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Free Press of the House of Israel: The First Publication of Benjamin Purnell

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Free Press of the House of Israel: The First Publication of Benjamin Purnell

Editors' note: The first publication by Benjamin Purnell, who, along with Mary Purnell, founded the House of David in Fostoria, Ohio, in 1902, and relocated the community to Benton Harbor, Michigan, in 1903, was a four-page pamphlet published in 1894, titled *Free Press of the House of Israel, New House or Body of Israel*. We had not been able to locate a copy until we discovered that the House of David had reprinted it in *Shiloh's Messenger of Wisdom*, in March 1911 (v. 8, no. 11). Below we print three items related to this publication. First is the accompanying article in *Shiloh's Messenger of Wisdom* explaining the events leading up to the publication of *Free Press of the House of Israel*, second is a facsimile reproduction of the four-page publication itself, and third is a commentary on the pamphlet by R. James Taylor, trustee of Mary's City of David.



Free Press of the House of Israel

On these pages we give a reproduction both in size and appearance of THE FREE PRESS OF THE NEW HOUSE OR BODY OF ISRAEL. This was the first paper printed in Israel since the Pioneer of Wisdom, published in England under the head of Jezreel's ministry, the sixth angel message addressed to the twelve tribes scattered abroad.

In 1894 Benjamin began the ministry of Jesus Christ, unfurling the mysteries of body, soul and spirit. The first year of his ministry he wrote and put in print a small paper while traveling in the field of his labors of love, having sacrificed all and everything pertaining to the old world and walked from place to place, preaching both night and day, and could say, The foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but he had nowhere to lay his head to rest. Mary also did the same, and by denying self daily, and taking up the cross they saved the few dimes until they could pay for a little four-paged paper, treating upon Israel's most holy faith, and gave them away as they traveled to help spread the word of the kingdom. They finally got plates for a booklet and remained in the battle field from 1894

up to 1902, and in the meantime was writing the STAR OF BETHLEHEM, THE LIVING ROLL OF LIFE, a book of 780 pages.

In 1902 and 1903 the ingathering began, according to the scriptures; and the writings of the foregoing messengers all point to the work which is now going on with unmistakable assurity, as we often explain in SHILOH'S MESSENGER OF WISDOM, published by the Israelite House of David, since the beginning of the ingathering of the children of Israel, who are to be gathered unto Shiloh, or Son of man, (Gen. 49-10, Matt. 24-30, 31) and the mystery finished when the seventh angel would begin to sound (Rev. 10-7) forth the mysteries in clear tones, unsealing the mysteries which have been sealed till the time of the end, to be unsealed to the seed which was to come to whom the promise was made—viz., the elect, 144,000 of the sealed who have the law written in their inward parts and stamped upon their minds that they may have the mind of Christ.

A copy of the paper was found by some friends in Canada and sent to the House of David. Therefore we reprint it in SHILOH'S MESSENGER OF WISDOM, that you may note the strength of the spirit of power.



FREE PRESS OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, NEW HOUSE OR BODY OF ISRAEL

29TH DAY OF THE SEVENTH MONTH, 1894.

MINER ELECTRIC PRINT, BRAZIL, INDIANA.

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed; rightly dividing the word of truth.— II Tim. 2-15.

The Scriptures are given to Jew, Gentile and the church of God.— Isa. 44-5.

This church of God will not slumber nor sleep (die). The gates of hell (death, grave) shall not prevail against it. Matt. 16:18.

Blindness in part happened to Israel (the church of God) until the fulness of the Gentiles had come in. The Gentiles are at their fulness, and have been since 1875, the opening of the Third Watch. The days of Daniel are here, and it is written, Blessed is he who waiteth and cometh to those days.

As the schoolboy in arithmetic uses three numbers to find the fourth, which he calls the "rule of three," so in the Scriptures, as well as in nature, we see the figure "3" ever held before us, turn where we will, from Genesis to Revelation. If we gaze into the firmament we do always behold the glories of the sun, moon and stars; if we walk in the green fields we tread beneath our feet the shamrock; so we, in the new house of Israel, have the figure "3" as our emblem in the holy trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. If we look at

man, the noble handiwork of Deity, we behold him turned out of the hands of the potter into three component parts—body, soul and spirit, and we find that Paul prayed for the whole man to be preserved blameless; said he: "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus." Notice, also, that Paul said: "There is one glory of the sun, one of the moon and one of the stars, but one star differs from another star in glory." Jesus says: "There are many mansions in my Father's house." Now, bear in mind, immortality is one thing, and corruptibility is another thing. Immortality is to be gained this side of the grave by keeping the laws of God, law and gospel joined in two pence; for it is written of them, this small remnant, in Revelations 7th and 14th chapters, "they sing the songs of Moses and the Lamb"—law and gospel. This is the small remnant that will glorify God by keeping the body, while, on the other hand, as touching the resurrection glory, which is the glory of the moon, this is a number that John saw—that no man could number—that had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. If you lose your body you dishonor God, for Paul says: "It is sown in dishonor." The wages of sin is death, and it is written that sin is a transgression of the law, and this is why Paul said that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Why? Because they lost the body he delighted to dwell in. Now, this may seem strange, but remember that

it is written in the book of wisdom that through envy of the devil death came into the world through the disobedience of Adam. If Adam had been obedient to God, he and his offspring would not have died. But seeing that he brought death, will it always remain? No; it is written, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." So we see that death is an enemy to man. Now, it is commonly taught that this all refers to the soul, but it cannot be so, for remember that in Proverbs 12:28 it is said "In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death." Could this refer to those who die? No; because that would be one death; but it will be fulfilled in the meek, who shall inherit the earth. How can they inherit the earth who have lost the earth (the body), the earth that hears the word of the Lord, the animate earth. It is written, "he that overcometh shall inherit all things." But if a man lose his body does he inherit all things? No, because he has lost his body, and this body he will never have again. Job says: "As the clouds are consumed and vanish away, so he that goeth to the grave cometh up no more, Job 7:9; and Samuel: "It is as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again," 2d Samuel 14:4; and Paul, touching the same thing: "Thou sowest not the body that shall be, but it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body," that is, two parts, the union of the spirit and the soul, but the other part (the body) is lost. So, you see, by going to the grave you suffer

loss and cannot be made perfect, because you have lost one part. You can get the glory of the moon, a celestial body, but it is not material. You can not shake hands with your friends, because spiritual bodies cannot be handled nor felt. The spiritual body is like that in which Jesus appeared to Mary, a type of the celestial body in the resurrection; but when he appeared to the disciples and told them to feel and see, that a spirit hath not flesh and bone as you see me have (Luke 24:39), he was there showing the type of the terrestrial or material body; bodies redeemed without death, as Enoch, Elijah and Jesus, the three living witnesses, one in each dispensation. We know it is written that it is appointed unto men to die and after that the judgment. Those who do not judge themselves shall die and be judged, both small and great. But we find it written that he that judgeth himself shall not be judged. Then for them, this little flock, the elect, the meek, there is a reprieve from death: "Preserve thou those that were appointed to die." (See 79th Psalm.) And again, "For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary, and the Lord beheld the earth, (the body), to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that were appointed to die. Psalms 102:18,20. This earth is the body of man, as it is written, "Hear the words of the Lord, O earth" (the body). See Jeremiah 22:29. In Scriptures men and women are called earth, plants, vines, trees, as it is written of Adam: "I planted thee a noble vine; how art thou turned into a degenerate plant, of a strange vine unto me." We find it was by eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Remember, men and women are called trees, it is written, "All of the trees clapped their hands for joy." Now, you know that the trees of the forest have not hands to clap for joy. And again, "trees of righteousness," the planting of the Lord. Now, this tree was a tree of knowledge. Did you ever see an apple-tree have knowledge? Some say it was an apple that Adam ate. Then they read in Holy Writ that it is not that that goeth into the mouth that defileth the man, but that that cometh out. The secret of this eating you will find in the 15th chapter of Leviticus. What brought woe and death into the world? The water as a flood that was cast from the dragon to carry

away the seed of the woman, or the people; but the law came and the earth helped the woman (that is the purity) to bring forth the good seed that was to put on immortality, as it is written: "The law was added because of transgression (Adam's transgression) till the seed should come to whom the promises were made. What promises? The promises of the life of the body, as Paul said: "Our forefathers died in faith, not having received the promise. They saw it afar off and were persuaded of it, but fell short of it." Now, that was not the promise of the common salvation of the soul, because the Psalmist David said. "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling into the pit" (grave); "And as to the promises of Christ, they drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them in the wilderness, and that Rock was Christ, so that promise was the life of the body, promised before the world began"—Titus 1. This was promised for their loyalty to God with the union in the time of the rebellion in heaven, when they cast out Satan by the power of God. It was then that the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy. Here were the two classes mentioned—the morning stars and the sons of God. Now, Paul makes mention of these sons of God, who will put on immortality. He says: "The creature waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." Notice, he never called an angel a son. "To which of the angels said he at any time thou art my son" Hebrews 1:5. So, you see they that die come in the resurrection angels not sons. But this remnant of sons will never go to the grave, for Paul says: "We shall not all sleep (die), but shall be changed in a moment." And this change is by keeping the law and the gospel and by overcoming the world, the devil and the flesh, and then they will receive the fulfillment of Joel: "I will cleanse your blood." Then there are several promises that it will be washed away. Then he will put his spirit in you, and this is the change here spoken of, as it is written: "I am with you and shall be in you." These are some of the mysteries that have been kept under seal till the time of the end. Daniel was told to go his way until the time of the end and he should stand in his lot at the end of days. Paul said: "Great was the mys-

tery of Godliness—God manifest in the flesh." Mark, there was no mystery about the common salvation of the soul, for it is written that the way is so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err therein. We must rightly divide the word of truth, as we are commanded in Timothy. Why? Because there are more glories than one, and it cannot all be applied to the soul; if so, the Scripture will not harmonize. The Scripture is given to Jew, Gentile and the church of God, as it is written: "One shall say we are the Lord's (Gentile); another will say I am of Jacob (the Jew claims the promises given to Jacob), and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord and surname himself with the name of Israel." Then we find it written: "Two parts shall be cut off and die (Jew and Gentile), but the third part (Israel) shall be left therein, for it is written: "In that day Israel shall be third." Again, it speaks of the three: Give none offence to Jew nor Gentile nor to the church of God. So you see that neither Jew nor Gentile is the church of God. This is the church that the gates of hell (the grave) shall not prevail against. This church will be made immortal, as it is written in the book of wisdom, man was created to be immortal. But it was for an appointed time, near the end of the six thousand years, for remember, We shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, from Genesis to Revelations, and more, for the comforter was to come to lead and guide you into all truth and show you things to come. Remember, all are written for our learning and admonition, upon whom the ends of the world have come. Now, we wish to draw your attention to a few of the keys of the Scripture which many good theologians have overlooked. God calleth those things that be not as though they were, speaking of things as if done; like with Jesus, who was said to have been slain before the foundation of the world, but he was not slain until two thousand years ago. "And no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation" (2d Peter, 1:20.) "And be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." 2 Peter 3:8. Now remember, there was a command given Adam and through his disobedience to it he ate of

the tree and it resulted in death—death taking effect within one day, or one thousand years, the Lord's time. Remember, the curse was upon the body and not upon the soul, until twenty-five hundred years afterward, until the law came; and observe, he did not die within a common day of twenty-four hours, for he lived 930 years, but he did die within the Lord's day, and both the good and evil fruit was shown in Cain and Abel. Then the type was shown of the whole creation, and it was shown in the second dispensation in Jacob and Esau, and in the third dispensation in Jesus and Judas. The woman is the dividing medium of creation. You see the bad fruit in Cain and the good fruit in Jesus, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (See Leviticus 15th chapter). Notice, He made the world in six days and all things therein, but we see it not finished, new creatures born and formed every day; but it was six thousand years, and this divided into three equal parts each is two thousand years and the seventh thousand years the Sabbath of rest—time, times and a half time, first dispensation is time, second and third is times, and the Sabbath is the half time. Notice, Jesus, the third witness, abolished death and brought immortality to light through the gospel. Remember the key—he calleth those things that be not as though they were. Death is not abolished yet, but we are living in the time. Paul says that the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Notice, that at the end of every dispensation there has been a great overturn of Nations. It is written, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn"—first, at the time of the flood; second the overturn of the Jews; third, which is now at our doors, the overturn of the Gentiles, the time of trouble spoken of by Daniel, such a time as never was, no, nor never shall be. Jesus referred to this time in Matthew 24:21: "At this time lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh (the redemption of the body), for he hath said that he would cut the time short for the sake of the elect, or there would be no flesh saved." So you see the body of flesh is meant, and you know that Paul said in Romans 8:22: 23: "Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Now, this time spoken of was shown in the time that he rose from the dead. The three days was a type of the three dis-

pensations in God's dealings with man. Remember, he arose before the third day was up. We see things in harmony with his words, cutting the time short. Remember, one dispensation of two thousand years is a time or generation. And he said: "this generation shall not pass away until all be fulfilled." Jesus said: "Are there not twelve hours in a day?" Then if we will divide one thousand years by 12 we have 83 years and 4 months in an hour, and if you divide 83 years and 4 months by 4 to get the four watches of an hour, you have 20 years and 10 months in a watch. Then we see by this that we are living in the third watch of the eleventh hour of the sixth day, or six thousand years, the Lord's time. Then you see one hour which time is shortened for the elect's sake; and we see the laborers in the vineyard all paid off in the eleventh hour. So we see the twelfth hour was not mentioned. And did not Jesus say: "If I come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, blessed are those servants who are so found doing"—not saying, but doing. This is the time he is to cut short to save flesh. Some say that we are not to know the day. We have not set a common day, but if we had, then it was sealed to the time of the end. For it is written: "To you, brethren, it need not be that that day should overtake you as a thief," but it would to the world to snare them, the whole world. Remember it is written: He doeth nothing, but he will reveal to his servants, the prophets." This refers to his elect who will serve him, and they also have the spirit of prophecy (See Revelations 7th and 14th chapters). "It is written without a vision, the people perish, the vision was for an appointed time and at the end it will speak." (Hab. 2:3). The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor the law giver from beneath his feet until Shiloh come, and unto Shiloh shall the gathering of the people be. This is the other comforter that should come and lead and guide you into all truth and show you things to come. Then if this be the case, it would show you the time the sealing is going on" (Rev. 7:1,2,3). And the door of immortality is open for the third and last time. Press into it, for soon the withering blast will pass over, and he will descend to receive his bride and his prayer will be fulfilled—Take them not out of the world (See John 17). These are

the meek that shall inherit the earth and "turn to the days of their youth, and their flesh will become fresher than that of a child." (Job 33:25). It will be then that righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and the whole earth shall bloom in bliss for a thousand years, the Sabbath of rest. The earth will not pass away (the inanimate), for it is written that one generation passeth away and another cometh, but the earth abideth for ever. Remember, the body of man is called earth, and this is the wicked earth that is to pass away with a great noise, with the roaring of artillery and the clashing of arms till they are all swept away and a new earth succeed wherein dwelleth righteousness (the body of man redeemed). Then his prayer will be fulfilled: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it was done in heaven." The voice is now calling: "Come out from her my people, and be not partakers of her sins, that ye receive not of her plagues. Come out from this mixture and confusion of tongues, this Babylon. Come out from among Jews and Gentiles, and be ye separate. Come out from under the curse of Adam, your forefather. The voice calls out unto those that are afflicted, who groan for death, to be eased of their weary toils and burdens, and that their deliverance is now at hand. The voice calls louder and louder, re-echoing over mountain and plain, "O Israel, awake, awake, awake!" The voice of the thunders is heard; the seals are unloosed; the mysteries made known. O, shout unto Israel, "awake!" The voice of God still calls to day, but who hears? They try to stop their ears, where God hath said: "Hearing they shall hear and not understand." But the voice of God will shortly be heard in the great battle of all nations amidst the roaring of artillery and clashing of arms, for his judgments are ready to descend and the vials of His wrath are full to overflowing. Nations today are slumbering, trusting in the treacherous peace around them; but it is a peace under a pall which now overhangs this planet. It is the motionless lull before the storm, the darkest hour of night immediately preceding the break of day, the deadly silence of inactivity noiselessly creeping, fuse in hand, to fire the train prior to the general explosion

among the nations of the earth. Woe, woe, woe, to those that mock his word! Now flee to the mountains of law and Gospel.

EXTRACTS FROM THE FLYING ROLL GOD LAST MESSAGE TO MAN
Jer. 36-28; Matt 13-35

This Flying Roll was pointed to by the prophets in a great many places to be brought forth, and in fulfillment of this it has come, spoken by James J. Jezreel, J. J. J. James, John, Jezreel. John was to prophesy, after eating the little book, before many nations, kings, prophets and tongues. Rev. 10:9,10,11. This little book is the roll that was to come to unseal those things that were under seal (See Daniel 12:9) and the things that Paul heard when he was caught up into the third heavens that was not lawful to be uttered in the outer court (Rev. 11:2) or to the Gentiles. 2 Cor 12:2. These are the words now heard in this third day or dispensation, the words, the seven thunders uttered. Rev. 10:4 and Rev. 20:12. Notice the three books mentioned. The dead, both small and great, were judged out of those things written in the books. One of these books was the law that was open to the Jews, for they had no other, and they will be judged by that. The Gospel was open to the Gentiles. Here we have the two books. Notice, in this same verse there was another book opened, called the Book of life (the Roll). The third book he returns in the words, Father, Son and Holy Ghost (mother), law, gospel, roll; law, father's book, gospel, son's book, roll, mother's book. Mother Jerusalem above, who is free, who is mother of us all, Gal. 4:26. Now, here are some of the references to this roll: Ezek. 2; 8,9; and when I looked, behold, a hand was sent unto me and lo, a roll of a book was therein (Ezekiel 3:1; Zech. 5:1:2)—Jezreel used as the trumpet to blow through as he spake through the prophets. See Hosea 1:11 and 2:22.

There is a difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said: "No one has ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. He was in heaven and yet he was standing on the earth. He was in heaven, for it descended upon him at the river Jordan, but the Kingdom of Heaven was not in him until his blood was shed on the

cross. After that heaven, which is the spirit, raised him up and dwelt within him, then it was the Kingdom of God. Notice the difference in the bride, the elect, those that will receive the redemption of the body and those that go through the grave and lose the body. Those that lose the body only get the Kingdom of Heaven, the glory of the moon, a spiritual body, not material, while the elect will retain the body, but the blood will be taken away and the fullness of the spirit put within, which is the kingdom of God the glory of the sun, possessors of both heaven and earth. Jesus said: "John the Baptist was the greatest of all that was born among women, but the least in the Kingdom of God. So you see one of the least of those in the kingdom of God is greater than John. Why? Because he saw death and fell short of the Kingdom of God, notwithstanding he is great in the kingdom of heaven, and it is written, "He that breaks the least command and teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven," showing that it is possible to get in the kingdom of heaven, but on the other hand it is written. "He that breaks the least command is guilty of the whole and will lose his body and fall short of the Kingdom of God." He that gets the redemption of his body gets his soul also, because his soul is within the body.

It is the voice of the bridegroom—
Behold he is come,
Leaping upon the mountains
And skipping on the hills,
The flowers appear on the earth,
The time of the singing of the birds
is come, and the voice of the turtle is
heard in the garden of the bride.

To the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.—Isa. 8-20.

Only a little while's contention,
Only a few more days suspension—
And all the earth shall mourn;
Only a little while's delusion,
Only a few more days' confusion—
And then the overturn.

The clouds are gathering fast, the storm is near;
And soon its withering blast will be felt here;
Hark! hear the rustling breeze the saplings shake,
Soon will the forest trees in pieces break.

Hark! hear the trumpets sound, "To arms!" the call,
See, see the Nations 'round preparing all;
Each eager for the fray and worldly gain,
And "who shall win the day" each one's refrain.

The awful, fearful fight will soon be fought
The fire of fiendish might is burning hot;
Soon will the streams with blood as water run,
Soon, soon the awful crowd will be cut down.

The plague though now asleep in wrath shall wake,
Soon 'twill the cities sweep and thousands take;

The rich, the poor, the great alike shall know
As crowds in every state to it shall bow.

A famine soon shall be in every land,
Distress we soon shall see on every hand;
For bread shall thousands cry and offer gold
In want shall thousands die let it be told.

This earth will soon be rent both far and near,
Perhaps it may find vent in vengeance here,
The lofty shall fall down, the low shall rise
Already it doth frown before our eyes.

And proud religion's cloak will now be torn,
The oppression of its yoke be no more worn;
All sets under the sun disguised so sweet,
Form "Babylon" to one and it complete.

Each sect claims to be right, yet none agree.
Confusion is the sight around we see,
How then are we to know the narrow way?
Join Law and Gospel now if you'd not stray.

Ye scientific men, excluding none,
Retrace your steps again, you've wrong begun;
True wisdom is of God and knowledge flies,
When Truth is brought abroad supposed thoughts die.

God's word is ever true, in it we see
All things will be made new immediately;
The hour of judgment's come to every clime,
Already there are some know well the time.

Now Israel is born—Jehovah's sword;
All dogmas will be torn through Christ our Lord;
One hundred forty-four thousand in all,
Beholds the dreadful hour yet will not fall.

Ye Brethren, God's elect, the first, the last,
Scattered in every sect through errors blast
Come out of BABYLON'S hell, the time is brief,
THAT DAY to Israel is not a thief.

THE FLYING ROLL

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For full information address
HOUSE OF ISRAEL,

Commentary

By *R. James Taylor*

FREE PRESS OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, NEW HOUSE OR BODY OF ISRAEL

29TH DAY OF THE SEVENTH MONTH, 1894.

MINER ELECTRIC PRINT, BRAZIL, INDIANA

This is the heading of a four page leaflet, written by Benjamin Purnell about three and one-half months before the 2:00 a.m. graft lighting at Detroit, Michigan, on March 12, 1895.¹ From the graft lighting, during a late night into early morning meeting at the Mills communal home in Detroit, the written message, or “covenant message,” began on that date with the article entitled: “The Prince of Peace At The Descent Of The Branch,” recorded in *The Star of Bethlehem, The Living Roll of Life*.²

In the texts of *The Star of Bethlehem*, Benjamin Purnell told of their special preparation of three years leading to the grafting. They, Mary and Benjamin Purnell, arrived in the Detroit commune in 1891, a branch community of the New and Latter House of Israel, an organization founded at Gillingham, England, by James Jezreel, the sixth “messenger” of the Christian-Israelite latter-day prophets. The Purnells had enjoined themselves to the American community under the direction of Canadian born Michael Mills, who commissioned them as preachers to travel, distributing literature throughout Indiana, Ohio and most probably into Illinois, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and West Virginia. Their three years of preparation would have dated from 1892 and this four-page leaflet would

be a publication in advertisement of the latter-day “visitation” beginning in England during the 1790s, but tracing back to the 1652³ founding of the Philadelphian Society of Jane Leade.

The writing of the *Star of Bethlehem* was a work spanning seven years of their travels upon leaving the Detroit commune soon after the grafting—an event that was both witnessed and recorded in *The Star of Bethlehem*.⁴

Readers of *The Extracts From The Flying Roll*, the central work by James Jezreel, would recognize the graft as Jezreel had prophesied that it would occur soon: “the graft would alight before the third watch closed,”⁵ which would be the middle of 1895. Many acquaintances of the Purnells, during their times as preachers of the *Extracts*, would certainly be interested in Purnells’ manuscript published first at Ashland, Ohio, in 1902. *The Star of Bethlehem* would come to be the Purnells’ lasting credential for their visitation experience(s), drawing a following among the various churches of the Christian-Israelite movement that was initially rooted in England, and became international by the mid-nineteenth and into the twentieth century.

The Star of Bethlehem, in comparison with the earlier writings of such recognized standards as Joanna Southcott, Richard Brothers, and John Wroe, along with James Jezreel, would clearly reveal a decided difference of interpretation and a new level of understanding and explanation of such central mysteries as the tree of life, the bride of Christ and the preparation for both the coming of Christ and the millennium.

The leaflet of 1894 is a valuable document that takes us back to Benjamin Purnell as a Jezreelite preacher just several months before the crowning graft event.

As Benjamin Purnell writes, the fruit of the graft was *The Star of Bethlehem*; a new text which gave credence to his position as the seventh (and last) messenger, the culmination of a two-and-one-half-century series of “visitations.”

The writing of the *Free Press* leaflet provides a rudimentary explanation of fundamental Christian-Israelite doctrine. The 1894 tract moves quickly and cites numerous biblical texts that support the Christian-Israelite teachings. The text, however, tries to cover too much ground making numerous points that are not well organized. Benjamin later revisited and amended his writing publishing a series of booklets between 1903 and 1916, including the *Little Book, Key of The House of David* and the *True Light*

booklets. In these booklets Purnell shows greater fluency and focus in his writing, whereas in the 1894 tract he has a tendency to move quickly from one topic to the next, leaving the reader to get a focus at intervals within the reading. The well-organized delivery of points of interpretation in the later booklets clearly shows an increased maturity and authority.

“The Prince of Peace at the Descent of the Branch,” written in the hours of March 12th, following the graft lighting, is altogether separate from the *Free Press* leaflet of three and one-half months earlier. There is a clear sense of command over the topic and it is written boldly through the voice of that which has engrafted the writer:

I withdrew from the first Adam to prove my creation, which was for your sake—to prove I am he that keepeth thee. I withdrew to see what he would do. He being without wisdom, immediately transgressed my commandment and departed from me; who was turned over to my officer whom I have sent to prove my creation. Without darkness, light could not be made manifest.

I am the light of the world—which shone in darkness, and the darkness comprehended me not. I was in the world, and the world knew me not; and I have been working hitherto, manifesting myself at different times along the line of time. I was sent in my Father’s name, and I have kept as many as he has given me. And I have delivered the gospel unto the poor—binding up the broken hearted, preaching deliverance to the captives, and restoring of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are in captivity. I walked with the faithful—the seventh from Adam; who kept my covenant which was made alive in him—my faithful witness of the end, when I began the second time the redemption of my people Israel, for whom I made myself known in all ages of the world, and set types and similitudes for their sake, upon whom the ends of the world have come.⁶

This was a beginning text from the graft date of *The Star of Bethlehem*, which is 780 pages in length, required a period of seven years to write, and remains the standard text of the Israelite House of David for now 109 years.

The 1894 *Free Press*, was commendable for its range of topics and careful scriptural support to provoke the curious and restless mind in search of truths beyond the common salvation story retold weekly throughout

Christendom. By March 12, 1895, Purnell had achieved a new level of skill and authority. Fluently written in a style by one who has become a medium through whom the texts flow; all the while belying the fact of his sparse, primer education in the hill country of Kentucky in the post Civil War era.

Notes

1. Because the first month of the Christian-Israelite calendar is May, as observed by The Society of Christian-Israelites from the 1820s, the date cited on the pamphlet as the “29th day of the seventh month, 1894,” converts to Nov. 29, 1894.
2. Benjamin Purnell, *The Star of Bethlehem, The Living Roll of Life*, 3rd ed., Benton Harbor, Mich.: Mary and Benjamin, [1910], 677.
3. *Early Dawn of the Great Prophetic Visitation to England: Being Extract from the works of Jane Lead, Prophetess, 1623-1704* ([Bedford: Panacea Society], 1922), xii.
4. Purnell, *The Star of Bethlehem*, 351, 711.
5. James J. Jezreel, *The Extracts From The Flying Roll* (London : Printed by Frederick Shaw & Co., [1879-1881]).
6. Purnell, *The Star of Bethlehem*, 677.