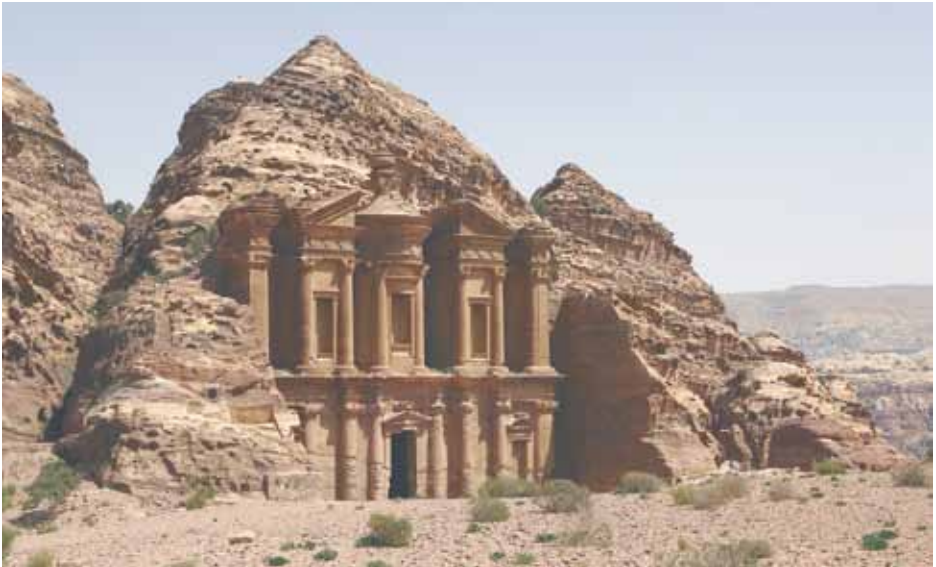


Petra

A reserved place prepared by God



"Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days."

(Revelation 12 : 6)

Ab Klein Haneveld

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Original title:

Petra - een gereserveerde plaats

Introduction

Years ago I discovered the location of the "place in the wilderness" where the believing remnant will be gathered in order to hide from the "great tribulation". The ancient Edomite and Nabataean capital city Petra was only known by a few. In the past it was highly dangerous and nearly impossible to visit this mysterious city. But since the borders of Jordan have opened up to tourism, this area can nowadays be visited quite easily.

What we could not achieve ten years ago, became reality: we were allowed access to the place "prepared by God" where in the near future the earthly foundation will be laid for the coming Kingdom of Christ. With this in mind, in the paper below we would like to focus on what the prophetic word explicitly says about all these issues.

Desolation until the end

"Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." (Daniel 9 : 24)

In this verse, God announces that a certain period of time would pass before the promised blessings would definitely be given to Israel. Here, the time is determined until the coming of the Messiah and the conversion of the Jewish people, especially that of Jerusalem. After all, the angel speaks about "your people" and "your holy city". Daniel's people and city are incontestably the Jewish people and Jerusalem. The sentence "to anoint the Most Holy" clearly refers to the Messiah, who is called "the Anointed One" and "Christ" in other languages. In verse 25 the expression "Messiah" is used again and is left more or less untranslated.

Seventy weeks, 70 x 7 years, will pass until these events. Furthermore it is remarkable that the last week of the seventy weeks is only mentioned in verse 27. The prophetic word says about this week, which, by the way, has still not been fulfilled:

"Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate." (Daniel 9 : 27)

These words clearly express that until the end of the seventy weeks, and hence until the end of the seventieth week, desolation will come upon "your people" and "your holy city". This means that there will be desolation until the conversion of the remnant in Jerusalem, that is, until the moment that the Messiah will set His feet on the Mount of Olives. In practice, this means that the Lord will appear on the Mount of Olives on the occasion of the final destruction of Jerusalem.

We can now safely conclude that as far as there is a believing remnant, it will not be found in Jerusalem itself. The reason being that there will be no Jerusalem anymore at that point of time! After all, the Lord will appear on the Mount of Olives at the very moment Jerusalem is destroyed! This obviously implies that from that day on there will not be found any life in Jerusalem and thus no believing remnant. When the Lord establishes His Kingdom over the Jewish people, there will neither be a Jewish state nor will there be a Jewish city. Thus it is not possible for the remnant to be in Jerusalem when Christ returns but it has to be someplace else. This truth can be found in various parts of the Old Testament but even more explicitly in the New Testament.

Return of the Lord, gathering of the people and return to their land

The term "secret things" in Deuteronomy 29 : 29 apparently makes reference to our present "dispensation of the mystery" (Ephesians 3 : 9 lit.). Subsequently it is stated:

"Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind (= believe) among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you [...]" (Deuteronomy 30 : 1)

The people will call to mind again the blessings and believe with all their heart! However, they will not do this in Canaan nor in Jerusalem, but "among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you". How would this come about?

"[...] and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul (i.e. your way of living) [..]" (Deuteronomy 30 : 2)

The result will be:

"[...] that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you." (Deuteronomy 30 : 3)

According to the Hebrew language, the sentence "and [God will] gather you again" should be literally translated as "and [God will] return and gather you". Thus this verse speaks about the return of Christ after the "secret things" of Deuteronomy 29 : 29. Thereafter the Lord will gather them "from all the nations where the Lord [their] God has scattered" them.

"If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers." (Deuteronomy 30 : 4, 5)

When we read these verses attentively, we come to see that, first of all, the Lord will return. He then will gather Israel from all the nations and after that He will bring them to the land. These are three events:

1. The return of the Lord
2. The gathering of Israel
3. The return to the land.

From this verse we can conclude that the Lord will indeed gather Israel, though not in the land, but rather somewhere else. This fact is confirmed in many other places in Scripture.

Insofar as the believing members of this people will find themselves in Jerusalem at the end of the seventieth week of Daniel, they cannot be gathered in Jerusalem because they were already there. They will have to leave Jerusalem like Lot had to leave Sodom; where the comparison between the desolation of Jerusalem and that of Sodom is absolutely biblical! They will not be gathered in Jerusalem but somewhere else. From this place they will later be brought to the location where Jerusalem had once been. It will take them seven years to cleanse the land from armaments and seven months to bury the dead! (see Ezekiel 39 : 9 and 12)

Into the wilderness

Thus, the gathering of Israel will not take place in the land, although that will be their final destination, but in the wilderness.

"As I live," says the Lord God, 'surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you,' says the Lord God. 'I will make you pass under the rod (in connection with the sheepfold), and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; [...]"
(Ezekiel 20 : 33-37)

The Lord will plead His case, He will make them pass under the rod and He will bring them into "the bond of the covenant". Verse 36 refers to the fact that in the past God gathered Israel from Egypt. The Lord brought Israel into the wilderness and under His jurisdiction and law. He brought them into "the bond of the covenant". Formerly this covenant was the old covenant, as we now know it. In the future the Lord will gather Israel not only from Egypt, but from all nations:

"Therefore behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that it shall no more be said, 'The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' but, 'The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.' For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers." (Jeremiah 16 : 14, 15)

But even then the Lord will initially gather them in the wilderness. That is the literal meaning of verse 35. The Lord will again administer justice to them in the wilderness. He will make a covenant with them or bring them into it. This is not the old covenant of the Law "which they broke", (Jeremiah 31 : 32) but, needless to say, the new covenant. Somewhere in the desert between Egypt and Canaan this story will more or less repeat itself.

Grace and rest in the wilderness

"'At the same time,' says the Lord, 'I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.' Thus says the Lord: 'The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness—Israel, when I went to give him rest.'" (Jeremiah 31 : 1, 2)

These verses are about people who survived and escaped the sword, about a remnant. It is obvious that this is about the believing remnant of Israel. More specifically about the part that will remain from Jerusalem, at the time when the city will be destroyed at the end of the seventieth week of Daniel.

Furthermore it is important to see that the remaining people have found grace. Not the law of the old covenant, but grace of the new covenant. This corresponds with the "bond of the covenant", as quoted above from Ezekiel. Additionally, the verses say that the Lord was going to give rest to Israel. It must be clear that neither Moses, nor Joshua, nor David, had given them rest. (Hebrews 4 : 6-9) Christ, the Messiah, will give them rest. He is the One Who once said:

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden (with the yoke of the law nobody was able to bear), and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11 : 28)

Rest and grace are both terms indicating the new covenant. Here it is said that the people will find grace, not in the land, but rather, in the wilderness. Israel will not so much find grace among the nations where the Lord had driven them, but particularly in the desert. From Jeremiah 31 : 31 there is extensive mention of the days in which the Lord will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. The new covenant is to replace the covenant of the law, which the Lord made with Israel on the occasion of the exodus from Egypt. This section corresponds very well with Ezekiel 20.

In Jeremiah, we find once again the same comparison between the historical exodus and the future salvation of Israel:

"Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the Lord: I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.'" (Jeremiah 2 : 2)

Already at the beginning of this Bible book we find reference to the phenomenon that Israel was saved to subsequently end up in the wilderness. And in the future this will not be any different.

Flight from the tribulation

In the New Testament we explicitly find the same train of thought expressed in the words of the Lord Jesus Himself that are in line with Daniel 9 when He says:

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' [the "wing of abominations" from Daniel 9 : 27] spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), "then let those who are in Judea [i.e. the land of the Jews] flee to the mountains [which mountains?]. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight [!] may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matthew 24 : 15-21)

Verse 21 is about the great tribulation; the expression is derived from Daniel 12 : 1 and there can be no misunderstanding about it. This great tribulation will start at the beginning of the second half of the seventieth week of Daniel. When that time will come, they will have to flee abroad in a great hurry. From the above description, it even appears that it is a matter of seconds.

Here one should realise that according to other prophecies not only an idol will be erected in the temple courtyard, but also the two witnesses, who will have preached the gospel in the streets of Jerusalem during the first half of the seventieth week of Daniel, will be killed. (Revelation 11 : 3, 7) Both will happen simultaneously. The Jewish state will, in any case, have made a covenant with the Palestinians (and possibly others) at the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel. (Daniel 9 : 27) After three-and-a-half years that covenant will be broken. On that same occasion the borders will certainly be closed so that nobody will be able to leave the country anymore.

Therefore it might be expected that this flight from Jerusalem will not be a flight to another place in the Jewish country. By the way, it is written: "[...] then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." Apparently everybody has to flee from the Jewish country. The only right conclusion is that they should flee to mountains beyond the borders of the Jewish state.

Furthermore, it should be noted that this flight does not take place at the end of the seventieth week of Daniel but in the middle of it! In fact, the flight encompasses the entire first half of those seven years. It will be possible to flee until the beginning of the great tribulation. During the tribulation as such it is evidently impossible to escape it; everybody has to wait then until the end of the seventieth week of Daniel when they will be able to flee from the city on the occasion of its destruction. This we shall see later on.

In connection with Matthew 24 one could still ask the following question: "Where will they flee?" This question is not explicitly answered here, but we find an indication starting in verse 23:

"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it." (Matthew 24 : 23-26)

From the statement "Look, He is in the desert!" we can conclude where He is. It is not explicitly stated that He is in the desert, but the contrary cannot be confirmed either! It only says: "Do not go out." The reason for this is that a person can only flee during the first half of the seventieth week of Daniel but not afterwards. If somebody tries to flee during the great tribulation (the second half), he probably will not survive it. That is the reason for stating: "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out."

One could wonder why people will assume that He is in the desert. In the preceding three-and-a-half years the two witnesses will preach in the streets of Jerusalem. What will be their message? They will tell the people that they have to believe in the Lord Jesus and that they should "go forth to Him, outside the camp". (Hebrews 13 : 13) For in the desert there will be an assembly point. This is precisely the same as at the beginning of the old covenant. We can very well assume that they will be able to recall these words of the two witnesses!

When it says: "Look, He is in the inner rooms!" it continues with: "do not believe it." In the past the inner rooms were the outbuildings of the temple. But the Messiah will by no means be in the inner rooms. If He were anywhere, it would be outside the camp. If one looked for Him, they would have to look in the desert. That does not necessarily mean that the Lord will be there physically. Yet it is sure that the believing remnant will be in the wilderness and that the Lord will be with them in the same manner as He is with us now.

A place prepared by God

In the twelfth chapter of the book of Revelation we find the description of the well-known "sign" of the dragon, the pregnant woman and the male child. It says:

*"She (the pregnant woman) bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne."
(Revelation 12 : 5)*

We know that the statement about the person "who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron" refers to Christ. It is literally derived from Psalm 2 : 9 and does not only refer to Christ but also, and above all, to Christ including the Church which is His body. Psalm 2 states that the Lord Jesus will be appointed as Son. But the Church is also destined to be appointed as Son, together with Christ. This is one of the blessings that we, as the Church, have received in Christ. (Ephesians 1 : 5; Romans 8 : 29) And it is the main theme in various letters of the New Testament.

Only when Christ as well as the Church will be appointed as Son, this Son, including the Church, will rule all nations with a rod of iron. This "appointment as son" implies, after all, the appointment as king! (See Psalm 2 : 6)

"[...] And her Child was caught up to God and His throne." (Revelation 12 : 5)

The woman is, as always, a type of Israel in which the Church finds its origin. However, the Church will be caught up to God and His throne. The term "caught up" is also used in 1 Thessalonians 4 : 17 where it refers to the rapture of the Church. The Greek expression for "to catch up" means: "to take away with force or power".

The power that is used for the rapture of the Church is Christ's resurrection power. (Ephesians 1 : 19) Just as the apostle Paul writes about "the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body [...], according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." (Philippians 3 : 20, 21)

By this power we will also be physically placed with Christ in heaven and on the throne. And from that position, we will rule the nations with a rod of iron. "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? [...] Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6 : 2, 3)

Now we will focus on what happens after the rapture of the Church:

"Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days." (Revelation 12 : 6)

This is just right, because the first half of the seventieth week of Daniel will begin after the rapture of the Church. From that instant the two witnesses will appear in the streets of Jerusalem. As a result of their preaching, believers will flee from the city to the desert. This will only be possible for three-and-a-half years, which is until the erection of the abomination of desolation and the killing of the two witnesses in the middle of this same week of Daniel. After that, this believing remnant will remain three-and-a-half years in the wilderness, where it will be sheltered in the days of the great tribulation over Israel.

The first period of three-and-a-half years is not mentioned here explicitly, but evidently it is the period of "peace and safety" (1 Thessalonians 5 : 3) in which the woman will flee into the wilderness.

The second period though is mentioned explicitly and it undoubtedly corresponds with the period of which Paul writes:

"[...] then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman(!). And they shall not escape." (1 Thessalonians 5 : 3)

They should leave Jerusalem before its impending fall. For at this time of "sudden destruction" the following applies: "Do not go out [...]" While the great tribulation will break loose in Jerusalem, this remnant will have fled in due time and will be sheltered in the wilderness during this same period. At the end of the seventieth week, when people again will flee from Jerusalem on the occasion of the destruction, they will apparently go to the same place in the desert where previously a believing remnant had gathered. This truth from verse 12 is repeated in verse 14:

"But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time (three-and-a-half years), from the presence of the serpent." (Revelation 12 : 14)

So at the end of the seventy weeks there will be a believing remnant in the desert, in "a place prepared by God", not in Jerusalem. Thus God has reserved a place for the believing remnant of Israel. A reserved place. A place of grace and rest!

From Jerusalem to Petra

The last verse of Zechariah 13 says that Israel will once more say: "The Lord (Jehovah) is my God" and that God will say: Israel "is My people (Ammi)."

The answer to the question how this was attained, is given in the verses below:

"Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. (This means that the Lord will punish the sins of Jerusalem.) For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city (= a part of it) shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city." (Zechariah 14 : 1, 2)

The first part, which will go into captivity, will evidently be eradicated. There are only two parts: one that will go into captivity and another that will not be cut off. "To go into captivity" means "to go to Hades" or "to die". In the Bible, the term "captivity" is repeatedly used to indicate death. The remnant of the people that shall not be cut off from the city will find grace in the wilderness. (Jeremiah 31 : 2) This is also said here:

"Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations [...]" (Zechariah 14 : 3)

Which nations? Those nations, which He Himself, according to verse 2, had gathered against Jerusalem. The question that needs to be answered now is: Why this turnaround? The explanation can be found in several places in the Bible. The remnant from Jerusalem will repent and call on the name of the Lord. From that moment onwards the Lord will fight on the side of Israel and thus against the nations. As another prophet testifies:

"And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the remnant ("the people who survived the sword" Jeremiah 31 : 2) whom the Lord calls." (Joel 2 : 32)

Zechariah then describes this deliverance, this opportunity to escape:

"And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south." (Zechariah 14 : 4)

"In that day" is the day of the destruction of Jerusalem. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives "which faces Jerusalem on the east". This is a remarkable sentence. Elsewhere we read:

"Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey [...]" (Zechariah 9 : 9)

In Matthew 21 : 5 this last statement is applied to the appearance of the Lord on the Mount of Olives, when He was riding a donkey during the so-called entry into Jerusalem on the last day of the sixty-ninth week of Daniel. It was then that the Lord said about Jerusalem:

"If you had known, even you, especially in this your day (still today), the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes." (Luke 19 : 42)

From that time onwards the "secret things" of Deuteronomy 29 : 29 began. Thereafter, from the Mount of Olives, the Lord announces the destruction of the city:

"For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side [...]" (Luke 19 : 43)

At the end of the seventieth week of Daniel the Lord will again put his feet on the Mount of Olives. On that occasion, Jerusalem will be literally destroyed. So there is a clear link between the events on the last day of the sixty-ninth week and the seventieth week of Daniel. Zechariah 14 : 14 is the only verse in the Bible that explicitly and literally states that the Lord will appear on the Mount of Olives in His Second Coming. Nevertheless, this idea is generally known. We can barely find the Mount of Olives in a vision in Ezekiel 11 : 23, and effortlessly in Acts 1. As is said by two men:

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (Acts 1 : 11)

It does not say "at this location". But because the Lord disappeared in a cloud and will again appear in the clouds, it will most probably be at the same location. However, it cannot be concluded with absolute certainty from this chapter. But when we compare Acts 1 : 11 with Zechariah 14 : 4, there is no problem.

Of course the Lord will return at the same location: on the Mount of Olives. At that place He was last seen. Moreover, the last thing He did there was really just a sign of His Second Coming.

Furthermore, Zechariah 14 : 4 states that "the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley (plain) [...]." This is hard to imagine, as the Mount of Olives is only a small mountain. Nevertheless, a very large plain will emerge.

"Half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley [...]." (Zechariah 14 : 4, 5)

The impossible will happen. What could never be done previously suddenly becomes possible. In the past, one could not leave the city on the east side because there was a steep and deep valley in which the brook Kidron found its way. On the other side of the Kidron Valley the Mount of Olives is situated. In the

future it will be possible to leave the city to the east; to the side that was always blocked, the side to which the temple gave a view, because the mountain will have moved away.

"Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with You." (Zechariah 14 : 5)

Azal?

The escape route for the believing remnant, across the split Mount of Olives, apparently reaches to Azal. A place with that name was and is unknown. Nevertheless, we can conclude that this name is given to a place in the wilderness "prepared by God" so that "the remnant of the people" that "shall not be cut off from the city" could flee there. In this way "the people who survived the sword" will find the grace and peace of the new covenant in the wilderness.

Now the question is: "Where is Azal located?" Revelation 12 states: It is "a place prepared by God". Zechariah says: "to Azal". "Azal" means "reserved". "Azal" can be translated in many ways, but it always has the scope of "to be reserved" or "to be withheld". On the one hand, the idea behind "Azal" is that of a reserved place. On the other hand, "Azal" also means that the place is away somewhere.

Also in the English language "reserved" may denote "set aside". When we reserve something, we set something aside. We put something away in a special place. "Azal" means "repository". The nice thing is that this Hebrew word also occurs in European languages. It is the same as the German word "Zelt" which we translate with "tent". The English have corrupted the Hebrew word into "shelter". Azal is a shelter, hidden somewhere. One can also find the word "Azal" in the description of the Day of Atonement. It speaks of a goat for Jehovah and a goat for Az-azel. "Az" means "goat" and "azel" is translated as "to leave". "Az-azel" is the "scape-goat" (Leviticus 16 : 8), which was set free in the wilderness. (Leviticus 16 : 22) It appears that among other things he is a type of the faithful remnant that will be set free in the wilderness after it has found reconciliation! Moreover, although

the spelling of "Azal" in Scripture is not the same everywhere (the letters "tsade" and "zayin" are interchangeable), the pronunciation and significance remain absolutely the same!

Ezel?

In 1 Samuel 20 : 19 the stone "Ezel" is mentioned. Its name resembles that of "Azal". In this story David has to flee from Saul. One could say that the new covenant has to flee from the old one. Saul's son Jonathan was going to try to figure out his father's opinion about David, as David's life might be threatened. Jonathan told David to hide for three days. After these three days he and David would meet again. Jonathan would shoot an arrow. If the arrow fell down far away, David would have to flee.

*"And when you have stayed three days, go down quickly and come to the place where you hid on the day of the deed; and remain by the stone Ezel."
(1 Samuel 20 : 19)*

After three days salvation would come. Until that time David would remain hidden in his secret hiding place. He stayed by a stone in a special place. There he was safe from Saul. There he would meet Jonathan. From a typological point of view, all this relates to the believing remnant of Israel. Thus Revelation 12 is about a prepared and reserved place somewhere in the desert. Zechariah 14 states that a level route will emerge when Jerusalem is destroyed. That level route will lead to a reserved place with the name "Azal", meaning "reserved". The location of "Azal" is indeed known, only not by that name. The place could be called "Eben" (stone), but usually it is identified with another word for stone, that is "Sela" (Hebrew) or "Petra" (Greek).

William E. Blackstone

Sela or Petra, the ancient capital of the Edomites and later of the Nabataeans, is located about 80 kilometres south of the Dead Sea in the mountains on the east side of the Wadi Araba. It is evident that the thousands of caves, which are mostly carved out with bare hands and which constitute this ancient city carved from

the mountains, would be the ideal hiding place for the believing remnant. And I was not the first one to discover that! A few months later, my brother-in law Henk Zutphen brought to my attention the following passage of the book "The Drama of the End-Time" by Oral Roberts, which was unknown to me:

"William E. Blackstone, author of the book, Jesus is Coming Soon, carried on a very interesting work among the Jewish people, especially in Palestine. Mr. Blackstone died in 1935 at the age of 94, but before his death he had a revelation from God that many of the fleeing Jewish people, awakened to their awful betrayal at the hands of the Antichrist, would find refuge in the dens and caves of the mountain fastnesses around Petra.

Out of a \$5-million trust fund, Dr. Blackstone, in 1935, sent a corps of Christian workers to Petra with great cases of Hebrew Bibles, encased in copper boxes. They were sealed in hewn-out vaults in the mountain side of the Petra region against the day when, according to the Bible, the Jews will flee from Jerusalem to the Petra Mountain.

In the midst of the Great Tribulation, these Bibles with marked passages will be found, tracing the lineage of Christ, and the working and deceit of Antichrist will be exposed to the persecuted Israelis. These marked passages will show the Jewish people how they have been deceived, betrayed by the Antichrist, and that Jesus Christ is truly their Messiah, their only hope. Only the future will reveal the results of this unique venture of Dr. Blackstone."

(I do not know whether these copper boxes with Hebrew Bibles still exist. Perhaps it is within the scope of the foundation "Israel and the Bible" to examine this further, because their main aim is to distribute Hebrew Bibles to Jewish readers.)

This place in the desert will not only provide refuge for the believing remnant, but it will also be the base camp for this same believing remnant when it will rebuild Jerusalem after the seventieth week in order to re-establish there "the thrones for judgement" (Psalm 122 : 1-5) and "the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down". (Acts 15 : 16) In short, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom on earth will

initially happen from this reserved place. In this context, the name of this city is explicitly mentioned in Scripture in many ways!

Teman, Hor, Paran and Selah

"O Lord, I have heard Your speech and was afraid; o Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy." (Habakkuk 3 : 2)

"The midst of the years" obviously refers to the middle of the seventieth week of Daniel. After all, it is about "in wrath remember mercy". When the wrath, the great tribulation, begins in the middle of the seventieth week, there must be a shelter somewhere, a place "of mercy" for the believing remnant.

"God came (or: will come) from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise." (Habakkuk 3 : 3)

This verse apparently speaks about the place from which the Messiah will appear and several city names are mentioned. "Teman" is usually translated as "the south", but since various city names are mentioned here in one breath, "Teman" is rightly conceived as a city name as well. "Teman" is the name given to the area south of Palestine. And Petra is indeed located there.

Furthermore, it is said that the Holy One will come from Mount Paran. "Paran" is the name of the area around Petra. Other Bible passages speak of the "wilderness of Paran" and "Mount Paran". This is probable, because this name is given to the area around Petra, of which the east side is mountainous while the west side consists of the low plain of the Wadi Araba south (Teman) of the Dead Sea.

If we perceive "Teman" not only as a city name, but as the word that is translated as "mount" as well, we also end up in this area! The Hebrew word for "mount(ain)" is "hor" or "har". Why could that not be the name of the famous Mount Hor that is located directly southwest of Petra? Aaron died on this mountain, and was succeeded as High Priest by his son Eleazar. (Numbers 20 : 22-29) It is by far the

highest mountain in the wider surroundings of Petra! Thus we find "Teman"; the name which is applied to that area. We find "Hor", the mountain at Petra, and "Paran", the name of the area.

Then it says: "Selah". In Hebrew it literally says "Selah". Grammatically, it means "at Selah". The translators apparently did not know how to deal with it and thus left it untranslated. But "Selah" is simply the name of the ancient capital of Edom. After the conquest of this city by the Nabataeans, it became known under the Greek name "Petra".

The names "Teman", "Hor", "Paran" and "Selah" do not contradict each other. They all apply to the same area. The most specific Hebrew name "Selah" is used three times in this chapter (in verses 3, 9 and 13). In addition, the name appears 71 times in Psalms and is used there in the same manner. It has been left untranslated there as well. Although the Selah verses are very enlightening, we unfortunately have to omit them here.

He comes from Bozrah

"Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? – 'I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.'" (Isaiah 63 : 1)

The question: "Who is this who comes from Edom?" can be answered: The Messiah comes from Edom. However, we should ask ourselves another question: Why does He come from Edom? We now know the answer. From Petra, the former capital of Edom, the Lord and his men will go up in order to re-establish Jerusalem and His Kingdom! Although Jerusalem is destroyed, it will be rebuilt. The believing remnant will not stay in the desert in Petra, but it will go out in order to build Jerusalem and to establish an Israelite State. From there, the nations will be subjected.

As far as the Lord does not come from heaven, He comes from Edom and thus from Teman, Hor, Paran and Selah. But what is Bozrah? According to the Bible, it is one of the important cities of Edom. But its location is virtually unknown. Of

course, it has been assumed that the original location of this city would be somewhere north of Petra. But nothing has been proven as of yet.

Selah, Petra or Bozrah?

Several years ago I expressed my assumption that "Bozrah" is perhaps another name of Petra. As of now, I am convinced of it, but nevertheless there is a slight difference! The fact is that "Selah" was the official name of the capital of Edom. That city was, as the name itself suggests, located atop a large rock. Nowadays that rock is known as "Umm al-Biyara" and protrudes from within the area we now call "Petra".

When we enter Petra from the east through the gorge, which is approximately 1,700 meters long and serves as the entry route, diagonally to the left we can see this big mountain Umm al-Biyara with almost sheer walls. By way of steps carved out in the rock, the mountain can be climbed on the rear (west side). On the flat top the ruins of Selah, the former Edomite capital, can still be found.

It was from this rock town that king Amaziah defeated the Edomites and cast down ten thousand of them (2 Chronicles 25 : 12). After Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon, also Selah was eventually captured and destroyed by the Nabataeans, descendants of Nebajoth, a son of Ishmael. (Genesis 25 : 13) However, the Nabataeans decided against living on top of that mountain. They settled 1,000 meters lower, in the area that is completely surrounded by mountains. The famous Siq, the above-mentioned gorge right through the mountains, is the only entrance to this area. The Nabataeans called this area "Petra". In short, in the time of the Greek world the region around the mountain Selah was named "Petra". So strictly speaking, Selah is located on top of the mountain at the foot of which the area of Petra extends.

In Isaiah 63 : 1 we find the name "Bozrah". "Bozrah" is translated as "fortress" or "fold". The name "Petra" meets both translations, because Petra is nothing but a gigantic fortress, an enormous natural sheepfold surrounded by mountains. Furthermore, this sheepfold only has one entrance: a long and comparatively very narrow gorge. In the past, there was once a real door at the entrance to the gorge,

the "Siq". Through this door, the sheep were able to enter the sheepfold, passing under the rod. We read about this rod before in Ezekiel 20 : 37. And might it be that the Siq qualifies as "the narrow gate"?

The Lord will gather Israel. He will make them pass under the rod. So one by one they will go through the narrow gate into the sheepfold. The gate, the Siq, is 3 meters wide, 50 meters high and has a total length of 1,700 meters.

The flock in the sheepfold

"I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together like sheep of the fold [Bozrah], like a flock in the midst of their pasture; they shall make a loud noise because of so many people." (Micah 2 : 12)

Here in the NKJV it says that the Lord "will put them together like sheep of the fold". Other translations give us "as the sheep of Bozrah". So we find:

- "I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah." (KJV)
- "I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah." (ASV)
- "I will bring them together like sheep in a pen." (NIV)
- "I shall bring them together like sheep in the fold." (AMP)

If one conceives "Bozrah" as a proper name, it will have to be translated as: "I will put them (the remnant) together like sheep in Bozrah"!

"The one who breaks open will come up before them; they will break out, pass through the gate, and go out by it; their king will pass before them, with the Lord at their head." (Micah 2 : 13)

Verse 12 refers to the gathering of Israel in the fold. That will happen in the first half of the seventieth week of Daniel, but also after the seventy weeks during the downfall of Jerusalem. Verse 13 is about how they will subsequently leave the sheepfold. After all, the Lord would come from Edom, from Bozrah! Together with His believing remnant He will come up from Petra.

Thereafter the Lord will break through with His people, in the sense of "breaking out". They will pass through the gate. The place God has prepared for her in the wilderness thus indeed has a gate. This fits the situation of Petra perfectly. They will go out through the gate. And their king shall go before them; and the Lord at their head. The King is mentioned here, because at this point it is about the revelation of the Kingdom.

However, as the remnant is indicated as a flock, we also find the Lord as a Shepherd who goes before His flock and who is followed by His sheep that know His voice! (John 10) Those of you who know the situation of Petra, can easily compare Ezekiel 37 with Micah 2:

"Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." (Ezekiel 37 : 12)

In the region of Petra there are thousands of graves (caverns, caves). Is it possible this verse could relate to Petra? In addition, this statement from Ezekiel is related to the dry dead bones that shall live again, while these same bones are mentioned in the following verses of Micah as well.

From Petra to Jerusalem

When leaving Petra through the gate of the Siq, Bab as-Siq, you go eastward. If subsequently you go further north, in the direction of Jerusalem, you will cross the region of Moab. You will also have to cross the river Arnon; a valley that is several hundred meters deep with many hairpin bends.

That is where the region of Moab begins. When you get as far north so that you are at the same height as Jerusalem (that is beyond the Dead Sea), the region of Moab ends and the region of Ammon (Amman) begins. Thus, if you travel from Petra to Jerusalem you will have to cross the region of Moab.

The subject of Isaiah 15 and 16 is the final judgment of Moab. In those chapters various places are mentioned that are located in that area, including "Ar of Moab", "Kir of Moab" (Kerak), Nebo and Medeba.

In the middle of this passage the prophet says:

"Send the lamb(s) to the ruler of the land, from Sela to the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Zion." (Isaiah 16 : 1)

The lambs are the flock of the Shepherd. They are the believing remnant under the leadership of Christ Himself. "Sela(h)" is not located in the region of Moab, but further south, in Edom. "The mount of the daughter of Zion" is Zion, of course. Thus the lambs come from the capital of Edom (Selah) and go to the capital of Jacob: Jerusalem.

Although I suspect that the escape route from Jerusalem to Petra runs through En-Gedi on the west side of the Dead Sea, these verses clearly indicate that the way back from Petra to Jerusalem will run through the region of Moab, thus along the eastern route. Moreover, the prophet confirms this interpretation:

"Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler. For the extortioner is at an end, devastation ceases, the oppressors are consumed out of the land." (Isaiah 16 : 4)

The route from Selah to Zion leads through Moab, which is called "the King's Highway". (Numbers 20 : 17) Nowadays, signposts still refer to it as the "King's Way". "The extortioner is at an end" is associated with the great tribulation that will be terminated for Israel and will last no longer than until the end of the seventieth week. (See Matthew 24 : 22)

"In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness." (Isaiah 16 : 5)

In connection with this verse we find references to Isaiah 9 : 6; Daniel 7 : 14, 27; Micah 4 : 7 and Luke 1 : 33. In those verses the same expressions are used with regard to the throne of David's Son in Zion.

Some further arguments

There are other scriptures dealing with this subject. However, these are less noticeable. The names "Selah", "Paran" and "Edom" play a considerable role in this, especially when we realise that the names appear in stories with a prophetic significance. Take for example the story of David who had to flee from Saul. He went from Bethlehem, which is located on the west side of the Jordan, to En-Gedi. (1 Samuel 24 : 1) En-Gedi is located on the west bank halfway along the Dead Sea. After Samuel's death, David went down to Paran. (1 Samuel 25 : 1) When interpreting this story prophetically, we begin to suspect that the escape route from Jerusalem to Paran runs indeed along the west side of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. In En-Gedi are also all kinds of rocks and caves. I have been assured in writing that from En-Gedi one can see the Mount Hor, which lies on the west side of Petra. Thus from En-Gedi it is easy to follow the route to Petra.

Zechariah 9 deals with the punishment of various nations. In verses 2 and 3 Lebanon (Tyre and Sidon) is mentioned. Furthermore, in verses 5 and 6 Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and Ashdod are mentioned. All of these places are located in the Gaza Strip, in the land of the Philistines. Thus it will end very badly for the Palestinians. The remainder of the chapter is about the coming of the Messiah on the Mount of Olives. Although the statement in Zechariah 9 : 9 is applied to the events at the end of the sixty-ninth week of Daniel, without a doubt it could also be applied to the end of the seventieth week. After all, only then will this judgment of the various nations take place! The prophet continues:

"Then the Lord will be seen over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning. The Lord God will blow the trumpet, and go with whirlwinds from the south (Teman)." (Zechariah 9 : 14)

In this verse, "Teman" is translated as "the south". If we leave it untranslated, also here we find the confirmation of what is said in Habakkuk 3: The Lord will come from Teman. And this way, we end up again in Petra, Selah, Bozrah and Paran. Thus there need be no doubt about the fact that there will be only one possible hiding place here on earth for the believing remnant from the great tribulation. It is sure that this place of refuge will not be found in Jerusalem nor in Canaan, but

in Edom. In Selah. In the place prepared by God. Could it be that the statement: "On this rock (Petra) I will build My church" (Matthew 16 : 18) may yet get another, prophetic, significance?