

Japan in Bible Prophecy



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Japan in the Bible

By Peter Salemi

Japan has been the West's friend ever since the end of World War Two. Japan had transformed itself from national defeat in 1945 into the second largest economy in the world. Does Japan still have a key role in future events? The Bible identifies Japan, and she will continue to be the friend of the West in the near future, til Jesus' second coming!

Where is Japan in the Bible? What is her ancient name? In Genesis 10 Japheth son Java had sons, and these were called, "...Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim" (v.4). *It is from Tarshish that we can trace back the Japanese!*

It appears that the sons of Tarshish originally settled in southern Asia Minor, giving their name to the city of Tarsus. The traditions of ancient Japan claim its people were led to the "Land of the Rising Sun" by a threelegged crow—the "sun crow" representing the sun deity in the ancient Far East. Surprisingly, the rare imagery of three-legged birds as sun symbols has also been found on coins of Asia Minor, where sat Tarsus.

Josephus writes, "Tharsus [gave his name] to the Tharsians; for so was Cilicia of old called." (*Antiquities* i.vi.I). A.L. Sadler, a professor of Oriental Studies at the University of Sydney, wrote in his 1946 book *A Short History of Japan*: "... Some Japanese ethnologists favour the theory that the Yamato came from Central Asia" (pp. xi-xii). Indeed, perhaps they came all the way from Asia Minor.

The peoples of Persia called those descended from Javan in Asia Minor, *Yuna* or *Yuana* (Rapson 1914 : 86). Tarshish migrated with Kittim. (*not of the sons of Heth*). They stayed with Kittim for a time in northern China. The Chinese Yuan- Yuan Empire and Yuanan region take their names from Javan, father of Tarshish. In China, along the coast, there was a people called the Three Han by the early Chinese writers. Han may be a derivation of Javan or Yahan. They were recognized as being a very different people to the rest of the Chinese. The three were the Ma-Han, Shon-Han and the Pien-Han. There is, as Bishop writes, a very close relationship between them and the people who settled Japan (Bishop 1925 : 556). No doubt they were the very ones who settled Japan later. Their culture may be described as partly Chinese and partly central Asian (ibid, 558).Hurlimann traces them back to central Asia (Hurlimann 1970 : 90) and Japanese traditions maintain they originated in the far west of Asia.(Odlum 1937 : 17).

Colin in his *Native Races and Their Customs* writes: "*The principle settler in these archipelagoes was Tharsis, son of Java, together with his brothers.* (quoted in *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*),). Of further interest is the statement in a Japanese document compiled in 720 AD, the *Nihon Shoki*; (*The Chronicles of Japan*), that Ninigi, a forefather of their race, had four sons. This may have been Javan, who also had four sons. From one of these sons descended the Japanese emperor Jemmu Tenno. This son was named Po-wori which means "Fire Bender" and may be compared to Tarshish which means "smelter" or "refiner".

Many confuse this Tarshish to the colony of Benjamin in Spain called “Tharshish.” In Spain, “...these fleets of Tarshish were Semitic/Phoenician in Nature” (Lost Ten Tribes...Found, Collins, p.79). So this Tharshish in western Spain cannot mean the Japhetic Tarshish of Genesis 10:4. And “...in the word Tharshish [the “h” added to the word] identifies this navy with one of the clans of the Israelite tribe of Benjamin, which was named ‘Tharshish’ (1 Chronicles 7:10)...Dr. Barry Fell observed that the language of Tartessus/T[h]arshish in ancient Spain was ‘no more than a dialectal variant of Phoenician’ (ibid, p.79). So the Tharshish in the west in Spain were the Israelites, primarily of the Tribe of Benjamin, *and the east the Japheth tribe of Tarshish.*

Looking at 1 Kings 10:22, 2 Chronicles 9:21, and 2 Chronicles 20:36 we can reasonably conclude that Solomon had a navy whose home port was Ezion-Geber on the north shore of the Gulf of Aqabah, which provided commercial access into the Red Sea, that his ships *went to Tarshish*, and that *every three years* this navy returned to Israel with “gold and silver, ivory and apes, and peacocks.” *It does not take three years to sail from Palestine to Spain. This had to be another far away place called “Tarshish.”*

Josephus confirms that Solomon had many ships that lay upon the Sea of Tarsus which carried all sorts of merchandise into the remotest nations, and that these goods were sold for gold, silver, ivory, Ethiopians, and apes; and that the returned journey took three years (The Works of Josephus, p.225).

The Hebrew for “apes” and “peacocks” are foreign loan words. Bullinger noted that “the Hebrew for these are Indian words (Tamil)”.(E.W. Bullinger, Companion Bible,p.466.) It may have been more likely to obtain apes and peacocks from India than via Africa or Spain, though not necessarily.

One more point to realise, if Tarshish was one of the “remotest nations”, and that the ships had to be specially commissioned for the journey, *it would seem to imply that Tarshish was not necessarily on a regular sea/trade route.* When Jonah departed for “western” Tharshish it seems that he did not have too much difficulty in procuring a passage on a merchant vessel. (Jonah 1:3)

Another commodity the identifies Japan is gold and silver. In sixteenth-century Japan, the production of gold and particularly silver grew so significantly that it left a mark on world economic history. Indeed, Japan may have accounted for as much as one-third of the world’s silver output at the end of the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth century. (Kozo Yamamura, editor, The Cambridge History of Japan, pp.60-61). (cp. Jeremiah 10:9)

The warlords of this period encouraged gold and silver mining as a source of funds, leading to the discovery and development of many more mines. Most of the daimyos held large stocks of gold and silver bullion and gold dust. Nobunaga, (1534-82, the ‘Japanese Attila’), and Hideyoshi (1535-98, a brilliant commander and statesman), both had great reserves of bullion collected in their castles and used gold freely and ostentatiously to impress the world with their magnificence. (George Sansom, A History of Japan 1334-1615, pp.339-340).

The “Ships” of Tarshish

Continually in the Bible we read of the “ships” of Tarshish. The Japanese have always prided themselves on their naval capabilities. The Wikipedia under “The Naval History of Japan” article

writes, “The naval history of Japan can be said to begin in early interactions with states on the Asian continent in the early centuries of the 1st millennium, *reaching a pre-modern peak of activity during the 16th century, a time of cultural exchange with European powers and extensive trade with the Asian mainland.* After over two centuries of relative seclusion under the Tokugawa shogunate, Japan’s naval technologies were seen to be no match for Western navies when the country was forced by American intervention in 1854 to abandon its maritime restrictions. This and other events led to the Meiji Restoration, a period of frantic modernization and industrialization accompanied by the re-ascendence of the Emperor, *making the Imperial Japanese Navy the third largest navy in the world by 1920, and arguably the most modern at the brink of World War II.*

“The Imperial Japanese Navy’s history of successes, sometimes against much more powerful foes as in the 1894-1895 Sino-Japanese War and the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War, ended with the navy’s almost complete annihilation in 1945 against the United States Navy, and official dissolution at the end of the conflict. *Japan’s current navy falls under the umbrella of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) as the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF). It still one of the top navies in the world in term of budget,* although it is denied any offensive role by the nation’s Constitution and public opinion.” (emphasis added). God speaks of the “ships” of Tarshish in the end time especially during World War II.

The “Merchants” of Tarshish

Ezekiel 38:13 calls them “the merchants of Tarshish.” Their entire nation is so closely linked to merchandising goods to others that they are called a nation of “merchants” in Ezekiel 38. Japan pioneered the export-driven model of mercantile sales to other nations as a national policy. This trait was so well-known that the nation was sometimes called “Japan, Inc.” in media articles. Japan perfectly fits the prophecy about Tarshish in the latter days.

Ezekiel 38:13 also prophesied that there would be “young lions” that would be closely linked to the “merchants of Tarshish” in the latter days. There are a number of smaller Asian nations on the Pacific Rim which have copied the mercantile, export-driven success of the Japanese nation. These nations are even called the “young tiger” nations or “young tiger” economies of Asia. Since there were only Asian lions, not tigers, in the region of the ancient Promised Land and Fertile Crescent (in which Ezekiel lived and wrote), the term “young lions” could as easily be translated “young tigers” in an Asian application. Is it not amazing how precisely the Bible foretold millennia ago the modern realities and traits of Japan and various Pacific Rim nations? The “young tiger” nations include such nations as South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, etc. These nations are all closely-integrated into the economies of the Western world, and it makes sense they would object to an attack upon their allies and best customers!

Isaiah 23 & WWII

The prophecy in Isaiah clearly shows the situation in the second world war, and the axis powers of Germany, Rome and Japan. In our article “Tyre and the Rise of the Next Roman Empire,” we clearly prove that Tyre is modern day Rome. When Rome fell, the prophecy says, “Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it [Tyre/ Rome] is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim [Italy] it is revealed to them.” (Isaiah 23:1).

The prophecy goes on to say, “Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle; thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished.” Tarshish is called the “inhabitants of the Isle.” Again, “Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle.” (v.6). *Clearly not Spain*, but Japan. The merchants of Zidon being the Spanish and the Venetians in the 16th century “filling” as it should read, see Strong’s #4390, their ships with spices and other agricultural commodities. These Babylonian merchants of Zidon had trading posts all over the world during that time.

Tarshish was to “howl.” (v.6) Japan in its defeat, and unconditional surrender in World War Two had the entire nation in mourning. The dropping of the nuclear bombs, the total destruction and massive deaths of the Japanese forced them to surrender to the Americans. Japanese militarism and colonization was over. Japan was lost.

“Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: *there is no more strength.*” (v.10). God tells the Japanese colonists to return to their land seeking refuge. There is no more strength. Japan had lost, it is devastated. Without the mother country, the colonies cannot survive.

After the war, Japan and the USA have grown to be genuine allies. The USA was not a harsh conqueror of Japan. The USA (in Japan’s post-World War period of reconstruction) preserved Japan’s monarchy, treated the Japanese people and their culture with respect and laid the foundation for Japan’s mercantile success by blending Western, democratic institutions with Japan’s own unique culture Japan has become a trusted ally and friend and it becoming an ever-more important nation in the Western alliance. Bible prophecy shows that this alliance will continue this way til the time of the Coming of Jesus Christ!

Japan in Future World Events.

As quoted earlier in Ezekiel 38, Japan says to Gog, who is China in the end time (Read our Booklet China in Prophecy for further details), “Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, *Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?*” (v.13). These nations of course are all USA and Western friendly nations. Sheba and Dedan is Saudi Arabia The Word “Arab” means “mixed.” All biblical scholars know that Arabia is a mixture between Shemites and Cushites. As we show in our booklet, The Plain Truth About Islam, Arabia are peopled with the tribe of Joktan, and the Cushite tribes of Dedan and Sheba, see Gen 10:7, 26-29. Unger’s Bible Handbook says, “Seba is connected with South Arabia and is mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions in the 8th century B.C. Havilah was ancestor to a people in central and southern Arabia partly Cushite and partly Semitic Joktanite...” (pp.53, 56).

“And their [Joktan’s] dwelling was from Mesha, as thou goest unto Sephar a mount of the east.” (Gen 10:30). What is “Mesha”? R. Zacuth (s) “says, Mesha in the Arabic tongue *is called Mecca*; and it is a point agreed upon by the *Arabs that Mesha was one of the most ancient names of Mecca*; they believe that all the mountainous part of the region producing frankincense went in the earliest times by the name of Sephar; from whence Golius concludes this tract to be the Mount Zephar of Moses, a strong presumption of the truth of which is that *Dhafar, the same with the modern Arabs as the ancient Saphar, is the name of a town in Shihr, the only province in Arabia*

bearing frankincense on the coast of the Indian ocean (In Juchasin, fol. 135. 2. (t) Universal History, vol. 18. p. 353., emphasis added) And “from Mecca till you come to the city of the eastern mountain, or (as in a manuscript) to the eastern city,” meaning perhaps Medina, situated to the east; so that the sense is, according to this paraphrase, that the sons of *Joktan had their dwelling from Mecca to Medina (In Pocock. Specimen Hist. Arab. p. 34. emphasis added).*

The merchants of Tarshish and the young lions are of course Japan, Singapore, Taiwan etc...These nations however are criticizing China for attacking and destroying America and the West during the tribulation period. It is easy to understand why Japan and the young tiger nations would criticize China for their attack on the west. Their economies are so linked to the West in banking, manufacturing, and trade relationships that any attack against the West would destroy their own economies! One could say China's attack is equally self-defeating but Ezekiel 38:12 reveals that China has an overall goal of world domination. Japan and the “tiger nations” seek prosperity, not world domination. So for Japan to criticize China for its actions is totally logical.

After the tribulation during the day of the Lord the time of God's wrath, “For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low...And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.*” “And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: *and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.*

“And the idols he shall utterly abolish.” (Isaiah 2:12, 16-18). Japan's pride shall be broken. The pride that it has in its merchant fleet that carries cargo to the four corners of the earth. The “pleasant pictures” can mean art, but in a modern sense Television Sets that show moving pictures. These idols of making money and trade and goods will all be abolished, and the Lord Jesus Christ will be exalted in that Day.

During this time, Israel will be in a state of slavery and captivity because of their sins, see Ezekiel 39:23-24. Verse 25 then says, “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; *Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob,* and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name;” A huge Exodus back to the promise land. Isaiah the 11th chapter also reveals this Exodus of Judah and Israel scattered, and making their way back to the promised land, “And it shall come to pass in that day, *that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.*

“And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and *shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.*

“And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; *like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt*” (vv.11-12, 16). The second Exodus back to the promised land. One of those areas is from the “Islands of the sea.” Tarshish/ Japan plays a crucial role in helping the modern day Israelites (America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand), those who are left, of bringing them back to the promised land. Isaiah 60, reveals, “*Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far,* their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.”(v.9). Clearly Japan will be the West's friend right until the end.

The ships of Tarshish will be used in the work of God, and not cargo to make money and trade anymore, but for the Lord. To bring back his people to the land of Israel, and Japan is going to help them get there with her ships.

Conversion of Japan

Japan today is not Christian in any sense. But, the time will come when God says that Japan will be converted to God, and worship him.

Isaiah 66 reveals a prophecy of the second coming of Christ, “For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

“For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many....it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.” (vv.15-16, 18). This will be the time when all the armies will be gathered to fight at Jerusalem, see Joel 3:9-16. When the battle is over and Jesus Christ wins and sets up his rule Jesus will set up missionaries to go to these far away nations to preach the Gospel to those who have never heard it.

“And I will set a sign among them, and *I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.*

“And they shall bring all your brethren *for* an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, *to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD,* as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD.” (vv.19-20). Japan is one of those nations listed that will hear the Gospel from those who are left from that great battle in Jerusalem. Those who have repented because they have seen Christ. These shall go to the four corners of the earth and proclaim the good news. This will trigger them to bring the Israelites back with their ships, and Tarshish will escort them back to the promise land.

Psalm 72, clearly a prophecy of the coming of Christ, says, “He [Jesus] shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

“*The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts*” (vv.8, 10). Japan, we see in the ISLES, as well as the Muslim nation of Saudi Arabia will bring “offerings” to Jesus as tribute, and subject themselves to Christ.

Zacariah 14 shows Christ as King over all the earth (v.9). “And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles” (v.16). “And it shall come to pass, *that* from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.” (Isaiah 66:23)

No more excuses. No more pagan religions! Just Jesus Christ, and worshipping him, keeping his laws and appointed days. Japan has a wonderful future ahead of them!