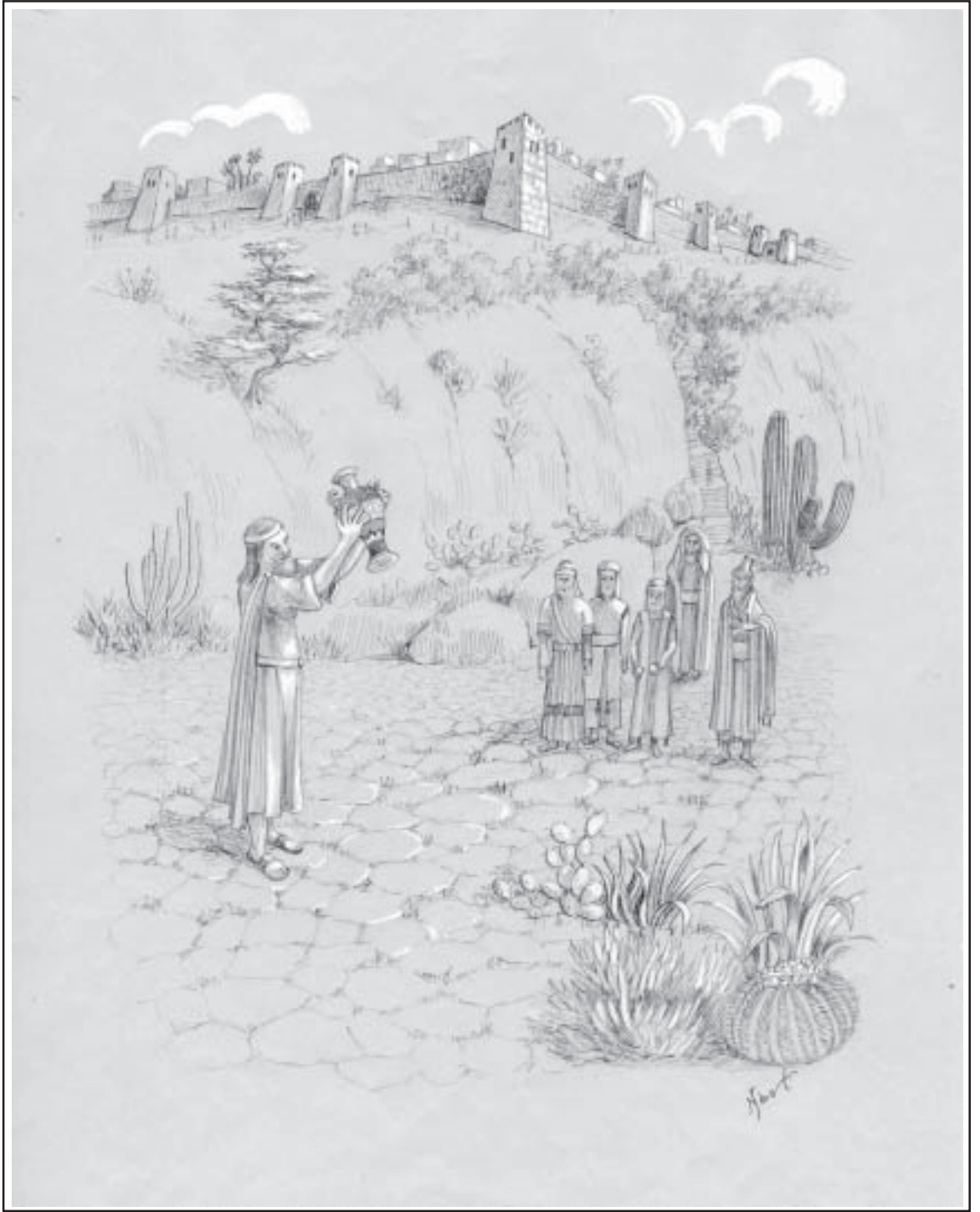
– King Jehoiakim probably wanted to kill him because of it, but he did not dare. He knew that his father, the godly King Josiah, had protected Jeremiah and he surely feared the reaction of the people. When it came to the prophets Jeremiah had nothing good to say:

– Among the prophets of Jerusalem⁷ I have seen something horrible: They commit adultery and live a lie. They strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no-one turns from his wickedness. They are all like Sodom to me; the people of Jerusalem are like Gomorrah.

Jeremiah – martyr for the truth

– Is there anybody who has tried to kill Jeremiah?

– Yes, some men from his home town Anathoth plotted⁸ against him, but they never succeeded. The Lord had promised to be a wall of fire around Jeremiah and this protected him. The men of violence were given a prophecy which was literally fulfilled in a horrible way. After that nobody dared touch Jeremiah.



Jeremiah in the valley of Ben Hinnom breaking a precious jar of clay

– But was he not put in stocks?

– Yes, but that was several years later. It was the priest Pashur⁹, son of Immer, who thought he could do as he liked to Jeremiah.

– What happened?

– It began by the Lord’s command to Jeremiah to take a clay pot and with some of the elders of the people and some of the priests go out to Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom¹⁰ where child sacrifices were made. In front of these men, while they were watching, he broke the jar and prophesied:

– *This is what the Lord Almighty¹¹ says: “I will smash this nation and this city just as this potter’s jar is smashed and cannot be repaired.”*

When Jeremiah returned home he stood in the Court of the Lord’s Temple and said to the people:

– *This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says¹²: “Listen! I am going to bring on this city and the villages around it every disaster I pronounced against them, because they were stiff-necked and would not listen to my words.”*

The priest Pashur, chief officer in the temple of the Lord, then had Jeremiah beaten by thirty-nine lashes and put in stocks at the Upper Gate of Benjamin in the Lord’s Temple. He had to sit there while all the people passing by sniggered at him. The next day, when he was released from the stocks by Pashur, Jeremiah had a prophecy for him:

– *I will hand all Judah¹³ over to the king of Babylon, who will carry them away to Babylon or put them to the sword. I will hand over to their enemies all the wealth of this city - all its products, all its valuables and all the treasures of the kings of Judah. They will take it away as plunder and carry it off to Babylon. And you, Pashur, and all who live in your house will go into exile to Babylon. There you will die and be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied lies.*

Haniah added: – Yes, the proud chief officer Pashur could not prevent the Chaldeans from plundering the king’s treasury and the Temple store houses, these treasures are now on their way to Babylon.

But do we know what happened to Pashur? asked Azariah.

– We know that he isn’t in this caravan of prisoners, but there can be more prisoners transported later, said Haniah.

Daniel exclaimed: – The incident with Pashur is not the last atrocity against Jeremiah. In the beginning of King Jehoiakim’s reign he was nearly killed. The Lord told Jeremiah to stand in the Courtyard of the Lord’s house and prophecy to all the people from the towns of Judah coming to worship in the house of the Lord. He hoped that they would listen and turn from their evil ways. But if they did not listen, this was the message:

– *Then I will make this house¹⁴ like Shiloh and this city an object of curse among all the nations of the earth.*

The priests and the prophets heard the words of Jeremiah, seized him and told him that he had to die. The officials of Judah came from the royal palace and with the people surrounded Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. The priests said to them:

– This man should be sentenced¹⁵ to death because he has prophesied against this city. You have heard it with your own ears!

Then Jeremiah told the officials and the people:

– *The Lord sent me to prophesy¹⁶ against this house and this city all the things you have heard.*

Be assured, however, that if you put me to death, you will bring the guilt of innocent blood on yourselves and on this city and on those who live in it, for in truth the Lord has sent me to you to speak all these words you are hearing.

Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the false prophets:

– *This man should¹⁷ not be sentenced to death! He has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.*

Some of the elders of the land stepped forward and said to the entire assembly of the people:

– *Micah of Moresheth¹⁸ prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah. He told all the people of Judah, “This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Zion will be ploughed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets.”*

Did Hezekiah king of Judah or anyone else in Judah put him to death? Did not Hezekiah fear the Lord and seek his favour? And did not the Lord relent, so that he did not bring the disaster he pronounced against them? We are about to bring a terrible disaster on ourselves!

That time Jeremiah escaped with his life intact because some of the elders of the people dared to stand up to defend him.

The Prophecy about seventy years of captivity

– Where was Jeremiah when the Chaldeans besieged Jerusalem and we were taken prisoners. We did not see him in the Temple Square.

Daniel answered: – Baruch told me a couple of months before the assault by the Chaldeans, that Jeremiah again was about to walk all the way to the river Euphrates to fetch the linen belt he had hidden there seven years earlier. It will be interesting to find out about the symbolism of this linen belt.

– Just imagine if we will see him on his way back. I assume he will follow the same route as we do on our way to Charchemis.

– I doubt it, surely he will avoid all military transports and hide in the mountains and woodland until the land is free of soldiers.

– What was Jeremiah's last message before the siege?

– He had a message about seventy years of captivity. This is what Jeremiah himself has written down:

– The word came to Jeremiah concerning¹⁹ all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. For twenty-three years – from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah until this very day - the word of the Lord has come to me and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened. Therefore the Lord Almighty says this:

Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole country will become a desolate waste land, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years.

– Did he prophecy about Babylon?

Daniel declared: – Yes, at the end of the same prophecy he said this about Babylon:

– But when the seventy years²⁰ are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt, and will make it desolate for ever. I will bring upon that land all the things I have spoken against it, all that are written in this book and prophesied by Jeremiah against all the nations. They themselves will be enslaved by many nations and great kings; I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.

– This means that the Chaldeans and Babylon have power only for the time God permits, then new and mighty nations will conquer them.

When they finished talking it was pitch dark and they quickly decided who should keep the campfire. The four of them thanked God for a lovely Sabbath day.

The King's Kids

Early next day the camp was full of activities, everything had to be packed and made ready for another long day of walking. The animals had to be fed, fires extinguished, tents taken down and everybody had to fill their waterskins. After breakfast the prisoners lined up to be hand cuffed. To their surprise the four cousins discovered that they no longer needed to be handcuffed but were to march two by two.

They soon realised that they were not going through the desert, instead they turned towards Mount Carmel and the western Caravan trail which started in Egypt and went through the forests of Lebanon towards Charchemis. Now they would be able to see the famous cedars of Lebanon and the wild beasts they had so often heard about. Perhaps they would even catch a glimpse of Mount Hermon, always covered with snow due to its height. The soldiers soon discovered a new spirit of willingness and helpfulness amongst the prisoners. It became even more evident as they began walking, nobody was dragging their feet, they all walked on briskly. It had not been a bad idea to have a Sabbath day! All were rested and ready for new adventures and the memory of yesterday gave the prisoners hope for the future.

The four friends were overjoyed to discover that God had heard their prayers. The fever had left the soldier but he was relieved of duty this day. Sometimes he rode on a donkey but once in a while he walked for a short period and talked with Daniel in Aramaic.

He told Daniel about himself and his hopes for the future. His name was Havlat and he came from the mountains of Elam. He had been conscripted to the army already at the age of seventeen and had had years of hard training. He had been looking forward to being part of expeditions to foreign countries, which he had been promised, but camp life was often strenuous and the risk of being wounded or killed was always there. Soldiers received just food and uniforms, no other pay. His father had been killed in fighting when Nineveh was conquered, but his mother was alive and he longed to get back home to her and his little sister who were waiting for him.

Most of all he wanted to marry the girl he loved, if she was still faithful to him and he longed to return to till the soil and tend the sheep in the mountains. If only he did not have to be part of all this fighting.

In confidence Daniel was told that the officers called the four cousins “the King’s kids” and that they were highly respected among the other prisoners. Havlat said that the soldier who had hit and pushed Daniel the first day, had been punished. Now they had firm orders that the four were to be well protected and nothing untoward was to happen to them.

The Camp at Kishon

That night they camped by the river Kishon near the Megiddo Pass. As always it was necessary to find fresh water, their guides knew the caravan trail like the back of their hands. After a long day of walking all were looking forward to the evening by the camp fire. While Azariah drew a picture of the beautiful Kishon Valley, Daniel and Hananiah continued the fascinating story of the kings and prophets of Judah, only now and then interrupted by questions from Mishael and Azariah.

– Hananiah, you mentioned Josiah’s reformation. You and Daniel learnt about the reformation at the School of Prophecy. Can you tell us what you know? We were just children when it all happened, said Mishael.

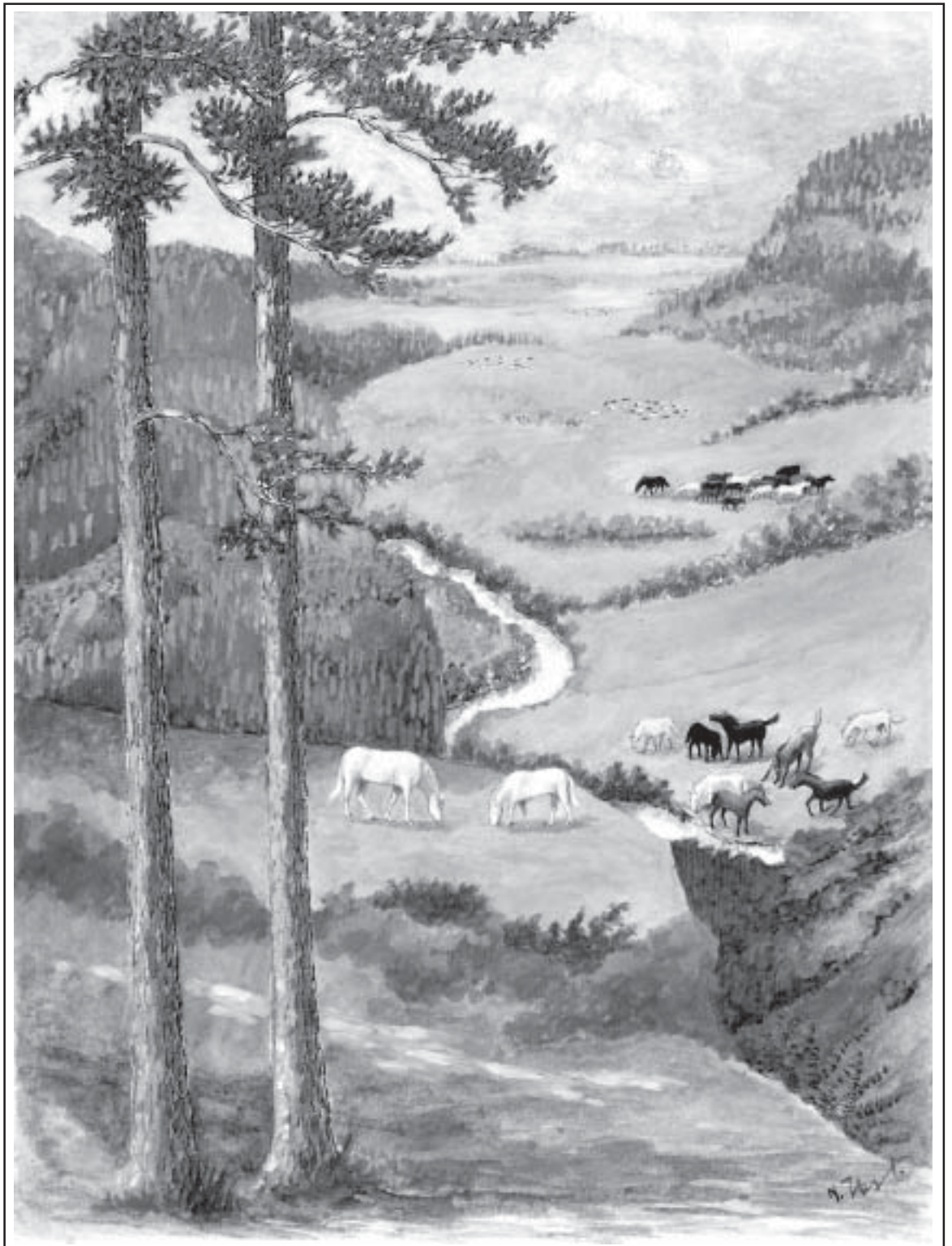
– We’ll tell you what we learnt, but first we might as well look at the background and the conditions in Judah and Israel. All the kings in Israel were wicked and all of them worshipped their bull calves, whilst in Judah, the Temple in Jerusalem was the central most important place where worship still took place as of old. Most of the kings there were good, godly men and there was always a remnant of people faithful to the Lord. There were, however, several wicked kings in Judah as well.

In the Northern Kingdom – Israel – the conditions went from bad to worse, in the end there were hardly anyone among the people who feared the Lord and this led to their destruction.

Isaiah – the great Messianic Prophet

Daniel continued: – We must not forget the efforts by the prophets to preserve faith in God. At the time of the fall of Samaria there was in Judah a great prophet – perhaps the greatest of all – Isaiah. His influence on both kings and people was immense. His life spanned the reign of five kings and he influenced them all. Isaiah was just a youth when the Lord called him and God’s eternal fire touched him, the fire of love which burnt deep in his soul all his life. He prophesied to his contemporaries about the future in particular – nobody has described the coming Messiah and his reign of peace as he has done.

– Isaiah’s call came to him in the same year as King Uzziah died.¹ The king was succeeded by his son Jotham² who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father had done. But then Ahaz³ became king of Judah and he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord. Remember



Horses on the Plain of Megiddo

that we told you about Ahaz earlier when we talked about the destruction of Israel. He introduced worship of Baal, sacrificed several of his children to the god Chemos in the fire and burnt incense at high places and hilltops everywhere in Jerusalem. He even shut the gates to the Temple of the Lord. It was then that the Lord allowed the king of Israel to punish him and Ahaz lost more than half his army.

– Both the prophets Micah and Isaiah preached repentance and judgment. They predicted the destruction of the Northern Kingdom and it happened in front of their eyes. The prophets warned Ahaz that if he did not turn from his ways even Judah would be destroyed. At that time the people listened to the prophets and saved Judah from destruction.

– Judah was shaken by the total destruction of the northern kingdom and when Hezekiah⁴ became king of Judah he smashed the idols and removed the high places his father had established.

– We can be proud of our grandfather Hezekiah holding fast to the Lord. Of course we are all descendants of King David, but our royal blood⁵ comes through Hezekiah, who is our common ancestor.

Sennacherib, King of Assyria, attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and conquered them in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign. He even sent a large army with his field commander Rabshaketh to Jerusalem and besieged it. Then Hezekiah took off his royal robes, put on sack cloth, went into the Temple of the Lord and spread out the threatening message he had received from the king before the Lord and prayed for the Lord's deliverance.

– Then Isaiah received the Lord's message that He would defend and deliver Jerusalem for the sake of David his servant.

And so it happened – already the following night the Angel of the Lord went out and put to death the Assyrian army. Thousands of men lay dead the next morning and this, the Lord's deliverance, was the beginning of the destruction of the great Assyrian empire. They never properly recovered from this enormous loss during just one night, the proud and arrogant commanders of the Assyrian army had met their superior. They could not keep their colonies in Judah either, those who survived had to return home disappointed and empty handed. I quote from the writings of Isaiah:

– Then the angel of the Lord⁶ went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning – there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib King of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.

Isaiah's prophecy and the quick fulfilment of it became well known and Isaiah was held in high esteem by the people. Another prophecy by

Isaiah regarded the length of King Hezekiah's life. Hezekiah became terminally ill but having wept bitterly and prayed Isaiah told him that the Lord had added fifteen years to his life. This prophecy was fulfilled but during this time Hezekiah became proud and vain. He showed the envoys from Babylon all his storehouses and so sealed his future destiny. Hezekiah had several daughters and it is through them that we are related to him. Before his illness he had no sons, however, during his prolonged life Manasseh⁷ was born. Unfortunately, in terms of apostasy, he became the worst of all the kings of Judah.

– If Manasseh had not been born, there had probably been a queen in Israel, one of our beloved and honoured grandmothers. If that had happened the royal lineage would have been quite different.

– Perhaps we should not speculate, answered Daniel, but if God's original plan for Hezekiah had been completed, then we would have been spared from having Manasseh on the throne of Judah. Hezekiah was a godfearing king as long as he lived, but with Manasseh came the greatest spiritual decadence in the history of Judah. He built altars to Baal, made Asherah poles and bowed down to the starry hosts, built temples to them and had his son sacrificed in fire. He practised sorcery, divination and witchcraft, he employed mediums and spiritists. He quelled all resistance and spilled much innocent blood, killing dissidents every day. He did more evil than anyone before him and many were martyred because of their beliefs.

– Isaiah was one of them. It was Manasseh who had him sawn in two because he told the truth about the king's evil ways, added Hananiah.

Manasseh's repentance

– As Manasseh despised the prophets of the Lord who expressed judgment over him, the Lord brought the army commanders of the king of Assyria against him, they plundered Judah and used trickery to take Manasseh prisoner. They bound him with bronze shackles⁸ and took him to Babylon. In distress in his dark dungeon Manasseh repented for his sinful, ruthless life, realising that the prophets had told the truth. In his distress he humbled himself before God, pleading for mercy as he sought the favour of the Lord. In his broken hearted and changed state of mind the Lord set him free and he could return to Jerusalem.

– How could the Lord forgive him, who had killed so many innocent people and caused Isaiah such a painful death?

– As human beings we question this. But God is not like us, God is gracious and merciful to forgive when someone truly repents and has a change of heart. David and many, many others have experienced this. The prophet Micah says:

– *Who is a God like you⁹, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry for ever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. You will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago.*

The prayer of Manasseh¹⁰ is recorded*, maybe I will be able to quote a few lines:

The prayer of Manasseh*

– *O Lord, according to your great goodness you have promised repentance and forgiveness to those who have sinned against you, and in the multitude of your mercies you have appointed repentance for sinners, so that they may be saved. Therefore you, O Lord, God of the righteous, have not appointed repentance for the righteous, for Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who did not sin against you, but you have appointed repentance for me, a sinner.*

For the sins I have committed are more in number than the grains of sand in the sea; my transgressions are multiplied, O Lord, they are multiplied! I am not worthy to look up and see the height of heaven because of the multitude of my iniquities. I am weighted down with many an iron fetter, so that I cannot lift up my head and I have no relief.

And now I bend the knee of my heart, imploring you for your kindness. I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I acknowledge my transgressions. I earnestly implore you, forgive me, O Lord, forgive me! Do not destroy me with my transgressions! Do not be angry with me forever or store up evil for me; do not condemn me to the depths of the earth. For you, O Lord, are the God of those who repent.

Prophets in activity during the kings of Judah and Israel.

The dates are from Dr of Divinity Edwin Wirén’s book “When he opened the book.”

Prophets	Kings in Judah: BC	Kings in Israel: BC
The years BC are approximate:	Jotham ruled 16 years, 740-736 Ahaz ruled 16 years, 736-720	Zechariah ruled in 6 months 745 Shallum ruled in 1 month 745
Isaiah 740-695	Hezekiah ruled 29 years, 720-692	Menahem ruled in 10 years, 745-736
Micah 740-692	Manasseh ruled 55 years, 692-638	Pekaja ruled in two years, 736-735
Jeremiah 624-584	Amon ruled two years, 638-637	Point ruled for 20 years, 735-732
Daniel 605-530	Josiah ruled 31 years, 637-608	Hosea ruled for 9 years, 732-722
Ezekiel 593-570	Jehoahaz ruled in 3 months, 608	
Haggai 520-516	Jehoiakim ruled 11 years, 608-597	* After ingestion of Samaria 722 BC, ended the Northern kingdom that lasted 264 years with 19 kings.
Zechariah 520-516	Jehoiachin ruled in 3 months, 597	
Malachi 444-433	Zedekiah ruled 11 years, 597-586	

*The Apochrypha – The prayer of Manasseh, 7-10; 11-13.

The Arrow at Megiddo

Their conversation was interrupted by a running soldier, his javelin at the ready. A flock of wolves had attacked, killing several donkeys at the edge of the camp. When the wolves had been chased away by the soldiers and peace again was restored, they continued to talk about the kings and prophets of Judah.

– What happened to Manasseh? Was he really able to make any changes in Judah after his change of heart?

Daniel answered Mishael's question: – When Manasseh came back to Jerusalem he immediately began to reform worship but sadly it was too late. When he died his son Amon¹ succeeded him as king, and he continued to do evil in the eyes of the Lord just as his father had done, living the kind of life he learnt from his father in his youth.

The Reformation by Josiah

The great reformation came after the death of Amon, through his son Josiah², who died in battle with Pharaoh Neco just about four years ago now. The memory of our angelic king and kinsman is sacred and full of light. If only all kings would be as he was. We still remember his annual speeches in the courtyard when he urged the nation to follow the Lord. Josiah was just eight years old when he became king. Already at the age of twelve he had won respect through his godly living, he urged the leaders of the nation to change their ways, to leave idol worship and to worship only the Lord their God.

When Josiah was twenty-six years old he began repairing the temple. It was then that Hilkiah the priest, found the Book of the Law of the Lord in the inner Sanctuary. For the people and their leaders this became a turning point, the revival went deep changing ways and foundation of worship for the leaders as well as the people of the nation.

– How exciting it was to find the Book of the Law! We were very young when this happened but our parents have told us about it. As Josiah heard the words of the Law, he tore his robes in distress over the sins against the Lord committed by kings and people. He called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem and then went up to the temple of the Lord with all the people as well as priests and prophets, yes, all people from the least to the greatest. The whole Book of the Covenant was read to

the people. The king stood by the great pillar of bronze and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord – he promised to follow the Lord and keep the Lord’s commandments with all his heart and all his soul. And all the people pledged themselves to the Covenant.

– After he had renewed the covenant, Josiah purged the whole country of idolatry. He removed all the high places, even those Solomon had built to Ashteroth, Chemos and Milkom. He broke the carved idols in pieces and tore down the Asherah poles.

– When the country was purged from idols, Josiah ordered the people to celebrate the Passover, a great national feast and celebration the like of which had not been seen since the time of the Prophet Samuel.

– I remember it well from my childhood, almost the entire nation gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Lord’s Passover. The King’s speech was the highlight of the celebration. I remember how all of us who were related to the King had to sit at a special table in the throne room. Nobody was allowed to touch the food before the King’s speech and the High Priest’s sacrifice on the altar. We had to sit still for a long time.

– What a celebration it was. The singing from the choir, all dressed in white, sounded as if it came from another world.

After that the annual Passover celebration became an important tradition to exhalt and praise the Lord. But as time went by less and less people attended and there was not the same sense of celebration.

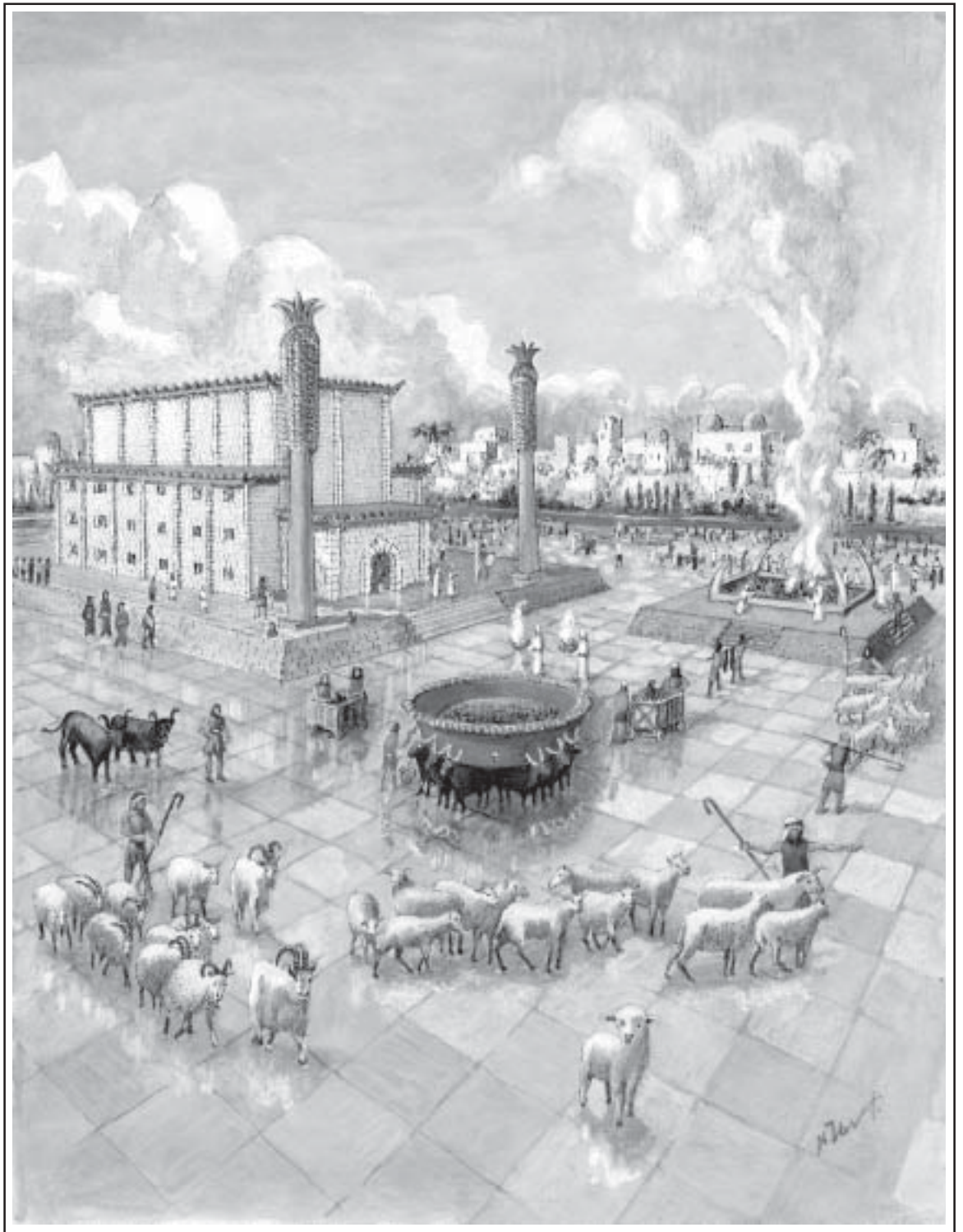
– No king could like Josiah encourage and inspire people to serve and worship the Lord and him alone. No, no king before him had turned to the Lord with all of his heart and all of his might like he did.

– But after a while, in spite of the reformation and the revival which had many followers at the beginning, the great mass of the people turned back to their old ways. The hearts of most people had been ruined by the long period of apostacy during the reign of Manasseh.

– At the end of King Josiah’s reign, Pharaoh Neco went up to fight the Assyrians by the river Euphrates and take his part of the spoil. The destruction of the Assyrian empire was imminent as both the Medes and the Chaldeans attacked. The King of Egypt asked permission to march through Judah with his army. However, Josiah wanted to prevent him as Judah was a satellite to Assyria from the time of Manasseh and he felt under obligation to help Assyria. But in the very first encounter when Josiah marched out to meet Neco in battle he was killed on the plain of Megiddo³.

– Megiddo is near here where we camp.

– Yes, this is an historic place. Many fights have taken place here, because here is the narrow passage through which all must pass in order to go either south or north. The best place to meet the Egyptian army was



King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem

at the Megiddo Pass, below is the plain of Megiddo, the battle field where so many encounters have taken place.

– It was a tragedy for the whole nation when Josiah was killed. Many thought that it was a sign of spiritual arrogance that made him oppose Pharaoh Neco. Others thought that Josiah in his righteousness did not want to break the covenant with Assyria, which he had signed, and he had to stand up for them when they were attacked. But through that defeat Judah became an Egyptian satellite for a time.

– It is quite strange how a tiny incident can change the entire direction of history. It was a tiny arrow from an Egyptian archer that ended the reign of King David which had existed more than four hundred years. The decline of Judah as a kingdom began after the death of Josiah.

The arrow at Megiddo was an arrow of destiny. It hit not just a joint in Josiah's armor, it also happened to hit a blood vessel which meant that he bled to death. They quickly took him out of his chariot and put him in the fastest chariot drawn by six horses bringing him at the speed of lightning to Jerusalem, but Josiah died soon after arrival. He was only thirty-nine years old.

– All the people mourned for Josiah. The Prophet Jeremiah composed a special lament for him. Even the prophet Syrac* has an obituary relating to him.

The hour of destiny for the Kingdom of Judah

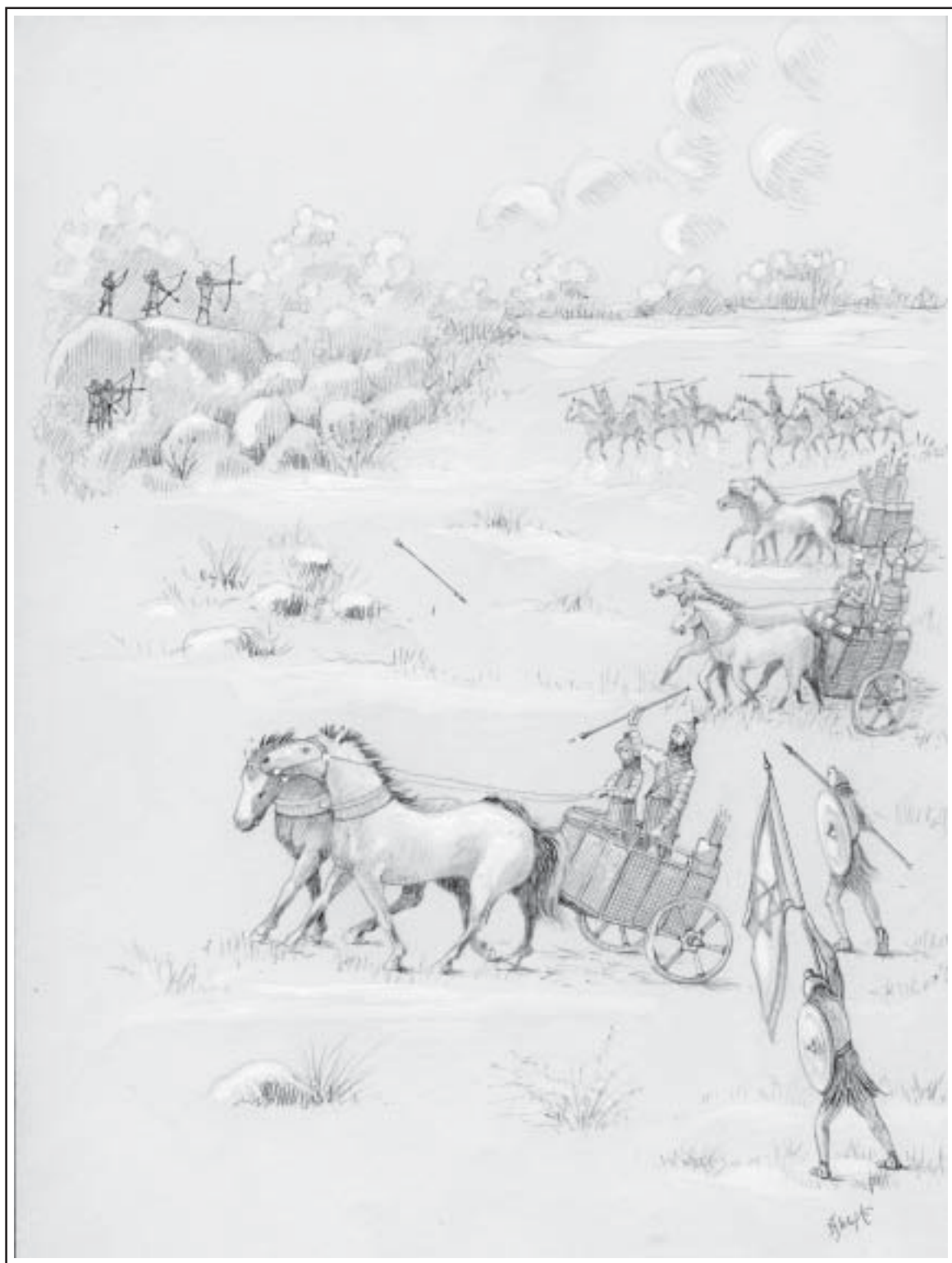
When Jehoahaz⁴, the wicked son of Josiah, became king the nation went downhill. Idolatry in all its horrible expressions had renewed emphasis in the whole of Judah, and the believers, the people of the revival, became a remnant often persecuted.

But, as we all well know, our cousin Jehoahaz (Shallum) who is only a couple of years older than we are, only reigned for three months before Pharaoh Neco came and dethroned him. First he became a prisoner at Riblah in the land of Hamath, then Neco removed him to Egypt where he died. Jeremiah's prophecy was thus literally fulfilled. This was the prophecy⁵:

– *For this is what the Lord says about Shallum⁵ son of Josiah, who succeeded his father as king of Judah but has gone from this place: "He will never return. He will die in the place where they have led him captive; he will not see this land again."*

Jeremiah also prophesied about Jehoiakim⁶ that he would die like a donkey⁷, and about Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin⁸ called Coniah⁹, that he never would become king, but be handed over and removed to Babylon as prisoner. It will be interesting to see when these prophecies will be fulfilled.

*Syrac, a prophet in the book of the apocryphal



*The arrow of destiny – extinguishing the star of David
King Josiah was hit by a fated arrow as he led the attack*

– As to Jehoahaz or Shallum as was his pet name, the people had chosen him instead of the eldest of Josiah's sons, Jehoiakim, because he was the worst of the sons, a wicked fellow, a violent brute and a debaucher.

– But now it was Pharaoh Neco who decided. It is thought that Jehoiakim had been scheming on behalf of Neco. So Jehoahaz's reign came to a sudden end and Neco made Eliakim king and changed his name to Jehoiakim. And now we have to take the consequences of the evil acts of our wicked cousin. What we have seen this far is surely just the beginning.

– To return to the revival during Josiah's first reign, it meant many good and lasting things. Hilkiah's School of Prophecy and David's Academy of Music are two important institutions established at that time. Through the discovery of the Book of the Law, the art of reading and writing became more attractive to young people. The reformation brought a cultural prosperity in every sphere which has continued in our days.

Azariah is drawing horses

While the others had got engrossed in history Azariah had been sketching on his outstretched scroll of papyrus. When the story about the performances of their forefathers was finished he showed them a picture of the beautiful view over the Kison Valley and the mountains beyond. To the west was the Megiddo mountains and in the distance you could just make out the massive Mount Carmel. The heights of Lebanon were to the right and the mighty Hermon Alps with their everlasting snow with the vast plain of Megiddo in between. Azariah had drawn a whole herd of horses in the foreground on the plain.

– Did Solomon not have one of his cities with the famous stables here in Megiddo?

– He probably had the whole of the plain of Megiddo or the plain of Jezreel as it is also called, just for grazing. It has a natural boundary of mountains so the horses could not escape. As the word for mountain is "harma", you could also call the plain Harma-giddo¹⁰, which means the plain surrounded by mountains.

– How many horses did he actually have? I have heard that there were a vast number.

The Chronicles have many accounts, but it is certain that he had 12 000 riding-horses and 4 000 teams of horses and chariots. There is an account that he had in all 22 000 horses¹¹.

– Well then he probably needed the whole of the plain of Megiddo for grazing.

Azariah continued drawing a picture from memory of Solomon's temple¹² with many animals to be sacrificed and an imaginary picture of the fatal arrow at Megiddo.

The Cedars of Lebanon

They came to the road from Egypt to Lydia and the river Euphrates the morning of the sixth day after their departure from Jerusalem. Traffic was even busier here. A great deal of trade took place between Africa and Asia as well as with the new world in Europe. The African gold and jewels were much sought after, as were ivory, hardwood and hides of every kind.

Having passed through the narrow Megiddo-pass they now came to the plain, where you could still see evidence of the battles between the Egyptians and Assyrians. And there were lots of horses, they passed one herd after the other. But they seemed totally wild. Some of the soldiers tried to catch a few horses but when they got near to them the whole herd disappeared with a deafening sound in a cloud of dust kicked up by their hooves as they galloped away.

Having walked for almost a whole day on the plain they began to climb the heights of Lebanon. They now found themselves in the part of the Lebanon mountains once belonging to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, the part of Israel called Galilee. It was nice to come into the shade between cypresses and cedars. Daniel turned around to see how long the train of prisoners really was. From this height he could see how it moved along down on the plain. At the back there were carts drawn by oxen or horses where the wives and children of the prisoners could ride. But it was not just a transport of prisoners, there were probably at least as many soldiers on their way home on furlough after many years in battle. Daniel discovered that the soldiers were longing to get back home as he listened to them talking to one another.

The rise became steeper and the higher they climbed the larger the famous great cedars became. Daniel and Hananiah began to talk.

Noah's flood – was it true?¹

– These giant cedars must be thousands of years old, perhaps they were already here when Abraham was alive.

– Yes, there are those who say that the largest and oldest of the trees stem from the time before the Flood and that they must have been covered by water for a short time.

Azariah said: – I am sorry to interrupt, but I heard you mention the great Flood. What do you know about it? Did it really happen?

– Yes, the story is there in the writings of Moses and the prophets refer to it as a catastrophe which came upon mankind.

– Even historians of other countries tell of a flood which happened about 2000 years ago. There is an Egyptian legend saying that the gods cleansed the earth by a flood and only a few shepherds survived. In the archives of the temple of Marduk in Babylon there is this story:

– *Xisuthros², a king, was warned by one of the gods to build a ship, and take into it his friends and relatives and all different kinds of animals, with all necessary food. Whereupon he built an immense ship, which was stranded in Armenia. Upon subsidence after the Flood, he sent out birds; the third time, they did not return. He came out, built an altar, and sacrificed.*

– There is a similar story in our Holy Scriptures.

– There are also tablets with inscriptions from the time before the flood. An ancient Babylonian king recorded that:

– *He loved to read the Writings of the age before the Flood,³ about how good life on earth was then and how long human beings lived at that time.*

These historical events fit exactly with what Moses wrote in *the Torah*, so why not?

– But where did all the water come from? wondered Azariah.

– Scripture records that the Lord God opened the fountains of the deep⁴ and the windows of the heavens were opened. If all the subterranean water rose like mist and all the moisture in the air was condensed at once then there could be so much rain that for a time it would cover all the earth, at least the inhabited areas.

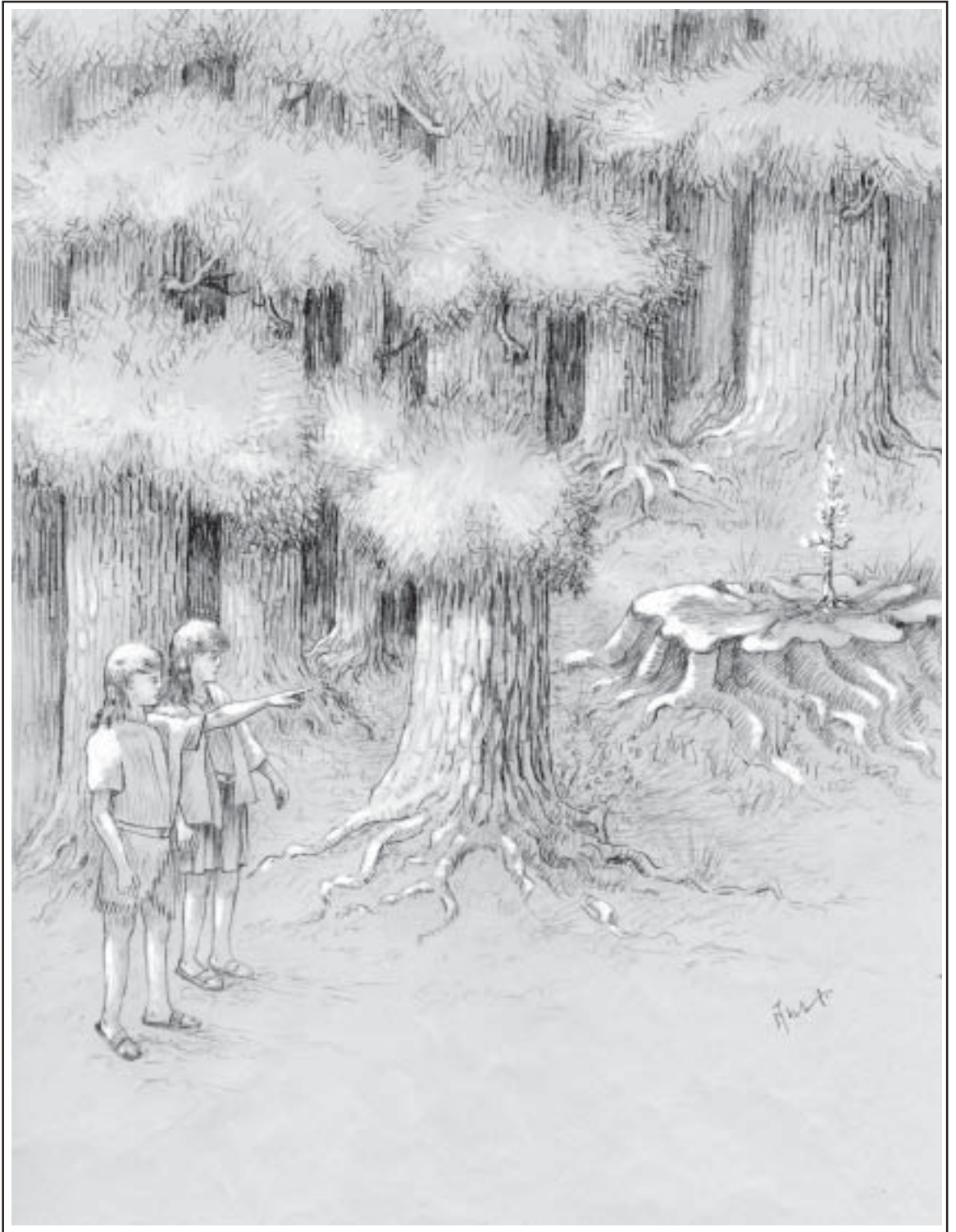
Isaiah's prophecies about the Messiah

– I wish these cedars could tell of what they have seen. Of course we have cedars too which Solomon once planted around Jerusalem. True, they are large and old, but not like these giants.

– No, at that time Solomon had to get all his cedar wood from Lebanon⁵, to build the temple and his many palaces.

– Look at that enormous stump over there, the one where there is a new shoot. It must be 15 to 20 cubits in circumference. When I see that I think of our nation, once like a magnificent cedar but now cut down so it is just the stump left. It reminds me of a prophecy of a stump with a new shoot which will be a blessing to the whole world.

– That is one of the Prophet Isaiah's famous Messiah prophecies. When I copied the book of Isaiah I learnt that prophecy by heart. It begins by telling how the cedars of Lebanon are ruined. Let's see if I can remember it now.



*Look at the stump over there – with a new shot of cedar.
"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse..." Isa 11:1.*

– *See the Lord, the Lord Almighty, will lop off the boughs⁶ with great power. The lofty trees will be felled, the tall ones will be brought low. He will cut down the forest thickets with an ax; Lebanon will fall before the Mighty One. A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse, from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.*

– *The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. In that day the Root of Jesse⁷ will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.*

– What a prophecy! exclaimed Hananiah. Imagine all heathens will rally to a descendant of King David! All will look up to him. It seems he will not just be our Messiah and Saviour but king of the whole world.

– I must quote Jeremiah, who in the middle of a prophecy of judgment predicts the splendid future of our nation:

– *At that time they will call Jerusalem "The Throne of the Lord",⁸ and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honour the name of the Lord. No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts.*

Isaiah further says that the Messiah will rule:

– *He will not judge⁹ by what he sees with his eyes or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with justice he will give directions for the poor of the earth. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.*

– *They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*

– What a glorious time it will be on earth. That is the end of idols and all wars. Knowledge of the Lord is the only thing that counts!

– Yes, when you think how things are now it is almost incredible. Jeremiah is preaching about the total destruction of Jerusalem at the same time as he is speaking about hope for the future through the coming of the Messiah:

– *The days are coming¹⁰ declares the Lord, when I will raise up to David a righteous branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: "The Lord Our Righteousness".*

– The picture of the stump which produces new life in a new shoot is striking when you consider our country.

As Daniel and Hananiah walked side by side they reminded each other of the wonderful prophecies about the Messiah, they were like mighty cedar trees of the future.

Who is the Messiah – God or man?

The view from the camp that night was like a mirage from Paradise, so breathtakingly beautiful with the rays from the evening sun filtering through the tree trunks. In the background the majestic heights of Mount Hermon with the everlasting snow was just visible. Daniel got out his flute and started to play the wonderful melodies from the Psalms of King David. Azariah soon caught the atmosphere in his drawings, it was almost like he was drunk from the experience of sheer beauty. As they continued talking by the campfire about the Messiah prophecies he could soon show them a master-piece on his papyrus scroll.

– Azariah and I have been listening to your theological discussions about the coming Messiah. I want to believe Moses and the prophets but I have so many questions. I always thought that the Messiah would be an ordinary human being like us, but with great spiritual power, like Moses. But now I am beginning to wonder, if he is not a supernatural being, like the archangel Michael who will reveal himself to us in a similar way as the angel in the burning bush did?¹¹ asked Mishael.

Azariah added: – Is there a prophecy which tells us who the Messiah really is – an ordinary human being, an angel or even God himself?

– If you study the prophecies you realise that the Messiah is neither an ordinary human being nor an angel but actually God himself revealed in human form. Isaiah has expressed it clearly like this:

– To us a child is born¹², to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

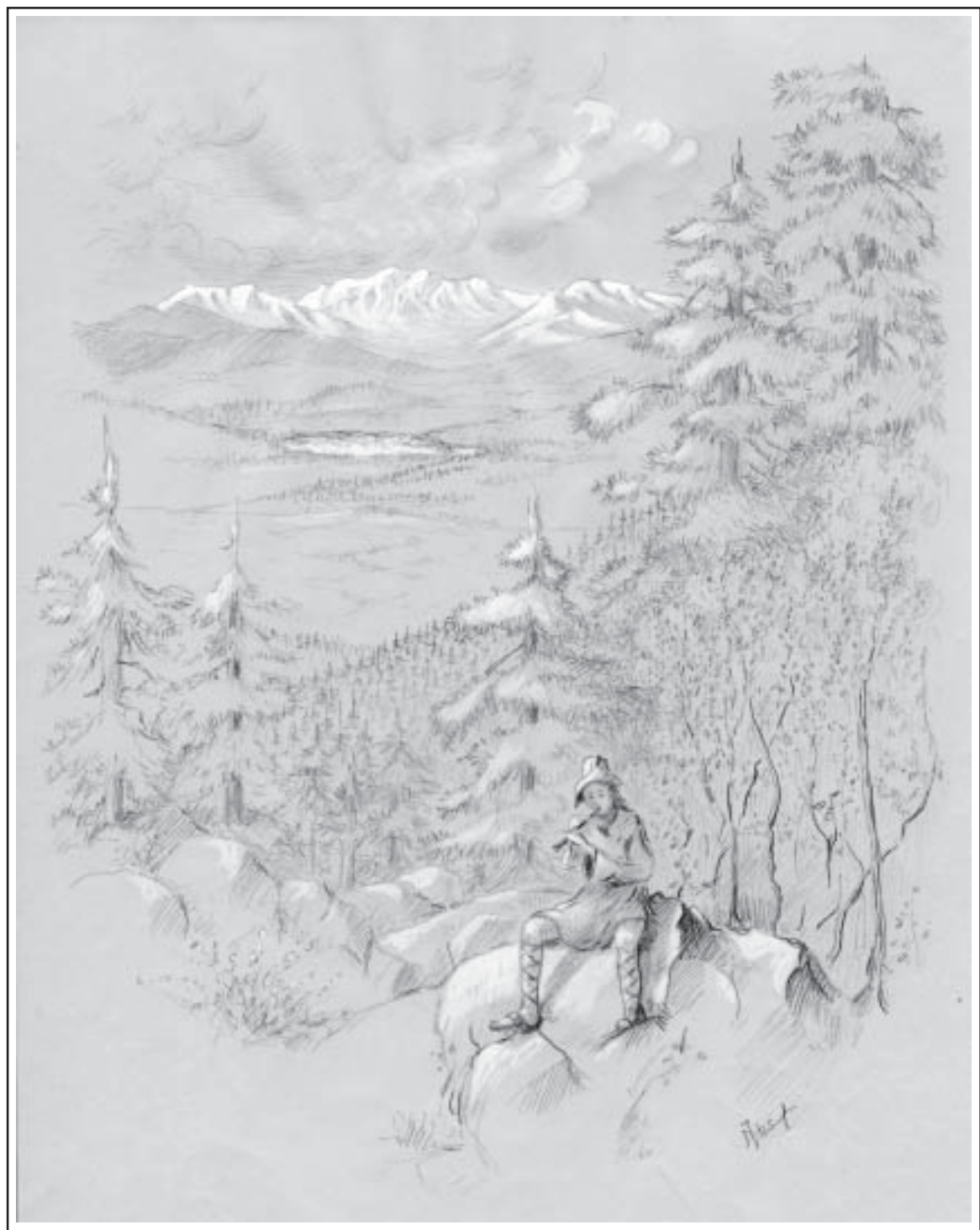
What a marvellous prophecy! It makes two things clear: The Messiah will be born a human being at the same time as he is Mighty God and Everlasting Father.

Mishael shook his head and said: – This is a mystery. How can one person be both God and man, and how can God come down and inhabit a human form at the same time as he is Lord of all the earth and the whole universe?

– Perhaps the key is to understand the nature of God as a unit of several divine persons. Our name for God, *Elohim*¹³ is actually plural. God uses the words we – us about himself, as he says in *the Torah*: "Let **us** make¹⁴ man in **our** image".

– Do you mean that we have several gods then? wondered Azaiah.

– No, not in the same sense as the pagans who talk about their many



The flutist

gods. We have to understand the Divine – the Godhead – as a spiritual unity of three personalities, a trinity in a perfect union. We have a messianic psalm which tells us that when one of the Godhead is born a human being, he is called the son during his time on earth:

– *He said to me, "You are my Son¹⁵, today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."*

– This prophecy is not about any ordinary human being but about the Messiah coming into the world as God's Son.

– Incredible! Would God be born into the world which he himself has created?

– Yes, the prophet Micah even tells us where he will be born, in Bethlehem, and as a descendant of king David.¹⁶

The holy trinity

– You talked about the three persons of the Godhead *Elohim*. I have also heard the expression the Holy Trinity and we repeat the word Lord three times in the blessing (Aaron's blessing). If *El Shaddai*,¹⁷ the Creator, is one and the Messiah the second, who is then the third?

Daniel declared: – When we describe the Godhead as a Trinity it is just as difficult for us to understand as the notion of time and space. None of us can understand time – its beginning and end. Who among us can explain the infinity of the space beyond the world of the stars, or how matter and everything created has been made from nothing. How then can God be just one and also three persons at the same time? This is a mystery! Well, Isaiah appears to answer who the third person is when he speaks about The Holy Spirit as a particular person in the Godhead. He says of the children of Israel during their desert wanderings:

– *Yet they rebelled¹⁸ and grieved his Holy Spirit. Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them? Like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord.*

The Spirit was not just a force, he could be grieved, guide them and live in them. Also, in the writings of Moses the Spirit is described as a person in the Godhead. When he tells us about the creation he says that *"the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters"*.¹⁹ It looks like the Spirit was God's supervisor at the creation. If we look at the picture of Mount Hermon which Azariah has just drawn we have a fine illustration of our triune God. From here it looks like there are three separate mountains, but when you get nearer you find that there is one single mountain mass with three mountain tops. So God is also one unit but three distinct persons.

– But if there are now three persons in the Godhead – how does that fit in with our first commandment, which says that there is only one God?

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One!²⁰

Shema Israel: Jahve Elohenu Jahve, Echad!

Daniel continued: – In our language we have two words for one: *echad*²¹ which is a composite word and *yacheed*, which means only or just one. The word for one, which is used in our proclamation about God, is the composite word *echad* which describes a unit. In our proclamation the name for God is used three times which highlights that there are three persons in the Godhead joined into one unit.

– But we have the name *Jahve* for God, how then does this name relate to *Elohim*? asked Mishael.

Hananiah answered: – As Daniel already has said, the concept of the Godhead is a mystery which is very difficult to explain. Be patient with me, I will try to sort it out.

Elohim is a name for the entire Godhead and so is plural. *Jahve*²² or the Lord, which we also say, is a singular form relating to God and refers to only one of the persons of the Godhead.

You mentioned the angel in the burning bush earlier on. It really was not an angel but God himself who revealed himself to Moses in the form of an angel. He was told that the place where he stood was holy ground and to remove his sandals. It was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who stood in the fire in the thornbush, he gave his name to Moses, *Jahve*, which means “*I am who I am*” - *eternally the same*²³, the verb actually has three tenses: “*I was, I am, I will be*”. It was *Jahve**, the Lord, who accompanied the children of Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire²⁴ when they came out of Egypt and their covenant was made with *Jahve*.

– I can’t prove it, but I believe that it is *Jahve* – the Covenant maker – who will be our Messiah, who will be born into our generation as God’s son for the salvation and peace of the world, added Daniel.

– We must also add that the name *Jahve* for God is so holy that you never write it out in full, you only use the consonants JHV.²⁵ |Some people pronounce the name *Jehovah* because they are not sure how it is meant to be pronounced from the beginning. Another more common name for God, which is often used in ordinary circumstances, is the word *Adonai* which means master and Lord. To sum it all up, *Elohim* refers to the entire Godhead whilst *Jahve* and *Adonai* refer to the Messiah who is also called the Son when he comes revealed in human form.

They had talked long into the night and the soldiers who guarded them had got restless. It was time to crawl into their tent for a couple of hours much needed rest.

*OT name for the Messiah – Christ 1 Cor. 10:1-4

Bridgebuilding

After three days march into the beautiful Lebanon – the part once belonging to the tribe of Naphtali – they came to a river which had its source in the Hermon mountains. Immediately on arrival by the river they had to line up in an open space, the commander wanted to address them, Daniel was asked to interpret. To their surprise they discovered that they were to find a place for a permanent camp to accommodate them for several weeks, they were to stay there to build a bridge over the river by the ford as the amount of rapid water from the melting snow made crossing the river impossible.

As they found the place where they were to pitch the camp for the weeks ahead the entire company were called together to listen to their commander again. His speech contained both warnings and promises, they would be the ones to suffer if they were not willing to work hard. He said that he would be frank in his reports to king Nebuchadnezzar and if they did not pull their weight it would be to their disadvantage on their arrival in Babylon. But if they were energetic and willing to work hard, he would report that too, they would also have the extra reward of being able to celebrate Sabbath every seventh day.

Now everyone were allowed to live in tents and all would be free of their chains. Also, families were allocated their own tents so the members of the different families could be together, while those with no family were to live in the bigger tents. This information was received with great joy and it was not long before officers and soldiers had allocated tents and spaces.

At dusk all tents were in place. Happy voices from the family tents, parents joined with their children, mingled with the distant howling of the wolves. The atmosphere was strange.

Around the camp now hundreds of fires burnt, watched over by the soldiers who had put an iron ring round the camp. In the forest around them were lots of wild beasts, wild boars, bears and leopards. But in spite of their dangerous surroundings everyone felt safe in the well organised camp.

At sunrise next day everybody got busy, the Jews would show what they could do. Carpenters, blacksmiths, brick-layers, all craftsmen were put into teams, a group of experts formed to which the four King's kids

were allocated. Together with Jews and Chaldeans who had previous experience from bridge-building they began to explore the terrain to find the most suitable place for the bridge. They needed to find a place where the riverbanks were naturally high for the abutments of a suspension bridge. The task also included the building of a new road to the bridge so they chose a place near to the old caravan trail.

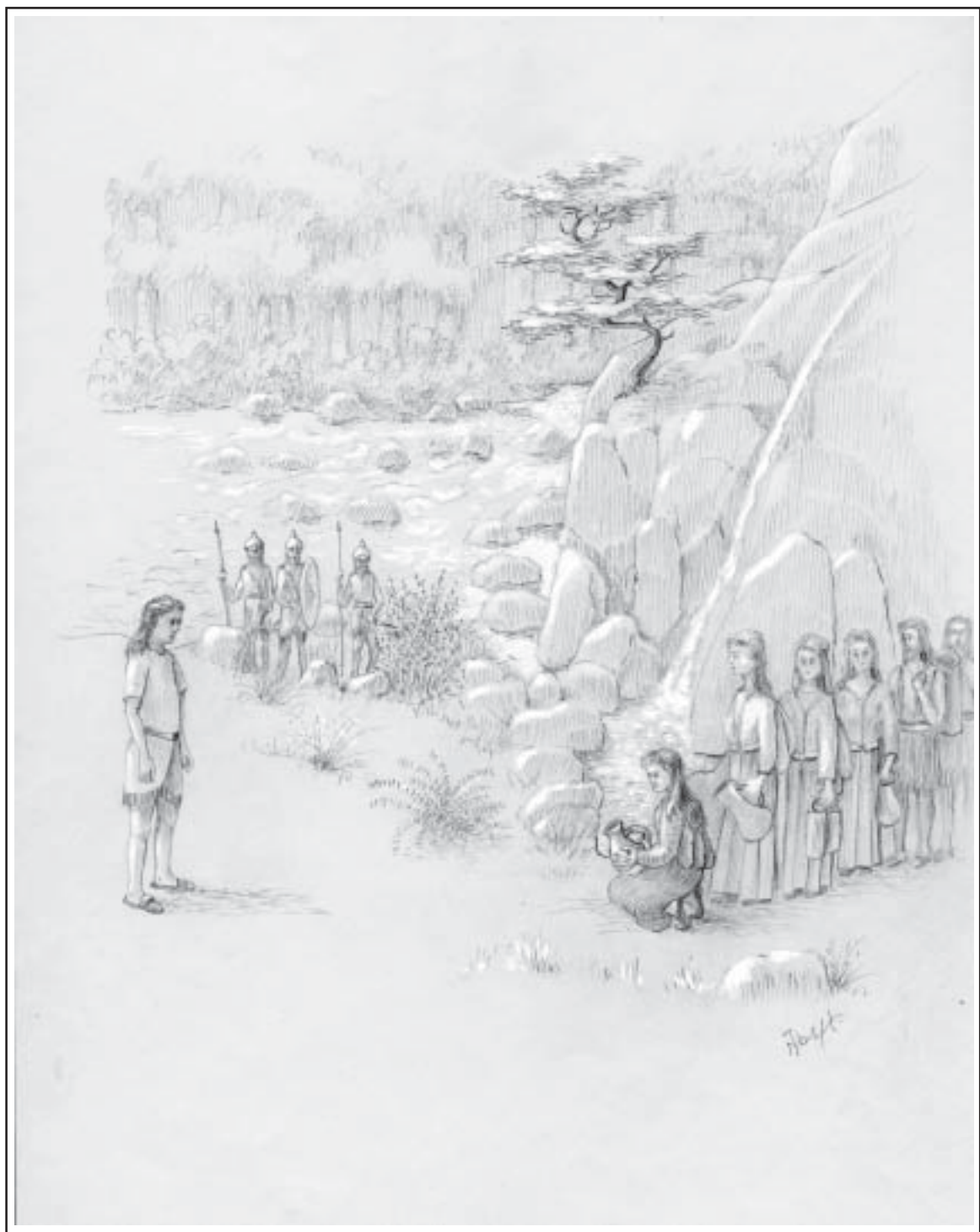
Having decided on the most suitable place for the bridge the experts gathered for a meeting to discuss the project and the design of the bridge. Azariah had studied architecture and he knew quite a lot about bridges, he had even had a practical placement at a bridge construction over the river Jordan. His contribution to the discussion carried great weight and he had to make some drawings with various different designs. The span would be about fifty cubits where they had chosen the best natural abutments. They decided to have two stone columns in the middle for the logs to rest on. It was important that the wood did not come into contact with the water as the strength of the wood had to be maintained. To strengthen the logs they would make a truss bridge, they knew that a bridge of this kind would be able to carry a much greater load than a flat bridge.

Everybody was soon busy at work. Several working parties went into the woods to find suitable trees, others began to move boulders for abutment and pillars. The bricklayers started to burn clay which was then crushed and mixed with quicklime, making a very strong mortar. The blacksmiths began to make tools, band irons and nails. Daniel and Hananiah worked together on the adjustments, they were used to handling spirit level and plumb line.

The Jewish prisoners were pleased to have the opportunity to show that they really were skilled craftsmen and it was not without pride that they set to. They were sawing logs and battens, worked in the smiths and quarried stones with an energy the Chaldeans had never seen. It was not for nothing they had selected the most skilled craftsmen from a nation with a long tradition in the art of building.

Mishael finds Hannah

The King's kids were rather tired in the evening and there was not much time for talking at the end of the day once the bridge building had begun. They had no longer a camp fire outside their own tent, so as it got dark they had to be inside the tent. The second evening Mishael arrived in their tent very happy, he had found his fiancée, Hannah, among the prisoners. She had chosen of her own free will to join the prisoners in a foreign land because of her love for Mishael. She had not told anyone about what she intended to do so that no one would hinder her, no one in



Encounter at the well

her family knew. She had left a note though before she made her way in the dark to hide in one of the packed baggage carts. The caravan had already travelled a fair distance when she was discovered and as they needed more people to look after the children, the officers allowed her to stay.

Women and children had not been allowed to come to the great Sabbath concert so it was only now in the large common camp that Mishael saw her. He had been standing in the queue to draw water when he thought he saw someone who looked like Hannah far ahead in the queue. He could only see half her profile but the girl was so like Hannah, her beautiful loose hazel coloured hair reaching far down her back, even her posture and movements were like Hannah's. She had several waterskins hanging in straps from her shoulders and Mishael got a better look at her when she filled the skins. It must be Hannah! His heart began to beat faster – how could this be possible? He was excited!

Mishael left the queue, went over to her and stood for a while astonished, looking at her as she poured the water. When she turned to leave he met her eyes and she cried out! They could only exchange a few words. Hannah told him how she had hid amongst the baggage. Initially she had been asked to help with the children, but when they heard that she was a dress maker she was given the task of mending clothes. As they parted they decided to meet again at the same place by the river.

Mishael admired Hannah's courage! She had given up everything because of him. He felt unworthy and was lost for words in this mystery of life, discovering a love which forgot to seek its own. It was wonderful to be alive, life was worth living once again. Everything was transformed into lofty music bubbling up within him. He remembered some verses from the Song of Songs which fitted his mood very well:

– You have stolen my heart¹, my sister, my bride; you have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much more pleasing is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume than any spice! Your lips drop sweetness as the honey comb, my bride, milk and honey are under your tongue. The fragrance of your garments is like that of Lebanon. You are a garden fountain, a well of flowing water streaming down from Lebanon.

It all fit together. And they could meet again by a flowing river gushing down from Lebanon.

Sabbath celebration below the Cedars.

Work on the bridge proceeded quicker than expected. As the water level at this time was low there was no problem erecting the pillars in the middle of the river, the big logs were put in place one by one with great shouts. Several work teams were sawing battens and the black smiths had made many fittings and whole rolls of band irons.

The Chaldeans kept their promise about the Sabbath. They thought that the Jews really had earned a day of rest. Whole families were allowed to participate in the celebration this time. Daniel was in charge of the proceedings. Hananiah spoke briefly about the faith of Abraham and Mishael led the singing with his eight stringed lyre. Hannah had a lovely voice and sang the solo part in the choir. The hardest heart would melt through her sincerity and warmth. She sang a solo about Jerusalem, the pearly white city, which left no one unmoved, even strong men were moved to tears. All rose to pray and turned towards Jerusalem² with raised hands as they received the blessing. There was an air of celebration below the tall cedars of Lebanon, God's own great cathedral. Never before had the Jews felt such unity in faith and in their love for one another, as now in their dispersion. They felt as if the Spirit of God and his glory filled them with a kind of courage overcoming everything. They would keep together, they would overcome!

As the prisoners were allowed to move quite freely within the compound, some of the young people went down to the river and gathered there by the campfire to meet and talk together. The four now met several young men who like themselves had been selected for service in Babylon within different trades. Hannah had got to know several girls of her own age who accompanied her to the river. The young people sat there for a long time and told one another about their different experiences. After a few hours a couple of guards came to tell them that it was time to return to their tents.

When Hannah and her friends walked home under the tall cedars, Hannah felt the happiest young woman in the world. What a wonderful day they had had! Never did she regret that she had left everything and followed that inner voice, the voice of love! Suddenly she realised she was humming a part of the Song of Songs:

– O daughters of Jerusalem³, I charge you – if you find my lover, what will you tell him? Tell him I am faint with love. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars. His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

Man of sorrow

One evening later on the four king's kids went down to one of the campfires by the river and there continued their conversation about the Messiah prophecies. No subject was as fascinating as this. Daniel had brought his copy of the Book of Isaiah and was unrolling it when Azariah began to speak:

– Isaiah has many wonderful prophecies about the Messiah, but there are statements that I don't understand and which seem conflicting. Can you read the first of the forty-second chapter.

Here is my servant⁴, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight, I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations, and I will make him a light for the Gentiles.

Azariah wondered: – This seems to be an obvious Messiah prophecy. The word Messiah means *the anointed one* and here it says that he is anointed by the Spirit of the Lord and that he will be a help for the whole world. But he is not called *the Son* but *my Servant*. Could that be two different descriptions of the same person?

– Sure! There are many names and titles for the Messiah:

–The Anointed One, the Son God's Servant, the Offspring, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, The Lord our Righteousness and so on, answered Hananiah.

Azariah had more questions: – I have a difficult question. In one of the prophecies, I think it is in either the fifty-second or fifty-third chapter, the Prophet says this:

– See, my servant will act wisely;⁵ he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. But then he continues in the next sentence:

– Just as there were many who were appalled⁶ at him – his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness – so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.

To me this seems conflicting! On one hand he is great and highly exalted and the next time he is degraded and disfigured. What is this about?

Hananiah answered: – You are not the first who has wondered about that prophecy. That part of the Scriptures describes God's servant, the Messiah, as forsaken by God and despised by human beings.

– Isaiah calls him *Man of Sorrow⁷*, one who knows suffering. Yes he was even *counted amongst sinners and transgressors so despised that he was counted for nothing, one from whom men hide their faces*, said Mishael.

Daniel gave his view: – I admit, that this prophecy is very difficult to interpret, I have myself pondered over it for a long time, it is greatly

conflicting. That prophecy does not fit until you find the key word.

– Do you mean that there is just one word that can solve the whole mystery? asked Azariah.

– Yes, I believe so. The word is *guilt offering*⁸. The guilt offering is the center of the message of the whole *Torah* about law and grace, everything else hinges on this. Without that offering neither law nor grace would function, nobody could be redeemed and saved.

Hananiah continued: – That is why our priest must sacrifice a lamb without blemish on the altar every morning and every evening, year in and year out. Without the guilt offering there is no grace, and without grace we die because of our sins according to the demands of the Law.

– Do you really mean that the Messiah must become a guilt offering. But why? We have the laws about the sacrifices. Is it not enough with the sacrifices prescribed in the Law, wondered Mishael.

Daniel explained: – Let me first quote the prophecy about the guilt offering:

– *Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him⁹ and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. – After the suffering of his soul he will see the light of life and be satisfied.*

From the prophecy we see that if the Messiah becomes a guilt offering the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. As this prophecy exists it must mean that it is God's plan to build a bridge one day between God and man through his own Son and by him exchange the bloody animal sacrifices for a better substituting sacrifice.

– The fact is that the prophecy time and again emphasizes the truth that God's servant gives himself as a sacrifice for us, in our stead, so that we can be whole and find peace, said Hananiah. Here is a prophecy of Him being our substitute

– *Surely he took up our infirmities¹⁰ and carried our sorrows. Yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed, We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Mishael exclaimed: – That is almost unbelievable! I have never understood it like this! The Messiah must be filled by an incredibly deep love for us as he is willing to take our punishment on himself and be beaten and abused for our sake. But how does it end? I don't remember the content of the prophecy very well.

A crucified Messiah

Hananiah said: – It means death for him. It says that *He poured out his life in death*¹¹.

– Will the Messiah die? But that is unthinkable! How can he then be king of the whole world? How can he be Prince of Peace, the one the world is hoping for? Are you not mistaken, so that this relates to another person, said Azariah in distress.

Daniel was firm in his belief when he declared: – No, it says clearly that it is God's servant, the Messiah, who is suffering and dies in our place:

– *After the suffering of his soul*¹², *he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.*

– King David wrote many Messianic psalms. In one of them there is a description of the suffering Messiah:

– *Dogs have surrounded me*¹³, *a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing, added Hananiah*

– To have hands and feet pierced means crucifixion. That is the punishment for the worst offenders – many hours of terrible agony. Just think, that God loves us so much that he will die for us, said Mishael.

Daniel added: – Yes, all we can experience of human love is only a dim image, a mirror of God's eternal love, a reflection of the perfect love of God. It is written that he even intercedes for those who crucify him.¹⁴

– I am disappointed by all this! A crucified Messiah! This is not the kind of Messiah that I want. A Messiah who dies – like a criminal on a cross! said Azariah in deep grieve.

Azariah stood up.

– No never! I don't believe it! You must be mistaken. That prophecy must relate to someone else, or it is a false prophecy. This is pure folly! said Azariah in an outburst of fury.

Azariah got more and more heated!

In anger he left the camp fire and disappeared into the darkness.

The Dream of Paradise

The building of the bridge progressed day by day. Several teams worked on connecting roads on both sides of the river. It was no easy task to remove the great tree stumps. They took gravel and stones for the road surface from the river bed. At the same time they made the river channel deeper between the supporting columns so that as little water as possible would wash over the abutments and pillars. When the bridge was finished it had to be coated with tar, a team of Israelites would bring pitch from Media and do the job.

The well of music

Mishael went to draw water every day and Hannah was often there already waiting for him. Their love grew deeper the more they got to know one another, and they both knew that they could no longer live without each other. True, through their parents according to an old custom they had got engaged already as young teenagers. Of course they had had their say, what they thought, and each had suggested the other one. They had met at choir practice in Jerusalem and there their first love was budding, but they had never been alone together so they did not know one another very well when they got engaged. Now they looked upon that ceremony as quite a formality. The feeling they then had for one another could be likened to flower buds which were now blossoming. The purity and beauty radiating from Hannah's entire being made a deep impression on Mishael.

Innocent love is moving and beautiful. It inspired Mishael to write music again. The siege of Jerusalem and all the horror afterwards had made him lose his desire to write music. Now it welled up again within him. Within him there was a fountain of music and he became aware of new beautiful melodies and sounds. Earlier he had always created his melodies to fit certain Scripture texts, but now the music was there independent of any text. For the first time he wrote entirely independent music – music for its own sake which in its beauty glorified God and his wonderful creation – unusual – exquisite – interpreting the sincerity and ecstasy of pure deep love.

A new Paradise

After the last conversation about the Messiah prophecies when Azariah got so upset, Daniel and Hananiah had studied by themselves. They enjoyed putting together the different prophecies like different pieces in a jigsaw puzzle – especially relating to where and when the Messiah would come and above all about his mission. At the School of Prophecy they had learnt how to interpret Scripture. All wishful thinking, emotions and ideas had to submit to the actual truth of the accounts. They discovered that the prophecies complimented each other so that often one prophecy explained another and together they were in harmony and formed a whole. Sometimes they disagreed but often found that they could sort out their disagreements by investigating further and compare different sources. Daniel was quite humble and listened without disputing. Hananiah was more easily excited and speeded up their studies in his eagerness. In a way they complemented each other. Sometimes Daniel went with Hananiah and helped him in his great hobby gathering unusual plants and then they had more time for discussion.

– We have to find an answer to Azariah’s outburst. He is an honest soul even though he has got his doubts and can get quite violent, said Hananiah.

Daniel nodded and said: – His question is valid to all of us. Not even the School of Prophecy had a real answer for the prophecies about the suffering Messiah.

Hananiah pondered a while and said: – How do you look upon that problem? Will the Messiah first have a great worldwide mission as Saviour and Leader for the nations and bring the people peace and prosperity but later be betrayed and taken by surprise by his enemies and finally die an infamous death? What happens then to the continuation of the Kingdom of Peace? The Prophecy says that there will be no end to his kingdom:

– Of the increase of his government¹ and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever.

Daniel said what he thought: – I think you have answered the question yourself. Of course it can not be right that everything ends with the Messiah being destroyed. I think that the Messiah’s task in the world is much greater and of a deeper dimension that we can imagine. It is not only a question of establishing David’s throne and his kingdom, although that is one part of his task.

– That is what I have also thought. I think that the Messiah will come to return man to the lost Paradise², both spiritually and physically, was Hananiah’s reply.



Handwritten signature or initials.

The Messiah shall bruise the head of the serpent

– The very first Messiah prophecy says that he will crush the serpent or Satan who caused man’s fall into sin with all its consequences, curse and death. It says that the *offspring of the woman*³, *the Messiah, will crush the serpent’s head but he will strike the Messiah’s heel*.

– The worst consequence of the fall is that man became a mortal being. Daniel agreed and said:

– That is why I believe that the Messiah will give man back eternal life which he had in Paradise. Isaiah says about the Messiah: *he will swallow up death for ever*⁴. But sin, which is the true cause of death, must first be removed. This will happen when the Messiah becomes our *guilt offering*. Then the Messiah will crush Satan, who is in charge of death, and free mankind from the curse of death. But this can’t happen without suffering, so the serpent will sting the Messiah’s heel, which can mean that he will die from the serpent’s venom.

– You mean that when the Messiah, figuratively speaking, put his heel on the serpent’s head to crush it, then the serpent takes the opportunity to put the sting in his heel so that he dies?

– Yes, it will be a victory with his life at stake. The power of Satan is crushed but the Messiah must give his life to atone for our sins and remove sins and poison from the world, concluded Daniel.

The Messiah’s death and resurrection

– But if the Messiah must die to atone for our sins, is there then nothing in the prophecies to explain resurrection? I haven’t got a copy of the Book of Isaiah so I haven’t been able to study this and I have not found anything conclusive within the prophecies so far, said Hananiah.

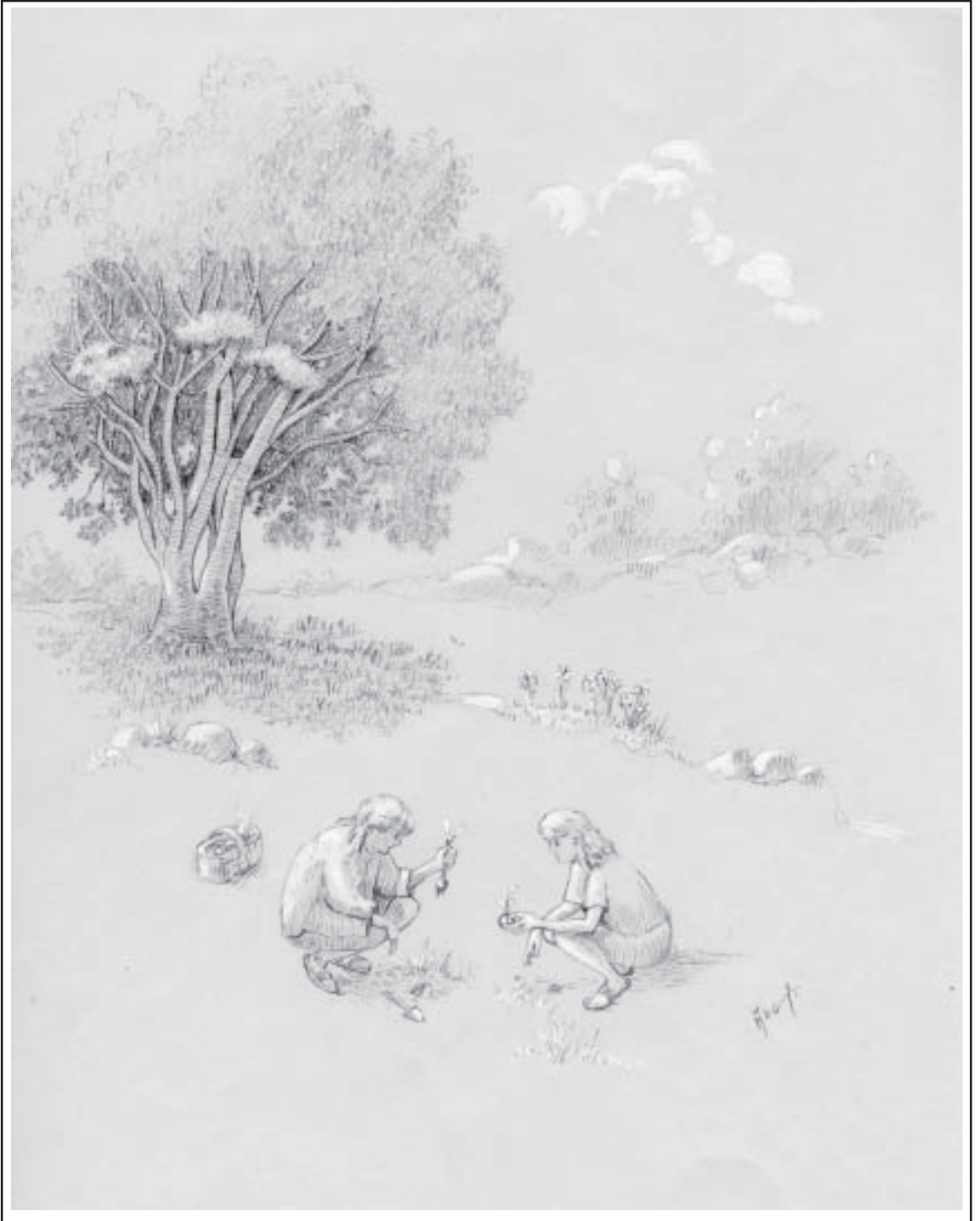
Daniel admitted: – The exact expression ”resurrection of the Messiah” is perhaps not found clearly written in the prophecy, but there are accounts which hint that he must rise from the dead. In the same verse that mentions the guilt-offering, it says that *he will see his offspring and prolong his days*, which means that *he will have life again*. So the pouring out of life in death as a guilt-offering is not the end, how would he otherwise be able to see his offspring or have spiritual children.

The expression *he will swallow up death for ever* continues with the wonderful words:

– *The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears*⁵*from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth.*

If *he will swallow up death for ever*⁶ then he must first conquer death himself through his own resurrection. God the Father will rise him up.

Hananiah agreed and said: – True, the greatest of all miracles is when someone is risen from the dead, but it has happened in Israel before, several



*The bulb – a symbol:
– The bulb must die in the soil in order to burst forth and blossom again*

times during the time of the prophet Elisha⁷, so why can it not happen to the Messiah?

– The prophecy about the seed of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent is a strange prophecy. It does not say that the seed of a man through a woman will bring the Messiah to the world, but only about the seed of the woman. This is a prophecy about a supernatural conception as the Messiah comes to the world and it fits in with the prophecy by Isaiah.

– *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign:⁸ The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel which means: God with us.*

– This is yet another evidence that the prophecies foretell that the Messiah is God himself, incarnate in human form and revealed on earth as the Son or God's Son, as he is actually born into the world by means of a holy conception, said Hananiah.

– Just the thought that God himself should assume the limitations of the human condition is tremendous. But it gives us also the insight that he, who is the author of life, cannot be held by death and that he through his own resurrection *will for ever conquer death.*

– Is our resurrection mentioned anywhere? wondered Hananiah.

Daniel declared: – Yes, Isaiah has a clear prophecy about this:

– *But your dead will live;⁹ their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.*

Hananiah asked: – What does *your dead* mean?

Daniel summed up the prophecies and said :

– I assume it means those who belong to the Lord, those who have died believing in the redemption by the Messiah. You can express the prophecy in a paraphrase like this:

– *Yet we have this assurance¹⁰: Those who belong to God shall live again. Their bodies shall rise again! Those who dwell in the dust shall awake and sing for joy! For God's light of life will fall like dew upon them!*

While they talked they had filled their shoulder bags with many unusual herbs and bulbs, there were many different kinds of beautiful lilies. Hananiah knew a lot about plants and Daniel was a grateful disciple, he was eager to learn and if he had the opportunity he would himself grow some plants in the new country.

What they had just talked about they saw fulfilled in nature too. A seed or a bulb must be planted in the soil and figuratively speaking die, in order to be resurrected. Through this process of death a small seed could be the source of new life and so have many offspring.

Azariah's agony

In the night when Azariah got so disappointed in the exposition of the Messiah prophecies that he left his friends in anger, he walked by the river to and fro between the camp fires. He felt a failure, he could not believe like the others. Sometimes he actually even doubted that God existed. If he did, surely he did not care for Azariah, he felt so terribly alone. He had no fiancée like the others – none who loved him. His mother had died, when he was only five years old and his step mother had not cared much for him. When he was fifteen his father had wanted to arrange an engagement for him. The girl whom they introduced to him was surely a nice girl, but he had no real feelings for her. After several meetings, even dates alone, he had almost decided to say no, but she did it ahead of him, she sent a message that she was not interested. What humiliation! To be rejected by a bird! Was he not related to the king! Who did she think she was!. How could she give him the push!

So Azariah was alone. His parents belonged to the Josiah's revival movement and had promised to live according to the Law, marriage was sacred and sex outside marriage a great sin. Azariah had friends who lived a different life, they worshipped Baal and had free sex, but he did not think they were any happier. The girls were ruined when they were forced to serve in the temple and at the Asherah poles, their virginity belonging to the Baal priests. After a year of service there they were either apathetic or sex mad. They could never experience true love and their emotional life got impoverished. It was just sexual gratification that counted for anything. Azariah had heard about the awful orgies that took place amongst the Baal worshippers with wife swapping and group sex. All this happened with the blessing of the Baal priests and as a part of their holy rites to appease the gods. Azariah had received many invitations to join them, but he had resisted. His upbringing was so different, it was strict and according to the Law; and he dreamt of experiencing pure, true love.

The Temptation

But it happened in a moment of weakness that he promised to go with a friend to a temple. It could be interesting to see for himself what they were up to. They stole away at dusk. As Azariah was a novice he was taken to a special room where there were soft carpets and cushions on the

floor. There was a statue of Baal with big empty eyes on one side, in front of the statue there was an altar with a fire burning, giving a heavy smell of incense.

Three temple girls dressed in shining clothes arrived through a door behind the idol. They told him to sit opposite the idol on the cushions. Two of them started to dance in front of the idol while the third girl was playing a lyre. The dance got livelier and after a while they took off all their clothes with graceful movements, one by one. When at last they were naked they started to dance around Azariah. Having danced for a while they touched him and started taking off his clothes – first his cloak then his tunic. They rolled him on the floor and began to caress him. He wanted to leave but seemed to be rooted to the spot by an unseen power. As he looked at the idol he discovered that it had eyes looking at him. Could it be one of the priests who had come in through the hidden door behind the idol and stood inside the statue?

The girls took turns to go to the altar. They poured out wine in front of the idol and also offered Azariah to drink from the wine. After the wine ceremony they continued with incense ceremonies at the same time as their dancing got more and more provocative. In the poor light from the oil lamps and a kind of smoke screen from the incense the girls got more and more pushing and Azariah was aroused both from what he saw but not least by the touch of the girls and their caresses. Quite involuntarily he lost control.

They wanted to keep him there to continue what they called the "holy" intercourse to the honour of the gods but then he got angry and hastily picked up his clothes. From the idol he heard a rough voice swearing and cursing. Azariah put his cloak around him and hurried out.

Afterwards he felt very ashamed, it was like he had committed a deadly sin. Never again would he go to a pagan temple. He could not get over what had happened and he always felt unclean. The peace and joy he had as a child was gone, it was like God was far away after that and he started to doubt God.

Azariah finds creativity

After the incident with the failed engagement Azariah spent more time on his drawing, and thought he would really show what he could do – that he was not a nobody. He learnt to draw characters and his pictures of horses were superb – those were the most difficult to draw. He became more experimentative, his way of using shading gave unimaginable depth to his pictures. Azariah also began working in colour, some of the vegetable

dyes used in the dying of linen and wool, could be made permanent by mixing with olive oil.

He used outstretched hide treated with chalk and bone glue to paint on. Some of this material were now part of his luggage. His artistic creativity developed his personality and gave him a sense of identity and confidence. He discovered beauty in nature and from time to time lived in a world of colour and forms that lifted him out of the drudgery of every day, creativity becoming a different way of life to him

Between the fires

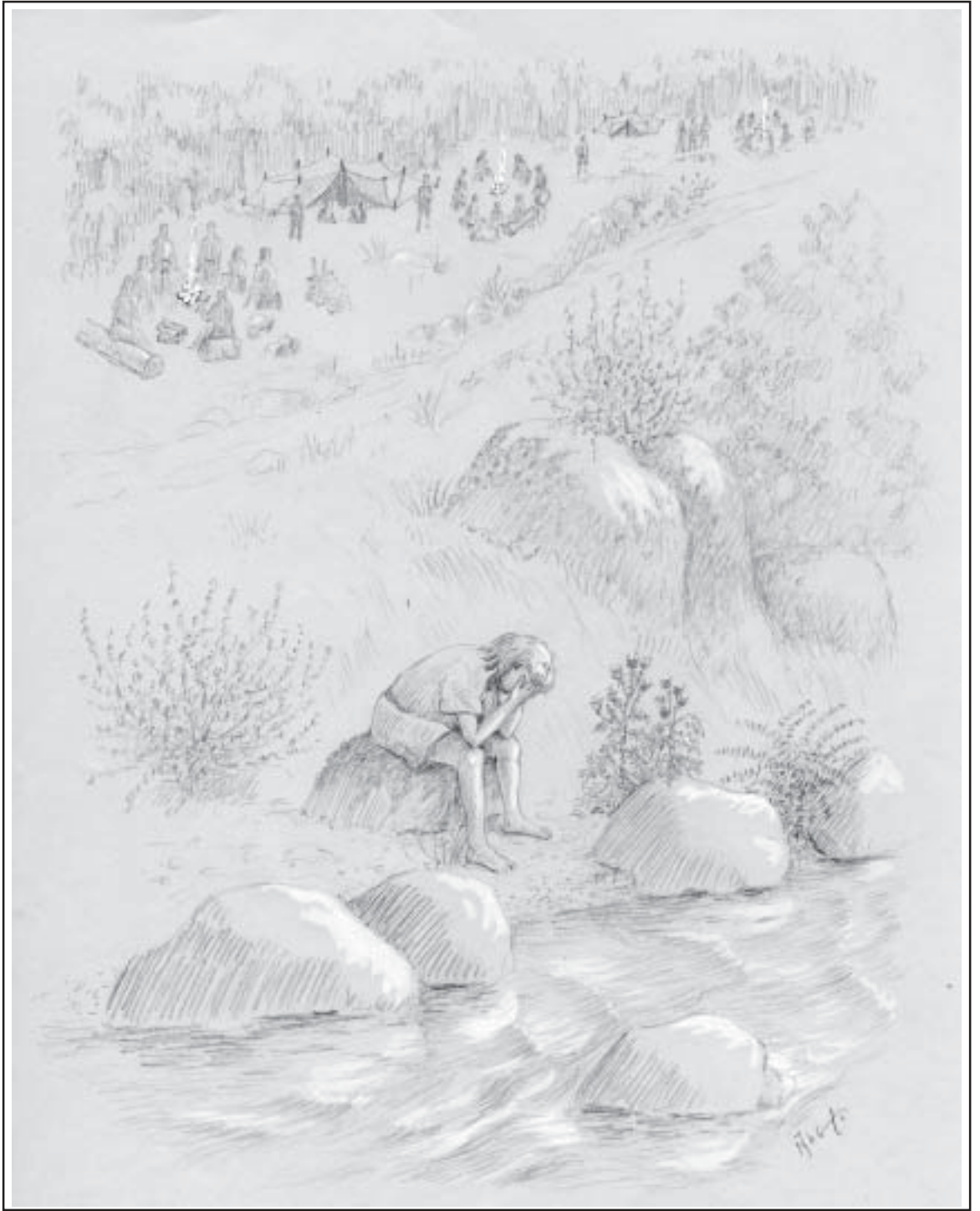
But as he walked between the fires this evening all felt so dark and meaningless. Why did he fight? Who cared for him? What was the purpose of drawing? He sat down on a boulder out of sight by the river, his head in his hands he cried his heart out. In the depth of his being there was a prayer: – O God, if you are there, show me!

Somehow he felt better when he had cried for a while and complained to a God he did not know. When he returned to the tent the others were already there, they had worried about him and were glad to have him back, safe and sound. It felt good that his friends did not despise him because of his attack on their faith.

Pure love

Weeks went by. The Jewish youths had great freedom to meet during these weeks in the camp. The soldiers found them easy to handle and they always obeyed immediately when told to break up. Three times a week they could meet at one of the camp fires by the river. Hannah was often there with her friends and it was there Azariah found Mikal. She was a charming beauty, a descendant of Benjamin, daughter to a carpenter who had his whole family among the prisoners. She had been trained in using the potter's wheel. She was not cold and haughty but warm and friendly. When Azariah first saw her he found himself longing to be with her, a strange feeling which he thought was mutual. It was not just that she was beautiful but there was something in her character and manners that captivated Azariah. He did not dare to show it though, instead he was almost a little reserved to start with. He had been burnt once and he could not take being rejected again.

Although she was still quite friendly when Azariah was stand-offish towards her she showed no particular interest and Azariah became distressed and started to pay attention to her. She was still non committal. They played hide and seek like this with each other for a while and as a result



Despair
"God – if you are there – reveal yourself to me!"

fell more and more in love. But they were too proud to show it for a while and as a result fell more and more in love.

Their friends knew though. Azariah had fallen in love, he had become happier but also quite restless. It was quite apparent but he did not understand himself what was happening to him. Sometimes he could not eat, especially those evenings when they were allowed to go down to the river. As time went by though, Azariah grasped that something wonderful was happening to him and that the same thing was happening to Mikal. They experienced a miracle, that of mutual love. He remembered some verses in the Song of king Salomo:

– How beautiful your are¹, my darling, there is no flaw in you. Like a lily among thorns is my darling among the maidens.

– Your two breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies.

When love got a hold – it stopped the pride and stubbornness. When Azariah was sure that their feelings were mutual, he was ready to accept that this was the best and most wonderful thing that had ever happened to him – to love and be loved. When their eyes met he had to believe that it was true – there was true and pure love, and that miracle had truly happened to them.

Love transformed Azariah. There was something so great in love, that he began to believe that there really must be a God behind all this. He had not been able to create these feelings himself, he had not been able to imagine them or buy them with money. No this was a great gift of life from a God who can perform miracles.

Law and grace

Nevertheless Azariah had still a great problem within him. When he looked at Mikal, pure and lovely in her innocent love, then he was disturbed by the memory of the horrible, dirty experience in the temple. Sin had entered into his life. How could he be clean again? The more he looked at the purity in Mikal's eyes the dirtier he felt. The harmony could not be complete unless he could get rid of his unclean memories. In the end he decided to talk to Daniel and share his problem. To begin with he did not tell him the details about what had happened, but he wanted to find out what Daniel meant when he talked about atonement for sin.

They walked by the river at dusk, just when the fires were lit. It was beautiful – but within Azariah's heart there was deep distress. He was serious as he began to talk.

– When we lived in Jerusalem I always went with my parents to the

Temple to sacrifice and the priests atoned for our sins, not just for our sins but for all the sins of the people of Judah. Now we can not go to the Temple to sacrifice, what happens now? asked Azariah.

Daniel answered: – I don't think distance means much to God, we turn towards Jerusalem when we pray to show our faithfulness to the law and the ministry of the temple.

– But what will happen if the Temple is destroyed as Jeremiah has predicted?

– I have also wondered about that and I think it will be like it was before we had the Law and the Temple. Abraham experienced righteousness by faith before the Law.

– But even though I sacrificed in the Temple according to the Law I did not have peace and had no contact with God.

– No, the Law of itself can not cleanse and save, it is just the means, it is only when we receive grace that the miracle happens. You have to separate the law from the grace, or find out how they work together. The Law forces us to God, making us sinners, and when we see that we have broken the Law and are in need of forgiveness, we can experience reconciliation and grace.

– Then there is a gap in my life, I have not experienced this grace, because I have not experienced anything spiritual at all in my life. I have not got the peace and joy in the Lord as I see you and the others have.

– It is good that you have come to this insight and realise your situation. Then the blessing of grace is not far away. It is here that the faith of Abraham comes in. Through faith and confession before God you can find salvation – the miracle of being born again in your inner being. But so long as we remain silent and try to cover up our sins before God, we can not experience grace. David expressed it like this:

– *There was a time² when I wouldn't admit what a sinner I was. But my dishonesty made me miserable and filled my days with frustration.*

– If I am entirely open and honest, I feel like my soul pants within me longing to be cleansed from sin, said Azariah.

– Conviction of sin is the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Lord. But it was not until David confessed his sin and asked for forgiveness that he experienced the grace. The law is not enough nor is awareness of sin, you must take action and ask for forgiveness in order to experience forgiveness.

David writes:

– Finally I admitted all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, "I will confess them to the Lord." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.³

Azariah born again

Azariah then told Daniel what had happened in the temple of Baal in Jerusalem and how the memory was haunting him. He also told Daniel how he often doubted God's existence since then. At least he could not believe that God was there to help or that he could perform miracles.

He told Daniel about his despair that evening as he walked between the camp fires by the river and how he had cried out to God, and he also for the first time confided in Daniel his love for Mikal. He could not quite explain his love, it was like a miracle within him which made him again believe in a superior power. But something was missing, he did not have peace with God. When he saw the faith and joy in the Lord that the others had, he knew and understood that he was missing the experience of God in his life that the others had. Now he wanted Daniel to pray for him.

Daniel put his hand on Azariah's shoulder and prayed, then Azariah prayed himself. He asked God to forgive him for the visit to the temple of Baal and for his lack of faith. Brokenhearted he prayed sincerely under great distress. He did not experience anything particular during the prayer nor immediately afterwards, but somehow he felt relief as he prayed. Earlier he had tried to get close to God only through different sacrifices according to the Law, now for the first time in his life he had sought God's forgiveness and grace. There was humiliation but also relief.

After his prayer he went for a walk on his own along the river. Darkness had fallen but the lights from the camp fires shone peacefully. It was then, as he walked between the fires thinking about his situation that it suddenly happened. He felt like something releasing within and warmth and light flooded his inner being. Azariah felt so happy he just had to cry *hallelujah!* He knew for sure that God had touched him.

God had heard his prayer! He was clean! His sin was gone! He had experienced forgiveness and God's grace! The peace of God filled him! What happiness! He could no longer doubt! He had been born again!

For the first time in his life he realised that he had a spirit that can never die, eternal life was a reality and the Holy Spirit lived in him. We, as

human beings, are not abandoned to fend for ourselves. God is there, and he cares for us and loves us! He remembered the words of David's psalms:

– In my distress I called to the Lord⁴, I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice, my cry came before him, into his ears.

– *What happiness for those⁵ whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record.*

– *You are my hiding-place⁶; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.*

Azariah had not been drawing any pictures over the last few weeks, now he looked at the nature and all the beauty around him with new eyes. His experience of God as well as his love for Mikal gave him unprecedented inspiration. When they gathered around one of the camp fires that evening Daniel wanted him to show the pictures he had drawn since he left Jerusalem. With the help of these pictures they could remind themselves of all that had happened. They could confirm that the Lord had been with them and helped them in a marvellous way.

Already the same evening Azariah told his friends about his experience of God's Spirit. There was great celebration in the tent and they spoke for a long time about eternal life and about heaven⁷ where many who had the same experience had gone before. After their conversation they got out their instruments and played and sang long into the night. None of the soldiers told them to stop.

Discussion about numerical values

The rain was pouring down when they woke up next morning. They could not work outside that day, but it was nice and dry underneath the oil impregnated canvas. After their usual morning prayer and a few psalms they wondered how they could use the time that day. Daniel had an idea.

Daniel wondered: – Do you want to learn about numerical values? As you probably know I have studied the mystery of numbers for a long time.

Mishael: – Yes I would like to know more about Jeremiah’s message about 70 years of captivity. Number 7 and 70, do they have any particular significance? said Mishael.

Azariah had also a question and asked: – And why do we celebrate Sabbath on the seventh day? Why can we not celebrate it as well on the sixth or tenth day?

About number seven and creation¹

– Rest on the seventh day is divinely ordained. The *Torah* tells us that God created every living thing in six days.² God had completed his work by the seventh day³ and blessed his creation. God made the seventh day holy and a day of rest. The seven day week⁴ comes from the Hebrew word *Shevah* meaning seven, said Daniel.

– In seven days! How could God create everything in just seven days?

– You must understand that God is entirely independent of time. For him a day can be like a thousand years or even longer. In His omnipotence he is above time. If God speaks about seven days this might be God’s way to teach us about the importance of the week. We are created to work six days and need to rest on the seventh in order to feel well.

– Moses says that men are created in God’s image⁵. What does that mean?

– Scripture tells us that unlike the animals God breathed His Spirit into the first human being. Through this man is different from the animals; every human being has a spirit which can not be destroyed, not even by death. God put eternity into each human being⁶. It is because we have got an eternal spirit we are an image of God.

**Those who are not interested in the mystery of numbers can leave out this chapter without losing the context.*

– If God completed the present creation in six days, is there anything in nature that has its foundation in number seven?

Numerical value in nature⁷

– Yes there are several things in creation related to different numbers, not just the number 7. There is a regularity in nature which proves that everything has been made and created according to careful plans and not through coincidence. There is no chaos in nature but harmony, no chance but well planned designs. And it is often founded on different numbers and series of numbers.

In plants the number five is the predominant number, in insects the number three but in vertebrates it is the number seven that is predominant. The gestation period for instance in vertebrates consists of different series of sevens. After conception it takes 8 weeks for a cat and 9 weeks for a dog before they produce their young, whilst for a sheep it takes as much as 21 weeks. We know that it is three weeks before a chicken hatches whilst a duck brood on her eggs double that time, six weeks. But all are multiples of seven.

– Does that apply to human beings as well?

– Yes, in several aspects. The duration of pregnancy⁸ in human beings is divisible by seven, that is 280 days which means forty weeks. The human body⁹ has many sevens built into it. I have not checked this but it is suggested that our pulse slows down in the morning each seventh day, which means that we have a biological clock showing our need of rest every 7th day.

In music¹⁰ the octave has 7 tones, the frequencies of which all are multiples of 11. Our ears can perceive these 7 tones plus the intermediate half tones as harmonious. But our ears have difficulties in distinguishing the frequencies in between them.

The colour chart¹¹ consists of three primary colours: red, green and blue, and three complementary colours: yellow, magenta and cyan. All these six colours can be seen in the rainbow. If we include black it will be seven colors. Combined you can create almost an indefinite range of different shades.

The number seven is a kind of seal of perfection within nature. The colours of the rainbow and the notes of the octave form complete cycles of seven, when you count to eight it means a repeat of the first colour or note.

Numbers in the Hebrew alphabet¹²

– Is there a pattern of numbers also in the *Torah*? wondered Mishael.
– As you well know, there is a number for each letter in our language. What is so fascinating is that God’s inspired word in the *Torah* – actually in all Scripture – what we call the *Tanakh* – seems to be built upon different series of numbers. Thus all numbers up to 13 have a special meaning* and in addition many numbers are symbolic. Numbers of specific significance are: 3, 7, 10 and 12, which we call perfect numbers, each one in itself signifying perfection as you will soon see.

Seven – number for perfection¹³

– Which number is the most common?
– It is the number seven symbolising spiritual perfection. As those who wrote our Bible books were inspired by the Spirit of God, number seven is one of the most common numbers in Scripture. It symbolises the perfect revelation of truth by the Spirit.

The biblical revelation is marked by the seal of perfection in the most remarkable and abundant way. In one of the psalms we sing of how God’s word is purified seven times¹⁴. Already the beginning of the *Torah* shows us how the number 7 provides the foundation in the building of sentences within the inspired word. Let us look at the first sentence in the *Torah*:

”In the beginning God¹⁵ created heaven and earth”

The first sentence in Scripture consists of 7 words and 28 Hebrew letters, i. e. 4x7 where the number 4 relates to earth and the number 7 to

* When numerical values are deciphered the thirteen first numbers have the following symbolic meaning:

- 1 = Number for God and for unity
- 2 = Division and harmony
- 3 = Divine perfection
- 4 = Creation and testing
- 5 = Grace
- 6 = Number for humanity
- 7 = Spiritual completion
- 8 = Miracles and saints
- 9 = Number for judgment and the end
- 10 = Order
- 11 = Lack and disorder
- 12 = Complete reign
- 13 = Apostasy and reconciliation

spiritual perfection. Both the number of words and the number of letters can thus be divided by seven.

- Are there many sentence structures that contain multiples of seven?
- There are many such sentences, especially those that are direct expressions by the Lord himself. But you find the number seven also in other contexts, like in important incidents and commandments. Abraham the 21st from Adam, had a sevenfold blessing¹⁶ and God made a sevenfold covenant with him.

When we study the tabernacle¹⁷ and the order of worship we find that throughout they are constructed using number seven. Also we find the number seven connected with the seven feasts¹⁸ in several ways.

Number one, two and three¹⁹

- We have now seen that the number seven is God's seal of perfection. Let's now look at some other numbers. We'll take them in order, said Daniel.

We have talked before about the figure one as particularly symbolising God as one. Number one symbolises God also as the beginning and end of all existence. There is only one who can be first and only one who can be last. In Scripture the number one symbolises God himself as the first one, the one who is the beginning of everything. God is number one, he is exalted over everything, he is the source but also the last one who completes everything. God is A and O, Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.

- But number three also symbolises God, doesn't it?

- Yes as we have already mentioned the number three is the divine number. This becomes evident as you study God and his way of revealing himself to us mortals. For example, the Temple, the house of God on earth, is divided into three. It consists of the Court yard, the Holy and the Holy of Holies. The inner part of the Tabernacle²⁰, the inner sanctuary, was a cube which in its three dimensions symbolises God. Further, God is described by three attributes: He is almighty, omniscient and omnipresent. He is also the one who was, who is and who will come. The Law commands everyone to worship Him in the Temple at the three great Feasts every year. So we can see clearly that the number three is related to divine revelation.

- We missed out number two. Is that of any specific significance?

- Yes but that significance is more related to that of man. Men and women are created like two opposites. Number two symbolises difference and division as well as harmony and fellowship. Where there are two there is possibility of division and separation for both good and evil (in a sense).

Number two can mean opposition and hostility but it can also mean fellowship and harmony between two parties, between two individual personalities.

God's plan with man is that the two opposites should make one harmonious unit. We believe that Adam and Eve were united in such a harmonious way, at least before they fell into sin. God describes their unity in the sentence "*they, man and woman, will become one flesh*" where the Hebrew word *echad* stands for one, meaning a composite one.

More talk about numbers

The rain still pouring down, they talked about the mystery of numbers for a long time. When the rain stopped they were ordered outside to carry out a few tasks and to fetch some wood. Later in the evening they asked Daniel to continue his deliberations about numbers.

Number four – the number for creation²¹

– We had come to the number four which is the number for creation and the earth. We speak of four cardinal points of the compass, four seasons and each twenty-four hours are divided into four parts, day and night, morning and evening.

Spiritually the number four symbolises the weak and carnal nature of man as well as any imperfection because of the fall. Four cherubim guarded the entrance to the garden of Eden so that Adam and Eve could not return there after their sin. The four cherubim²² are now inside the temple to show that no carnal human being can enter God's holy place. Two cherubim are woven into the veil in front of the holy and two cherubim are sculptured in gold above the ark inside the most holy place.

The priest must atone daily for the sins of mankind by sacrificing four different burnt offerings on the altar which has four sides with four horns – one for each point of the compass.

40 – Number for testing and trial

The number for the testing, trial and discipline of mankind is number forty. This number 40 occurs frequently in Scripture.

– That is interesting. Can that be relevant for our lives too?

– There are many examples of how the number 40 in particular has been important as a number of trial in the life of many people. If we think about it we might discover that connection in our lives as well.

It rained for 40 days and 40 nights during Noah's flood. And 40 days after the ark had come to rest on Mount Ararat Noah opened the window of the ark.

Moses had three different periods of 40 years each in his life. First he had 40 years of studying the wisdom and knowledge of Egypt, then 40 years of testing and trial in the Median desert and finally 40 years as leader for the people of Israel, a period in the history of Israel which for Moses was a very testing time.

Moses was on Mount Sinai for 40 days when he was given the Law and a further 40 days on Mount Sinai after the sin in relation to the worship of the golden calf. Later, the land of Canaan was investigated for 40 days by the spies.

Our forefathers had to wander in the desert for 40 years due to their unbelief. Jonah warned the people of Nineveh for 40 days. God tested his people during three periods of 40 years each during the time of the Judges Othniel, Barak and Gideon. God tested the kingdom during five periods of 40 years each during the times of the kings: Saul, David, Solomon, Jeroboam and Asah. Israel's offspring was to be tested in a foreign country for four hundred years before they were allowed to inhabit the promised land.

Number five – the number for grace²³

– Five is the number for grace. You trace it like this: the number three symbolises the Godhead and the number four God's work of creation on earth, whilst the number five means a further step in God's action, that is redemption and reconciliation of the fallen creation through grace.

The number for earth in Hebrew *ha-erets*, is 296, a multiple of 4, $74 \times 4 = 296$. The number for heaven in Hebrew *ha-shemayem* is 395, a multiple of 5, $79 \times 5 = 395$.

Almost all measurements in the tabernacle is founded on the number five. All gates had five pillars, the pillars were 5 cubits apart, each pillar held a piece of white linen measuring 5x5 cubits. The outer walls were held together by five cross bars on all sides and the bronze altar receiving the guilt offering was 5x5 cubits square.

The sacred anointing oil as well as the sacred incense contained five parts. It is through worship in the tabernacle we receive grace. All this shows that it is only through grace that we come near to God, and it is through grace that we are reconciled and made clean.

Numbers 6 and 666 – the number for man²⁴

– Number six is the number for man. It is the number for apostasy, the number for man's independence of God. If the number seven is the number for perfection then the number six becomes the number for not being good enough. It is about the failure and omission of mankind. If the number

five is the number for grace then the number six is the symbol of the arrogance of mankind wasting and spoiling God's plan by selfish scheming and rebellion.

Scripture shows man marked with the number six. Man was created on the 6th day and for six days man has to work. The consequence of man's fall into sin was 6 curses. The life-span of man can be divided into six periods: infancy, childhood, youth, manhood (middle age), young at heart (seniority) and finally old age.

The Serpent symbolising Satan has the number six and in Scripture we find 6 names for the serpent and 6 names for the evil one²⁵. The number 666 is a repetition number of degradation symbolising the greatest apostasy and falling away from God.

The lampstand in the temple has six branches symbolising mankind. They are supported by the middle rod symbolising God. It is only when the human being comes into contact with God, who is the upholder of everything, that he or she can spiritually be filled with light and warmth.

Number 70 and 777²⁶

– I am not quite clear about number 70. According to Jeremiah the captivity will last for seventy years. What is the significance of the number 70? wondered Mishael.

– Ten is the number for order. Seven tens becomes the number for total order. By letting the people live in captivity for 70 years God will completely restore spiritual order for his people. Another interesting number is the repetitive 777. It strengthens the manifold importance of number 7 and signifies the highest degree of total harmony between God (3) and his creation (4). Thus the number for "*God, heaven and earth*" becomes the remarkable number 777, signifying harmony between God and mankind, heaven and earth.

They talked long into the evening.

To end the day, as many times before, they read aloud together David's shepherd psalm.

Brothers reconciled

The bridge was finished. The Israelites from Media had arrived. They were a company of twenty men plus about ten soldiers and had brought ox-carts fully loaded with big barrels of tar. In several places in the deserts of Persia there were whole lakes full of the thick black oil which would now be used to impregnate the wood.

The Israelites belonged to the fifth and sixth generation of those taken prisoners to Assyria from the time before the fall of Samaria about a hundred and fifty years earlier. They spoke ancient Hebrew to one another and Aramaic to the Soldiers.

The Jews had waited for them with great expectation. These were their brothers in exile. To welcome them they had organised a celebration in their tents. There was great joy and fun as they met with their distant relatives and could talk with them in their own language. The Israelites told them that there was great unity among the ten tribes. They were just a remnant who had survived all the wars, famine and pestilence and who had been removed into captivity. But they were a chastened group, they had listened to the prophets and in their trial they turned to the Lord. Idol worship had ceased and it was now the inheritance of their forefathers and the Law of Moses that united them. Their greatest prophet was Hosea, who in many prophecies had mourned their apostasy. He predicted the captivity but promised also that if they repented they would one day be able to return to their land.

Israel in captivity

Daniel had an interesting conversation with one of their leaders, whose name was Semaja. Daniel wanted to know about their life in captivity and what they thought about the future.

– How have you been treated as prisoners? asked Daniel.

– I have been told that in the beginning of the captivity things were very hard. The Assyrians were cruel and the Israelites were under strict supervision, the men became slaves and had to work hard for long periods to beautify and extend the Nineveh metropolis among other things, answered Semaja.

– How many went into captivity?!

– It was the entire population except some poor shepherds here and there. A few escaped and lived in caves in the mountains, most of them were found by the Assyrians. Nobody knows for sure how many were brought to Assyria, as one caravan of prisoners followed another and they had to go to different places in Media which was under Assyrian rule. There was only a remnant left of our people once so great and prosperous.

– How many of you are there now?

– As we can not travel freely we cannot find out how many Israelites there are now. But we have multiplied greatly so we might be three or four times as many now as we were at the beginning of the captivity.

– What was it that prevented you from being mixed up with the rest of the population?

– Our distinctive religion has kept us together, there has been a spiritual revival amongst those removed into captivity. We had our forefather's Scriptures, and we had prophets among us who spoke in the name of the Lord. All idol worship disappeared and the law of Moses became our guidance. Another thing was that everyone was careful to keep their genealogy in order and not to marry the uncircumcised in accordance with the law of Moses. However, there were many exchanges of virgins between the tribes.

Hosea – Israel's Prophet of the future

– How do you look at the future?

– Hosea prophesied about the northern kingdom and its destruction, but also said that we had a future. He became our favourite prophet. We study his prophecies often and trust in them as they specifically relate to us - the ten tribes of Israel. I have memorized some of the most important prophecies.

– *In their misery they will² earnestly seek me: "Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us, he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.*

– *Yet the time will come when³ Israel shall prosper and become a great nation; in that day her people will be too numerous to count - like grains of sand along a seashore! Then, instead of saying to them, "you are not my people," I will tell them "you are my sons, children of the Living God." Then the people of Judah and Israel will unite and have one leader; they will return from exile together.*

– *Afterwards the Israelites⁴ will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days.*

Semaja continued: – Hosea’s prophecy declares that our people will not be destroyed or mixed up in the crowd but grow and multiply and become a great nation. It says further that we shall return to the Lord and again be called the Lord’s people. Finally it says that in the future we will become united with Judah and again we will have a king ruling us, King David. If that means that King David will be resurrected or that it means that one who is related to David will rule us, that I do not know.

Daniel sat silent in his own thoughts. One of David’s stock! He himself was a descendant of David. The Messiah when he comes, will also belong to the stock of David. He remembered the Messiah prophecy:

– *Of the increase⁵ of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom.*

– What is it like to come to the forests of Lebanon and look at the beautiful mountains of Hermon? asked Daniel.

– We regard it as a great blessing that we are among the first to see the land of our forefathers. The whole of the south of the Lebanon mountains where we now are, belonged to the tribes of Asher and Naphtali. In Hosea’s prophecies there are many references to the beautiful forests of Lebanon.

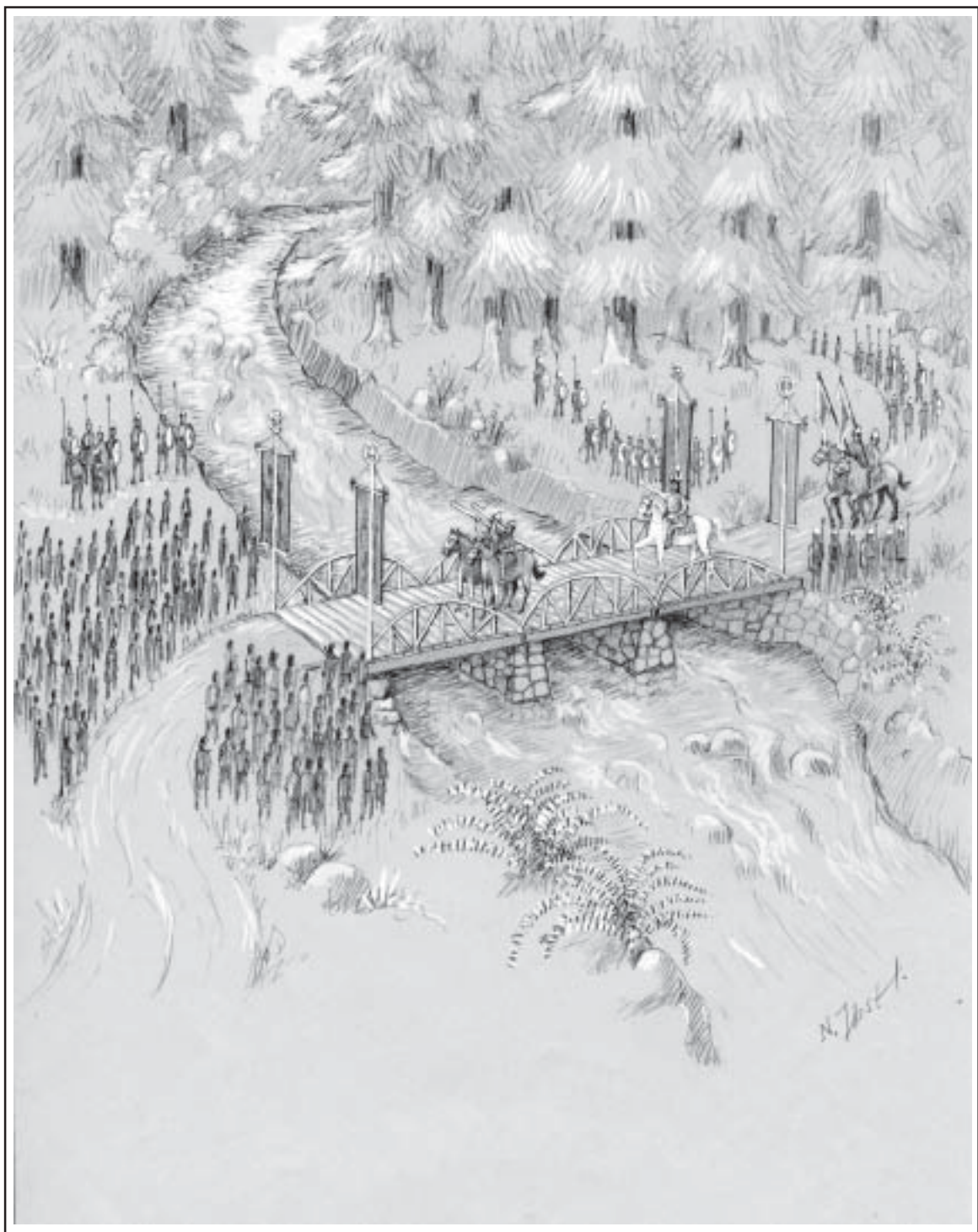
– *I will heal their waywardness⁶ and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. I will be like dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; his young shoots will grow. His splendour will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon.*

– These promises, about you returning to your land and about complete restoration, must mean a lot to the people of the “Diaspora”⁷. But was there no change for you in captivity when the Assyrian empire fell in the attacks by the Medes and Chaldeans?

– When Assyria fell large groups of our people were no longer guarded and many Israelites took the opportunity to escape north through the Caucasus mountains out of reach of the new rulers. More and more people have taken that opportunity and left. There has been rumours that they have already formed their own state north of Caucasus with the ten commandments as their constitution. They have built an altar to the Lord and celebrated Passover together as the *Torah* commands.

– Then it looks like Hosea’s prophecies have been fulfilled at least in part.

– Yes there is great joy among our people that the day of deliverance is near. The most beautiful prophecy I know deals with this:



Inauguration of the bridge

– *Let us acknowledge the Lord,⁸ let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like winter rains, like the springs that water the earth.*

We, the people of the "Diaspora", experience the promise that God will restore us as a nation in this way. But this is only the beginning. The prophecies will not be fulfilled in their entirety until we again can be united with you in Judah in our own country – in the land of Israel. This really is something to look forward to, whenever this will happen.

Inauguration of the Bridge

The Israelites mixed copper oxide into the oil, which strengthened the impregnation and gave the bridge a beautiful dark red colour. The inauguration of the bridge would take place when they had treated the bridge twice. The King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, had his headquarters in the north at a place called Riblah. For the inauguration he sent one of his nearest men accompanied by staff and guard.

Heralds on swift horses arrived a couple of hours beforehand, announced by shrill trumpet fanfares. Every one had to line up for inspection. The officers were somewhat nervous. The company with the king's aide arrived heralded by standard bearers to the sound of kettle drums and sonorous trombones.

It was the policy of the Chaldeans to keep to their laws and rules. Many people were under their rule and they could not be governed without strict discipline. Many of these people had hailed the Chaldeans as deliverers from the Assyrian yoke, they wanted to keep in with the different nationalities and therefore offered gifts and praise as opportunities arose.

In the inauguration speech the aide praised the Jews for their craftsmanship and skills. The bridge with its three spans was one of the most beautiful he had seen. He pointed out that the truss which also served as a rail was unique and worth copying at future bridge building projects. He praised also the Israelites for giving the bridge its dark red colour. The compliments the prisoners received from this man of might was a good sign for the future. However the prisoners' greatest joy came from knowing that after many years of conflicts and separation, Jews and Israelites had now been able to work together and live up to their brotherhood.

Decampment began the day after the inauguration of the bridge, their next major destination Carchemish by the upper springs of the River Euphrates. Getting there meant at least three weeks of walking.

Towards Carchemish

One of the greatest and most crucial battles of world history took place at Carchemish. Some important incidents had preceded this battle.

The world war had lasted for many years. First there were the many battles between Assyria and Egypt. Then there was the great uprising within the Assyrian empire when the Chaldeans and the Medes joined together in their attempt to free themselves from the yoke of the Assyrians and they conquered Nineveh. Nabopolassar became the first king of the new Babylon.

Then a great army from Egypt with Pharaoh Necho as commander made their appearance and wanted their part of the plunder from the disintegrating Assyria and to take back Syria. It was then that King Josiah tried to hinder Necho¹ but he was fatally wounded. At first Pharaoh Necho could defend his interest in Syria all the way to the upper part of the river Euphrates. After that he returned, arriving in Judah he dethroned Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, whom the people had chosen for their new king in Jerusalem. Jehoahaz had only reigned for three months and ten days. Necho installed his elder brother Jehoiakim on the throne as king while he took Jehoahaz prisoner into exile in Egypt.

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign Nebuchadnezzar arrived with a great army from Babylon to Carchemish² by the upper springs of the river Euphrates to engage in battle with Pharaoh Necho. Pharaoh did not delay accepting the challenge and went out to meet them with a mighty army. The Babylonians and Egyptians met at Carchemish and fought one of the greatest and most important battles in the world's history, leading to a new world power being established, that of Babylon.

Jeremiah's prophecy about Carchemish

Egypt's Pharaoh Necho had perhaps thought that he would finish off Nebuchadnezzar and the advance of the Chaldeans. But that was not to be, Jeremiah describes the whole event in one of his prophecies:

– This message was given³ to Egypt at the occasion of the battle of Carchemish when Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, and his army were defeated beside the Euphrates River by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim (son of Josiah), king of Judah:

What is this mighty army, rising like the Nile at flood time, overflowing all the land? It is the Egyptian army, boasting that it will cover the earth like a flood destroying every foe. Come, o horses and chariots and mighty soldiers of Egypt! Come all of you from Cush and Put and Lud who handle the shield and bend the bow!

Buckle on your armour, you Egyptians and advance to battle! Harness the horses and prepare to mount them – don your helmets, sharpen your spears, put on your armour.

In this part of the prophecy we see Egypt mobilise their armed forces. Sure of victory they advance from Egypt and move towards Carchemish.

But the Chaldeans, with the help of the Medes, conquered the Egyptian army so thoroughly that never again did they dare try any conquering expeditions. Necho lost many thousands of soldiers, all his horses and chariots and other equipment, Jeremiah writes about this in the continuation of his prophecy:

– But look! The Egyptian army⁴ flees in terror; the mightiest of its soldiers run without a backward glance. Yes, terror shall surround them on every side, says the Lord. The swift will not escape, nor the mightiest of warriors. In the north by the river Euphrates, they have stumbled and fallen.

The Battle at Carchemish

As Nebuchadnezzar gathered all his best troops at Carchemish for the crucial battle against the Egyptians he used cunning stratagem. He let his troops remain in the mountains on their own side of the Euphrates, they never crossed the river. Having arrived at the Euphrates the Egyptian army with Pharaoh Necho waited for several weeks for the Chaldean attack, putting strain not least on their food supplies. Their patience finally run out and they began felling trees and building rafters to ship their troops to the other side of the Euphrates. This proved fatal for the Egyptians. The Chaldeans left them in peace to move their troops, horses and chariots over in thousands and even left them to camp on a plateau on the other side without disturbing them.

When most of the Egyptian troops had arrived the Chaldeans surprised them by attacking their camp at night. They forced the Egyptians to retreat to the river where many drowned in their heavy armour. Those who boarded the rafters trying to escape to the other side were shot at by archers from the Chaldean river boats located both up and down river. Tens of thousands of Egyptians got killed in the battle in the ensuing disorder and confusion and as many drowned in the river. Dead bodies were found floating

by the shores of the Euphrates for a long time. After the victory the order came that all dead bodies were to be removed and buried so that the river water would not be spoilt. As a reward the soldiers were allowed to strip the bodies of their equipment. The most desirable items were the amulets worn by the Egyptians, made of gold, silver and amber.

After the victory at Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar was free to cross the Euphrates and turn south to conquer Syria⁵. After that, as we know, he attacked Judah and besieged Jerusalem.

Preparation for Celebration

Now, a year later, the victory at Carchemish was to be celebrated by a great feast for seven days. There were to be great parades and formal speeches, promotions and medals were to be distributed to those who had showed special courage and skill. Each day was to be an exciting adventure of games and competitions.

The preparations were already under way as the train of prisoners from Jerusalem arrived. Nebuchadnezzar himself, now king after the death of his father, would be present at the celebrations with his entire entourage and staff, therefore everything had to be prepared with great care. There was no room for mistakes. The arrangements had to be well organised and the program for each day in place. Great stores of food and other essentials had to be provided for the tens of thousands of soldiers who would be gathering. Soldiers were already out in the woods hunting wild boars and deer for the banquets and selected athletes had begun training in their various skills in order to perform their best during the competitions.

The *king's kids* were also going to participate in the various events. The Jubilee quartet was to play, Mishael to conduct the prisoners' choir with solos by Hannah and several duets by Hannah and Mikal who had practiced together. To our four friends the most exciting event in the games was Azariah's participation in the javelin competition.

About Babel and Oppressive Regimes

In the evening the four gathered in their little tent to talk, but it was historic events that now interested them. Mishael and Azariah took turns in asking questions and Daniel and Hananiah tried to provide answers.

– Why is Carchemish such an important place to the Babylonians?

– Babylon became the new world power when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Assyria and Egypt. This is what is to be celebrated now.

– As you have studied world history at the School of Prophecy, can you tell us a bit about how these great world powers have come into being and why they oppress other nations. Are there any true records?

– What Moses has written in the *Torah* is as far as we know a true record of developments, this we believe as it is divinely inspired. Many things, different finds and inscriptions on old plates of clay also confirm what Moses has written. We have to go back to the time just after the Flood to know how it all began and why oppressive regimes have developed dominating other nations and their people.

– It is said that the region around the Euphrates and the Tigris is the “*cradle of mankind*”.

This area is part of a fertile crescent. According to the writings of Moses it was on the lowland plain between these rivers that the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth⁷, settled after the Flood and started to build a city by the name of Babel⁸ at the lower end of the river Euphrates. For they said:

– *Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.*

– What is the difference between Babel and Babylon?

– Babel is the old Hebrew name for the oldest city in the world. Babylon is just a modern name for the same city.

– Did God command Noah and his sons to build the city of Babel?

– No, on the contrary! His command when he blessed them was this:

– *Be fruitful⁹, increase in number and fill the earth.* Instead of filling the earth they all gathered in the same place.

The Confusion of Languages¹⁰

– Did the apostasy begin already while Noah was alive?

– Noah got very old and lived for many years after the Flood. Evidently he could not control the development. The population increase was explosive and many strong wills battled for influence and power. As the Lord saw that they did not spread out over the earth, God himself acted and changed the conditions of their lives.

The reason for them staying in the same place was that they were just one people with the same language. The Lord divided them into several peoples and gave them different languages so they could no longer understand each other, this began the dispersion.

– What was the original language?

– There is a lot indicating that it was Hebrew¹¹. The word Babel¹² is for example a Hebrew word, meaning confusion. Shem was Noah’s eldest son and he evidently kept his language as a kind of birthright. Tradition says that he was the most devout of the three sons.

– How were the races spread out over the earth?

– One of the first to leave was the Semite Asshur¹³. He built a city up north in the upper region of the river Tigris, which had its name after him. Asshur thus founded the Assyrian kingdom. He was later regarded as the father of his people and worshipped as god in the northern kingdom.

– We belong to the Semite people. It is interesting to hear that it was a Semite who founded Assyria.¹⁴ But where did the descendants of Japheth and Ham go?

– Japheth and his sons went north¹⁵ through Caucasus and they became the origin of the many Caucasian races. Some of Japheth's sons went west over the Taurus and Amanus¹⁶ mountains and populated Lydia¹⁷ and the land further west.

– Several other sons of Shem left Babel and built cities on the fertile Shinar plain. One of the oldest cities is Kish, another is Lagash. The one we know best is Ur¹⁸, the place our forefather Abraham came from and a big port in the delta of the Persian Gulf at the mouth of the Euphrates river. These cities were in the beginning small kingdoms with their own kings or priestly kings.

One of Shem's sons was Arphaxad¹⁹. It is his descendants who are called Chaldeans. Arphaxad's grandson was Eber of Heber, from whom the word Hebrew, the name of our original clan, is derived. Some of Shem's family went further to Elam and even further to the present day India. Both Elamites and Persians are descendants of Shem.

Abraham, whose father was Terah²⁰, was a Hebrew belonging to the tenth generation from Noah.

– Was Babel then totally deserted? And what happened to the tower they were building?

– According to tradition it collapsed in a terrible storm.

Nimrod – the great hunter

– No, Babel was not deserted. We must tell you about one of the mightiest men in ancient times, the Hamite²¹ by name Nimrod²². He was Noah's great grandson and an outstanding leader, but the archetype of a perpetrator and rebel against God. Tradition tells us that it was he who from the beginning led the building of the tower in opposition to the command of God. Nimrod was a very brave person equipped with an unusually great strength. He actually egged the people on to be disobedient and rebel against God. He persuaded the people not to honour God and not to give God the credit for their happiness. Instead they were to take the credit themselves and believe that through courage and perseverance they had gained happiness and prosperity.

– As time went on he altered the government in Babel to an arbitrary dictatorship. He was so evil and conceited that he turned the people from the fear of God and made them dependent on himself and his own power.

– Did Moses have anything to say about him?

– Yes, according to Moses, Nimrod was *a great hunter*²³ *and the first to establish an empire on earth*²⁴.

The meaning of our Hebrew word *gibbor*²⁵ can be translated *mighty warrior, tyrant, giant, master and man of action*. The word is also used to describe giants known for their wickedness. At that time the wild beasts were a menace and Nimrod could fight both lion and bear, several inscriptions from that time have been found about a king fighting with a lion. But those who are learned in Scripture say that above all he took people captive and used them as slaves in his many great building projects. He ruled over others and hunted and destroyed all who opposed his despotic power. In world history Nimrod's kingdom is the first dictatorship.

– What happened to Babel?

– Nimrod stayed there and persuaded his people that they should rebuild the tower and make it so high that no flood could cover it and so strong that no wind could make it fall. He got masses of slaves to continue building the tower on a broader foundation than before. Nimrod also built the city of Babel which was provided with great walls. He was not satisfied however just being a ruler of Babel, to control the plain around it he built three cities Erech, Akkad and Calneh²⁶, in the land of Shinar. Shinar is the Hebrew name for the land south of Babylon. Erech became the centre for the worship of Ishtar with enforced prostitution. Akkad became a centre for learning with an enormous library. Later on Sargon I²⁷ came from that city. He was a mighty warrior before the time of Abraham, who ruled from Elam all the way to Sinai.

Eventually Nimrod ruled over all of the southern part of the Euphrates valley. This became the beginning of imperialism and dictatorship. The country was first called Nimrod's domain but was later named Babylonia after Babel, the main city. The part of the far south was also called Chaldea as most of the people living there were Chaldeans. Wild beasts were a great nuisance at the time and as the great leader he was, Nimrod ordered the population in the entire country to build high walls around the cities to protect them.

But here we have to finish for tonight. We will continue talking about Nimrod and how the first dictatorship came into being some other time.

Anniversary Celebration of the Carchemish triumph

The day arrived when the celebrations were to begin. The troops lined up in different regiments on the great plateau where the battle had taken place a year ago. There was a great movement of soldiers with glistening weapons marching forward from their various stations. The archers, the javelins, lance-bearers and sword-cutters soon filled the great arena. Cavalries, chariots made of iron and lighter chariots made of wood, even a whole company of elephants, were lined up in a long line when the music started. Nebuchadnezzar with his body guard and all his elegant entourage came in magnificent chariots drawn by white horses three abreast. There was a great cheer with shouts from everybody:

– Long live the king, long live the king!

The prisoners from Jerusalem, the only ones who did not carry weapons, were on show marching in a special parade. Because of the importance of the day they were not in chains but because of the occasion they were dressed in a kind of grey prisoners' cloaks in order to distinguish them from the multitude. In spite of this they marched with apparent pride. The report of their skills in the bridge building project had preceded them and they were brought all the way forward to the tribune where the king sat and then to a balcony by the side.

Daniel looked with intent interest at his new commander. He was both young and handsome, this Nebuchadnezzar who was now the mightiest man in the world.

The four kings' kids had special chairs to sit on while all others had to stand. They had also been given beautiful cloaks different from the others, woven in a lovely navy coloured cloth with embroidered stitching in gold, they felt treated like royalty.

The king made his speech after the great orchestra had played. Sentence by sentence was repeated by speech relayers with big funnels so that those who stood far away could still hear. The king was no mean orator, he was confident and quite sure of himself. He even used the expression "*God in heaven*" and said that it was God who had decided he was to be the ruler over all kingdoms on earth. He praised his generals and expressed his appreciation of the heroic achievement of every private soldier first in the war against the Assyrians and lately against Egypt. At the end of his speech

he greeted the prisoners from Jerusalem and bade them welcome to their new country. This they had not expected, it was almost so they could come to like this king! He also praised them for their achievement in building the bridge.

Many medals were awarded after the king's speech. The soldiers who were to receive this honour were called forward to receive their medal from the king's own hand. First they had to put their weapons down by the body guard and then they had to bend their left knee in front of the king to show their obedience. They received their medal in their outstretched right hand.

As a finale to the ceremony the prisoners' choir sang from the balcony. The great army of soldiers went completely silent as the choir sang, there was not even the sound of rustling weapons. The choir sang magnificently and as Hannah and Mikal sang their duets you felt that you were in another world where there was no war and no misery. Their voices joined, woven together into a ray of hope with promises of a new future.

After the parade it was time for the feast, you could already smell the barbecued wild boars. There was lamb for the Jews as they did not eat pork. The prisoners were treated really well by the Chaldeans, perhaps they did know that they actually were true relatives even though distant ones.

Competitions for the king's favour

The games and competitions began the next day. All the participants were divided and sent to several different places. Horse racing with many qualifying heats attracted a lot of interest. The king's kids followed the developments day by day, they had all learnt to ride and to tend horses, it was part of their training as members of the royal family. But there was also another reason. Their first friend amongst the Chaldeans, Havlat, was competing in the horse races and they had helped him to select some of the very best horses for his team...

The final competition took place on the big arena, the king was there and there was an air of great celebration. You could really sense that these soldiers loved their king. The horses and carriages drove around lap after lap and Havlat got into a good position. The king's kids started cheering Havlat on and soon all the Jewish prisoners joined in. The Chaldeans marvelled. Havlat drew ahead, and when he took the lead there was great cheering. When he finally won it was not just the Jews who cheered but also all the soldiers who had been on the march from Jerusalem. They felt that somehow they now belonged together with their Jewish prisoners, there was a good atmosphere of mutual appreciation and warmth between them.

Competitions of all kinds took place day after day, running and riding, archery, stone throwing and sling shot. And there was the javelin in which Azariah was competing. He fought hard to win, sensing the honour of the Jews at stake. There was also Mikal who inspired him, he wanted to do everything to make her happy. It was not easy, there were many soldiers greatly skilled in javelin.

There were two competitions in javelin. One was in long throwing, the other one in throwing at a target. The last competition had a lot to do with keeping one's nerves steady at the time of the throw, the least wobbling and the javelin would go astray. Azariah was amongst the ten qualifying for the finals in the long throwing. Each had five throws in the final competition. Azariah had a couple of good throws and came third, not a bad result.

As the day arrived when the target throwing was to be decided, the friends prayed to God that Azariah would be successful. Praying gave strength, and it was free to everyone to pray, nobody could hinder them. Azariah relaxed through the prayer and he was able to throw as well as he normally did. All his five throws were valid and he even got a couple of direct hits. His contesters were not so successful – they were very tense in front of the king and most of them had some throws disallowed.

So you could say that Azariah won because of the misfortune of the others. But win he did! There was no limit to the cheering amongst the prisoners and even the soldiers from their march were pleased about Azariah' success. It was a very proud Azariah who bent his left knee in front of the king to receive the medal of victory in javelin.

Nimrod founded Nineveh

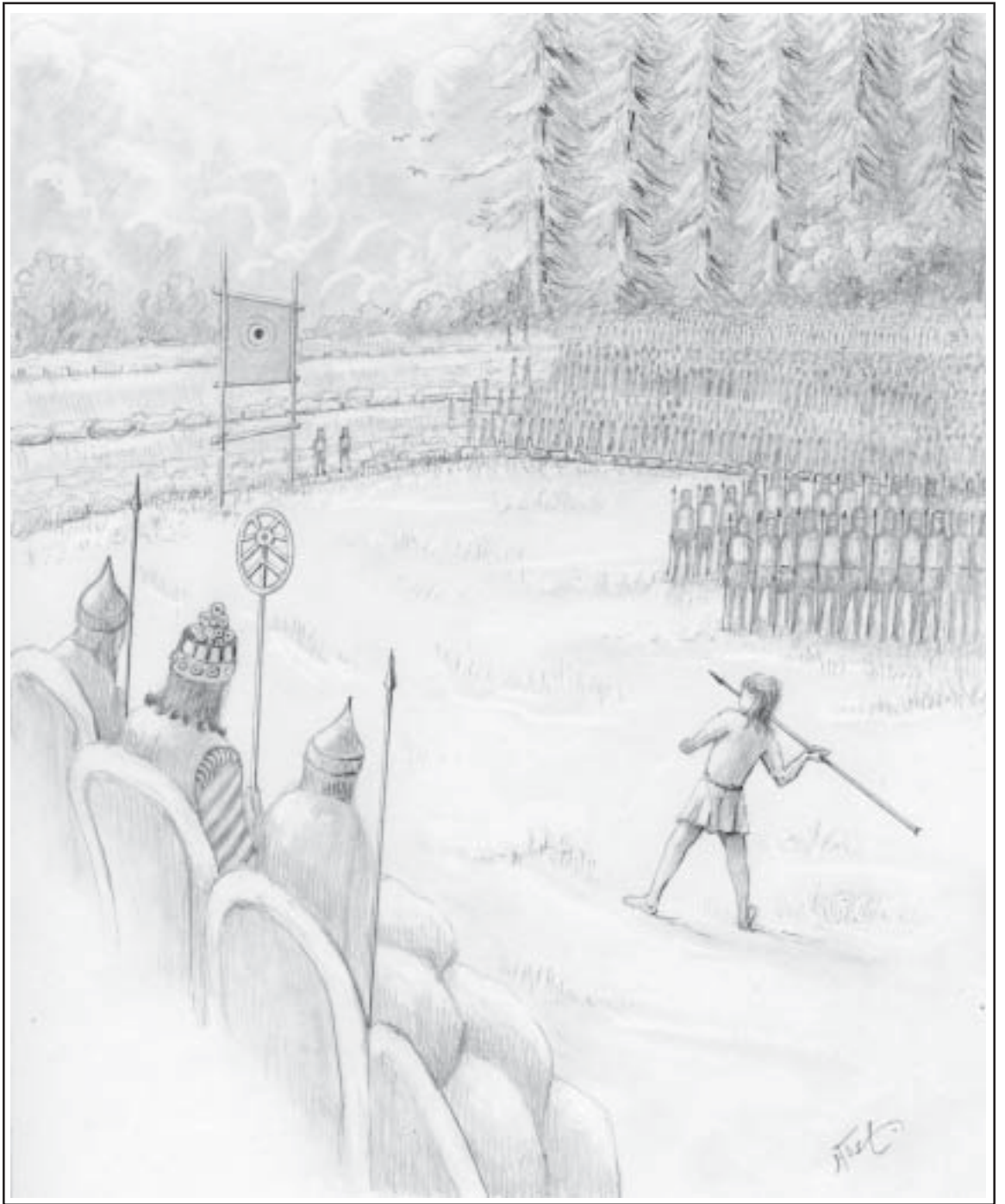
They were again together in their little tent later in the evening when the festivities were over.

Daniel asked: – Are you tired, or shall we continue our talk about Nimrod¹ and the first dictatorship?

– Let's continue, we can't sleep for a while yet anyway, the soldiers seem to have a drinking party. Such noise and bawling I have not heard since they celebrated the victory over the conquest of Jerusalem.

– Wasn't it Nimrod, who founded Nineveh – the centre of violence and oppression of the rest of the world for such a long time?

– Yes, he was not content to have the control of just the southern kingdom but turned towards the north and he built a very strong fortified city, only three days travel north of Ashur. He called it Nineveh after Nina, the nick name for his favourite god Ishtar. Close to Nineveh he built three more cities: Rehoboth-Ir, Calah and Resen. In this way Nimrod got control



The javelin thrower

also over the northern kingdom and for a long time the two cities Nineveh and Babel were the leading cities of the world.

– There were often conflicts between the northern and southern kingdoms. There was frequent competition between the two capitals Babel and Nineveh² relating to the art of buildings, idol worship, inventions and culture. During the first period after the Flood the southern kingdom Babylonia dominated completely with its many great cities and dynasties, Babel, Kish, Lagash, Nippur, Ur, Erech, Akkad and Calneh.

– According to Moses Nimrod became very old. He was worshipped as god by his survivors who gave him the name Marduk³. It was his golden statue standing on top of the tower of Babel and so there was a human idol in the seat of honour at Babel. This involved a dark time of people worship which did not augur well for the future. With Nimrod we see the beginning of rebellion against God, idol worship, violence and dictatorship.

Hananiah added and said: – I think you can follow an interesting tendency here. The violence and lust for power increased to the same extent as idol worship increased. It was the apostasy and falling away from the true God, Noah's God, which was the real reason for the formation of the first oppressive nations leading to a general moral decline which led to control, dictatorship and violence.

Three dimensions of apostasy

In Babel we can see the beginning of three different ways in which the people went astray from what God intended. First we find in Babel the beginning of a godless and imperialistic policy with oppression of people. Secondly, it is in Babel we see the origin of idolatry and polytheism. And thirdly, it is in Babel that a mammon culture originates with accompanying debauchery. Enormous riches were gathered in Babel through oppression of the poor and the exploitation of slaves. These riches gave the rulers the resources to live an immoral life in luxury and in excesses of all kind.

The apostasy was threefold; political and religious as well as monetary. Babel became the mother of all degeneration and all misery on earth while Jerusalem as God's chosen place on earth was meant to be exactly the opposite.

Daniel continued his teaching: – After Nimrod there were many other powerful kings in what we call Old Babylon or the land of Shinar. We have already mentioned Sargon I. Another very important ruler was Hammurabi⁴ who is known for his laws. He made expeditions all the way to Canaan and it is believed that he is identical with the Amraphel of Shinar⁵ mentioned by Moses. Shinar is, as you know, another name for the southern part of the Euphrates-Tigris area. Mesopotamia is yet another later name for the whole country by the two rivers.

Hammurabi and Abraham⁶

The Babylonians controlled the entire middle Asia when Hammurabi was king. In order to enlarge their kingdom they turned south and conquered Syria first, on the Sodomites they put a tax which they then received for twelve years. Sodom rebelled and the Babylonian army marched towards them under the command of Amraphel, Arioch, Kedorlaomer and Tidal. The Babylonians were victorious and took many prisoners among them Abraham's nephew Lot and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. It was then that Abraham stopped the Babylonian advance and freed Lot and the other kings.

According to our old history this is what happened:

– When Abraham heard of their calamity⁷, he was at once afraid for Lot his kinsman, and pitied the Sodomites his friends and neighbours; and thinking it proper to afford them assistance, he did not delay it, but marched hastily, and the fifth night fell upon the Assyrians, near Dan, for that is the name of the other spring of Jordan; and before they could arm themselves, he slew some as they were in their beds, before they could suspect any harm; and others, who were not yet gone to sleep, but were so drunk they could not fight, ran away.

*Abraham pursued after them, till on the second day he drove them in a body unto Hoba, a place belonging to Damascus; and thereby demonstrated that victory does not depend on multitude and the number of hands; but the alacrity and courage of soldiers overcome the most numerous bodies of men; while he got the victory over so great an army with no more than three hundred and eighteen of his servants, and three of his friends: but all those that fled returned home ingloriously.**

This far the old historical account. However, our theologians suggest that it could not be the skill of Abraham that decided it all, it was the Lord who supernaturally helped him.

Probably Hammurabi's plan was to take the Sinai from Egypt, something Sargon I never managed. Hammurabi might even have thought that he could create a world power by conquering Egypt. He did not succeed and it was first about a thousand years later that a country in the Euphrates-Tigris region, Assyria, succeeded in becoming the great world power to rule the world.

Polytheism⁸

– The other evening we were thinking of how oppressive states like Assyria came into being. We said already then that the main cause was apostasy, people fell away from true faith in God and then began to worship idols.

* From "Josephus Complete Works", 33:1

– How could the people fall away to idol worship so quickly after the Flood? wondered Azaiah.

Daniel explained: – In the beginning they had only one God, the one Noah worshipped and the God we still worship.

But as Noah's influence among the people diminished, uncertainty crept in about the meaning and purpose of life and they began worshipping the powers of nature which seemed to them to be the source of life. In the prevailing religious thought at the time, the sex life of both animals and human beings therefore became very important. Inscriptions and ancient writings indicate that the greater part of the liturgy in the temples were descriptions of sexual rites between gods and goddesses, through whom people thought everything had come into being.

Sun and rain as well as other forces of nature were declared gods as life on earth was entirely dependent on them. Kings were made gods due to their great power and the most important god in many cities and countries was often the person who had founded it. Thus Ashur became the godfather of Assyria and Nimrod, with his idol name Marduk, the godfather of Babylonia. People made statues representing them in order to make these gods more real and the statue then gradually became the object of worship.

Having been monotheists originally the people then threw themselves into a bottomless pit of polytheism which, when practiced, often had elements of sexual debauchery and in many instances cruelty towards children.

– Did Babylonia or Assyria at that time develop into a world power? Did Nimrod become the world ruler of that time?

– No, it took a very long time before Assyria or Babylon became a world power, another people was there before them. Noah's son Ham had more sons than Nimrod, and many of them turned south. One of them was Canaan whose territory got the name after him⁹, the other sons populated Africa. Nimrod never became a real world ruler.

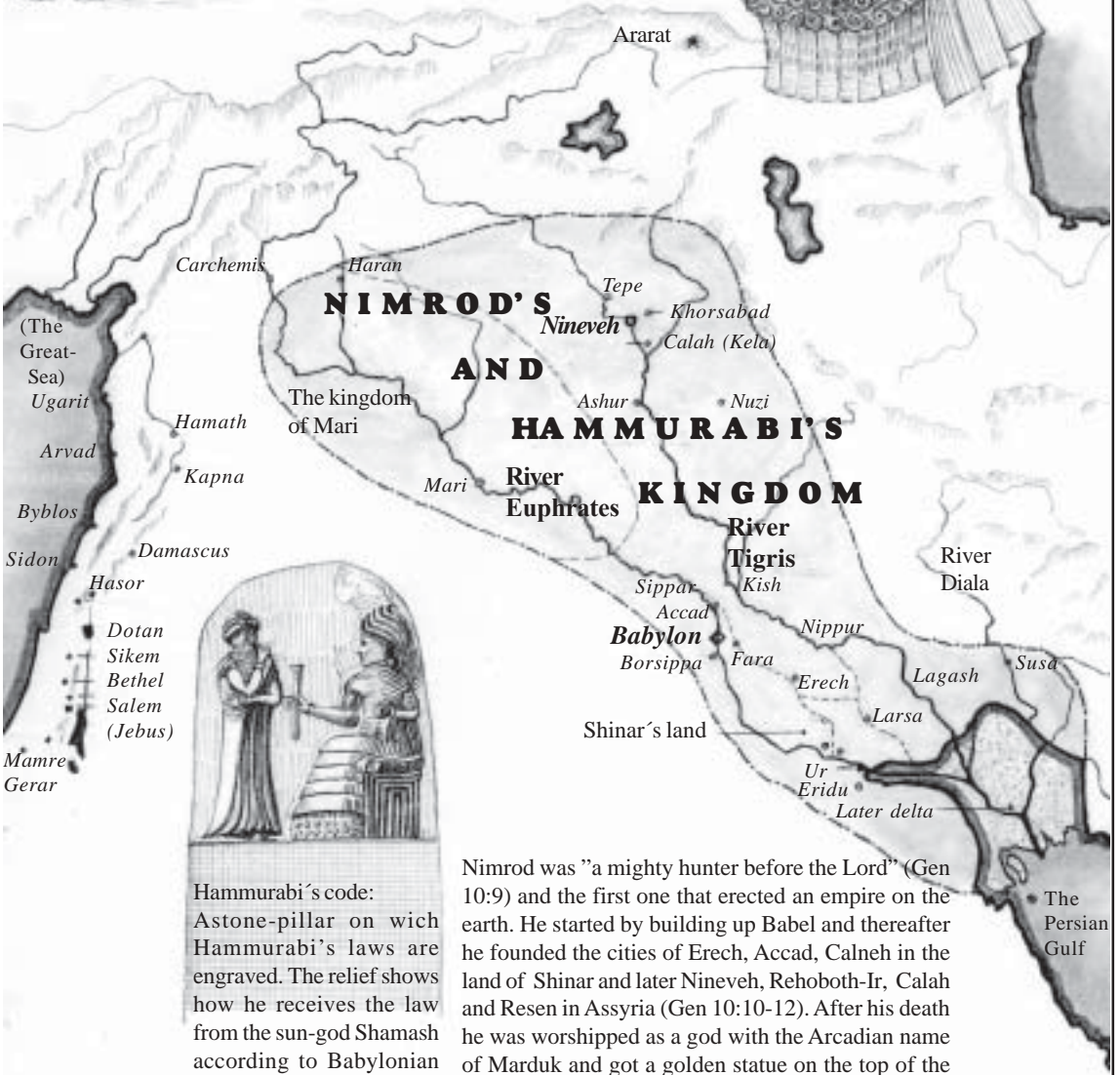
A close relative of his, however, an uncle by the name of Mizram¹⁰ went as far as the valley of the Nile and there developed a kingdom which later was to become the very first world power, Egypt. This then became the most powerful kingdom of prehistoric times and it continues to be a great power to be reckoned with today, said Hananiah.

They continued to talk far into the night. Eventually the noise from the drunken soldiers subsided and they could get a few hours sleep.



A winged bull that guarded the palace entrance in the city of Nimrod

A reconstructed head of Nimrod found at excavations of Calah at the river of Tigris



Hammurabi's code: A stone-pillar on which Hammurabi's laws are engraved. The relief shows how he receives the law from the sun-god Shamash according to Babylonian mythology.

Nimrod was "a mighty hunter before the Lord" (Gen 10:9) and the first one that erected an empire on the earth. He started by building up Babel and thereafter he founded the cities of Erech, Accad, Calneh in the land of Shinar and later Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah and Resen in Assyria (Gen 10:10-12). After his death he was worshipped as a god with the Arcadian name of Marduk and got a golden statue on the top of the tower Babel. Later he also got the Armenian name of Bel, in Hebrew Baal.

THE OLD BABYLONIAN KINGDOM

Towards Haran

When they arrived at the Euphrates before the feast they had been able to cross the river on rafts. Now they thought that they would not have to walk any more but continue by boat on the Euphrates down to Babylon. But it did not happen quite as they had imagined, they were not to be that comfortable. To start with there were not enough boats and you could not travel far anyway by rafts in the fast river.

The Chaldeans were skilled administrators and they used every opportunity to cut costs for their king. All prisoners, who could handle horses, were to ride or drive a carriage to Haran¹, the reason being that a great deal of the spoil from the Egyptians was still left in Carchemish and needed to be removed. Wagons and horses were there by the thousands and great stores of all kinds of goods. The prisoners had to help, no one had to walk any more, all could have a ride one way or another. It took them several days to load the carriages and organise the entire transport, but when they were on their way it was a rather pleased company of prisoners moving forward to new adventures.

Haran was a very large, busy city. From here there were caravan trails in all directions, to Babylon, Nineveh, Carchemish, Lydia and to Damascus. The arrival of the prisoners in Haran was expected, the military had prepared quarters for them in big barracks. Haran was one of the king's large military cities with large store houses for supplies. The king's kids were given their own room in a house near the river where they were to stay a week to help unloading and even load new goods to be taken to storage in old Nineveh.

- What a nice room! Just feel these soft carpets to sleep on.
- It will be nice here. I wonder how the others are, perhaps Hannah and Mical are putting the children to bed now, said Mishael.

Abraham – God's friend²

– Do you realise that Haran is an historical place? Abraham lived here for several years before leaving for Canaan, said Hananiah.

– That's right, Abraham was born in Ur and when he lived there the Lord revealed himself to him and said: – *Leave your country and your people and go to the land I will show you.*

So he left the land of the Chaldeans and he settled in Haran. And his father Terah and their whole family also moved to Haran.

– How big was Terah’s family³?

– Abraham had two brothers, Nahor and Haran. Haran had one son, Lot, and two daughters, Milchah and Jiscah. Haran died while they were still living in Ur. Nahor married Milchah and Abraham married Sarai his half sister, who was the daughter of his father Terah but not of his mother. Maybe it was because of Terah’s grief for his son Haran that he consented to move the whole family to Haran. Terah was a keen worshipper of the moon goddess Ishtar.

– Abraham and Sarai had no children at first, but they adopted Lot, Abraham’s nephew⁴. Nahor and Milcha had eight sons, among them Bethuel, who had two children Laban and Rebekah⁵. It was Rebekah who became the wife of Abraham’s son Isaac.

– Was Haran a large city already then?

– It was a meeting place and a place to stay on the great caravan trail, a kind of trade centre for the prosperous surrounding countryside. Some believe that it was Terah who named the place after his dead son Haran.

– How long did Abraham stay in Haran?

– When his father Terah was dead, the Lord told Abraham again to leave his family and go to another land which God would show him. Abraham was then seventyfive years old⁶, so he could have lived in Haran for many years. It was probably not until after his father Terah had died that he could obey the Lords command to leave his people. He took only his wife Sarai and his adopted son, Lot, and went south to the land of Canaan.

– If Abraham’s father was an idol worshipper how come that Abraham believed in Elohim, Noah’s God?

– Among the Semites there were worshippers of Elohim. We know also that Shem was still alive at the time of Abraham, he was the oldest man on earth after the death of Noah, he told his descendants about the true God. Abraham had certainly met the famous old man Shem⁷ and had probably eagerly listened to his stories. The scribes think that it is likely that Abraham in his youth often met with Shem and that they knew one another very well. Indeed, Abraham belonged to the tenth generation⁸ after Shem, but Abraham was such an unusual young man that Shem no doubt noticed him.

– Our slanderers say that our forefather Abraham was an unlearned shepherd who could neither read nor write. Is that true?

Daniel shook his head and said: – No Abraham was a very well educated and gifted man. His contemporaries describe him as a great man of unusual stature⁹:

– In the tenth generation after the Flood, there was among the Chaldeans a man righteous and great, and skillful in the celestial science. Abraham was a person of great sagacity, both for understanding all things and persuading his audience, and not mistaken in his opinions; for with reason he began to have higher notions of virtue that others had.

And he determined to renew and to change the opinion all men happened then to have concerning God; for he was the first that ventured to publish this notion, that there was but one God, the Creator of the universe; and that, as to other gods if they contributed anything to the happiness of men, that each of them afforded it only according to his appointment, and not by their own power.

For which doctrines, when the Chaldeans and other people of Mesopotamia raised a tumult against him, he thought fit to leave that country; and at the command, and by the assistance of God, he came and lived in the land of Canaan.

This is a summary of what contemporary historians write about Abraham. But the greatest affirmation is given to Abraham by God himself as through the Prophet Isaiah, he calls him his friend.

Ur – a metropolis at the time of Abraham

– What was life in Ur¹⁰ like, the place where Abraham spent his childhood and youth?

– There is said to have been a city at Ur already before the Flood, and it has since then been rebuilt. Tradition says that Ur is only one day's walk from the place where the Garden of Eden¹¹ once was.

Daniel explained: – Ur was the most prominent city of the world just before the time of Abraham. It was a centre for craftsmen, shipbuilding, farming and shipping in a country of incredible vegetation and wealth. Caravans went in all directions to distant countries, there was lively traffic on the river Euphrates with vessels and cargo ships of all kinds. They sailed to the many cities along the river all the way to Nineveh by the river Tigris. From the docks at Ur ships also went out into the Persian Gulf with cargo of copper and precious stones as well as all kinds of crafts and produce. It is true that at the time of Abraham Babylon¹² was the leading city but Ur remained a very important, busy city for a long time.

– Was Ur a city of culture¹³?

– Ur was a very important cultural city with many schools and libraries.

Thousands of clay tablets have been found with hymns, liturgies, prescriptions, business contracts and so on from the time of Abraham. Around 150 tablets used for exercises in mathematics, medicine, and history were found in an old school along with big tablets with parallel columns of a complete account of the tenses of Sumerian verbs and their equivalence within the Semitic language.

– Were there entire libraries?

– There were libraries at Ur connected to schools and temples, as in all other cities of importance. They had thousands of books, dictionaries, grammatical books, reference books, encyclopedias, public chronicles and works of mathematics, astronomy, geography, religion and politics. The city of Akkad, a days journey north of Babylon was also called Sippar which means letter. That was one of the places where Hammurabi's famous laws were put together.

Sippar was the place where tradition tells us that Noah before the Flood dug down sacred writings and afterwards dug them up again. In the ruins of that city more than 60 thousand tablets with cuneiform writing have been found and a large library with 30 thousand tablets. The time of Abraham was a period of great literary activity.

– What did they write on?¹⁴

– Words like "write", book and ink are ordinary words in all parts of the Semitic language, and that points to that writing was common already before the people were divided into different races or nationalities. But it is only tablets of stone or clay that have been preserved. Any writing on animal hides or papyrus-like materials have been destroyed by mildew or have broken down by other natural processes.

– What kind of writing did they use?¹⁵

– From the beginning the writing was the so called cuneiform writing which consisted of 500 different characters with about 30 thousand combinations. Later they changed to alphabetical writing, like we have in Hebrew, with 26 different characters or letters, which can be used to express all existing sounds and words.

– Is it known what the buildings in Ur looked like?¹⁶

– Yes, the art of building was very advanced, at Ur they built a tower, like that in Babylon and that was the most prominent building. It was called a "ziggurat" or temple-tower and had a square base, built by bricks in terraces with trees and bushes planted on the ledges. There was a temple for the moon god on the top of the tower.

Ur – city of many gods

– Was idol worship as common in Ur as in Babylon?¹⁷

– Yes, there was almost competition between the cities in building splendid temples and introducing new gods. About 400 years after the Flood, at the time of Abraham, idol worship had effected the soul of the people so deeply that monotheism was almost extinguished. Fire, sun, moon, stars and different forces of nature were all worshipped. Nimrod was worshipped under the name of Marduk, he was later also called Bel, a counterpart of Baal in Canaan. The name of the sun-god was Shamash, the moon god Sin was the most exalted god in Ur. The moon-goddess, Sin's wife, was called Ningal, popularly first known also as Nina. Later Ishtar became her most common name which has been translated to Ashtoreth in Canaan. The worship of Ishtar or Ashtoreth made the sex-mania sacred and her worship demanded the unleashing of sexual lust.

Prostitution was considered holy and a common custom among the women related to their ministry in the temples throughout Babylon. There were charming little chambers where priestesses and temple maids entertained male worshippers in sensual ceremonies and sexual pleasure. Besides these priestess prostitutes every virgin, wife or widow, had to offer their services in these rites in an Ishtar temple at least once in their lifetime.

Abraham's father Terah was an eager worshipper of the moon goddess Ishtar. Undoubtedly the young Abraham went with his father to the temples to see what was happening there. Tradition tells us that Abraham was beaten because he refused to worship the idols. One of the reasons why Abraham was given God's command to leave his family and go to another country which God would show him, was surely that his father was so enslaved to the sensual pleasures of the idolatry.

– It must have been quite an undertaking for Abraham to leave the rich culture behind to go to an unknown country and become a simple shepherd there.

– Of course, but he did it as a result of a divine commission. As the apostasy increased and the number of idols increased the risk was great that the true revelation of God would disappear in an ungodly environment. Therefore God called our forefather to make his descendants a numerous people who would keep monotheistic belief. Genesis teaches¹⁸ that God would bless him and make his name great and through him all people in the whole world would be blessed. He became a shepherd to make a living for himself and his family.

The establishment of Jerusalem¹⁹

Daniel continued his teaching and said:

– But before Abraham went to Canaan something very strange happened. According to the tradition of the scribes, Noah's eldest son Shem left the ungodly Babylon long before Abraham did and he came to the well of Gihom at the foot of Mount Moria in the land of Canaan. There on the height of Orfel he built a city which he called Salem, which means the home of peace. Our tradition further tells us that Shem is none other than Melchizedek²⁰ whom Moses writes about and who was priest of God Most High in Salem.

Melchizedek is a priestly name which means King of Righteousness and King of Peace. As Shem established the city of Salem, later called Jeru-Salem, he created a direct contrast to the sinful Babylon. In Jerusalem it was only God Most High who was worshipped and thus Jerusalem became God's chosen place on earth. It became the very opposite to Babel which was, and still is, the den of idolatry and worship of man on earth!

– When Abraham later came to Salem and mount Moria in connection with his rescue of Lot from imprisonment by king Amraphel from Shinar, Melchizedek blessed Abraham who gave him a tenth of everything. From this we understand what a prominent person Melchizedek was and that they knew each other.

– So it seems likely that our scribes are right when they suggest that Melchizedek and Shem was the same person. In any case Abraham was called to pass on the revelation of God. Through his grandson, Jacob²¹ who was called Israel by God himself, our nation was formed and through Jacob's twelve sons²² we became a great people with Jerusalem eventually as our capital. God placed our people quite strategically between two great centres of culture and where three continents meet. We could, if we were faithful to the Lord, influence the development of the whole world.

– To which places did Abraham arrive?

– The first place where he stayed was Shechem between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. The next place was Bethel, one of the highest points in the mountains of Canaan with a magnificent view in all directions. Abraham probably liked that place because he returned there later on.

Then he went on and passed Salem on Mount Moria, where no doubt he stopped to visit Melchizedek the priest, who we believe to be his grandfather Shem. Then he continued south to Hebron where he first lived. He built an altar in every place he came to and sacrificed to the Lord. Later on when there was famine in Canaan²³ Abraham went with his family all the way to Egypt.

A God without statue and amulets

Here they were interrupted as Havlat came for a visit. First of all he wanted to thank them for their help and support at the horse-racing, he also congratulated Azariah on his victory in the javelin throwing. All understood Aramaic reasonably well but it was only Daniel who spoke the language so it was he who answered.

– I was called to the officers' tent today.

– So, what did they want?

– Well, I have to choose between becoming one entirely free man and avoid any more duty in the army or I can be promoted to officer and receive a salary. I don't really know what to do. What do you think I should do?

– Congratulations. It is great that you can have a change for the better.

– You know that I can't wait to get home, I want to get married and tend the sheep as my father did. But I am entirely broke and can't buy any sheep so I have nothing to live on.

– Lack of resources can be a grim reality!

– So I have begun to think that maybe I ought to serve as an officer for a year or two. I have been offered to train horses and instruct riders at the great stud-farms outside Susa in Elam¹.

– That is not so far from home, I get quite a good salary and can save most of it for the farm at home. After a year or so I would be able to marry and support my family.

– Well, you are still young and it is perhaps a good idea for you to get some capital first to run the farm.

– I would like to have my freedom first for a couple of months and be with my mother and little sister for a while. It is several years since the last time I saw them.

– We think you should really do that. Just imagine how happy they will be as you come home, you can show them your medal and your promotion as well.

– Then there is another thing. I have heard your songs and been moved by them. There is something special in them, it has been like healing for my soul to listen to them in this materialistic world. I also feel you have a joy that I miss. I would like to know the name of the God you worship.

The four looked at each other dumbfounded and did not quite know how to answer. Was their God interested also in the pagans? Had the Lord not helped Havlat and healed him when he was ill? And, when the Messiah

comes is he not to let his salvation burn like a light to the end of the world according to the prophets. God must love all people.

– Our God’s holy name is Jahve Elohim², El Shaddai³. It means the Lord God Almighty.

– That is a mighty name, I think it is wonderful that he is almighty. There is such a lot of gods in Babylon, you do not know who to worship and who are the best. It would be much better with just one God who is almighty. But I have heard that your God does not live in a temple. How come that not even in Jerusalem there is a statue of your God? How can you then worship him?

– Our God lives in heaven beyond the stars. He can be worshipped wherever you are, you do not need a statue. When you pray from the heart in spirit and truth, he will hear you wherever you are.

– That is a strange God! But is he not a very strict God? I have heard that your God will not even allow that you have any small temple idols besides him. Does he demand all or nothing?

– Yes, his first commandment is that he alone is true God. We are to have no other gods besides him. Our God says that all others that you call gods, actually are not real gods, but demons created by fallen angels who take up residence in idols made by human and worshipped by them.

– I can see that if your God knows everything and really can help people everywhere, then you do not need any other God. Can I first try out an amulet of your God for a while first, before I decide altogether? I have thrown away all the amulets I had of our gods before I got ill as they did not help at all.

– We have no amulet of our God. He has forbidden us to use such things.

– No statues and no amulets. What a different God you have! If he forbids those, is he not a very strict God then?

– Yes he is strict in a way, but it is for our own good. We have ten commandments⁴ which he has asked us to keep, we can give them to you so you can study them. Then we also want you to know that our God is not only strict, he is merciful as well. Our great prophet Moses experienced the presence of God on one occasion and he heard the Lord exclaim:

– *The Lord, the Lord⁵ the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin, yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished, he punished the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.*

– Those are strong words, I feel so small when I hear this! Your God seems too great and too mighty for me. But thank you for the commandments, I will study them until we meet again next time.

Abraham in Egypt

The days in Haran flew by. The king's kids got permission to visit their distant relatives there but they soon realised that these were so many that they could not even be counted. It seemed that the whole neighbourhood was inhabited by Hebrews, descendants of Terah's son Nahor. After a lot of searching they discovered that the graves of Terah and Nahor¹ were still intact in an old burial ground outside the city.

In the evenings they continued to talk about Abraham and his journeys. Daniel was very interested in anything related to history. He meant that there was so much to be learnt by history and he had picked out several of his notes from the School of Prophecy.

The Jews were particular about their history and many of the writings of their forefathers had been preserved. In the archives at Hilkia's School² there were copies of the history lessons from 200 years earlier at Elijah's School of Prophecy³. As usual it was Mishael and Azariah who asked the questions, whilst Daniel and Hananiah helped one another in answering.

Abraham's visit to Egypt

- What happened to Abraham⁴ down there in Egypt?
- Abraham was well received not least because of his beautiful wife, everyone spoke of her beauty. Pharaoh was not satisfied with just hearsay of the beautiful woman but invited her to come to see him, there was an old custom in Egypt that a pharaoh should keep the most beautiful women in the country for himself.

It could have ended very badly, but when Pharaoh realised that Sarai was the wife of Abraham, he sent her back and was pleased that he had not touched her. He gave Abraham a large sum of money and Abraham also got the opportunity to speak with and consult with the most learned men of Egypt.

As Abraham addressed the sages, they admired him as a man of great understanding, no matter what subject he dealt with he could analyse it concisely and with clarity, and he had the ability not just to understand it himself but he could also make it clear to others. He taught astronomy and arithmetic. These branches of science originated with the Chaldeans and were unknown to the Egyptians.

– Was Egypt as refined as Babylon at the time of Abraham?

– At the time of Abraham, Egypt⁵ was a very powerful nation and culturally advanced. From the time of the Flood to the time of Abraham's visit, that is during the first twelve dynasties in Egypt, the same time as civilisation developed in Babylon under Nimrod, Sargon and Hammurabi, the development in Egypt was even faster.

After that time Egypt became one of the most powerful nations in the world, the first nation to rule the entire world. That time coincided with our forefathers' slavery in Egypt. But maybe we should start from the beginning.

Egypt's prehistoric times

– First a preparatory question. Can we be certain that the people of Egypt really are the descendants of Ham's son Mizraim? Could they not be a people from an earlier time who had escaped the great Flood?

– No, our scribes have found Moses' historic description correct⁶. When Moses gives details of how the families were dispersed on the earth after the Flood, he says that Ham had a son called Mizraim⁷. And even if the international name is "Agyptos"⁸, in Hebrew we still say "Misrajim" and call the inhabitants "Misraites".

– Egypt was probably not inhabited before the Flood but if it was, then the people must have been killed in the flood. According to Moses all but the eight people⁹ in the ark died.

– Another evidence is that Egypt is called Ham's land in several of the psalms:

– *Then Israel entered Egypt¹⁰, Jacob lived as an alien in the land of Ham.*

– How did this powerful nation, Egypt, come into existence?¹¹

– It is thought that not only Mizraim himself but also his father Ham went down to the valley of the Nile. From the beginning their sons divided the land so that several tribal domains were formed in the south where Thebes now is, while other tribes established themselves in the north by Memphis and On. Yet other tribes went to other places in Africa and formed countries like Libya, Ethiopia and Sheba.

– A powerful king by the name of Menes later united the tribes by the upper and lower parts of the river Nile into one country. The name of the country was Mizraim and later Egypt. The inhabitants there lived in a fairly sheltered world, they had deserts on both sides of the valley of the

river Nile which gave them protection both from enemies and wild beasts. The tribes on the whole lived in peace with one another so they could multiply and develop an exceptionally rich culture in a relatively short period.

Another reason for Egypt's progress was the river Nile which flooded its banks every year resulting in a layer of mud on the fields. The valley of the river Nile was once one of the most fertile areas of the world yielding several big crops per year.

– You mentioned the dynasties of Egypt¹². Can you explain further?

– The word dynasty is an expression for the royal families of Egypt. The crown is inherited as long as a dynasty exists. The Pharaohs have great power and the government vested in them contributes in the developing the country. At the time of Abraham's visit to Egypt, the twelfth dynasty of mighty Pharaohs ruled the land. At present the twenty-sixth dynasty is in power.

The pyramids of Egypt¹³

– When were the gigantic pyramids built?

– They were built relatively early. The time from the third until the sixth dynasty is called the era of pyramid building, it lasted for the three centuries just before Abraham came to live there. Development was rapid during the third dynasty. There was shipbuilding and the Mediterranean was used as a trade route all the way to Lebanon.

– The pyramids were developed in the reign of the first Pharaoh of the third dynasty, Zoser, whose ziggurat was built at Saqqara. It imitated the temple tower of Babylon and has six terraces. After that Snefru built the first real pyramid at the nearby Meydum by filling in the terraces until they became slopes.

– The high point of the epoch of the pyramids came during the fourth dynasty when the three great pyramids of Giza west of Memphis were constructed. The largest was built by Pharaoh Cheops who was one of Egypt's most prominent leaders. The next pyramid in size is Pharaoh Chephren's pyramid. It has a chiseled sphinx, which is a portrait of Pharaoh Chephren. The third large pyramid is called after Mykerinos.

– Why did they build the pyramids?

– In contrast to the Babylonian Ziggurats which have an idol temple for idol worship at the top, the Egyptian pyramids are merely mausoleums.

– These enormous structures never cease to impress, partly because they are so colossal, partly because they are so carefully constructed.

– How could they build these?

– The Cheops pyramid¹⁴, the largest pyramid, stands like a mighty monument to time. It has a foundation of about 768 feet (231 meters) square and a height of about 482 feet (147 meters). It contains about 2 million 300 thousand pieces of about 3 feet (91 cm) high blocks of lime stone.

The outer layer consists of finely hewn and well fitted blocks of granite. In the middle of the north side there is a passage, about 3 feet (91 cm) in breadth and about 4 feet (122 cm) high, which leads into the burial chamber of massive stone about 100 feet (30 meters) below the base line and about 600 feet (183 meters) below the apex of the pyramid. There are two further chambers exactly half way to the top with pictures and sculptures relating to the achievements of Pharaoh Cheops.*

– It has been calculated that it would take ten years for one hundred thousand men to build the road where the stone blocks were transported and 20 years for them to build the pyramid itself. The work was carried out by an Egyptian working class but also by slaves from other countries, forced to work by slave drivers with tough whips. The original theory was that the blocks were hewn in a quarry about a day's walk east of the Nile and then dragged up on slopes along the sides of the pyramid.

But there is also another theory suggesting that the blocks were made on the spot from a mixture of desert sand, clay and lime stone.

– Did Abraham see the pyramids when he came to Egypt?

– Abraham arrived there during the twelfth dynasty and it is thought that Pharaoh Senusert II¹⁵ then reigned. As the capital Memphis was situated near the pyramids, Abraham could not avoid seeing them. But the epoch of pyramid building had finished long before then.

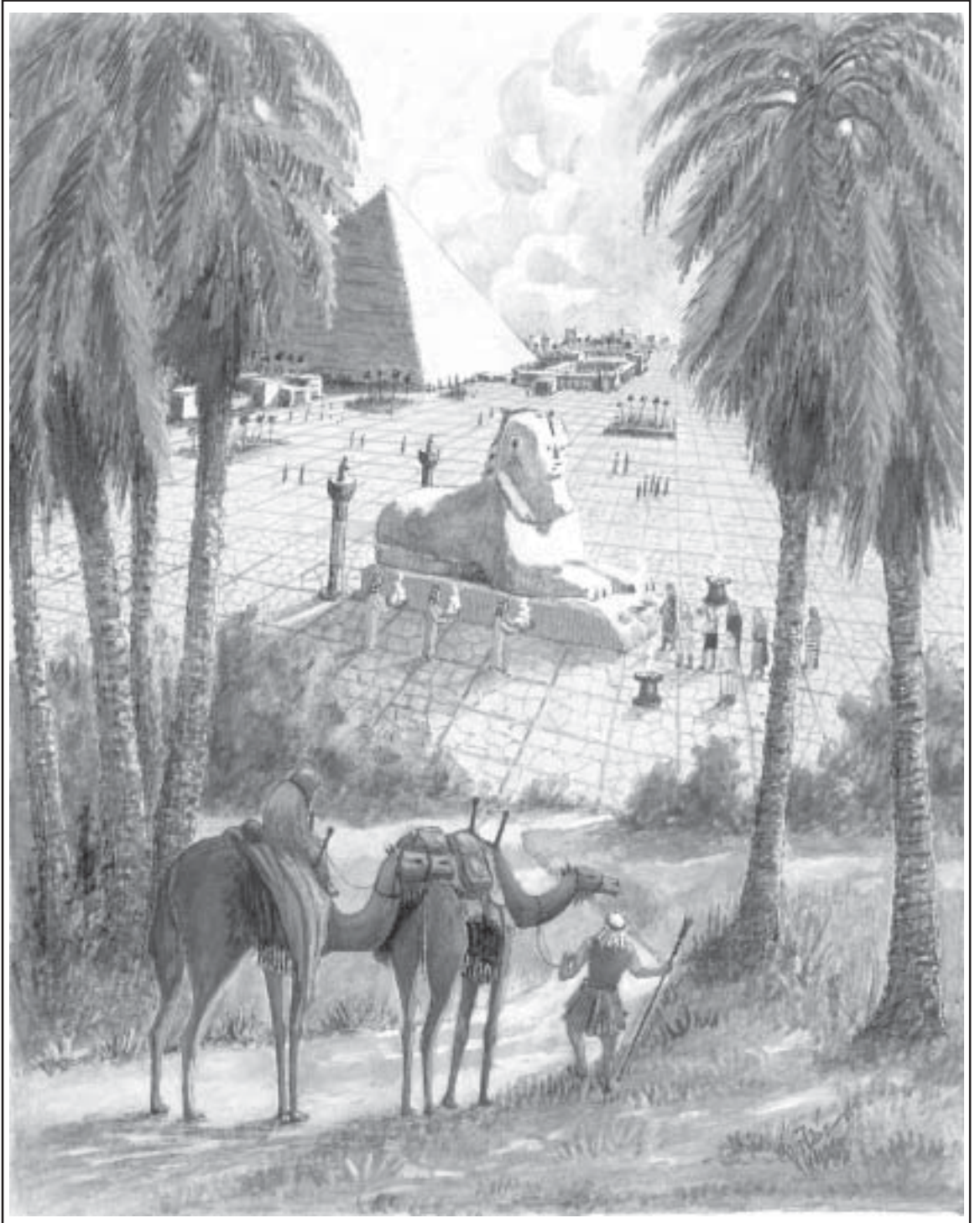
At that time many small canals were being built from the Nile in order to water new fields and a large canal was dug to provide for shipping from the Nile to the Red Sea. During that time Pharaohs built obelisks as memorials where their achievements were inscribed. The great obelisk On is from that time.

Egypt's hieroglyphs¹⁶

– What are hieroglyphs and how old are they?

– Hieroglyphs are a kind of writing using pictures where every sound of the language is represented by a picture. For example the letter r is represented by "a mouth", the letter m by "an owl" etc. There is evidence that already in Abraham's time people had started using a way of writing

**The details of the burial chambers were probably not known at the time of Daniel.*



The land of Ham – Egypt – a country of rich culture

reminding us of the way we wrote, where every sound is represented by a character or a letter.

In a temple in Sinai, built by Pharaoh Serabit¹⁷ during the twelfth dynasty, something like alphabetic writing was used. It is quite probable that Abraham also used an alphabetical way of writing, similar to our present day Hebrew writing. That means that the use of hieroglyphs was being discontinued already at the time of Abraham. Later on another kind of alphabetical writing called demotic writing was used in Egypt, the most common way of writing today.

– What more could Abraham see in Egypt?

– There were many things for him to look at. The Pharaohs of Egypt were competing with one another in erecting unusual buildings¹⁸ and the Egyptians would surely have been anxious to show Abraham their remarkable buildings in order to impress him and to make a comparison with Babylon from where he came.

He must have acknowledged that the culture of Egypt in no way was inferior, he could even have found it to be superior to that of Babylon. Although the pyramids were remarkable there were also many other strange buildings like obelisks, sphinxes, temples, mausoleums and whole cities with distinctive and artistically advanced designs.

– What happened to Abraham in Egypt?

– He went there because there was famine in his own country, and he returned to where he came from when the famine was over. He benefited much from his journey to Egypt, Pharaoh (Senusert II) gave him sheep, cattle and donkeys, asses and camels, servants both male and female so he returned¹⁹ as a wealthy man with riches in livestock, silver and gold.

The religion of Egypt²⁰

– What about the religion of Egypt? Is it like that of Babylon?

– Yes it is, but with a certain difference. In Babylon you worship the celestial bodies and particularly the powers of nature, in Egypt there is worship of animals as well. Like in Babylon, religion was monotheistic from the beginning but very soon every tribe made their own god symbolised by different animals. The god of Memphis is a bull by the name of Apes, the god of Tebe a cow named Amon and the god of eastern Nile is the crocodile named Set.

The sungod Ra is the god of all Egypt, the god of intelligence. Thoth, is represented by an ape and Osiris, the god of the dead, by a goat.

– The river Nile is regarded holy. Pharaoh's are treated as gods and the bull, the bull calf and the crocodile are the most holy of the animals. Living specimens are cared for in several temples and tended to in the most luxurious way. In Tarris there is a temple where at least 50 priests make sacrifices to and worship the crocodile god, this is in reality a kind of worship of Satan. The sea serpent and the dragon symbolising Satan²¹ have developed from the crocodile symbol²²

Thebes* – the Temple City

– Are there many temples in Egypt?

– Yes there are lots of temples and the priests have great power over the people. Thebes²³ is one of these strange temple cities built by the Pharaohs. It is built in an area of great natural beauty like a great amphitheater with splendid terraces on both sides of the powerful river Nile.

Like in Babylon the river is part of the city with many beautiful bridges and lively traffic of boats between the different parts of the city. World history does not know of any other city which is so full of beautiful temples, stone monuments and palaces, beautified in the most brilliant way with glimmering gold and shining colours.

– In the eastern part of the city at Thebes the Karnak Temple was built, one of the largest buildings ever erected. The central part has 134 gigantic columns of which the middle ones are 78 feet (26 meters) high and about 11,5 feet (3,5 meters) in diameter.

The pylons are so big that there is room for a hundred people on the top of one of them. Thebes was a metropolis at the time of Abraham's visit but it had its heydays when our ancestors were slaves in Egypt. Tradition tells us that Abraham travelled to southern Egypt to see the famous city.

*Gr, Luxor

An unexpected visit

All of the sudden there were three knocks on the door and a pleasant voice asked in Hebrew:

– Shalom!¹ Is young Daniel here?

– Shalom! I am here – who is asking?

After an intensive silence there was an answer, totally unexpected:

– Jeremiah from Anathoth.²

– The four friends were startled. In their eyes Jeremiah was almost holy – like an angel from a different world. This impression increased when a thin figure with blazing eyes and a long flowing beard stepped through the door. Daniel was the first to collect his wits. He knew Jeremiah. He stepped forward, gave him a welcoming kiss and invited him to sit on the cushions.

Jeremiah, the Lord's prophet! In front of them was the very person everyone was talking about. More than anyone else he was God's spokesman to all mankind. Right from the start they felt the air around him somehow vibrate with supernatural power. It was a fascinating experience just to look at Jeremiah and to hear him speak. His voice was soft but at the same time it had a depth and authority which they had never before encountered. The room was filled of light and a fragrance which they could not explain.

All tiredness went. They sat at the feet of an anointed prophet.

As they calmed down from their astonishment over this unexpected "royal" visit, they began to talk about Jeremiah's visions of what they could expect in captivity and the future of Israel and Jerusalem. Jeremiah told them that he had been all the way to Babylon.

– I wanted to find out how my fellow countrymen would fare in Babylon during their captivity. First I walked to Carchemish, I had been there once before. Then I followed the caravan trail by the river Euphrates. I have walked mostly during the nights, it is quite an experience to walk in the light of the moon and to see the magnificent stars in the sky. The majesty of God becomes overwhelming. I have also seen the eyes of wild beasts glimmering in the dark thickets by the road sides, but they never attacked me. I believe the Lord has ordered them to keep at a distance so the Lord God has protected me and clogged the jaws of the wild beasts.

Daniel wondered: – But Sir, how could you get into the compound here?

– It is a long story. I have a pass! When I was in the Babylon area, I kept mostly to a hill with trees outside the city and a good view over both the river and Babylon. The Lord urged me to fast and pray for a month, so that my country-men would have reasonable conditions whilst in captivity. When my fast was over I wanted to go into the city to see what it was like inside the high city walls so I mingled with the other people passing through the gate in front of the very eyes of the guards.

I managed to do that several times but one day I was caught. The guards understood I was an alien when I answered their questions in broken Aramaic and took me to be a spy so I was brought to the chief officer at the army headquarters. I was questioned several times and there was great commotion. Fortunately I had brought my scroll written by Baruch with me.

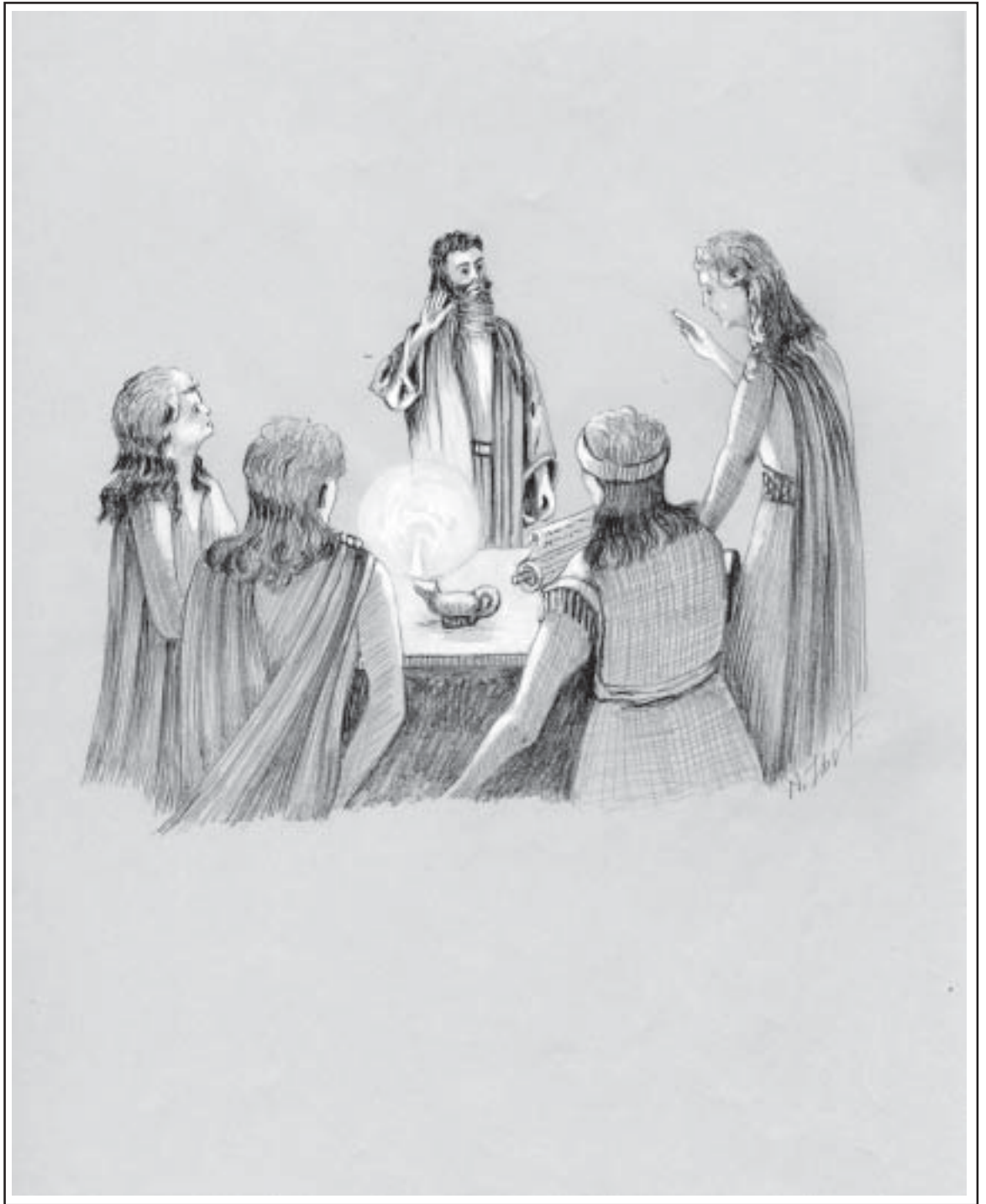
It was not long before they discovered who I am. One of their spies, who had been in Jerusalem disguised as a businessman, recognised me from my public appearances at the Temple Gate. When they had my prophecies translated and studied the content, I was treated very well. It impressed them greatly that I had prophesied long beforehand about the conquest of the Chaldeans, that the name of their new king would be Nebuchadnezzar and that he would conquer³ the Egyptian army at Carchemish. I had the opportunity to testify before these distinguished gentlemen about the God of Heaven who knows everything beforehand and decides our destiny.

They gave me full freedom and also a pass so I can go wherever I want. Not only that, they also gave me food and permission to fetch salt and other provisions from the king's stores along the caravan trail. They were most generous to me. Of course behind all this is the care and mercy by my heavenly Father for his poor servant.

Through the courier mail I received a note from Baruch about the siege and the first train of prisoners. He wrote that you Daniel, and three others of the king's family were among the prisoners. I also found out that you probably would pass through Haran en route to Babylon, so I have been here for a while waiting for an opportunity to meet you.

– What was life in Babylon like?

– Babylon is a enormous city, I could never dream of anything like it. It is still being developed and the king has many plans. A whole new palace is to be built, a great library and many other public buildings are planned. There will be more temples, zoos, beautiful gardens, anything you can imagine. The city is full of life and excitement.



Jeremiah of Anathoth – an unexpected visit.

– Is there idolatry among the people there as well?

– Of course there is idolatry. Lots of temples are places of prostitution. But the spiritual condition is nevertheless better on the whole there than in Jerusalem. Child sacrifices are forbidden and so is sodomy. All offenders are severely punished and there is capital punishment for murder. Slavery is the punishment for robbers and other men of violence.

The worst sin in Babylon is the worship of human beings. Both Nimrod and Ashur are worshipped. In the future they will even worship a contemporary human being and this will be their undoing. The Babylonian kingdom will not last for more than 70 years⁴. Babylon will be destroyed never to be rebuilt, just like Nineveh.

– What will the captivity be like for us?

– I think you will be treated well, but it will depend a lot on yourselves. Rebellion and civil disobedience is severely punished. But if our people realise that their situation is inevitable and they co-operate with the Chaldeans then you will have great freedom and a good life in due course. During my fast the Lord has assured me this. So you can look forward to great and interesting tasks as far as you are concerned.

– What will happen to Jerusalem?

– The judgment of God is upon Jerusalem. If judgment is to be averted it will take a miracle, like that in Nineveh after the preaching by Jonah. Long before my time Micah as well as Isaiah foretold the total destruction of Jerusalem unless the people changed their ways. It is probably just a question of time when it will happen. There has been too grave sins and shedding of innocent blood there.

– Is the shedding of innocent blood the worst sin?

– Sacrificing little children is among the worst, but also killing innocent people, in particular a prophet of the Lord like Isaiah, is a terrible sin which God will avenge.

– Will you return to Jerusalem, sir?

– My task is not finished yet. The Lord has commanded me to go to the Euphrates at Carchemish and dig up the linen belt which I hid there seven years ago in a cleft in the mountain. It will become a sign of warning to all the people of Judah.

– How?

– Just like the belt has been destroyed, the Lord will let decay destroy the whole of Judah.

– Will there be more transports of prisoners?

– Yes there will be many. Those who are removed into captivity are

those the Lord wants to save from the sentence to death. All those who are left will be destroyed by one of three afflictions, the sword, the famine or the pestilence. You are fortunate to be part of the first transport. You are the spearhead which the Lord will use to make something new for our people. It is the Lord who has removed you in the honour and glory of his name.

– So there is still hope of a future for our people and our land?

– Yes, the Lord can not alter his promises to Abraham. In seventy years all the Jews in Babylon will be free to return to Judea to rebuild the Temple and Jerusalem. Yes, the whole country will flourish. From that time there will no longer be idolatry⁵ in our land. Then the Messiah will come and the Lord will fulfil his promises to Abraham, Moses and David.

– No more idolatry in our country. That sounds wonderful! What a marvelous time that will be!

*Though kingdoms fall under crises,
Jerusalem always arises.
City of our great King.
Messiah will come! Sing!*

Their conversation carried on long into the night. Jeremiah was a great encouragement to them all as he talked individually with each one of them. Azariah showed him some of his drawings and Jeremiah said he longed to have such creativity. If he had then he would have made drawings of the visions he had received from the Lord. As they did not disturb anybody where they lived they played and sang together some of Mishael's tunes.

Jeremiah sat quiet for a long time and they realised that he was deep in prayer. It was apparent that something troubled him. They asked if he had something special to tell them.

– Life is strange. It is a mixture of sweetness and bitterness, a mixture of the Lord's loveliness and the Devil's curses. When I was young I had my dreams. Like anybody else I wanted a family and to see my children growing up. But then the call came from the Lord to be his prophet. I thought then that a prophet had to forsake all and so all my own plans for the future came to nothing. The girl I loved from my youth sought another man. I became perhaps the most lonely person on this earth. But it was because of the Lord. I burnt with holy zeal to save my people. Now I look upon everything as a failure. I had hoped for and lived for a radical revival in our land. I fasted and prayed more than any one else. For weeks I was before the face of God in prayer. But I was too weak, I could not turn the awful development of our country.

How I fought and prayed. I thought that if the Lord would do the same

miracles as in the time of Elijah and Elisha, then the people would listen and repent. But there was no miracles. I always had to complain and mourn. Most of the time my prophecies were of doom and judgment, which nobody wanted to hear. They said that I discouraged the people, so I decided to keep quiet. I thought, I would not think of the Lord or speak in his name any more⁶. But his word became like a fire burning in my heart within me. I tried to endure it but I couldn't. I had to cry out against violence and oppression, I had to warn the people of the coming judgment.

I sacrificed all. How I fought and prayed! I offered the dearest of my life. It was terrible to see her, the love of my soul whom I loved above everything else, go to another man. What result is there of all my sacrifices and self denial? Now I think that the work of my life has been completely in vain. If I had been like anybody else perhaps by this time I would have had sons and daughters of your age of my own. Now I have nothing, my life is in ruins – a leaf carried away by the wind and then there is nothing.

Nobody cares for me, I am despised by almost every one. My own have turned their backs towards me. Already in my youth, when I had just begun prophesying there were plans to murder me, and those who planned it were my best friends in the village, Anathoth. They called me traitor and a deserter to the enemy. Sometimes I wish that I never had been born⁷. But how can I hinder God's way? In my dark hours I complain to God about my dismal fate.

Jeremiah was crying. The four friends were touched and moved to tears. After a while Jeremiah continued his monologue. Now, as he looked up his face was transformed and a light from heaven shone through his beautiful eyes.

– But now, when the word of the Lord comes to me again it is the delight and joy of my heart⁸. The Lord comforts me and tells me that I will have more children⁹ than those born in families. I understand that the Lord means spiritual children – those who have repented and who follow the Lord and who have found eternal life. But I am not sure that I have any spiritual children.

Jeremiah got down on his knees and prayed for each one of them. He lifted them to the throne of God in a prophetic prayer. They experienced heaven coming down upon them. They felt that they were swimming in a sea of grace and divine love.

When they looked up, Jeremiah was gone. A man of God had come and gone. He left eternal footprints which they would never forget.

They knew they were Jeremiah's spiritual children.

Among the pine trees

Day by day the prisoners worked with packing goods and loading carriages for the transport to the store houses in Nineveh. On one side of the compound was the river Belish, a river feeding the Euphrates. The work for some of the prisoners consisted of loading goods on to the barges which were tied to the embankment but bobbing up and down in the swift river.

At one of the line ups they were informed that the whole prisoner transport was to be divided. The commander's order meant a difficult separation for the families although the promise that they would be reunited in Babylon was reassuring. A group of male prisoners were to "coach" the loaded carriages to Nineveh.

For the four king's kids and for many of the other men who could handle horses this meant going further east to Nineveh with loaded carriages. The rest, including women and children, were to walk to the Euphrates to be shipped direct to Babylon. The barges could be moved down river to calmer waters but the river Belish had many waterfalls and was too swift for anybody to travel by boat from Haran down to the Euphrates. So most of them had to walk again apart from children and pregnant women who were riding on ox carts.

Romance at sunset

In the evening after line up Mishael and Azariah went down to the river. They could move freely within the compound. Along the river bank there was a beautiful forest of pine trees with a fragrance, fresh and enticing. Some of the trees were bent and hung far out over the water. Among Azariah's best themes were the old, crooked pines or small young ones with high, blue green top shoots.

But this time he had no peace to think of drawings and pictures, this was a moment of destiny. The two friends walked to and fro along the river bank and analysed their situation. Separation was inevitable! But how would they find their loved ones again? Would they all arrive in Babylon, or would the prisoners be dispersed in all directions? They just did not know, their future was clouded in uncertainty. They were not free to move or travel as they pleased in this country, they were prisoners and had to remain prisoners.

As they walked amongst the pine trees on the river bank they looked out over the fully loaded barges soon to be driven by the force of the water down to the Euphrates, they saw two other people who like them had gone down to the river at sunset. It was Hannah and Mical. They had the same longing as Mishael and Azariah remembering the many moments of happiness between the fires by the river winding its way among the tall cedars of Lebanon. Once more they wanted to hear the roar of the river and experience the romantic sunset.

Their joy was genuine as they so unexpectedly stumbled across one another. Two couples of lovers! But the moment was somber. Tomorrow was the Sabbath, but afterwards the departure and separation could take place any time. How would they find each other again? They agreed that only God in heaven could help them so they would not lose each other for ever in this vast country with its millions of people¹. They decided to pray to the Lord that they would meet again and celebrate the Sabbath in Babylon.

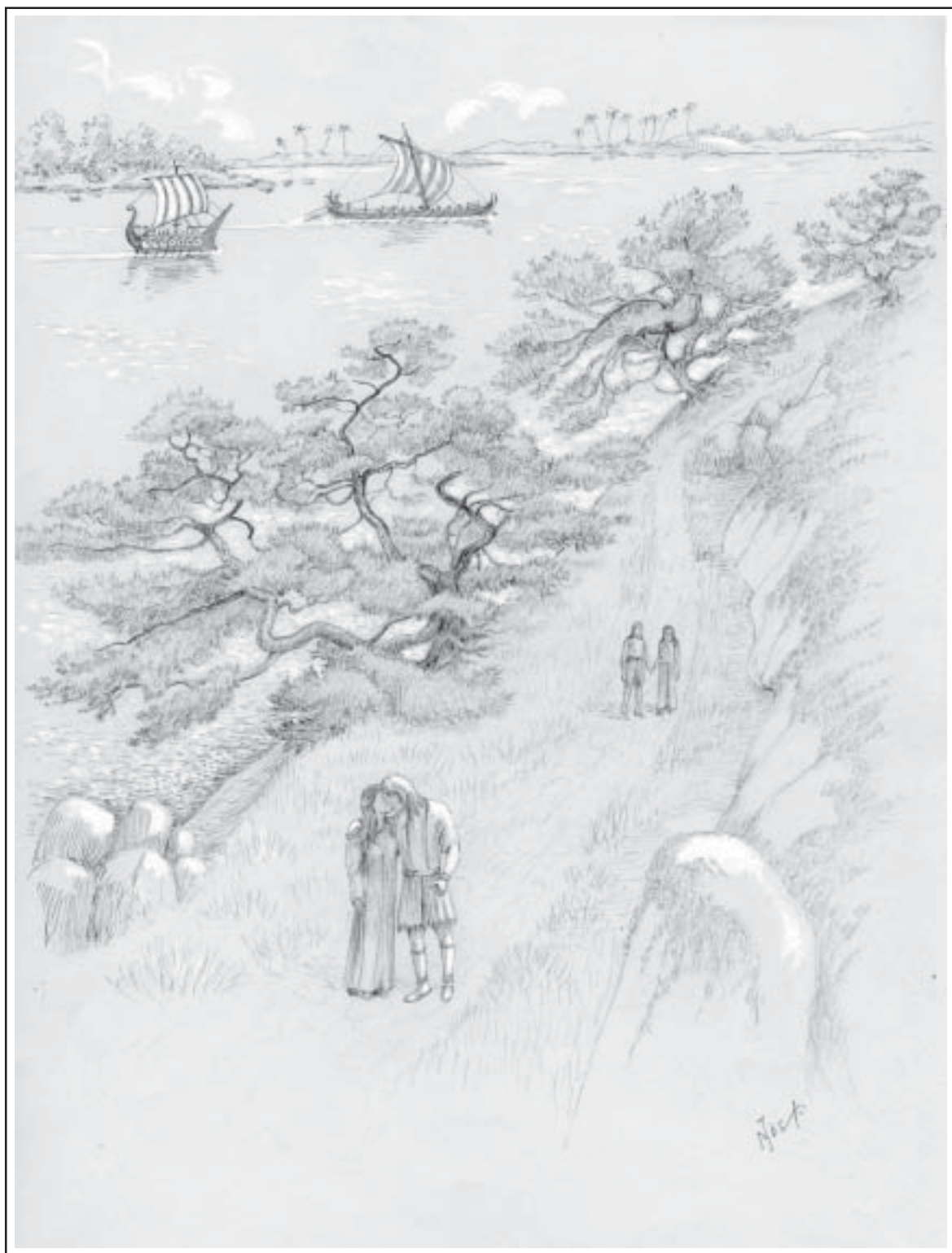
There were soldiers everywhere watching them. Trying to escape was not worth it. It would mean death. No, even as prisoners they had to find a way of keeping together. Nothing could better join them together than their common faith which made them strong, as they knew they always could get help when their whole trust was in the Lord.

They walked slowly, the two couples, to and fro between the pine trees along the river. Azariah slowed down when he and Mical walked behind the other two. His heart was beating hard, it was now or never! When they were at a suitable distance from the others he had to declare his love for Mical! She had to know! He loved her with an overpowering love. His unexpressed love almost paralysed him. He felt like he was pregnant with love! It was like a fire which could not be contained! He did not have to say many words before Mical fell into his arms.

When Mishael and Hannah turned to go back, they saw a beautiful sight. It had happened, he had done it, he had dared, they remembered the first line of the Song of Songs, it fitted well.

– Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth² – for your love is more delightful than wine. Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes; your name is like perfume poured out. No wonder the maidens love you.

The two pairs of lovers continued walking between the crooked pine trees on the river bank. Their mutual love had joined two entirely different personalities. The air was filled with harmony and happiness. The fragrance from the pines deepened the romance of the sunset.



The gnarled pine-trees

– *Awake, north wind³, and come, south wind! Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad. Let my lover come into his garden and taste its choice fruits.*

– *I have come into my garden⁴, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honey comb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk.*

– *My lover is mine⁵ and I am his; he browses among the lilies.*

– *Eat, O friends⁶ and drink, drink your fill, O lovers. Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you⁷: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.*

Sacred promises

The atmosphere was solemn and tense when they gathered to celebrate the Sabbath this time. Perhaps it was their last time together. As the place for their celebrations they were assigned a pine forest with tall tree trunks away from the river. Hananiah led the congregation. Their praise rose to the Lord who had created heaven and earth and whose faithfulness is eternal.

Daniel held a searching and faith-giving speech:

”We are now in a foreign land surrounded by millions of gentiles and we are in the place where Abraham received his call to go to Canaan. The real reason for the Lord’s call to Abraham was the idolatry in this country. If Abraham held fast to his faith, the Lord promised him that in the new country Abraham and his descendants would become a blessing to all mankind.

We know that our forefathers failed in their task to be a light to the nations. They abandoned their faith in the Lord, the God of their fathers. That is why this captivity has befallen us. We have promises to return to our own land. But it will depend entirely upon whether we hold fast to our faith and do not fail the Lord again.

Daniel further reminded the people of Josiah’s reformation and of how the people made a covenant with the Lord to serve him alone and said:

– *Should we not, we who now are prisoners in a foreign land make a new covenant with the Lord?*

When Daniel said this, there were shouts of *amen* from several prisoners. Daniel continued, his confidence strengthened.

– *If we make a new covenant with the Lord, it needs to contain certain promises about our faithfulness to him. Here is what the four of us have arrived at:*

– *Let us keep the Sabbath and God's ten commandments. Let us never enter into a pagan temple. Let us never worship an idol. Let us never be ashamed of our faith in the Lord. Let us worship the Lord alone. Let us keep together.*

When Daniel had finished, there was silence for a long while.

The air was tense! Would such a radical suggestion, proposed by the young Daniel be acceptable to all the prisoners. Most were older than he. But Daniel was highly esteemed. His way of handling the Chaldean officers as well as the soldiers had won respect with every one. There was something in his humble way of behaviour together with a diplomatic sensitivity which meant that all listened to him. Some of the elders had even said to each other that had they lived in a free country, Daniel would surely have been chosen for their king.

Hananiah appealed to the Elders to speak.

Three of the Elders went forward to the lectern and appealed to everyone to support Daniel's suggestion. Hananiah suggested that all who agreed with these rules, should raise their hands towards heaven. That would be the sign that today they were making a new covenant with the Lord and promised to keep these commandments.

It was a sacred and solemn moment. All without exception lifted their hands towards heaven! With one voice all promised the Lord to stand fast in their trust in him and not to turn away from him in this foreign country.

When Hananiah uttered the words of blessing upon them and all turned towards Jerusalem⁸ something very strange happened. Several people saw a cloud with the glory of the Lord above them. Daniel saw it clearly and several others with him. It was like a great pillar of light, a mysterious appearance.

It was the *Shekinah*⁹ – the glory of the Lord!

God lived in the pillar of the cloud! Everyone, even those who did not see anything strange, experienced the presence of the Lord! It was like eternity had come down among them.

They had an inexplicable sense of time and space disappearing, an experience of holiness and crystal clear light. From the crowd you could hear many *hallelujahs* and *praise the Lord*. The sound of prayer increased! At the end the sound of exultation was so loud that you could not hear your own voice.

All of the sudden there was alarm in the camp. The guarding soldiers called for assistance and soldiers with their swords drawn and even officers



The glory of God manifested to the prisoners

of high rank came rushing from all directions. When they realised that the Jews were just praising their God they calmed down. These people were not like any other people with their strange worship.

The Jews really knew that their promises had been sanctioned and accepted by God. This became an unforgettable experience and a time of glorification before the Lord, which was to mean incredibly much to them. This incident was to help them endure life in captivity and to resist succumbing to the enticing teachings of idolatry.

Engagement celebration

Hananiah continued and said: – We have an announcement to make.

– There is also a covenant between two of our young people which we will ask God to bless today. We now ask them to come forward together with their families so that you can all see them.

There were rejoicing everywhere as Azariah, the hero of Carchemish came forward together with Mical. Mical had her parents at her side as well as her brothers and sisters. But Azariah stood alone. All knew why. His relatives were in Jerusalem.

He had encountered the harshness of destiny already in his youth. How he would have wanted his loved ones with him on such a day! There was something noble about Azariah, he stood there erect, like a mighty single fir-tree. In front of everybody they promised each other lifelong faithfulness. In Israel red wine was a symbol of love, their promises were sealed as they drank wine from the same glass.

After the last praises of the Sabbath had sung out, all youngsters went down to the river bank. Now there would be an engagement party! The girls had brought food and in spite of the solemnity of the occasion everyone was exhilarated. The experience of the presence of the Lord as they lifted their hands, had given them a particular joy and this was the main topic of conversation.

The same as had happened in Israel previously, had happened to them. It was the pillar of fire and cloud¹⁰ which protected their forefathers when they were chased by the Egyptian army. It was the pillar which led the people through the desert to Canaan. When Solomon inaugurated the Temple the pillar of cloud had come down over the Temple so that no one could enter it. Just imagine that the Lord was with them in the same supernatural way! There had to be a future and a hope even for them.

The young people rejoiced with their newly engaged friends in the fragrance of the pine trees until the twilight of the evening became the darkness of the night.

Egypt - the first world power

Later on as they gathered in their tent they continued talking about Egypt¹ and the slavery of their forefathers under the Pharaohs.

The Pharaohs oppressed the Hebrews²

– From the description it seems that a Pharaoh had enormous power? wondered Mishael.

– Yes the Pharaohs were dictators, Egypt was a state of oppression like Babylon. The Pharaohs' magnificent buildings were largely the work of slaves. As we already mentioned they had an enslaved working class, but they took also slaves from other countries, from Ethiopia and areas further south in Africa which later got inhabited by other tribes, descendants of Ham.

When Israel's family, 70 people³ in all, through the care of Joseph came to Egypt, they were first well received by the so called hyksos-pharaohs⁴, who were related to the Semites. These hyksos came from the east and took charge of Egypt for a time, but when they were dethroned by the original population, our forefathers who had by that time grown to a large people, became slaves in Egypt.

– How long were our people in Egypt?⁵

– There are different theories about how long the time of slavery lasted in Egypt. Abraham received a prophecy that his descendants were to be foreigners for 400 years in a land which did not belong to them. Some scribes suggest that in these 400 years the time of alienation in Canaan is also included. Before the time in Egypt the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were aliens already in the land of Canaan which they could inhabit only 400 years later through the conquest by Joshua. The time in Egypt would then have lasted for 215 years.

Supporting this theory is the Lord's message to Abraham that they would return in the fourth generation after their arrival in Egypt and then the time in Egypt cannot have been 400 years. There are four generations recorded between Jacob and Moses in our Chronicles. Jacob's son Levi begat Kohath, Kohath begat Amram and Amram begat Moses.

– How could they become such a large people in such a relatively short period?⁶

According to Moses there were 600.000 men of war in Israel at the time of the exodus without counting the priestly tribe of Levi. Besides these there were wives, children, older men and woman and a multitude of mixed people who were descendants of the servants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is estimated that there were four million people or more who left Egypt at the time of exodus. Moses writes that the Hebrews were very prolific. They had Jacob as their model and he had thirteen children.⁷

– How long ago did our forefathers leave Egypt?

– If you use the dates in Moses' writing and in the Chronicles we find that God called Abraham about 1500 years ago and the exodus took place about 1000 years ago.

Egypt becomes a great power

– When did Egypt become a world power?⁸

– Egypt's period of greatness spanning the then whole known world from Ethiopia to the Euphrates, was during the 18th and 19th dynasty. During a period of 200 years it was for the greater part the world's mightiest nation, to which all had to pay taxes. The first Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty was Amosis I⁹. He was the one that founded the new state and drove the hyksos-rulers away. Amosis conquered Palestine and Syria which countries then had to pay tribute to Egypt.

Thotmes I was the first to rule all the way to the Euphrates. First he expanded the boundaries to the south, then he went east through Canaan and Syria all the way to the northern part of the Euphrates where he erected a memorial.

– The next Pharaoh, Thotmes II¹⁰ did not govern the people himself but his half sister and queen, the daughter of Thotmes I, the famous queen Hatshepsut¹¹. She is supposed to have been the first queen in world history and she was one of Egypt's greatest and most powerful rulers, a very remarkable woman. She was very greedy for power and she was the one who expounded the country. She built many monuments, among others the two obelisks at Karnah in Thebes.

– There are those who say that queen Hatshepsut was the daughter of the Pharaoh who saved Moses and raised him. She had no children of her own and even Pharaoh Thotmes III¹² who like Moses was her adopted son, had to submit to her.

Thotmes III became the greatest conqueror in the history of Egypt. First he conquered Ethiopia, and having been victorious over a Syrian coalition at a battle at Megiddo, he ruled all the way to the Euphrates and created the first empire of the world.

He controlled all the nations of the Orient, they had to pay tax to Egypt.

He established a navy and conquered Cyprus, also called Kittim¹³. He amassed great riches and was involved in great building works. During his time art and architecture flourished. The famous temples of Thebes and Karnak were built during his reign. He inscribed his achievements and successes in detail on walls and monuments. His burial place is at Thebes.

– Was it then that our ancestors had to work so hard making bricks for the buildings?

– Yes, as our people multiplied in Egypt, they were afraid that we would seize power. Therefore the Egyptians oppressed our forefathers with hard slave labour¹⁴. They even ordered all newborn Hebrew male babies to be thrown into the Nile. Giving children as food to the Crocodile god was regarded as worships by the Egyptians. That period was a terrible time of suffering for our people.

– What work did they have to do?

– First and foremost digging canals for irrigation and building walls and embankments around their cities to safeguard against flooding. There are accounts of the Israelites being involved in developing the beautiful city of Thebes. They also built city depots for the Pharaohs at Piton and Ramses.

The Child prodigy Moses¹⁵

– When did Moses come into the picture?

– Our historians have much to tell about Moses. There was an Egyptian priest with a gift of prophecy who warned Pharaoh, that among the Hebrews a person would be born, who would become a mighty leader and deliver the Israeli slaves and weaken the Egyptian power. If they did not kill him, he would surpass all other human beings in virtue and gain honour, to be retold in all future ages.

– This was the direct reason for the order of Pharaoh (Thotmes I?) to throw all the Hebrew boy children into the river Nile. The order was carried out for a couple of years until it was believed that the wonder child had perished. But as we know, Moses was rescued from death by the Pharaoh's own daughter.

– Was Moses a real child prodigy?

– Yes, you could say that. This is what the historians say:¹⁶

– *Moses's understanding* became superior to his age, nay, far beyond that standard; and when he was taught, discovered greater quickness of apprehension than was usual at his age; and his actions at that time promised greater, when he should come to the age of a man.*

**This text is quoted from "Josephus Complete Works"*

*God did also give him that tallness, when he was but three years old, as was wonderful; and for his beauty, there was nobody so unpolite as, when they saw Moses, they were not greatly surprised at the beauty of his countenance: nay, it happened frequently, that those that met him as he was carried along the road, were obliged to turn again upon seeing the child, that they left what they were about, and stood great while to look on him; for the beauty of the child was so remarkable and natural to him on many accounts, that it detained the spectators, and made them stay longer to look upon him.**

– What training did Moses receive?

– Moses grew up at the Court. He had a very thorough education in all the knowledge of Egypt and he acted with power in both word and action. As the queen had no children of her own, her plan was to make Moses king.

Queen Hatshepsut was very interested in the mines of Sinai and restored the temple of Serabit¹⁷. It is quite possible that Moses was given the task of leading that project and that already then he became familiar with conditions in Sinai.

– *At the time the Ethiopians ravaged the land. They pushed forward all the way to Memphis plundering and looting. The Egyptians were weak as they lacked strong leadership. When they consulted their oracles they were ordered to ask the Hebrew Moses to help them. Pharaoh's daughter let him go to become their leader with their promise on oath not to harm Moses. In a short time he gathered the Egyptian forces and drove out the Ethiopians at the same time as they occupied one of the Ethiopian capitals¹⁸.*

– *Because of his success the Egyptians became jealous of Moses. They were frightened because of his power and consulted the Pharaoh about killing him. Then the incident happened when Moses defended one of his own countrymen against one of the Egyptian guards who was killed, Moses fled¹⁹ as he knew his life to be in danger.*

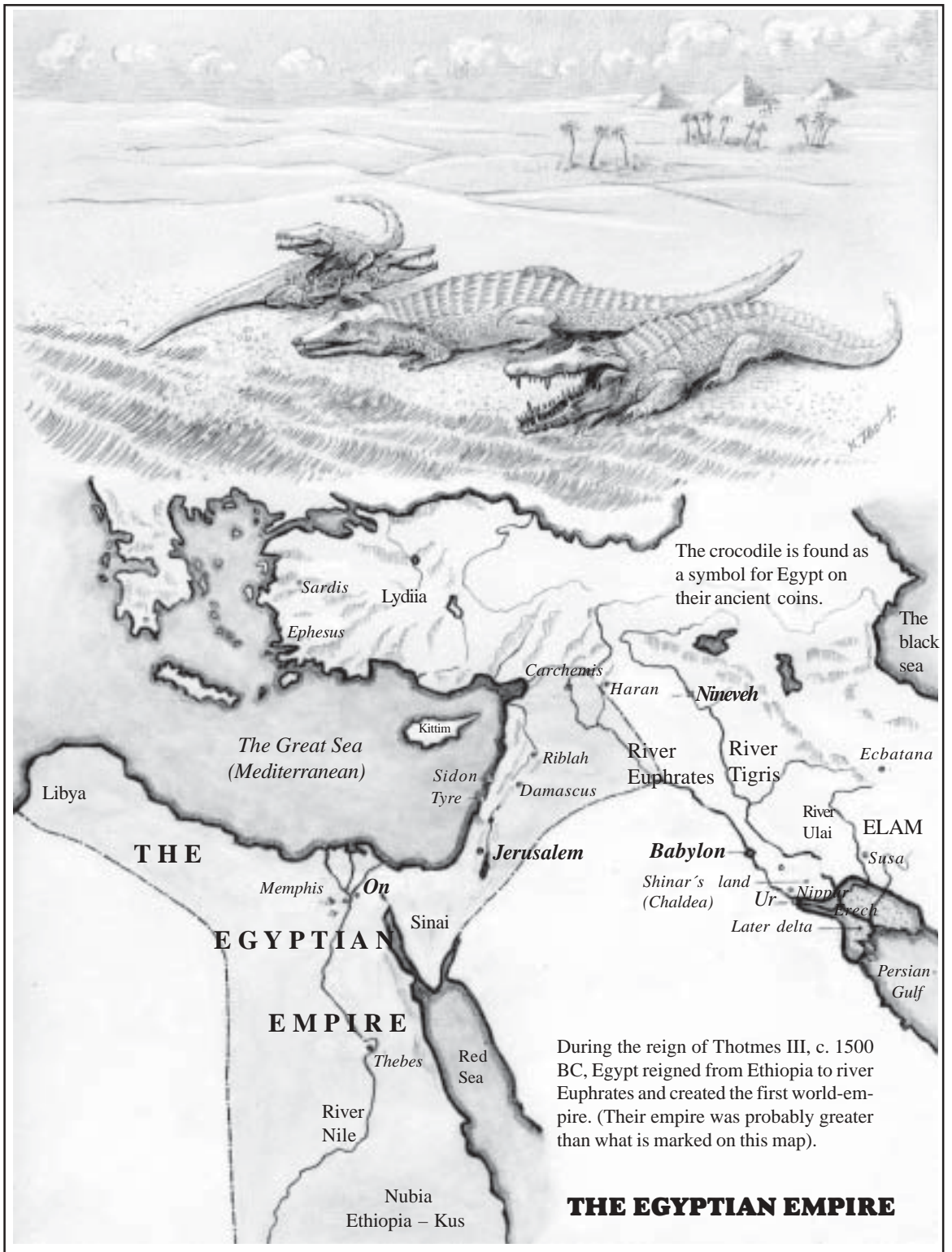
– *All roads were blocked to hinder him escaping but Moses avoided the usual caravan trails and escaped through the desert arriving in Median by the Red Sea. There he had distant relatives, descendants of Abraham's children with Ketura. Moses was 40 years old when this happened. After that he lived a simple life as a shepherd in the Sinai desert for forty years, before God called him to return to deliver his people.***

The Hebrews were delivered from slavery

– What happened in Egypt during that time?

– Thotmes III was succeeded by his son Amenhotep II²⁰. He was also

* *Josephus 57:6+7* ** *57:10*



a very forceful ruler and the oppression of the Israelites continued. It is thought that it was during his rule that Moses delivered our forefathers.

– How numerous were our people when they left Egypt?

– When Moses, at God's command, left Egypt with its slavery and child sacrifices, we were a great people²¹ with more than 600 thousand fighting men who were more than 20 years old. The Levites were not counted among them because their whole tribe was selected for priestly service and were not allowed to fight. Together with women, children and older people they still were a people of at least three million plus a great herd of cattle. There are those who calculate that they were double that number.

If we estimate that they were three million people who walked in rows of twenty with the cattle in the middle and with one meter between the rows, that would mean a train of people five days' journey long. If they walked in rows of a hundred then it would be a train of people of a whole day's journey.²²

– When this enormous crowd had left in the night, Pharaoh (Amenhotep II?) regretted that he had let them go and pursued them with a great army²³. His army consisted of 600 chariots, 50 000 cavalry and 200 000 rank and file soldiers, all armed.

– But the Lord manifested himself in a pillar of fire and cloud between the Israeli and the Egyptian army and hindered the Egyptians from reaching the fleeing crowd.

– When the Egyptian army perished in the Red Sea, it was a noticeable loss for Egypt. It was not just 600 thousand slaves that they lost but also the whole of their famous army with chariots and swift horses with brace archers, javelin throwers, stone throwers and sword fighters. The proud army who had conquered the world all the way to the Euphrates had a sorry end drowning in the waves of the Red Sea. It was a long time before Egypt recovered from that loss.

– The day after the Israelites would collect masses of weapons from the drowning Egyptians brought to the shore by the sea current and the strong wind.

The decline of Egypt

– After Israel's exodus under Pharaoh Amenhotep II the decline of Egypt as a world power began. They lost their Asian empire. Pharaoh Amenhotep IV introduced a monotheistic religion thought to be influenced by Moses. The last Pharaoh of the 19th dynasty was Tutankhamun²⁴ who

reintroduced the old religion. He is mostly known for his wealth but he was a weak ruler who ended the most brilliant time in the history of Egypt.

– By the second Pharaoh of the 20th dynasty, Ramses II²⁵ a certain Egyptian control was restored from Ethiopia to Syria. He was a forceful ruler and a great master builder. He is known for his marriage to his own daughter. He inscribed his achievements on many monuments but was also a great plagiarist who took the credit for the achievements of others. However, Egypt could not keep their conquests for long.

– During Ramses III the power in Egypt was entirely in the hands of the priests in Thebes, and after the end of the 20th dynasty Egypt's period of power was also at an end. And Assyria now appeared more and more as the leading world power.

Thus the Lord's prophecy to Abraham about Egypt 400 years before the exodus was fulfilled:

– *I will punish²⁶ the nation they serve as slaves.*

Egypt was the first world power that oppressed Israel. The crocodile is one of the world's most cruel animals and it was Egypt's state symbol, engraved on their coins.²⁷ The Egyptians were as cruel as the crocodiles they worshipped.

– Is the crocodile the symbol of Egypt even in Scripture?

– Yes, Isaiah uses that symbol in one of his declarations about the Lord's judgment on Egypt:

– *Was it not you who cut Rahab²⁸ to pieces, who pierced that monster through? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made a road in the depths of the sea so that the redeemed might cross over?*

In this historical account, Isaiah shows how the Lord once struck Egypt in order to save his people Israel. Isaiah uses a word of poetry for Egypt, that of Rahab. He calls Egypt a monster. The Hebrew word *tannin*²⁹, which is used here, means crocodile, but is also the original picture of Satan, that is the dragon. He wanted to show that Egypt was possessed by Satanic forces in their cruelty towards Israel.

Through Daniel's account it became clear and plain that God's message to Abraham about the judgment of Egypt had been fulfilled. When the time came God punished Egypt not just with the ten plagues so that they let the Hebrews free but even so that Egypt lost their dominion and as time went on became a weak nation, whose people were oppressed by others.

The ambush

A great deal of the booty taken from the Egyptian army was to be transported to large store-houses outside Nineveh. The caravan had over 600 fully load-loaded carriages each drawn by a pair of horses. The king's kids were each allocated the task of driving a carriage and placed after each other in the latter part of the train.

When they had been allocated their carriages, they went to get to know the horses. Horses like to be patted; kindness means a lot to them. Horses also need to be used to the voice of their commanders and as new drivers they had to learn several Egyptian shouts of command so that the horses would understand. Before their departure they spent the days practicing and training their horses.

It was a rather pleased quartet who took their places among the drivers at line up for the departure to Nineveh early in the morning the second day after the Sabbath. Because of the risk of being ambushed all had strict orders to watch the distance between the carriages and not lose contact with each other. Sometimes it happened that bandits launched an attack on carriages separated from each other.

There were still Assyrian soldiers left in the mountains, who had either deserted or fled when they were conquered by the Medes or the Chaldeans. They were trained warriors and their weapons could still bite, so it was important to keep together. The drivers were protected by soldiers on foot, marching on both sides of the carriages.

Daniel led the little troop of king's kids. He sat in the middle of the driver's seat with an officer on one side and a soldier on the other. This was a new and exciting adventure as he was placed high up in a carriage with eager horses in front. These horses were well trained, they obeyed the slightest command! Of course, the horses of Egypt were the world's best! Daniel was very happy!

A Chaldean officer

After a while the officer started to talk to Daniel. His name was Ledar and he came from the district of the old Ur south of Babylon, a real Chaldean indeed. His father was also an officer and belonged to the pioneers of the New Babylonian nation. He had participated in the uprising, when Nabo-

polassar seized power in Babylon and destroyed the Assyrian garrison there. His father was now one of the most prominent generals in the new country.

Ledar had studied for several years in the military academy. The campaign in Jerusalem was his first practical year as an officer. Daniel thought that he was quite a likable person. When Ledar asked about Daniel's background and Daniel told him that he was a close relative to the kings of Jerusalem the officer was quite impressed. When Daniel went further back in time and told him that the ancestor of the whole nation, Abraham, came from Ur in Chaldea he got even more interested. They got on quite well and Daniel felt that he had found a new friend among the Chaldeans.

On a desolate mountain road

After a few hours travelling they arrived in the majestic Armenian mountains. In some places they could catch a glimpse of the snow capped Ararat mountains, where Noah's Ark once had stranded. Daniel discovered that the commander's warnings were well founded as the area got more desolate and the roads got worse, anything could happen in these places.

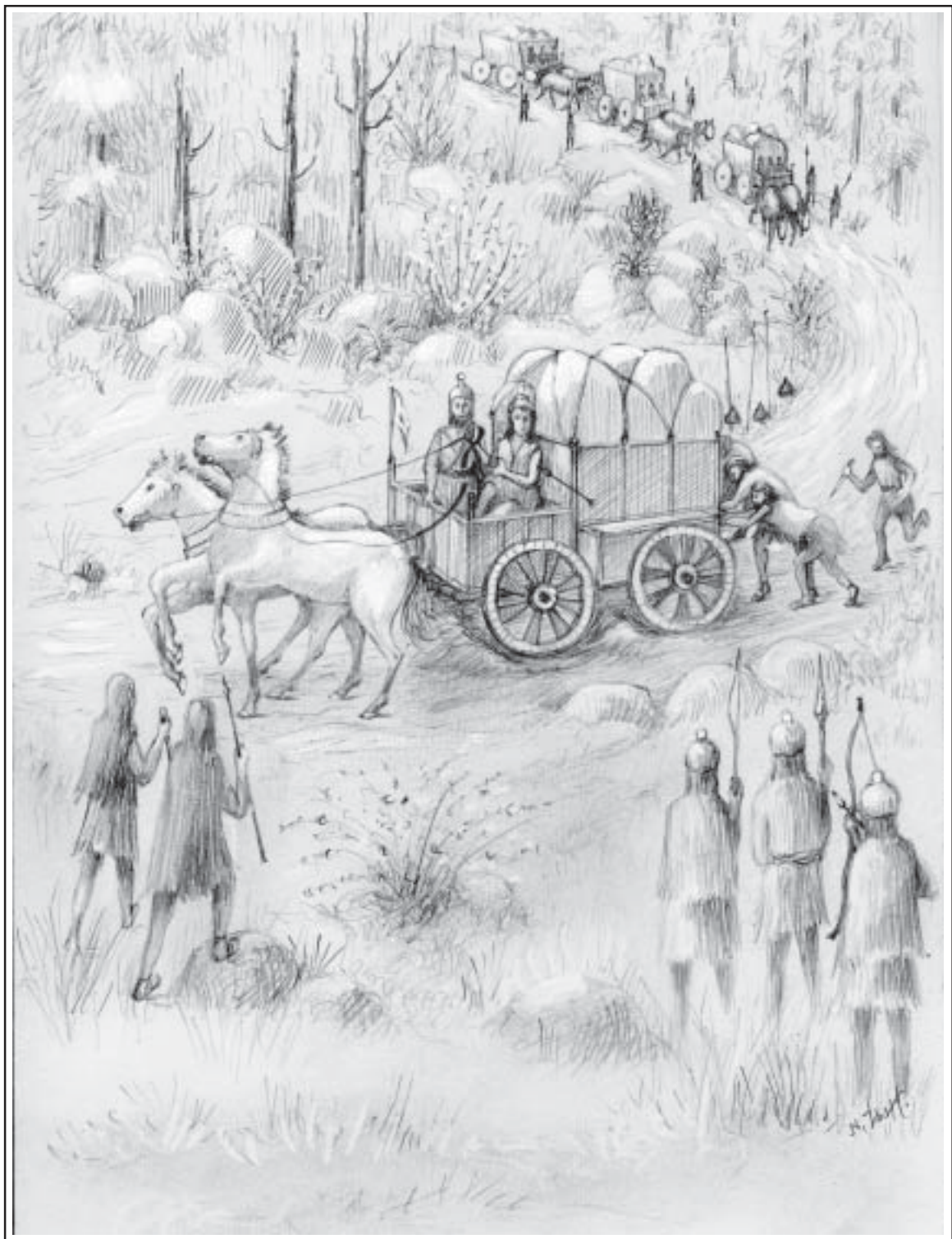
He had a sense of security though as there were several soldiers with their shields and tall lances walking on either side of the carriage. The incline got ever steeper! The horses reared up. The carriages swayed. The road was quite dangerous with steep drops. Sometimes there were holes in the road and they needed real force to pull out of them. Daniel had to dismount to hold the bridle and urge the horses on while the soldiers pushed. The horses wheezed.

The romantic atmosphere of the departure had all but gone.

The carriage in front seemed to have got into even worse problems as it had stopped, a wheel had come loose. It was necessary to take a break and Daniel took the opportunity to put some oil in the hub of the wheels on his carriage and to water the horses. The load also had to be tightened. All soldiers helped. Daniel then discovered that the distance to the carriage behind driven by Hananiah was about a hundred meters, it seemed as if it was stuck in a hole in the road. Daniel was worried, but of course as the carriage in front now had stopped they should be able to catch up. They had to wait for each other.

The ambush

Then it happened! Daniel heard a shout and then a command! Ambush! Raise the shields! Protect the horses. Daniel hurried to the horses to calm them so they would not bolt. What had happened! There it was – the carriage behind them had been ambushed! As Daniel turned around he



*The ambush
Hananjah hit by an arrow*

could see at least thirty armed men surrounding Hananiah's carriage, but he could not see Hananiah. The Chaldean soldiers from his own escort hurried to help but they did not get there before the bandits ran into a deep ravine where they disappeared. Everything happened so fast!

When Daniel got to the carriage he found Hananiah lying in front of the driver's seat. Hananiah told him, that when they tried to get the carriage out of a hole in the road, he was shot in his arm by an arrow. As a result he had dropped the reins and fallen down on the foot board. Immediately the officer sitting beside him shouted to the others that they were being ambushed. The other soldiers who were pushing the carriage from behind reached for their weapons.

But they did not have time to get their weapons before they were surrounded by a great crowd of bandits. They captured the officer just as he was about to dismount plus two other unarmed soldiers and then disappeared. As quickly as they had arrived they were gone. None of the other soldiers were seriously wounded.

Somehow it was strange that these robbers were not ruthless enough to rob them of more, they had not taken anything from the carriage, nothing apart from the three men. What was the purpose? They had not shot at the horses either. That would otherwise have been the best way to get a couple of carriages down the precepe to plunder them later on.

Daniel patched up Hananiah's wound tying a bandage around his arm to stem the blood. Hananiah was in shock! He again told how he sat there with his arms forward holding the reins – suddenly he had felt a stab in his arm, as if his arm was on fire. As he dropped the reins the horses stopped and he fell down to the floor of the carriage.

The officer by his side shouted several commands which were repeated further. When the officer dismounted from the carriage he was surrounded and taken captive before he could use his sword. The event was evidently well planned by the robbers. It was surely they who had enlarged the holes in the road to stop the carriages.

The arrow hitting Hananiah had been well aimed. Had he been hit a bit further up in his throat he would have been killed. And it was fortunate that the horses had not been hit. Just imagine if they had bolted, there would have been no choice then but to jump off before they came near a precepe where the carriage could have tumbled down. Hananiah was fortunate not to be fatally wounded. Of course the wound still hurt and he had lost quite a lot of blood.

Hananiah's character test passed

What had happened made the whole caravan stop. Some of the officers gathered around Hananiah's carriage to discuss what to do and Daniel caught some of what they said. He found out that they had been involved in similar ambushes before. The officer and the soldiers would probably be used as hostages now. These Assyrian soldiers knew that they could not fight against the Chaldeans for any length of time and they were not seeking a fight with them.

But now, as they lived in the mountains and were dependent on hunting in the great forests and fishing in the rivers, they were desperate for one item – salt! Without the vital salt they could not survive for long. So this was probably why they had attacked and taken hostages. Now they had to make contact with them and give them a bag of salt. Salt was worth its weight in gold. Daniel told Hananiah what he had heard.

– I have salt. I brought several bags of real Dead Sea salt. How much do you think they need? Will it be enough with one Efa? asked Hananiah.

– Hananiah, you amaze me! These robbers tried to kill you just now in an ambush in the forest and you are already willing to give them your salt! Are you out of your mind?

– Of course I am in shock, but I am not hurt more than in my arm. I have thought much about the command to love your neighbour as yourself. I feel I often fail to live according to that commandment – you have to show love by practicing it and not just talk about it. This is my opportunity.

– I don't want to hinder you from doing a good deed.

– Well, it is not thanks to me that I have extra salt with me. Our mothers provided the sheep skin bags for us and it was my father who gave me the salt as a going away present. You have to think how it is for these poor people living in the mountains. We can't let them waste away without salt.

Daniel thought that he had salt as well, even if not as much as Hananiah. Perhaps he should also give of his salt, but wouldn't that look silly when Hananiah gave so much. Perhaps Hananiah would feel better if he alone could save the lives of one officer and two soldiers.

For a while Daniel stood listening to the chief commander Rabsaris' discussion with the officers about how to obtain salt. They said that they did not have more than what was needed for their own people. Even the horses needed salt. Daniel got hold of Havlat and told him that Hananiah had offered to help them by providing a bag of salt, a whole Efa.

Rabsaris was genuinely glad to hear that one of the king's kids had brought a lot of salt among his belongings from Jerusalem. Hananiah's offer to give a whole Efa to free the hostages was gratefully received. They admired him, he had been wounded by the robber's arrow – yet he was the one who was willing to give of his invaluable salt to the enemies. The chief officer thanked Hananiah personally. He now took a good look at Hananiah's injury and ordered him immediately transferred to the army doctor for treatment.

Cuneiform writing

As the officers were still discussing how best to contact the robbers, an arrow flew through the air. It struck the side of the carriage above their heads with a tremendous sound – chung – stuck to the arrow was a piece of birch bark. They understood that it must be a message from the robbers. They stood there for a long time and wondered what it said. It was written in the old cuneiform writing and there was nobody who could decipher that old way of writing; it was no longer used in the civilized world.

The officers motioned to Daniel, they knew he was a linguist. He did not need many seconds to decipher the writing. It was in Aramaic and meant roughly:

– *Salt. Commander – two sea. Private – one sea. Big oak. High sun.*

Daniel interpreted it like this. They demanded two sea of salt in exchange for an officer and one sea of salt for a soldier, altogether one Efa* and one Sea. The delivery place was the big oak and it had to take place when the sun was highest in the sky.

The officers discussed this for a long time. They did not have much choice. To pursue the robbers up in the mountains was an expedition that would take several days. If their soldiers were to go out on such an expedition of revenge then the caravan would not get enough protection and could be in danger of further attacks.

If they did not accept the demand by the robbers their hostages would surely be killed. If an officer was sacrificed unnecessarily they themselves could be court marshalled and punished.

No, they had to try to find the big oak as soon as possible and get the hostages exchanged. A couple of patrols were sent out for reconnaissance. They soon discovered that the Assyrians did not miss any opportunity to get the desired salt, the path leading to the bit oak was marked with red pieces of cloth hanging in the trees. When they saw this they turned back immediately.

**One Efa = about 36 liters. One Sea = about 12 liters*

The rescue

At once they formed a strong troop of well-armed soldiers, several hundred men. They would not hand over a grain of salt until the hostages were free. Hananiah's bag of salt had double skins with wool in between so that no moisture would get into it and the salt melt in the heat. One bag of an Efa measured three Seas but the robbers had demanded four seas altogether. However, the commander thought one whole Efa would be enough to free the hostages. The salt was divided into several smaller bags of skin and dispersed among the soldiers. Daniel was allowed to come along. He might be needed to interpret more messages.

From a distance they could see the officer and the two soldiers under a great big oak tree. Their hands were tied in back and around their necks they each had a noose tied to branches in the tree. Each one of them was standing on a low tree stump. If the stump was removed the noose would tighten and they would be strangled, the normal way of execution by hanging. The robbers had probably tied a rope around the upper ridge of the stumps so that they could quickly remove the stumps.

They found a new message by the last ribbon. Daniel interpreted. They were to put the salt on a marked spot some way away from the oak tree, if they tried to free the prisoners without leaving salt the hostages would be killed.

Several soldiers were ordered to place the salt on the marked stone in front of the oak. When they retreated some ten robbers appeared from their hiding places. They opened several bags and tasted the salt. They looked satisfied, the Dead Sea salt was the purest in the world! They took their time, they were evidently quite confident, they had the hostages in their grasp. They brought a sea measure and began to measure the salt. This was nerve racking! They could now discover that salt was lacking to free one of the soldiers.

Would they kick away the stump from under him? They counted the bags several times and measured the content of one bag for a second time. They stretched out their empty hands as a sign of their displeasure. Now Daniel regretted that he had not given the missing sea by the demanded ransom. Would he now be responsible for the death of a soldier? However, after negotiations between them the robbers disappeared with the bags on their backs.

The Chaldeans hurried to free their comrades.

Reduced gratitude

After a short while an arrow with another message landed on the ground just in front of the Chaldeans. The message was just – thank you. But underneath in smaller cuneiform writing it said: *minus one Sea*. Apparently the robbers had a sense of humour! As they were missing one Sea from the demanded ransom they deducted one Sea from their thank you to show their displeasure.

The freed hostages could now relax. They had been standing on the narrow tree stumps underneath the oak for several hours and it had been nerve racking.

To start with they were afraid to lose their balance and so get caught in the noose and just imagine if an animal appeared and turned the stump over. Or just imagine if their fellow soldiers could not get enough salt together or did not understand the robbers' message.

Perhaps they would not find the right oak tree. Or maybe they would be late and the patience of the robbers would run out! Uhh, it was nerve racking! Thousand and one thoughts had gone through their heads during those long hours underneath the oak. But it was all over now! And it was a happy ending!

The commander of the troop asked Daniel to write a message to the robbers in cuneiform writing:

– His royal highness King Nebuchadnezzar grants pardon to all Assyrian soldiers putting down their weapons. Become honest citizens.

They fastened the message to one of the ropes under the oak.

When those who had been hostages learnt from where the salt had come, they could not praise the king's kids enough and in particular Hananiah for his magnanimity and generosity towards his prison officers.

This story and the king's kids' reputation spread far and wide among the Chaldean army.

Assyria and the Prophets of Israel

Knowing the history of your own country and what your forefathers have fought for is important in order that you might better understand your own time and what is necessary to hold on to. The four friends reasoned like this when, by the flickering light of the lamp in their tent, they continued talking about the history of their forefathers in the evenings.

Israel becomes a great nation

– We talked about our forefathers in Egypt last time. What happened to our people after the exodus?

– After the decline of the Egyptian world power there was a long interval of about 600 years without a dominating world power¹. It was during this time that Israel developed as a nation and entered the scene in between the two power struggling nations, Egypt and the Euphrates-Tigris area. King David's kingdom in turn developed into a great power during the reign of King Solomon².

If Solomon³ and his successors had not fallen away from the Lord, then the balance of power could probably have been maintained to the blessing of the whole world. But through the division of Israel into two kingdoms after Solomon, the buffer zone was weakened considerably. When later the northern kingdom, Israel, sank even deeper into idolatry, the Lord let Assyria increase to become the chastisement of Israel.

– How far back in time was the exodus from Egypt?

– After the exodus from Egypt our forefathers stayed for a year in Sinai and then wandered in the desert for 40 years. The time of the judges⁴ lasted about 510 years finishing with the Judge and Prophet Samuel, who anointed Saul as king. From the time Saul became king until the time of the division of Israel there were 120 years, and from the division to our time is about 380 years. So that would mean altogether about 1050 years from the exodus.

Israel's period of greatness was short

– What was our relationship to Egypt like during this time?

– At the time of King Solomon, when Israel was a great power, we had very good relations with Egypt. Solomon entered into an alliance with Egypt and his first wife was Pharaoh's (Pharaoh Siamun or Psusennes II) daughter.⁵ But because of Solomon's apostasy Israel's period of greatness

was very short. Forty years later during the reign of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, Judah was invaded by Pharaoh Sisah⁶. He founded a new dynasty in Egypt, the 2nd. He was not related to the sons of Solomon and did not feel bound by any alliance with Israel. Sisah arrived with an enormous army of 1200 chariots, 60 thousand cavalry and a countless number of soldiers – Egyptian, Libyan, Sukan and Ethiopians. He conquered Jerusalem and took all the king's treasures. He even devastated the Temple and removed the 300 golden shields that Solomon had erected in the Temple court yard. Pharaoh Sisak has recorded this victory in the Karnak Talatat in Thebes.

– About 200 years later King Hezekiah of Judah sent ambassadors to Egypt with presents; he sought help from Egypt against their common enemy, Assyria, which had started to behave threatening. However, when Jerusalem was besieged by the Assyrian King Sanherib neither Egypt's Pharaoh So nor Tirhaka⁷, King of Ehtiopia, would help Hezekiah.

Isaiah prophesied against Hezekiah's dependence on Egypt⁸, Hezekiah should have depended on God's help. When Hezekiah changed his mind⁹ and entered the temple with tears pleading for God's help, Isaiah received a new prophecy that the Lord would save them from Sanherib. It was then that the Lord's angel¹⁰ intervened and struck the Assyrian army.

– After this the Assyrians never again attack Jerusalem. But they punished Egypt for trying to help Israel. Sanherib's successor, Esahaddon, marched the coastal way through Israel and Philistia to Egypt and conquered Memphis¹¹. A couple of years later his son Assurbanipal attacked Egypt. He conquered and destroyed Thebes¹² and Egypt became for a time an Assyrian vassal state; the new Assyrian world power was a fact.

During their conversation the light from the oil lamp got ever more dim. It was time for rest after a long and hard day. In the distance they could hear the howling of the wolves, but nevertheless they felt secure. They knew God watched over them.

Assyria – a cruel oppressive regime.

Day after day the line of carriages continued through the old Assyrian highland. The mighty Assyrian power was now just a memory. Their history would continue though. Nobody could forget their cruelty to so many people. All the time since the fall of Samaria, Assyria had been a threat to Judah, spreading fear and dread amongst the Jews.

In the evenings the four friends continued their historical accounts. As before Daniel and Hananiah took turns answering the questions.

– Describe how Assyria developed into such a dreaded world power!
– The early history and culture¹³ of Assyria is to a great deal the same as that of old Babylon. They used the same kind of writing, the same religion and about the same kind of architecture. They were a mixture of Semites and Hamites. Their first capital was Ashur. It was the Hamite Nimrod¹⁴ who founded Nineveh which became the capital of his kingdom. As we said once before Nimrod was the first founder of an empire on earth, a combination of the Old Babylon and Assyria. It was not a world power as it affected just the countries in the valley of Euphrates – Tigris or Mesopotamia as it is also called.

– Afterwards Assyria was under the power of Babylon for long periods of time. However, Salmaneser I¹⁵ from Assyria threw off the Babylonian yoke about 700 years ago as he gained power over the valley of Euphrates-Tigris. The Assyrians did not regain power until Tiglat-Pileser I¹⁶ made Assyria a great nation. After that there was yet another period of decline.

Assyria becomes a great power

Through Assurnasipal II¹⁷ Assyria became a great power to reckon with about 300 years later. He was keen on war and a cruel ruler who made Assyria a military power. On his statue this message is engraved:

– *Assurnasipal, the great king¹⁸... conquered the great seas and all nations from the rising of the sun until its setting.*

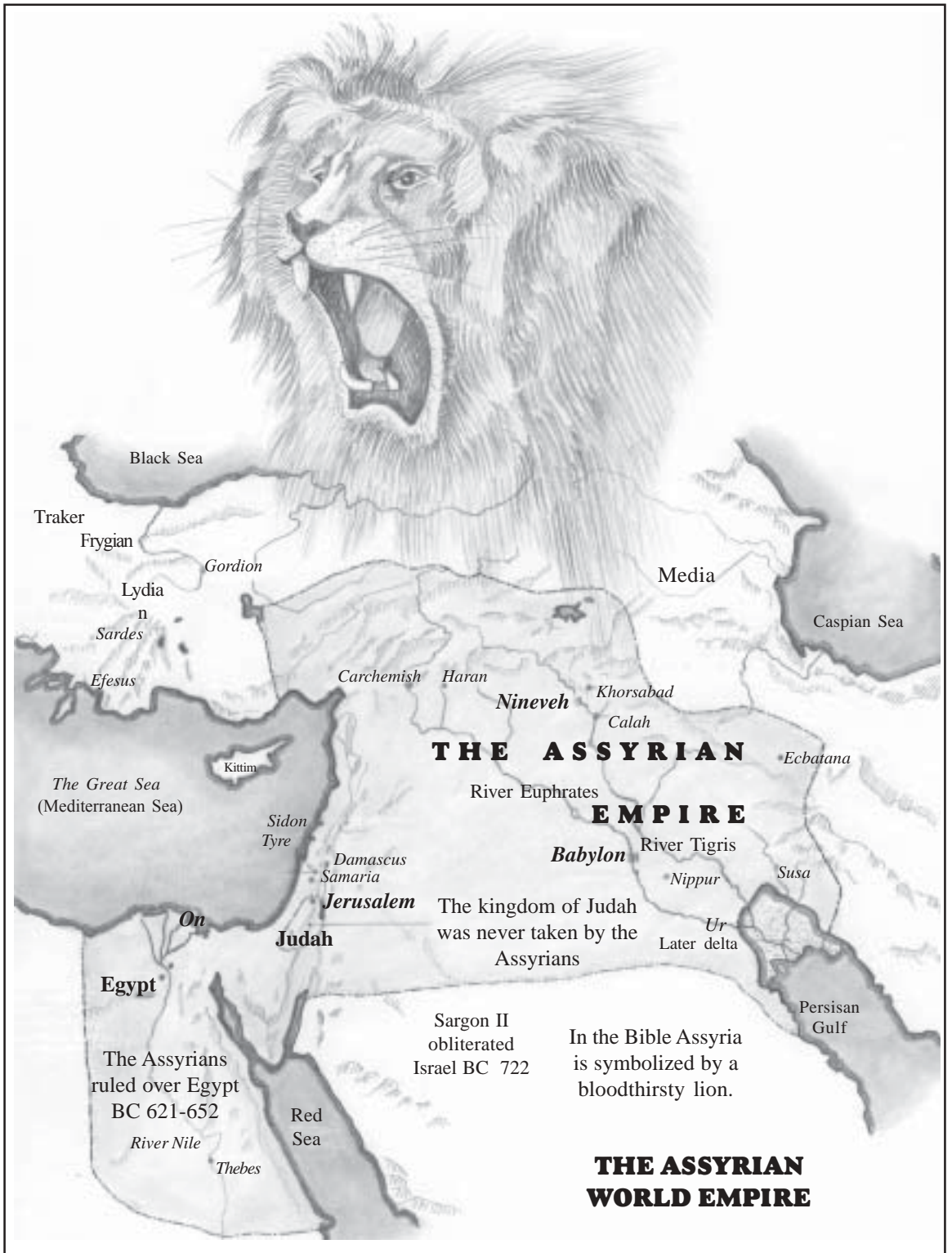
Nineveh became the capital of the world when Assyria developed into an empire. The Assyrians ruled with violence and terror for nearly three hundred years¹⁹ and become one of the most cruel and feared nations ever. It became the first nation to get a regular army and the entire nation became one mighty war machine intent of conquering the whole world. The Prophet Nahum²⁰ likened Assyria to a raging lion who lived on the blood of other nations.

– In order to create fear and incite terror they treated their enemies in the most bestial way: skinning them alive, impaling them on poles, putting out their eyes, pulling their tongues out, cutting their hands and feet off, noses and ears. They made great piles of human skulls, anything to frighten their contenders. They had a perverse enjoyment in orgies of cruelty. How deep can a human being fall?

– In one inscription one of their kings boasts of his achievements:

– *Many enemies I burnt²¹ others I let live. On some of them I cut off hands or arms, on others noses or arms, and on many I gouged out an eye.*

At that time all the nations were actually robbers but the Assyrians



**THE ASSYRIAN
EMPIRE**

The kingdom of Judah
was never taken by the
Assyrians

Sargon II
obliterated
Israel BC 722

In the Bible Assyria
is symbolized by a
bloodthirsty lion.

**THE ASSYRIAN
WORLD EMPIRE**

were the worst of all. They built up their prosperity from looting other nations. Incredible riches of gold and silver from the whole world streamed into the treasuries of Nineveh. The policy of the Assyrians was to deport the people²² they conquered, partly to destroy any sense of nationalism partly to find slave workers. Before deportation all old people, sick and weak who could not manage the long march, were killed. Pregnant women were raped and then killed by the sword as they did not want to have to bother with pregnant women. Infants were held by their feet and swung against rocks and stones so that their skulls were crushed²³ in front of their parents. Only people possessed by Satanic forces can carry out such cruelty.

– Salmaneser II²⁴ extended the country's boundaries and ruled from the Persian Gulf in the east to the Syrian coast in the west. He conquered Carchemish²⁵ defeated a mighty allied army and besieged Damascus²⁶.

– He was the first to get into conflict with Israel²⁷ during the reign of King Ahab who was one of the most ungodly kings of Israel. His wife Jezebel introduced worship of Baal and killed the prophets of Jahve. An inscription by Salmaneser mentions Ahab:

– *I destroyed 2 000 chariots and 10 thousand of Ahab's men, the king of Israel.*

The prophet Elijah²⁸ was active in Israel at that time. He preached against the apostasy and against the Baal worship which resulted in a national revival. Elijah was succeeded by his disciple, Elisha the Prophet²⁹, who with his many miracles in Israel revived trust in God³⁰.

King Jehu³¹ the successor to Ahab's family, did much evil. During his time Israel had to pay tributes to Salmaneser. There was inscribed on a black obelisk found in Kalah:

– *Jehu tributes³²: silver, gold, golden vessels, gold chalices, golden jugs, golden vases, leather, scepters, spear shafts, I have received.*

The prophets of Israel and the rise and fall of Assyria

– We must now look a bit closer at the activities of the prophets in relation to world history. What is significant for our people and which differs from all other nations, is our monotheistic belief in God coupled with a particular divine revelation conveyed by our prophets. All countries have their oracles but none can compare with our dynamic prophets and the prophecies they time and again uttered. Many of these prophecies have already been literally fulfilled.

– The prophet Joel³³ was active in Judah during the reign of King Johaz; with him came a new era of prophetic activities. He became the first of the so called writing prophets, that is he wrote down his prophecies

in a book. His message was that all mankind and all nations³⁴ would face judgment. Nobody can attack other countries without retribution. He even prophesied that there will be an outpouring of the Spirit of God³⁵ throughout the whole world, and that many gentiles will seek God. All who call on the name of the Lord will then be saved.

– In an interesting passage of Joel’s sermon he encourages the Jews to defend themselves against their oppressors with these words:

– *Beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hook into spears³⁶. Let the weakling say, "I am strong!"*

Several later prophets use this theme about the ploughshares but in reverse order as an expression of worldwide peace when the Messiah comes.

– During the time after Salmaneser II Israel had several wars with Syria, but not with Assyria. But Nineveh, already then the capital of the world, was feared by all because of its violence and wickedness. One of Israel’s most remarkable prophets, Jonah³⁷, one of the prophet Elisha’s disciples, was at that time sent to Nineveh to proclaim judgment over³⁸ the city. This judgment, however, was postponed for about 180 years because the people repented. One of the things they repented of when they heard Jonah preach, was just their lust to conquer other nations. Thus Israel had respite for a couple of decades.

– Why did God postpone judgment?

– People believed and heeded Jonah’s proclamation.

Jonah was first disobedient to God’s command and fled west, in the opposite direction. But he repented when he was thrown into the sea and landed in the belly of a great fish³⁹. Jonah was literally resurrected from the dead. According to tradition the big fish brought him to the Black Sea⁴⁰ from where he had the shortest distance to Nineveh. He preached in Nineveh so forcefully that people believed him when he said that the city would be destroyed in 40 days because of its wickedness.

– The people repented⁴¹ in sackcloth and ashes. The king ordered that the people could neither eat nor drink, not even the animals, and all were to cry out to God for mercy. To the great dismay of Jonah God spared the city.

Shansi-adad⁴² and Adad-nirari⁴³ were Assyrian kings after Salmaneser II. Adad-nirari maintained that he had subdued all Syria with Fenicia, Edon and Philisia and taken the king of Damascus prisoner. It was at the end of his despotic reign that Jonah preached in Nineveh. History shows, that Jonah’s preaching was effective, as Assyria did not make any conquests immediately afterwards during the reign of the kings Salmaneser III⁴⁴, Assur-dayan⁴⁵ and Assur-lush⁴⁶.

– During this time the prophets Amos and Hosea were active in Israel and Micah and Isaiah in Judah. They predicted judgment first for Israel and then also for Judah.

Amos and Hosea

The Prophet Amos*⁴⁷ appeared about 100 years after Elijah during the reign of Jeroboam II⁴⁸, king of Israel. Syria had been conquered by Israel after long outdrawn conflicts. Amos preached against the apostasy within the country and predicted that a new danger threatened from the north, from the Assyrian power.

– Amos was a simple shepherd from Tekoa. He appeared quite suddenly at a harvest festival in Bethel and began to sing a lament over the ruin of Israel. His severe message caused dismay amongst the celebrating congregation. The priest Amasja who defended their bull worship at Bethel – a state religion which could not be attacked – accused Amos of high treason to the king.

Amos also had a prophetic word about how Israel could avoid judgment and destruction through repentance. Even if the people did not repent and judgment was to come, there was a message in his prophecy of hope of a future restoration – *a restoration of David's fallen tent*⁴⁹ – which meant a renewal of Israel's former glory. That would happen at the return of the Messiah. But the people did not listen. Amos was the first prophet, who proclaimed the destruction of the kingdom and that the people would be removed into captivity.

– The next great prophet, active in the northern kingdom, was Hosea⁵⁰ who continued where Amos had finished. He lived during the time of the seven last kings of Israel and could witness the nation's death struggle against the overpowering Assyrian armies. He was also a prophet of doom:

– *O Samaria, I reject this calf - this idol you have made*⁵¹. *My fury burns against you. How long will it be before one honest man is found among you?*

– *When will you admit this calf you worship was made by human hands! It is not God! Therefore, it must be smashed to bits.*

– *Israel is destroyed! The only friends she has are those she tricks;*

These were terrible prophecies which were literally fulfilled. However, Hosea had also a message of comfort, of a new future in their own country when the Messiah comes:

– *I will betroth*⁵² *you to me for ever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will heal their waywardness*⁵³ *and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.*

The Prophet Micah

– The Prophet Micah⁵⁴ appeared in Judah during the reigns of Jotam, Ahaz and Hezekiah, and was contemporary with Isaiah in Judah and Hosea in Israel. He had a message of warning both to Israel and Judah and foresaw that judgment over the northern kingdom was imminent. He had to witness how the prophecies about Israel were fulfilled through the fall of Samaria and the removal of the people to Assyria. He was also the first to predict that if Judah did not repent the same would happen there too and Jerusalem would be destroyed too:

– *It is because of you that⁵⁵ Jerusalem will be plowed like a field, and become a heap of rubble; the mountaintop where the Temple stands will be overgrown with brush.*

– This prophecy has not yet been fulfilled but according to Jeremiah judgment is now sealed and it is just a matter of time, when it will be carried out. Even Micah has prophecies of a peaceful and bright future:

– *In the last days the mountain⁵⁶ of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and people will stream to it.*

Many nations will come and say,

– *Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord. to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths". the law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge among many peoples and settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.*

They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more.

– There we have an expression from Joel's prophecy although here it is reversed. *the swords will become ploughshares and the spears pruning hooks.* This is an expression of worldwide peace in coming days.

They talked long into the evening until the oil in the lamp was finished and it was time to stop. Oil was in short supply and they were not allowed an unlimited amount. To finish the day they read David's shepherd psalm together aloud, as always.

The lion hunt

Finally, it was the Sabbath after a whole week of travelling from Haran – a week full of hardship. The officers chose a suitable place for the day of rest, a beautiful plateau in the Armenian mountains. The view all around was stunning. Most of the soldiers had to be on duty even on that day as they all the time had to be on guard against attacks by wandering enemy soldiers on rampage in the mountains. Due to the risk of attack neither could the Jewish prisoners gather for the Sabbath celebration.

Most of the Jews in the transport to Nineveh were either carriage drivers or horse handlers and they had to take turns to feed the horses. None of them were allowed to leave the camp. According to the law of Moses they were allowed to look after animals and perform absolutely necessary work but they could not walk any distances on the Sabbath. It was a day of rest and a day intended for worship.

Neither could the Chaldean soldiers leave the camp, but it was different for the officers. They welcomed the Jewish Sabbath, they were going to have fun! They formed small teams to go hunting. The chief commander Rabsaris had chosen his hunting team and Daniel's new friend Ledar was among them. Ledar approached Daniel to find out if he would like to be included in their expedition. It was a suggestion by the commander himself and to be part of the chief commander's own hunting team was an offer no-one could really refuse but Daniel declined, the strict Sabbath rules did not allow any expeditions further afield on the Sabbath.

The four king's kids began the Sabbath by singing and playing David's psalms. Every now and then they had to tend to their horses. Azariah took the opportunity to draw the beautiful view. Daniel and Hananiah discussed numerical values in Scripture, while Mishael composed music. He had begun a new sequence with a message of hope with words from the prophet Isaiah. It fitted very nicely with their situation on the way to captivity. One day the Jews will return to Zion with joy.

– Everlasting joy will crown their heads. And a main road¹ will go through that once deserted land; it will be named 'The Holy Highway'.

No evil-hearted men² may walk upon it. God will walk there with you; even the most ignorant cannot miss the way. No lion will lurk along its course, nor will there be any other dangers; only the redeemed will travel there.

These, the ransomed by the Lord,³ will go home along that road to Zion, singing the songs of everlasting joy. For them all sorrow and sighing will be gone forever; only joy and happiness will be there.

The hunters disappear

As it was getting dark Havlat came to tell them that there was a problem. All hunting teams had returned apart from that of the chief commander, a group of five officers. As it would soon be pitch dark several groups had gone out with torches to search for them and to guide them back.

The torch bearers returned after a couple of hours without having found Rabsaris and his hunters. There was now great commotion among the officers. They called all the soldiers together and selected several teams to go out yet one more time to search with torches. They too returned to camp after several more hours of futile searching.

Reveille and line up was early next morning and half of the soldiers were divided into small groups with one officer in each. They were to search through the mountains meticulously where the hunters were thought to have gone.

Daniel asked if he could join Havlat's group. Azariah had to stay home to tend the horses and Hananiah had not yet recovered from his injury. Mishael and Daniel were eager to help and they were welcome to come along but as no prisoners could carry arms Havlat wondered what assistance they could give. Would they not be just more trouble, what could they do if they met enemy soldiers or were attacked by wild beasts? Daniel explained that they could bring their "stone slings" which were not traditional weapons but nevertheless were very useful.

There were four men in Havlat's team plus the two king's kids. Before they set off they discussed in which direction to start searching. Daniel remembered Ledar saying that he wanted to go up into the mountains across a river where there would be animals of all kinds, bears and leopards and even lions had their lairs everywhere in that area. The hunters had not intended to kill big game but they had decided that if they could get a roebuck or wild bear they would grill it on the spot.

By supplication I will guide them

First they needed to find the river down in the valley which Ledar had talked about and then climb the hill on the other side. Daniel and Mishael were pleased to be part of this expedition. On the way down to the valley where the river ought to be, they reminded themselves of a word from the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah:

– *By supplication I will guide them.*⁴

God knew where the lost hunters were and it was within his power to lead them there if they prayed for it. But they had to be sensitive enough to discern God's guidance. They tried to find out which way to go. It was like stumbling in the dark but even so you could get a sense of the right direction.

Having walked for an hour they could see the river deep down in the valley. On the other side there were sloping hills towards the distant high mountains. That would be the area Ledar had been talking about.

For a while they stood there just looking, fairly soon they discovered smoke from a fire half way towards the mountains. That looked interesting! It could be the officers' fire. But why would they stay around a fire instead of coming back to camp? Could it be a band of robbers?

They started off in the direction of the smoke, it was worth investigating. First they had to go down to the river and try crossing it somewhere. They had to walk along the river for quite a while before they found a suitable place. Daniel and Mishael took the opportunity to collect smooth stones for their slings. The many bushes and trees by the river blocked the view so they could no longer see the smoke from the fire on the other side.

Having climbed for a while on the other side of the river they arrived on a plateau. A cheetah chasing a gazelle came rushing by at great speed. The cheetah is similar to the leopard but has another pattern of the fur and has longer legs. It is said to be the fastest animal in the world. In the distance they could see many other animals, whole herds of deer and antelopes. In this area there would also be lots of bears, but they would probably stay further up in the mountains. It took a while before they could see the smoke again. But then they saw something moving in front of the fire. Could it be a lion?

It was most important not to betray their presence. They discovered the direction of the wind and took a long detour moving against the wind. The animals must not notice their scent. As they got nearer they got a clearer picture of the situation. Behind the fire were large boulders and above them steep mountain cliffs.

They caught sight of some people between the fire and the boulders. The people were trapped as in front of the fire there was a whole pride of lions just waiting for the fire to die. The officers had ended up in front of a lion's den! Their only hope was to keep the lions at bay by keeping the fire going. When they could no longer keep the fire going that would be the end of their protection. Two male lions and three lionesses were lying in wait to catch them, they also wanted to get into their den.

The David sling

The rescue team crept as near as possible, crawling against the wind. They had to put the lions out of action and this was not easy. Short spears and arrows were their only weapons. They had to get fairly close in order to be effective, however if they got too close they might be in danger of an attack by the lions. Havlat asked Daniel if he would try his stone sling. Daniel and Mishael had brought several so called *David slings*⁵. It was a similar sling king David once used when he defeated Goliath, the giant.

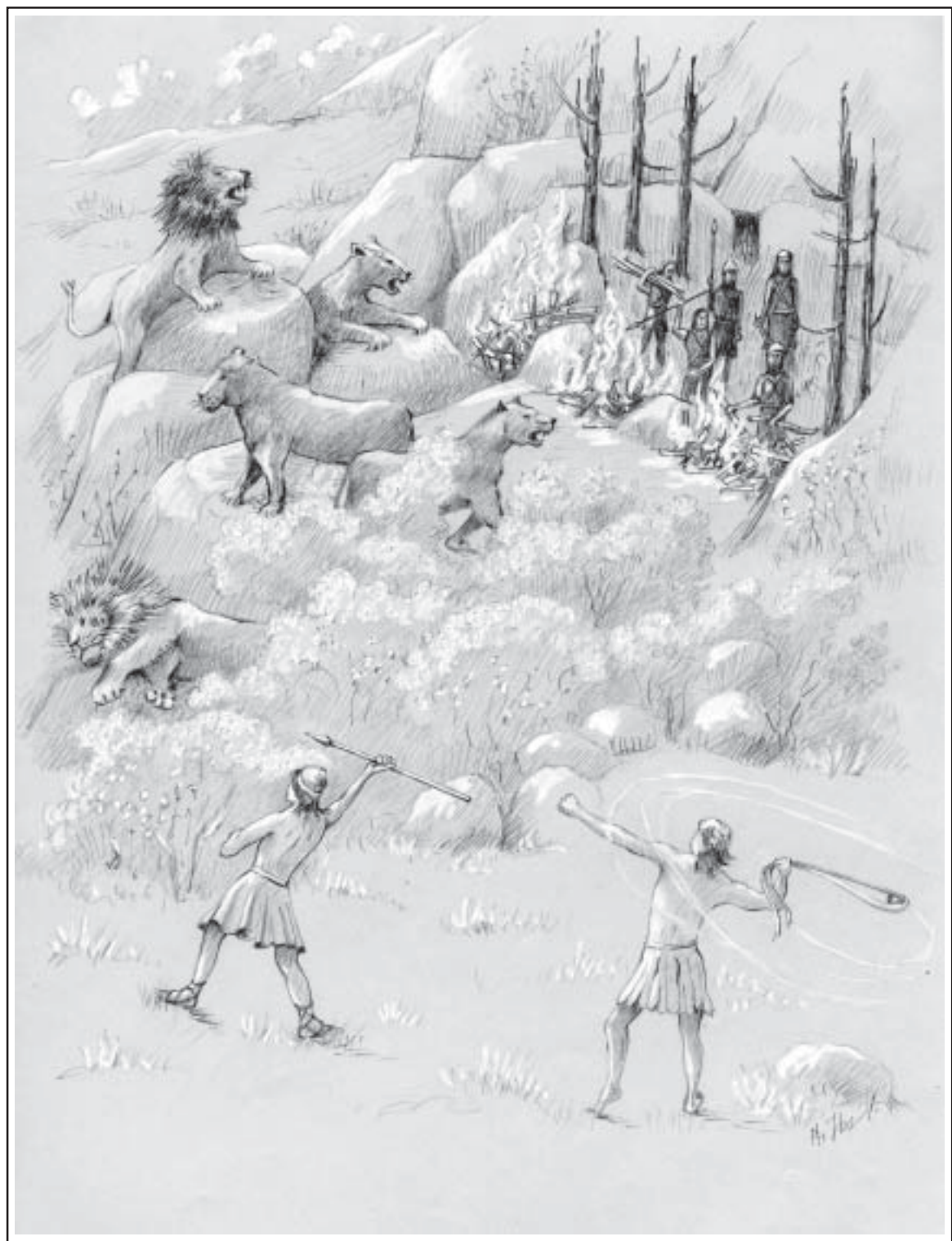
Great skill was needed in using it. For those trained in its use, the possibility of success was great. It was important to let go of the one end of the sling at exactly the right moment to get the stone off in the right direction. The other end of the sling was fastened through a loop around the thumb. Soon you could hear a whizzing sound as Daniel swung his sling around aiming for a large male with a great dark brown mane. He let the stone go with great speed through an opening in the bushes. It hit the unsuspecting lion with great force.

It looked ridiculous! The stone hit the lion's foot. He jumped up with a terrific yell and started dancing around, sometimes on his hind legs, sometimes getting down to lick his front paw. It probably hurt a lot. The officers behind the fire looked surprised wondering what was going on. They were keeping the rather large fire going to prevent any of the lions from daring to approach them. Now it was Mishael's turn to use the sling. He aimed for one of the females lying quite near. That stone struck home, it hit the lion in the ear. The lion jumped up like lightning but then rolled downhill without a sound, no doubt it got concussion. It landed in such a good position that the soldiers could put it out of its misery with a few arrows and a well aimed spear.

The officers now discovered what was happening and got themselves ready to join the hunt with their spears. Daniel and Mishael continued using their slings. They aimed for the heads of the lions to make them unconscious. About every third throw hit home.

The task of the others was to kill the lions. Havlat thought this was a very benign way of hunting. After an animal had been hit in the head and made unconscious by the stone it would not feel the pain of arrows and spears. Hitting a lion with a couple of arrows or a spear in the back was a slow and cruel way of killing the animal as it was not killed immediately.

After a couple of hours four of the proud lion kings lay dead. One of the females had fled. She could return so they had to look out for her. The officers appeared from behind the fire, sooty but pleased. Rabsaris, the commander, was impressed by how smoothly they had felled one lion after the other and wondered what kind of equipment they had used for



The David-sling

shooting stones with such precision. He was greatly surprised, when he saw the simple David slings and heard the story about David and Goliath, the giant Philistine⁶.

The lions' den

In answer to the question how they happened to be in front of a lions' den they said that it was the result of sheer thoughtlessness. There had been a strong scent of animals between the great boulders, but as they saw no animals they thought they were safe. They thought it was a suitable place to grill an antelope they had killed as there was a flat stone. Between the stones their backs would be free and they could be sure that the fire would not spread to the dry grass and so cause a forest fire.

However, when they had got the fire going and started to grill the meat, one lion after another appeared. They got very close and were very noisy with their roaring. As the officers had only big stones behind them and steep mountain slopes above them, they had no way of retreat. They had to keep the initial fire going and start a few more fires by the outer boulders in order to keep the lions at a distance.

Soon enough they discovered the entrance to the lion's den behind the boulders. From there they could hear the whimper from several lion cubs. Now they understood the danger they were in, but it was too late. They had discussed if they would be able to fight their way out but reasoned that as long as they could keep the fire going they would be safe.

Fortunately there was quite a lot of dry old trees between the boulders and the steep cliff. They realised that when they had used up all the dry wood, then they would have no choice but to try to break out. The chance of survival would then be rather small. So they decided to wait for help to arrive and continue keeping the fire going. All night they had taken turns to feed the fire. Some of them had continuously been felling the dry trees cutting them into suitable pieces for the fire. In order to be seen in day light they had put a lot of dry leaves on the fire, now and then creating rather a lot of smoke. Of course they all turned black from the soot.

The lion cubs

– Come and have a look, said the commander. He made his way between the boulders to the entrance of the lions' den. They had to bend down to get into the narrow opening. It was dark inside but after a while they got used to the darkness. The commander picked up the tiny lion cubs. They were not much bigger than half grown cats, probably born just recently. They whimpered and their eyes tried to focus. Perhaps they were hungry. The officers had tried to feed them with some goats milk that they brought but it was difficult to get them to lap it up at first. Once they had dipped

their noses in the milk they began to lap up and now they managed pretty well. Unfortunately there was no milk left now so they would have to hurry back as fast as they could. Every one admired the little orphans.

When they came out of the lions' den they were met by another rescue team. They had been far up into the mountains and from a cliff ledge had seen the smoke. On the way down they had been surprised by a furious female lion. Usually lions stay away from human beings but this female had attacked them immediately. One of the soldiers narrowly escaped with his life, he had held up his short spear just at the right moment and so speared the lion. He had a big scratch on his shoulder from the lion claws when the lion fell on top of him. The other soldiers had quickly killed the lioness. Now they were all tired but happy that their commander and his hunting team had been rescued.

The commander Rabsaris spoke:

– That the lioness was furious we can all understand. Now there is much work to be done before we can return to camp. We cannot leave the valuable lion skins here. As soon as we have eaten we need to skin the lions.

The sun was high in the sky. All were hungry. They had smoked antelope ham and spring water for lunch. After that they all set to skinning the lions, cutting out the best meat. The officers cast lots for the skins. The commander declined as he already had several skins from other hunting adventures. Two soldiers from the other team had to go back to fetch the skin from the lioness. They had to obey orders but protested jokingly anyway:

– Of course we will go back, so long as you don't send any more lions to attack us!

Daniel and Mishael helped to take care of the wounded soldier. They washed the wound clean and poured balsam oil into the wounds and bandaged them. It was all they could do for the moment. Mishael had a flask with real balsam from Gilead which came in handy.

What was to happen to the lion cubs though? Surely they could not leave them to fend for themselves? Now when the escaping lioness also had been killed the cubs would die of starvation. Daniel asked Ledar. He looked bemused – Daniel then realized he had a plan. Before setting off they all gathered around.

The commander Rabsaris made a thank you speech to all in the rescue team with Havlat as the leader. Then he turned to Daniel and said:

– So, you joined them after all. I was annoyed to say the least as you did not accept my invitation to join us yesterday.

– Our law does not allow us Jews to walk any distances on the Sabbath. That is why I declined.

– Yes, I know that you have a strict religion with lots of things that are forbidden. But now I am nevertheless very pleased that you joined Havlat's rescue team and I have seen what a great contribution both of you have made from behind the bushes with your secret weapons. So I will give you a small reward because you helped to save our lives. Rabsaris continued:

A present for the king

– These four lion cubs are very valuable. I have heard that our king, his highness Nebuchadnezzar has plans to start a zoo down in Babylon. It will become the world's greatest gathering of wild animals. He would surely be very pleased to receive a few tiny lion cubs. Then he could have his own lions' den in his zoo. We have now four lion cubs and we have four king's kids among the Jewish prisoners. They are all going to the king's palace in Babylon.

I think it is very suitable for them each to bring a lion cub as a present for the king – you will be the ones to have charge of the lion cubs! Take good care of them! You can be sure that the king will be delighted to receive such a present. It will mean a great deal for your future at the court.

Daniel and Mishael gladly received the pocket size kings of the animal kingdom, they were touched by the chief commander's speech. They carefully put the lion cubs on top of some pieces of cloth in their rucksacks.

It was a happy company of hunters that returned to camp. Some of the soldiers carried marvellous lion steaks on long spears between them. Others carried the lion skins stretched out on long poles.

Daniel and Mishael were very proud over their valuable load whimpering in their rucksacks. They each took out their flutes and began playing one march after the other. One of the marches was Mishael's own composition:

– *Come with joyful shouting to Zion!*⁷

Sometimes Mishael sang in Hebrew accompanied by Daniel's flute. The Chaldeans did not understand the words to the music but they marched very well to it. Daniel and Mishael dreamt of the day when they again could march to Zion and the king's palace in Jerusalem. Dreams and imagination are often healing for the soul.

They were in high spirits as in a march of victory, when they returned to the camp. When the people at the camp heard the music they all came to look at the triumphant hunters with the large lion heads dangling between them. Most admired were the tiny lion cubs. In the evening there was a great celebration the camp, lion steaks were on the menu.

The fall of Samaria and Assyria

Tiglat-Pileser – Pul

A couple of evenings later they continued talking about the Assyrian world power – its rise and fall. Daniel and Hananiah helped one another to read from their notes from the history lessons at the School of Prophecy. Some of their talks was a repetition and a summary of earlier talks.

– The prophet Jonah’s preaching made a great impression on the Assyrians and they stopped their cruel invasions for a time. It was not until 50 years after Jonah’s preaching that the Assyrians attacked Israel again through Tiglat-Pileser II¹ with surname Pul. He was a mighty ruler and commander of the world’s strongest army which he re-organised to make it undefeatable.

His goal was to take the western hemisphere and make Nineveh a centre of power for the whole world. Israel had a king named Menahem² who became a liability for the nation. He seized power by murdering the previous king, Sallum, he was incredibly cruel. When the people of Tisah³ did not accept him as king, he had everybody killed who lived in the city and by the coast. He had all pregnant women cut open.

– Then Pul⁴ attacked him with a great army, but Menahem bought himself free with 1000 talents of silver. Pul made Israel a vassal state and Menahem became liable to pay tax to Assyria.

– When Menahem’s son, Pekaja⁵, had been in power for two years he was murdered by Peka⁶. When Peka became king of Israel he made an alliance with the king of Syria, Resin. They wanted to force king Ahaz⁷ of Judah⁷ to join the alliance, as he refused, they attacked him. The attack was a fatal attack against their own brothers, the Jews. Ahaz⁸ asked Assyria for help. The prophet Isaiah condemned⁹ Ahaz’ actions and said that Judah had nothing to fear from Resin and Peka. They were just *smoldering stubs of fire wood*¹⁰ who soon would be without all power. Instead king Ahaz became liable to pay tax to Assyria through his dependence on Assyria.

The fall of Samaria and the northern kingdom

– Some years later Pul began the campaign¹¹ whereby he conquered Syria and their king Resin. He occupied Damascus, conquered Peka and brought many prisoners from northern Israel, the whole of the tribe of Naphtali¹², in what is called the Galilean captivity.

- What Isaiah had prophesied was literally fulfilled.
- Through Pul's third invasion all Israelites east of Jordan, the tribes of Ruben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh were taken captive to Assyria.
- The next king, Salmaneser IV¹³, was also a great commander and when the Assyrians invaded Israel for the fourth time he made king Hosea¹⁴ a tributary king. However, after a while Hosea stopped paying tax to Assyria and allied himself to Egypt instead. Salmaneser IV came with a great army and besieged Samaria¹⁵, the fifth and last invasion of Israel. As he himself died at the siege, one of the commanders, Sargon II¹⁶ took over power.
- Sargon II was a mighty warrior and ruler who made Assyria the world's hitherto greatest nation. He took all land from east of the Tigris to the Mediterranean and his campaigns reached all the way to Egypt. He continued the siege of Samaria which he occupied after three years.
- During his time the northern kingdom, Israel, was completely annihilated. He took the population captive and brought them all to Assyria¹⁷ to Halah and to Habor, places by a river in Gozan in Assyria, and to the cities of Media. They were forced to live in hard slavery for the rest of their lives. In an inscription by Sargon we read:
 - *During my first year I took Samaria¹⁸. I took 27 290 prisoners. People from other countries who had not paid their tribute I placed in Samaria.*
 - The Assyrians brought other oppressed people, the Elamites from Elam¹⁹ east of Babylon, to live in Galilee and in Samaria in their stead. That was the beginning of a system of transfer of people which other kings later also made use of.
 - Some years later Sargon II conquered the Hittites²⁰ in a great battle by Charchemish and seven years later Babylon which then had a Chaldean king was conquered. Sargon II was murdered, however, and was succeeded by his son Sanherib.
 - During this time Isaiah, Hosea and Micah were prophets in Judah and Israel. Their prophecies about repentance did not help and judgment was executed. The northern kingdom lasted for about 200 years and ceased with the fall of Samaria. The prophecies by Amos and Hosea were thus fulfilled.

Isaiah – king of the prophets

- Isaiah²¹ is sovereign amongst the prophets. He was just a young man when Assyria crushed the northern kingdom and removed most of the people²². In spite of Isaiah's warnings the apostasy continued in Judah. When the rest of Israel was removed as Samaria was conquered thirteen years later, Isaiah predicted that Judah²³ also would be hit by the Assyrians' violent ravages as a result of their lack of repentance:

– *I will overwhelm²⁴ my people with Euphrates' mighty flood; the king of Assyria and all his mighty armies will rage against them. This flood will overflow all its channels and sweep into your land of Judah, O Immanuel, submerging it from end to end.*

– Isaiah lived all his life in the shadow of the world's most cruel nation and he watched all of his land being destroyed, the only exception was the city of Jerusalem.

Sanherib and Isaiah – two sovereigns in confrontation

– Sargon II's son, Sanherib,²⁵ was one of the most well known of the Assyrian kings. He had a hard struggle with rebellions among the Chaldeans which led to Babylon being²⁶ razed to the ground. He conquered Egypt, he also attacked the kingdom of Judah during the reign of king Hezekiah. Sanherib destroyed 46 of the smaller cities and according to some accounts he took more than 200 thousand Jewish prisoners²⁷ and brought them to Assyria. This became the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy about the flooding of the north. At the time of the siege of Jerusalem Sanherib's army²⁸ was killed by the angel of the Lord. This too was in accordance with a prophecy by Isaiah. After the defeat at Jerusalem Sanherib returned to Nineveh which he now wanted to make as beautiful as Babylon had been. He himself wrote:

– *I have²⁹ recreated all the buildings in Nineveh, my royal city, and re-laid all of its old streets, enlarged the most narrow and made the whole city shining like the sun.*

As Sanherib worshipped³⁰ his god Nisroks in his temple, he was killed by two of his sons, and thus another of Isaiah's prophecies was fulfilled.

– Isaiah is however above all the prophet of the future. His greatest and most important visions relate to the coming of the Messiah as Saviour and Prince of Peace. Like Micah Isaiah also uses the same picture language as Joel in relation to peace although in reversed order as he says:

– *Beat their sword into ploughshares.³¹*

– Esarhaddon³² was the third son of Sanherib. Like Sargon II he was a great commander and became one of Assyria's greatest kings. He rebuilt Babylon and conquered Egypt. However he died during a campaign to crush a rebellion in Egypt and was succeeded by his son Assurbanipal.

– At that time the prophet Nahum³³ appeared. He predicted in detail the total destruction of Nineveh when it was still at the height of its power. Nahum's prophecy about the destruction of Nineveh³⁴ came to the relief of many, yes a whole world who under oppression cried out for justice.

Assurbanipal destroys Thebes

– Assurbanipal³⁵ was a forceful ruler, interested in education and culture. We have talked about this before. It was he who founded the greatest library at the time in Nineveh by copying masses of then up to 2000 year old documents and masterpieces from earlier generations. We can thank him that we know so much about the very earliest culture both before and after the Flood. Assurbanipal was also a very cruel ruler. When Egypt again rebelled he showed no mercy but quelled the rebellion and destroyed the beautiful city Thebes³⁶, the pride of Egypt. He also finally defeated the Elamites and leveled their capital Susa to the ground.

The fall of Assyria³⁷

– The many wars impoverished Assyria. The treasuries were empty and the fighting men were drastically diminished in number. About ten years after the destruction of Thebes Egypt broke away from Assyrian control³⁸, the year thereafter Babylon also liberated itself³⁹.

The decline of the mighty Assyrian empire was rapid. It was attacked from the north by the Scythians and from the south by Chaldeans and Elamites. Assurbanipal's sons, Assur-etil-ilami, Sin-sar-ishum⁴⁰ fought each other to gain power and this was detrimental to their defense against their common enemies.

When Nebuchadnezzar then formed an alliance with the Medes to defeat the Assyrians, it was not long before their fate was sealed. The fall of Ashur⁴¹ came first, then Nineveh⁴², and soon the New Babylonian empire together with Media gained total control over the earlier Assyrian empire. The second world power, Assyria, perished never to return.

– We have still another prophet who predicted the fall of the Assyrian empire, Zephaniah⁴³. He expressed the fate of Nineveh in strong language - that it would become just a heap of rubble:

– *He will stretch out his hand⁴⁴ against the north and destroy Assyria, leaving Nineveh utterly desolate and dry as a desert.*

Havlat's conversion

After their last talk with Havlat the king's kids noticed that he tried to avoid them. True, they said hello when they met but there was something different in his eyes which they had not noticed before. Daniel wondered if the loud praise during the Sabbath at Haran had frightened him.

Therefore they were pleased when Havlat again came to visit them one evening in their tent. He was their only real friend in the new world they now lived in.

– It's some time since we talked together. We might soon be going in different directions, I have decided to accept the promotion to train riders in Susa for the king's life guards, said Havlat.

Daniel exclaimed:

– Congratulations! We hope to see you again as we also ourselves will be placed in Babylon.

– Yes, it is quite possible. Do you know where in Babylon you will live?

– It is likely to be in a wing of the king's palace, we will study at the royal academy.

– Well, I never! That is a bit of good luck – It is said to be the best educational establishment in the whole of Chaldea, maybe in the whole world.

– We are looking forward to it. We have been very impressed by the Chaldean knowledge and wisdom in all fields, so it will be interesting to study more of this. But what about your future? Tell us more!

– The king will promote me to officer when we arrive in Babylon. Whenever we stay in one place for a while the officers now arrange courses for applicants so I have already began to study.

Believe it or not, I have started to learn to read. I realise that you thought I could read when you gave me the Ten commandments. I was ashamed to tell you that I could not read at all, that is one of the reasons why I have not come to see you again earlier.

– It is nothing to be ashamed of if you can't read or write. Most of the Jews can't read or write either but we have a group among us who we call scribes¹ and who can read. Everybody turns to them to get writings of all kinds explained.

– I want to explain to you why I have come today. I have learnt the ten commandments² by heart now and they are really very good. Just think if all gods had such rules. Then it would be good to live on earth – people would have to abide by them of course.

Take the tenth commandment for example, the one about not coveting anything belonging to some-one else, if all followed that commandment we would avoid war and violence on earth.

– Ethical rules are necessary for human beings to live in harmony. unfortunately there are many who violate such rules.

– I look forward to seeing my old mother again and I want to do everything I can for her in her old age. There is a promise in the commandments which says that if you honour your parents and care for them then you will have long life.

– What do you think about the first commandments?

– Well, I was just coming to them. There are so many gods to choose from in our country, it is difficult to determine which one is the best. Perhaps it is like you say, that there is only one real God. In any case I do not know of any other God who has good rules like your God has. Of course, he is strict, when it comes to faithfulness in marriage for instance. I think it is good in a way. As you don't want to be betrayed yourself, why should you then betray your wife by being unfaithful and committing adultery.

When it comes to not being allowed to have any other gods than the Lord, I am prepared to accept that. I have not forgotten the experience of how your God helped me, when I lay dying in your tent.

But the deciding moment was your gathering in the forest of pine trees in Haran, when all of you lifted your hands in praise. I have never seen anything like that before. Your God was so real although you could not see him, it was as if you did see him. Your faces were radiant and your praise was genuine. A God like that, who can make people happy and uplifted is the kind of God I want. But can I really be allowed to worship your God? I am an unclean pagan and I felt so very sinful when you sang your praises.

There was a long silence. The king's kids were moved to tears by what they had heard from Havlat. They did not know that their worship could make such an impression on a pagan.

Havlat continued and said:

– I can tell you that what happened in Haran has been talked about far and wide. All the officers talked about it. And when I showed them your commandments there were many who wanted them copied. We Chaldeans are rather proud over our culture but we are a bit envious of your contact with the higher powers. If I am honest I feel unworthy to worship your God.

– Daniel could not keep quiet any longer, he explained to Havlat that the Lord has created all human beings in his image³ and that he loves everyone. He wants all men to search for him, to repent of their sins and so receive God's grace and forgiveness. The Lord has promised that

– *Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*⁴.

That promise is for all people, even pagans.

Havlat thought for a while and said:

– What does it mean, calling on the name of the Lord? How can you pray right out into thin air – without an idol or anything similar?

– We call it praying in faith. God hears us when we mention his name and pray sincerely. Usually we turn in the direction of the Temple in Jerusalem as a sign to show that we are serious when we pray. One of our kings, the one who inaugurated our temple in Jerusalem⁵, prayed in his dedication prayer that all who turn towards Jerusalem and ask for grace, will experience forgiveness and salvation, whatever nation and people he may belong to.

– Can I pray here now? I want to be in contact with Almighty God. Otherwise, I am afraid I will just return to the sensual temple ceremonies in my home area when I get home, everyone participates in those ceremonies. I would like to have something better and higher to live for, something new.

All four stood up. Turning towards Jerusalem they prayed, one by one, that the Lord would receive Havlat and make him a child of God. Daniel led Havlat in a prayer for grace, forgiveness and salvation in the name of the Lord, Havlat repeated word by word.

A lovely sense of peace filled the little tent.

How valuable each life is before God!

Towards Nineveh

In the evenings when the king's kids were together, they amused themselves by reading notes about the remarkable metropolis, Nineveh. This was their next destination. They went through the teachings they had had at the School of Prophecy.

Nineveh – the metropolis

Nineveh, one of the most beautiful cities in the world, was founded by Nimrod¹. There had been a competition between Nineveh and Babylon, 15 days journeys south, both wanted to be the mightiest and most beautiful city in the world. When Assyria became the dominating world power Nineveh became the capital of the whole world.

Kalah, a days journey north, belonged to Greater Nineveh, also Korsabad² half a days journey south. Together they form a triangle where the river Tigris meet with the river Kaser. The area has a complex system of cities with a network of canals for irrigation of the vegetation between the built up areas. Everything is protected by no less than five systems of high walls with three moats connecting with the rivers. Nineveh with its enormous fortification constructions, one of the world's strongest cities, was built by thousands of foreign slaves and considered unconquerable.

The inner city centre³ the actual Nineveh, is about 3 miles (5 kilometers) in length and 1,5 miles (2,5 kilometers) in breadth. It is surrounded by the very strongest of walls, about 100 feet (34 meters) high and broad enough for four chariots to be driven side by side around the entire city, half a day's journey. During the time of Assyrian world power, after the Assyrians had destroyed Babylon and Thebes, Nineveh became the queen of all the cities of the world.

The Assyrians gathered enormous riches which they had taken as spoils from countries which they had conquered. With the help of slaves they built not only high walls, streets and market places, but also beautiful temples and palaces. King Sanherib's palace is one of the world's largest and occupies three whole blocks. As we mentioned before it contains Assurbanipal's enormous library⁴. It contains more than 100 thousand volumes including the world's oldest historical writings. Assurbanipal had his scribes search for and copy the tablets in the libraries of old Babylon as far back as 2 000 years before his time.

In Nineveh there is, as in all other large cities, lots of temples. All idols of Babylon are also in Nineveh. The most popular temples are those where Ishtar and their own local landsfather Ashur are worshipped.

The prophet Jonah who was sent to preach judgment over Nineveh, gives a description of the entire Nineveh-area and tells us that the city is three day's journey⁵ in length. In the book of Jonah it says also that one of the reasons that the Lord wanted to spare the city was that there were 120 000 inhabitants⁶ in Nineveh who could not tell right from left. This expression is interpreted by many to refer to the children, for whom the Lord had particular compassion as they would suffer innocently if the city was destroyed. If there were that many children then the entire population of the city would count to over a million.

The destruction of Nineveh

– These were some of the notes I have made about Nineveh. But now Nineveh might be just a heap of rubble? said Daniel.

– It is now just two years since the fall of Nineveh. How could the Chaldeans take Nineveh with its great walls and moats?

– It was really with the help of the forces of nature. As you know, the prophet Nahum in Israel was one who predicted the destruction of Nineveh in detail. It happened just as he had foretold:

– Nineveh you are finished?⁷ You are already surrounded by enemy armies! Sound the alarm! Man the ramparts! Muster your defenses, full force, and keep a sharp watch for the enemy attack to begin!

Shields flash red in the sunlight! The attack begins! See their scarlet uniforms! See their glittering chariots moving forward side by side, pulled by prancing steeds! Your own chariots race recklessly along the streets and through the squares, darting like lightning, gleaming like torches. The king shouts for officers; they stumble in their haste, rushing to the walls to set up their defenses, But too late! The river gates are open!⁸ The enemy has entered! The palace is in panic!

The queen of Nineveh is brought out naked to the streets, and led away, a slave, with all her maidens weeping after her; listen to them mourn like doves, and beat their breasts! Nineveh is like a leaking water tank! Her soldiers slip away, deserting her; she cannot hold them back.

”Stop, stop,” she shouts, but they keep on running.

Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold!⁹ There seems to be no end to the treasures. Her vast, uncounted wealth is stripped away. Soon the city is an empty shambles; hearts melt in horror; knees quake; her people stand aghast, pale-faced and trembling.

Where is that great Nineveh, lion of the nations, full of fight and boldness, where even the old and feeble, as well as the young and tender, lived unafraid?

– About 20 years after¹⁰ Nahum's prophecy an army of Chaldeans and Medes surrounded Nineveh. Assyria was much weakened then. The Scythians, nomad warrior tribes from the north of Assyria made continuous war expeditions, they had very much decimated the Assyrian army. On top of that Assurbanipal II's sons¹¹ had proclaimed themselves kings, each over a part of the empire, with civil war as a result.

– The river channel altered its course and suddenly the water level in the river rose, destroying parts of the ramparts and washing away parts of the walls when Nineveh had been besieged for two years.

– Nahum had prophesied that the river gates would open, and it happened just as he predicted. The Medes and Chaldeans were not late in taking the opportunity to move in and the once so mighty city with its many moats and high walls could not keep the enemy out.

The huge army poured in like a flood and the proud inhabitants of Nineveh were subjected to a terrible carnage.

– In a couple of weeks we will see for ourselves what is left of Nineveh, concluded Hananiah

The swan song of Nineveh

It was late in the day when the long caravan of carriages arrived at one the suburbs of Nineveh.

They were accommodated in military barracks. Tired after many days of “driving” with heavy loads on bad roads, all were looking forward to a long time of rest as they were to stay for the winter in the military compound outside Nineveh.

So the four king’s kids had now arrived at the famous city of Nineveh¹ by the river Tigris. From early childhood they had heard of this mighty metropolis, the capital of the powerful Assyrian empire. It was the world’s largest and wealthiest city at the time. But how much was left after being plundered and pillaged by the Chaldeans and the Medes. Next day they were to see it with their own eyes and find out.

But the following morning they were told that nobody was allowed into Nineveh. All access roads were blocked by soldiers to stop unlawful looting. Special teams were still clearing buildings. All had to be leveled with the ground and totally destroyed so it could never be rebuilt again. But first everything of value was being removed and collected in great storage buildings erected for that very purpose.

Nevertheless it was decided that the king’s kids were to accompany an officer to look at the devastation. It was seen as useful for them to discover what happens to enemies of the new rulers.

As Nineveh was so vast² They had to ride to get around. They could not use horse and cart as the streets in the city centre were impassable for vehicles. For quite a long time they rode by one of Nineveh’s colossal outer walls. Just outside the wall there was a deep moat but it had now only a small amount of water in it, Everything looked abandoned and deserted. Several of the gates were closed and they just passed them by. The boats in the moat were empty.

Then they arrived at a very large gate heavily guarded. There was a pontoon bridge across the moat. When the guards saw the banner of their leading officer they immediately opened the gates and they were allowed into the closely guarded city within the walls.

After the first gate they soon arrived at the next wall, perhaps not quite as high but still with masses of fortification structures on top. Between the walls there was an open field. The intention was that if the enemy had come through the first wall they would get showered by arrows in the open field between the walls and be destroyed there. There was a kind of strategy of building two parallel walls with an open field between them where an enemy had no protection.

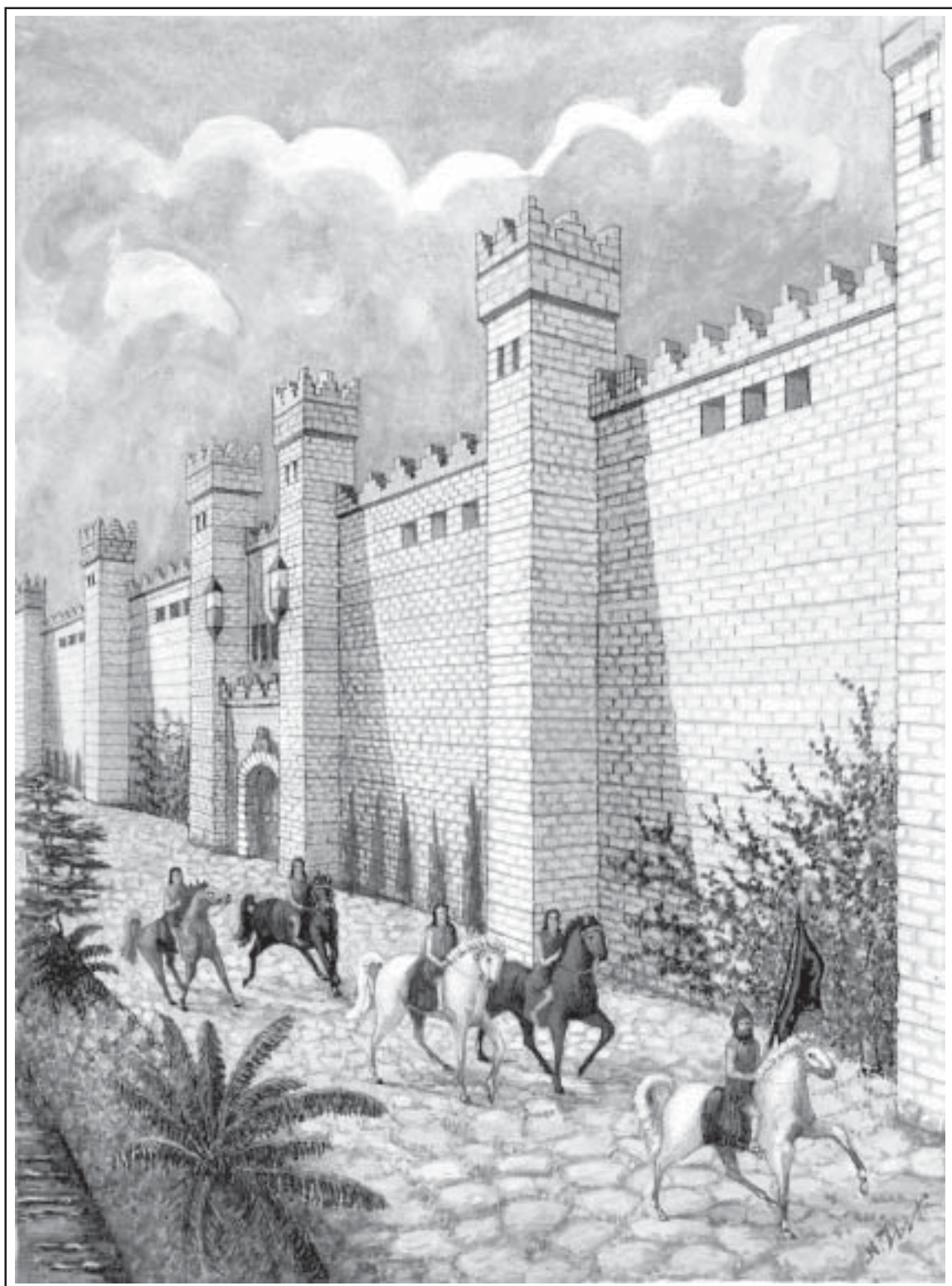
Having passed through the second gate they passed yet another moat and a third wall which looked older and not at all as high but still quite high enough to hinder an enemy to get across. Then they rode for quite a while where there were many cultivated fields and canals with low buildings between the fields. After that there was yet another moat, the third in order and then a fourth wall. Having come through the gates to this one they came to yet another open field in front of the last and largest wall surrounding the very inner city.

The walls were really impressive with high towers and many beautiful ornaments here and there. Especially the last wall was of enormous height and breadth, as if you had put houses on top of one another. At the top there were embrasures for the weapons if anyone would dare to raise ladders and climb up.

No ladders would be tall enough for these heights though. When they passed the gates, they could also see the thickness of the wall. They estimated it to about 36-39 feet (12-13 meters). With such walls and with double gates in each wall they understood that Nineveh was said to be an unconquerable city.

Inside the centre they would see with their own eyes what a beautiful and lavish city Nineveh was with its wooded broad boulevards and beautifully adorned buildings. At the great entrance to the city most were still intact. They rode by one beautiful mosaic front after the other. Pilasters with lions and sculptures of all kinds stood in long rows like on parade by the main road to the river. As they arrived by a canal from the river Tigris flowing through the city centre, they had a better view of the city's enormous size. But here by the river they had the shock of their lives: on the other side of the broad canal most buildings were destroyed, or in the process of being destroyed. In some places there were just small parts left of the buildings – a pillar here and piece of brickwork there.

They saw special teams at work with their battering-rams and wedge tools. With heavy chains harnessed by many horses they pulled down



The ride along the high walls of Nineveh

entire buildings with clouds of dust everywhere. In front of a long pole up to ten horses side by side could be harnessed. From the pole there were thick chains around the part of building require to be pulled down. Loud shouts of commands for the horses to pull at the same time... It looked like hard work! Thousands of men were occupied with this destruction. What others had achieved by toil and hard labour and great inspiration, was now to be destroyed for ever. But this was the king's irrevocable decree.

Nahum's prediction of the fall of Nineveh

There was an uncanny sense of judgment and vengeance over the city. All oppression and all the violence, suffering and terror, this city with its rulers had caused, was now met by a devastating judgment and a terrible wrath which nobody could stop. The judgment was decided from above. The Prophet Nahum had twenty years earlier in detail predicted what was now happening. His predictions have been called the swan song of Nineveh:

– *God is protective of³ over those he loves; that is why he takes vengeance on those who hurt them. he furiously destroys their enemies. He is slow in getting angry, but when aroused, his power is incredible, and he does not easily forgive.*

– *Where now is the lions' den⁴, the place where they fed their young; where the lion and lioness went,, and the cubs with nothing to fear? The lion killed enough for his cubs and strangled the prey for his mate, filling his lairs with the kill and his dens with the prey.*

– *Woe to Nineveh⁵, City of Blood, full of lies, crammed with plunder. Listen! Hear the crack of the whips as the chariots rush forward against her, wheels rumbling, horses hoofs pounding, and chariots glittering as they bump wildly through the streets!*

– *All who see you⁶ will shrink back in horror: Nineveh lies in utter ruin. Yet no one anywhere regrets your fate!*

Many troops were at work. In some places they could count up to twenty pairs of horses in front of some poles with chains. It was quite a skill getting that many horses pulling at the same time. They had learnt special commands which could be heard from afar. In some places they were salvaging works of art, furniture, panels of cedar and ornaments of gold and other metals before it was the demolition team's turn to get to work.

It was very depressing to watch one beautiful building after another being pulled down. It was not just the dust of the demolition that made the air thick to breathe. There was also an off smell, a kind of acid, stale

indefinable kind of smell. Soldiers told them that it was the smell from all the blood which had flown in streams at the assault of the Chaldeans. The dead bodies had been hurriedly buried but the blood had seeped into the ground and not much could be done about the stench. Nahum's prophecy about Nineveh's bloodbath had been fulfilled:

– See the flashing swords and glittering⁷ spears in the upraised arms of the cavalry! the dead are lying in the streets – bodies, heaps of bodies, everywhere. Men stumble over them, scramble to their feet and fall again.

The soldiers said that the greatest part of the work was still to be done, that of demolishing the great walls surrounding the city. That would be the last task, the penultimate task would be to demolish all the beautiful bridges across the rivers Tigris and Kaser. Only one bridge would be left as a passage for a caravan trail. Probably at the end they would just set fire to all the wood between the walls so that nothing would be left of value for anybody thinking of squatting.

Nineveh's centre of culture

They rode on and arrived at the great gate of Ishtar and the Ishtar temple and the giant palace. Close by was Assurbanipal's enormous library. These buildings were still untouched. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to see them himself before they were destroyed.

The king's kids got permission by the guards to enter the palace. The entrance itself was magnificent with its columns of pillars, terraces with beautiful plantations and broad steps. For a long time they walked from one hall of splendour to the next. Anything so fabulously lavish they had never before seen.

Of course they thought that the palace in Jerusalem was beautiful. But it could not compare to this. The size of the banquet halls! they would probably take several thousand people. The height of the decorated pillars. Even the ceilings were decorated. On the walls were enormous works of art in mosaic and one inscription after the other told of the achievements of the Assyrian kings.

When they again came out to the plaza, the guards brought them through the Ishtar gate in to the temple court. The king's kids first decided that they would not enter this temple of idolatry. They remembered their promises on the Sabbath in Haran.

But as the soldiers explained that worship in the temple had stopped and that the Ishtar idol of pure gold was already on its way to Babylon, they could look at it as an ordinary building already doomed. In contrast to the palace, the temple was very dark and dull. Of course it was a very

large temple but as a building it was almost a disappointment. The temple in Jerusalem was much more beautiful and better in its proportions than this gigantic building. Assurbanipal's great library was probably what interested them the most.

– Just imagine sitting here studying the old texts! Then maybe we could have learnt more about the time of Abraham. Here they are supposed to have descriptions even of what life on earth was like before the great Flood.

The clay tablets were packed tightly in long rows with identifying texts above each row and each tablet. What would the Medes do with this treasure of culture? Would it be saved, or would it also be destroyed? Nobody could answer. Although one thing was decided. In a little while all these magnificent buildings would be pulled down. It was moving to see how literally the prophecies about this city had been fulfilled.

One hundred and eighty years ago the prophet Jonah had prophesied about the destruction of Nineveh. When that judgment was postponed, Assyria became an agent of chastisement for Israel. But when the Assyrians again lusted after new conquests, they fell into even worse cruelties than before and became a dreadful terror to all nations in the whole world.

Zephaniah's prophecy about the destruction

Nahum prophesied how Nineveh could be occupied and Zephaniah about its devastation. What they now were looking at was the fulfillment of Zephaniah's prophecy about judgment. Nineveh would become a desert and a place for wild animals:

– *The Lord will do terrible things⁸ to them. He will starve out all those gods of foreign power he will destroy Assyria and make its great Capital Nineveh a desolate wasteland like a wilderness.*

– *That once proud city will become a pastureland for sheep. All sorts of wild animals will have their homes in her. Hedgehogs will burrow there; the vultures and the owls will nest among the ruins of her palaces, hooting from the gaping windows;*

– *The ravens⁹ will croak from her doors. All her cedar panelling will lie open to wind and weather.*

– *This is the fate of that vast, prosperous city that lived in such security, that said to herself: "In all the world there is no city as great as I". But now – see how she has become a place of utter ruins, a place for animals to live! Every one passing that way will mock, or shake his head in disbelief.*

They rode north for several hours on the western river-bank. They could then see the strange happening as the river changed its course and washed away a long stretch of Nineveh's great walls. What no enemy could achieve, the great volume of water had accomplished in a short while. Who can tame a river in its flow. There the human being is powerless. They could see the great gap in the defense system where Medes and Chaldeans had stormed forward into the city. Nahum's prophecy of how the flood gates would open had been literally fulfilled.

It was with a kind of sadness that the four king's kids returned to their accommodation. They knew that what had been prophesied about Nineveh had also been said of Jerusalem. Due to the great apostasy also their own beautiful home city would be devastated and become like a ploughed field and lay in waste for a long time. The difference though was that the prophecies also made promises that Jerusalem, unlike Nineveh, would be rebuilt. When the Messiah comes, Jerusalem will become a centre of worship for the whole world.

The same evening Azariah continued drawing his impressions from the day until far into the night. By the light of the oil-lamp he tried to depict with his drawing pencil the great walls with the high towers, the beautifully ornamented gates and last but not least the plaza with its magnificent building: the palace, the library and the large Ishtar temple. He had a well developed visual memory, but it was important to make the drawings whilst the memories of the impressions were still fresh in his mind. Perhaps he would be the only one to preserve some of Nineveh's glory for posterity. As he drew he remembered a proverb by Solomon:

– If a man digs a pit¹⁰, he will fall into it; if a man rolls a stone, it will roll back on him.

Sanherib had razed old Babel to the ground and Assurbanipal had destroyed the beautiful city Tebe. There were to be no competition to Nineveh. But the misfortune they caused others now struck them. Nineveh, their own pride, became a heap of rubble.

Winter quarters outside Nineveh

Now it was winter. The north wind brought both rain and snow. It was an unusually hard winter that year. The roads became almost impassable. The commander decided that the prisoner train would make its winter quarters outside Nineveh.

The prisoners got the job of sorting the booty from Nineveh. Everything of value was to be kept. The four king's kids had a lot of spare time for discussion and studies.

The mystery of numerical values

The north wind was the worst during February. Sometimes it poured with rain. Often the snowfall was heavy. The prisoners were given different tasks day by day. During the long, dark winter evenings the king's kids continued their discussions about Israel's history, the activities by the prophets and the promises of the Messiah. The mystery of the Hebrew numbers was also a subject which captivated them.*

Mishael wondered: – Our Hebrew names have all a numerical value. Is that important?

– Well, I will show you some interesting thing, not just about the value of our names, but what value our names have together. First though we must deal with yet another number, i e the number eight, said Daniel.

Numbers 8 and 888 – the numbers for God's name¹

Number eight is the number of God's miraculous intervention within this world. It is the number for miracles, abundance and glory. It is the number for the name of God's people and also a factor in the names of the Messiah. It is the beginning of a new era or order.

The Hebrew word for eight, *Sh'moneh*, comes from the root *Shah'meyn*, to make fat, cover with fat, to abound. As participle it means "to abound in strength". The seventh day was the Sabbath, Saturday. Sunday is called the eight day, but was also the first day of the week. After perfection through number 7, number 8 becomes the first number in a new series at the same time as it is number 8.

– Some examples of number eight. When God began anew after the Flood, there were eight people who got the task of inaugurating a new world order.

The Passover Festival lasted seven days but it was on the eight day the first fruits were sacrificed and the new year began. Circumcision according to the Law is to be performed on the 8th day as a sign of a new life entering into the congregation of the saints.

Elijah, who many believe to be a model of the Messiah, performed 8 miracles in his life. Elisha who had a double portion of anointing by God's spirit, did (2x8) 16 miracles. How many miracles will then the Messiah do, when he comes? These examples speak about number eight symbolising God's miracles and intervention as well as new life and a new order.

Another remarkable thing with number 8 is that it is a factor within the

**Those who are not interested in the mystery of numbers can skip this chapter*

name of God's people while number 13, the number of apostasy, is part of the names of the people who rebelled and fell away from God. The total added value of all firstlings from Adam to Noah's son Jepheth, becomes 8×396 for those within the godfearing line of Seth, while the ungodly line of Cain has the value of $13 \times 9 \times 19$. For Noah's family except Ham who fell away, the value becomes 888. But if we also include Ham the numerical value 13 is added as a symbol of his apostasy, $8 \times 9 \times 13 = 936$.

Further the numerical values for the patriarchs Abraham and Isaac and Jacob's family are values divisible by eight, while Ishmael's twelve sons and Abraham's sons by Ketura form numerical values divisible by 13. In the same way we can continue with the names of God's people and for those who are enemies of God's plan in our entire history.

During the times of the judges and in the kings genealogy we find that they either have numbers 8 or numbers 13 as part of their names depending on whether they were godly or ungodly. In the most precise way, without exception, the names in our sacred writings are marked by this law of numbers. This proves that the Scripture really is inspired by the Spirit of God.

– But what connection has number eight with our names then? asked Azariah.

Daniel continued: – I'll tell you something very interesting.

As you may remember we talked about numbers with three similar digits in a row, we can call them triplets, which reinforce the importance of that number's value. Number 666 is a number which speaks of the deepest degradation and apostasy of mankind. In contrast number 777 signifies wonderful harmony between God and man, between heaven and earth. But we have also a triplet of number 8, that is 888 which means the fullness of God's power, glory and abundant life.

The interesting thing is that the total of our joint numbers is just 888.

Mishael exclaimed: – How peculiar! That is the same number which you mentioned for the family of Noah with the exception of the wicked Ham. Can you give a little more details?

– Yes, here is the figures of our names: – Azariah = 292 ($73 \times 2 \times 2$); Mishael = 381 (127×3); Hananiah = 120 ($3 \times 8 \times 5$); Daniel = 95 (19×5) = together 888.*

– Very exciting and exact! What can this mean for us? asked Azariah.

– Well, when we work together and stand fast in our trust in the Lord, then we together make a stronghold for God's miraculous power to be active in. Thus it is no coincidence that we are here together, but it is the Lord himself who has chosen us to make a team to reveal God's power

* *The figures are collected from E.W. Bullingers's book "Number in Scripture", – a Kregel Publication 1967.*

and glory among the Gentiles in Babylon. Surely we will see evidence of this in time to come.

– That is marvelous – just imagine that we are chosen by the Lord for such a task. We who thought at first that it was the heathen commanders who just packed us together when it was really the Lord himself who selected us to become his tools in a foreign country. We really are favoured, said Hananiah.

Numbers 9 and 999 – numbers of final judgment and the end²

– Is it God who really is in charge of the rise and fall of the nations? Will God judge whole nations?

– Yes, *the Lord has established his throne in heaven³, and his kingdom rules over all.*

The Lord is the one who rules. The nations have evidently freedom within certain limits. But if a nation falls into degradation with violence and cruelty and becomes a conquering nation then its days are numbered. God condemned Egypt as well as Assyria and one day Babylon will meet God as judge too.

– It would be interesting to study God's judgment over the nations a bit further.

– We have now come to the number nine in our series about numbers in Scripture. What we are now talking about is what this is about. Here are some definitions. The figure nine is the number for judgment and the end. Number nine is the last figure in the series of figures before a new series begins. Number nine is therefore the number of finality and end. Number nine is above all a number of judgment and it sums up the final result and conclusion in the judgment of God.

The word *amen* has number 99. *Amen* is an expression meaning that something really is true. *Amen* is a kind of final word or a final expression of truth. The sum total of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet is: $4995 = 999 \times 5$. Remember that 5 is the number for grace! The letters in our alphabet has a total value which gives the impression of something concluded and whole, a kind of finality of the final with the numbers for grace and judgment combined.

– Are there any examples of number 9 in actions of judgment? wondered Hananiah.

– There are many. For example all sentences dealing with judgment of Sodom are multiples of nine. Judgments over Jerusalem also are multiples of 9.

– Does the number 999 have any meaning?

– Yes it has, but unfortunately I do not know the exact wording, but it deals with God's wrath over the wicked.

– If God’s wrath has the remarkable number 999 – a threefold repeat of judgment and end, does not that guarantee a judgment completely just, a judgment no-one can object to?

– Sure! God is both the beginning and the end. He will complete his work with a final exalted and irrefragable judgment.

The ten commandments and grace

– What was the deepest cause of the apostasy in Israel. Were the ten commandments too difficult to keep? Did God have unreasonable demands on his people?

– No, the demands of the law were not unreasonably harsh. God’s ten commandments⁴ were plain and clear and not particularly difficult to follow. The ceremonial laws, however, were more complicated with their many sacrifices, but these were more the duties of the priests to keep track of, they were employed full time for that purpose.

– There must be those who feel that the demands of the law are unreasonable and impossible for anyone to keep.

– I think that is due to ignorance and misunderstanding. God does not require of us to be perfect. That is why we have the law about sacrifices. If someone does the wrong thing and sins he or she can have their sins atoned for and forgiven through the prescribed sacrifices.

We have not just a God of law but also a God of grace. We must differentiate between moral laws, God’s ten commandments, which is the norm to live by and the laws of sacrifices which are the means by which we experience God’s grace and salvation.

– What connection is there between the ten commandments and number ten?

Number 10 – the number for order⁵

– There is a clear connection. Number ten is the number for order and symbolizes a perfection of divine order.

Ever since we were little, we have learnt to count on our fingers. With decimalisation as a base we have really got a system of calculation which is foolproof. The first figures from 0 to 9 is the foundation for the whole system.

Just as we find ten fingers and ten toes just right without anything lacking, so God’s ten commandments is a complete standard, where nothing is lacking and nothing needs to be added. The ten commandments are God’s order in relation to himself and human beings.

– Are there any other areas where number ten occurs?

– Yes, for example there are ten generations from Adam to Noah, whereby one generation was concluded before the Flood. Then there are a

further ten generations from Noah to Abraham. We have the ten plagues⁶ over Egypt, in addition we are to give the Lord a tenth of all crops and the cost of redemption is ten *gera*. All these examples show a set order in God's activities and in his directives. Concerning the Tabernacle we have numbers ten in connection with the foundation and joining together the establishing order within the whole⁷.

Number 11 – disorder

When we now have seen the importance of the number ten, we also must say something about the next number which is its direct opposite. Number 11 is the number for disorder. It signifies deficiency and disintegration. This is how you reason. Ten plus one is an addition which negates the order. You can even see this from the number 12, which is the number of the chosen leadership, twelve minus one is not good enough. We can take a couple of examples: the reduction of Jacob's sons to 11 brought disorder, grief and disintegration of Jacob's family expressed by Jacob with the words: *I have eleven sons, one is no more*. From Horeb to Kadesh Barnea is a journey of 11 days. If they had walked yet another day they would have entered the promised land.

Number 12 – figure of leadership⁸

– You mentioned the number 12. What more is there to learn about this number.

– We normally talk about perfect numbers. Three indicates divine perfection, seven spiritual perfection, ten complete order and twelve characterizes perfect government.

Thus number 12 is a perfect number. It signifies complete leadership and is there as a factor in the expression of divine guidance and rule. It is even the number for God's specially chosen ones for a particular purpose.

Number 12 consists of the factors three and four. Number three is the number for the heavenly and the divine. Number four is the number for the creation of earth and material things. The product of these numbers, twelve, becomes a divinely led and organised creation and an expression of God's purpose for creation.

Number 12 is also the sum of $5 + 7 = 12$, the number for God's grace, 5, and spiritual completion, 7, which gives a vision of God's grace to those he calls for service in his kingdom. Let me remind you of some examples.

Jacob's twelve sons formed our nation. Each one of them became the leader of his tribe. Leadership and different kinds of services in our nation is founded on number 12. From the tribe of Levi each year 2×12 men are chosen to serve as priests. The altars for sacrifices and worship were built

of 12 stones. The High Priest has 12 gemstones on his breastplate representing the twelve tribes of Israel before the face of God. The number of judges who acted as deliverers of Israel during the time of the judges, was 12.

Springtime

It was nearly the end of winter. Spring came with the wind from the south, it was like magic. They were soon to break camp from their winter quarters in Nineveh and begin the last leg of the march towards the metropolis – Babylon.

One evening they sat outside the tent admiring the sunset. They were eager to have an enriching discussion and asked Daniel to give them yet another lesson about numbers in Scripture.

Number 13 – the number for sin and the evil one⁹

– We have now come to the number thirteen in the series of numbers. The number 13 is the last of the fundamental numbers. Other numbers of importance are most often combinations of the 13 first numbers. Thirteen is the number for sin. It is also the number for Satan and for the wicked. Thirteen is the number for rebellion, apostasy, deceit, corruption, revolution and disintegration. Remarkable is though, that although thirteen is the number for sin, at the same time it is the number for atonement for sin and the number for the representative of the sinners.

– How is it that people regard number 13 as an unlucky number?

– The popular perception is that number 13 is the number for bad luck and misfortune and it is thought to come from the time Israel conquered Jericho. First the Israelites marched around the city once each day for six days. But on the seventh day they marched seven times, that is a total of 13 times. It was when they had completed the 13th round during loud fanfares from their trombones that the walls fell inwards over the population of Jericho. It was a disaster for the inhabitants of Jericho but a victory for Israel.

The number for Jericho is 234 and within it 13 is a factor, $13 \times 2 \times 9 = 234$. If the number 13 was a number for disaster for the children of the world in Jericho, then the circumstances were the direct opposite for God's people. Thirteen is not an unlucky number, or a number of misfortune for the children of God.

– Are there many examples of the number 13 being a number for sin and sinners?

– We showed when we dealt with number 8, that the symbolism of numbers in Scripture has number 13 as multiples in the names of people and nations who fell away or in one way or another became enemies of God and went their own way. On the other hand we find the names of people who trust in God and follow him having numbers consisting of multiples of 8. This law is so prevalent and so consistently found in Scripture, from its beginning to its end without exception and without any deviation, that this in itself is tremendous evidence of the supernatural inspiration of our sacred writings.

The number thirteen is also a seal of Satan and his activities. Its is clearly evident already from Moses' description of the temptation of the first human beings. That description shows us in a striking way how on one hand the number eight is there in all expressions of God, his plan and his chosen ones, whilst on the other hand the number 13 is there in all expressions of Satan and his attacks against the image and plan of God. We can give some examples of numbers from the temptation story:

In the sentence: *Now the serpent¹⁰ was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made* we have the figure $1521 = 13 \times 13 \times 9$. The first part dealing with the temptation and fall has the figures: $24011 = 13 \times 1847$. the second passage dealing with how Adam and Eve hide from God out of fear: $49478 = 2 \times 11 \times 13 \times 173$. The third passage deals with enmity: $10894 = 2 \times 13 \times 419$. The whole chapter: $84383 = 13 \times 6491$. Eve's confession: $3692 = 2 \times 2 \times 13 \times 71$.

In all these instances, dealing with their fall, we have 13 as a factor. But when we come to God's intervention, then we have eight as a factor. The Lord calls: $4064 = 8 \times 508$. The promise of the Messiah: $4266 = 8 \times 8 \times 8 \times 158$. The promise and the role of woman: $8512 = 8 \times 8 \times 7 \times 19$ (or $8000 + 8 \times 8 \times 8$) God clothes Adam and Eve: $2856 = 7 \times 8 \times 51$.

– I have never heard anything so remarkable before. Has God then predestined everything, even the fall into sin? wondered Hananiah

Daniel answered: – No, I don't think you can interpret it that way. Man has free will and God does not tempt anyone to do evil. But I assume it is like this – God is independent of time and can see in advance how people will act. The names of the godly kings of Judah until Hezekiah have the total number – value of 3032, which is 8×379 , whilst the wicked kings in the northern kingdom have the total number 3900, that is 13×300 .

Another interesting study is that the names of the evil one – who is an enemy of God – and his people, all have number 13 as a factor. Satan becomes $364 = 13 \times 28$. The old serpent, *Ha-Seraph* is $585 = 13 \times 45$; *Beelsebub*: $598 = 13 \times 46$; *Belieal*: $78 = 13 \times 6$; *The tempter*: $1053 = 13 \times 81$.

Number 13 is also the number of reconciliation¹¹

We cannot end the number 13 discussion, however, without noticing what part it plays in all words dealing with reconciliation and redemption. The number 13, therefore, is not only the number for sin and enmity with God but also the number for atonement for sin and for the one who atones for sin. We have previously talked about the Messiah as a guilt offering for sin. In Isaiah's remarkable prophecy which is difficult to interpret, the Lord says that:

– *The righteous one¹², my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

Yes he became so completely joined with our sin that the very name of the redeemer has the figure 13, the number for sin, as a factor. In the second psalm "my anointed one" has number $364 = 13 \times 9 \times 2$. We can interpret it like this. Through the Messiah sin (13) is atoned for when it comes to judgment (9) and we have peace (2) with God.

We can also look at the name Jahve, which is the name of the God of the covenant and always associated with sacrifice. It has number $26 = 2 \times 13$, where two stands for harmony between God and man, and thirteen symbolises sin and the fall, which Jahve atones for.

There are many prototypes of this atonement. The sentence speaking of Abel's sacrifice of a lamb, has number $2080 = 13 \times 5 \times 8 \times 2 \times 2$. We can interpret the figures like this: Through atonement for sin (13) through the grace of God (5); through the Messiah (8) we have peace (2) with God. The same concerns the scapegoat, which is another prototype, we have the number $3575 = 13 \times 5 \times 5 \times 11$. Even here 13 is included as a symbol for sin, which is taken away by grace. We have whole sentences containing the numbers speaking of both reconciliation and of grace in Isaiah's prophecy about the suffering servant, about the Messiah and his atonement,

– How can all this fit in in such minute detail when there are such long sentences? If only just one tiny word is exchanged for another then it becomes a totally different number, asked Azariah.

– Yes, it is beyond our comprehension. That the number 13 is so consistently used about both sin and atonement for sin, shows a divine inspiration of Scripture. It is absolutely impossible to explain away number 13 and also number 8 in all these sentences as mere coincidences. Such an incredibly perfect and concordant use of these numbers in their respective symbolic meaning is beyond our ability to explain – it is divine.

Many symbolic numbers in Scripture

– Are there any more interesting numbers besides these thirteen foundation numbers?

– Yes, there are several others, but most of them, as we said earlier, become different combinations of the foundation ones. We have number 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24, 30, 40, 42, 50, 70, 120, 153, 400 and so on, which are all there in Scripture.

Number 17 is an important number. It is a prime number, that is not divisible. From number one we have the following series of prime number: 1, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17 where 17 becomes the seventh prime number.

Seventeen is the sum of two perfect numbers, 7 and 10 and means spiritual order. The number 17 is included as a factor in another very important number, that is number 153. But we have to tell you about that some other time.

– It has been very interesting to hear about numbers in Scripture. From it you can conclude that God is a great mathematician and knows his creation and the history of mankind in minute detail. You could almost believe that he has counted the very hairs on our heads. In any case you get the feeling that we are included in a great continuity as part of a great context where God reckons with us. He has not forgotten any one of us, concluded Mishael.

– Quite true! In God's plan there are no coincidences. The creation around us is an almost incredible functioning system, quite beyond our comprehension. Sea and land, sun and rain, plants and animals, warmth and cold, everything form a harmony of nature, where nothing is lacking.

In the same way even Scripture is an incredible product marvelously put together by different numbers, each of symbolic value. The combination is so complicated and so exact that it excludes completely any possibility of these systems of numbers having come together by coincidence or that Scripture would be human product, explained Daniel.

– If scripture, which is for our edification and help, is so wonderfully put together, then we ourselves cannot just be victims of coincidences. Surely God has figured out a plan for us, where we will fit in, summarized Hananiah.

During their conversation the sun had slowly set behind the mountains in the distance. The last rays of sunshine sprayed the clouds with a whole cascade of colours by the horizon. It was beautiful beyond words! Darkness was setting in. They could hear the howling of wild animals from afar. But they were not afraid of the night.

They were protected in the shadow of the Almighty.

Babylonia - the third world power

After two months in winter quarters outside Nineveh, the day finally arrived when the king's kids and their fellow prisoners were to start on the last leg of their journey to Babylon, their future home in captivity. Daniel tells his story from his diary.

– All horses were needed for the pulling down of Nineveh's great walls. So we had to use our feet again – walking. Strange as it was we felt a certain excitement and subdued joy in getting to Babylon. We would no longer have to live on the move as we had done over the last half year. In any case it was nice to leave Nineveh behind.

We will never forget the impressions from this dying city. Everything on this earth is corruptible! But it is like you can not comprehend this until you come face to face with death and destruction. It is just like Solomon once expressed it:

– Everything is futile!¹ There is a right time for everything – A time to destroy and a time to rebuild! a time for scattering stones and a time for gathering stones. Everything is appropriate in its own time. But though God has placed eternity in the hearts of men, even so, many cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.

It is true enough that we cannot comprehend fully why all the beautiful things built during generations with much hardship and incredible labour purposely has to be pulled down to become just dust and ashes. Perhaps we find the answer in the expression

– God has placed eternity in the hearts of men.

We must not get stuck in the present and in material things but must see further – to things of eternal value which can never be destroyed, through everything that happens we are prevented from the wrong emphasis in this life.

For several days we walked by the west shore of the river Tigris. In a distance we saw the ruins of the ancient city of Ashur. We were pleased that we did not have to look closely at more destruction. From Ashur we turned west and marched straight through the famous river valley between the Tigris and the Euphrates, the most fertile and heavily populated area of

the earth, we found village upon village and city upon city. Out of curiosity people often lined the roadside as lots of children and adults wanted to catch a glimpse of the prisoners from a distant foreign land.

If the Chaldeans had expected to see a crowd of ragamuffins, they were probably disappointed. All prisoners took great care in looking after their clothes. In fact we were better dressed than the crowds that lined our route.

In a couple of days we arrived at the great river Euphrates, which we were to follow down to Babylon. We struck camp like before in the evenings, with the difference that now we need not have any campfires except for cooking. There were no wild animals between the rivers. Again we had to bring out our little tent from our baggage on the ox-cart. After a long days walking in the heat of the sun it was quite nice to relax to music and discussion in the tent.

Babylonia – the third world power*

– Until now we have mostly dealt with history, now is time to concentrate on our own time – our new world – Babylonia and learn a bit more, said Daniel.

– First we do need some more history though. I am not quite sure how the Babylonian nation came about. How could it so quickly become the strongest nation of the world? asked Azariah.

– The people of Media, Elam, Chaldea and the whole of Mesopotamia were intensely tired of the Assyrian regime of violence. So therefore a liberation movement simply developed in one part after the other within the great Assyrian empire.

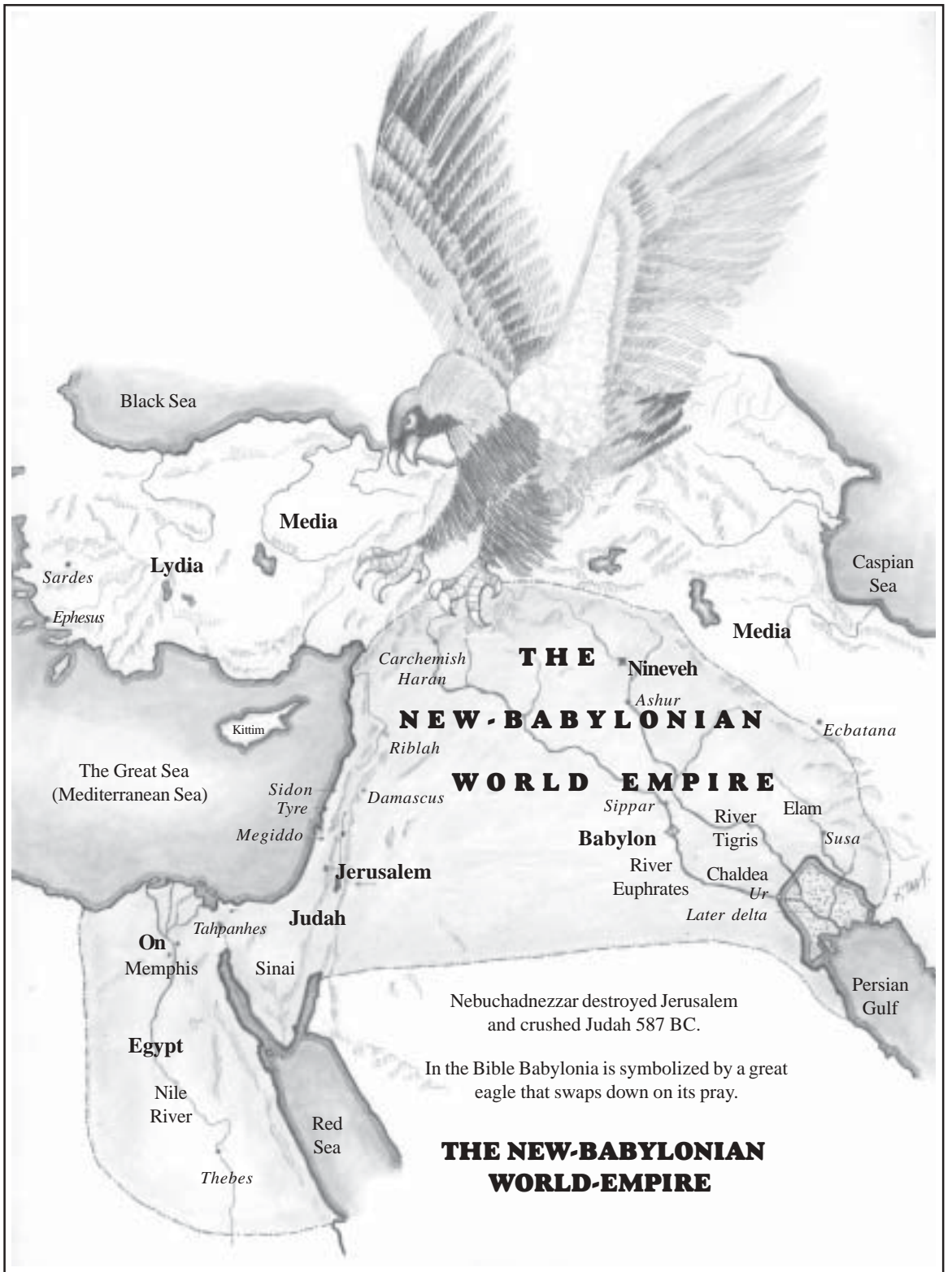
The Medes, in the east, first liberated themselves from the yoke of the Assyrians through a banner-bearer by the name of Fraortes². He managed to bring all the Medes together to become an independent kingdom with Ecbatana³ as the capital in the Zagros mountains east of the Tigris. But as he was audacious enough to attack Ashurbanipal's kingdom he himself got killed in the battle field and the revolt was crushed.

– The first real problem for the Assyrians came about through an invasion⁴ by the Scythians from the north which greatly depleted the Assyrian army.

Babylonia and Media in alliance

– The Medes returned through the son of Fraorte, Kyaxare⁵. He organised a new uniform army. It consisted of a cavalry with archers and two units of infantry – spear throwers and archers. First he conquered several

** The following pages is about the history of how the third world-power came to power – for those interested in history.*



Persian tribes in the north east and made them vassal states. Then the Medes again dared to attack Assyria⁶, this time in alliance with the Chaldeans.

– Babylonia had then been a vassal state under Assyrian rule for a long time. But soon after the death of Ashurbanipal, Nabopolassar⁷, the Chaldean, proclaimed himself king over the new kingdom named New Babylonia or Chaldea. In a couple of years he managed to drive the Assyrian garrisons out of Babylon and to make the country independent. His next step was to attack the centre of the Assyrian power structure which suffered a great defeat half way up the river Euphrates.

– After that the Assyrians got help from an army sent by the Egyptian Pharaoh Psametik I⁸. Nabopolassar then appointed his son, Nebuchadnezzar chief commander⁹ over his forces. When the Chaldeans allied themselves with the Medes in a united attack commanded by Nebuchadnezzar the Assyrian armies could no longer keep up the defense, and the old world power came to an end. Ashur fell¹⁰ first and then Nineveh. The entire great Assyrian territory was then divided between the allies¹¹. The Medes took over the Assyrian mainland and north west Mesopotamia whilst the land around mid-Euphrates, Elam and Syria belonged to Babylonia. Thus the country became divided into a northwestern and a southwestern area of great power.

– We have earlier mentioned how Egypt again tried to guard their interests in the disintegrating Assyria. Egypt's new Pharaoh Neco¹² in his first campaign succeeded in getting sovereignty over Syria. But at the time of Egypt's second expedition to Syria the forces met at the famous battle of Carchemish¹³. It was then that Nebuchadnezzar caused Egypt a crushing defeat. Then Babylonia become the leading great power.

Nebuchadnezzar continued south after this and occupied Lebanon and Syria, then he besieged Jerusalem. However, when he got the message of his father's death, he returned at once to Babylon, where he was proclaimed king¹⁴ of the new world-power with Babylon as capital.

– Have the prophets anything to say about the new world power?

– Yes, when Isaiah prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem, he speaks about young lions catching their prey and carrying it away. He even speaks of Judah going into captivity, but his message is hidden.

The young lions is the new world power Babylonia.

– *Their roar is like that¹⁵ of the lion, they roar like young lions; they growl as they seize their prey and carry it off with no-one to rescue. In that*

day they will roar over it like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks at the land, he will see darkness and distress; even the light will be darkened by the clouds.

Babylonia symbolised by an eagle

Jeremiah depicts Babylon as an eagle:

– *This is what the Lord says¹⁶: Look! An eagle is swooping down, spreading its wings over Moab.*

That prophecy concerns the neighbours to the east of Judah, Moab, descendants of Lot. Another prophecy concerns the neighbour to the south, Edom, descendants of Jacob's brother Easu: *Look! An eagle¹⁷ will soar and swoop down, spreading its wings over Bozrah. In that day the hearts of Edom's warriors will be like the heart of a woman in labour.*

– Has Jeremiah a definite prophecy about Babylon invading Judah and Jerusalem?

– Yes, very much so. He even mentions the king by name before the siege of Jerusalem, the one we were part of:

– *The word came to Jeremiah¹⁸ concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon: Therefore the Lord Almighty¹⁹ says this:*

– *Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, declares the Lord, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin.*

This whole country²⁰ will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years.

Seventy years is our whole life-time. If this is what the Lord God has decided then we can do nothing about it. We then have to make the best we can of our situation.

– But when Jeremiah received this prophecy Nebuchadnezzar had not yet become king of Babylon, he became king later the same year after the first siege of Jerusalem had begun. Jeremiah received several similar prophecies. This is another even earlier prophecy:

– *This message came to Jeremiah²¹ from the Lord at the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim (son of Josiah), king of Judah: Make a yoke and fasten it on your neck with leather thongs as you would strap a yoke on a plow-ox. Then send messages to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre*

and Sidon, through their ambassadors in Jerusalem, saying, Tell your masters that the Lord, the God of Israel, sends you this message:

– By my great power I have made the earth and all mankind and every animal; and I give these things of mine to anyone I want to. So now I have given all your countries to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who is my deputy. And I have handed over to him all your cattle for his use. All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until his time is up, and then many nations and great kings shall conquer Babylon and make him their slave.

– The end of this prophecy declares that there will also be an end to the Babylonian kingdom and that other mighty world powers will appear. It actually looks like the Lord already has planned the development of history?

– Yes, both Jeremiah and Isaiah have many mighty prophecies about the future. Isaiah also speaks of the destruction of Babylon. Regarding Jerusalem he says that it will be there at the end of time, it will become the capital of all the world when the Messiah comes. The whole world will then be destroyed by fire²² and the Lord will create new heavens and a new earth²³.

Babylon – the world’s oldest city

– It would be interesting to know a little more about Babylon, the capital of the world now, said Mishael.

– Babylon is the *miracle city* of the whole world, and the world-famous metropolis of both the old and new Babylon. According to Moses²⁴ it is the world’s oldest city and has its beginning just after Noah’s flood, when the survivors of the Flood built the tower of Babel there. Then Babylon became a centre of the first power on earth and developed into a city of great power and beauty with high-falutin’ architecture, magnificent building skills and high culture.

– Babylon is situated on a great plain by the river Euphrates, where the cradle of mankind once was and in the same region where the garden of Eden²⁵ once was.

– As we said before, however, during the time of the Assyrian king Sanherib²⁶ there were rebellious elements in Babylon, with the consequence that Babylon was completely razed to the ground. The city was rebuilt again during the time of Esarhaddon²⁷ when it got its present magnificent design with broad straight roads and many squares. That means that the new Babylon is only 70 years old and a great deal more modern than both Jerusalem and Nineveh.

– As soon as Nabopolassar became king he began to fortify and beautify Babylon. He had an Egyptian queen, Nitphris²⁸, who made a great contribution to the work. She was the one who had the river Euphrates run straight through the city and a great bridge built between the parts of the city. She did not only have the enormous city wall built with its towers and gates in order to defend the city against Assyrian, but she also had the Euphrates divided into a great many canals around the city. These were to serve as moats within the defense.

– Babylon²⁹ is enormous, formed as a square with buildings on both sides of the river which flows diagonally through the city. The circumference is about 58 miles (96 kilometers), surrounded by a network of moats and an enormous double wall - the outer part of which is nearly 90 yards (80 meters) high and going down into the soil to a depth of over 9 yards (10 meters) preventing any enemy from digging a tunnel underneath the walls. The wall is wide enough, over 21 yards (24 meters), for six chariots to drive side by side on top of the wall.

– Which one is the largest city, Babylon or Nineveh?

– Babylon is different to Nineveh in many ways. It does not have as many ring walls and not as large an area as greater Nineveh, if you include its outer ring-wall. On the other hand the city centre is considerably larger than Nineveh. The double wall is even higher and double the width to any of the walls surrounding Nineveh.

– There are no less than 250 watch towers around the city wall and they are continuously manned by armed soldiers guarding the city day and night. The wall has 100 beautiful copper gates all inscribed with the names of different gods. They are opened at sunrise and shut at sunset and the copper then shines like arches of fire. From each gate there are magnificent avenues crisscrossing the city, 25 in each direction and they form no less than 76 big open squares.

– Inside the city there is a 121 yards (135 meter) long bridge over the Euphrates, ending with beautiful palaces at each end. The royal palace is very large and lavish. The communication between the two parts of the city is largely through ferries but also by pontoons or bascule bridges which are raised at night.

Everything that I have now told you about Babylon is what I have been told by several business men and traders who have been there themselves and seen this magnificent city of beauty and elegance.

Babylon – city of many gods

– As we will soon see, the most dominating building in Babylon is the enormous high tower, the tower of Babel – or *Bel-tower*.³⁰ The original part of it was probably never entirely destroyed. As the people were divided into different language groups, the tower of Babel became the most superior temple called *Etemenaki*. The tower consists of several buildings like terraces on top of each other. It has a height of as much as 198 yards (220 meters) including a temple on the top. On the outside there are stairs leading all the way to the top.

– The temple contains the most expensive items ever seen in a place of worship. Among the many valuables there are golden statues of the principal gods, Bel and Ishtar. There are two lions made of gold, an enormous table of gold 4,5x14,4 yards (5 x 13 meters) and a giant statue of pure gold, 5,4 yards (six meters) tall, of a man, *Marduk*.

– Babylon is a very religious city – a centre for polytheism³¹. There you find all kinds of different idols. They worship fire, sun – *Shamash*, the moon – *Sin*, stars and different forces of nature there.

– It was in Babylon worship of man first began, the first man declared god was the founder of Babylon and Nineveh, Noah's grandson Nimrod, who got the divine name *Marduk* also called *Bel*. He is the one whose statue and temple are on top of the tower of Babel.

– The female goddess *Ishtar*³², also called the goddess of fertility, is one of the most worshipped gods in Babylon, her worship includes sexual passions being made divine. The inhabitants of Babylon and the country of Babylon are subjected to very strict religious demands. We have mentioned that worship of Ishtar demands sexual worship service and holy prostitution and is one of the forced customs by the priest at all temples in Babylon.

Religious freedom in Babylon³³ is very restricted, there is said to be fiftythree temples and one hundred and eighty altars to Ishtar.

Towards Babylon

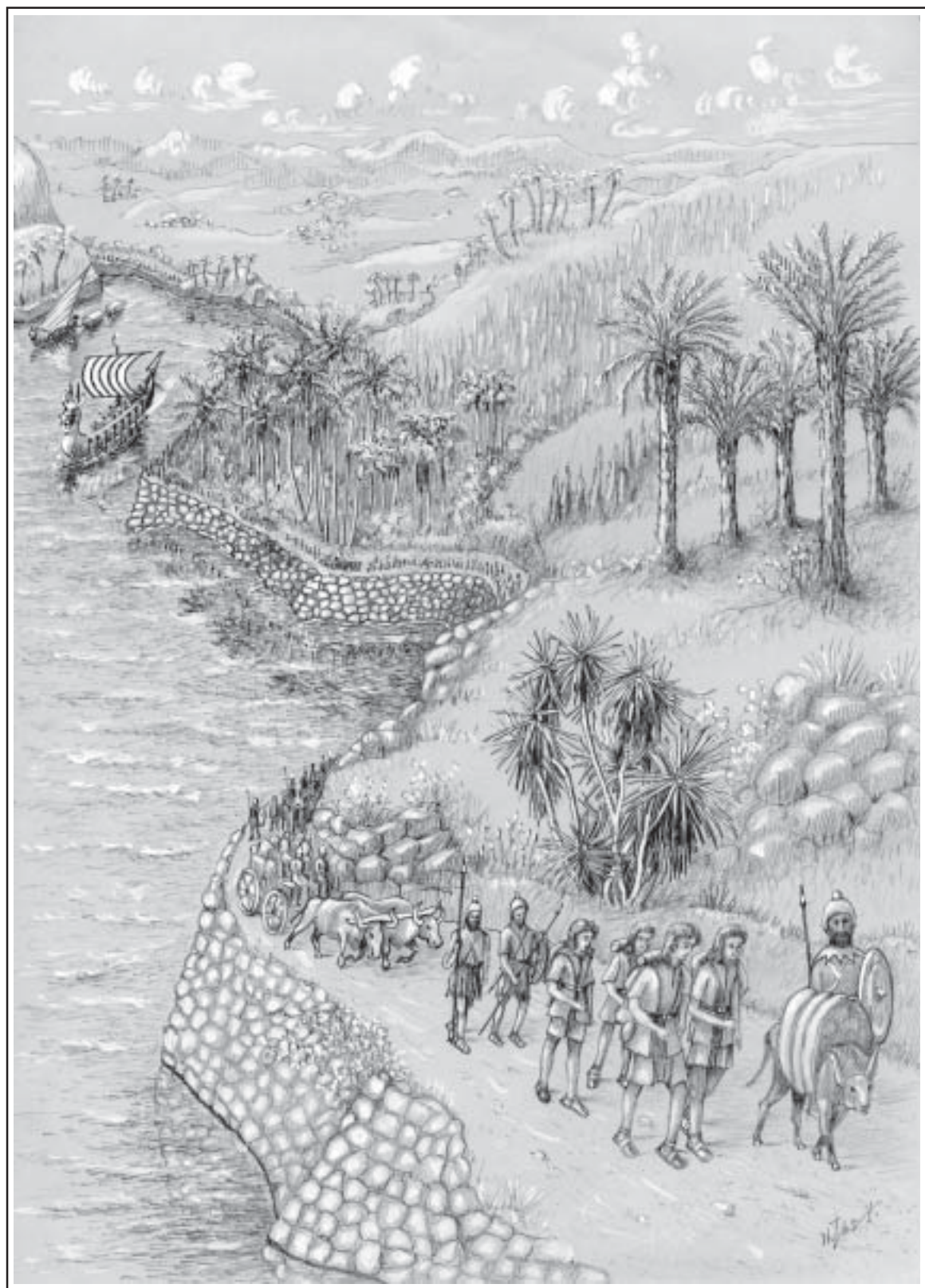
The walk was long and strenuous. Burning afternoon sunshine. Dusty roads. Dry, thirsty throats. Sore feet. Would these days of marching never end? Their goal was to get to the Euphrates before sunset. At last they saw the mighty river like a silver chain deep down in the valley, glistening in the evening sun. They now moved quickly down towards the river valley. It was almost dark when they arrived at the garrison. Torches and oil lamps met the tired walkers and guided them right.

- I wonder how far Babylon is from here?
- When I was in Nineveh, I saw a map. I reckoned that we would have a week of marching after reaching the river.
- It will be exciting to see the famous city.
- I wonder if we will be allowed to celebrate the Sabbath together with the others yet another time when we get there.

Along the Euphrates' riverbanks

Day after day the march continued along the riverbanks of the Euphrates¹. Walking alongside the winding river, alternatively lined with palm trees and other kinds of trees like cypresses, willows and pine trees, it was breathtakingly beautiful. Sometime there were natural banks high up and a tremendous view. The river itself had more or less created these banks, as it had eroded the porous rock. But in other places banks had to be built in order to hinder the river from changing its course.

Traffic on the river was lively with boats of all kinds. The large galleys had terrifying dragon heads at the bow and often a fish's tail at the stern. There were galleys with up to thirty oarsmen on each side. Upriver they had a tough job, especially when the boat was towing barges. The beating of the oars was rhythmic and you could hear the captain cheering the rowing-team on. The oars-men were life-prisoners. Instead of executing them or keeping them in prison they were forced to serve as slaves, it was cheaper for the king. No one volunteered for that kind of hard work. There were also plenty of sailing boats. Often there was a breeze along the river, caused by the cold water from the mountains. But when it was calm they had to dock in one of the many ports, provided they did not sail down river when they could make use of the current.



Along the banks of the Euphrates

The largest city in the world²

It happened one afternoon that their caravan was led away from the river bank to a plateau away from their route. Why were they taken there? They were soon to discover. From there they could see the first glimpse of the giant city Babylon in the distant haze. It was a fabulous sight! The largest city in the world! This would become their city, their home! From the height where they were the city looked like a giant pearl, glistening in the sunset. An illusion of beauty and elegance. The image of her towers and pinnacles glimmered in the canals along the walk. She was the queen of all cities on earth. The distance was still too great though for them to be able to distinguish people and details.

The high plateau became their camping ground for the night.

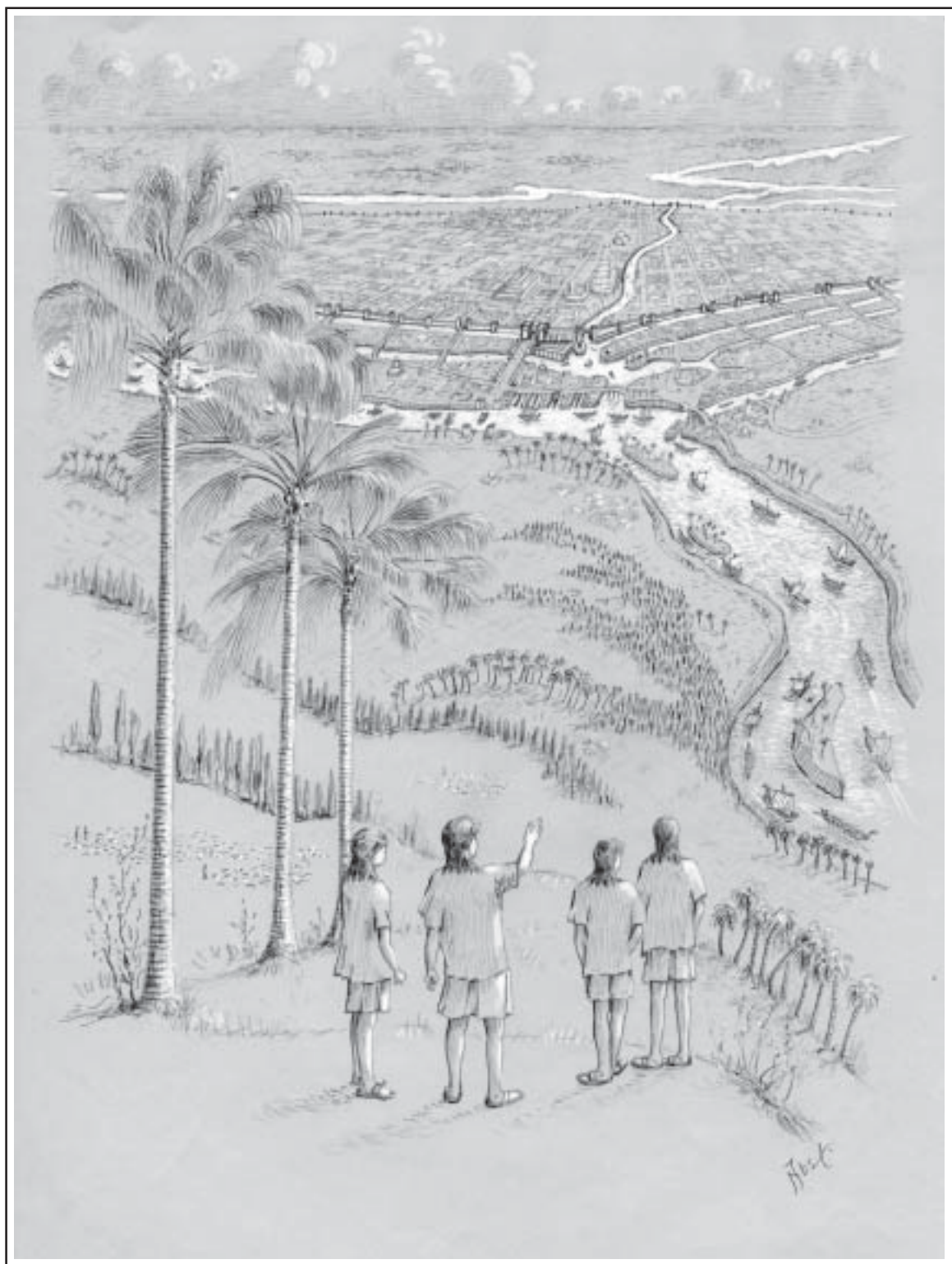
After yet another days marching along the beautiful river valley they again camped on a height away from the river. They had now come considerably nearer the city. The copper gates were still open. Those turned towards the sunset shone like fire. The sharp silhouettes of the majestic towers were outlined against the blue green evening sky. Their numbers you could not count. Columns of soldiers with their shining spears could be seen on top of the walls. Horse-drawn cabs hurried in both directions, traffic was intense. Everywhere there was movement and life. People thronged by the gates. People hurried on to the jetties to get across the river and the moats into the city before dark when the gates would be shut.

The next night they would themselves probably be in Babylon.

Everyone was up at sunrise. Now they could see the gates opening. Already there were long queues of people and wagons lined up outside the many gates which all were opened at the same time on commands from the towers. An imposing sight!

It was true what they had heard: The copper gates looked like bows of fire, when they were opened in the morning sun. The traffic got moving soon afterwards. Wagons of all kinds, pulled by oxen, donkeys and horses and loaded with people and goods went in and out through the city. Riders on camels, yes, even elephants could be seen traveling amongst the crowds. Far away through the haze of the sun they could catch a glimpse of the tower of Babel, the world's tallest building.

Hour after hour they marched towards the city, which in a way had bewitched them. What fate would befall them there during their long captivity? Every time they looked at the city from a new plateau along the way, the city just grew larger and mightier. It was like the walls grew and the towers got yet taller. But the distance to the city was much greater than



Babylon – the world's largest city

they first had thought. They had to spend yet another night outside the city on a piece of land between the many canals belonging to the defending troops. The mighty city wall cast its long shadow over them at the northern camp site.

Next morning they got up before sunrise. When the gates opened, they were already standing in the long queue of soldiers and prisoners. One of the military gates had been assigned for their entry. Being close to the walls they could now make comparisons and had to conclude that Babylon had much higher and mightier walls than Nineveh. Above all they were much newer and had richer ornamentation also on the outside. They were so close to the gates now that they could study them more thoroughly. Every gate had the name of one of Babylon's idols which was described by different pictures. The gates were very lavish, a work of art of the highest class. The city had a hundred gates, an indication of how large it was and how many idols there were.

There were two watch towers by each gate and in addition to them also several towers between the gates. The towers were very impressive. Surely there was an extensive view over the surrounding plain and far-away to the forest hills in the distance from these towers.

The new Babylon³

The gates were opened and the long train of prisoners started moving. They were heading for one of the military parade grounds inside the city. The king's kids were a little surprised over the geometrical symmetry in the city. It was just one great big square. Even inside the city everything was in straight lines and symmetrical. It was apparent that it was a minutely planned and developed city. They soon saw that it was a still developing city. Big areas still had no houses. The streets were finished however and by every street there was a deep trench as a sewer towards the river. There were open squares by the street corners. Markets were held there and you could buy almost anything. Babylon was a great commercial city.

They continued straight ahead on the same street and came to one market after the other. In one they sold furniture, in another there were masses of pets, in a third vegetables and fruit were sold. There was a fish market, a meat market, a pottery market and a market for clothes or rugs. Everything was orderly in well ordered stands. They walked until they came to the Euphrates running through the city. By the riverside there were larger open spaces and parks, virtual oasis' and palm groves. A magnitude of boats travelled up and down river between the different parts of the city. The prisoners were taken to one of the bascule bridges which was lowered to let them pass over.

The parade

They soon arrived at the parade ground surrounded by magnificent cypresses on the other side. Lots of other prisoners in long rows were already there. Their hands and feet were manacled. It was a long time since the prisoners from Jerusalem were relieved of their foot-chains. And the king's kids had worn no chains at all since they helped Havlat when he was ill.

The Jewish prisoners who now arrived from Nineveh, were given their places. They tried to distinguish who the other prisoners were but they could nor recognise any relatives from Jerusalem. Were they not to see them again? Had not the officers promised that they would be together again? Havlat was still one of the guarding soldiers, so they motioned to him. Yes, their friends from Jerusalem would also come. The prisoners who had already lined up were from Philistine, Moab and Edom⁴. They had put up a hard resistance at the Chaldean invasion and so were treated much more harshly than the Jews.

After waiting for a while the other Jewish prisoners marched in. The king's kids felt proud over their kinsmen. They were clean, tidy and well groomed. They still had their handcuffs but there were still no sulking expressions. Perhaps they remembered that

– *The Lord is my strength⁵ and my song.*

There is an unbeatable power in showing a cheerful disposition no matter what life brings. Joy in the Lord is our strength! Proud and upright the Jews proceeded in front of all scrutinizing eyes.

Mishael was the first to discover that Hannah was there. Mishael tried to wave but evidently she did not see him. Nevertheless he could see how her eyes searched the whole field of prisoners. Azariah also searched eagerly and the others helped him. But they could not see Mical anywhere. What had happened to her?

Soon enough the commander started to tell the prisoners what would happen to them. He spoke Aramaic. But as most of the Jews did not understand very much of that language he got interrupted by one of the generals who whispered something in his ear and pointed to where the king's kids were standing. Yes, of course, Daniel was called forward to interpret, like he had done so many times before. All the prisoners were glad to hear Daniel's voice again and the atmosphere lightened on their first day in Babylon.

The future of the Jews in Babylon

They now got to know that most of the Jewish prisoners were to stay in the Babylon district⁶. They would be allocated places to live on an manmade island between the canals surrounding the city⁷, since their work would be to assist in the building and development of Babylon. This was due to the skill and willingness to work that they had shown when building the bridge in Lebanon. There was general joy amongst the Jews, building work was what they liked best. Now they need not worry about having to empty sewers, sweep up dung on the streets of Babylon or something even worse, becoming galley slaves or mine workers. Their first task would be to build their own homes. The prisoners thought that they were treated rather well. Of course, they would not be able to escape from the island as there were always guards by the bascule bridges, watching all comings and goings. But in any case they could live as free people and their subsistence was guaranteed provided that they performed their work to the king's satisfaction.

They also learnt that as soon as they arrived on their island they would be free from their handcuffs. During the building time of their homes, they were to live in tents. The commander encouraged every one to attend the language course which was to be arranged for them. Those who wanted to could also enroll in a course in reading and writing.

The commander continued with the placements and working tasks for the other prisoners. Some would be moved far away and be placed in Elam⁸, where the population once had been moved to Samaria⁹. Others would stay in Babylon as refuse collectors. The rebellious among them would become miners and some would dig canals. Their future prospects did not look particularly bright. The Jews could count themselves fortunate in their rather privileged position.

After a long speech with many warnings and conditions in the new country, they were all allowed go to the cauldrons to eat the main meal of the day, before they began the march to their respective places.

Havlat helped Mishael and Azariah to find Hannah. They could only exchange a few words. She at once told them what had happened to Mical who was not there. She had stepped on a loose stone and fallen down into a ravine during the march and had got hurt. She had probably broken her leg because she could not walk. The soldiers at first did not bother to help Mical, she had to sit among the baggage on an ox-cart. But when the officers discovered that she was betrothed to Azariah – the world champion in throwing javelin – it became a different matter.

Without special treatment she would be crippled for the rest of her life. Quickly one of the fastest chariots pulled by six horses was ordered and she was taken at express speed down to the river. There she was carried by stretcher on to one of the fast galley boats to the king's very own health pavilion by the river – a palm grove near Babylon.

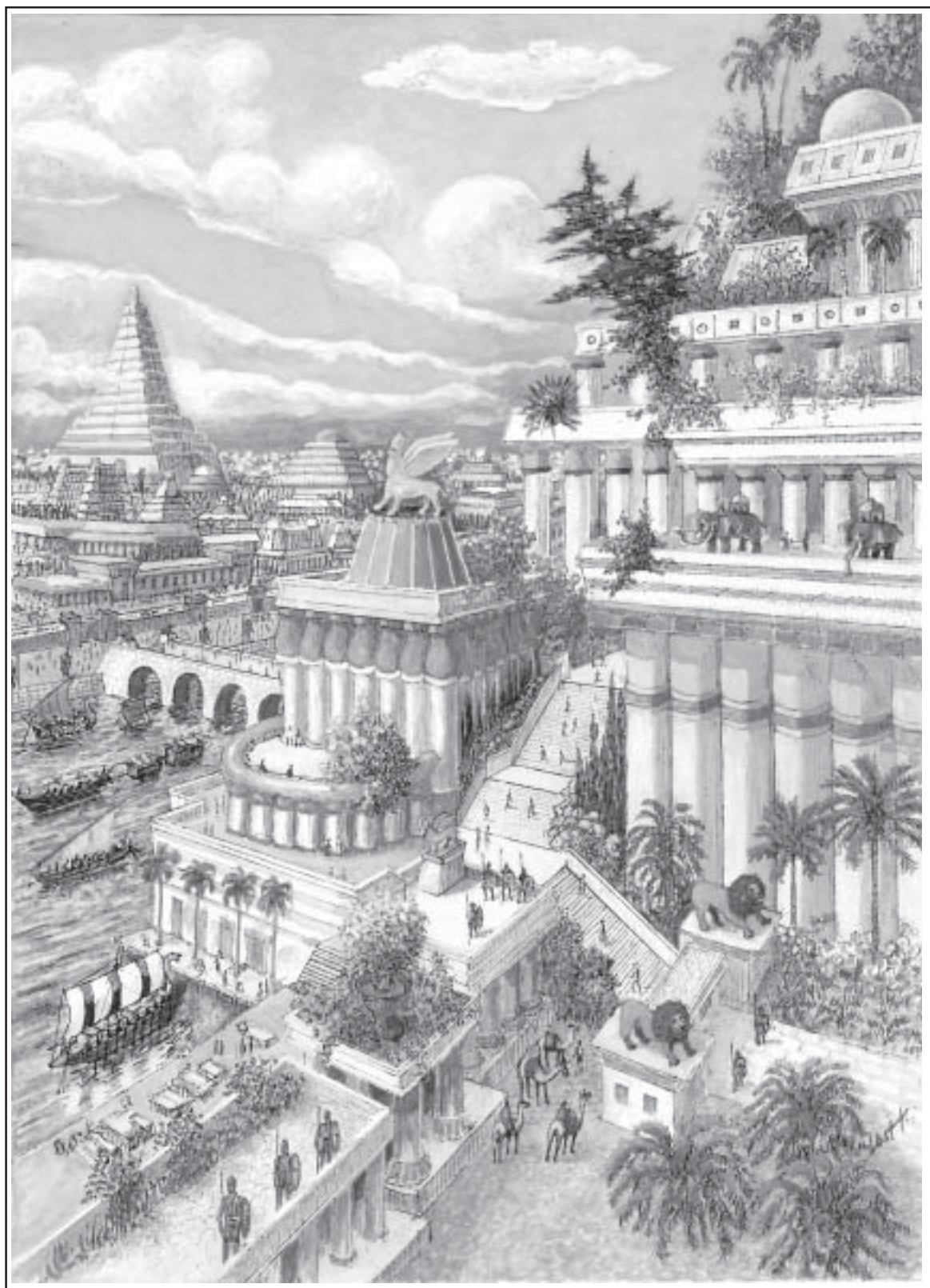
She was now undergoing treatment there by the skilled Chaldean doctors and they thought that they would be able to get the leg to heal again. Their method was to put the leg into splints so it could not move. Then nature would do the rest as long as the bones had been put together correctly.

There was no time for talking or arranging where and when to meet again. All had to line up immediately after the meal and each one had to follow their leaders to the assigned places.

A few officers were detailed to take the king's kids to the royal palace. Havlat was not yet promoted officer but he was nevertheless allowed to accompany them. He was very curious to find out how his friends from the long march would be living.

In their rucksacks they had their valuable scrolls and instruments plus a few personal items. Azariah had several scrolls of drawings and Mishael had his drafts of new compositions. These were to them irreplaceable items. The rest of their baggage would be moved to the palace later on.

They carried the four lion cubs between them in two large baskets with lids on.



The Palace

The king's kids felt rather humble when they started walking up the steps to the royal palace. They felt like being in a dream. Everything was so incredibly beautiful. Everywhere there were footmen on duty dressed in beautiful red clothes, all bowing to them. Already when they came to the first entry-gate they had to leave their baggage as they were not allowed to carry the smallest parcel. They parted from their rucksacks with a certain anxiety. Daniel explained to the guard that they wanted to take the baskets with them as they contained a present to the king. They were told to open the baskets and show what was inside. The guards called a court official when they saw the little lion cubs. There was a shout of delight. Four footmen were told to carry the baskets behind them.

Before they could enter the palace they had to remove their own jackets and wrap themselves in beautifully embroidered ankle length thin coats of navy silk. The coats were all of the same colour but with different coloured girdles: white, blue, yellow and red. They guessed that this was to distinguish between them. The king's kids were astonished over the respect with which they were received. All footmen treated them like they were princes or Nebuchadnezzar's own sons.

Havlat's new life

They were tense as they sat waiting for king's chief official, Ashpenaz.¹ While waiting they talked with Havlat. The other officers were taken to a wine cellar to cool down, perhaps they were more interested in this.

Havlat was anxious to tell them how his life had changed since they prayed together. He now knew that there was only one real God, the living God whom the Jews worshipped, the creator of heaven and earth. His heart almost burst of joy over the grace of being one of those who had received the gift of eternal life. Nobody could take away his certainty that this was so. In his own heart he had made contact with another world.

His own inner being had become sensitive to things of a different world. Not even death would be able to rob him of this inner joy and peace that he now possessed. It was a foretaste of the eternal joy with God. Havlat had promised to talk to the officers about getting permission for the Jews in Babylon to celebrate Sabbath together again. If their request would be granted and where and when the celebration would take place, he could not say.

Shocking information

As they continued talking Havlat wondered if they were to serve at court in the future?

– We do not know for certain what our tasks will be in the future. But for the next three years we will study here at the court in the royal academy.

– I hope you get a different job from that of a court official!

– Why?

– Perhaps I should not mention this, but I have heard that those who get higher duties at the king's court and among other the duties of taking care of his harem, must become eunuchs².

The silence became deafening. This was a shock to all four of them. They were paralyzed by fear. Becoming eunuchs! To be castrated to serve the king! That would be incredibly cruel. All of us are betrothed – we have our loved ones. It can't be possible. God can't allow this to happen to us.

Ashpenaz – the chief of the court officials

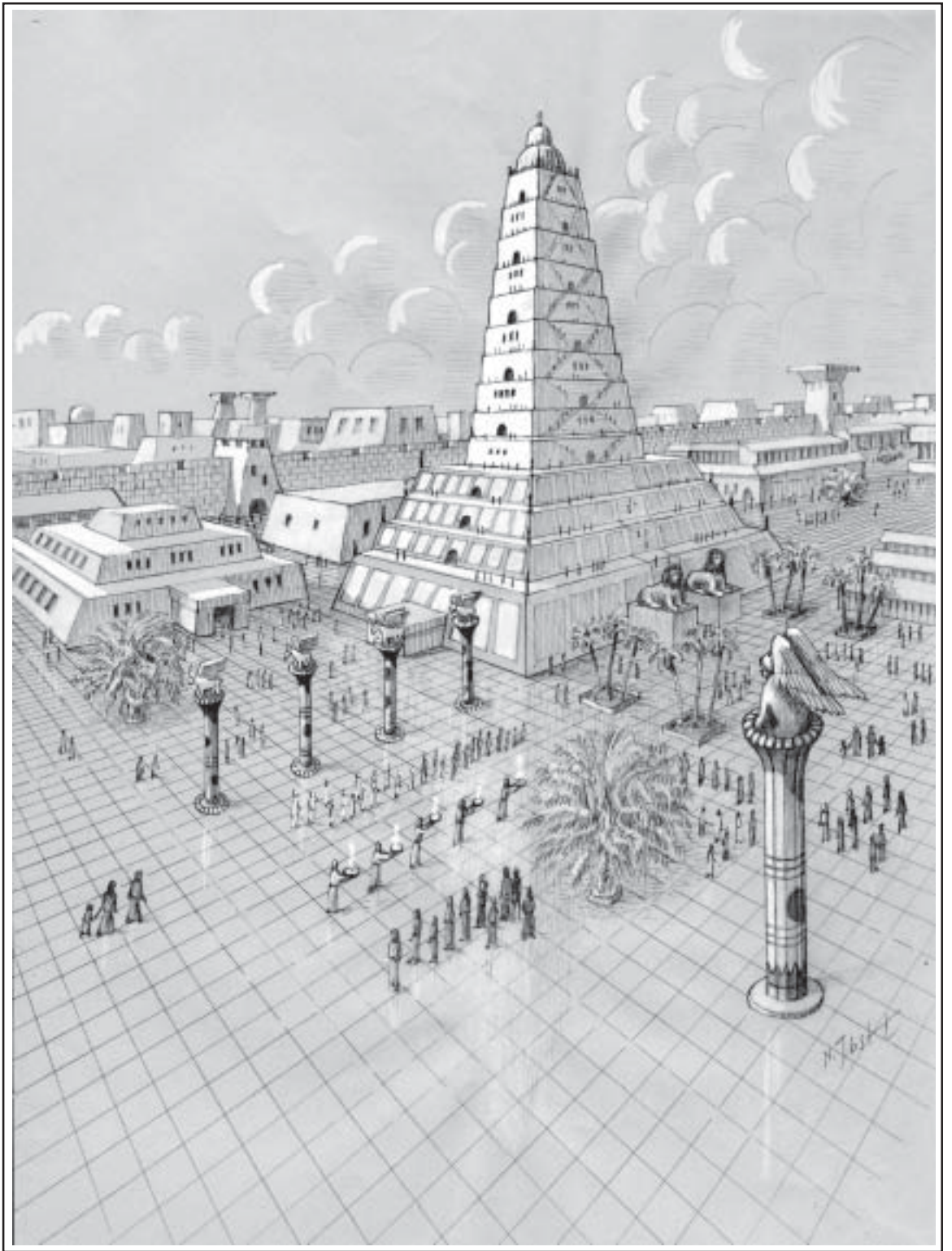
There was no time for any comments. A footman came with the message that the chief of the court officials was to receive them, they were to be presented to him.

Hastily they had to say good-bye to Havlat. They were taken through several broad arcades with a view over the royal gardens. A wonderful scent of mock orange hit them. Spring had arrived. But just now they had no desire to admire the soft carpets, the beautiful inlays of mosaic and the ornate pillars. Their future was at stake! What was the king's intentions with them? What was to happen to them.

The Chief Court Official, Ashpenaz, was rather fat but at the same time a very neat fellow. He was dressed in a beautiful official uniform with many braids and exquisite embroideries. Ashpenaz was very kind and pleasant and wondered how the long journey from Jerusalem had been. He had more questions relating to their relationship with king Jehoiakim.

When they told him that king Hezekiah was their grandfathers' father and grandmother's father respectively he was well pleased. King Hezekiah was a well known name among the Chaldeans as he had caused king Sanherib and the Assyrian army a crushing defeat outside the walls of Jerusalem.

Ashpenaz continued by mentioning how King Hezekiah had shown the Chaldean envoys his treasuries. As your kings after Hezekiah gave away some of your treasures to Egypt to get help from them, we decided to bring some of the most exquisite valuables here to Babylon. They are in



The tower of Babylon – the tallest building in the world

better and safer keeping here than in Jerusalem, everything might end up in Egypt otherwise.

Ashpenaz continued by telling them the king's plans for them. Three years were set aside for special studies here at the castle. They were to receive the highest education to be found in Babylon, even in the whole world. All the Chaldean wisdom was to be at their disposal. After that their service to the king would begin.

He did not mention specifically, however, what duties their service would entail. The king's kids pondered over what Havlat had told them. Certainly they sensed that it was true. Those who served the king intimately were eunuchs. The feminine way, the beardless face and the light somewhat squeaky voice of the Chief Court official, filled them with apprehension and misgivings.

When their time was nearly up, there was a howling from one of the baskets the footmen had put down by the door. The lion cubs could not get on together. Their games were quite violent and they could bite one another's tail.

When Ashpenaz wondered what they had brought in the baskets Daniel told him briefly about the lion hunt and that they had received four orphan lion cubs to give as a present to king Nebuchadnezzar. When Ashpenaz saw them he got quite excited and said that this was the best present you could give to the king, as he had plans to establish a zoo. Already the same day Ashpenaz would himself personally show the lions to the king with the greetings from the king's kids from Jerusalem.

It was hard for the youngsters to leave their pets whom they had got quite fond of. But they consoled themselves that they probably would be able to go to see them in their future lion den. Their names Grott, Gri, Drott and Dri were inscribed on their collars.

The King's treasury

After their conversation Ashpenaz took them for a walk around the palace. He could only show them a small part of the castle and the gardens, that is the part where they were free to go. All was like a dream. So incredibly beautiful! What luxury!

From one terrace they had a beautiful view of the whole city and in the distance they could see the tower of Babylon – the tallest building in the world. What a majestic impression! They gazed in awe for a long time!

After a while Ashpenaz took them down to the vaults in the cellars. They passed several large wine cellars and several guards. All bowed ceremonially to the chief court official.



The king's treasury

After opening several gates using large keys, they arrived at a great vault. It was one of the king's treasuries. When the vaults were illuminated by several oil lamps around the walls, they could see what they had never seen before. There were the holy vessels from the temple in Jerusalem. There were many cups and bowls of pure gold, beautifully formed and decorated. Every cup was a master piece. They counted twelve seven branched candlesticks of pure gold. Each one had inscribed one of the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

However, they did not see any sign of the Arc of the Covenant with the bema seat, the incense altar, the table for the bread of the Presence or the large lamp-stand, all those items which always had been in the inner sanctuary of the temple in Jerusalem. Probably the Babylonians had only removed items in the king's treasury or in the court of the temple, leaving those inside the Temple itself and those that only the priests could touch.

As one of the footmen at the request of Ahspenaz lifted a covering cloth they were greatly astonished to see a harp underneath it. Mishael went close and inspected it thoroughly. Yes, it was his instrument, it was his very own David harp. It was never meant to find its way into this treasury of the king.

But Mishael did not say anything. To say that it was his harp now could be taken wrongly, and be regarded as offensive. It was quite safe here. He had his name inscribed in a secret place so one day maybe he could prove that he was the owner. Time would tell if he ever would be able to play it again.

After their tour the footmen took them to the part of the castle where they were to live. It was in one of the castle's many wings. On the ground floor there were class rooms and a library. On the first floor they each had a study and a bedroom facing north towards a beautiful garden. Each room was linked with a large common lounge. This was their new home. They had never before lived in such luxury.

The law about sowing and reaping³

– This is really royal living! said Hananiah.

– I would rather live simply and in poverty and be free, retorted Mishael.

Azariah agreed: – Yes, riches and luxury are nothing compared to freedom and being able to live normally.

– Is it possible that the king can castrate us? If that is the case, is life then worth living? wondered Mishael.

– Probably all of us will not be assigned to become court officials to care for the king's wives. There are also princes from other countries

conquered by the king whom he will make court officials, said Daniel.

– It is still quite possible that one or two of us will be chosen but who will it be? replied Hananiah.

The four friends were chocked over what they had heard from Havlat and continued to talk about it trying to understand why this should happen to them.

– Can't the Lord prevent this if we pray? wondered Azariah. We have God's promise that he will answer!

– God has not promised that we always will be free of suffering and hardships. But he has promised to be with us in the furnace of affliction.

– What did the prophecy say – the dream you had in Bethel, Daniel? Did not God promise that he would protect us so that no evil would happen to us? asked Mishael.

– No there was no promise of protection from all evil and all suffering but that he would be with us and watch over us. We were to be his witnesses and to glorify him.

In the end it will depend on what God's will for us is. I am more afraid that we will have to suffer because of the evil deeds of our forefathers which can according to Moses be punished to the third or fourth generation, continued Daniel.

– Just think of that fate! To become half feminine with half size breasts, beardless faces and high piping voices, said Azariah.

– It would be terrible if we could never experience natural love created by God. It would be like loosing your life if that possibility would be taken away from us. Just imagine becoming a callous monster! A kind of neuter, added Mishael.

– The worst for me would be the knowledge that I never could father a child. I love children! It would feel like my whole life was a failure if I could never have any children of my own, said Azariah.

– Did not several of our evil kings treat their prisoners from other countries in this way. They made them childless eunuchs at their courts. Now it is our turn to pay for their misdeeds, said Daniel.

– Isn't it unreasonable though, that we are to be punished because of evil deeds by our ancestors? wondered Azariah.

Daniel continued: – Of course it seems very unfair. But nevertheless there is a law about sowing and reaping which works like that. There are may examples of this, what a person sows he will also reap.

Jacob deceived his brother Esau. He was then himself deceived time and again. First he got Lea for his wife instead of Rachel whom he loved. Then he was cheated out of his pay several times.

– Yes, it probably is true that there is such a law of retribution for

individual people. But what we are talking about is that the retribution or the reaping is moved over to children and children's children or a whole nation, said Hananiah

Daniel continued: – Evidently in some instances the unrighteousness will not be avenged until the third or fourth generation. Probably it is impossible for us to find a proper answer to why it is like this and why the law about sowing and reaping is so uncompromising that it affects coming generations.

It looks like this is where innocent suffering has its place. I believe though that justice will prevail for those who are hit by innocent suffering and becomes martyrs for the truth. God will ultimately compensate them in eternal honour and glory.

– Yes I think so too. I believe it is like Daniel says, even though we can't understand it and think it is unfair. The entire captivity here in Babylon is clear punishment for the misdeeds of our forefathers. We have to accept that God makes us take some of the punishment. If we realize that it is not a coincidence that we are here, but that it is God who has decided our fate, it will become easier for us to bear, said Hananiah.

Mishael said: – Of course it is a kind of comfort to know that we are martyrs for God. But how difficult isn't it to pray "your will be done"!

Daniel said: – It is a great simplification to suggest that all suffering which befalls innocent people is a retribution for the misdeeds of previous generations, even if that thought is deeply rooted among us.

There is also innocent suffering which is caused directly by the evil around us. If someone is born blind, this can't be a consequence of that person's own sin, because he can't have sinned before he was born.

Daniel thought for a while and said:

– If someone is born blind, it does not have to mean that it is punishment for the sins of his fathers as we often think. It can simply be due to that the mother happened to get ill during the pregnancy. When it comes to illnesses there is no difference between people, that can happen to any-one.

We have to conclude that all is not happening the right way in this world. There are many things that are unfair and are never explained.

Many have to suffer innocently. We have to look beyond that. We will not see the final reckoning in this life. God will deal with that, he is the righteous judge. Before him all who suffer innocently will be restored and receive their reward.

The most important in this life is, when all is said and done, that we pray that God's will be done. In the perspective of eternity our lives are of the greatest value, both to ourselves and to others, summarized Daniel.

David's psalms – medicine for the soul

Later in the evening Mishael sat meditating. The best healing for the soul when it felt broken by the hard blows of life, was to read and sing David's psalms.

King David suffered much hardship, many trials and much innocent suffering. Already in his youth he was a great poet and most of his psalms are still loved and sung. Mishael tuned his lyre and sang some of David's psalms:

In my distress I called to the Lord⁴,
cried to my God for help⁵.
From his temple he heard my voice.

Turn to me⁶ and be gracious to me.
for I am lonely and afflicted
Let your face shine⁷ on your servant;
save me in your unfailing love.

My times are in your hands⁸;
deliver me from my enemies
and from those who pursue me.
Those who know your name⁹ will trust in you,
for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

Your love, Lord,¹⁰ reaches to the heavens
your faithfulness to the skies.
For with you is the fountain of life¹¹;
in your light we see light
continue your love¹² to those who know you.

A righteous man¹³ may have many troubles,
but the Lord delivers him from them all.
The angel of the Lord¹⁴ encamps around those who fear him,
and he delivers them.

When I was woven together¹⁴ in the depths of the earth,
Your eyes saw my unformed body.
All the days ordained¹⁵ for me were written
in your book before one of them came to be.

Underneath are God's everlasting¹⁶ arms

As Mishael softly sang and pondered over David's poetry the thought came to him that there were many similarities with his own situation. He was not a poet compared with David, but nevertheless one line after another came to him to a completely new tune. Together they sang the captivating melody again and again. It was good for their distressed souls, it was the balm they needed.

We only wish to wander
Under blue skies yonder
Mid flowers of peace
And constant ease.

But when the path grows steep and stony
There is the One and Only¹⁷
His steadfast arms and shining face¹⁸
In everlasting embrace.

Who has promised a life
Free from trouble and strife,
Death and sorrow,
Every day a sunny morrow?

Assailed by drama at length
The Lord gives daily strength.
His steadfast arms and shining face
In everlasting embrace.

God has not promised my life will be
Always lived in prosperity.
Without concern for daily bread,¹⁹
Free from sickness and anxious dread.²⁰

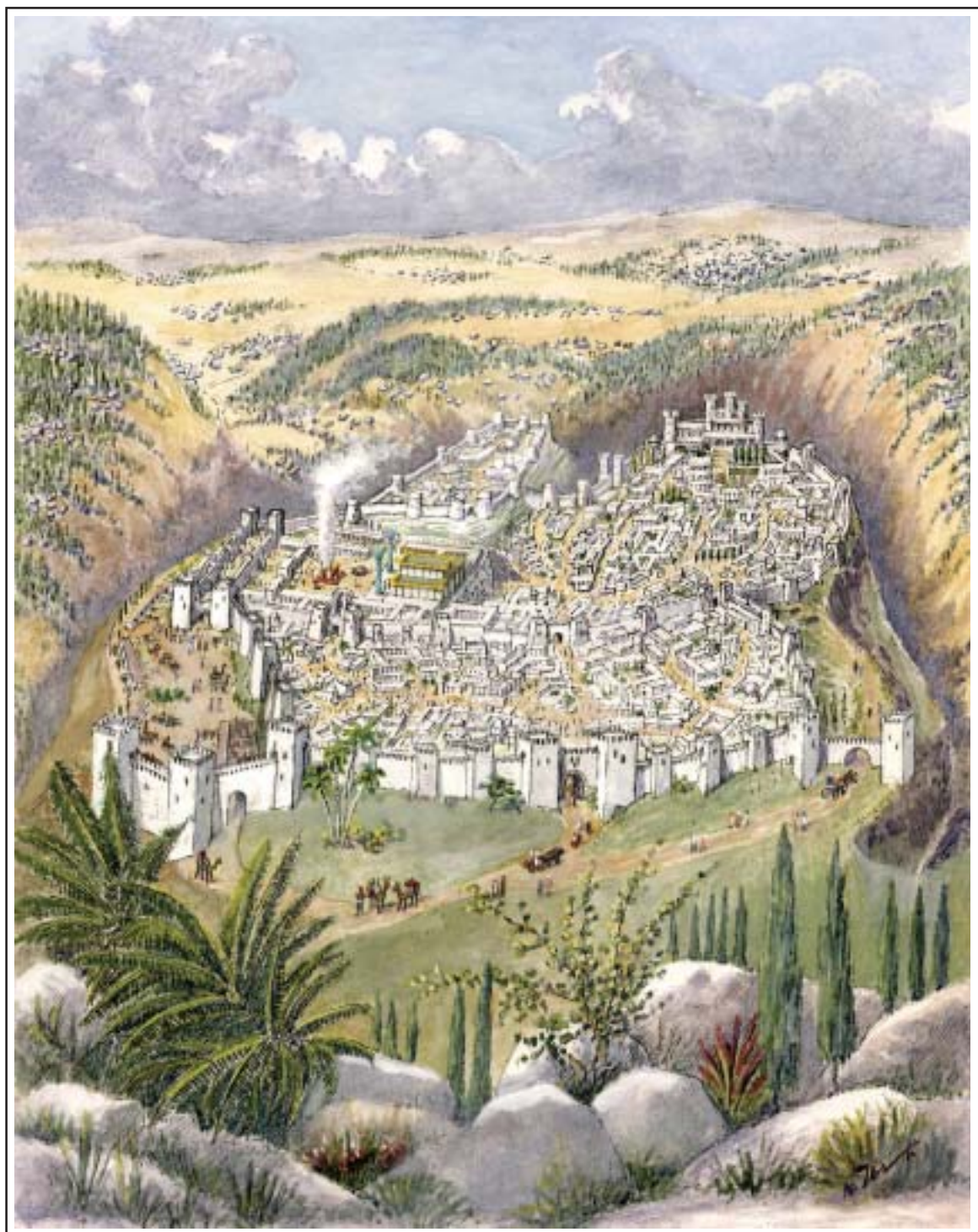
When I drink that bitter cup
His rock of refuge lifts me up.²¹
His steadfast arms and shining face
In everlasting embrace.

The end

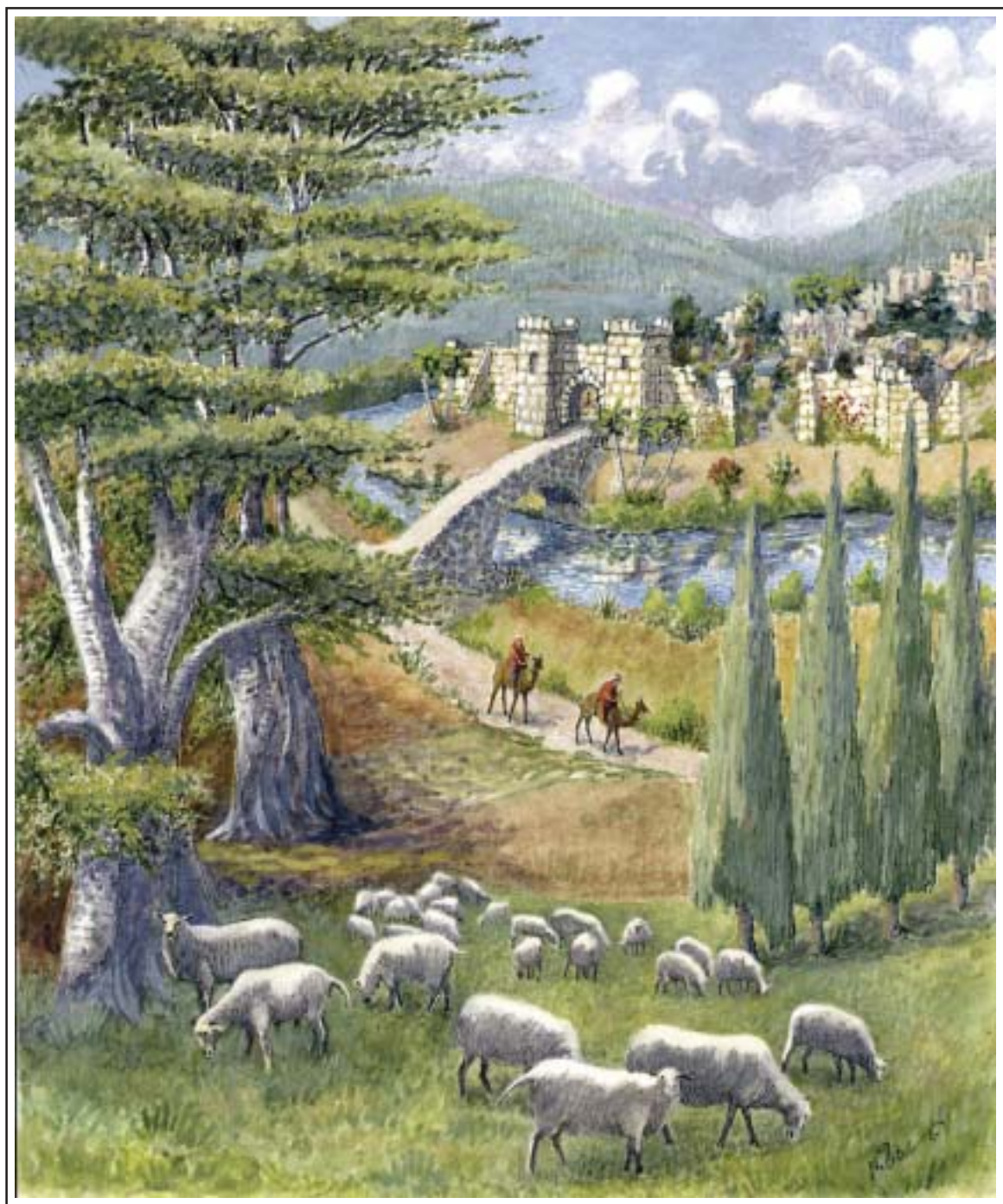
Here we leave the four king's kids. We can follow what happens to them later on in the next book with the title *The king's kids in Babylon*²². All four will experience incredible things, suffering and joy, persecution and exaltation. They will experience many bitter times of trial and hardship. But their testimony will still be: God never abandoned them.

But in the furnace of affliction,²³
With hard times in addition;
God promises to be near²⁴
To help see me clear.

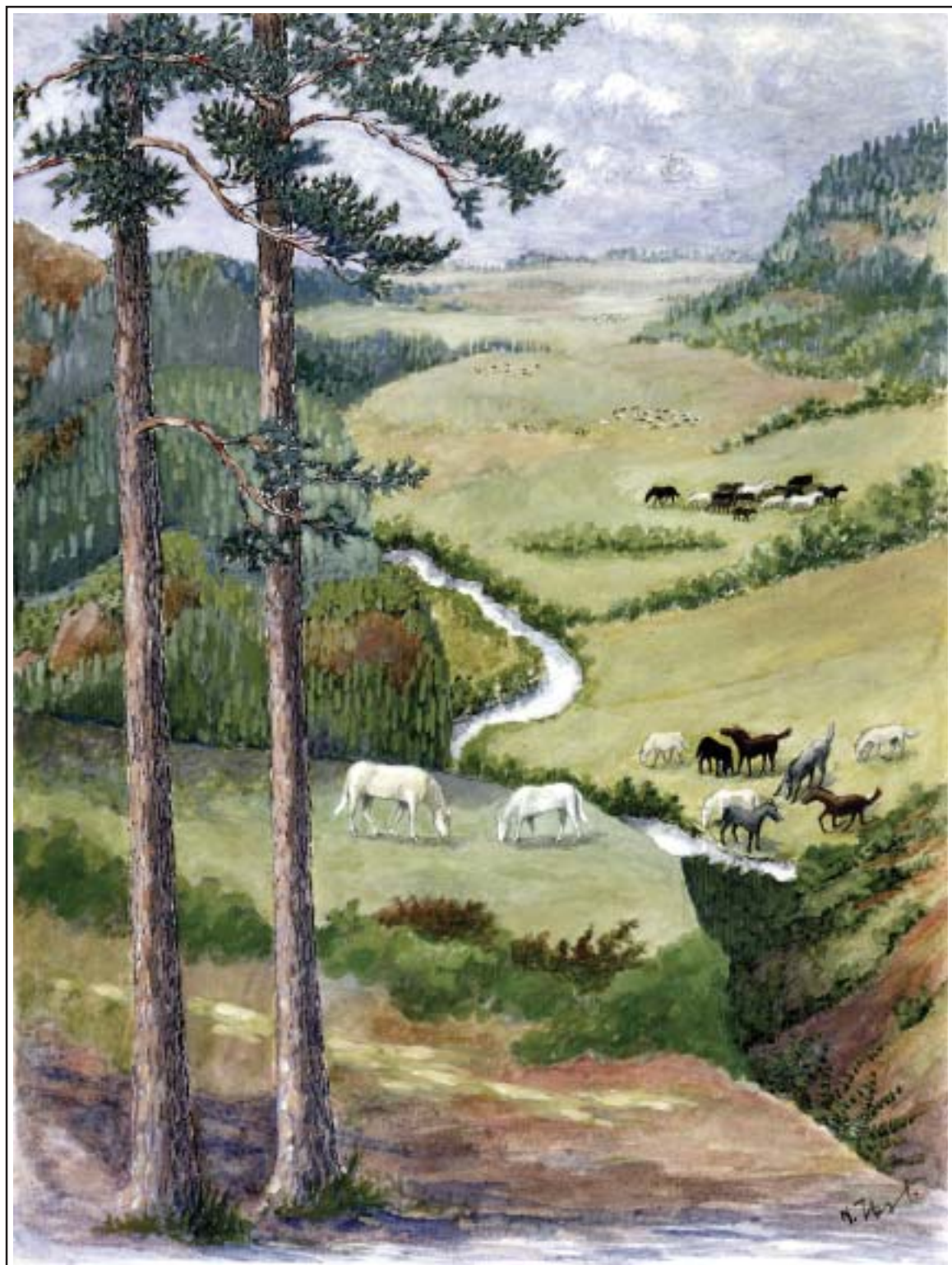
Why be worried and downcast my soul?
He will guide²⁵ and make you whole.
His steadfast arms and shining face
Guide my earthly race.



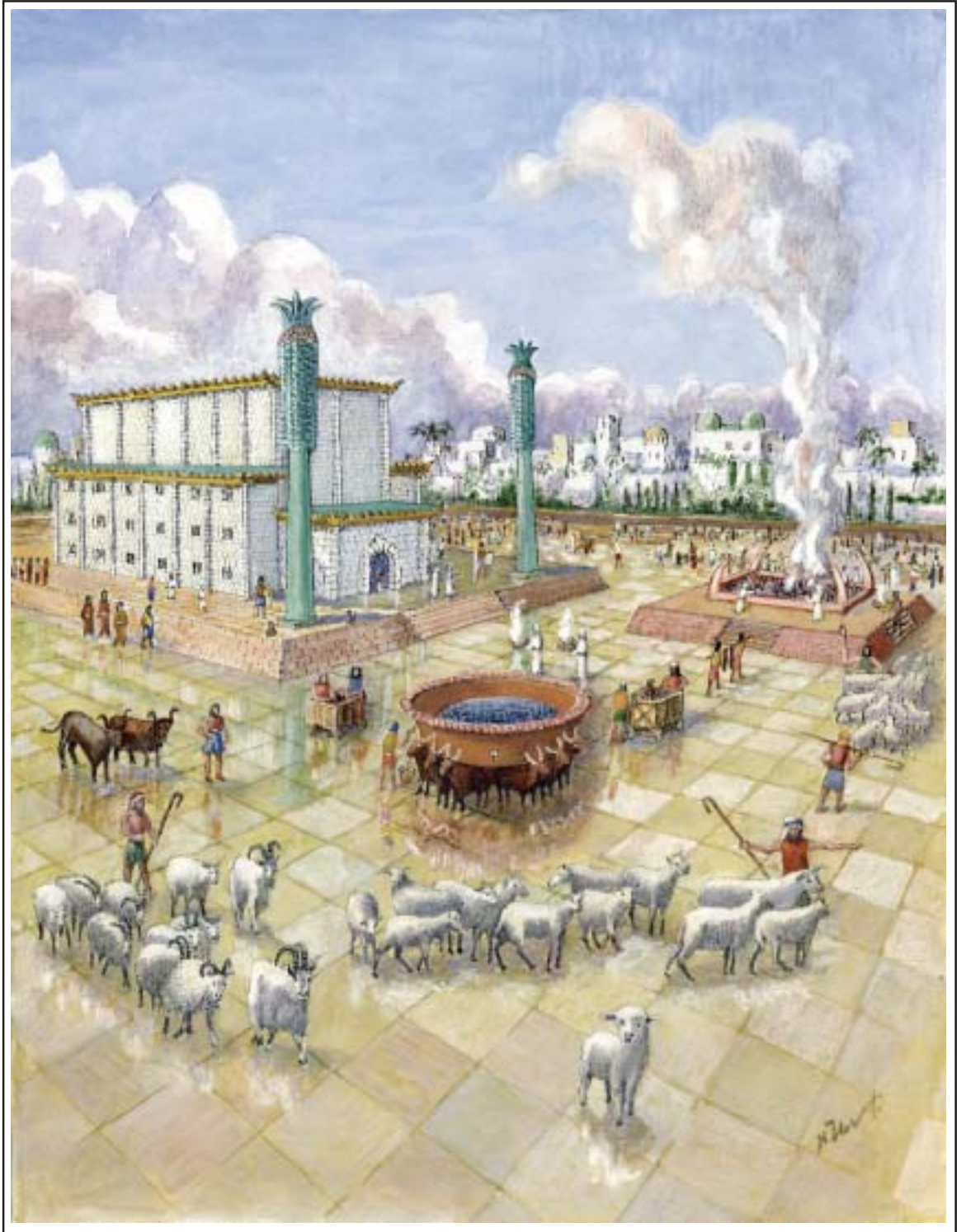
Jerusalem at the time of Daniel, the Prophet



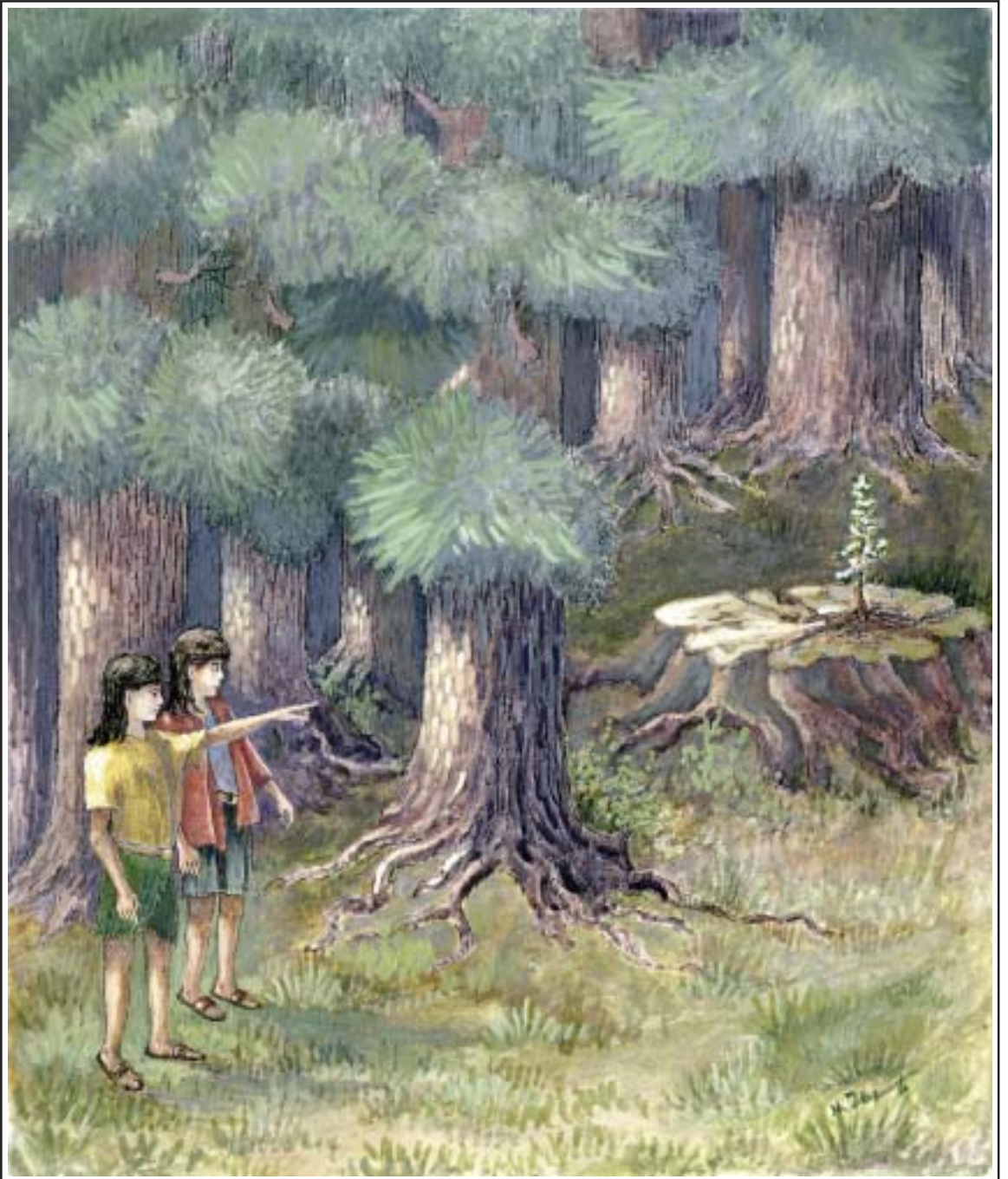
The ruins of Samaria



The plain of Megiddo



King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem



5. The cedars of Libanon

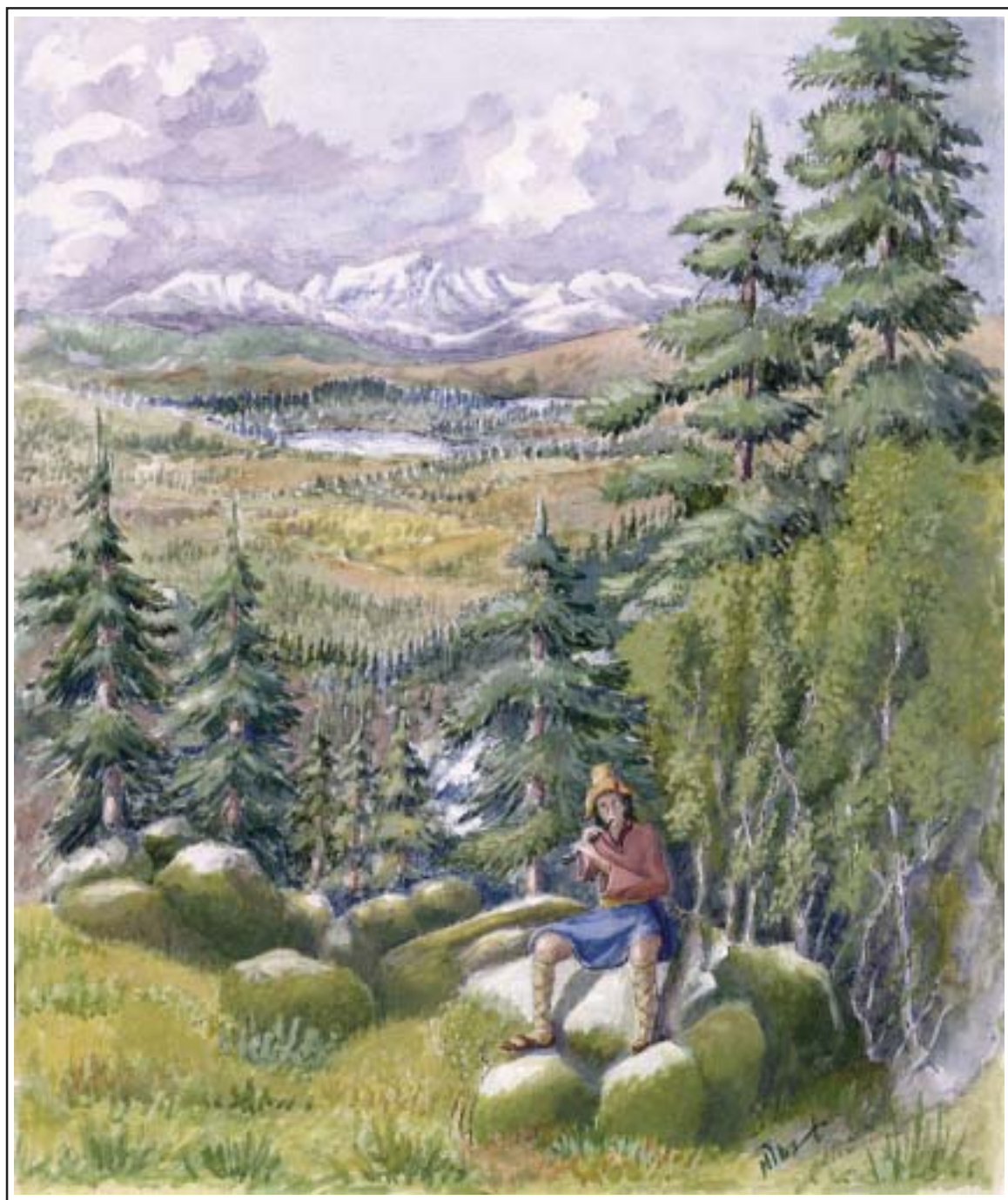
On their route to Babylon they saw the mighty cedars of Libanon.

Daniel to Hananih: "Do you see that stump of a big cedar over there that has got a new shoot?

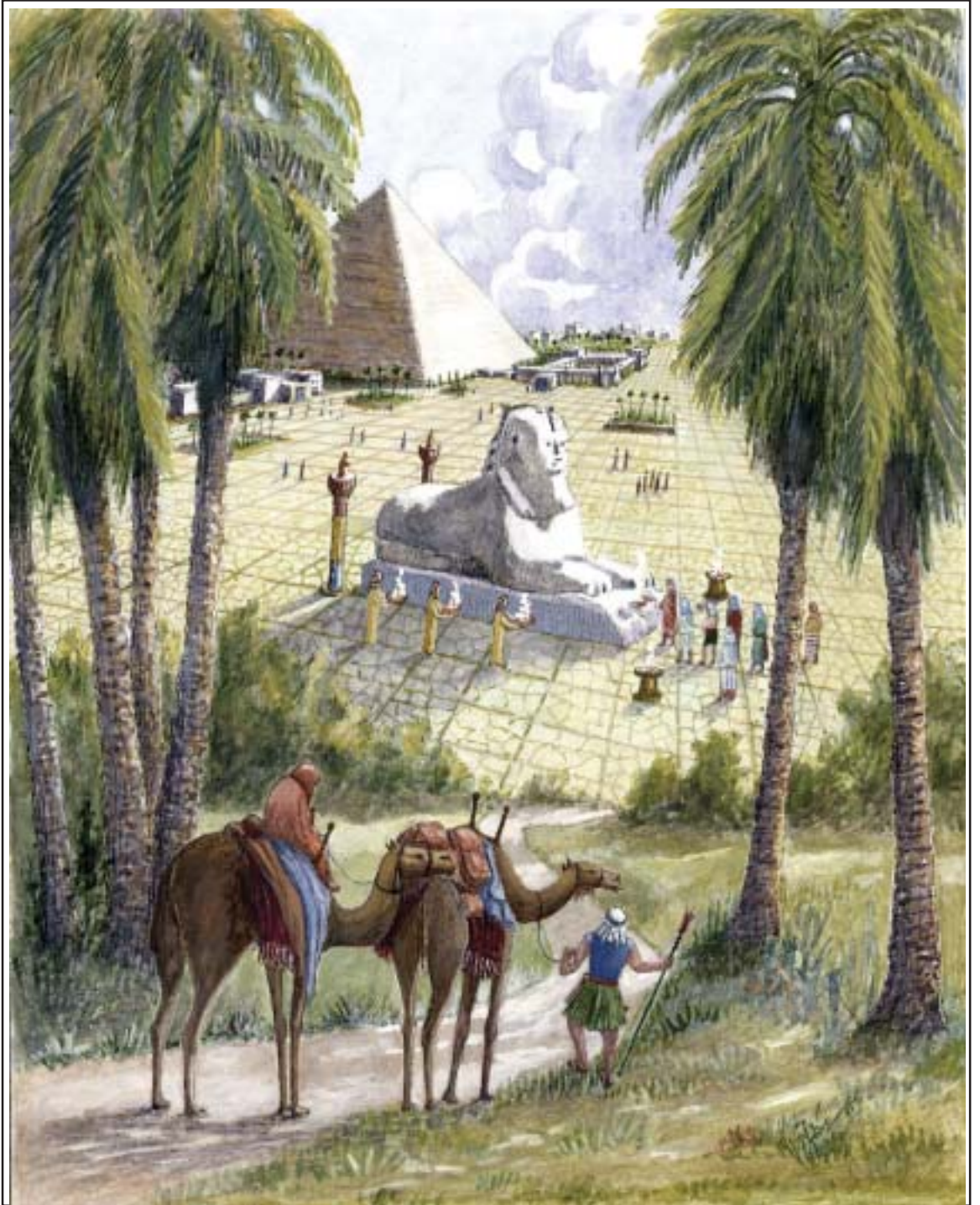
It reminds me of a prophecy about the coming of Messiah:"

"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse.

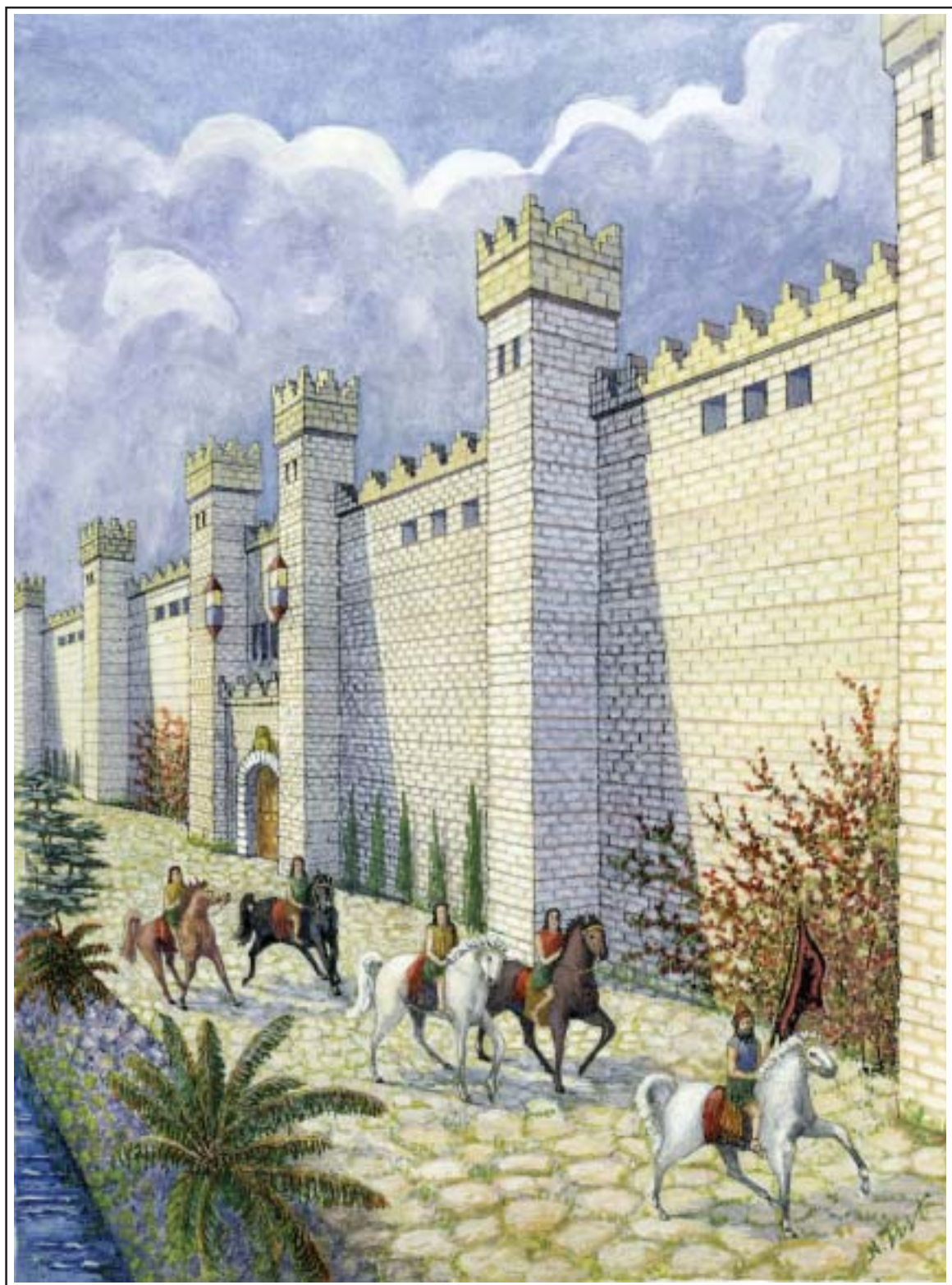
250 And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him..." Is 1:1-2



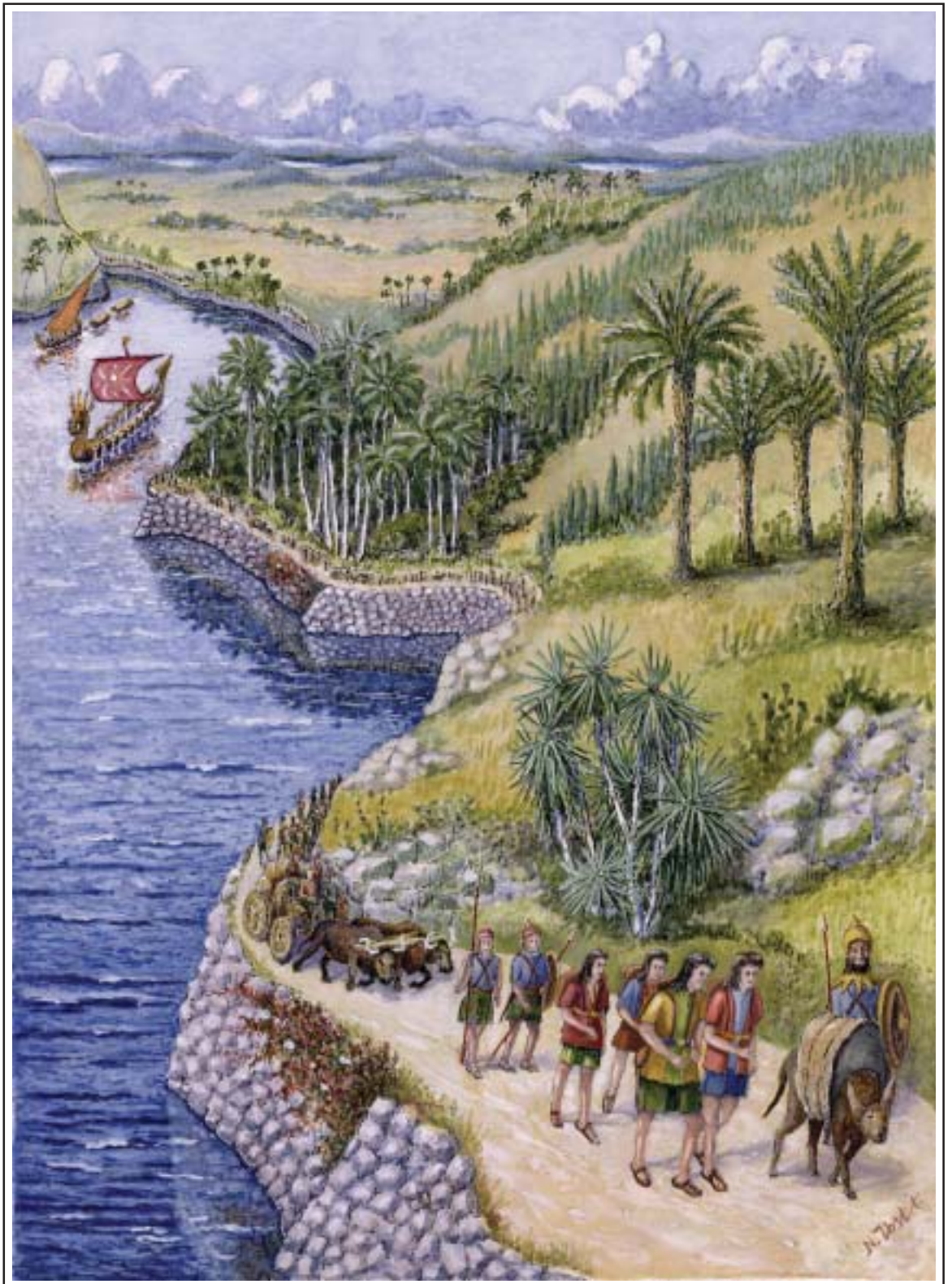
The flutist
– in view of Mt Hermon



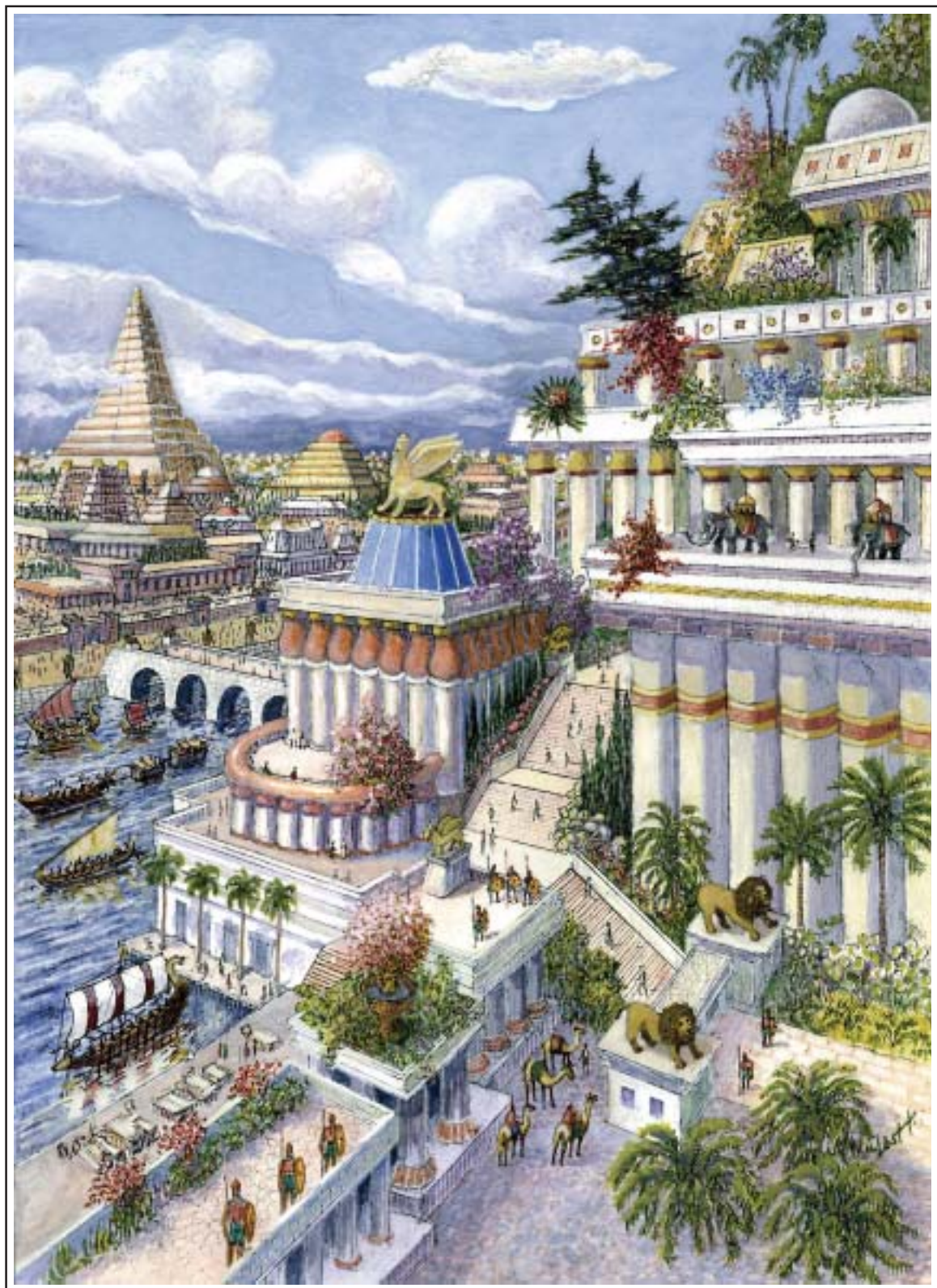
*Abraham came to Egypt – The land of Ham
– a country of rich culture*



The ride along the high walls of Nineveh



Along the banks of the Euphrates



Babylon – the metropolis of the world

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES

If these become silent, the stones will cry out,
is one of Jesus' winged words.

This prediction has received an unprecedented achievement by the archaeological findings that confirm the Bible's historical descriptions.

The authenticity of the Bible's statements has been strongly challenged by the influx of Biblical criticism which had a growing influence from the mid 1800's to the present day. Much of the Bible's informations was doubted and rejected. Genesis creation doctrine and how the Earth was populated are explained as myths. It was claimed that Moses never had been able to write, and they even went so far as to doubt that a city such as Nineveh and the Assyrian empire ever had existed.

Then, almost simultaneously when the Bible's testimony was presented as myths and fairy tales, "*the stones began to cry*". One archaeological discovery after another confirmed the truth of the Bible's description of history.

Bible Criticism

The Bible has always been subject to criticism. Already in the 200's AD, said the Gnostics, who wanted to reconcile the New Testament (NT) teaching with Greek philosophy, said that the Old Testament (OT) God was not the same God as the one Jesus called his Father. One of the most famous early, literary opponents of Christianity was Celsus (180 AD). Another critic who exerted a strong influence on the Bible and Christianity was Porphyry (233-300 AD). The arguments they put forward have been taken up and developed by contemporary critics.

The modern Biblical criticism originates from the 1700's when, during the so-called "Age of Enlightenment" began to question everything, including the Bible and the Christian faith. They argued that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, but originated much later. Gradually they went further in their criticism and mustered out everything supernatural. They argued that the creation story was a myth, Israelites exodus from Egypt was a legend and Joshua a novel. They claimed that monotheism was created by the prophets Hosea and Amos. Lord God, Jahwe, was merely a tribal god among the Jews. The ark, the tabernacle and the priesthood with the feasts would have been introduced after their return from captivity in Babylon. The latter half of Isaiah, chapters 40-66, the majority of the psalms and the book of Daniel, were alleged to have occurred only during the Maccabees time, etc. Likewise, the contents of the NT has been questioned. All miracles and supernatural events have been explained as myths and legends. The Bible's own data and its author's authority, as well as almost everything they have taught and preached, have been criticized, analyzed into pieces, broken and more or less rejected. Even in our time there are often new theories in order to reduce the Bible to a collection of tales and unrealistic doctrines.

The archaeological excavations have, contrary to what these Bible critics had expected, in an undeniable way confirmed the Bible's historical data on people and

places. Remnants of ancient cities show a very high culture, and the art of writing was in use thousands of years before Moses.

How archaeology began

The interest in ancient culture and structure was first raised in 1798 at Napoleon's invasion of Egypt. He then led an expedition of about one hundred scientists who would inspect the Egyptian monuments. Their reports were the beginning of a veritable movement in the West to discover ancient cultures, where it was thought that the cradle of humanity had once stood.

The first archaeological excavations began by chance a few years later, in 1811, completely independent of Napoleon's expedition. An agent for the British East India Company named Claude James Rich, stationed in Baghdad, was intrigued by the inscriptions on some clay tablets which were found by a colleague. When he visited the site of the find it turned out to be the ancient Babylon. With the help of the natives during ten days' time he uncovered a few more tablets, which he brought to Baghdad.

In 1820, Claude James Rich visited the site of Mosul on the Tigris River where there were great heaps of ruins across the river. He stayed for four months to identify the place that he assumed to originate from the lost city of Nineveh. While there, he collected tablets with inscriptions which neither he nor anyone else could read.

An Englishman named J G Wilhelmsson traveled to Thebes in southern Egypt and lived there during 1821-1833. He copied the inscriptions from the major monuments. For his great and epoch-making efforts, he received the title: *The Egyptian archaeology father*. Nor he nor anybody else could at that time interpret the mysterious signs on these monuments.

In 1842 a French consul, Paul Emil Botta, began to excavate in the hills of ancient Nineveh, and after ten years' time, he could expose Sargon's magnificent palace in Khorsabad, a suburb of Nineveh.

Between 1845-51 Sir Austen Henry Layard, an Englishman who was known as *The Assyrian archaeology father*, succeeded to uncover palace ruins after five Assyrian kings at Nineveh and Calneh, all of which are mentioned in the Bible. He also discovered a large library of Assurbanipal, which has been assumed to contain 100 000 volumes.

This was only the beginning of many expeditions around the world. Archeologists have dug up thousands of clay tablets, buildings, monuments and objects of all kinds in both the Euphrates-Tigris River valley as the Nile Valley. The inscriptions on these tablets were written in ancient, dead languages, engraved with ancient unknown characters. Since the excavators did not understand these old characters, nor the ancient languages, it became impossible to place the findings in their proper historical context.

Many scientists tried to interpret the messages on the tablets. Despite great efforts the inscriptions remained for a long time closed and inaccessible. However, several unexpected events and three major discoveries finally solved the mysteries, both in terms of languages and the meaning of the characters. It was the findings of the Rosetta Stone, Behistun rock and the Tell el-Amarna-tablets.

The Rosetta Stone

In 1799 one of Napoleon's engineers, M Boussard found the Rosetta Stone, a boulder with inscriptions in three languages. One of these languages was Greek, but the other two languages were unknown. They tried for a long time to decipher them. Finally a young French language genius named Jean Champollion, in 1822, after twenty-three years patient work, could produce a full translation of the trilingual inscription. He managed to link up the demotic and hieroglyphic text into Greek. When the pharaonic language was revealed, the archaeologists could open the hitherto unknown historical and literary treasures of the Nile Valley.

The Behistun rock

The second landmark event was the discovery and deciphering the inscriptions on the Behistun rock on an overhanging cliffside about one hundred seventy-five meters above the surface of the Zagros mountains, southwest of Harmadan in Persia. On the rock wall are reliefs of kings with their booty, and inscriptions in three languages, all of which were unknown to people at the time. It was not a famous scientist who solved the riddle, but a British officer named Sir Henry Rawlinson. He used four years to make exact copies of the inscriptions. It took him another eighteen years to fully decipher the three languages: Old Persian cuneiform, the Elamite and the Babylonian cuneiform. With knowledge of these three languages Rawlinson and many other well-known archaeologists and scientists could reveal the secrets of the lost civilizations of Assyria, Babylonia and Persia, who all played an important role in the Biblical description of past events.

The Tell-el-Amarna Tablets

The third major discovery was the discovery of the Tell el-Amarna Tablets. A Bedouin woman, who searched for top soil for her garden, in 1887 came across the rock piles of the Tell el-Amarna. On the eastern side of the Nile one of the Pharaoh's beautiful cities, Akhenaten, was once formed. The tablets contained official documents of the pharaoh Amenhotep III (1413-1376 BC) and his son Amenhotep IV (1375-1358 BC). Some of the paintings were a diplomatic exchange of letters between the foreign ministers of Egypt and king Mitanni, king of Babylon and other Asian countries. Many of the tablets were letters, approximately four hundred, which was written by leaders of various countries in Palestine, Phoenicia and Syria.

These tablets have been shown to be of great value to Biblical science. The fact that most of the tablets were written in Babylonian cuneiform, although they came from different countries, indicates that this form of writing was common in Biblical countries during that time and perhaps for a long time before and after. Therefore, the people which the Bible speaks about could make themselves understood to different nations and peoples. Through these discoveries there was a growing interest in archaeological research, especially in England, Germany, France and the United States. Many expeditions of archaeologists and scientists began excavations of ancient cities. It was found that the civilization of these ancient cities were consistent with what was written in both the Bible and in other ancient literature.

After nearly two hundred years of topographical and archaeological research, one can certainly say that discoveries during these excavations in over thousand ancient remains corresponds almost completely with the descriptions in the Bible. *The stones have cried out* these proofs of the Bible's authenticity at a time when its credibility was strongly criticized.

Archaeological discoveries from the cradle of civilization

Here are a few excerpts from the archeological discoveries that prove the Bible's presentations.

Creation. Babylonian creation stories, quite similar to the ones in Genesis, has been found on tablets in the ruins of Babylon, Nippur, Assur and Nineveh. The Genesis doctrine of the Bible about creation appeared thus to have been deeply rooted among the people of the world's oldest civilizations.

Original Monotheism. Bible teaching that man in the beginning believed in one God and that polytheism was a later development, have been verified by inscriptions found by Langdon in clay layers that predate the Flood at Jemdet Nasr near Babylon. In Egypt, Sir Petrie found indications that Egypt's first religion was monotheistic.

The Garden of Eden. Hall and Thompson from the British Museum in London found in 1918 indications that Eridu, which according to tradition was the site of the original Eden, was the first city that has ever been built in the world.

The Fall of man. What Moses wrote about the fall of man has been found described in an image on a Babylonian clay tablet. The centerpiece is a tree and on one side there is a man and on the other side, a woman picking fruit. Behind the woman there is a snake coming up that seems to whisper something to her. The painting has been named the Temptation Seal. Another picture is called the Adam and Eveseal. It depicts a naked man and a naked woman, walking stooped, as if they were saddened, accompanied by a snake.

The early use of metal. According to the Bible copper was in use for making articles already while Adam was alive. Scientists have long held the theory of the Neolithic Bronze Age and Iron Age, and have argued that iron came into use not earlier than 1200 BC. But in 1933 Frankfort discovered at the ruins of Babylon near Asmar an iron sheet made 2700 years BC. Copper instruments have been found in the ruins that predate the Flood.

The Flood. Babylonian tales of the Flood, very similar to those that Genesis tells us, have been found in many tablets that were made shortly after the Flood. Expressions that are repeated again and again on these tablets are "*from the time before the Flood*" and "*writings from before the Flood.*"

Deposits of the Flood has been found at four different sites – beside the testimony of it contained in fossil deposits worldwide. At Ur (1929) Woolley found a 2.4 meter thick layer of silt. Beneath the deposition, he found the ruins of a former town.

At Kish Langdon (1928-29), found a similar layer of silt and beneath it a very well-preserved chariot dating from before the Flood. It had four wheels and was made of wood with copper nails.

In Fara, which according to tradition was Noah's hometown, Schmidt (1931), found a layer of pure silt and below that relics of inhabitants from before the Flood.

In the large mound after Nineveh, Mallowan (1932-33) found at the bottom of the mound a layer of viscous mud and river sand, which must have been deposited there by a flood of water. There is a big difference in the appearance of the pots in the lower and the upper layers of the clay. These findings are very obvious signs that there has been a great flood as the Bible describes it.

Ur, the City of Abraham. The ruins of Ur have been carefully excavated by Woolley (1922-34). In Abraham's time it was one of the world's largest and most powerful cities. Many of the ruins that are from the days of Abraham have been uncovered, so that one can see the streets that Abraham once walked. The whole history of the civilization and religion that Abraham lived in has been elucidated.

Patriarchal cities. Critics who have questioned Abraham's existence have also claimed that the city of Shechem, Bethel, Ai and Gerar were not as early as the days of Abraham. But Albright and Garstang have found pottery shards from around 2000 BC at the base of the ruins of these cities, which proves that they were built in Abraham's time.

Ancient writing

The modern Bible critics who launched the theory that the art of writing was unknown at the time of Moses, stress that OT's books have been written long after the events they describe. They believe that the Bible contains only legends that have been transmitted through oral tradition.

This proposed theory, which has largely been accepted in intellectual circles, has been the most insidious attack ever on the Bible's historical credibility. But thanks to the archaeological excavations in the last century, which have discovered hundreds of thousands of books written on clay and stone tablets centuries (700-800 years) before Moses. The shovel of the archaeologist has proven that even very early Biblical events have been documented by contemporary writers.

Archaeological discoveries from the childhood of writing

Here is a small selection of the world's oldest written discoveries.

The world's oldest writing. Inscriptions from before the Flood has been found in the ruins of Ur, Kish and Danger.

Large libraries from before Abraham has been found in the ruins of Ur, Nippur, Lagash and Sippar.

The oldest known "historical document" containing information about contemporary events, written just after the Flood, was found (1923) by Woolley at Ur near Obeid.

The oldest summary of world history known as the Weld-dynasty-prism, written about a hundred years before Abraham, was found at Larsa (1923) by the Weld-Blundell expedition.

A city of books. Accad, one of Nimrod's cities, was also called "avens", meaning "The city of books". This shows that Accad was known as a center of literature.

Hammurabi's code of Laws, a large boulder with many inscriptions engraved in Abraham's time and was originally set up in Babylon, was discovered in 1902 in Susa by a French expedition.

A school-room from Abraham's time with lots of practice boards tablets in math, grammar, history and medicine have been excavated in Ur. All the hitherto mentioned places where these early writings were found: Ur, Kish, Fara, Nippur, Lagash, anemone, Larsa, Accad, and Susa, are in the same region as the tradition says that the Garden of Eden was located.

In Egypt, thousands of inscriptions, written hundreds of years before Moses have been found.

Alphabetic Writing from 1800 BC, 400 years before Moses, was discovered in 1905 by Petrie at Serabit in Sinai. Alphabetical writings during the period between Abraham and Moses have been found in Palestine in the ruins of Shechem, Gezer, Bert-Shemich, Lachish, and the Hittite cities north of Palestine.

Alphabetic Writings in Israel. The name "Kiriath-sepher", a town near Hebron, meaning "Script City", which indicates that it was a literary center.

These letters and inscriptions prove that the art of writing is very old and was used long before the time of Moses. The study of these inscriptions on the clay and stone tablets have also confirmed the Bible's description of history.

Data are collected from:

Halley's Bible Handbook

The Thompson's Chain-reference Bible

Appendix 2

Jerusalem

– earth's belly button

Why is Jerusalem called "The Holy City"? What makes it so special? This essay highlights the role of Jerusalem from an eschatological perspective.

Jerusalem – a burdensome stone for all peoples

"This is Israel's fate, as it were spoken by the Lord who made heaven and earth and created man's spirit that is in her, I will make Jerusalem and Judah to a poisoned chalice for any neighbors who send their armies to surround Jerusalem. Jerusalem will become a heavy stone that becomes a burden to the whole world. And though all nations of the earth unite in an attempt to lift it, they must be crushed." Zech 12:1-3, TLB.

So runs an over 2,500 year old prophecy about Jerusalem. This prediction of Jerusalem has been realized repeatedly during its long history. Few cities have been so contested and coveted as Jerusalem. Not less than thirty times, Jerusalem has been besieged by foreign armies and was more or less destroyed, but the city has nevertheless always been rebuilt. Thirteen of these sieges are depicted in the Bible. Twice, Jerusalem has been burned and completely razed to the ground, in 586 BC and the year 70 AD. The whole area has resembled a plowed field and remained deserted – like a desert – for long times, but the city has reinvented itself and is still a metropolis of great importance.

Here is a TT (Swedish New Agency) message from Paris, August 31, 1993: *"Jerusalem is the major stumbling block. There will be no agreement between Israel and the Palestinians unless Israel agrees to discuss the status of Jerusalem."*

So said the head of the Palestinian negotiating team in an interview published on Tuesday.

"I can not accept that Jerusalem is not being discussed in two years. We must now discuss, publicly and in secret," said Faisal Husseini in the paper Libération.

Why Jerusalem?

Why is Jerusalem so often the focus of media? It has become something of the worlds political belly button – a city that attracts all the world's attention to itself and often is the subject of heated political debates. Rabbi Robert L. Wolkoff in the Swedish paper "Sydsvenska Dagbladet", May 27, 1994 quotes the following from a speech by Yasser Arafat:

– *"You must come and fight and start a jihad to liberate Jerusalem, your third holiest sanctuary? Jihad will continue. Jerusalem is for the entire Muslim nation – our main battle is Jerusalem."*

Nicosia on 5 June 1996: – *"No one can stop the Palestinians from establishing their own state with Jerusalem as its capital."* So said Yasser Arafat at the meeting in Aqaba in Jordan with King Hussein of Jordan and President Mubarak of Egypt.

TT-DPA June 8, 1996: – *"No independent Palestinian state, more Jewish*

settlements and an undivided Jerusalem.” These are some of the key points of the political program that the new Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and his future government coalition will work for. So said several Israeli newspapers on Friday.

Editor Leif Snare of the Swedish paper "DAGEN" April 30, 1998: *"A few days before the signing of the Oslo Agreement,"* Yasser Arafat said: *"This will provide a basis for a Palestinian state in accordance with the Palestine National Council resolution,"* which was adopted in 1974 in Cairo. This so-called *"phase plan"* means among other things that the whole area of Palestine is to be liberated in phases. The last phase, means that Israel is obliterated, by an armed attack by other confrontational states.

According to Bible prophecy, Jerusalem will be *"a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around."* One conflict will replace the other. The tension will be between the countries around the Euphrates and Israel – between a modern Babylon and Jerusalem.

Jerusalem's history is written in the Bible

Why, then, has Jerusalem become the most controversial and coveted city in the world? The Bible has the answer. Jerusalem is God's chosen city above all other cities and the Jews are a people who are different from all other people. Biblical prophets say that the living God, who created heaven and earth, has been pleased to select this people and this city on earth for His specific purposes. To find the cause for this we have to go far back in time. The Bible has in brief the following story:

Idolatry began in Babylon

The Jews' ancestor, Abraham, a Hebrew, came from Ur at the river Euphrates in Babylonia. There stood the cradle of our civilization and the world's first city, Babylon (in Hebrew: Babel). During the period immediately after the great Flood people were monotheists. They worshipped only one God, namely the God of the righteous Noah, Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord God, the same God that Jews and Christians worship today. But over time Babylon became a center of astrology and the worship of heavenly bodies and the forces of nature. Babylon was the first place on earth where people began to worship a man, namely Nimrod, who was the founder of Babylon. The temples gradually became places where they practiced child sacrifices and debauchery.

Abraham forwarded the revelation of God

As the falling away from the Lord grew, it became a high risk that the monotheistic belief in one God would drown in all sorts of human inventions and polytheism. The Bible tells us that God then called out to Abraham from Ur in Chaldea, so that He through him in a different country could create a nation that would bear the true revelation of God. This happened about 2000 BC. The country that Abraham came to was Canaan, the current Israel.

Jerusalem became an antithesis to Babylon

In the city of Salem, on the slope of Mt Mori in the middle of Canaan God established a base on the earth by a priest named Melchizedek, who worshiped God the Most High. According to Jewish tradition he was identical with Noah's eldest son

Shem. In the beginning was the city called Salem, but later it was named Jeru-salem, an antithesis to the sinful Babylon, which was a nest of idolatry and worship of humans on earth. Abraham's monotheistic faith in God was passed on to his children, and by his grandson, James, the Israeli nation was founded, which have Jerusalem as its capital.

In the Bible, Jerusalem became God's chosen place on earth, while Babylon symbolizes the humanity that turned away from the true God. Although the old Babylon long ago has been ruined, the name of Babylon still remains as an indication of man's wickedness and godlessness. And still the tension remains between the area around the river Euphrates and Israel. According to the Bible, these contradictions will deepen as we approach the end of this age.

Jerusalem and the end of time

Bible prophecy also says that Israel in the end times shall have returned to their nation and its capital Jerusalem. With "the end of time" the Bible means the end of the current age, also called "*The times of the Gentiles*". Jesus said in one of his speeches, that "*when you see the fig tree beginning to bud, then you know that summer is near*". The parable of the fig tree refers to the Israelites' return to Palestine and the revival of Israel as a nation. The prophet Jeremiah has a prophecy of the returning of the Jews from the *diaspora*, which reads:

– *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, then you do not more say, "As the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites out of Egypt", but: "As the Lord lives, who brought seed from the house of Israel out of land in the north and got them from all countries whither I had driven them away." So shall they dwell in their own country. Jer 23:7-8 SBM.*

Before our very eyes we see how this old prophecy is coming true, that not only the tribe of Judah, but all twelve tribes of Israel, are returning to their ancient homeland from around the world,

The current situation

Israel was established again as a nation in 1948. At the 1967 "Six Day War" they captured Jerusalem and in 1980 they declared Jerusalem as their capital. But very few nations dare to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's national capital and establish embassys there in view of the neighboring countries' reactions. Bible prophecy predicts that Jerusalem will be the center of major political entanglements that will touch the whole world. This will eventually lead to Armageddon – a battlefield – from which Jerusalem will be besieged by hostile armies surrounding the city at the end of time.

Messiah

The Jews are still waiting for their Messiah. The Christians are waiting for Christ's return to Earth. Jesus calls Jerusalem "THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING". Jerusalem will play an important role, not only at the end of this time period but in a future Kingdom of peace, as a world capital, according to the prophecies.

Bible chronology

Many chronologies of the Bible have been drawn up but with different results. One of the most famous is Archbishop Usher's chronology from the 1600's, which has been recorded in *'The King James Version of the Bible'*. According to him the time from Adam to Christ was 4004 years. That it was not an even 4000 years, was because Jesus was born four years before our era.

Behind this chronology, there was an underlying concern about the timetable of God with humanity consisting of a week of millenniums (7x1000) of which the first 6000 years would end in 1996 AD (2000 minus 4 years). Then Christ would come back to establish his kingdom, which would become the seventh millennium – a time (realm) of millennial peace and Sabbath rest for all of creation. But if you carefully follow the times as the Bible itself says, it turns out that this theory of the regular 6000 years until 1996 is incorrect. In 2000 AD, we have exceeded that time by about 181 years. It will therefore be about 6181 years from Adam until year 2000 AD, according to the timetables of the Bible.*

Another well-known theologian Dr. W. Hales (1778-1821) made *'A New System of Chronology'*, in which he reached a year of 5311 from Adam to Christ's birth. He built the data on the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible text, known as the Septuagint translation. It is known to contain multiple manipulations of the basic text in which dates in several places are different from the original Hebrew text.

There are several major problems in the calculation of the Bible's chronology. A frequent mistake is a mistranslation or misunderstanding of Exodus 12:40: *"The Israelis had lived in Egypt for 430 years"*. The verse should instead read: *"Alien's time for the children of Israel, who lived in Egypt, was 430 years."* (The King James version: *"Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, WHO dwelt in Egypt, was 430 years"*). Many writers calculate the whole time of alienation to the time of slavery in Egypt, while it rightfully also should include the time of alienation of the Patriarchs in Canaan. The historian Josephus also has this view and indicate that the period from Abraham's calling to Jacob's removal to Egypt for 215 years and the time in Egypt until the Exodus to 215 years. That the period in Egypt was only 215 years is also confirmed by the fact that Moses was only the fourth generation of the patriarch Jacob. (Jacob's son, Levi, became the father of Kohath, Kohath became the father of Amran and Amran became the father of Moses and Aaron. Exodus 6:16-20). Here is what Josephus wrote about alien time of the patriarchs and the exodus from Egypt: *"They left Egypt in the month of Xantikus (April) on the fifteenth day. It was 430 years after their father Abraham's migration into Canaan and 215 years after Jacob's migration to Egypt."*

That the children of Israel were only 215 years in Egypt is also what Paul writes in Galatians 3:14-17: *"Now the promises were given to Abraham and his seed ... an order which God has already given the current force, can not by a law, published 430 years thereafter become void..."* The promise to Abraham was 430 years before the law, therefore, must the 430 years of alienation be counted from the time (430) when Abraham received the promise at the age of 75. These 430 years of alienation and servitude includes both Abraham, his descendants, Isaac and Jacob, until the exodus.

*The Jewish chronology is based on Adam and count 5760 years in our year 2000 AD. But then the exile in Egypt and the time of the Babylonian captivity is not included. If included it will be 6045. The Jewish year, has only 360 days. In order not to come in fault with the seasons, they added months when necessary.

The time 400 years, which is set in Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6, **concerns only the descendants** (heirs) **of Abraham**. Isaac was born 25 years after that Abraham received the promise. Isaac was declared heir at the age of 5, when Ishmael was cast out, (25+5 = 30; 430-30 = 400), so that the time of sojourn and servitude of Abraham's descendants became 400 years (from when Isaac became heir) until the Exodus from Egypt.

Another major difficulty is the interpretation of the statement in 1 Kings 6:1, which says: "*In the 480th year from the Exodus from Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel... he began building the house to the Lord.*" But when you add up the actual specified split times there will be 645 years between the Exodus to the time when Solomon began building the temple. (See timetable IV and V). The 480 years which is stated concerns only the time when there was a king that reigned in Israel. If we exclude the time at Sinai (1 year), the wandering in the desert (40 years), the time to occupy Canaan (10 years), the time of plagues and the time of the judges (111 years) plus the time of Judge Abimelech's anarchy, there remains 480 years of the reign of the kings. The phrase "*In the 480th year*" is therefore understood as: "*When someone reigned in Israel*".

During the royal period, the reign of each king is always stated, with one exception, namely for King Saul. We find the time of his rule in the book of Acts. After the division of the two kingdoms into Judah and the Northern Kingdom (Israel), the time for the coronation of a new king is always stated in which year of reign in the other kingdom it took place.

This means that it becomes a puzzle to get the exact dates because the time of a reign does not match the calendar year, but can begin anytime during the year. Therefore, no one with can certainty establish the exact chronology of the royal period. Moreover, there is some overlap of the time of government for example when King Jehoram was crowned king while his father Jehoshaphat was still alive, 2 Kings 8:16. Moreover, during Israel's King Jeroboam II's long time of reign, which lasted for 41 years, Judah was without a king between his 16th and 27th year of reign. These eleven years must be counted into the Kingdom of Judah's chronology.

Before I present my attempt to work out a Bible chronology, I would like to stress again that the difficulties are many and that the uncertainty therefore is large. In this chronology, I have started from the original Hebrew text known as *the massoretian* text. According to this, I have come to the conclusion that there will be about 4180 years from Adam to the birth of Christ. Here follows a comparison with Usshers and Hales chronology. Note that there are certain time periods completely overlapped in these three chronologies. If we add up the year's that are stated from Adam to Noah, the Flood will be in the year **1656**. From Abraham's calling to the Exodus from Egypt, there will be **430** years and from the destruction of Jerusalem until the birth of Christ, there will be **587** years.

	Ussher	Hales	N. Ibstedt
1. From Adam to the Flood (River)	1656	2156	1656
2. From the Flood to Abraham's calling	427	1077	428
3. From Abraham's calling to the Exodus	430	430	430
4. From Exodus to King Saul	396	588	561
5. Time of Kings	508	473	519
6. From the destruction of Jerusalem to the birth of Christ	587	587	587
	4004	5311	4181

THE BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

This chronology follows the dates in the original Hebrew text in the scriptures up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC. From Adam until 2000 AD, the total time will be about 6181 years.

• The time of Christ's birth is different from the data of world history by 3 to 7 years. In general, it is estimated that Christ was born four years before our era.

Fairly safe world historical dates:

1. The 1st caravan of captives to Babylon : 606 BC
2. Jerusalem's destruction at the time of king Zedekiah: 587 BC .*
3. Cyrus edict of freedom, when the 70-year of captivity ended and about 50 000 Jews returned to Jerusalem: 536 BC. (606-70 = 536).
4. Philip of Maced. defeated Darius III: 330 BC.
5. Rome took over the Greek Empire: 146 BC.
6. Jerusalem was captured by Pompeii in 63 BC.
7. Christ was born 4 BC.
8. Christ was crucified AD 30.
9. Titus destroyed Jerusalem AD 70.

I. From Adam to the Flood: 1656 years

The following time intervals are according to Genesis 5:1-29, which covers the period from Adam to the Noah-Flood:

	Years	BC
0. Adam was created in		4181
1. From Adam to Seth's birth	130	4051
2. From Set for Enos	105	3946
3. From Enos to Cainan	1990	3856
4. From Kenan of Mahalalel	70	3786
5. From Mahalaleel to Jared	65	3721
6. From Jared to Enoch	162	3559
7. From Enoch to Methuselah	65	3494
8. From Methuselah to Lamech	187	3307
9. From Lamech to Noah	182	3125
10. From Noah's birth to the Flood	<u>600</u>	2525
Total years this period =		1656

The Flood will be 2525 BC (= 3125-600)

When Noah was 500 years Shem, Ham and Japheth were born. Gen 5:32; Gen 7:11

II. From the Flood

to the call of Abraham = 428 years
 Gen. 8:13: The Flood lasted 1 year: 1 2524

Years BC

According to records in Gen 11:10-26:

1. Shem became father to Arphaxad		
2 years after the flood	2	2522
2. From Arphaxad to Shelah's birth	35	2487
3. From Shelah to Eber	30	2457
4. From Eber to Peleg	34	2423
5. From Peleg to Reu	30	2393
6. From Reu of Serug	32	2361
7. From Serug of Nahor	30	2331
8. From Nahor to Terah		29
2302		
9. From Terah to Abraham, Gen 12:4	130	2172
10. From Abraham's birth to his call	<u>75</u>	2097
Total for the period =		428

From Adam to Abraham's call: 2084 years
 Abraham was called in the year 2097 BC.
 **Abraham was born when Terah was 130 years.
 Terah became 205 years and died before Abraham went to Canaan at the age of 75 (205-75 = 130).
 Gen 11: 32; 12:4; Acts 7:4.

III. From Abraham's call to the exodus from Egypt: 430 years
 Gen 21:5; 25:26; 47: 9; 28, 50;
 22.26; Gen 12: 40-41; Gal :3:14-17

	Years	BC
From Abr's call to the birth of Isaac,	25	2072
From Isaac's birth to Jacob's birth	60	2012
From Jacobs birth to exodus in Egypt	<u>130</u>	1882
		215
Jacob lived in Egypt until his death	17	1865
From Jacob's death to death of Joseph	54	1811
From Joseph's death to the Exodus	<u>144</u>	1667
		215

Total for the period = 430

From Adam to Exodus from Egypt: **2514 years**
 Exodus from Egypt = **1667 BC**

Jacob was 91 years when Joseph was born after 14 years of marriage (1 Gen 30:22-34, 31:41).
 Joseph was 39 years old when Jacob came to Egypt when Jacob was 130 years old.
 When Jacob died when he was 147 years old, Joseph was then 56 years (39 + 17 = 56).

* Also the years 605 and 586 BC occurs.

** The age of promise of 430 years is divided into 215 years of sojourn *** in Canaan and 215 years in Egypt.

*** To live as strangers, eng: sojourn. Exodus 26:5, 17:7 Jdg

IV. From Exodus to King Saul: 561 years

	Years	BC
Receiving the Law at Sinai	1	1666
The time in the desert	40	1626
The time from the entrance into Canaan until Saul becomes king is at least 520 years according to the following passages:		
Jos 14:7: Joshua's time in Canaan	30	1596
Jos 24:39: Joshua was 40 years old when he became a scout.	= 40	
His time in the desert	= <u>40</u>	
	110	

The Time of Judges

includes the time for 16 Judges and 7 plagues:

Judges 2:7-3:7 The time elders survived Joshua?*		
Judges 3:7-8, 1st plague	8	1588
Judges 3:9-11, 1st Judge Othniel	40	1548
Judges 3:12-14, 2nd plague	18	1530
Judges 3:15-20, 2nd Judge Ehud	80	1450
Judges 3:31, 3rd plague? *		
Judges 3:31, 3rd Judge Shamgar? *		
Judges 4:1-3, 4th plague	20	1430
Judges 4:4, 4th Judge Deborah	40	1390
Judges 5:31, 5th Judge Barak? *		
Judges 6:1-10, 5th plague	7	1383
Judges 6:11 to 8:32, 6th Judge Gideon	40	1343
Judges 8:33 to 9:57, 7th Judge Abimelech	3	340
Judges 10:1-2, 8th Judge Tola	23	317
Judges 10:3-5, 9th Judge Jair	22	1295
Judges 10:6-18, sixth plague	18	1277
Judges 11:1-12-7, 10th Judge Jephthah	6	1271
Judges 12:8-10, 11th Judge Ibzan	7	1264
Judges 12:11-12, 12th Judge Elon	10	1254
Judges 12:13-15, 13th Judge Abdon	8	246
Judges 13:1, 7th plague	40	1206
Judges 13:2-16-31, 14th Judge Samson	20	1186
Judges 17:1-21:25 Civil war? *		
1 Sam 4:1, 15-18, 15th Judge: Eli	40	1146
1 Sam 7:2-15, 16th Judge: Samuel	40	1106
1 Sam 8:1 – Samuel's sons? *	<u>0</u>	
From the the entry into Canaan until Saul becomes king	520	
Plus 41 years in the wilderness	+ 41	
The total of the period	561 years	

From Adam to Saul: 3075 years

Saul became king in 1106 BC

From Exodus to Saul: 1667-561 = 1106 BC

• When there is no time interval given = (?), it can be a question of months. In that case, the time from the Exodus to Saul will be **561 years**.

V. From Saul to Jerusalem's destruction: 519 years

Acts 13:21, Saul's reign: 40 years from 1106 to 1066
 2 Sam 5:5, David's reign: 40 years from 1066 to 1026
 1 Kings 11:42 Solomon's reign, 40 years: 1026 to 986

Kings in Judah:	Years of reign	BC
1 Kings 14:21, Rehoboam's reign, 17 years		986-969
1 Kings 15:2, Abiam's reign, 3		969-966
1 Kings 15:10, Asa's reign, 41		966-925
1 Kings 22:41-42, Jehoshaphat's reign, 25		925-900
2 Kings 8:17, Jehoram's reign, 8		* 904-896
2 Kings 8:26, Ahaziah's reign, 1		896
2 Kings 11:3, Athaliah's reign, 6		895-890
2 Kings 12:1, Joash's, reign, 40		889-850
2 Kings 14:1-2, Amaziah's reign, 29		* 850-821
2 Kings 14, Judah is without any king, 11		822-811
2 Kings 15:1-2, Azariah's (Uzziah) reign, 52		811-759
2 Kings 15:32, Jotham's, reign 16		759-743
2 Kings 16:1-2, Ahaz's reign, 16		743-727
2 Kings 18:1-2, Hezekiah's, reign 29		728-699

The fall of Samaria in

	722
2 Kings 21:1 Manasseh's reign, 55	698-643
2 Kings 21:19 Amon's reign, 2	642-640
2 Kings 22:1 Josiah's reign, 31	640-609
2 Kings 23:31, Jehoahaz's reign, (3 months)	609
2 Kings 23:36 Jehoiakim's reign, 11	609-598
The first captivity caravan (in King Jehoiakim's fourth year of reign.)	605
2 Kings 24:8, Jehoiachin's reign, (3 months)	598
2 Kings 24:18, Zedekiah's reign, 11	598-587
Total time of reign =	513 years

+ 11 years without a king minus 5 years when the times of the reign coincided (overlapped) with the previous ruler

(*Joram = 4 years, *Amaziah = 1 year),

= **513 + 11 - 5 = 519.**

The total for the period = 519 years

Destruction of Jerusalem, Zedekiah 11th reign, 587

From Adam to the destr. of Jerusalem: 3594 years

COMPILATION

I From Adam to the Flood =	1656 years
The Flood was	2525 BC
II From the Flood to Abraham's call =	428 years
From Adam to Abraham' call =	2084 years
Abraham was called in the year	2097 BC
III Fr Abraham's call to Exodus =	430 years
From Adam to Exodus =	2514 years
Exodus from Egypt =	1667 BC
IV From Exodus to Saul	561 years
From Adam to Saul =	3075 years
Saul became king in	1106 BC
V From Saul to destr. of Jerusalem =	519 years
From Adam to destr. of Jerusalem =	3594 years
From Adam to the birth of Christ	4181 years

6500 years?

The most significant research results from 1997 have finally emerged in the media. Researchers investigating the human genetic make-up (genome) has made a discovery that shows that man has hardly been in existence for more than about 6500 years. How can they reach such a conclusion?

The majority of human genes are in the cell nuclei, as a string in which four different colored "pearls" can be described in different words, all composed of three letters. Such a code, the DNA molecule, can disclose enormous amounts of information.

By comparison, the Morse code can convey any information using only two symbols. Computers have only two symbols at their disposal.

Each cell in humans contains so much text, as if it were printed in book form would fill 3500 bands, each with one million characters. If we should put all the cellular strings from one human in a single chain would it reach from earth to the sun and back 30 times. The information density of "the string pearls" is so vast, that all information in the world's all libraries could be stored in one cubic millimeter DNA.

When the cell divides, it copies "letter by letter" all the "3500 bands" in a few minutes. Cell nucleus proofing system ensures that the copying generates accurate copies by proofreading the text. In spite of this there will come up errors in the copying process. Of three and a half billion "letters", there is an average of one that gets copied incorrectly. But the result is nevertheless so good that life can continue, at least for some time.

Mitochondria

But there is a weak link that threatens the survival of life. In the cell's power plants, the mitochondria, which is located outside the nucleus, there is a small database, which is not good enough to correct the copying errors.

In the mitochondria, we can calculate the copy errors that have been accumulated over thousands of years. The errors are accumulating at a rate of one thousand times higher speed than any correction can be made to the text. The cell can not get rid of the errors that arise here, as it does with misprint errors in the cells nucleus. Therefore all the print errors will be accumulated.

It is assumed that the aging process depends on this fact. Man's power is weakened gradually and the consequence is death. The same problems can threaten the entire existence of life on our planet. Energy production may simply die out.

New mutations in the mitochondrial DNA shows up with a fairly constant rate over time. Therefore,

the amount of "print" errors in the mitochondria can be used to calculate the time when there should not have been any "misprintings".



The DNA alphabet consists of four letters: Every DNA word consists of three letters. Every word is the code for an amino acid. There are 64 different possibilities. Amino acids can also occur in flip variants, "right- and lefthanded". It offers 128 varieties, but only 20 of the first type are used. These 20 amino acids then build the proteins that constitute the actual participants in the bodily processes. (Fig.: Vorel / EO.)

There are up to 10 000 mitochondria in each cell. Mitochondria are inherited in principle, only from the mother, because the sperm's mitochondria, which are in the tail of the sperm, almost always are left outside of the egg at fertilization.

The mitochondria have become a major problem for proponents of evolution, also because they use a language that is different than the language in DNA of the nucleus. It has been interpreted as a "design-signal" from a creator. (Scherer-Junker, "Evolution – ein kritisches Lehrbuch" 1998. Weyel Lehrmittelverlag, Giessen).

Mitochondrial Mutations

A group of medical students recently studied the deterioration of data from one generation to the next that are taking place in the mitochondrial databank. They found that the data base degenerates much faster than commonly thought. In their first estimate, the occurrence of "misprints" could be twenty times larger than they first thought. In September 2000 they wrote in a new article stating that the mutation rate is perhaps even greater – 100 times larger than assumed before. (29 Sept. 2000, Science, vol 289, p. 2342-2344).

This research result from empirical science suggests that the modern man only has existed for about 6,500 years.

The recent mapping of the human DNA has found that we have approximately 99.9% common DNA. This again shows that we have emerged relatively recently, because we have had very little time for variation. There is in this result no genetic basis for different races, but we are all members of one big family. The prevailing perception of the human race advanced age has been based on pure speculation.

Mitochondrial Eve

A few years ago mitochondrial research showed that all people have a common first mother, who was called Mitochondrial Eve. Then it was assumed that this "Eve" had lived in North Africa for about 200 000 years ago. But now we understand that "Eva" really should have lived for about 6500 years ago.

In addition to the copying errors that occur in every body cell's nuclei, about 5000's daily mutations also appear due to radiation, ultraviolet radiation, environmental toxins, etc... It makes it very difficult to understand why humans have not died out if they have been here several hundred thousand years!

Y-chromosomal Adam

How is it with Adam? Age determination also fits him. Recently, it was concluded, by comparing the Y chromosomes from men, that all men most likely have the same first father. The differences between men from different nationalities are very small, but the differences relative to chimpanzees and gorillas are so large that one can not talk about relationships. It is often stated that there are only 1-2% difference between human and chimpanzee. When making such comparison, they don't tell us that they have only used such DNA sequences that are most similar to each other. Then of course they get the desired result. (Source: <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~jonmarks/DNAhyb.html>). For example, the difference between the brain size in humans and chimpanzees is one cubic decimetre. This difference can not be explained away as 1-2% different DNA.

The gene pool of the cell nucleus

The human genetic make-up (genome) in the nucleus has already collected more than 6,000 errors that cause disease, and we are constantly finding

new diseases. This also is consistent with the Biblical story of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, after which God's perfect work of creation began to degenerate.

SUMMARY

Recent research suggests that humans have existed for a short time, and that we have a common first mother and first father. The similarity between human DNA also indicates that the human race has gone through a "bottleneck", where only a few individuals have survived (Noah's Flood). This and much more we can read in our cells' data library when they open up before our eyes.

We can see that God's revelation about the origin of man in the Bible as in good agreement with the facts that science discovers.

PEKKA Reinikainen

Source: *Parsons, Thomas J., et al., A high observed substitution rate in the human mitochondrial DNA control region, Nature Genetics, vol 15, April 1997, p. 363-367. – See also the website www.crcs.org and arn.org.*

This article appeared in the magazine Genesis number 1, 1998. By courtesy of Pekka Reinikainen and the paper's editor Erik Östlund, I have been able to introduce these article by Reinikainen in a revised form for this book as a supplement to the study of Biblical chronology.

CONCLUSION

The author's chronology is not based on any archaeological discoveries, but only on the dates contained in the original Hebrew.

My approach has been to start from a secure and recognized historical dates, namely the destruction of Jerusalem 587 years BC.

Then I counted backwards the lists of Kings in Judah (519 years). After that I continued with the time of the judges and the Israelites wandering in the desert (561 years), their stay as slaves in Egypt (215 years) and the Patriarchal alienation in Canaan after Abraham's call (215 years). Then comes the time between Abraham and the Noa-Flood (428 years) and finally from the Flood to Adam (1656 years).

A total of 4181 years from Adam to the birth of Christ. The result differs from Usshers chronology by 177 years and is in line with the English scientist David Rohl's archaeological discoveries that have brought new datings to the Old Testament time.

Flavius Josephus

Flavius Josephus lived from year 37 to year 93 AD – a time when Christianity was spread throughout the known world. He witnessed the slaughter of Christians by Emperor Nero, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the Jewish nation's downfall, which he fully described in his book "Jews' war against the Romans."

His father was a famous and beloved priest, and on his mother's side he was of royal blood. He belonged to the elite among the Jews both in terms of education and talent. Josephus joined the Pharisees' party, whose way of living and thinking had some similarities with the Stoics of the Greeks. At twenty-six, he visited Rome and was impressed by the Roman state power and order. At his homecoming to Israel some fanatical Jews who wanted to realize the Messiah Idea of a theocratic government, launched a rebellion against the Romans. It would end with the Jewish nation's total destruction.

Josephus together with several leading Jews tried to calm the rioters. They understood well enough that a rebellion against the powerful and battle-tested Rome could only get a miserable end. When the rebellion spread, and developed into a national war against the Romans, Josephus was forced to take a stand for his people against Rome. He became governor of Galilee, which he successfully defended against a great Roman army under command of the great General Vespasian. Unfortunately, the Romans later defeated them in the great battle of Tarichea. After a period of siege at the fortress Josophat, Josephus must surrender himself as a prisoner in 67 AD.

He probably saved his life by a dream in which he predicted that General Vespasian would become emperor, which he said to the general. After that he was treated well by Vespasian and his son, General Titus. In the continuing war in Judaea, Josephus tried several times to persuade the rebel Jews to surrender before the superior force, but he was regarded by the stubborn fighting Zealots as a traitor and a deserter to the Romans.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD Josephus was released and settled in Italy, where he became a Roman citizen and received a castle as his home. Since there were many plots against his life among the Jews, he could never return to his native land.

Josephus was a genius in the art of presentation and was an outstanding orator. He was a prolific writer and wrote, among other things, a book about Jewish history, from Genesis all the way to his own time. It contains much interesting world-historical information, a lot of Jewish tradition and is an important complement to the Bible's presentation. He has, through its detailed documentation of the thinking and way of life and the great political events from that time, given us invaluable knowledge of ancient history.

Sources & Literature:

(Abbreviations in bold).

Bible Facts in color, Libris 1979, **BFacts**
GOOD BOOK'S WORLD HISTORY 1983, **BRA**
Dake's Annotated Bible Ref, 1980, **Dake**
Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 1967, **Bibellex, Blex**
Josephus Complete Works, Kregel, **Josephus, JOS**
Apocryphal 1921, **Apoc**
Halley's Bible Handbook, 1989, **Halley, Hal**
When he opened the book, Wirén 1946, **Wirén**
Number in Scripture, Bullinger 1967, **NIS**

Bible Translations:

The Bible quotations are taken from
THE BOOK, 1995 (**B**)
and The Living Bible, 1971 (**LB**)
and the New International Version in 1987 (**NIV**)
For general references to the Bible that are not quotes,
there are no indication of any translation.

Abbreviations:

OT = Old Testament
NT = New Testament
BC = Before Christ
AD = After Christ
Heb = Hebrew
Gr = Greek
Ch = chapter, P = page
Repr = represent
Ca = approximately

Examples of references:

Isaiah 53: 3-6, 12b = Isaiah chapter 53, verses
3-6 and the latter part of verse 12.
Jer k12-K15 = Jeremiah Chapter 12 to Chapter 15.
Dake 833-1e = Dake page 833 in the GT, Column
1, comment e.
Halley 44-47 = Halley pages 44 through 47th

Abbreviations of the OT's books

The history books:

Genesis, Ge
Exodus, Ex
Leviticus, Lev
Numbers, Nu
Deuteronomy, Dt
Joshua, Jos
Judges, Jdg
Ruth, Ru
I Samuel, 1 Sa
II Samuel, 2 Sa
1 Kings, 1 Ki
2 Kings, 2 Ki
1 Chronicles, 1 Ch
2 Chronicles, 2 Ch
Ezra, Esr
Nehemiah, Ne
Esther, Est

The poetic books:

Job, Job
Psalms, Ps
Proverbs, Pr
Ecclesiastes, Ecc
Song of Songs, SS

Prophets:

Isaiah, Isa
Jeremiah, Jer
Lamentations, La
Ezekiel, Eze
Daniel, Da
Hosea, Hos
Joel, Joel
Amos, Am
Obadiah, Ob
Jonah, Jnh
Micah, Mic
Nahum, Na
Habakkuk, Hab
Zephaniah, Zep
Haggai, Hag
Zechariah, Zec
Malachi, Mal

Sources and comments

The index numbers in the main text refers to comments with the following sources:

Index in italics: 1,2,3 *et*

* = *graphic illustrations*

	Page
Preface	4
Contents	5
* <i>Jerusalem at Daniel's time</i>	6
* <i>Babylon at Daniel's time</i>	7
Introduction	8
* <i>The train of prisoners is leaving Jerusalem</i>	9
Chapter 1. The march to captivity	10

1. *The Babylonian captivity*

There are six documented caravans:

The first captive-caravan, 605 BC was in King Jehoiakim's fourth reign. Jer 46:2, 2 Ki 24:1; Josephus 217-VI-1. Neither the Bible nor Josephus have any indication of the number of prisoners in the first captivity, in which Daniel and his companions were taken. Dan 1:1-6.

- It is from this date that the 70-year (s of) imprisonment counts. Cyru's edict of freedom for the Jews came 70 years later, in 536 BC, when Daniel was about 90 years. Dan 9:2; Josephus, 228-1, 229 Halley, Wirén 123. The temple was deserted for 70 years: 586-516 BC; Halley 230.

- Jeremiah has no documentation of the siege of Jerusalem in 605 BC and the first caravan of captives. It is possible that he at that time was wandering to the Euphrates. According to Jeremiah, chapter 13, he would pick a linen girdle, which he at the Lord's command, he had buried by the river several years earlier. It would be there for a long time until it was spoiled. It was a symbolic act which would illustrate how Judah as a nation had rotted before the Lord. Dake 758-1b.

- Some of the most valuable objects of the king and the treasures of the temple were taken to Babylon.

- World history indicates that it was after the victory over Egypt at the battle of Carchemish, that the field was open for Nebuchadnezzar to march on with his army south towards Jerusalem. In Dan 1:1, it says that King

Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and besieged it in King Jehoiakim's third year of reign, while in Jer 46:2, it says that it was in Jehoiakim's fourth year of reign as King Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish. There is a solutions to this problem: The Hebrew's *bo* in Dan 1:1, is translated by *came* can also mean *went out*, meaning that Nebuchadnezzar began his campaign against Jerusalem in Jehoiakim's third reign, but was detained by troops of Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish, so that it was not until in the fourth year that he came to Jerusalem. Dake 856-1b.

- King Jehoiakim became taxable to Babylon. After three years, he rebelled. 2 Ki 24:1-2; Josephus 217-2. The Chaldeans then captured Jehoiakim and brought him bound in bronze chains to captivity to Babylon. 2 Ch 36:5-8. After a time, however, he was released, and returned to his throne in Jerusalem.

The second captive train, 598 BC. When Jehoiakim rebelled again, the Chaldeans attacked Jerusalem again in his 11th reign. Jehoiakim was killed and they threw his body off the city wall and took 3000 prisoners, including the prophet Ezekiel, to Babylon. Josephus, 217-3. According to Jeremiah 52:28, the attack was in Nebuchadnezzar's seventh year of reign and the number of prisoners were the 3023. Jehoiakim was 25 years of age when he became king and reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. Nebuchadnezzar installed Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin, called Coniah, who then was 18 years as king. 2 Ki 24:8-9; Wirén 123; Dake 418.1k

The third captive train, 597 BC. In the beginning of the following year, three months later, came the Chaldeans came again with a large army and retook Jerusalem with 10 000 prisoners. King Jehoiachin and his family were brought to captivity in Babylon in Nebuchadnezzar's eighth reign. 2 Ki 24:10-17; Josephus 218-VII-1. Josephus says the numbers of prisoners was 10 832. Often only men were counted. With women and children, they could have been over 20 000: "*And he removed all the treasures from the Temple of the Lord and from the royal palace, and took away all the gold articles that Salomon king of Israel had*

made for the temple of the Lord. He carried into exile all Jerusalem: all the officers and fighting men, and all craftsmen and artisans – a total of then thousand. Only the poorest people of the land were left . 2 Ki 24:13-14

- Mordecai's great-grandfather, Kish from the tribe of Benjamin, was one of the prisoners in this caravan. Mordecai was an eminent statesman in Persia and foster father to Queen Esther. Est 2:5-7. Jehoiakim's older brother Mattaniah with the name, Zedekiah, became king for the rest of the people.

- Jeremiah has no documentation of this caravan of prisoners. It is possible that he was once again gone on a long hike.

The fourth train of captives, 586 BC. When Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar he came with his whole army and besieged Jerusalem in Zedekiah's ninth reign. The siege lasted until Zedekiah's 11th reign, when the city was stormed. Zedekiah and his family fled, but were overtaken in the plains of Jericho and taken to Nebuchadnezzar in Riblah where Zedekiah was tried and convicted. The children were slaughtered before Zedekiah's eyes and on Zedekiah himself they put out his eyes and brought him to Babylon in shackles. Jeremiah states that the number of prisoners who were taken away in Nebuchadnezzar's 18th reign, was 832 persons. Probably it was only the prisoners from Jerusalem. But the rest of the people of all Judah who were removed were certainly many more, probably about 50 000 Jews. Jer 52:15,29; 2 K 25:1-7, Josephus 219 VIII.

- The temple, the royal family and the town were burned on the seventh day of the 5th month in Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year of reign. The rest of the valuable items, such as the copper pillars, copper bases, and the copper sea were removed and taken to Babylon. Similarly firepans and bowls of gold and silver were removed. 2 Ki 25:8-17, 2 Ch 36:13-21, Jer K52.

The fifth captive train, 581 BC. Over the people that remained in the land of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar appointed a person of a noble family by the name of Gedaliah. But a person, who was of royal descent named Ishmael, came

with a group of ten men and killed Gedaliah. Most of the remaining of the people broke up and fled to Egypt, for they were afraid of revenge from the Chaldeans. They forced the prophet Jeremiah to go with them and settled in Tahpanhes in Egypt. Of those who remained in Judah were 745 prisoners carried away to Babylon five years later in Nebuchadnezzar's 23th reign. Jer k 40-44, 52:30

Sixth captive train 581 BC. The same year, Nebuchadnezzar attacked Egypt and defeated it. The Jews who had fled to Egypt, were taken prisoners and brought to Babylon. It was the sixth and last captive train that is documented. Josephus, 222-7. The number of prisoners is not specified. Probably Jeremiah died in captivity in Egypt before the last train, for there is no indication that he was among them. Jer chapters 43-44; 52.

- The total number of prisoners who are documented in five of those six trains of captives becomes 15 436. But the number of prisoners must have been many more. At the first return 70 years later, there were 49 897 prisoners that came with Serubabel to Jerusalem and another 1754 at the second return in Ezra's time. Nevertheless, there were many Jews who were not interested to return even though they had the opportunity to do so. JOS 228-3.

- It is therefore likely that there was a sizable number of prisoners also in the first prisoner train, in which Daniel and his friends were carried away, although this number is not specified. In addition, the Assyrian king Sennacherib stated in his chronicles that he in King Hezekiah's time, took all the fortified cities of Judah (701 BC) and took no less than 200 150 prisoners from the Jewish rural *areas*. Bible Facts 21-4; Bibellex 393. The Bible has no record of this prisoner-train, but that all Judah was devastated in Hezekiah's time is clear from Isa 36:1, 2 Ki 18:13. The number of prisoners may however here be highly exaggerated.

Farewell Jerusalem!

9

2. *Jerusalem.* According Jewish tradition Jerusalem was founded by Noah's son Shem, who is said to be identical to Melchizedek,

"priest of God, Most High". The original town, whose name was Salem, meaning the abode of peace, was built on the hill Ophel where there was a spring named Gihon. (Halley S38-39. Dake GT 248 - 4f).

• Later, Salem became a heavily fortified city that was dominated by the Jebusites, one of the tribes who lived in Canaan. It was named Jeru-Salem (Hebr: Jeru-Shalaim) and is mentioned by that name already in the time of Judges (Jdg 10:1). The city was also called Jebus (Jdg 19:10).

In the case of Zion - the city of David, the researchers' opinions are divided. The general conception is nowadays that the "Stronghold of Zion" (2 Samuel 5:7), which David took about 1000 BC, was the fortified city of Jebus. David thereafter called the city of Zion - the city of David. (Illustrated Bible Dictionary: Jerusalem, Zion)

But according to older Biblical commentaries "the stronghold of Zion" was not the old Jebus but a fortification that the Jebusites had on the highest hill westward from the Ofel-hill, and that David built a new city around that castle which he called Zion - the city of David (2 Sam 5:9 - 11).

According to this view it was only later that David had taken the old town. (A Bible Atlas, Ancient Jerusalem, p.62-65 by Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, 1947. Dake: GT s.335-q). Accordingly (to this view) Zion was the name of the highest of the five hills on which the city of Jerusalem was built. The three eastern hills: Ophel (where Salem was situated), Moriah (where the temple was built) and Bezetha (which was built on in New Testament times) were separated from the two western hills of Zion (which in Jesus's time was called: Upper Town) and Akra. Now researchers are using other names for the hills around this valley named Tyropoion.

Violence breeds violence **10**

The start of the long march **11**

3. *You shall love your neighbor...* Ex19:18b

4. *Daniel* Hebr: God - my judge, God judges. Dake 859:1: "Names defined".

5. *Hananiah* Hebr: The Lord is gracious.

6. *Mishael* Hebr: Who is like God?

7. *Azariah* Hebr: The Lord has helped.

• It is estimated that these four friends were at an age between 18 and 20, when they were brought to Babylon. They were relatives to King Jehoiakim who was a few years older than them. Isa 39:5; Dan 1:3; Hall 342-1.

The farewell **11**

8. *Miriam* Hebrew: bitter.

* *Daniel's goodbye to Miriam* **12**

9. *For love is as strong as death* SS 8:6

The Chaldeans conquer Jerusalem **13**

10. *The Chaldeans' conquest* Dan:1-2

11. *King Jehoiakim* 2 Ki 23:34-37

12. *Nebuchadnezzar* At the siege of Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar's father Nabopolassar died. Nebuchadnezzar had therefore to return to Babylon to inherit the crown of the Neo-babylonian Empire. BRA 109, Dake 856:1 b.

13. *Carchemish* Jer 46:2, Dan 1:1, JOS 216-1

14. *In Hezekiah and* 2 Ki 18-20, Isa 37:14

15. *The prophets Micah and Jeremiah* Both these prophets foretold the total destruction of Jerusalem. Mic 3:12; Jer 9:11-16

The first caravan of prisoners **14**

16. *Babylon* = gr; Babel = Hebr

Chapter 2. Ruined future plans **16**

A busy route **16**

Pleasant memories **16**

1. *Competitions* Although competitions became more general during the Hellenistic period, it is likely that young people also at Daniel's time competed with each other.

The Sabbath - a day of worship **17**

2. *An idol called Kemos* Biblelex 3130

3. *The Sabbath* is the weekly Jewish holiday and falls in on our Saturday.

4. *Draw water with joy* Isa 12:3

The School of Prophecy **18**

5. *Hanna* Hebr, pardoned.

6. *Hilkiah* was the high priest that found the book of law in King Josiah's time - in his 18th year of reign. 2 Ki 22:8, Daniel and his companions were then only a few years old.

7. *Torah* The Hebrew word for the Pentateuch.

An imagined bird's view of Jerusalem* **19

**Jerusalem at Daniel's time (pencil-drawing)*

8. *Tanakh*, the Hebrew compilation for Torah, the Prophets and the Scriptures.

9. *Rachel* Hebrew: ewe.

Four friends 20

10. *Hear the word of the Lord Almighty* Isa 39:5-7

11. *Eunuchs (Slaves) in the king's palace* In King James Bible and in Josephus: slaves = "eunuchs".

Chapter 3. Why were we taken captive? 22

On unfamiliar roads 21

Toward an uncertain future 21

1. *Galley* General name for an ancient warship driven by means of rowing. Galleys in the Mediterranean during ancient times was known as uniremer, biremer, triremes depending on the number of vertically stacked rows of oars. NF G679.

2. *Numerical values mystique* See ch 16+ 33.

*** Map of the route** 22

Jerusalem - a city of culture 23

3. *Baruch* He was Jeremiah's scribe. Jer 36:4

4. *Papyrus* was produced in Egypt and exported from there.

Jerusalem - a city of decadence 25

5. *Baal and Ashtaroth* Canaanite names of the Babylonian gods Bel and Ishtar.

6. *Temple for idols* Probably there were small temples or "houses for sacrifices" in high places. 2 Ki 23:13,19

7. *Who is the King of glory?* Ps 24:8-10

The first campsite 26

Chapter 4. Talks by the camp fire 27

1. *Jacob's ladder* Gen 28:10-16

2. *Israel, God's warrior* Gen 32:28

3. *A living dog* Ecc 9:4

4. *Seventy years* Jer 25:11-12, 29:10

5. *As high as the heavens*, Ps 103:11

6. *Everlasting love* Jer 31:1-6

7. *No, as the heavens are* Isa 55:9

8. *The Lord has raised his throne* Ps 103:19

9. *His everlasting arms* Dt 33:27b

10. *Become scattered* Dt 28:15-68

*** By the campfire** 29

11. *A bow-saw - a saw used by two men*

An uncertified Jewish tradition. Halley 285

12. *Until harvest time*, Matt 13:30

Chapter 5. Daniel's dream at Bethel 32

1. *Blind people received their sight, the lame,*

began to walk... Isa 35:4-6, 53:10. A prophecy about the Messiah. The author's view is that Daniel in his prophetic dream looked ahead to the time of Jesus' ministry.

Through the land of Benjamin 33

2. *In the shelter of the Most High.* Ps 91:1,

A people of divine revelation 33

3. *God's ten commandments* Ex 20:1-17

4. *Shiloh* 1 Sam 4:11,17,22; Jer 26:6

*** The Messiah - the ladder to heaven** 34

The tabernacle in Shiloh 35

*** The tabernacle in the desert** 37

The great apostasy begins 38

5. *Solomon's wives*, 1 Ki 11:1-13, JOS 182

6. *David* Even King David had several wives, but he never took any wife from the pagan countries that they were forbidden to be related with in marriage and he never fell away to any kind of idolatry.

7. *Prophecy of the division of the kingdom* 1 Ki 11:9-13

8. *The Northern Kingdom* After the split of the kingdom of Solomon the northern part with the ten tribes was called the Northern Kingdom, or Israel. Even the name Ephraim after the largest tribe occurs. The country in the south was called the Kingdom of Judah or Judah alone.

Chapter 6. To Samaria 40

1. *God's watchful eye* Ps 34:16

According to Psalm 137 the Jews did not sing as they were in captivity along the rivers of Babylon. But the psalm must not be interpreted as meaning that they - because of their trials - could no more sing the songs of Zion. This story is about four youths full av vitality. Psalm 137 is about the grief that Jews faced under the first time in captivity. As time passed, the Jewish people became so rooted in Babylon, that when they regained freedom 70 years later, there was only a small part of them who wanted to return to Judah.

*** Pastoral scene near the ruins of Samaria** 41

Solomon - the cause of the nation's division 42

2. *I turned my mind* Ecc 7:26-27a,

3. *Because God does not* Ecc 8:11-12,

4. *It is to much* 1 Ki 12:28b

5. *You shall not go up to fight* 1 Ki 12:21-24a
 6. *David's Census* 2 Sam 24:9
 7. *400 prophets of Asherah*. 1 Kings 16:24,29-33, 18:19
 8. *Asherah* The Hebrew name of a fertility goddess worshiped in the Near East, symbolized by a tree of life. At Asherah-worship sexual rites were practiced under a tree or a high pole erected on a raised place or a green hill.
 9. *Elijah on Mount Caramel* 1 Ki 18, 19:18
Idol worship in Canaan 44
 10. *Baal and Astarte worship* Halley 166-167, 198. Halley: "Temples of Baal and Ashtoreth were usually together. Priestesses were Temple Prostitutes. Sodomites were male Temple Prostitutes. - It Seems That, in large measure, the land of Canaan had become a variety of Sodom and Gomorrah on a national scale."
 11. *Their widespread homosexuality* That homosexuality was common in the land of Canaan, and it was the main reason for peoples eradication, shown by the following quotes from the Bible. Lev 18:22: "Thou shalt not lie with a man as one lies with a woman. It is an abomination." Dt 20:17-18: "But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the Lord your God has commanded you, in order that they may not teach you to act according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would not sin against the Lord your God."
 12. *Baalworship* – a sodomite cult
 13. *The measure of sin was heaped* Gen 15:16: "For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."
Civil war in Israel 45
 14. *Civil war in Israel*, 2 Ch 28
 15. *Samaria's fall and the Northern Kingdom's destruction* Wirén 120; JOS 209-212; Biblex 4825 **The ruins of Samaria* 46
The fall of the Northern Kingdom 47
 16. *Lord let the downfall be done in stages* 2 Ki capter:15-K17
 17. *King Ahaz of Judah* 2 Ki 16:10-20
 18. *If your enemy is hungry*, Ecc 25:21-22
Northern Kingdom in Assyrian captivity:

There were five Assyrian invasions of Israel:
I. By king Pul, another name for Tiglath-Pileser, in 738 BC. With 1000 pounds of silver king Manahem in Israel could save himself. 2 Ki 15:19-20.
II. By Tiglath-Pileser in king Pekas time, 734 BC. He defeated Peka and took the northern Galilee and brought the tribe of Naphtali captive to Assyria. 2 Ki 15:29.
III. The third invasion by Tiglath-pileser 732 BC. He took Damascus and all of Israel east of Jordan, namely, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh was carried captive. 2 Ki 15:29, 16:7-18, 2 Ch 28, Isa chapter 7
IV. By Shalmaneser IV in 731 BC, when King Hoshea of Israel was obliged to pay tribute to Assyria. 2 Ki 17:3.
V. The second invasion by Shalmaneser in 725 BC, which led to a complete destruction of the Northern Kingdom. King Hosea in Judah broke with Assyria and entered an alliance with Egypt. Shalmaneser besieged the capital of Samaria, but was killed himself during the siege. His commander, who took the name of Sargon II, took Samaria after a three-year siege in 722 BC, and took away 28 000 prisoners to Assyria and sent them to live in Halah and in Habor, a stream of Gozan, and the cities of the Medes. 2 Ki 17:4-6

Chapter 7. The Lord's Sabbath 48
Songs of praise on the mountain 49
 1. *Neglected Sabbaths* 2 Ch 36:21
Jeremiah - their contemporary prophet 50
 2. *Jeremiah - their contemporary prophet* Wirén 195
 3. *As a wall of brazen* Jer 1:1-3,18
 4. *Lord, I can not be* Jeremiah 1:6-8
 5. *Yes, from the north will* Jer 1:14-15
 6. *Hilkiah found the book of Law* 2 Ki 22:3, 8
 * *The four musicians* 51
Jeremiah had a message of repentance 52
 7. *Jerusalem - purify your heart*, Jer 4:14
 8. *They will call Jerusalem*, Jer 3:17-19
 9. *Shout out to Jerusalem* Jer 4:5-7, B
 10. *You are trusting in deceptive...* Jer 7:8-11
 11. *Go to Shiloh* Jer 7:12, 14
 12. *For as many as your cities* Jer 11:13
 13. *Therefore do not pray* Jer 11:14

Chapter 8.		Chapter 10. King's Kids	65
Jeremiah - The Prophet of judgement	54	The camp at Kishon	66
Child sacrifice in the Valley of Hinnom	54	Isaiah - the great Messiah Prophet	66
1. <i>Jerusalem, shave your head</i> Jer 7:29-31		1. <i>Uzziah</i> , Isa 6:1 Uzziah, is also known as Azariah, 2 Ki 15:1-7, 2 Ch 26:1-23	
2. <i>They are like well-fed lusty horses</i> Jer 5:8		2. <i>Jotham</i> 2 Ki 15:32-38, 2 Ch 27:1-9	
3. <i>Do not pray for this people</i> Jer 7:16-18		3. <i>Ahaz</i> , 2 Ki 16:1-20, 2 Ch 28:1-27	
4. <i>If only my head</i> Jer 9:1-2		* <i>Horses on the Plain of Megiddo</i>	67
Jeremiah, the prophet of doom	55	4. <i>Hezekiah</i> 2 Ki 18-20, Isa 36-39	
5. <i>Even if Moses and Samuel</i> , Jer 15:1		5. <i>Hezekiah our common ancestor</i> Isa 39:5-7	
6. <i>Tell this to the nations</i> Jer 4:16		6. <i>Then the angel</i> Isa 37:36-37	
7. <i>Cut down trees</i> Jer 6:6-7		7. <i>Manasseh</i> 2 Ki 21:1-18, 2 Ch 33:1-20	
8. <i>You have rejected the Lord</i> Jer 5:19		Manasseh's repentance	69
9. <i>I will turn Jerusalem</i> Jer 9:11		8. <i>Manasseh, a prisoner in bronze chains</i> 2 Ch 33:11	
10. <i>God of Hosts says</i> Jer 9:17,18		9. <i>Who is a God like you</i> Mic 7:18-20	
11. <i>The potter's workshop</i> Jer 18:2		10. <i>Manasseh's prayer</i> Apoc 241-242	
* <i>Jeremiah preaching at the temple gate</i>	56	The prayer of Manasseh	70
12. <i>Working at the wheel</i> Jer 18:3-4		Prophets in activity	70
13. <i>Bury a new linen girdle</i> Jer 13:1-11			
14. <i>They did not say in their hearts</i> Jer 24-25		Chapter 11. The arrow in Megiddo	71
At death's door	58	1. <i>Amon</i> 2 Ki 21:19-26, 2 Ch 33:21	
		Josiah's reformation	71
Chapter 9. The weeping prophet	59	2. <i>Josiah</i> 2 Ki 22-23:1-30; 2 Ch 34-35 Josephus 215: IV, V	
1. <i>I'm crushed</i> Jer 8:21-22		3. <i>Megiddosläätten</i> Josephus 216	
2. <i>Yes, Uria, Shemaiah son</i> Jer 26:20-23		* <i>King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem</i>	73
3. <i>All from the least</i> Jer 8:10-11		Judah's hour of destiny	74
4. <i>Refuses you still</i> Jer 13:17		4. <i>Jehoahaz</i> 2 Ki 23:30-33, 2 Ch 36:1-3	
5. <i>Say to the king</i> Jer 13:18-19, 24-25,		5. <i>Shallum</i> Jer 22:11, Josephus 217	
6. <i>Therefore I will also pull up</i> Jer 13:26-27		6. <i>Jehoiakim</i> 2 Ki 23:34-36, 2 Ch 36:4-8	
7. <i>But Jerusalem's prophets</i> Jer 23:14,		7. <i>As a donkey</i> Jer 22:13-19	
Jeremiah - the martyr of truth	60	8. <i>Jehoiachin</i> 2 Ki 6-16, 2 Ch 36:9-10	
8. <i>Treason in Anathoth</i> Jer 11:18-23		9. <i>Coniah</i> Jer 22:24-28	
* <i>Jeremiah in the valley of Ben Hinnom</i>		* <i>The arrow of destiny – extinguishing the star of David</i>	75
<i>breaking a precious jar of clay</i>	61	Azariah signs horses	76
9. <i>The priest Pashur, son of Immer</i> Jer 20:1-6		10. <i>Harma-giddo</i> Rev 16:16. The plain of Megiddo is the place where one thinks the Armageddon of revelation will be.	
10. <i>Tophet in the Valley of Hinnom</i> Jer 1:18-23		11. <i>Solomon's horses</i> Josephus 181-3	
11. <i>Thus saith the Lord</i> , Jer 19:11		12. <i>Solomon's temple</i> According to 1 Kings 7:15 the height of the copper pillars was 18 cubits (about 9 meters), while according to 2 Chronicles 3:15 it was 35 cubits (about 17.5 m). The latter included also the superstructure with the lily, globe and the hanging chains.	
12. <i>The Lord of hosts</i> Jer 19:15			
13. <i>I will hand all Judah...</i> Jer 20:4-5			
14. <i>Then I will destroy this house</i> Jer 26:6			
15. <i>This man should be sentenced to death</i> Jer 26:11			
16. <i>It was the Lord</i> Jer 26:12,15			
17. <i>This man does not deserve</i> Jer 26:16			
18. <i>Micah of Moresheth prophesied</i> Jer 6:18,19			
The prophecy of the 70-year captivity	63		
19. <i>This message of</i> Jer 25:1-3, 8-11,			
20. <i>When these seventy</i> Jer 25:12-14			

Chapter 12. Cedars of Lebanon	77	vowels in the replacement word Adonáj,
Noah's flood – was it true?	77	which the translater wrote in the margin to facilitate reading aloud.
1. <i>Noah's flood</i> Gen Chapters 6-8; Halley 73-80; Josephus 28:5,6		In the Christian Middle Ages the word Jehovah wrongly was perceived as a real form for God's name. Jehovah was pronounced with short vowels its first syllables shifted easily from a to e, but this form never existed in the original text.
2. <i>Xisuthrus</i> Halley 44.75		The Jahvé name can not be reserved only the messiah, but it also includes the Lord Messiah, B2000. Dake 690-4i.
3. <i>Scriptures before the flood</i> Halley 44: Anti-Diluvian origination of writing + 48: Accad.		
4. <i>God opened the deep sources</i> Gen 7:11		
Isaiah's messianic prophecy	78	
5. <i>Cedar from Lebanon</i> , 1 Ki 5:10		
6. ...will lop off the boughs Isa 10:33-34		
* <i>Lock at the stump over there – with a new shot of cedar. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse..."</i> Isa 11:1.	79	
7. <i>The Root of Jesse</i> Isa 11:1,2,10		
8. <i>The Throne of the Lord</i> Jer 3:17,18.		
9. <i>He will not condemn</i> Isa 11:4,9		
10. <i>The days are coming</i> Jer 23:5-6		
Who is the Messiah - God or man?	81	
11. <i>The burning Bush</i> Ex 3:1-5		
12. <i>To us a child is born</i> Isa 9:6-7		
13. <i>Elohim</i> Dake: NT 280-2:2; Biblelex 2065		
14. <i>Let us make man in our image</i> Gen 1:26		
* <i>The flutist</i>	82	
15. <i>You are my son</i> Ps 2:7,8,12. Yahweh, the everlasting God, became the only begotten Son when He was born in Bethlehem.		
16. <i>Born in Bethlehem</i> Mic 5:2		
The thrice holy	83	
17. <i>El-Shaddai</i> Dake: GT, 14-1m		
18. <i>But they were reluctant to His Spirit</i> Isa 63:10 a, 11b, 14a		
19. <i>The Spirit of God was hovering</i> Gen 1:2		
20. <i>Hear, O Israel! Lord our God is one Lord!</i> Dt. 6:4		
21. <i>The numerical value</i> NIS 55		
22. <i>Yahweh</i> Dake 52-4: Jehovah titles.		
23. <i>The same one forever</i> Hebr 13:8, Rev 22:12		
24. <i>Cloud and pillar of fire</i> Ex 13:21-22		
25. When out of reverence for God's name <i>Yahweh</i> , with the four consonants YHWH, one does not dare pronounce it, it is replaced with the word <i>Adonáj</i> which means Lord or my Lord. The practice of translating <i>Yahweh</i> with revamping the Lord, was taken over by those who translated the OT to the Greek (septuagint) and has been retained in most subsequent translations of the Bible. The original God's name consonants (YHWH) and the		
Chapter 13. Bridgebuilding	85	
Mishael finds Hannah	86	
* <i>Encounter at the well</i>	87	
1. <i>You have taken the SS</i> 4:9-11,15		
Sabbath celebration along cedar	89	
2. <i>Towards Jerusalem</i> 2 Ch 6:38		
3. <i>I beseech you</i> SS 5:8, 15b-16		
Man of sorrows	90	
4. <i>Behold my servant</i> Isa 42:1, 6b		
5. <i>See, my servant shall prosper</i> Isa 52:13		
6. <i>Yet many will be appelled</i> Isa 52:14-15a		
7. <i>Man of sorrows</i> , Isa 53:3		
8. <i>Guilt offering</i> Isa 53:10		
9. <i>Still, it was the Lord's plan</i> Isa 53:10		
10. <i>Surely it was our infirmities</i> Isa 53:4-6		
A crucified Messiah	92	
11. <i>He gave his life in death</i> , Isa 53:12b		
12. <i>After the suffering</i> Isa 53:1		
13. <i>Evil men surrounding me</i> Ps 22:17-19		
14. <i>Pray for those who crucify Him</i> Isa 53:12		
Chapter 14. Dream of Paradise	93	
Music Source	93	
The well of music	95	
A new Paradise	94	
1. <i>So the rule will come to be great</i> Isa 9:7a		
2. <i>The lost Paradise</i> Halley s64-70: Location of the Garden of Eden The case		
* <i>The Messiah shall bruise the head of the serpent</i>	95	
3. <i>The woman's seed</i> Gen 3:15b		
4. <i>He will swallow up death</i> Isai 25: 8		
Messiah's death and resurrection in	96	
5. <i>And the Lord God is</i> Isa 25:8b		
6. <i>Destroy the power of death</i> 1 Cor 15:26, Hebr 2:14		

* *The bulb – a symbol: – The bulb must die in the soil in order to burst forth and blossom again* **97**

7. *In the prophet Elisha's time* 2 Ki 4:32-37, 13:20

8. *The Lord will give you a sign* Isa 7:14

Commentary on Isaiah 7:14 from the New Living Translation: "The controversial Hebrew word used here means sometimes virgin and sometimes a young woman. The immediate significance here refers to Isaiah's young wife and her newborn son (Isa. 8:1-4). This was, of course, no virgin birth. God's sign was that before this child had learned to speak, so should (verse 4) the two invading kings be defeated. But the Gospel of Matthew 1:23 tells us that there was yet another fulfillment of this prophecy by a virgin (Mary) who became pregnant and gave birth to a son, Immanuel, (God with us) Christ. We have therefore used this deeper meaning of the word "virgin" in verse 14, because otherwise the statement by Matthew will be meaningless."

9. *But your dead* Isa 26:19

10. *Yet we have this promise* Isa 26:19

Chapter 15. Azariah spiritual struggle 99

1. Temple prostitution was common in the temples of Astarte Halley 166-167.

Temptation 99

Azariah experiencing the joy of creating 100

Between the fires 101

Pure love 101

Despair "God – if you are there – reveal yourself to me!"* **102

1. *How beautiful* SS 7:6, 4:7, 2:2, 4:5

Law and grace 103

2. *There was a period in my life,* Psalm 32:3

3. *Finally I confessed all* Ps 32:5

Azariah born again 105

4. *In my despair I cried* Ps 18:7

5. *What happiness for those* Ps 32:1

6. *With you I feel safe* Ps 32:7

7. *Heaven* Bereppet "heaven" occurs in the Old Testament verses as "The Lord wanted to take Elijah up to heaven." 2 Ki 2:1, also in: 1 Kings 8:30-43, 2 Chr 18:15, Neh 9:6, Ps 103:19, Dan 4:35, to name a few. That many Jews during the Old Testament time believed

in a paradise after death is clear from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and of Jesus' words about paradise to the penitent thief. Luke 16:19-31, 23:43.

Chapter 16. Call the number values 107

About number seven and Creation 107

1. *Number seven and Creation* Gen 2:2

2. *Every living things in 6 days* Gen 1:31

3. *On the seventh day completed* Gen 2:2

4. *The seven-day week* NIS 168

5. *In God's image* Gen 1:26-27

6. *A spirit* Ecc 12:7, Isa 25:8, 26:19

Numerical values in nature 108

7. *Numerical values in nature* NIS 7-19

8. *The duration of pregnancy* NIS 9

9. *Human physics* NIS 10

10. *Tone scale* NIS 15-18 There is also a pentatonic scale. It is unknown which tone scale was used in Old Testament times. Frequencies in the modern tone scale: C = 264 D = 297, E = 330, F = 352, G = 396, A = 440, H = 495, C = 528th. These frequencies are divisible by 11.

11. *The color scheme* NIS 18-19. These are modern RGB and CMYK colors. At that time the seven colors of the rainbow had a different breakdown of primaries and secondary colors: – three primary colours: red, yellow and blue, and four secondary colours: green (blue and yellow), orange (red and yellow), violet (blue and red), pink (red and white).

Numerical values in the Hebrew alphabet

12. *Numerical values of the Hebrew alphabet* NIS 48

Seven - the number of perfection 109

13. *The numerical value seven* NIS 158

14. *Purified seven times* Psalm 12:7

15. *In the beginning God created* Gen 1:1

16. *A seven-fold blessing of* Gen 12:2-3

17. *The tabernacle and the order of worship* NIS 140

18. *The seven annual feasts:* Passover, unleavened bread, first fruits, Pentecost, New Year's feast, the Day of Atonement, Tabernacles.

Lev 23

Numerical values one, two and three 110

19. *The numbers 1, 2 and 3* NIS 50, 92, 107

20. *Tabernacle* Ex 26

More discussion on numerical values	111	<i>6. Euphrat-Tigris region, the cradle of humanity</i>	
Number four - the number for creation	111	Halley 42,48,65	
21. <i>The numerical value 4 - Creation</i>	Blex K1	7. <i>Noah's sons:</i>	Gen 5:32
126, 4 Ex 28:3-10, Ex 2:13	3 NIS 123	8. <i>Come let us build a city</i>	Gen 11:4
22. <i>Cherubims</i>	2 Chr 3:7, Blex K126	9. <i>Be fruitful</i>	Gen 9:1
40 - The number for testing and trial	111	Confusion of tongues	122
Number five - the number for grace	112	10. <i>A confusion of tongues</i>	Gen 11:1-9
23. <i>Number five - grace</i>	NIS 135	11. <i>Hebrew, the original</i>	Dake 9-4g
6 and 666 - number for man and evil	112	12. <i>Babylon means confusion</i>	Dake 10-1g
24. <i>Number six - human</i>	NIS 150	13. <i>The semite Asshur</i>	Gen 10:21
25. <i>Six names for the fallen archangel:</i>		14. <i>Assyria</i>	Gen 10:11, 22; Bible Facts 20
<i>Devil, Satan, Belsebul, dragon, serpent, the</i>		15. <i>Japheth went north</i>	Gen 10:21-23
<i>tempter, NIS 156, 219</i>		16. <i>Taurus and Amanus</i>	The mountains are
Number 70 and 777	113	located in the eastern part of modern Turkey	
26. <i>The numbers 70 and 777, NIS 270</i>		17. <i>Lydia</i>	Current Turkey.
		18. <i>Kish, Lagash, Ur</i>	Halley 86.87.
Chapter 17. Reconciled brothers	114	19. <i>Arphaxad, Eber</i>	Gen 10:24; Dake 9-4c
Israel in captivity	114	20. <i>Terah, Abraham</i>	Gen 11:10-26
1. <i>How many had to go into exile to Assyria?</i>		Nimrod - the mighty hunter	123
2 Ki 15:29, 17:5, 18:11		21. <i>Ham</i>	Gen 10:6-20; Halley 82
Hosea - Israel's future prophet	115	22. <i>The hamite Nimrod</i>	Gen 10:8-12; JOS 30
2. <i>Yes, in their distress they seek me</i>	Hos 6:1.	23. <i>Nimrod, a mighty hunter</i>	Gen 10:9
3. <i>But the time will come when</i>	Hos 1:10-11a	24. <i>The first to establish</i>	Gen 10:8
4. <i>Afterwards the people of Israel,</i>	Hos 3:5	25. <i>Gibbor</i>	Dake 9-1n
5. <i>Of the increase of his government</i>	Isa 9:7 a.	26. <i>Erech, Accad, Calneh</i>	Gen 10:10; Hal 48
6. <i>Then I will heal the wounds</i>	Hos 14:4-6,	27. <i>Sargon I</i>	Halley 87: Accad dynasty.
7. <i>Diaspora, Greek: Diaspora</i>			
* <i>Enauration of the bridge</i>	117	Chapter 19. The feast in Carchemish	125
8. <i>So let us get to know the Lord</i>	Hos 6:3.	Competitions for the king's favour	126
• There is a tradition which says that the		Nimrod founded Nineveh	127
Israelites formed a state north of the Caucasus		1. <i>Nimrod</i>	Halley, 82, Nimrod founded
based on the Law of Moses. From there, the		Nineveh	Gen 10:11,12
ten tribes have spread north and to Europe.		* <i>The javelin thrower</i>	128
Inauguration of the bridge	118	2. <i>Babylon and Nineveh</i>	Halley 82: Babylon
		and Nineveh, founded by Nimrod, were the	
Chapter 18. Towards Carchemish	119	leading cities of the World.	
1. <i>Pharaoh Necho and King Josiah</i>	2 Ki	3. <i>Marduk</i>	Halley 1995
23:28-34, 2 Chr 35:20-26, 36:1-4		Three dimensions of apostasy	129
2. <i>Battle of Carchemish,</i>	in King Jehoiakim	4. <i>Hammurabi</i>	Halley 50 1997, Blex 244;
fourth reign	Jer 46:1, Josephus 237, Dan 1:1	5. <i>Amraphel of Shinar</i>	Gen 14, Halley 50,87
Jeremiah's prophecy about Carchemish	120	Hammurabi and Abraham	130
3. <i>This message</i>	Jer 46:2	6. <i>Amraphel (Hammurabi) and Abraham</i>	Gen 14:1-16
<i>What is this</i>	Jer 46:7-9b Prepare	7. <i>When Abraham heard</i>	JOS 33:1
Jer 46:3-4b		Polyteism	130
4. <i>But what happens!</i>	Jer 46:5-6	8. <i>Polyteism in Babylon</i>	Halley 1994 95
The battle of Carchemish	121	9. <i>Canaan,</i>	Gen 10:6,19-20
5. <i>To conquer Syria</i>	Josephus 217	10. <i>Ham's son Mizraim</i>	Gen 10:6,13-14
Preparations for the feast	121	* THE OLD BABYLONIAN EMPIRE	(map) 132
About Babel and oppressive regimes	121		

Chapter 20. Towards Haran 133

1. Haran Gen 11:31-33

Abraham - God's friend 133

2. Abraham, the friend of God Isa 41:8
3. Terah's family Gen11:26-30
4. He adopted his nephew Josephus, 32-VII
5. Rebekah Gen 24:15
6. Abraham was called at the age of 75 Gen 12:1-5, Acts 7:2-4
7. Great grandfather Shem Halley 38
8. Abraham the 10th generation en11:10-26
9. In the tenth generation after the flood JOS 32:2

In his description of Abraham Josephus refers to historians Berosus, Hecataeus and Nicolaus of Damascus.

Ur - a metropolis at Abraham's time 135

10. Ur, a metropolis Halley 87-89
11. Eden Hal 64: "The location of the Garden"
12. Babel, Babylon Halley 83-84
13. Was Ur a cultural city? Halley 51 87-89
14. What did they wrote on? Halley45
15. What kind of writing did they use? Halley, 45: "Cuniform writing".
16. The architecture of Ur Blex 5956

U - a city of many gods 137

17. Idolatry in Ur Halley 94-95
18. Genesis teaches Gen 12:1-3

Jerusalem's foundations 138

19. The establishment of Jerusalem Halley 38-39
20. Melchizedek Gen 14:17-24; Halley 38
21. Grandson Jacob - Israel Gen 32:27-29
22. Jacob's twelve sons Gen 42:13; 12's: NIS 253
23. Famine in Canaan Gen 12:10-20.

As Jews were a people of scripture and had a strong tradition of education, it is conceivable that Daniel knew the conditions that Abraham lived in when he got the call to leave Ur.

Chapter 21. A God without the statue 139

1. Susa in Elam Dan 8:1-2; Dake 866-1a
2. Yahweh Elohim Gen 2:4; Dake 52-4: "The Eternal Creator".
3. El Shaddai Gen 17:1, "God Almighty"; Dake 14-1m
4. The Ten Commandments Ex 20:3-17 2
5. Lord! Lord! Ex 34:6-7

Chapter 22. Abraham in Egypt 141**Abraham's visit to Egypt 141**

1. Tehah's and Nahor's graves Gen 11:27,33
2. Hilkiah 2 Ki 22:8
3. Elijah's Prophet School 2 Ki 2:1-5, 6-1
4. Abraham Gen 12:10-20; JOS 32:58-1,2
5. Egypt Halley 90-91; BFacts 18-19

Egypt's prehistoric times 142

6. Moses was correct Gen 10:1
7. Ham's son Mizraim Gen 10:6; Halley 89; Dake 40-4
8. Aigyptos Bibellex 1139: Gr, Aígyptos = Egypt
9. Eight people in the ark Gen. 7:13. The Chinese character for a big boat is a sail with eight mouths.
10. Israel came to Egypt (land of Ham) Ps 78:51, Ps 105:23, Ps 106:21-22
11. How did Egypt Halley 90 92 110;
12. Egyptian dynasties Halley in 1990;

The pyramids of Egypt 143

13. Pyramids of Egypt Halley in 1993; Blex 1141; GOOD 167-168.
14. The Cheops pyramid Halley in 1993;
15. Senusert II Halley 1992; Blex 1142

Egyptian hieroglyphs 144

16. Egyptian hieroglyphs Halley 52-53; Blex 1151-1152
- * The land of Ham – Egypt – a country of rich culture 145
17. Pharaoh Serabit, alphabet Halley 52 54-55: "Earliest Alphabetic scripts, 92: in the 12th dynasty."

18. Egypt works Halley 93 117
19. Abraham returned as a rich man Ex13:2

Egyptian religion 146

20. Egyptian religion Halley 110 122; Blex 1146
21. Crocodile symbol Ezekiel 29:3; Dake 833-1e: "The crocodile, a symbol of Egypt",
22. The dragon symbolizes Satan Ps 74:13,14; Dake 547-1c; Blex 998

Temple city of Thebes 147

23. Temple city of Thebes Halley 117

Chapter 23. An unexpected visit 148

1. Shalom Hebrews, which means peace, peace
2. Jeremiah from Anathoth Jer 1:1-3
3. Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jer 46:1-26

- **Jeremiah from Anatoth*
 – *un unexpected visit* **150**
 4. *The Babylonian Empire will last 70 years*
 Jer 25:12-14, 51:8,44
 5. *No longer any idolry* Jer 30-31
 6. *I shall not further speak on his* Jer 20:9
 7. *Never been born* Jer 20:14-18
 8. *My heart's delight and joy* Jer 15:16
 9. *More children* Isa 54:1

Chapter 24. Between the pines **154**
Twilight romance **154**

1. *Thriving millions:* Babylon was one of the most densely populated areas of that time.
 2. *Kisses let him give me* SS 1:1-3. B82
 * *The gnarled pine-trees* **156**
 3. *Wake up* SS 4:16
 4. *I have come into my garden* SS 5:1
 5. *My friend is mine* SS 2:16
 6. *Eat, O friends and drink* SS 5:2
 7. *I beseech you* SS 3:5

Sacred vows **157**

8. *Turned to Jerusalem* 2 Ch 6:38
 9. *Shekinah*, Heb = glory Dake NT58-1q
 * *The glory of God manifested* **159**

Engagement celebration **160**

10. *Pillar of cloud* Ex 14:19-20, 40:34-38;

Chapter 25. Egypt

- The 1st World-Empire **161**

1. Egypt became the first country that oppressed Israel. The Pharaohs enslaved Israelis for hundreds of years, and commanded that the Hebrew male children should be cast into the Nile. Egypt was dominated by satanic forces for which the dragon is a symbol.

Pharaohs oppressed Hebrews **161**

2. *Pharaohs oppresses* Ex 1:8-22
 3. *Seed of Israel, 70 people* Ex 1:1-7
 4. *Hyksos Pharaohs* Halley 111; Blex 1143
 5. *How long time were the Israelis in Egypt?*
 Dake 13-1o q
 6. The chronological data for the exodus vary from 1667 to 1446 BC, depending on whether you count the 430 years or 215 years for the Israelis' time in Egypt. Josephus writes about the time of exile in Egypt: The Exodus, 62:15-2: "They left Egypt in the months xantikus (April) on the fifteenth day. It was 430 years

after their father Abraham had migrated to Canaan and 215 years after Jacob's removal to Egypt. "

7. *A great nation in a short time* Dake 77-1b

Egypt becomes a superpower **162**

8. *Egypt a world power*; Blex 1144-1145
 9. *Amosis I* Halley 111; Blex 1144
 10. *Thotmes II* Halley 111
 11. *Queen Hatshepsut* Halley 112-113;
 12. *Thotmes III* Halley 112

13. *Kittim* = Cyprus

14. *Slaves* Ex 1:11,22 Halley 117; Jos 55:1

The child prodigy Moses **163**

15. *Moses* Ex 2FS; Halley 118-120;
 16. *Moses' mind was unusually* JOS 57:6 7
 17. *The Temple of Serabit, Sinai* Halley 54
 18. *Moses defeats the Ethiopians*
 Josephus 57: k10

19. *Moses fled* Ex 2:11-21, Josephus 58: K11

Hebrews freed from slavery **164**

20. *Amenhotep II* Halley 112

21. *Israel* ex 12:37 Halley 109

* **THE EGYPTIAN EMPIRE (map)** **165**

22. *A day trip* around 18 miles

23. *Pharaoh pursued* Ex14:5-30; Jos 62-63

Egypt's decline **166**

• Which pharaoh ruled at the time of the Exodus is controversial. There are three theories:

1. The Israelites lived in Egypt during the time of the Hyksos who were immigrated Semites during the 15th and 16th dynasty. During this time, the children of Israel were well treated. But after the Hyksos were expelled, the Israelites were mistreated in hard bondage and slave labour. Exodus would, according to this theory have been during the 17th or 18th dynasty.

2. The Queen Hatshepsut, daughter of Pharaoh Thotmes I, was the daughter of the Pharaoh who brought up Moses. Exodus would then have taken place in the time of Pharaoh Amenhotep II in the 18th dynasty.

Recently, the DNA researcher, L Möller of Karolinska Institutet, along with archaeologist R E Wyatt developed the following theory. According to Moller Nerfertiti, as the female pharaoh Hatshepsut was called, had responsibility for the child Senmut, ie the Biblical

Moses. When Senmut became co-regent, he received the title of Thutmose II. This Senmut was suddenly deprived of his privileges and disappeared, which is true of Moses. According to Moller's hypothesis it was the pharaoh Amenhotep III, who ruled the Israelites at their exodus from Egypt. Shortly before the Exodus all the firstborn boys in Egypt were killed. Pharaoh's firstborn was none other than the famous Tutanchamon whose tomb was discovered in 1922. His age at death is estimated at 18 years and he received his father's tomb since his father died in the Red Sea. The weekly Peter 01-01-09.

3. The third theory is that Moses was brought up during Rameses II's reign and that the exodus took place under his successor, Pharaoh Merneptah in the 19th dynasty.

24. *Tutanchamon* Halley 112

25. *Ramses II* Halley 113 116

26. *I will punish* Gen 15:14 a.

27. *Crocodile engravings on coins*

Eze 29:3; Dake 833-1e

28. *Was it not you who struck Rahab*

Isa. 51:9 b-10. B82; Dake 720-1h in

29. *Hebrew word tannin* Dake 70-4q

Chapter 26 The ambush 168

A Chaldean officer 168

On a desolate mountain road 169

The ambush 169

**The ambush.*

Hananjah hit by an arrow 170

Haniah's character test passed 172

Cuneiform writing 173

The rescue 174

Reduced gratitude 175

Chapter 27.

Assyria and the prophets of Israel 176

Israel becomes a great nation 176

1. *After Egypt's decline there was 600 years without a dominant world power*

Blex 1145

2. *King David's kingdom - a great power during the time of King Solomon* 1 Ki 10:23-25

3. *Solomon* 1 Ki k3-K11

4. *Time of the Judges = 520 years,* Dake 60-4

Israel's glory was short 176

5. *Solomon's first wife* 1 Ki 3:1

6. *Pharaoh Shishak* 2 Ch 12:9-20. He is called Sosak in 1 Kings 14:25-27; Josephus 186

7. *Egyptian Pharaoh So and Tirhaka,* 2 Ki 18:21,24; 19:9.34

8. *Hezekiah's dependence on* Isaiah 30:1-6, 31:1

9. *Hezekiah changed his mind* Isaiah 37:14-20

10. *A Lord's angel* 2 Ki 19:35-36, Isaiah 37:36

11. *Conquered Memphis,* 670 BC; Blex 1145

12. *Destroyed Thebes,* 663 BC; Bibellex 1145

Assyria - a cruel repressive 177

13. *Assyria's earliest history and culture* Halley 209; Bible Facts 20-21; Blex 389-391

14. *Nimrod* Gen 11:8-12; Halley 82

15. *Shalmaneser I, about 1300 BC;* Blex 391

16. *Tiglath-Pileser I,* 1120-1100 BC, Hal 209

Assyria becomes a superpower 178

17. *Assurnasipal II, 885-860 BC;* Halley 210

18. *Assurnasipal, the great* Blex 392

19. *Assyria reigned* Halley 209

20. *Nahum - an enraged lion* Nah 2:11-12

21. *Many enemies I burned* Blex 389

*** THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE (map) 179**

22. *Assyrian policy was to move people* Halley 209; Blex 392. Hosea 14:1.

23. *The crushing of infants* Hosea 14:1. Also the Assyrians and the Chaldeans crushed all infants before the removal of the captives. Jer 31:15-17, Isa 13:15-17

24. *Shalmaneser II,* 860-824 BC: Blex 392

25. *Conquered Carchemish,* 857 BC: Blex 392

26. *Besieged Damascus.* 842 BC: Blex 392

27. *Came in conflict with Israel,* Blex 392

28. *The Prophet Elijah, were active in king Ahab and Ahaziah time in Israel,* about 915-902 BC; 1Ki ch17-21, 2 Ki ch 1-2; Wirén 119; Blex 1181

29. *The prophet Elisha was active in the time of the kings Jehoram, Jehu, Joash, Jehoahaz in Israel around 902-830 BC,* 1 Ki 19:19-21, 2 Ki ch 2-13; Wirén 119; Blex 1188

30. *Elisha's miracles* Elijah achieved 16 miracles while Elisha who received a double portion of the Holy Spirit achieved 32 miracles. Dake 391:1j

31. *King Jehu,* 872-844 BC, 1 Ki k9-10

32. *Jehu tribute* Blex 392

Prophets of Israel and the fall of Assyria 180

33. *The prophet Joel*, prophecied most likely during the reign of King Joash about 850 BC, Joel ch 1-3; Wirén 170-172

34. *Everyone Joel* 3:1-2,14

35. *An outpouring of the Holy Spirit* Joel 2:28-32

36. Beat your ploughshares into swords Joel 3:10.

37. *The prophet Jonah*, Jonah ch 1-4: The Prophet of Israel during Jeroboam II's reign about 785 BC.; Blex 2987th According to Jewish tradition he was one of the prophet Elisha's disciples. Wirén 153

38. *Jonah preached judgement* Jonah 3:4; Wirén 153

39. *The belly of a big fish*. Josephus says that Jonah was devoured by a whale. According to the Bible, it was a big fish, probably a shark. Whales swallow only small fish and they do not inhabit the Mediterranean.

40. *The Black Sea* Josephus 208-k10: 2: "Euxine Sea" = Black Sea.

41. *The people repented* Jonah 3:6-10.

42. *Shansi-Adad*, 825-808 BC; Halley 210

43. *Adad-nirari*, 808-783 BC, Halley 210

44. *Shalmaneser III*, 783-771 BC, Halley 210

45. *Assur-Dayan*, 771-753 BC; Halley 210

46th *Asshur-lush*, 753-747 BC; Halley 210

Amos and Hosea 182

47. *The prophet Amos*, Am ch 1-9. He was born in Tekoa near Bethlehem and was active during King Uzziah in Judah and during King Jeroboam II in Israel about 800 BC, Halley 358-360; Wirén 159; Blex 243

48. *Jeroboam II*, 824-783 BC, 2 Ki 14:23

49. *David's fallen tent* Am 9:11, Acts 15:16.

50. *The prophet Hosea*, Hos ch 1-14; The prophet Hosea appeared in the latter part of Jeroboam II;'s time and was active during six kings. He witnessed Isarels death struggle against the Assyrian power and was the last prophet of Israel around 780-710 BC, Hal 353; Wirén 163

51. *Samaria! Abandon* Hos 8:5,6,9,8a

52. *And I will betroth* Hos 2:19

53. *Yes, their backsliding* Hos 14:5

The Prophet Micah 183

54. *The prophet Micah*, Mic ch 1-7. The

prophet Micah lived during the reign of the kings in Judah: Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah and was contemporary with Isaiah. His activity was about 765-695 BC. Halley 366. Wirén 186

55. *It is because of you that* Mic 3:12

56. *But in the last days* Mic 4:1-3

Chapter 28 Lion hunt 184

1. *And a highway* Isa 35:8 a-10

2. *No evil people* Isa 35:8 b-9a

3. *These the ransomed of the Lord* Isa 35:10

The hunterdisappear 185

I will guide them 185

4. *By supplication I will guide them* Jer 31:9b

The David sling 187

5. *The David sling* Blex 5140

6. *David defeats Goliath* 1 Sam 17-49

* *The David-sling 188*

The lions den 189

The lion cubs 189

A present for the King 191

7. *We are marching to Zion* The text is taken from Isaiah 51:11. Gr. Sion, Heb. Zion = exalted

Chapter 29. The fall of Samaria and Assyria Tiglath-Pileser - Pul 192

1. *Tiglath-Pileser*, Blex 392; Halley 210

2. *Menahem*, 2 Ki 15:13-22; Halley 195

3. *Tisah (Tifsa)* 2 Ki 15-16

4. *Then Pul* 2 Ki 15:19-20, 1 Ch 5:26

5. *Pekaja*, 2 Ki 15:23-24; about 761-760 BC

6. *Tap*, 2 Ki 15:25-30, about 759-740 BC Halley, 195, 208; Isa 7:1-7,16

7. *King Ahaz of Judah*, 2 Ki 16:1-6;

8. *Ahaz asked* 2 Ki 16:7-9; 15:29

9. *Isaiah condemned Ahaz* Isa 7:1-23, 8:1-9

10. *Smoldering fire stumps* Isa 7:4

The north Kingdom's downfall 192

11. *Pul against Syria, took Damascus* 732 BC, 2 Ki 15:29, 16:9; Blex 392

12. *Naphtali* 2 Ki 15:29; 734 BC. At Puls 3rd invasion Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh were taken into captivity.

13. *Shalmaneser IV* 727-722 BC; Blex 392; Halley 210

14. *Hosea becomes liable to tax* 2 Ki 17:3

15. *Besieged Samaria* durig three years at the fifth and final invasion, 722 BC, 2 Ki 17:5

16. *Sargon II, 722-705 BC*; Blex 392
 17. *All of Israel taken captive to Assyria 722 BC*. 2 Ki 17:6; Wirén 120; Blex 393, Josephus 211
 18. *In my first year I took Samaria* An inscription reads: "I have besieged, conquered and taken the city of Samaria and abducted its 27 280 inhabitants to captivity, I have changed the country's previous constitution and put it under my conquests." Blex 393
 19. *Elam, east of Babylon* Blex 1163
 20. *Sargon II defeated the Hittites 717 BC*; Blex 393
Isaiah - the king of the Prophets 193
Sennacherib and Isaiah - two princes in confrontation 194
 21. *The prophet Isaiah*, about 765-695 BC
 22. *Most of the people of Israel carried off in the year 734 BC*
 23. *King Ahaz of Judah* 2 Ki 16:10-20
 24. *I'll let the river Euphrates* Isa 8:7-8,
 25. *Sennacherib, 705-681 BC*; Blex 393
 26. *Babylon was destroyed 689 BC*; Blex 393
 27. *200 000 Jewish prisoners, 701 BC*. Of this Jewish captivity during King Hezekiah's time, there is no direct information in the Bible. Bible Facts 21: Sennacherib protocols states: "46 of the (Hezekiah's) strong cities ... I stormed and defeated, I brought out of those 200 150 people... (Hezekiah) I locked in like a bird in a cage in Jerusalem, his capital."
 28. *Sennacherib beaten with the whole* Isaiah 37:21-38
 29. *I have done on* Blex 393
 30. *When Sennacherib worshiped his gods he was killed by his sons* Isa 37:5-7
 31. *Beat your swords into plowshares* Isa 2:4
 32. *Esarhaddon 681-669 BC*; Blex 393
 33. *Nahum, Nah k1-3*; Nahum's book is probably written in Judah King Manasseh's time about 650 BC, when Nineveh was still at the height of his power. Halley, 368; Wirén 189; Blex 4040
 34. *Nineveh destruction* Nah 3:1-7
Assurbanipal destroys Thebes 195
 35. *Assurbanipal 669-626 BC*; Blex 393
 36. *Destroyed Thebes* Halley 210
Assyria's downfall 195
 37. *Assyria's downfall*. Blex 393,

Halley 368-371
 38. *Egypt broke away from Assyrian control 650 BC*
 39. *Babylon freed 651 BC*; Blex 393
 40. *Assur-etil-ilani, Sin-sar-iskun* Halley 210
 41. *Asshur fell* about 609 BC
 42. *Nineveh fell 605 or 606 BC*, Halley 369
 43. *Prophet Zephaniah, Zep k1-3*. Zephaniah was active during Josiah's reign, when Isaiah's and Micah's prophet voices had fallen silent; Wirén 191
 44. *And he will extend* Zep 2:13

Chapter 30. Havlats conversion 196

1. *Scribes* Blex 5083
 2. *The Ten Commandments*, Ex 20:3-17 2
 3. *Created all men in his image* Gen 26-27
 4. *Everyone who calls on the name* Joel 2:32
 5. *Turn towards the temple* 2 Ch 6:38-39

Chapter 31. Towards Nineveh 199

Nineveh – the metropolis 200

1. *Nineveh was founded by* Gen 10:8-12
 2. *Kalah - Korsabad* Halley 365
 3. *The city center* Halley 369
 4. *Assurbanipal's library* Halley, 42, 371
 5. *The city was three days' journey* Jnh 3:1-3
 6. *120 000 people* Jonah 4:11

The destruction of Nineveh 200

7. *Nineveh, you are finished* Na 2:1, 3-5
 8. *The river gates are open* Na 2:6-8.
 9. *Plunder the silver* Na 2:9-11
 10. *About 20 years later* Halley 368
 11. *Assurbanipal sons* Halley 210

Chapter 32. Nineveh swan song 202

1. *Nineveh by the river Tigris* Halley 369
 2. *Nineveh was so vast* Halley, 365, 369

**The ride along the high walls of Nineveh 204*

Nahum's predictions of Nineveh 205

3. *God is jealous* Na 1:1-3
 4. *Where is the lions' den* Na 2:12. B82
 5. *Woe, you are doomed, Nineveh* Na 3:1-2
 6. *All who see you will shrink* Na 3:7
 7. *Arms of the cavalry* Na 3:3

Nineveh's centre of culture 206

Zephaniah's prophecy about the destruction 207

8. <i>The Lord will do terrible</i> Zep 2:11-15	605 BC; Halley 212; Blex 462
9. <i>The ravens will croak</i> Zep 2:14b	8. <i>Pharaoh Psammetik I</i> , 663-609 BC; Blex 1145; Good 108
10. <i>Whoever digs a pit</i> Ecc 26:27	9. <i>Nebuchadnezzar, Supreme Commander</i> 609 BC, Halley 212
Winter Quarter outside Nineveh 208	10. <i>Asshur fell about</i> 609 BC
Chapter 33 Mystery of numerical values 209	11. <i>Nineveh fell</i> 607 BC, Halley 369
The numbers 8 and 888 209	12. <i>Pharaoh Necho</i> Bibellex 1145; BRA 109
1. <i>The numbers 8 and 888</i> NIS 196, 207	13. <i>Battle of Carchemish</i> 606-605 BC; Halley 318; Blex 394, 1145; Dake 789-1g; BRA 109
Numbers 9 and 999 - the numbers of final judgement and the end 211	14. <i>King Nebuchadnezzar</i> 605 BC, Hal. 212
2. <i>The numbers 9 and 999</i> NIS 205	15. <i>They roar like lions</i> Isa 5:29, TLB.
3. <i>God has set his throne</i> Ps 103:19	Babylonia symbolized by an eagle 222
The Ten Commandments and grace 212	16. <i>See, one that resembles an eagle</i> Jer 48:40,46. B82
4. <i>Decalogue</i> Ex 20:3-17	17. <i>See, one that resembles an eagle</i> - Bozrah Jer 49:22
Number 10 - the number of order 212	18. <i>This is the word that came</i> Jer 25:1
5. <i>Century 10</i> NIS 243	19. <i>Therefore thus saith the Lord</i> Jer 25:8-9,11. B82
6. <i>The ten plagues</i> Ex k7 - K11: blood, frogs, mosquitoes, flies, cattle plague, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, the Firstborn death.	20. <i>Yes, this whole country - 70 years</i> Jer 25:11.
7. <i>Tabernacle</i> Ex C26 - C27	21. <i>This message came to</i> Jer 27:1-7
Number 11 – the number of disorder 213	22. <i>In the end, the whole world burn</i> Isa 24:1
Number 12 - the figure of leadership 213	23. <i>New heavens and a new earth</i> Isa 65:17-19
8. <i>number 12</i> NIS 253	Babylon - the world's oldest city 223
Springtime	24. <i>According to Moses Babylon is the world's oldest city</i> , Gen 11:9
The number of reconciliation 214	25. <i>Eden</i> Halley 64
Number 13 - the number of sin and the devil 214	26. <i>Sennacherib destroyed Babylon</i> Blex 393
10. <i>Number 13</i> NIS 205, 256	27. <i>Esarhaddon rebuilt Babylon</i> Blex 393
11. <i>But the serpent was more crafty</i> Gen 3:1 a.	28. <i>Egyptian queen, Nitpkris</i> Blex 462
Number 13 is also the number of atonement 216	29. <i>Babylon = Greek form of Babel</i> ; Halley 338; Blex 454. Babylon, consisted of a square with a circumference of about 96 km.
12. <i>He will make many righteous</i> Isa 53:11b, 12b	Babylon - a city with many gods 225
Many symbolic numbers in Scripture 217	30. <i>Beltornet</i> Halley 88, 95
Chapter 34. Babylonia - the third World Empire 218	31. <i>Babylon - a center</i> Halley 94
1. <i>All is vanity</i> Ecc 1:2 b, 3:3 b, 5a, 11	32. <i>The female deity Ishtar</i> Halley 95
Babylonia and Media in alliance 219	33. <i>Cramped for religious freedom</i> Halley 94
2. <i>Fraortes</i> 675-653 BC; Good World History 107	Chapter 35 Towards Babylon 226
3. <i>Ecbatana</i> Good 107	Along the Euphrates river banks 226
4. <i>Scythian</i> 626 BC; Good 108; Halley 368	1. <i>Euphrates</i> Halley 37.42; Blex 454, 457
5. <i>Fraortes son</i> , 625-584 BC; Good 107	* <i>Along the banks of the Euphrates</i> 227
* THE NEW-BABYLONIAN WORLD-EMPIRE (map) 220	The world's largest city, 228
6. <i>Attacks against Assyria</i> 616 BC; Good 107	2. <i>Babylon</i> Halley, 82, 83; Blex 454, 457
7. <i>Nabopolassar, King of Nybabilonien</i> 625-	* <i>Babylon – the world's largest city</i> 229
	The new Babylon 230

3. *The new Babylon* Blex 462

The parade 231

4. *Prisoners from the Philistines* (Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and Ashdod), Edom, Moab, Ammon and Syria (Damascus and Hazor) Jer 25:9,19-26; Jer K47-49-

5. *The Lord is my strength* Ps 118:14

The Jews' future in Babylon 232

6. *The Jewish prisoners* were allowed to stay in the district of Babylon Jer 20:4-6, Jer 29:4-10, Ez 1:1. The stream Kebar, the present Khabour, is flowing into the Euphrates 320 km north of Babylon. Dake 806-1d;

7. *The rivers of Babylon*, Ps 137:1

8. *Elam* Jer 49:34-36; Dake 794-1c-g

9. *Elam's people were moved to Samaria*, Ezr 4:9-10, 2 Ki 17:24; Dake 409-4g; Dake 491-1j, Josephus 222-K9: 7

Chapter 36. The palace 245

**The entrance to the palace in Babylon* 244

Havlat's new life 245

1. *Eunuch Aspenäs* Dan 1:3

Shocking information 236

2. *Eunuchs* Isaiah 39:5-7. Courtier is translated by the word eunuchs in the KJV, et Bible translations. Isa 56:3-4: castrated Josephus, 22-k10: 1. Blex H190. Dake 398-1c.

Head steward Aspenas 236

** The tower of Babylon* 237

The king's treasury 238

** The king's treasury* 239

The law of sowing and reaping 240

3. *The law of sowing and reaping is incorruptible* Isa 55:10-11, Gen 20:5.

• The Jewish people's "holocaust" is a well documented example of how the law of sowing and harvesting has come true. At Christ's soulsearching before Pilate, the people cried in chorus: "Let His blood be on us and our children." Since it is a regrettable fact that Godforsaken politicians, also called Christians, by misguided theology and anti-Semitic propaganda has contributed to the persecution of the Jews.

Psalms of David – a soul medicine 243

4. *Call upon me in trouble* Ps 50:15

5. *I called on the Lord* Ps 18:7

6. *Turn to me* Ps 25:16

7. *Let your face shine* Ps 31:17

8. *My times are in your hands* Ps 31:16

9. *And let those who know your name* Ps 9:11

10. *Lord, in heaven* Ps 36:6

11. *For you is the source of life* Ps 36:10

12. *Let your kindness* Ps 36:11

13. *The righteous must suffer* Ps 34:20

14. *Angel of the Lord encamps* Ps 34:8

15. *All of my days is* Ps 139:16

Down here is God's everlasting arms 244

16. *Down here is God's eternal arms* Dt 33:27

17. *One at our side* Gen 33:14-17

18. *The light of God's face* Nu 6:25, Ps 80:4

19. *Without concern for daily bread.* In Matthew 6:25, Jesus urges us that we should not worry for our lives, what we should eat or drink ... In Matthew 6:11, Jesus teaches us to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread ..." Paul says in his teaching: "Those who do not want to work shall not eat". 2 Thes 3:10.

20. *Spared the anguish* Jesus experienced the agony in Gethsemane. In contrast, Israel promised to avoid diseases if they kept "My covenant": Ex 15:26, 23, 25-26.

21. *His rock of refuge lifts me up* Ex 33:22

Completion of the first part in 245

22. *King,s Kids in Babylon* The four prisoners in their future lives in Babylon is briefly described in Daniel's own book.

23. *In the furnace of affliction* Isa 48:10

24. *Has God promised to be close* Ps 23:4

25. *He will lead you* Ps 25:9, 31:4, 32:8;

Ten colour-gouache 146-155

Appendix 1 Archaeological discoveries 256

Appendix 2 Jerusalem

- the earth's belly button 262

Appendix 3 Bible chronology 265

Appendix 3B 6500 years? 269

Literature, sources, GT's books 271

Flavius Josephus 272

Headlines, sources and comments 273

Display on the back-cover

King's Kids *on the move*

When Chaldean troops conquered Jerusalem in 605 BC a group of prisoners were removed to Babylon as slaves. Among them were Daniel and his friends. All their youthful dreams and hopes for the future were shattered as through a cruel twist of fate they were forced to abandon their plans as well as their girlfriends to become servants to the Babylonian king.

Nevertheless they conquered one difficulty after another through courage, intelligence, sheer zest for life and not least faith in God. Their long march from Jerusalem to Carchemish through the forests of Lebanon and on through the Armenian mountains was full of adventures and surprises. During the journey they had many lively discussions about why they had been taken prisoners. They also talked about the writings of Moses and the prophecies about the Messiah in whom they put their hope.

The intention is to give the reader insight into what the Bible and Jewish tradition teach about human early history and its importance for our times. The reality behind the Biblical account has always been tested and is still subject for debate. The fact remains however that there are many archeological findings confirming the Biblical account about the great flood and early civilisation in the Euphrates-Tigris area.

The historical information is gathered from many sources, mainly from the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, 37 - 93 AD, but also from modern encyclopedias and Bible commentaries. The four prisoners' many adventures and their discussions in the various subjects are purely fictional in order to make the account come alive. Their experiences are entirely plausible and give insight into the level of education, culture and prevalent world views of the time.

This book will open the world of the Bible to contemporary readers and make it easier to understand current happenings in Israel and Jerusalem. It will also show that the ethics and teaching of the Bible how to love your neighbour as yourself, has played an important part in the development of current thoughts on human rights and true democracy and is the very foundation of our Western civilisation.

Glimminge, Broby, Sweden 2010
www.nils-ibstedt.com