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Recycling History
Times are changing. Or are they? Take a look at today’s religiously unaffiliated and their not-so-new view of the world.

Elwood McQuaid

The Greatest Prophet
True prophets spoke to their people on God’s behalf. Here is why Jesus was the last biblical prophet—and the one Moses told the Israelites to expect.

Richard D. Emmons

What Went Wrong
Israel’s priests were supposed to help keep their nation close to Almighty God. Instead, they led them astray, to something entirely different.

David M. Levy

Résumé of the King
God had always planned for His people to have a king. Here is how He intended to administer His kingship authority over Israel.

Peter Colón

The Divine Separation
Prophet, priest, and king. Learn how God’s design for two of those offices was meant to protect Israel.

Tom Simcox
I grew up in a Catholic town. Most of my friends attended either one of the many Roman Catholic churches in the area or the First Congregational Church downtown. Had you asked me what the differences were between them, I could not have told you.

We had a Catholic orphanage; Catholic elementary schools; a big Catholic high school; two Catholic colleges; and, at one point, a Catholic hospital—which my mother preferred over the other hospitals because she liked the nuns.

The Catholic church near my home was called Christ the King—a name I did not understand. I was as puzzled about it as I was about the lyrics to “The First Noel,” a Christmas carol I learned in public school.

Why, I asked myself, do we sing, “Born is the King of Israel”? What does Jesus have to do with Israel? Why do people call him a king? Were His parents Mr. and Mrs. Christ?

One day in Hebrew school (I was about 10), someone asked, “Who was Jesus?” We all wanted to know.

Our teacher replied, “He was a prophet.” How is that possible? I thought. A Gentile prophet? That made no sense. There were no Gentile prophets. All the prophets were Jewish.

Then some boy piped up, “He was Jewish, wasn’t He?” Another shock! Jewish? Are you kidding? Mr. and Mrs. Christ were Jewish? That was when I discovered Jesus’ mother, Mary (née Miriam), and His father, Joseph, were Jewish. So where did the word Christ come from?

It was many years later that I learned Christ is His title, not His name. His name is Jesus the son of Joseph; in Hebrew, Yeshua ben Yoseph. He is also Yeshua ben David, Jesus the son of David, because He is the direct heir to the Davidic throne. The word Christ means “Messiah.” And Messiah means “anointed.”

Jesus the Messiah: Prophet, Priest, and King. I was 31 years old before God enabled me to put it all together and gave me the faith to believe.

This issue of Israel My Glory explains the offices of prophet, priest, and king and why Jesus is the only one anointed to hold all three. May it take you less time to understand the intricacies of these glorious truths than it took me!

Waiting for His Appearing,
Lorna Simcox
Editor-in-Chief
During the 15 years I have ministered with The Friends of Israel, I have been impressed with the longevity of our staff. We have very little turnover, and many of our colleagues work well beyond the average retirement age because of their love for the ministry to which God has called them. Being a part of The Friends of Israel is something special, and it is difficult to walk away.

Some great men of God in the Bible no doubt felt the same way. Moses was 120 when he asked the Lord to set another man over the congregation of Israel (Num. 27:15–18). None of our staff, of course, has known the longevity of Moses. But eventually, time catches up with all of us.

Our first executive director, Dr. Victor Buksbazen, gave 30 years of his life to serving the Lord with The Friends of Israel until his age and health brought an end to his tenure. God used him to pioneer our outreach to the Jewish community and establish Israel My Glory as a reliable communicator of biblical truth.

I was saddened recently to accept the retirement of my beloved uncle, Dr. Renald Showers, for health reasons. After 27 years with The Friends of Israel and 80 years of life, Rennie’s “earthly house, this tent,” as the apostle Paul called our mortal bodies (2 Cor. 5:1), is failing. His regular feature, “The Foundations of Faith,” will continue to run in Israel My Glory until the end of the year.

Another change is also under way, driven by the realities of time and age. Yet I clearly see God’s hand at work. David Levy, now 79, who has served as director of International Ministries for 31 years and been with us for 42, informed me earlier this year that he feels it is time for someone else to take the reins. A much-loved author, speaker, and leader of our international outreach, David is highly regarded by all who know him, both within and without The Friends of Israel.

As he transitions away from International Ministries, I am pleased to say he has accepted the new post of director of Worldwide Ministry Development. This position will minimize David’s need to travel abroad while still utilizing his many talents and vast reservoir of experience to assist me in developing The Friends of Israel ministry. His responsibilities will include consulting, mentoring, training, writing, speaking, and special projects.

Shortly after David spoke with me, God began revealing to us the man He has been preparing to succeed David. I’m excited to share with you that Dr. Mike Stallard has accepted the call to become the director of International Ministries for The Friends of Israel. You may already be familiar with Mike through his articles in Israel My Glory.

He is a highly accomplished theologian, pastor, mentor, and author. Since 2008, he has served as dean of Baptist Bible Seminary in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania. He is an extremely capable administrator and was instrumental in initiating and leading the seminary’s PhD program, which balances academic rigor with global-ministry leadership.

Throughout his 22 years at the seminary, Mike led Mission Scranton, an urban, inner-city outreach that he founded to reach the Scranton, Pennsylvania, community with the gospel. Mike modeled leadership and mentored students as pastor of New Life Baptist Church in Scranton. And more, he has a love for Israel and the Jewish people.

I am encouraged to see how the Lord so wonderfully provides for The Friends of Israel. He graciously directed Mike to us at precisely the right time and is allowing David to continue with us. To God be the glory.
The United Nations is obsessed with Israel. So obsessed that, if it were a person, it would need therapy. If it were a sports organization like FIFA (the soccer world’s governing body prosecuted for corruption last year), its representatives would be fired and thrown in jail.

The UN’s 47-member Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has condemned Israel more times than all other nations in the world combined. Last year alone it adopted six nonbinding resolutions against Israel, while passing none against China, Cuba, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, or ISIS. In fact, each session includes a mandated discussion of Israel’s human rights violations. It has no such mandated discussion about any other country in the world.

The Commission on the Status of Women condemns Israel as the world’s worst violator of the rights of women, even though the freest Muslim women in the Middle East are Israeli Muslims. The UN condemned Israel 104 to 4 as the only country that violates health rights, even though it is the only nation that treats injured terrorists alongside their victims. And it cites Israel as one of the worst abusers of child rights in the world, alongside the Islamic State (ISIS) and Boko Haram.

The UNHRC confirmed Canadian academic Michael Lynk as “Special Rapporteur” on human rights in the Palestinian territories. Lynk has a long record of bias against Israel and will only examine alleged Israeli violations without also looking at those of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, or Fatah. He served on the board of an Arab lobbying group that promotes Israel Apartheid Week and gave a keynote speech on Arab resistance. Yet the UN calls him “impartial and objective.”

Psychology Today calls obsession “an iron mask that permits us to gaze in only one direction at one thing.” That describes the UN. While ISIS kidnap and beheads innocent people, many of whom are Christians, and North Korea and Iran threaten the world with nuclear destruction, the UN spends its time trying to find fault with Israel.

In August 2013, then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon admitted the UN is obsessed when he addressed students in the Rishon LeZion College of Management’s Model UN program at UN offices in Jerusalem. “Unfortunately,” he said, “because of the [Arab-Israeli] conflict, Israel has been weighed down by criticism and suffered from bias — sometimes even discrimination.” He said Israel should be treated like the UN’s other 192 members.

So what should the UN do to heal itself? Some psychologists use the following steps to help overcome obsession:

1. Get back on track. It needs to understand that it’s off track in blaming Israel for everything and acknowledge the fact that Israel cannot possibly be wrong all the time.

2. Stop. The next time an Israel-related confrontation arises, it should stop itself from saying, “The conflict is all Israel’s fault; all the other countries are victims of Zionism.”

3. Keep moving. Psychologists advise taking a bathroom break or a walk to ward off returning to the obsession. So when a country with a terrible human-rights record submits a resolution against Israel, perhaps the UN should take a break and (here’s a novel idea) examine that country’s human-rights violations instead.

4. Get angry. New research claims anger can sometimes help. Perhaps UN leaders should get angry at the lies and slander targeting only Israel and shout them down.

5. Identify the distortions. Use facts.

6. Apply some humor. This tool may help the rest of us as well, as we confront the fact that the UN will never do anything to change.

The 50 worst violators of the human rights of Christians through severe persecution are all UN members except for the Palestinian Territories, which ranks 24th on the list. And 35 are Muslim-majority nations. Israel is not on the list.

Perhaps the UN should concentrate on these nations and leave the Jewish state alone.

by Steve Herzig
Israel has acquiesced to a plan to transfer sovereignty of two strategically important islands in the Red Sea from Egypt to Saudi Arabia as part of an informal, emerging alliance between Israel and its Sunni Muslim neighbors.

The islands—Tiran and Sanafir—are located at the entrance to the Straits of Tiran, which is Israel’s only access to the Red Sea from the Gulf of Aqaba (Gulf of Elat). Egypt’s blockade of the Straits in May 1967 precipitated the Six-Day War.

The 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty guarantees Israeli vessels freedom of navigation through the Straits of Tiran. With these islands passing to Saudi sovereignty, some analysts have expressed concerns that this freedom may be in jeopardy.

Israeli officials approved the transfer after Riyadh gave Jerusalem written assurances it will “recognize and respect” Israel’s right to free passage through the Straits. “We reached an agreement between the four parties—the Saudis, the Egyptians, Israel and the United States—to transfer the responsibility for the islands, on condition that the Saudis fill in the Egyptians’ shoes in the military appendix of the peace agreement,” Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon said.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir was quick to clarify there will be “no direct relationship between the kingdom and Israel due to the return of these islands.” By publicly pledging to uphold the obligations of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, however, Saudi Arabia has implicitly recognized the Camp David Accords and Israel’s right to exist.

By Soeren Kern, a senior fellow at the Gatestone Institute, a nonpartisan foreign-policy think tank based in New York City

Middle East analyst Simon Henderson believes the agreement reflects a “growing maturity in tentative Saudi links with Jerusalem.” According to Henderson, “Officially, Riyadh still opposes formal relations with Israel, but both countries obviously share similar views on key issues, such as the threat posed by Iran. The latest development in the Straits of Tiran suggests that their agenda of common interests is broadening.”

Motivated by mutual concerns over Iran and the Islamic State (ISIS), Saudi Arabia and Israel have been involved in covert diplomacy for years. It recently emerged that Saudi and Israeli officials have held at least five secret meetings—in India, Italy, and the Czech Republic—to discuss the common threat Iran poses to the Middle East.

The Saudi-Israel talks are part of a larger effort to create a Sunni Muslim front against Iran. In January 2016, Dore Gold, director-general of Israel’s Foreign Ministry, revealed that Israel now has contacts with “almost every Arab state.” Gold attributed the push for such ties to a shared animosity toward Iran: “Clearly, there’s been a convergence of interests between Israel and many Sunni Arab states given the fact that they both face identical challenges in the region.”

Yaakov Amidror, a former Israeli national security adviser, framed it this way: “What we have with the Sunni countries is based on two common interests. They don’t like the Iranians, and they are afraid of Islamism.”

A weak link in the emerging alliance to counterbalance Iran is Egypt, which, among myriad political and economic problems, is confronting an Islamist insurgency. In a show of support for Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Saudi King Salman recently paid a five-day visit to Cairo. He pledged to pump billions of dollars into Egypt to shore up an economy that has been devastated by years of political turmoil and jihadist attacks. In exchange, el-Sisi agreed to transfer sovereignty of the two islands in the Straits of Tiran.

The Saudi investments may be a small price to pay to ensure stability in—and buy loyalty from—Egypt, which has one of the largest militaries in the Middle East. Economic collapse in Egypt would probably deal a deathblow to Saudi efforts to prevent Iran from dominating the region.

Activists protest against the decision to hand over control of two strategic Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia.
IRAN—An imprisoned Christian convert from Islam recently sneaked a message of encouragement to Iran’s Christians in the face of a government crackdown that has crippled the country’s house-church leadership.

Ebrahim Firouzi, held in the notorious Rajai Shahr Prison in Karaj, exhorted Iranian Christians to expect persecution but to continue proclaiming Christ.

“If you are courageous in God’s way, God’s grace will be with you,” Firouzi said. “Do not fear what you are doing, and raise the banner of Jesus in the name of God.”

Paraphrasing the New Testament, Firouzi, said, “If you want to do good to others, who can harm you? . . . Keep your conscience clean so that people will be ashamed if they cause you harm. If it is God’s will that you should suffer, it is better to suffer for doing good” (cf. 1 Pet. 2:15; 3:17; 4:19).

The message has come at a dark time for Christians in Iran. The advocacy group Middle East Concern (MEC), which confirmed the communication’s authenticity, reported that the government has left only a few Farsi-language churches open. Christians have no option but to hold meetings in homes, a move that is illegal and heavily persecuted.

Firouzi, 31, has been in and out of prison because of his faith since 2011. Now serving a five-year sentence that began in 2015, he encouraged prayer for the shuttered churches.

“I ask you to pray for the reopening of the churches in Iran . . . , so that the sound of worship and praise can be heard in the buildings again.”

Rob Duncan, MEC region manager for Iran, said Iranian officials have gutted the leadership of the house-church movement, imprisoning many and forcing pastors into self-enforced exile by harassing them to leave. “Most of the mature leaders have been forced out of the country,” Duncan said. “People are being called to pastor their house church[es] when they are really new in the faith.”

Firouzi’s case reflects the Iranian government’s continuing hostility toward Christians. When first arrested in 2011 and imprisoned for more than 150 days, Firouzi endured intense interrogation about his beliefs, how he came to faith, and the leadership structure of church bodies.

In March 2013, officials arrested him again. Authorities claimed he was involved in setting up and running a website about Christianity, disseminating Bibles, and acting against national security. On July 15 of that year, the court sentenced him to one year in prison, followed by two years of internal “exile” in the town of Sarbaz.

Firouzi should have been released from prison in January 2015; instead, authorities refused and charged him with “acting against national security, gathering, and collusion”—all of which they claim occurred even though Firouzi was in prison on previous charges.

In his message to Iran’s Christians, Firouzi said he wants his freedom but asked for prayer to be a strong example of Christ while in prison. “We are trying to preach the gospel, and Jesus is our example,” he said. “We sometimes have to sacrifice our freedom to live in God’s love, so I can’t only think about myself when there are so many other believers and churches suffering persecution.”

Firouzi said he hopes his imprisonment “stirs the international community to work to prevent such future persecution of new believers.”

by Morning Star News
(MorningStarNews.org)
MAKING A WILL THAT WORKS

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Vice President for Ministry Advancement
RECYCLING HISTORY

A look at today’s religiously unaffiliated and their not-so-new view of the world.

by Elwood McQuaid
Israel’s wise King Solomon, with years of world-watching behind him, concluded, “That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9). History is a process of recycling, yet people never seem to learn much from the past; and trashing the “old” ways in a quest to be different doesn’t often deliver what is promised.

**ROOT AND BRANCH**

At the root of the most catastrophic failures in the recycling process is the rejection of God and rebellion against His divine standards of faith and practice. Scripture warns and history confirms the dire consequences. Today, signs that we are moving in that same fatal direction are too numerous to ignore.

Greg Smith, with the Pew Research Center, told The Washington Post, “What we’re seeing now is that the share of people who say religion is important to them is declining.” Furthermore, “The religiously unaffiliated are not just growing, but as they grow, they are becoming more secular.”

Smith’s observation is certified by the shrinking number of regular attenders in mainline Protestant and Catholic churches and the dropout rate in some churches loosely identified as evangelical. The religiously unaffiliated are often referred to as “nones” because they follow none of the traditional religions, believe nothing in particular, or have chosen atheism or agnosticism as a lifestyle.

A curious sidebar is that they repudiate traditional religion but not spirituality, which means a neo-pagan center of gravity has taken hold.

Religion has become a distasteful word, and people are jettisoning God and the Bible for whatever suits them personally. In his book Spiritual, but Not Religious, religious-studies professor Robert Fuller pointed out that in the 20th century, “The word spiritual gradually came to be associated with the private realm of thought and experience while the word religious came to be connected with the public realm of membership in religious institutions, participation in formal rituals, and adherence to official denominational doctrines.”

He said a group of social scientists studied 346 people from varying backgrounds and found the following: “Religiousness . . . was associated with higher levels of church attendance and commitment to orthodox beliefs. Spirituality, in contrast, was associated with higher levels of interest in mysticism, experimentation with unorthodox beliefs and practices, and negative feelings toward both clergy and churches.”

**DO-IT-YOURSELF FAITH**

This trend marks a return to the old ways of denoting the true God, discarding divine authority, and defining faith as personal belief based on individual whim—all of which fall into Solomon’s bin marked “nothing new under the sun.” That age-old category has left deep and ugly tracks on the historical record.

The first Adam, along with his wife, Eve, set the standard for buying into Satan’s seducing lie of liberation from the Almighty. When Satan confronted them concerning their Creator’s specific instructions of do’s and don’ts, they chose to see things Satan’s way. The prince of seduction asked, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” (Gen. 3:1).

In essence, Eve replied, “Yes, except one. If we do, we shall die.”

To which the Devil answered, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (vv. 4–5).

Man and wife fell for the ploy, partook of the forbidden fruit, and died. Though they continued to live physically, spiritually they became dead; and the effects were immediate. Instead of being elevated to a godlike state, they were dragged down to fallen-creature status. Worse, Adam dragged the entire future human race down with him: “By man came death, . . . as in Adam all die” (1 Cor. 15:21–22). That dire consequence made all human beings hereditary sinners by nature.

There are those, of course, who mock the biblically recorded episode in the Garden of Eden. They call it myth, legend, and nonsense. However, no argument can refute the grim evidence of sin resident in Adam’s posterity.

**CONTEMPORARY RECYCLING**

Israel’s history reveals the folly of turning away from God. The book of Judges shows what happens when people embrace the principles of the “none” faction now growing among us.

Rather than standing as a nation united, Israel became a
The religiously unaffiliated are often referred to as “nones” because they follow none of the traditional religions, believe nothing in particular, or have chosen atheism or agnosticism as a lifestyle.

Israel is God’s covenant nation. Throughout Scripture, He promises to restore it for His name’s sake. Nowhere does He promise to restore America, for example, which is all the more reason this country needs to get right with God before it is too late.

**IF I PERISH, WHAT THEN?**

What happens to the “nones” when they die? There is no shred of true hope in the future of God-free mortals. Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and third president of the United States, was a man of unequalled intellect in his contribution to the founding of the American democracy.

Though he admired the moral aspects of the New Testament, he rejected Jesus’ miracles and was particularly put off by the resurrection. In fact, he created his own version of the Gospels by literally cutting out portions and pasting together an 82-page document, preserved as The Jefferson Bible. The closing entry reads, “There laid they Jesus: and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.” What a sad, erroneous conclusion.

All of his intellectual abilities could take him no further than to a sealed sepulcher, closed to anything beyond, which illustrates the ageless spirit of absolute or partial denial.

**THE KING IS COMING**

History inevitably circles back to the same patterns of former generations. The current dream to colonize Mars, erect tent cities on the moon, or find another celestial world to inhabit is evidence of a futile quest—a leap in the dark to find a future beyond planet Earth. It won’t happen.

The good news is that a new heaven and new Earth have been ordered by the Master Creator who declares, “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5).

The King of kings is coming. Folded into the plan for believers is the Rapture of the church; the resurrection of the saints; rewards; and a Kingdom where peace, justice, and truth reign for a thousand years in preparation for the new heaven and Earth. Such is the enduring “blessed hope” of authentic, biblical spirituality. And it is available to all who place their faith in Jesus Christ.

**ENDNOTES**

3 Ibid., 6.

**Elwood McQuaid**

is a former executive director of The Friends of Israel and retired editor-in-chief of Israel My Glory.
THE GREATEST PROPHET

Why Jesus was the last biblical prophet and the one Moses said to expect.

by Richard D. Emmons
Prophet, Priest, and King. That is how Jesus’ ministry roles are often portrayed. The Gospels emphasize His role as King of the Jews, though He has yet to occupy that position. The book of Hebrews emphasizes His role as High Priest, both in His sacrificial death and current ministry. Yet, while on Earth, Jesus was primarily a Prophet. So what does that title imply?

Every day people wonder, What will tomorrow bring? Who will be elected president? What will happen in the Middle East? Predictions are surely part of biblical prophecy. However, the whole picture is much more comprehensive.

DEFINING PROPHET

The clearest picture of God’s definition of prophet is found in Exodus: “So the Lord said to Moses: ‘See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land’” (7:1–2).

“A prophet,” wrote scholar Walter Kaiser, “... is one who receives a word from God, just as Moses acted in the place of God in passing on the divine revelations he received from the Lord to his brother Aaron, now functioning as a prophet. Moreover, a prophet is authorized to communicate this divine message to another.”¹

God spoke to His prophets through visions and dreams. However, to Moses, He spoke face-to-face; “and he sees the form of the Lord” (Num. 12:8). “Clearly, then,” Kaiser concluded, “a prophet is an authorized spokesperson for God with a message that originated with God and was communicated through a number of means. When God spoke to these spokespersons, they had no choice but to deliver that word to those to whom God directed it.”²

MOSES, THE PROPHET

Moses, of course, is generally regarded as the greatest prophet in the Hebrew Scriptures. God called him “faithful in all My house” (v. 7). In using him to redeem the Israelites from Egypt and to establish them as a nation under God’s covenant, God lifted Moses up in the eyes of countless generations. Yet, at the end of his ministry, Moses indicated God would raise up another prophet like him one day:

The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear. And the Lord said to me: ... ‘I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him’” (Dt. 18:15, 17–19).

Though great prophets arose from Samuel through Zechariah and Malachi, none achieved the stature Moses had promised. Centuries passed, and the prophecy remained unfulfilled. Approximately 1,400 years had gone by, and Israel was still awaiting the prophet like Moses when the Levite John the Baptist appeared on the scene in Roman-occupied Judea:

Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him [John], “Who are you?” He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ [Messiah].” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet [emphasis added]?” And he answered, “No.” Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” He said: “I am ‘the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” as the prophet Isaiah said.”

Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. And they asked him, saying, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet [emphasis added]?” John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose” (Jn. 1:19–27).
After Jesus performed a miracle by multiplying loaves of bread, some Jewish people suspected He might be the one for whom they were waiting: “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world” (6:14).

After He taught on the last day of the Feast of Booths (Sukkot), some responded, “‘Truly this is the Prophet.’ Others said, ‘This is the Christ [Messiah].’ But some said, ‘Will the Christ come out of Galilee?’” (7:40–41).

THE GREATEST PROPHET
Though most people did not believe Him, Jesus as much as said who He was in a synagogue in Nazareth when He read aloud verses 1–2 of Isaiah 61:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk. 4:18–19).

Then He closed the book, sat down, and said, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (v. 21). But He knew they would not believe Him: “Then He said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country’” (v. 24).

Jesus clearly explained that He spoke nothing on His own initiative:

He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak (Jn. 12:44, 49–50; cf. 7:16–18; 17:7–8).

Moses said, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear. And the Lord said to me: . . . ‘[I] will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.’”

Deuteronomy 18:15, 17–18

THE FOUR MAJOR DISCOURSES OF JESUS

ONE

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT
The Sermon on the Mount explicated the type of righteousness necessary (Mt. 5:20) for Kingdom saints. He used the formula, “You have heard it said, . . . but I say to you.”

TWO

THE PARABLES DISCOURSE
The Parables Discourse (Mt. 13) was delivered after Israel’s religious leaders rejected His offer of the Messianic Kingdom (chap. 12). It describes the nature of the mystery kingdom: “The kingdom of heaven is like . . . .”

THREE

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE
The Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24–25) was delivered halfway between Palm Sunday and the crucifixion. It amplifies the 70th week of Daniel (Dan. 9:24–27) and urges the Jewish people to look for His promised return to set up His Messianic Kingdom.

FOUR

THE UPPER ROOM DISCOURSE
The Upper Room Discourse (Jn. 13–17) was Jesus’ final teaching to His disciples about His departure and the arrival of the Holy Spirit as “another Helper [Comforter]” (14:16).
Jesus told His disciples, “The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works” (14:10).

Therefore, since every word Jesus spoke was given to Him by the Father, His entire spoken ministry was prophecy. The majority of it, however, was not predictive in nature. Like Moses’ ministry, Jesus’ prophetic work was primarily revelatory. He came to (1) reveal God in ways not seen in the Hebrew Scriptures (even the term Father was significantly different), (2) highlight the type of righteousness necessary for God’s Kingdom, (3) reveal the new administration that would be established upon His death, and (4) manifest God’s loving righteousness through His redemption of mankind.

Later He would reveal to the apostle John the future judgment of the world and the establishment of His Kingdom (Rev. 1—22).

During His time on Earth, Jesus delivered four major discourses (and several shorter ones) in which He revealed the mind and will of His Father. (See page 17.)

Approximately 1,400 years had gone by, and Israel was still awaiting the prophet like Moses when the Levite John the Baptist appeared on the scene in Roman-occupied Judea.

Jesus was the last biblical prophet and the one Moses said to expect. The writer to the Hebrews put it this way:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power,
Moses, of course, is generally regarded as the greatest prophet in the Hebrew Scriptures. God called him “faithful in all My house” (Num. 12:7). Yet, at the end of his ministry, Moses indicated God would raise up another prophet like him one day.

when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over his own house (Heb. 1:1–3, 3:5–6).

Moses was a great prophet, but Jesus was far greater.

ENDNOTES
2 Ibid.

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THE SENSE OF PLAIN SENSE

Another way in which I was subjected to the attitude of Replacement Theology was through the teaching that all of the Old Testament had been nailed to the cross and was therefore irrelevant to Christianity. . . . The beginning of my liberation from these viewpoints occurred when I was about 30 years old.

I started reading the Minor Prophets, and I was captivated by them. Their messages seemed so relevant to modern-day problems. And, once again, it was the book of Zechariah that proved to be my turning point.

After reading it through from start to finish for the first time in my life, I was impacted by the fact that it is full of Messianic prophecies about the First Coming, and that every one of them meant what it said. It suddenly dawned on me that if the First Coming prophecies in this “apocalyptic” book meant what they said, then the Second Coming prophecies must mean what they say.

My study of Bible prophecy since that time has convinced me that the twisting of Scriptures through spiritualization is a terrible abuse of God’s Word. It has led Christians to reject the Genesis account of creation, as well as the promises of God for the future.

From the beginning to the end of the Bible we need to interpret God’s Word for its plain-sense meaning. The failure to do so will produce tragic doctrines like Replacement Theology.

—Evangelist Dr. David R. Reagan, excerpted from his sermon “The Evil of Replacement Theology”
WHAT WENT WRONG

A look at the downward spiral of the Aaronic priesthood.

by David M. Levy
Contrary to what some people think, the concept of priesthood did not originate with Israel. In the patriarchal period, the male head of each household functioned as a mediating priest on behalf of his family. Job (Job 1:5), Noah (Gen. 8:20), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all erected altars and sacrificed animals to God.

After God delivered Israel from Egypt, He wanted to make the nation a kingdom of priests with direct access to Him (Ex. 19:4–6). But Israel sinned, breaking the covenant it had made with God at Mount Sinai (v. 5), and forfeiting the privilege of becoming a kingdom of priests.

That forfeiture birthed the Aaronic priesthood, a system that grew more corrupt with age until it even demanded the crucifixion of its own Messiah.

The Aaronic priesthood was established when God commanded Moses to take his brother, Aaron, and Aaron’s sons from the tribe of Levi and designate them as priests (28:1). Aaron, the high priest, was consecrated in an elaborate ceremony. His body was washed with water; blood atonement was offered on the altar for his sins; holy anointing oil was poured over him; and beautiful, official garments were draped on his body for service. In the decades to follow, the priesthood was passed down through Aaron’s family.

Priests could have no physical defects and were rejected for service if they failed to meet the qualifications recorded in Leviticus.
The word priest (Hebrew, kohayn) means “one who officiates.” Priests were not self-appointed but divinely called by God, deriving their authority directly from Him. They interceded for the Israelites by offering gifts and sacrifices for their own sins and those of Israel (Heb. 5:1–4). Priests could have no physical defects and were rejected for service if they failed to meet the qualifications recorded in Leviticus 21:17–21.

Priests also labored under certain restrictions. They were not permitted to defile themselves by participating in funerals, except those of family (Lev. 21:1–4). They could not shave their heads, beards, eyebrows, or make any cuts in their flesh (19:27–28). Nor were they to marry a profane (secular or unspiritual) woman, divorcée, prostitute, or widow. A priest had to marry a virgin (21:7, 14). Years later, Nehemiah condemned the priests for taking heathen wives (Neh. 13:25, 28). Other restrictions are listed in Leviticus 22.

The priests’ sacred responsibility was to represent the Israelites before God, and God before the Israelites by declaring God’s will to the people, teaching the Mosaic Law, caring for the Tabernacle and Temple, and offering sacrifices in worship to God (Dt. 33:8–10).

Over time, however, the priesthood grew corrupt, and priests often abused their calling and position. For example, Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of the high priest Eli during the days of Samuel, forcibly took the peoples’ offerings and slept with women at the door of the Tabernacle. As punishment, God severed Eli’s house from the priesthood of Israel (1 Sam. 2:17, 22, 31–36).

The prophet Malachi detailed the priesthood’s corruption (Mal. 1:6—2:9).

The priest defamed God’s sacred name by showing contempt for it and not giving Him honor or glory. Furthermore, they seemed unaware of their corruption and calumny, having the audacity to ask, “In what way have we despised Your name?” (1:6).

The priests offered defective sacrifices in the Temple (vv. 7–8). Malachi sarcastically urged them to take the blind, crippled, and diseased animals to the governor and see if he would accept them. No credible priest would dare offer such worthless things to the governor. How much more insulting to offer them to the God of the universe.

The priests had demeaned the Temple by their despicable
actions and attitudes. God was angry that there was no conscientious, devout priest to step forward and close the Temple until the sinful practices were terminated (v. 10). The priests showed no respect for either the Lord’s table (altar) or its fruit (meat offering) (v. 12).

So God cursed the priests and the way they performed their duties before Him (2:1–9). He warned them to turn from their wicked ways because if they continued down the path of disobedience, He would send the same curses prophesied against Israel as it entered Canaan (Dt. 27:9–26; 28:15–68).

Other prophets also relayed God’s condemnation of the corrupt priests (cf. Jer. 5:31; Lam. 4:13–20; Ezek. 22:26; Hos. 5:1; 6:9; Mic. 3:11; Zeph. 3:4).

By the time Jesus began ministering on Earth, the priesthood was beyond redemption. Priests were full of pride, projected a pseudo piety, and misused their power. They sought to murder anyone who threatened their position or authority or their nefarious means of acquiring massive wealth by manipulation.

Jesus predicted the high priest would reject, arrest, and convict Him and call for His crucifixion—a prophecy that came true (cf. Mt. 16:21; 20:18; Lk. 24:20). The chief priests continually tried to obtain false testimony against Jesus so they might have Him put to death (Mt. 26:59).

Both the Jewish religious authorities and Roman political authorities put Jesus on trial. Each held three hearings, totaling six trials. The Jewish religious leaders brought Jesus before Annas then Caiaphas, both high priests, though Annas was no longer in office. Then Jesus went to trial before the Sanhedrin. Jesus was also arraigned before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who sent Him to Herod for questioning, after which Herod sent Him back to Pilate. Pilate heeded the desire of a mob that called for Jesus’ crucifixion. After Jesus was brutally scourged, He was led away and crucified (Mt. 27:11–50).

All these trials were illegal, according to Jewish and Roman law. But by then, the Jewish priesthood had sunk so low it bore little resemblance to the office God instituted in the wilderness of Sinai when He commanded Moses to take Aaron, his brother, and Aaron’s sons and consecrate them to serve Him.
Old Testament times, only the Aaronic priests and, of course, Moses enjoyed direct access into the presence of God. Although Moses was blessed with privilege, position, and prominence, he nevertheless was imperfect and eventually died—like any other man.

The Bible calls Jesus alone our “great High Priest” (Heb. 4:14) who not only sympathizes with us and intercedes for us but who loves us so much He actually offered Himself as the final sacrifice for sin. Christ’s priesthood supersedes the Aaronic priesthood and is superior to it in every way (5:1—10:25).

**CHRIST’S PRIESTHOOD IS PEERLESS.**

Jesus is both divine and human (5:1, 7–9). He was neither self-appointed nor elected but divinely selected (v. 4), as prophesied in two Messianic psalms (Ps. 2; 110; cf. Heb. 5:5).

Christ also was from a different order than the Aaronic priests. Aaron was from the tribe of Levi, the priestly tribe, whereas Jesus is from the tribe of Judah, the ruling tribe. Yet a psalm of David says of the Messiah, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Ps. 110:4).

The psalm compares Him to Melchizedek, not Aaron. Melchizedek was a contemporary of Abraham. He lived approximately 700 years before Aaron and the inception of the Aaronic priesthood. Whereas Aaron was a priest only, Melchizedek was both king and priest, as Christ will be: “He [Messiah] shall be a priest on His throne” (Zech. 6:13). The Messiah is the only Davidic ruler God allows to be both Priest and King.

The Aaronic priesthood was inherited and transmitted to many sons down through the centuries. Like Melchizedek, Jesus neither inherited His kingly priesthood nor transmitted it to successors.

As High Priest, Jesus does not continually offer sacrifices for people’s sins, like the Aaronic high priest, “for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself” (Heb. 7:27). Christ is sinless, yet He offered Himself, once for all, as the perfect, unblemished blood sacrifice to expiate sins.

**CHRIST’S PRIESTHOOD IS PERFECT.**

Aaron’s priesthood functioned under the Mosaic Law, which demanded perfect righteousness—something sinful priests could never provide. Therefore, perfect standing before God could never come through the Aaronic priesthood. Christ, the God-Man, is the only perfect High Priest who can provide righteousness through His sacrificial death and shed blood, making it possible for sinners to be declared righteous before God.

**CHRIST’S PRIESTHOOD IS PERMANENT.**

Aaronic priests served for a specific time, but Christ is a Priest forever: “He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (vv. 24–25).

Jesus Christ is an unchangeable High Priest, an ever-living Priest whom we will someday see face-to-face and enjoy throughout eternity. He is able to save to the uttermost and is seated at God’s right hand, making intercession on our behalf. As the apostle Peter exclaimed, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn. 6:68).

The importance of Jesus Christ’s high priesthood cannot be underestimated or overstated. The book of Hebrews instructs believers to come directly to God’s throne of grace through Jesus Christ their advocate and present their requests. The admonition is to come boldly before God to obtain mercy and grace (Heb. 4:14–16).

No need for a Temple. No need for a human priest. No need for a blood sacrifice. Jesus is all we need.

**Editor’s Note:** For further insight on the subject of Christ’s priesthood, we recommend David Levy’s book Hebrews: A Commentary, available through The Friends of Israel.

by David M. Levy
Moses said, “You shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses” (Dt. 17:15). Here is how God planned to administer His kingship authority over Israel.

by Peter Colón
It is rarely in people’s natures to want what God wants for them. Often we want things that have no eternal value or that might even hurt us. Other times, we may want the right things but at the wrong time and for the wrong reason, much like Israel did when it demanded a king.

Israel wanted a human ruler so it could be “like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5). But God did not want His Chosen People to be like the pagans because He was their King. In his distress, the prophet Samuel went to the Lord: “And the Lord said to Samuel, . . . ‘They have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them’” (v. 7).

God had intended for the Israelites to have a king eventually (Gen. 49:10; Dt. 17:14–20), but not then and not for their reason.
By divine design, He chose to administer His kingship authority mediatorially: The king was to rule on God’s behalf, and God was to be Israel’s true Sovereign: “The Lord shall reign forever and ever” (Ex. 15:18).

In fact, Israel’s two-day celebration of the Feast of Trumpets presents God as King. This feast today is referred to as Rosh Hashanah, which means “head of the year.” For some Orthodox Jewish groups, the Feast of Trumpets’ fundamental theme is God’s coronation as Hamelech, “the King” (cf. Ps. 93:1).

According to tradition, the blowing of the shofar (ram’s horn) at Rosh Hashanah signals the beginning of the 10 days of repentance, when people usually fear God’s judgment. However, the rabbis believed that viewing the feast as a coronation would replace fear with adoration for God’s grandeur as King.

During Temple times, the blowing of trumpets was accompanied by the recitation of 10 kingship verses of Scripture. Some people sang 10 kingly psalms of David. Others read the Ten Commandments, while still others favored reciting from the book of Genesis the 10 words God spoke during creation. Whatever route people chose, the point was to acknowledge God’s authority as the only true, majestic King (cf. Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 32a).

God’s kingship over Israel is still highlighted in the current traditional Hebrew blessing, “Blessed art Thou O Lord our God, King of the universe.”

When the time was right, God planned to administer His kingship authority through a representative (Dt. 17:14–20). He provided specific qualifications and guidelines for the man who was to hold this high and powerful office:

1. He was to be an Israelite (v. 15).
2. He was not to create a large military by amassing horses (v. 16).
3. He was not to amass wives (v. 17).
4. He was not to amass a large personal fortune (v. 17).
5. He was to write out personally a copy of the Law of God (v. 18).
6. He was to read the Law throughout his lifetime (vv. 19–20).
7. He was never to make the people return to Egypt (v. 16).

According to Egyptologists, the pharaohs saw themselves as divine and received worship as the incarnation of Egypt’s creator sun-god, Ra.

The Israelites, however, were to worship only the true God, the Creator and King of kings, who delivered them from slavery in Egypt; and their kings were to see themselves as His human representatives, as King David did:

O Lord, there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And who is like Your people Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people—to make for Yourself a name by great and awesome deeds, by driving out nations from before Your people whom You redeemed from Egypt? For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, LORD, have become their God (1 Chr. 17:20–22).

Prior to David, Israel’s foray into the realm of human kingship did not go well. Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin, started well but ended in failure. Then God chose young David from the tribe of Judah, “a man after His own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14; cf. Acts 13:22). With David He made a covenant that is in effect to this day: “And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:16).

Israelite kings came and went. Some were good; most were bad. But the Davidic Covenant remained.
Hundreds of years prior to David’s birth, God had designated Judah as the royal tribe. In ancient Egypt, the patriarch Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel (Gen. 32:28), gathered his 12 sons to his deathbed for their final blessings. When Jacob’s eyes rested on his son Judah, he saw in Israel’s future a specific King to come: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people” (49:10).

An ancient Aramaic paraphrase puts it this way: “He who exercised dominion shall not pass away from the house of Judah, nor the scribe from his children’s children forever, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people” (49:10).

The word Shiloh means “the one who brings rest or peace.” It expresses the belief that the King will bring tranquility to His people. The scepter represents authority.

The fulfillment of Jacob’s prophecy began with the anointing of King David (1 Sam. 16:13). Ultimately, it will be fulfilled with Jesus. He is the King, the God-Man, and the Son of David who will sit on Israel’s throne forever.

When He returns to rescue Israel, the world will recognize Him instantly: “He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:16).

Then Israel will have its final and divine King; and “of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever” (Isa. 9:7).

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Ernst Josephson’s painting of King Saul listening to David (unseen) play the harp.
HOW GOD’S DESIGN FOR THE OFFICES OF PRIEST AND KING WAS MEANT TO PROTECT ISRAEL.

by Tom Simcox

“P

ower tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” So said Sir John Dalberg-Acton in the 19th century, and nothing happening in the world to date has contradicted him. In fact, when you examine the Mosaic Law, his statement seems almost biblical.

The Mosaic Law strictly separates the three most important offices: prophet, priest, and king. Prophets could be kings, as David was. Priests could be prophets, as Samuel was. But kings could not be priests, and priests could not be kings.

The kings were never to interfere with the spiritual ministry of the priests, and under no circumstances was the king to be united with the priesthood. To control a nation spiritually and politically vests too much power in a single human being who, by his very nature, is a sinner and therefore susceptible to corruption. And absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Nebuchadnezzar exemplified someone who had absolute power. He ruled the entire known world in the days of the prophet Daniel. In interpreting a dream for him, Daniel told him, “You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory. . . . You are this head of gold” (Dan. 2:37–38).

He was so taken with his own importance that he erected a 90-foot-tall, gold image of himself and commanded everyone to fall down and worship it or die (3:4–5). He melded religious and political power and abused them both. When Daniel’s friends—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego (in Hebrew, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; Dan. 1:7)—refused to worship the image, Nebuchadnezzar had them thrown into a furnace where the fire was so hot it killed the men who threw them in. But God delivered Daniel’s friends,
and “the hair of their head was not singed nor
drew not their garments affected, and the smell
of fire was not on them” (3:27).

Amazed by what he had seen, Nebuchadnezzar
did an about-face:

Thereupon I make a decree that any people,
nation, or language which speaks anything
amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach,
and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their
houses shall be made an ash heap; because there
is no other God who can deliver like this (v. 29).

Nebuchadnezzar did not have the Mosaic Law.
However, Israel did. When two Israelite kings
attempted to join the offices of priest and king,
God judged them severely.

The first was King Saul. Israel was at war
with the Philistines, and Saul wanted to sacri-
fice to God to encourage his troops. But to do
so he needed Samuel, Israel’s prophet-priest.
Saul “waited seven days, according to the
time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come,
. . . and the people were scattered from him”
(1 Sam. 13:7–8). So Saul decided to take matters
into his own hands.

He overstepped his authority as king and
brought the offering himself. He combined the
offices of king and priest.

Bible commentator Eugene Merrill wrote,
“Saul could wait no longer and unlawfully took
on himself the priestly task of offering com-
munity sacrifice. Then Samuel came and when he knew that
Saul had taken liberties by offering the sacrifice, he rebuked
him with the words, ‘You acted foolishly.’”

Saul’s fear and impetuous abuse of power brought serious
consequences. Samuel told him, “You have not kept the
commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded
you. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom
over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue”
(1 Sam. 13:13–14). Saul’s transgression cost him his kingdom
and later his sanity.

Approximately 260 years later, 16-year-old Uzziah became
king and “did what was right in the sight of the Lord” (2 Chr.
26:4). Uzziah enjoyed the second longest reign (52 years) in
the history of the kings of Judah.

He appears to have been popular, smart, and powerful. Yet
he became prideful: “When he was strong his heart was lifted
up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord
his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense
on the altar of incense” (v. 16).

Azariah the priest and 80 other priests with-
stood the king: “It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn
incense to the Lord. . . . Get out of the sanctuary
[Temple], for you have trespassed” (vv. 17–18).

Uzziah was a good man. But he was human
and, consequently, a sinner. Pride is a dan-
gerous sin. It can destroy families, ruin ministries,
split churches, and estrange you from God. In
Uzziah’s case, it led to complete isolation for
the rest of his life:

Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a
censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he
was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on
his forehead. . . . King Uzziah was a leper until
the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house,
because he was a leper; for he was cut off from
the house of the Lord (vv. 19, 21).

God established the offices of prophet, priest,
and king for a reason, and He has been deter-
mined to keep priest and king separated. The
kings were to rule on God’s behalf; the priests
were to be in the Temple, steeped in God’s Word
and His Law, reminding the king to direct the
nation toward God.

There will forever be only one Person who has
the credentials to unite these three offices: the
Messiah of Israel. He is the ultimate prophet (Dt.
18:14–22), the interceding Priest (Ps. 110:1–4; Heb.
4:14–16), and the eternal King (Ps. 2; Rev. 19:16).

Isaiah prophesied about Him, “Unto us a Son is given; and
the government will be upon His shoulder. . . . Of the increase
of His government and peace there will be no end . . . to order
it and establish it with judgment and justice” (Isa. 9:6–7).

When absolute power is realized in Jesus the Messiah, the
incorruptible, sinless Son of God, the result will be absolute
righteousness, morality, and integrity on Earth forever.

ENDNOTE

1 Eugene H. Merrill, “1 Samuel,” The Bible Knowledge Commentary, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy

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Arnold Schwarzenegger’s 1990 sci-fi classic *Total Recall*, the protagonist gets into a heated argument with a self-driving cab, driven by an artificial intelligence-challenged automaton. The film takes place in 2084 on Mars. But fully autonomous cars will be a reality right here on Earth by 2021.

That, anyway, is Mobileye CEO Ziv Aviram’s vision of the not-too-distant future. Aviram founded Mobileye in 1999 with professor Amnon Shashua of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Their company is best known for inventing a technology to alert drivers to obstacles. Using that proprietary obstacle-sensing sensor system to gather millions of miles of driving data, Mobileye is working with many of the world’s biggest auto manufacturers to pave the way for self-driving cars and trucks.

“Autonomous cars are not a dream anymore. It’s not a matter of if. It’s matter of when,” he said.

The first of three phases, he said, was the advent of semi-autonomous driving, which is already available in some cars today, including Tesla’s Model S. Drivers can push an “auto-pilot” button when they’re on the highway, and the car will remain in its lane and avoid other vehicles. But the driver must still remain attentive, and the technology is not suited for city driving.

By 2018, the next phase, called automated driving, will be available. That system, which will require three cameras, will allow drivers to focus on other things during highway driving.

By 2021, Aviram said, he anticipates fully autonomous cars will hit the road. For that, he said, a much wider array of sensors will be necessary: “We think you need eight cameras, four corner radars and additional configurations of LEEDR [Laser Environmental Effects Definition and Reference] sensors and sonars.”

Together those different cameras and sensors will create enough redundancy in data that the system will be able to gauge the environment with “99.9999 percent” accuracy.

Mobileye also wants driverless cars to have an idea of where the road is leading—an accurate map of what’s over the horizon or around the corner. To do that, the company has put to use the visual data on 14 million kilometers (almost 8.7 million miles) of highways its cameras have recorded, creating a crowd-sourced map. “The supplier that eventually has the map of the road will control the market,” Aviram said.

The last element needed for autonomous cars is what Aviram calls “driving policy,” which refers not just to rules and regulations but interactions between drivers. For example, if four people reach an intersection at the same time, it’s generally not a problem; a combination of eye contact, flashing headlights, or just subtle movements can indicate who has the right of way. Computers might just wait forever for a break in traffic if they don’t have ways to navigate human behavior.

“The reason that we need to teach the computer driving policy is that autonomous driving is not going to be presented in one day. The transition will take at least two decades. So from 2021, the autonomous cars will drive alongside humans, who don’t always follow the rules of the road. They’ll need to understand how to merge into traffic,” he explained.

Aviram takes a multi-year perspective. His vision of reshaping the world through a technology that will revolutionize everything from commuting to shipping is driving Mobileye full speed ahead.

by Niv Elis

*The Jerusalem Post*
THANKFUL FOR THE
THESALONIANS

1 THESSALONIANS 1:2–4

When kindness is shown to someone, the usual response is to say thank you. No New Testament writer other than Paul expressed thankfulness to his fellow Christians. He opened every epistle except Galatians with thanksgiving.

Paul was thankful for the Thessalonian believers for three things in particular:

1. Their salvation in Christ (1 Th. 1:2–5).
2. Their service to Christ in the midst of great opposition and persecution (vv. 6–10).
3. Their sanctification in Christ. The Thessalonians were exhibiting great faith and spiritual growth in the midst of affliction (3:1–13).

After his abrupt departure from them, Paul agonized over the Thessalonians’ spiritual and physical conditions. Timothy’s encouraging report about their practice, whether in times of sadness or gladness. Paul commanded all believers, “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (5:18). Thanksgiving is also comprehensive, “for you all” (1:2). Though Christians differ greatly in their abilities and commitments, we should be thankful for all believers because we are brothers and sisters in Christ and can draw on one another for friendship and fellowship in times of need.

Paul offered the Lord consecrated prayer on behalf of the Thessalonians, “making mention of you in our prayers” (v. 2). He often linked thanksgiving and prayer (cf. Phil. 4:6; Col. 1:3; 4:2; 1 Tim. 2:1; 2 Tim. 1:3; Phil. 4). The word prayer refers to petitions offered on behalf of individuals or churches. Silvanus, Timothy, and Father” (1 Th. 1:3).

Paul agonized over the Thessalonians’ work, labor, and patience. These nouns are modified by the words faith, love, and hope respectively. Together, they reveal the Thessalonians’ dedication, diligence, deeds, and determination to persevere for the Lord despite opposition.

This is the first time Paul chronologically used these three key words (faith, love, hope) of the Christian faith in his epistles.

The word you refers specifically and emphatically to the Thessalonians alone.

1. WORK OF FAITH

Whatever they undertook, they accomplished by exercising faith—not saving faith but, rather, daily faith in Christian living. Their faith energized them to work for Christ. True faith should produce a life of good works in believers (cf. Jas. 2:26).

2. LABOR OF LOVE

Labor speaks of toiling to the point of exhaustion in working for the Lord. The Thessalonians did so in love. The Greek word for “love” here is agape, the highest, most selfless form of God’s love,
as expressed by Christ when He gave His life on the cross. The Thessalonians’ deep, self-sacrificing love for God motivated them to labor for Him.

Although the type of labor they did is not stated, some have speculated they helped Christians undergoing severe persecution and privation. Others believe they helped spread the gospel.

3. PATIENCE OF HOPE

Patience speaks of endurance and perseverance through trials, persecution, and conflict. This church continually faced government, pagan, and Jewish persecution. The hope that sustained them was not merely a wish or unfounded optimism, as many people today view the word hope. Biblical hope is a strong, settled conviction based on the sure promises of God in His Word. It is the eschatological hope of Christ’s return, mentioned throughout this epistle and 2 Thessalonians.

Their hope was “in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father” (1 Th. 1:3). Their faith gave them the endurance and fortitude to withstand their circumstances.

Faith, love, and hope all have Christ as their object. These words also appear in the logical order of the Christian experience: Faith speaks of our past in coming to Christ; love, of our present in appreciating all Christ means to us; and hope focuses on the future, as we anticipate the Lord’s return. In the context of verse 3, the emphasis is on hope.

It has been said, “Faith looks back to a crucified Savior. Love looks up to a crowned Savior. Hope looks for a coming Savior.”

Paul used the Son of God’s full title, “Lord Jesus Christ,” encompassing all He is and will do. With the word our, Paul included himself among his readers, indicating such hope is for all believers.

Some commentators connect the phrase in the sight [before or presence] of our God and Father to the word remembering at the beginning of verse 3, meaning the believers’ works of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope were continuously and consciously in the presence of God who watched over the believers, protected them, and witnessed the authenticity of their commitment.

Other commentators limit the phrase to the word hope. Thus their hope was centered in the Lord Jesus Christ’s promise to return. This hope was the focus of their lives. They waited for it patiently, and it gave them standing in the presence of God their Father. Though living in God’s presence, one day their hope would be fulfilled when they were physically standing before Him.

Scholars disagree on which interpretation is correct and what Paul had in mind when he penned the phrase.

POSITION OF THE THESALONIANS

Paul was thankful for the Thessalonians because he knew God chose them: “knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God” (v. 4).

The Greek word Paul used here for “know” is oida. It refers to knowledge gained by perception or intuition and identifies the Thessalonians’ genuine faith and possession of eternal life.

Paul described the Thessalonians as “beloved brethren” (v. 4). The word beloved expresses Paul’s deep affection for these Christians. The verb is in the Greek perfect tense and denotes a love that existed in the past but continues—a permanent object of divine love.

Those involved in evangelizing the Thessalonians are assured of their “election.” Election (Greek, ekloge) means to choose out from others. Election is the free, righteous, kind, and sovereign act of almighty God in grace, whereby He selected certain people from the human race (Jn. 15:19) for Himself before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4).

Election is used in the New Testament to describe God’s selection of individuals to have a special, saving relationship with Him (Rom. 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28; 1 Th. 1:4; 2 Pet. 1:10). Election is not due to merit, works, intelligence, noble birth, ability, riches, or power within an individual or nation (1 Cor. 1:26–29). Election is exclusively in God’s sovereign will and for His divine purpose.

Why God chooses one person or nation over another transcends the knowledge of man. His choosing is a mystery of His will, and He selects “according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself” (Eph. 1:9). Remember, however, election does not negate individual responsibility to respond and receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (1 Th. 1:6, 9). Scripture also teaches, “For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

Here is a question all of us must ask ourselves: Am I following Paul’s admonition to be thankful in all things, especially God’s love and presence in my life? Think about it!
During its formative years, the church was entirely Jewish, as Jewish people by the thousands recognized Jesus as their long-promised Messiah. But by the end of the apostle Paul’s first missionary journey, a considerable number of Gentiles had joined the church. Many Jewish Christians felt the Gentiles should be circumcised and keep the Mosaic Law to be saved. The issue became so troublesome the church held a special meeting, the Jerusalem council, to settle the matter (Acts 15:19–31).

The early church functioned as an institution. The council of Jerusalem was not a spontaneous, informal gathering of a few Christians. It was an organized, formal church meeting that made difficult, practical decisions for its life and ministry.

The church instituted a specific code of conduct for its members. James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem, said, “Therefore I judge that . . . we write to them [Gentile believers] to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality [fornication, KJV], from things strangled, and from blood” (vv. 19–20).

The code’s standards were specific, restrictive, and limited. SPECIFIC. As an institution, the church provided four specific standards. It did not provide a general statement about conduct.

RESTRICTIVE. The council restricted the liberty of Gentile Christians, listing certain activities from which they should abstain.

LIMITED. The standards were limited to prohibiting certain practices of Christian liberty, not practices concerning God’s moral absolutes. The command concerning fornication may be an exception. However, Bruce and several other theologians believe that, within context, the passage’s use of the term fornication probably does not refer to sexual immorality.

Instead, it may refer to certain kinds of marriages forbidden for ceremonial rather than moral reasons to Jewish people under the Law (Lev. 18). But since the Mosaic Law had been set aside, those marriage laws became a matter of conscience. Had it not been for the presence of Christians whose consciences were sensitive about those things, any Christian would have had the right to indulge in them.

The church addressed the code of conduct to those who were freer in their practices (Gentile Christians), not to...
those who were weaker in faith (Jewish Christians). The code restricted the majority, not the minority, in the church.

Sir William Ramsay, an authority on the early church, explained that by the time of the Acts 15 council, Gentile Christians outnumbered Jewish Christians. Thus the church did not determine its code of conduct according to how many members would favor it.

The church did not tell the weaker minority it was wrong to have such scruples. Instead, the church lovingly protected their consciences.

The church addressed its code of conduct only to its own members. Church leaders never intended to instruct people outside the institution.

The church did not regard its code as something its members could accept or reject, according to their personal preferences. Its restrictions were “necessary things” (Acts 15:28) because of the large number of Jewish people who held strongly to the ceremonial aspects of the Mosaic Law (v. 21).

If church leaders referred to the consciences of both Christian and non-Christian Jews, they then had two reasons for instructing Gentile Christians to obey its code of conduct: (1) to prevent Gentile Christians from unnecessarily offending unsaved Jewish people whom the church hoped to reach with the gospel (1 Cor. 10:32) and (2) to preserve the church’s life and unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians (Eph. 2:11—3:6).

The church regarded the salvation of Jewish people and the life and unity of its church body as more important than the full exercise of Christian liberty.

The church was not being legalistic in establishing this code of conduct. Two facts support this conclusion:

First, Paul, a staunch opponent of legalism and proponent of Christian liberty, fully approved of this code. He did not protest it at the council but, instead, helped to deliver the written notice to the Gentile Christians (Acts 15:22–23). Evidently, Paul regarded the code as a valid restriction of Christian liberty and not a form of legalism. Bruce commented,

If this code of conduct was not legalistic, what, then, constitutes legalism? It is obvious from the Jerusalem council’s decision that an institution is not legalistic for simply establishing rules of conduct. Rather, the purpose for which it establishes its code reveals whether or not it is legalistic.

If a Christian institution wants to turn questionable practices into moral absolutes or sees its code as gaining merit from God, then the code is a form of legalism. But if the institution wants to show genuine love by not offending those with weaker consciences and truly wants to help its members avoid such offenses to enable more effective ministry, then it is not legalistic.

Gentile Christians gladly accepted the code of conduct: “They rejoiced over its encouragement [consolation]” (Acts 15:31).

According to theologian Richard B. Rackham, in the word translated “consolation,” the “meanings of consolation and exhortation run into one another and can hardly be separated.” Bruce likewise wrote that the word means both exhortation and relief.

Thus the Gentile Christians were relieved to hear the good news that they did not have to be circumcised and observe the Law of Moses and were exhorted to hear the code of conduct.

But the main point of verse 31 is that they rejoiced over both parts of the council’s letter—the good news and the code of conduct. They were thrilled to be accepted as believing Gentiles into full membership in the church at Jerusalem, and they joyfully accepted the code of conduct. They regarded membership in the church and sharing in its ministry as more valuable than the ability to fully exercise their Christian liberty.

In conclusion, since the early church as an institution was justified in requiring all of its members to adhere to a code of conduct that was necessary because of its specific cultural situation, Christian institutions today are likewise justified in doing so.

ENDNOTES

2 Ibid., 300.
4 Bruce, 289.
5 F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Book of the Acts (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 316.
7 Bruce, Acts of the Apostles, 300.

by Renald E. Showers, retired author and Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel
Faith, Facts, and Grocery Lists

Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.

—John Adams, 1770

Christianity rests on facts. And because the record of Christianity relies on the accounts of facts set forth in the Bible, that Book is continually at the heart of debates and arguments over the validity and meaning of our faith. I thought about that, and about John Adams, when I read recently about a study regarding archaeological discoveries in the area of ancient Judah.

The discovery was a treasure trove of military inscriptions written in Hebrew, dating to 600 BC, a mere 14 years before Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the first Temple. The dating is significant because skeptics have claimed that literacy then was too low to have supported the reading and writing skills necessary to produce the Bible.

However, the study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), the official, scientific journal of the National Academy of Sciences, shows that these ancient inscriptions, penned by low-level Hebrew soldiers ordering delivery of wine, bread dough, and other provisions, were highly literate. In fact, Professor Israel Finkelstein of Tel Aviv University, an outspoken doubter of traditional beliefs about ancient Israel, had to admit, “They wrote well, with hardly any mistakes.”

Every trial lawyer knows that documents written closer to the date of events are generally more trustworthy than later documents. The PNAS report verifies that reading and writing skills were high enough even among the average population during the first-Temple period to authenticate the literary content of the Old Testament.

This is one more piece of evidence authenticating the antiquity and reliability of God’s Word. The Dead Sea Scrolls, the oldest existing copies of the Old Testament, show the same thing. In my copy of The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible, the scriptural text from Isaiah, for example, is virtually identical to the version I regularly read in my personal Bible.

Although factuality is merely one aspect of our faith, it is an essential one.

During one of my trips to Israel with my wife, Janet, I picked up a little book by a scientist, Dr. Roy Turkington, originally titled Arise, Walk Through The Land and retitled Bible Guide to the Land of Jesus. In the back, it lists alphabetically the places and people mentioned in the Bible that can readily be traced to geographical sites you can visit in Israel today. Under “A” alone, there are 88 entries.

The rocks, hills, valleys, and ancient ruins in Israel—indeed, the ground itself—cry out that the testimony of the Bible’s authors is true.

Perhaps C. S. Lewis said it best in his book Mere Christianity: “If Christianity was something we were making up, of course we could make it easier. But it is not. . . . We are dealing with Fact. Of course anyone can be simple if he has no facts to bother about.”

by Craig L. Parshall, a Washington advisor, special counsel to the ACLJ, and best-selling novelist. His newest novel, due out this fall, deals with demon possession. Follow him on Facebook and Twitter (@CraigParshall).
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For those of you who have been trying to log on to mideastreporter.com because you read about the new website in our January/February issue, we have good news. The nonprofit, newsgathering organization is indeed online but with a different name: mideastdig.com.

Investigative journalist Richard Behar, a founder of the endeavor, told us, “For various reasons, the enterprise rebranded very recently and legally changed its name to Mideast Dig. We are growing, and we will be even stronger in the future as a result of the changes.”

So if you’re looking for fair and professional journalism concerning Israel, the Middle East, and the Arab-Israeli conflict, try mideastdig.com.

UNESCO TRIES TO ERASE JEWISHNESS OF TEMPLE MOUNT

An online petition has been launched calling on UNESCO to reverse its recent “insulting” resolutions that deny any Jewish connection to the Temple Mount or Western Wall.

In April the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) “provoked outrage,” reported Ari Soffer of Israel National News, “when it adopted an Arab-sponsored resolution in which the holiest sites in Judaism—the Temple Mount and Western Wall—were labeled as Muslim sites. . . . The Temple Mount was referred to as ‘Al Aqsa,’ while the Western Wall was labeled the ‘Al-Buraq Wall,’ the latter a reference to a relatively recent Muslim legend that claims Mohammed once tethered his mythical winged horse at the wall.”

“The shocking decision,” wrote Soffer, “followed a similar move to deny Jewish heritage at two other holy Jewish sites—the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel’s Tomb in Bethlehem.”

Soffer reported that the International Legal Forum and StandWithUs “are asking people throughout the world to sign an online petition in protest of the latest move to erase Jewish heritage in Israel.” Within days, the petition had garnered more than 1,700 signatures. It can be found on the change.org website at tinyurl.com/unpetitionTM.

“The petition” said Soffer, “notes that the UNESCO decision goes directly against the organization’s own self-proclaimed role as a guardian of world heritage sites.” The UNESCO resolution also condemns Israel for a number of things, including its plans to build a prayer space for women by Robinson’s Arch.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed UNESCO’s move “as another ‘absurd’ UN resolution,” wrote Tovah Lazaroff in The Jerusalem Post.

Netanyahu said, “UNESCO ignores the unique Jewish connection to the Temple Mount, the site of two temples for 1,000 years, and the place to which Jews prayed for thousands of years,” the Post reported. He said the UN “is rewriting a basic part of human history and proving that there is no low to which it will not reach.”

Israeli leader Yair Lapid declared, “This resolution was an utterly irresponsible intervention in one of the most complex places in the Middle East. UNESCO prides itself on promoting tolerance, interfaith and inter-cultural dialogue, yet it passes resolutions which erase the Jewish people from the historical narrative,” the Post reported.
ISRAEL TREATS THOUSANDS OF SYRIANS

Israel is continuing to provide medical assistance to thousands of Syrians injured in the Syrian civil war since December 2013. Dov Lieber of The Times of Israel reported that, as of April, Israel has treated more than 2,000 Syrians, many of whom are women and children.

Lieber said most arrive at Israeli hospitals with severe orthopedic trauma, costing Israeli taxpayers $15,000 per patient. Because Israel offers them quick, quality care, Lieber said most Syrians choose Israel over receiving treatment in Jordan.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) treat all Syrians in need of medical care equally. Lieber reported that IDF spokesman Lt. Col. Peter Lerner told journalists, “We follow a medical professional policy. We do not screen. We will treat anybody in dire need. If someone comes to the border with no legs, you cannot just leave him there.”

IDF DISCOVERS NEW TERROR TUNNEL

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have discovered a Hamas-built terror tunnel that extends from the Gaza Strip into Israel. Military assessments indicate Hamas probably dug the 98-foot-deep tunnel after the IDF destroyed many similar tunnels during Operation Protective Edge in 2014.

“The challenge is very big. The tunnels are very deep,” a senior security source told The Jerusalem Post. The IDF, explained the source, is “always operating under the severe assumption that there are more intrusive tunnels out there. If we can . . . detect and destroy them, and achieve it without reaching an escalation, that is our set mission. If this does lead to an escalation, it will not deter us either.”

POLLS: ISRAEL LOSING YOUNG AMERICANS

Support for Palestinians has tripled among young Americans, and Republicans are four times more likely to be pro-Israel today than Democrats, according to a new Pew Research Center survey.

Of Republicans surveyed, 75 percent sympathize more with Israel than with the Palestinians, while only 43 percent of Democrats do so.

Among young people, sympathy for the Palestinians has tripled. Some 27 percent say they favor the Palestinians over Israel, up from 9 percent in 2006; 43 percent say they favor Israel.

Liberal Democrats are the least pro-Israel group, according to the survey, while older Americans are the most pro-Israel, favoring the Jewish state 4 to 1.

The new data came from a telephone survey of more than 4,000 American adults in April. Overall, 54 percent say they sympathize more with Israel; 19 percent sympathize more with the Palestinians.

From news reports

MOTOROLA OPENS NEW CENTER IN ISRAEL

American technology giant Motorola Solutions has announced it will establish an innovation center in Israel that will deal with cyber, analytics, mobile, and the Internet of Things. The move will boost Israel’s economy, providing jobs and helping to encourage future investments in the Jewish state.

Motorola Solutions views its Israeli branch as “a strategic asset” and said the establishment of the center expresses its continued long-term commitment to Israel and Israeli industry.

Motorola Solutions Chairman and CEO Greg Brown told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, “When we think about additional PhDs, data scientists, hi-tech resources around analytics and cyber, Motorola wants to put more resources here in Israel. This is an outstanding area for innovation, technology incubation, [and] joint venture investment.”

Arutz-7 (IsraelNationalNews.com)

ISIS MAY ATTACK ISRAEL FROM SOUTH

The Israeli military is concerned the Islamic State (ISIS) terror group is planning a large-scale attack against Israel from Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula, Germany’s Bild newspaper reported recently, citing an Israeli Defense Forces officer.

The Sinai has become an Islamic State stronghold in recent years. According to the Bild report, there could be hundreds of ISIS operatives training in the Sinai and awaiting an order to strike Israel. The IDF officer quoted by Bild said that while it is not clear what a future Islamic State attack against Israel would look like, it could include the terrorists’ use of tanks and artillery.

ISRAEL Hayom/Exclusive to JNS.org

GIRL FINDS ANCIENT EGYPTIAN AMULET

A 12-year-old Jewish girl discovered a 3,200-year-old Egyptian amulet while volunteering at the Temple Mount Sifting Project in Jerusalem.

“When I was sifting, I came across a piece of pottery that was different from others I had seen, and I immediately thought that maybe I had found something special. It’s amazing to find something thousands of years old from ancient Egypt all the way here in Jerusalem!” said Neshama Spielman.

The amulet displays the name of Thutmose III, the pharaoh of Egypt’s 18th dynasty, who reigned from 1479 to 1425 BC. Professor Gabriel Barkay, cofounder of the sifting project, said the pharaoh “is credited with establishing the Egyptian imperial province in Canaan, conducting 17 military campaigns to Canaan and Syria, and defeating a coalition of Canaanite kings at the city of Megiddo in 1457 BCE.”

Egypt ruled Canaan during the late Bronze Age, which explains why the amulet was found in Jerusalem.

JNS.org
Recently I was waiting for the bus to Jerusalem when two young men asked me for directions to a synagogue. I gladly told them the way. One replied, “We want to pray, but we have already been to that synagogue, and it is locked up tight.”

I asked, “If every synagogue were locked, would you not pray?”

They looked at me strangely. Then one asked, “How can you pray without a minyan?” A minyan is the quorum of 10 men required to conduct a Jewish worship service.

I replied, “God is not looking to see if you pray in a synagogue. He looks at your heart. If you pray to Him from your heart, your prayer will be heard in heaven.”

The young man asked, “How can you pray without a tallit and without tefillin?”

A tallit is a prayer shawl, and tefillin are phylacteries.

I replied, “Those things are not important. The Lord wants our hearts. When we give God our hearts, we give Him our very lives.”

As we were talking, more people joined the conversation. Some of the men belong to the synagogue that was locked; and, because they know me, one asked, “Why are you always against everything we do? Who are you to say our traditions are not true? Why are you trying to brainwash these young men?”

I told them my duty is to bring them closer to God—not according to the old traditions but according to what the Holy Scriptures say in Zechariah 1:3: “‘Return to Me,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘and I will return to you.’”

“Zechariah,” I said, “also refers to your old traditions”:

“Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds.’” But they did not hear nor heed Me,” says the Lord (v. 4).
It was like a small miracle to be able to give them facts from the Bible. It was also a small miracle the bus was late, giving me more time to share the truth with them.

Eventually the two young men said they wanted to repent, and they asked me to take them to the rabbi. I said, “If you really want to repent, you do not need a rabbi. Go before the Lord and open your hearts before Him. Then you will know you are saved from your sins, and you will not have to wear the clothes the ultra-Orthodox wear, thinking they are pleasing God with them. God is pleased when you come before Him and say, ‘Lord, save me!’ You can say, just as King David did in Psalm 25:1–2, ‘To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed.’”

I read the remainder of Psalm 25, along with other passages, including Jeremiah 31:33: “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

As soon as I spoke the word covenant, some of the older men said to the young men, “You must fear him. He is speaking from the New Testament, the book those Christians believe!” I told them how blind they were, as I showed them I had read from the prophet Jeremiah. All were surprised. This was the first time most of them had seen that the Jewish prophets spoke about the New Covenant.

I then showed them some Old Testament passages that clearly speak of the Lord Jesus.

I thank God He has given me many opportunities to meet with young men like these and tell them how they can truly repent by putting their faith and trust in the Messiah.

—The Friends of Israel Archives, 1997
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