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CONTENTS

10 Lest We Forget
What influenced Oskar Schindler to save Jewish people from the Nazis? What makes some people bystanders and others rescuers?
Elwood McQuaid

14 Inside Yad Vashem
Take an in-depth look at Israel’s exceptional memorial to the victims of Hitler’s war against the Jews.
Elliot Jager

20 Sirens of Silence
If you’ve experienced it once, you’ll never forget it: Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day in Israel.
Clarence Johnson

24 The Evidence Trail
How can anyone reject the reality of the Holocaust? But many people try. These facts will help you refute the deniers.
Peter Colón

30 Why We Believe
The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a nonnegotiable tenet of the Christian faith. Here are a few reasons why we know Christ arose.
Charles E. McCracken

MORE IN THIS ISSUE

4 From the Editor
5 Inside View
6 Editorial:
What America Needs
7 Eye on the Middle East
9 Christian Persecution
28 The Things He Saw
33 A More Perfect Union:
Dancing With the Devil
34 The Twisted Cross
36 Rightly Dividing:
The Thessalonian Church
38 The Foundations of Faith:
Liberty, Love, and Life
With Christ, Part 3
40 Israel in the News
41 Orthodox Rabbis
Embrace Jesus
42 Apples of Gold

ON THE COVER
Child survivors of Auschwitz (AP Photo)
From the Editor

Have you ever watched a TV show that asks simple questions to the so-called man on the street? Usually, it’s hilarious. Some of the answers are so ridiculous you can hardly believe people are that ignorant.

For example, comedian Jay Leno once asked someone, “Who was the first president of the United States?” The guy replied, “Benjamin Franklin” instead of George Washington.

He asked another, “Who was the first man on the moon?” When a woman correctly said “Armstrong,” he asked for a first name, to which she replied, “Louis.” Louis was the jazz musician; Neil was the astronaut.

Not all man-on-the-street segments are funny, though. In 2013, author Rhonda Fink-Whitman took a video camera to colleges in America to see what students knew about the Holocaust. The answers she got weren’t much better than the ones Jay Leno received.

When she asked, “What was the Holocaust?” one student said it was something that happened to African-Americans. Another said it happened 300 years ago. Many didn’t know who Hitler was, who the Allies were, or what concentration camps were.

“You can’t blame the kids,” said Fink-Whitman, whose mother was a Holocaust survivor. “Nobody’s teaching it to them. By the time they get to college, they should know a thing or two about the Holocaust and other genocides so when the plague of denial creeps onto their campus they’re armed and ready with the truth.”

An exception was when she interviewed students from New Jersey. Why? Because New Jersey is one of only five states that mandate Holocaust education for grades 6 through 12. The others are Florida, Illinois, California, and New York.

As Holocaust Remembrance Day approaches, this issue of Israel My Glory is dedicated to a subject today’s world should know more about. The atrocities that an educated, cultured society like Germany committed prove the heart of man “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). The only cure is true faith in Messiah Jesus, who changes hearts.

If you live somewhere that does not have Holocaust education, you might want to pray about contacting your officials. Teaching the truth about World War II should be a priority everywhere because ignorance is dangerous.

Waiting for His appearing,
Lorna Simcox
Editor-in-Chief
One of my responsibilities as executive director of The Friends of Israel is to lead our Up to Jerusalem tours to Israel. It’s something I enjoy immensely. I’m often asked, “Isn’t it dangerous to travel to Israel?”

I understand why people ask. They hear about Palestinian-Arab terrorists knifing Israelis, ramming cars into people waiting for a train or bus, and shooting bystanders in public venues. The worst is when a suicide bomber strikes.

These tragedies do occur; and for those who are caught in them, they are a nightmare. That point was brought home to me when an Arab bludgeoned the wife of one of my Jewish friends in November while she was standing at the Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem. The blow knocked her unconscious. Fortunately, she survived with only bruises and cuts.

Violence in Israel does not touch most Israelis, and it rarely affects tourists. We usually hear our tour participants say, “I feel very safe in Israel!” Personally, I feel more threatened in Philadelphia, New York City, or Washington, DC.

A little-known fact is that violent crime in Israel is low compared to other developed nations. A 2012 United Nations Office On Drug and Crime global study showed Israel has one of the lowest murder rates in the world. While violent crime makes headlines, unreported are the country’s amazing achievements. A recent article by Judith Bergman in Israel Hayom reported that little Israel was ranked 18th out of 188 countries on the United Nations 2015 Human Development Index (HDI).

The HDI noted that in Israel, between 1980 and 2014,

- Life expectancy increased from 74.1 years to 82.4 years.
- Average years of schooling grew from 9.8 years to 12.5 years.
- Expected years of schooling grew from 12.6 years to 16 years.
- Gross National Income per capita increased by 112 percent, from $14,498 to $30,676.

In some areas, Israel surpassed the very high group: the top 10 countries on the Human Development Index. Israel has the highest labor force participation rate: 63.4 percent, compared to 60.3 percent in the very high group. Israel also has the lowest youth unemployment rate: 10.5 percent, versus 18 percent for the very high group.

It is ironic that the United Nations, which continually criticizes Israel, authored this report testifying to the remarkable progress the country has made in 68 short years.

When you consider that Israel began in 1948 with nothing but a determination to rise from the ashes and become a nation again, it’s amazing to see its success. Israel isn’t perfect. But God’s blessing on this little country is undeniable. It is the “apple of His eye” (Zech. 2:8).

If you allow fear to keep you from visiting the Jewish state, you’ll miss out on experiencing the wonderful story that is modern Israel. And you’ll miss the sites you read about in the Bible, particularly the incomparable city of Jerusalem, where our Savior took our place on the cross and became our redemption.

Israel is safer than many places in the United States, and it’s like no other nation in the world because it’s the land of the Bible.

If you have never visited Israel, or if you would like to visit again, I invite you to come with me “up to Jerusalem.” You can find more information about our tours on our website, www.foi.org, or by calling our headquarters toll-free at 800–257–7843.

ENDNOTE


by James Showers, 
executive director of The Friends of Israel
WHAT AMERICA NEEDS

When Americans tune in to the presidential debates, most of them already know what they want to hear. They're ready for a new hope and change. That's why CNN’s Republican debate in December was the most-watched prime-time show of the week, topping even football.

One policy in particular many Americans want changed is the present administration’s disparaging attitude toward Israel. Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, a conservative Christian lobby started in 1983 by Focus on the Family’s Dr. James Dobson, said 90 million Christians in America consider themselves evangelical; of those, 9 to 10 percent would consider themselves supporters of Israel. According to Perkins, support for Israel could be among the top five issues voters listen for when choosing a candidate.

It seems astonishing that Israel consistently makes headlines, even in presidential debates. How is it that this small Middle Eastern country approximately the size of New Jersey, with a population of merely 8 million, is a significant topic for both Republicans and Democrats? We don’t hear debate moderators bringing up El Salvador, which is roughly the same size as Israel. We don’t see candidates visiting Slovenia to shake hands with its political leaders.

So why is Israel a vital issue in the U.S. presidential election? Because Israel stands as a beacon of hope for democracy and freedom. The Middle East seems filled with nothing but turmoil, strife, and uncertainty. Look at some of the changes that have shaken the region in the past year:

The Islamic State (ISIS) has crippled Iraq, preventing any form of positive growth. ISIS has added to the death and destruction already ruining Syria under the leadership of Bashar Assad. Iran, on the verge of acquiring nuclear weapons, recently agreed to a deal that only ensures it will obtain them in the near future.

Many of the Gulf States, such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, have severed diplomatic relations with Iran in what looks like an internal Islamic standoff between Sunni and Shia Muslims. And let’s not forget Turkey, the once secular country in the Middle East. Its Islamization has grown substantially over the past few years.

Even the most democratic countries in the region face issues of despotism, endless corruption, terrorism, and high unemployment, all of which help to create an unrest that shows no signs of abating; and the Western countries remain skittish about how to handle such a tinderbox.

Yet at the center of all the Middle East chaos sits Israel—a beacon of hope for democracy and freedom that is the complete opposite of every other nation in the region. In Israel there is opportunity to grow as a family; thrive as a citizen; start a business; and worship without fear, regardless of religion.

What America needs is a president who desires to support and promote Israel's strengths and who encourages the Jewish nation to spread freedom and peace throughout the Middle East.

I'm praying God will give us a president who understands the value of Israel and supports the Jewish state for being a refuge of freedom and democracy in a dark area of the world. I hope you are too.

by Chris Katulka

What America needs is a president who desires to support and promote Israel's strengths and who encourages the Jewish nation to spread freedom and peace throughout the Middle East.
The Israel Defense Forces recently detained 90 Birzeit University (BZU) students, teachers, and employees for association with terrorism.

BZU, near Ramallah, probably the most prestigious and liberal of the universities within the Palestinian Authority-controlled area of Judea-Samaria, immediately denounced the action, claiming Israel violated the Palestinian education sector.

What the university did not say is that it encourages violence against Israel and many of its 11,000 students identify with Hamas. In fact, 26 of the 32 people elected to student government in 2015 openly support Hamas, which wants to obliterate Israel.

In June 2014, when the majority of student-council representatives were Palestinian Authority (PA) sympathizers, it handed out sweets to celebrate Hamas’s kidnapping of three Israeli teenagers whose bodies were found two weeks later.

The following month, the BZU council supported Hamas by posing in front of fake Hamas rockets. Hamas launched thousands of rockets into Israel that year.

In September 2014, BZU forced Haaretz correspondent Amira Hass, a Jewish-Israeli journalist who lives full-time among the Palestinians, to leave a conference on the campus because it has a rule “stipulating that Jewish Israelis are not allowed on university grounds.”

Never mind that in 2013, Hass, a self-described leftist and anti-Zionist, wrote in her column that Palestinians should throw stones at Israelis, saying it was their “birthright.” Reacting to her removal, Hass wrote, “It is well known that the university doesn’t employ Israeli Jews as academic staff, even from anti-Zionist left-wing circles. The claim that the law applies to me because I am representing an Israeli institution is a shaky one: Palestinian citizens of Israel who teach at Israeli universities are not subject to the same policy.”

Now many Palestinian millennials (born roughly between 1980 and 2000) reject PA President Mahmoud Abbas and identify with Hamas, an internationally recognized terrorist group supported by Iran. The newly elected student government’s first action was to elevate Bilal Barghouti to “Honorary Chairman of the BZU student council.” Barghouti is serving 16 life terms in prison in Israel for his role in suicide attacks against the Jewish nation.

BZU President Khalil Hindi applauded the students’ commitment and cooperation. He said their conduct during the election reflected their sense of responsibility. These “responsible” students now formally identify with an organization that is more violent than the PA.

In December they celebrated the 28th anniversary of Hamas’s establishment by holding automatic weapons and standing over a mock Israeli soldier who was kneeling before a row of armed, masked men—a disturbing similarity to ISIS.

BZU’s website states it desires to give students “the opportunity to realize their academic aspirations and encourages them to be productive citizens and active members of their community.” If the BZU students’ recent actions are those of “productive and active members of the community,” no wonder most Israelis hold little hope for a two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli crisis.

Palestinian students supporting Hamas stand next to mock Hamas rockets to celebrate their winning of the student council election at Birzeit University (Mohamad Torokman/Reuters/Corbis).
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**Faith in the Fire**
by Elwood McQuaid

**They Looked for a City**
You'll hardly be able to lay down this incredible true story of a Jewish family's bitter yet triumphant struggle for survival in wartorn Eastern Europe. See how God protected them and enabled them to come to faith through real-life miracles.
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See enclosed envelope for ordering details.
EASTERN UGANDA—A 32-year-old Pentecostal pastor was hacked to death recently and his body thrown in the river less than a week after members of a Bible study were poisoned in another area of eastern Uganda.

Pastor Bongo Martin and other church members resisted a Muslim effort to take over their land in Nansololo village. Muslims erected a fence with poles and barbed wire that encompassed land of the Pentecostal Church Ministry (PCM), a church elder told Morning Star News. Pastor Martin went to the site.

“Why are you encroaching on the church’s land and removing the boundary marks?” he asked the imam.

“We have told you many times that we do not want the church to be located near our mosque. Your church has been taking our members to your church,” the imam answered.

A Muslim then drew his sword and struck the pastor’s neck, church members said. Pastor Martin fell down bleeding, as the man continued to strike him, decapitate him, and throw his body into the river.

Pastor Martin leaves behind a wife and two children. A PCM church elder who witnessed the atrocity said, “When I saw such a brutal killing of my pastor, fear gripped me and, fearing for my life, I went to report the incident to Nabintende area police.”

The PCM bought the land from Kamya Ephraim, a church leader said. “The church building extends to a nearby river that borders mosque land, and on several occasions we have been threatened that our church building should be removed from its present location,” the church leader said.

Five days earlier in another part of eastern Uganda, five underground Christians in the predominantly Muslim village of Kachomo were poisoned after a Bible study, area sources said.

The Bible study took place at the home of Hajii Suleiman Sajjabi, a convert from Islam who had begun the study with eight family members who had become Christians under his influence.

Sajjabi is in a coma after someone put a pesticide into the group’s food. Four of his relatives have died.

Police are searching for the suspect, Isa Sajjabi, 32, one of Sajjabi’s sons. Isa had opposed leaving Islam for Christianity and had distanced himself from his converted relatives.

Survivors said his mother found Isa in the kitchen during the Bible study. After the study ended and the group began to eat, he disappeared. Group members began to feel ill shortly thereafter. Hospital tests revealed the victims had ingested the pesticide Malathion.

One month before the incident, word reached the mosque that Hajii Suleiman Sajjabi was distributing Bibles to Muslims. The local imam wrote a letter of rebuke to Sajjabi, warning him to stop witnessing to Muslims.

Sajjabi stopped attending the mosque, and he and his family became fearful. Shortly afterward, he started distributing clothes and food, gave out eight Bibles, and started the Bible studies in his home.

A Christian said, “Sajjabi was using the service outreach approach to reach members of the mosque” to win some to the Christian faith.
Lest We Forget

by Elwood McQuaid

When invited by the Embassy of Israel to Washington, DC, to attend a prerelease screening of Steven Spielberg’s film *Schindler’s List* in 1993, I filed into a theater crowded with viewers. Most of them, I presumed, were either elderly Holocaust survivors or Jewish people connected to victims of the Nazi campaign to annihilate European Jewry during World War II.

After everyone was seated, the Israeli ambassador welcomed us. As one of the few Gentiles in the audience, I wanted to assess the film’s accuracy and the reaction to it. Throughout the movie, I could hear the muffled sobs and see in the dim light people shielding their eyes from the brutality being depicted on the screen.

When the film ended, I witnessed something I had never seen before. No one moved or spoke. We sat in silence. Then, still not speaking, we began moving slowly toward the exits, as though we were leaving a temple, rather than a theater.

*Schindler’s List* was based on a well-researched book, *Schindler’s Ark*, by Australian novelist Thomas Keneally. It told the true story of German industrialist Oskar Schindler, a member of the Nazi Party, who initially dreamed of amassing a fortune by using Nazi prisoners for cheap labor but who ended up a hero instead.

A nominal Roman Catholic, Schindler lived a checkered existence, both before and after the Holocaust. However, for a brief few years he was moved to audacious acts of courage that etched him a well-deserved niche in Jewish history. If we had never heard of Oskar Schindler before the film, by the end of the film we would never forget him.

It seemed we had all been affected. We became aware collectively that there is evil in the world, as well as people of pure wickedness who possess no redeeming seed of goodness within them. Such evil is incapable of being
appeased, cajoled, or negotiated into civility. It is implacable and exists in abundance in today’s world.

**Ignorance or Indifference?**
Many of the Nazis’ victims erroneously believed the Holocaust was a product of Christian animosity and anti-Semitism. After all, Adolf Hitler came from a Catholic family, and many professing Russian and European Christians viewed the Jewish people with hostility.

However, neither Hitler nor the Nazi Party was in any respect Christian. The Führer’s fanatical commitment to himself as a messiah was delusional—yet real and deadly. The Aryan nation’s religion was the “German Church.” Hitler was its “savior”; and Hitler’s rambling manifesto of hate, *Mein Kampf,* was its Bible.

Exactly how much Western leaders knew of the savage treatment of European Jewry is still a matter of debate. Undeniable, however, are the facts that they did nothing about it and that, with all of the intelligence sources operating inside Europe throughout the war, they knew much more than they were telling.

More complex is the issue of apparent Christian indifference in the West. It is not that Christians did not care; it is, rather, that most of them did not know. Anti-Semitism had pervaded Europe, particularly Eastern Europe. As the war progressed and atrocities became more openly severe, two distinct behavioral patterns emerged. Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, states, “Bystanders were the rule, rescuers were the exception.” But there were rescuers, and some of them were Bible-believing Christians.

Most rescuers were ordinary people . . . from all walks of life; highly educated people as well as illiterate peasants; public figures as well as people from society’s margins; city dwellers and farmers from the remotest corners of Europe; university professors, teachers, physicians, clergy, nuns, diplomats, simple workers, servants, resistance fighters, policemen, peasants, fishermen, . . . and many more.²

Almost without exception, these rescuers faced a defining moment. It may have come through a knock at the door: a Jewish individual or family pleading for a night’s refuge, or a starving child asking for bread. Sometimes it came after witnessing brutality that could not be ignored. Looking the other way no longer seemed an option.

For most rescuers, their decision was probably instantaneous. Human beings in desperate straits stood before them. There was no time for intellectual discussion. No time for procrastination. The question was simple but life-altering: What am I to do?

**The Power of One**
For Oskar Schindler, the life-changing, defining moment came as he watched the infamous liquidation of the Kraków Ghetto in Poland between June 1942 and March 1943. Kraków was the location of his enamel factory, where hundreds of Jewish people labored. That was when Schindler stopped being a bystander and became a rescuer. His decision to save Jewish people destined for the gas chambers refocused a life previously characterized by self-indulgence, greed, and a lust for amassing enormous personal wealth.

Thus began the assembly of his famous list that would contain some 1,200 names of Jewish people whom Schindler rescued from death by bribing German officials with money, expensive gifts, and illicit favors. He would be rewarded with three trips to Nazi jails, charged with too much familiarity with Jews; the loss of his fortune by trading it for Jewish lives; and a postwar period of failed business ventures and near poverty.

Schindler’s story of bravery and sacrifice was repeated thousands of times in many different ways for those who dared to exhibit courage in the face of intimidation.

**Legacy of Love**
Love—the heart-changing, life-altering variety—comes in a great many forms. I have sensed love every time I’ve been privileged to stroll along the carob-tree-shaded Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. In front of the trees are plaques memorializing rescuers honored as Righteous Gentiles from more than 44 countries.

The number of individuals stands at nearly 26,000, of which 11,945 represent those from the Netherlands and Poland. Of course, these numbers do not include the
thousands of others who stepped out of the shadows to help and then went, unrecognized, about their lives.

Among those honored from the Netherlands is someone well-known among true Christians: Corrie ten Boom, a courageous woman who in every respect left a true legacy of love. Her plaque reads simply, “Corrie ten Boom & Father Casper & Sister Elisabeth.”

Oskar Schindler’s marker is always bedecked in flowers placed by survivors on his list or their families or by grateful admirers of a man whom they respect for giving up literally everything to save his Jews.

Schindler died in 1974 and is interred in the Catholic cemetery on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. His remains were brought from Germany by a number of “Schindler’s Jews,” honoring his request to be buried in Israel. The spot is a shrine of sorts, as evidenced by the piles of memorial stones placed on and around the marker bearing a cross and the following inscription:

Oskar Schindler  
28.4.1908—9.10.1974  
Righteous Among the Nations [written in Hebrew]  
The Unforgettable Lifesaver of 1200 Persecuted Jews [written in German]

It may seem ironic that these rescuers, great and small, who gave up everything, will never be forgotten. In New Jersey alone, 25 streets are named after Oskar Schindler. Yet Adolf Hitler and his Nazi murderers lie unmourned and reviled. No markers. No flowers. No plaques. No memorials.

When faced with compelling circumstances, these righteous Gentiles made personal choices that accomplished what politicians, bystanders, and those who chose to look the other way could not. They stood for what was right in the face of evil, persecution, and death and left a legacy of love that will last forever. God grant us the courage to do likewise.

ENDNOTES
1  “The Righteous Among the Nations,” Yad Vashem <yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/about.asp>.  
2  Ibid.

Making a Will That Works

If your will is up-to-date, you enjoy a certain peace of mind. The fact that a plan is in place to care for your loved ones and favorite charities is a reason to sleep well. It’s comforting to know you have thoughtfully arranged your affairs before you go home to be with the Lord.

Yet our world is changing rapidly. In these uncertain times, you may be wondering if your will can withstand the changes that lie around the corner.

In light of today’s realities, it might be a good time to review your estate plan. Or perhaps you have yet to “get your house in order” and are looking to take that first step. Let us help. We can put you in touch with a capable professional to work around the uncertainties of the times.

To learn more about wills, request our free, no-obligation brochure Making a Will That Works. Simply check the appropriate box on the envelope in this magazine, call Tom Geoghan at our office at 800-257-7843, or email us at development_dept@foi.org.

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Mike Brown  
Dennis Marzka  

Lest We Forget

Elwood McQuaid is a former executive director of The Friends of Israel and a retired editor-in-chief of Israel My Glory.
INSIDE YAD VASHEM

A look at Israel’s memorial to the victims of Hitler’s war against the Jews
The Promised Land, as seen from the overlook at Yad Vashem (Hanan Isachar/Hanan Isachar Photography).
The idea of a Zionist memorial to the victims of Hitler's war against the Jews came to Mordechai Shenhavi (1900–1983) before anyone even grasped the horrifying scale of the Holocaust.

In August 1942, Shenhavi, a member of Kibbutz Beit Alfa in the Jezreel Valley, had a terrifying dream. In it, he saw millions of Nazi victims marching toward Zion, carrying tombstones on their shoulders. Gripped by this vision, he struggled to persuade the prestate Zionist institutions to take up the proposal.

The genocide in Europe would continue until April 1945. Even afterward, the British kept the gates of Mandatory Palestine closed to Holocaust survivors lest their arrival antagonize the Arabs.

In a May 1945 article in Davar, a Hebrew-language newspaper and the powerful workers-union mouthpiece, Shenhavi presented the nuts and bolts of his ideas for how the Holocaust should be memorialized. Finally, in August 1945, three months after World War II ended in Europe, delegates to the General Zionist Council meeting in London embraced his vision.

After Israel fought its way into existence in 1948, the concept for a Holocaust memorial took further shape. Ben Zion Dinur (1884–1973), who had political clout as education minister in Israel's fledgling government, championed the concept.

In 1950, hundreds of Jerusalemites, led by the country's chief rabbi, Isaac Herzog (his grandson Isaac is the current Labor Party leader), gathered at Jerusalem's Mount Herzl—the site of Yad Vashem today—to remember the dead. By 1953, Dinur had shepherded legislation through the Knesset that established Yad Vashem's Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority and declared the 27th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan (following Passover in the spring) as Holocaust Remembrance Day.

On April 28, 1957, the first building on what would grow into the sprawling Yad Vashem campus was opened. Thousands of Jerusalemites showed up for the solemn occasion, led by the country's president, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, and the city's mayor, Gershon Agron. The blue and white Israeli flag was flown at half-staff; six memorial torches were lit for the 6 million murdered Jews; and a cantor, choir, and rabbis chanted memorial prayers.

"The lesson of history is to sanctify their lives by living so that we don't have to sanctify them in death," Dinur pronounced. And with that, the Israeli national anthem, Hatikva ("The Hope"), was sung.

TODAY VISITORS ENTER the Holocaust History Museum galleries of Yad Vashem via a wooden gangplank that leads into a gray, triangular, concrete-reinforced structure; lighting is primarily from the skylight above. This ultramodern museum, redesigned by leading architect Moshe Safdie, opened in 2005.

The exhibition rooms are positioned in a Z-like formation off a long hall. The museum's narrative of the Holocaust starts with the rise of Nazism in Germany in 1920. No less central to the rise of Nazism, this first exhibit makes clear, was mainstream Christianity's relentless teaching of supersessionism, also called Replacement Theology, which claims God has abandoned the Jewish people and given all its divine promises to the church.

Museum visitors come from everywhere. They are a hodgepodge of travelers, students, Jewish youth groups from abroad, Asian tourists, new recruits in the Israeli army, newly married ultra-Orthodox couples, and more. Some probably have little grasp of history and no idea when World War II began or ended. Yet for most, the museum is both moving and educational.

As you zigzag through the main hall from one alcove to the next, you come upon exhibits—many using period photographs and film clips, sometimes accompanied by

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The words Yad Vashem come from Isaiah 56:5: "To them I will give in My house and within My walls a place [memorial] and a name [yad vashem] . . . that shall not be cut off."
survivors’ video testimonies—that transport you through the various stages of the industrialized destruction of European Jewry.

As the process of extermination proceeded, you learn, the world was indifferent. An exhibit addresses the Allies’ unanimous refusal to bomb the Auschwitz extermination site in Poland, the largest of Adolf Hitler’s notorious death camps, where more than 1 million people were murdered. On display is a reproduction of the wrought-iron Arbeit Macht Frei sign that hung deceptively over the camp’s entrance. Meaning “work makes you free,” the German words were intended to lull the bewildered, traumatized, exhausted arrivals into believing that good behavior would result in decent treatment. A display of children’s shoes brings home the fact that 1.5 million of the victims were children.

Toward the end of the pavilion, you come upon a niche with photographs and a video clip showing Israel’s first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, proclaiming Israel’s Declaration of Independence on May 14, 1948. The implicit message is twofold: First, had the Jewish people had a country of their own, it is unlikely Hitler’s killing machine would have been left undisturbed. Stopping the Holocaust was not the Allies’ goal; it would have been Israel’s. Second, never again will the Jewish people allow themselves to be put into the position of helpless victims.

As you make your way to the museum’s exit, you see the Hall of Names to the right. It is a spherical room containing floor-to-ceiling bookshelves with volume after volume of inventories, listing the names of the victims. The room testifies that every person murdered had a name and personal life. Yad Vashem says it has identified more than two-thirds of the victims of the Holocaust, which in Hebrew is called the Shoah (destruction).

In the center of the Hall of Names hangs a huge dome lined with thousands of black-and-white photos of victims. Its peak could be seen as a chimney, representing the smokestacks of the crematoriums. Below the viewing platform where visitors stand is a dark abyss.

When you exit the cool, somberly lit, gray, elongated chamber, you find yourself on an outdoor overlook (shown on pages 14–15) facing the splendor of the Judean hills. Hitler’s victims did not live to see this breathtaking vista. All you can do is take it in on their behalf.

YAD VASHEM DOES NOT PUSH a political line, beyond the reality that it is located on Mount Herzl, adjacent to the military cemetery in Jerusalem that maintains a section where great Zionist leaders are buried. The closest connection between Zionism and the Holocaust, says Yad Vashem’s director of libraries, Robert Rozett, is that many of the Jewish people who wanted to come to the Holy Land never got the chance because they were murdered.

Still, the museum does not want to think for you. The objective is for visitors to leave knowing what the Nazis stood for and viewing Hitler’s victims not as passive objects but as people. Precisely what messages—particular or universal—they come away with is up to them. Those who arrive with a set political view most likely leave with that view, too, says Rozett.

In a fractious Israeli society, Yad Vashem manages to stand above the fray: It is the oldest Holocaust museum and the repository of more material on the Shoah than anywhere else in the world. It is located in Israel’s capital, where some of the best scholarship on the Shoah takes place; and about 15 million people annually visit its website, yadvashem.org.

Yad Vashem is also unique because so many people who live within its radius are actually linked to the Holocaust, either as survivors or as relatives of survivors.

While some 850,000 visitors come to the campus each year, the museum is only one aspect of Yad Vashem.

Behind the scenes, it continues to collect, process, and make available to the public vast amounts of data—names, photographs, and documents—on the Holocaust. It annually acquires thousands of specialized books for its library, which contains 150,000 titles in 54 languages. It is officially charged with commemorating the Holocaust, including hosting Israel’s main ceremony on Holocaust Memorial Day, which takes place at the campus’s Warsaw Ghetto Square. Yad Vashem also sends specialists around the world to lecture. Rozett himself recently went to Senegal, Ghana, and South Africa.
The Christian Friends of Yad Vashem aims to draw visitors and develop support for Yad Vashem activities. . . . In November 2015, for example, it offered a nine-day colloquium geared especially to American pastors and lay leaders . . . from various denominations.

YAD VASHEM’S CAMPUS stretches across 45 acres of hillside and trees that offer an opportunity for quiet contemplation. Sculptures and monuments complement the rustic setting. The Avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations (a tree-lined walkway) and the Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations both commemorate the "righteous Gentiles" who, at great personal risk, hid or rescued Jewish people during the Holocaust. In 2014, 410 people—many of them Christians—were added to the rolls of the Righteous Among the Nations, bringing the total to 25,685.

After leaving the museum, you can stroll to the Hall of Remembrance, opened in 1961, whose centerpiece is an eternal flame. Foreign dignitaries from popes to presidents have placed wreaths in this dark pavilion where the names of the Nazis’ most infamous killing grounds are chiseled into stone. The Eternal Light was lit in 1961 by Knesset member Mordechai Nurock (1879–1962), whose entire family was murdered by the Nazis.

From there visitors can move through the Square of Hope to the synagogue. The modern, circular chapel is nondenominational and open to all for silent meditation, while also functioning as a synagogue. It houses salvaged artifacts, including a Torah ark from a synagogue in Răduăni, Romania. The ark arrived in pieces and was reconstructed without the benefit of a photograph showing the original.

In April 2015, Yad Vashem opened an exhibit titled “Children in the Holocaust: Stars Without a Heaven.” With books, toys, and video testimonies, it gives visitors a glimpse into the lives of children during the Shoah. Whether at Auschwitz where they labored, in hiding, or living under false identities, the children managed to form friendships, study, and pray. Playing softly in the background is Hatikva.

The exhibition will stay open through this summer.

YAD VASHEM KNEW IT WANTED to reach out to Christians and realized it would need a strategic partner. During the 2006 Feast of Tabernacles, the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem signed a partnership agreement with Yad Vashem to develop a Christian Friends office. The Rev. Sam Clarke, an Anglican minister with a passion for the Hebrew roots of Christianity, became the founding director. Susanna Kokkonen took over in 2008.

The Christian Friends of Yad Vashem aims to draw visitors and develop support for Yad Vashem activities. Kokkonen, a Bible-believing Christian, brings a considerable skill set to the job. She holds a PhD from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where she wrote her dissertation on Jewish, post-Holocaust refugees in Italy. Besides her native Finnish, she is fluent in six languages, including English and Hebrew, and has been known to study Old Testament texts in the original Hebrew.
Kokkonen explained that the words Yad Vashem come from Isaiah 56:5: “To them I will give in My house and within My walls a place [memorial] and a name [yad vashem] . . . that shall not be cut off.”

Her office, together with Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies, oversees the annual International Christian Leadership Seminar on Holocaust, anti-Semitism and Israel. In addition to the Christian Embassy, it partners with a range of Christian groups, depending on the nature of the seminar and who will be participating.

In November 2015, for example, it offered a nine-day colloquium geared especially to American pastors and lay leaders. The seminars bring together Christians from various denominations. Kokkonen hopes attendees will return home as Yad Vashem “ambassadors.”

Kokkonen said there are philosophical and theological issues Christians might want to reflect on during a visit to Yad Vashem and sees her mission as raising consciousness about the Holocaust among Christians.

“The Holocaust happened in Christian Europe,” said Kokkonen, adding that, in matters of faith, “it might actually be more comfortable for a Christian visitor to share their thoughts with another Christian, rather than a Jewish person.”

She travels widely to spread Yad Vashem’s message, speaking at churches and interfaith groups to make the case that Christians can play a singular role in supporting Yad Vashem. While the State of Israel contributes 36 percent of its budget, the remainder must be raised through donations and activities. Kokkonen also works with Christian communities in the United States and Europe that wish to host a traveling Yad Vashem exhibition that brings Yad Vashem’s message to believers who may never get the chance to visit Jerusalem.

Although she can only meet with a fraction of the thousands of Christians who visit the campus, individuals and groups are invited to email her office at Christian.friends@yadvashem.org.il well in advance of their arrival. Kokkonen or a member of her staff will try to make their upcoming visit as meaningful as possible. There is also a Christian Friends of Yad Vashem Facebook page.

**HOW SOCIETY TREATS JEWISH PEOPLE** is often a reliable barometer for the moral state of humanity. Jewish people had lived in Europe for nearly 2,000 years. Yet between 1933 and 1945, Nazi Germany and its enablers persecuted and murdered most of the continent’s Jews.

A small number of Christians actively tried to hide or help them escape. Most looked the other way. The United States entered World War II in December 1941. Halting the systematic, industrial-scale annihilation of European Jewry was never a priority of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s administration.

As time takes its toll on the last remaining survivors and witnesses—and as the enemies of the Jewish people brazenly deny that the Holocaust happened—Yad Vashem stands as an everlasting memorial, a beacon to light the way for mankind in a darkening world.

To read more about the Holocaust, go to the following:

- The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations
- The Holocaust and the Christian World: Reflections on the Past, Challenges for the Future, edited by Carol Rittner, Stephen D. Smith, and Irena Steinfeldt
- The Abandonment of the Jews by David S. Wyman
- Hitler’s Cross by Erwin Lutzer (available through The Friends of Israel, see page 8)

Elliot Jager is a Jerusalem-based journalist and son of a Holocaust survivor. His latest book, The Pater: My Father, My Judaism, My Childlessness, is available on Amazon.com.
Sirens of Silence

Reflections on Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day in Israel

by Clarence Johnson
People stood shoulder-to-shoulder under the Jerusalem morning sun—still, respectful, and mindful of the solemn communication for which they had assembled. The only sound was that of a siren wailing in the distance.

Siren and silence. Both simultaneously pierced the air throughout the small country as the monotone blast sounded for one minute, then stretched into two. Almost all traffic came to a stop as passengers and drivers left their vehicles to stand quietly on highways and alleyways. Television and radio broadcasts hushed, while shoppers, businessmen, and workers stood still in the heat until the moaning siren ceased.

Then, in a soulful procession, a steady stream of dignitaries, families, and national representatives emerged from the crowd and reverently laid their memorial wreaths at the base of Yad Vashem’s Warsaw Ghetto Uprising monument. It was Yom Hashoah in Israel.

Yom Hashoah, or Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day, is a national event when all of Israel solemnly remembers the victims of the Holocaust of World War II. The Israeli Knesset instituted the day on August 19, 1953. The Hebrew word yom means “day,” Shoah literally translates as “devastation” or “catastrophe” but has become the modern Hebrew word for “Holocaust.”

A Hebrew day begins at sundown and ends at the following sundown. According to the Hebrew calendar, Yom Hashoah falls on the 27th of Nisan, between the end of Pesach (Passover) and the start of Yom Ha’atzmaut, Israel’s Independence Day. If 27 Nisan interferes with Shabbat, Yom Hashoah commemorations are held either the Thursday before or the Monday following the 27th.

This year Yom Hashoah will begin at sundown on Wednesday, May 4.

During the 24-hour observance, Holocaust memorial ceremonies and educational programs for all ages are held across the country. Entertainment businesses, restaurants, and gathering places close; and media outlets replace normal schedules with Holocaust-related broadcasts.

In Israel, Yom Hashoah is an official, nationwide day of remembrance. The evening and morning services at Yad Vashem are recognized as formal government ceremonies. Jewish people around the
globe also observe the day with synagogue services, name-reading ceremonies, and the lighting of yahrzeit (memorial) candles.

But Yom Hashoah should not be confused with the annual International Holocaust Remembrance Day observed on January 27, which was instituted by the United Nations on November 1, 2005.

Properly memorializing the slaughter of more than 6 million Jewish people—of whom 1.5 million were children and infants—is not a simple undertaking. In the words of former Israeli President Shimon Peres, Yom Hashoah is a day when “tearing eyes turn to those who are not here with us. The piles of tortured bodies, the wounded thrown into the ditches of death, the furnaces burning the living. These are our witnesses forever. The last breath of the infants in their mothers’ arms will continue to horrify all human beings, until the end of time.”

However, memorializing the victims is not solely about the number 6 million; it is about each individual life. “Unto Every Person There is a Name” is a memorial project that Yad Vashem describes as “designed to perpetuate the memory of the Six Million not only as a collective, but as individuals—one at a time—through the public recitation of their names on Yom Hashoah to restore their identity and dignity.”

The Holocaust was uniquely Jewish. Although the Nazis and their collaborators also persecuted and killed others, the Jewish people alone were targeted for extermination. The scheme was unprecedented and was designed to kill everyone of Jewish blood everywhere.

In 2014, while studying at Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust History Museum and International School of Holocaust Studies, I was blessed to be invited to the national Yom Hashoah commemorations in Jerusalem. That experience has impacted me deeply to this day.

Each year, as the sun slowly sets over the Mediterranean Sea and Yom Hashoah begins, thousands of people rapidly fill Yad Vashem’s Warsaw Ghetto Square. Survivors and their families and friends are scattered throughout the assembly, along with ambassadors and representatives from numerous countries. The president and prime minister, accompanied by members of the Supreme Court, the Knesset, and other dignitaries, gather as well. The Israeli flag is then lowered to half-mast and a pillar of flame is lit that burns in remembrance for 24 hours. Military salutes, music, and speeches follow—all nationally broadcast on Israeli television and radio.

At the event, six Holocaust survivors light six memorial torches, representative of the 6 million who perished at the hands of the Nazis. Prior to the torch lighting, each survivor’s story is told briefly on large screens for all to see, ending with photos and tributes to their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. These heart-rending biographies...
leave few with dry eyes. While watching, I remembered a question asked by a Holocaust scholar that morning: “What is the greatest revenge for the Holocaust?” The answer, “Grandchildren.”

The year I attended, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke eloquently of the tragic events of the Shoah, declaring that “Never again” will the Jewish people stand silently and allow themselves to be led to the slaughter as the world watches.

President Peres spoke about what he had learned while visiting his birthplace—Wiszniew (pronounced Vishniev), Poland—after the war. (The area is now part of Belarus.) During World War II, many Jewish people fled Wiszniew for Israel, but those who remained were ordered to the synagogue and burned alive by the Nazis. Anyone who resisted or tried to escape was shot, and the city was purged of its Jewish heritage.

Among those who perished in the wooden synagogue’s flames was Peres’s grandfather, Rabbi Zvi Meltzer. Meltzer entered, his prayer shawl on his head, and the doors were locked behind him. Recalling the last prayer he heard from his grandfather’s lips, Peres stopped and quietly mouthed the Kaddish.

Clouds of sadness came over me throughout those days in Jerusalem as I thought about the Holocaust atrocities. It was no longer about people and places before my time and far away. It became personal. I spent time with survivors and heard their stories. I met families and friends of people who disappeared and were never heard from again. My heart broke, and my love for the Jewish people increased. These victims had been individuals with normal lives, hopes, dreams, and expectations. Yet they were brutally slaughtered as the world looked on.

I was troubled knowing false Christian teaching helped to fuel Nazi hatred of the Jewish people. The errors of Replacement Theology and anti-Semitic kingdom doctrines proclaimed that God had rejected, cursed, and cast aside the Jewish people forever because they had rejected their Messiah.

Echoing Prime Minister Netanyahu’s words, I, too, want to say, “Never again!”

“Never again” to errant Bible teaching that energizes anti-Semitism. “Never again” to churches cursing, rather than blessing, the seed of Abraham. “Never again” to a view of grace that is unable to touch people of every tongue, tribe, and nation.

As the Yom Hashoah sirens wail in Israel on May 5, I will not be silent. Will you?

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ENDNOTE

1 “Remembrance,” “Unto Every Person There is a Name,” Yad Vashem <www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/remembrance/2014/every_person.asp>.

Clarence Johnson is the director of The Friends of Israel Institute of Jewish Studies.
Auschwitz survivor Leon Greenman, 93, displays his prison number tattoo on December 9, 2004, at the Jewish Museum in London, England, where he conducted educational events (Getty Images).
The Evidence Trail

Exposing the flaws of Holocaust denial

by Peter Colón

I recently attended the Christian Leadership Seminar at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem. The Christian Friends of Yad Vashem (CFYV), which hosts the conference, does a wonderful job educating Christians about the Holocaust.

One session focused on Holocaust Revisionism, the contemporary anti-Semitic movement that denies what the Nazis did to the Jewish people during World War II. Holocaust revisionists refute that 6 million Jewish people were murdered, claiming the numbers are exaggerated. Their propaganda contends that gas chambers and crematoriums were never used to kill people and that Adolf Hitler and the Nazis never planned to exterminate all of European Jewry.

According to them, the Holocaust is a lie fabricated by the Jewish people themselves. Unfortunately, the Internet provides a convenient forum for these deniers to spew their absurdities, misleading and confusing people around the world.

Therefore, they must be confronted. We serve "a God of truth" (Dt. 32:4) whose "word is truth" (Ps. 119:160). So disseminating truth about the Holocaust is vital.

To determine the truth, CFYV taught us to consider the "convergence of evidence." To establish a case for guilt or innocence in a court of law, one must collect pieces of evidence from various sources. The same method should be applied to the Holocaust.

The consensus among genuine historians is that 5.1 to 6.4 million Jewish people perished at the hands of the Nazis. The most common figure—6 million—is conservative, within a 10 percent margin of error. Many believe the actual number is much higher.

Experts reached their figures by comparing the Jewish population before the war with demographic
information after the war. They collected records from towns and villages where censuses were held and consulted Jewish birth and death certificates.

In fact, in October the CBS News program 60 Minutes aired a segment about French-Catholic priest Patrick Desbois who has been on a 15-year-long quest to uncover undocumented sites where there were wholesale Jewish massacres. So far he has interviewed more than 4,000 eyewitnesses who have led him to more than 1,700 areas in the former Soviet Union where Jewish people were murdered en masse and dumped into communal graves entirely invisible today. He is documenting the data thoroughly.

The Nazis themselves kept meticulous records of deaths in their camps and received reports from their organized killing squads. William Shirer (1904–1993), an American war correspondent and historian who wrote The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, stated, “According to two S.S. [Schutzstaffel, or protection squadron] witnesses at Nuremberg the total was put at between five and six millions by one of the great Nazi experts on the subject, Karl Eichmann, chief of the Jewish Office of the Gestapo.”

The “Nazi expert” was Karl Adolf Eichmann (1906–1962), who kept the trains rolling, deporting helpless Jewish men, women, and children from all over Europe to death camps. During his trial in Jerusalem in 1961, Eichmann never denied his participation in the Holocaust.

Though the Nazis treated their victims worse than animals, each victim was a unique, irreplaceable human being, created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26–27). As Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Judith Miller wrote, “We must remind ourselves that the Holocaust was not six million. It was one, plus one, plus one.”

Under interrogation, he was asked what happened to the Jews when they arrived at his camp. He replied, “They were not supposed to be employed in work there, but they were supposed to be exterminated. . . . That order I received in mid year of 1941, I believe it was July, from the Reichsführer SS [Himmler] in person.” When asked how the Jews were to be exterminated, Höss replied, “By gas.”

Victims typically arrived by rail and were met by the SS-Totenkopfverbände, or “Death’s-Head Units,” and their collaborators. The Nazis told those selected for death they were going to be given showers, clean clothes, food, and work assignments.

After undressing, victims were led into the “shower chamber,” which was made to look like a real shower. Once they were packed inside, the Nazis sealed the doors and dropped Zyklon B pellets into a small air vent above the chamber.

To drown out the screams of the dying, Nazi officers turned on the motor of a truck parked outside the chamber. Once the air in the chamber cleared, they dragged the bodies to the crematoriums, . . . loaded them onto sliding metal trays, and slid them into the ovens.

DENIERS ARGUE that gas chambers and crematoriums were used primarily to exterminate bugs and dispose of the bodies of those who died of natural causes. But Holocaust survivors have testified that the gas chambers and crematoriums were used as “machinery of mass murder.”

Nazis have even testified to this truth. One incriminating admission came from Rudolf Höss, the longest-serving commandant of the infamous Auschwitz death camp in Poland. Höss introduced the cyanide-based pesticide Zyklon B specifically to kill people.

French priest Patrick Desbois at one of many previously undocumented graves in Ukraine where Jewish people were executed en masse and buried—some alive (Efrem Lukatsky/AP Photo).
To drown out the screams of the dying, Nazi officers turned on the motor of a truck parked outside the chamber. Once the air in the chamber cleared, they dragged the bodies to the crematoriums—large, semicircular brick structures with huge smoke stacks—loaded them onto sliding metal trays, and slid them into the ovens. The ashes then were scraped out and dumped into open pits.

**HOLOCAUST DENIERS ALSO CLAIM** Jewish people were not specifically targeted. However, though Hitler’s regime murdered nearly 11 million civilians, at least 6 million of them were Jewish. The Jews were, in fact, singled out and slaughtered simply for the “offense” of being Jewish.

The historical facts concerning the Wannsee Conference verify this truth. On January 20, 1942, a special conference was held at a two-story mansion in Wannsee near Berlin. Fifteen high-ranking Nazi officials gathered to discuss a detailed protocol for how to carry out the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question.”

Within 90 minutes, they had decided to round up Europe’s Jews from west to east and send them to extermination camps. Ten days later, Hitler declared, “The result of this war will be the complete annihilation of the Jews. . . . the hour will come when the most evil universal enemy of all time will be finished, at least [for] a thousand years.”

On February 24, 1943, he stated, “This struggle will not end with the annihilation of Aryan mankind, but with the extermination of the Jewish people in Europe.”

Patrick Desbois told CBS News correspondent Lara Logan he has no doubt Hitler’s goal was the extermination of European Jewry:

Father Desbois: The general order was to eliminate the last Jew, even the baby, even the old mommy. They [the Nazis] never left anybody.

Lara Logan: So it was a policy of total annihilation.

Father Desbois: Total annihilation. And if Hitler didn’t lose the war, I think today will not be one Jew alive.

When I think about the Nazi atrocities, I remember Psalm 83: “They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted together against Your sheltered ones. They have said, ‘Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more’” (vv. 3–4).

It is profane to deny the reality of the Holocaust. Holocaust deniers and all anti-Semites should consider God’s involvement in Israel’s history and heed His stern warning concerning Israel’s enemies: “Therefore all those who devour you shall be devoured; and all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; those who plunder you shall become plunder, and all who prey upon you I will make a prey” (Jer. 30:16).

Biblically, Jewish people are at the center of God’s work and plan for the ages. Through them the world received the Scriptures (Rom. 9:4–5); and through them came the Savior, Jesus Christ, “in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14).

The commemorative political slogan “Never Forget” originated in the late 1940s to remind the world the Holocaust must never happen again—to anybody. People must never forget the atrocities of the Holocaust and the 6 million Jewish people who lost their lives; and in a world where propaganda is a weapon of war, they must make it their business to be able to tell the difference between truth and fiction.

**ENDNOTES**

3. David A. Rausch, _A Legacy of Hatred_ (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1984), 133.
4. “Responses to common Holocaust denial claims,” Anti-Defamation League <tinyurl.com/qzgt547>.
5. Ibid.
On April 27, 1945, the 12th Armored Division of the United States Army liberated prisoners from a Dachau subcamp called Kaufering IV in Landsberg, Germany. Serving with the armored unit was a 22-year-old soldier from Ohio named Robert A. Miller.

We walked between row upon row of bodies stacked like cordwood, only not neatly piled like cordwood. Bodies so emaciated they looked like skeletons with skin stretched over bones. . . . Some [American soldiers] were taking pictures and weeping at the horror of it all.

In April 1982, 37 years later, Miller was serving as a pastor in Florida when he was invited to participate at a local Holocaust remembrance ceremony. There he shared what he saw during the war. His firsthand testimony has been corroborated many times over by American soldiers and scores of photographs.

What the Jewish people suffered at the hands of the Nazis is unspeakable. Few people today seem to realize that the cruellest, most savage Nazis were highly educated members of a society considered among the most cultured in the world at the time—an affirmation of the biblical truth that neither education nor sophistication can change the naturally depraved condition of the human heart (cf. Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9). That transforming work can be done only through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
Here is what Pastor Miller said at the ceremony:

As we approached the town of Landsberg, our convoy came upon a concentration/slave labor and sick camp. [Landsberg was where Adolf Hitler wrote his book Mein Kampf (My Struggle).] Detouring slightly, we drove up to the front gate. Two U.S. soldiers stood guard. They firmly informed us that the camp was off limits [due to Typhus]. My commander was not to be put off so easily. He heard of the Nazi death camps and wanted a firsthand look. He ordered me to drive around back. As we circled the camp, we came upon a large hole in the fence.

Parking the jeep, we crawled through the hole. Regaining our footing, we looked around and were stunned. We had been through months of combat. Death, dying soldiers, and destruction all around us had been common sights. We were combat-hardened, but we were horrified at what we saw.

We walked between row upon row of bodies stacked like cordwood, only not neatly piled like cordwood. Bodies so emaciated they looked like skeletons with skin stretched over bones. Being so close to the Alps, the weather was still cold, but many of those skeletal bodies had on a flimsy, striped pajama-type top or bottom. None that I saw had both top and bottom.

These starved and tortured people were housed in A-frame shacks with wide openings on either end with no doors. The freezing wind could whip through with no problem. The “bunk” was one large shelf on either side, approximately three feet off the floor, similar to the type formerly used by slave ships. No mattresses, pillows, or covers could be seen.

Several other GIs [American soldiers] found a way into the camp. Some were taking pictures and weeping at the horror of it all. We were informed that many others, though rescued and still alive, were doomed to die. So starved, there was no way to save them. As we walked back to the jeep, our minds were numbed by this horrendous scene and of man’s inhumanity to his fellow man.

Where was the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob during these oppressive years? Standing in Jerusalem 36 years later, the answer was made plain. The approach to the museum of the Holocaust [Yad Vashem] is lined on either side by numerous carob trees planted in honor of “Righteous Gentiles.” Each tree was identified with a nameplate stuck in the ground beneath the tree.

We walked to one of the trees, and I read the little sign. It said, “Corrie ten Boom—A Righteous Gentile.” [Corrie was a Dutch-Christian survivor of the Nazi concentration camps. She and her family hid Jewish people during the German occupation of Holland.]

Corrie and many other Gentiles like her had risked their lives daily to show God’s love to a weary and beleaguered people—a great and courageous people who, in 1948, had finally come home.

Pastor Miller was a faithful preacher of the gospel who loved the Jewish people deeply and believed the Holocaust was perpetrated by people who neither believed in nor feared the true God of Scripture. Pastor Miller was my teacher, mentor, and friend. He entered the Lord’s presence in 2010, but his legacy of love and truth lives on.
Every year Christians pause to remember an event that changed history. Whether you call it Easter or Resurrection Sunday, it is a day of rejoicing, when we gather together in churches around the world to sing hymns and retell the amazing account of the Lord Jesus’ victory over the grave.

Christians have been celebrating Resurrection Day since the empty tomb was first discovered. The good news that Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead powerfully rocked the first-century world. Today the truth of that event is important not only to the 2.18 billion self-identified Christians (who account for almost one third of the earth’s population), but also to skeptics who struggle with this central tenet of Christianity.

Why do Christians believe Jesus literally and bodily rose from the grave? The answer to this crucial question can be found by scrutinizing the first-hand testimony of those who experienced the event as recorded in the New Testament.

Mary Magdalene was the first to notify Jesus’ disciples of the empty tomb she had discovered earlier in the morning. At the tomb—alone, distraught and weeping—she took a closer look. Studying the interior, she noticed two angels sitting at either end of the rock-hewn body-bench.

Although she heard them ask why she was weeping, the significance of their presence escaped her. Distracted,
she answered, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him” (Jn. 20:13).

Without waiting for a reply, she turned to leave and came face-to-face with Jesus—but failed to recognize Him. In response to His questions (“Why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”), she implored, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away” (v. 15). Then He spoke her name, and she immediately recognized Him.

In a split second, her acute grief turned to unbounded joy. She grabbed Him and would not let Him go (v. 17). In that moment, Mary Magdalene became the first person to experience the reality that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. She heard His voice. She saw His face. She touched His glorified body. He was alive.

Mary was not the only one to see Jesus after His resurrection. Later that day, He appeared to people who were walking home from Jerusalem. One was Cleopas; the other may have been his wife, Mary (Lk. 24:18; Jn. 19:25).

As Jesus communed with these disheartened followers of His on their way to Emmaus, He decided not to reveal Himself until He reminded them of the witness of Moses and the prophets. He knew they would not understand His death, burial, and resurrection until they understood what the Scriptures revealed about the Messiah.

As they walked, they listened as “He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Lk. 24:27). This was not a vision or transcendental experience. The risen Jesus was alive and walking with them.

Arriving at the town of Emmaus, they begged the “stranger” to stay with them in their home. After accepting their invitation, Jesus joined them for the evening meal. “He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him” (vv. 30–31). Without waiting, they returned to Jerusalem to tell the disciples.

Later that evening, Jesus was seen by 10 disciples who were hiding from the authorities. Despite the fact that the doors were locked, He suddenly appeared in the room with them (Jn. 20:19). He showed them the scars on His hands, feet, and side and ate broiled fish and a piece of honeycomb in their presence to demonstrate He was not a mere apparition (Lk. 24:42; Jn. 20:20).

Eight days later, Jesus appeared again and challenged Thomas (who had been absent when Jesus appeared in the locked room) to feel His wounds, verifying He was alive (Jn. 20:27).

The next time the disciples saw Him, they were in Galilee after a night of fishing. Jesus had built a fire; and when they came ashore, He cooked breakfast for them with a few of the fish they had caught (21:9–14). This thorough account includes a series of detailed dialogues between Jesus and His disciples, quashing any possibility that this was anything but a genuine report.

When the apostle Paul recounted the events surrounding the resurrection, he reminded his readers, “He [Jesus] was seen by over five hundred brethren at once” and that Jesus had also appeared to James, Jesus’ skeptical brother who subsequently believed and ultimately penned the profoundly practical Epistle of James (1 Cor. 15:6–7). James later became the head of the church in Jerusalem.

THE RESURRECTION WAS NOT an ethereal or spiritual event. Jesus rose physically and bodily from the dead, and the facts are available for the world to see:

◆ He was crucified in Jerusalem.
◆ He was placed in a tomb in Jerusalem that was guarded by the Roman military.
◆ Three days later, the tomb was empty.
◆ He appeared in His resurrection body to the disciples and large groups of people in the environs of Jerusalem numerous times for 40 days after His resurrection (Acts 1:3).
◆ The disciples began proclaiming His resurrection in Jerusalem.

On Pentecost (Shavuot), 50 days from the Feast of First Fruits when Christ rose from the dead, 3,000 believed in the resurrected Messiah after the apostle Peter preached in Jerusalem.

The book of Acts teaches, “The number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” (6:7). The evidence showing Jesus physically rose from the dead was so compelling they were convinced, and they believed.

Paul, who initially rejected the resurrection and vigorously persecuted Christians, ultimately placed his faith in the resurrected Christ.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a nonnegotiable, foundational tenet of Christianity. The historical record is available for investigation. The evidence provided in eyewitness testimonies documents the facts.

Merely knowing the facts, however, is not enough. The apostle John’s account concludes with the statement, “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (Jn. 20:31).

As we prepare to celebrate Resurrection Day on March 27, we should give thanks to God that Christ’s resurrection is not only fact but also the assurance that those who have placed their faith in Him will “dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Ps. 23:6).
DANCING WITH THE DEVIL

THE REALITY OF DEMONIC ATTACK and Jesus’ victory over it is woven throughout the Gospels, and there are 82 references to the word demon or demons in the New King James Bible. The sinister fact of fallen angels could not be any clearer.

However, Americans seem to exhibit an unusual dichotomy on the subject: They tend to reject organized religious belief while at the same time exhibiting an attraction to occult ideas and the belief in demons.

In 2012 two separate surveys addressed this phenomenon. The Pew Research Center found that an increasing number of Americans show an aversion to traditional religious affiliation and almost 20 percent of the population has no religious identification at all. These constitute the so-called nones, as in “none of the above.” Yet a whopping 85 percent also expressed belief in the existence of demons.

In a separate survey, the research firm Public Policy Polling determined that 63 percent of Americans aged 18 to 29 believe in demons and their ability to influence and possess humans.

This trend may be traced to cultural influences. Demonic themes have been flooding television shows and films. On Halloween a reality TV program supposedly featured a live exorcism. The television series Supernatural attracts a wide audience, along with the Starz channel’s dark occult-comedy, Ash vs Evil Dead. Demon possession is the focus of Cinemax’s new series Outcast, coming this year, as well as the recently released film Yakuza Apocalypse: The Great War of the Underworld.

A growing preoccupation with the occult is leading to an explosion of paganism. I recently ran across a website listing the best demons for occult practitioners to summon up. The culture is so laden with tolerance for bedevilment that last summer the Satanic Temple in Detroit proudly boasted about unveiling its statue of the goat-headed pagan god Baphomet and invited the public to attend.

None of this should surprise us. The dichotomy plaguing America is a convergence of two trends: one that rejects theological truth and one that recognizes, even embraces, demonic activity.

By the Sea of Galilee archaeologists have unearthed a 1,600-year-old marble slab with an Aramaic inscription on it. Experts believe the relic corroborates the location of ancient Kursi, the area of the Gergesenes (or Gadarenes) where Jesus cast a legion of demons out of a man and into a herd of pigs (Mt. 8:28–34; Mk. 5:1–20; Lk. 8:27–38).

A similar situation was evident in Kursi. When Jesus encountered the man in the Gadarenes who was possessed by such a multitude of demons that he had the strength to burst his chains, Jesus exercised clear authority over the supernatural realm. Recognizing Him as “Jesus, Son of the Most High God” (Mk. 5:7), the demons capitulated, begging Jesus to send them out of the man and into a herd of pigs. Jesus granted the request.

The locals knew the man was demon-possessed, and all their attempts to restrain him had failed. But after Jesus healed the man, “they began to plead with Him [Jesus] to depart from their region” (v. 17). They knew about demonic power; yet they rejected the Savior, the only One who could conquer it.

To conclude that the physical world of sight, sound, touch, and smell is all that exists leads to what the great writer C. S. Lewis called the fallacy of naturalism. But to embrace the existence of the supernatural without recognizing that Christ is Lord of all, both the physical and spiritual realms, is equally disastrous.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Eph. 6:12–13).

Followers of Christ Jesus must refute false positions, proclaiming truth to the marketplace, while wearing the whole armor of God.
I was in 10th grade U. S. History class when we got to the chapter on World War II and learned about Hitler and the Nazis. To me, the Second World War was just a misty history that happened a decade before I was born.

I knew my grandfather had been a major in the military, stationed in the South Pacific, and that he was gone during my father’s formative years. I knew Jewish people were killed and that a young girl named Anne Frank had written a diary. Beyond that, there was not much I knew or cared about.

Then one day my history teacher had a projector set up for a film. Good, I thought. A movie. I can relax for 45 minutes, and it will be an easy class!

There was no relaxing, and today I still remember it vividly.

The movie was called The Twisted Cross. It was the ghastliest thing I had ever seen. Tears ran down my cheeks. I saw piles of bodies that were Jewish people. And they weren’t just “killed.” It was hundreds of times worse. It was a mass destruction that was senseless and cruel and beyond my ability to comprehend. I knew every one of them was loved by someone. They were all someone’s mother or father or brother or sister.

I had always loved the Jewish people because of what I had learned in the Bible. How can anyone who loves the Lord Jesus hate the Jewish people?
or grandparent or favorite uncle or aunt.
And there were children.
How could this be?
I sat at my desk and cried. I bent forward so no one could see my tears. I thanked God that I had long hair so I could hide my cheeks and eyes. I was afraid my shoulders would shake. I was afraid my classmates would see me wiping my tears away.

I was ashamed that day to be a Gentile. I asked my father that night about what I had seen, and he told me it was the Holocaust. It sounded like a made-up word because I had never even heard it before. But it sounded exactly like what it meant: catastrophe, agony, devastation, and horror. And it happened to people chosen to be the special treasure of God Himself. I didn’t understand.

To be touched with suffering that medicine or ointments or even loving hearts of precious loved ones cannot reach must be the worst agony of all. And yet the Jewish people live. What grace God gives to those who hurt.

How I wish every person could take his or her suffering and run to the dear Lord Jesus Christ who has felt all this grief, pain, and rejection Himself—especially the special race that God has chosen, the Jewish people, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed.

My family is blessed. Blessed this day and all days. Blessed even after death to be forever with God. Blessed because Jesus our Deliverer came through the nation of Israel.

This all came back to me in 2014 when I attended the Shepherds’ Gathering at The Friends of Israel (FOI) headquarters in New Jersey. Steve Herzig, FOI’s director of North American Ministries, told of going to Hebrew school and hearing that all Gentiles hated him.

Then I remembered The Twisted Cross. I remembered the piles of bodies. But now I was seeing a face and hearing the voice of someone alive who represented them. The tears started rolling down my face again. I didn’t want to be a guest and sit in that lovely room and weep. I didn’t want to embarrass myself or my good husband; but the tears would not stop.

I was not among those who hated this man’s race. I had always loved the Jewish people because of what I had learned in the Bible.

How can anyone who loves the Lord Jesus hate the Jewish people? How can you go to Sunday school and church and listen to sermons and rejoice in your “so great . . . salvation” (Heb. 2:3) and sing hymns and worship and hate the Jewish people? The same God who chose the Jews has invited Gentiles into His Kingdom also.

How can true believers despise the people who brought them our Lord Jesus and salvation and beauty and truth and the laws for all true civilized behavior?

Over the years I’ve gotten myself into trouble by standing for what I knew was true and right, but I’ve never regretted it. I am honored to say that I stand with the Jewish people now and will stand with them forever. How I thank God for His Chosen People and His marvelous grace in preserving them.

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The Thessalonian Church

Acts 17:1–10

One of the apostle Paul’s most important ministries took place in Thessalonica. His letters to believers there show how he established churches early in his ministry, met with opposition, instructed new believers in doctrine, mentored Christians, and presented major themes on end-times prophecy.

So, as we appear to be in the last days, it is especially important to study Paul’s epistles to the Thessalonians, including how and when the church was planted.

Thessalonica was established around 315 BC by Cassander, who named it after his wife Thessalonica, the half-sister of Alexander the Great. The Romans took the city in 168 BC and made it the capital of Macedonia in Greece.

Thessalonica was a “free city” (without a military force) governed by its citizens and was more Greek than Roman in character. Its population, estimated at 200,000, was made up of Greeks, Romans, and Jews.

The city borders the Aegean Sea, providing access to the Mediterranean. Its location made it a major shipping center, second only to Corinth and Ephesus. Artisans, merchants, and trade guilds made it wealthy, although most citizens performed physical labor of all types.

Religious pluralism filled Thessalonica with all types of pagan cults, temples, and deities. Archaeological evidence indicates at least 25 gods were represented in heathen worship, including Zeus, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Aphrodite, Dionysus, and the Roman emperor, to name a few. However, some Gentiles had become proselytes to Judaism and were known as God-fearers.

Paul Preaches in Thessalonica

Paul’s ministry in Macedonia was not of his own choosing. He wanted to evangelize the Roman province of Asia (Turkey), but God hindered him until his third missionary journey. He had planned to minister in Bithynia (northeast of Mysia), but the Holy Spirit stopped him (Acts 16:6). So he passed by Mysia and went to Troas, where he received a night vision of a man from Macedonia pleading, “Come over . . . and help us” (v. 9).

From Troas Paul went to Philippi in Macedonia, where he and his traveling companion, Silas, were beaten, imprisoned, and released by the city’s magistrate (vv. 20–38). In Philippi the jailer and his family came to faith in Christ (vv. 31–34) and encouraged Paul and Silas to leave the city, which they did. They then traveled to Thessalonica (17:1), which proved to be where the Lord wanted them to evangelize. They started the church there between AD 50 and 51 (vv. 1–10).

The apostle’s strategy was to preach the gospel first in a city’s synagogue, always going to “the Jew first” (Rom. 1:16; cf. Acts 14:1, 27; 15:3, 19; 16:13–14; 17:1–2, 10–12, 17; 18:4, 7, 19; 19:8, 10; 20:21; 26:20; 28:17, 23–24). So on arriving in Thessalonica, he went to the “synagogue of the Jews” (17:1): “Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures” (v. 2).

Notice, he did not preach at them but, rather, “reasoned with them from the Scriptures.” He used the Messianic texts in the Old Testament. The Hebrew Scriptures prove the Messiah needed “to suffer and rise again from the dead” (v. 3). Paul explained that Jesus fulfilled these texts: “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ [Messiah]” (v. 3).

Paul Persuades the Thessalonians

Both Gentiles and Jews heard the apostle’s message. “Some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas” (v. 4). Although the synagogue probably drew Jewish people primarily, the text emphasizes that three groups heard Paul’s message:

(1) The phrase some of them were persuaded refers to Jewish people who believed, such as Jason (Greek form of the Jewish name Joshua, v. 5).

(2) The phrase a great multitude of the devout Greeks refers to the God-fearing Gentiles who had left the false gods of paganism and embraced the one true God of Judaism. They were former polytheists who accepted the ethical monotheism of Israel and attended the synagogue, but they did not keep the whole Mosaic Law (such as circumcision).

These people actually experienced a double conversion: from paganism to Judaism and from Judaism to Christianity. They were seekers of truth, and Paul’s message convicted them of their sin and convinced them Jesus was the Messiah.

(3) The “leading women” (v. 4) were the prominent wives of important Thessalonian leaders.

The church would be composed primarily of Gentiles who came out of a pagan culture. Christianity appealed to all of society.
Paul knew severe suffering would be this church’s lot, and he warned about it . . . and repeatedly prayed and agonized over their situation.

Yet these conversions were not instantaneous. Paul reasoned with the Thessalonians in the synagogue “for three Sabbaths” (v. 2). Some commentators believe he ministered in Thessalonica much longer, which is possible because the Philippian church had time to send two financial gifts on separate occasions to Paul in Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16).

Paul Evades Persecution
The Jewish people in the synagogue were outraged by Paul’s preaching and especially disliked seeing Gentiles believe Jesus was the Messiah. Filled with resentment and bitterness, their leaders plotted to destroy Paul and those with him: “The Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them [Paul and Silas] out to the people” (Acts 17:5).

They recruited rabble—ungodly men who were probably unethical, unskilled, and unemployed criminals. The mob attacked Jason’s house hoping to seize Paul and Silas and bring them before the politarchs, or elected governors, of the city, resulting in their trial and destruction. “But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city” (v. 6). Jason probably opened his home to Paul and Silas. He had become a believer under the apostle’s ministry. Not finding Paul and Silas, the mob hauled Jason and other Christians before the rulers and magistrates.

The mob’s accusation was twofold: “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Jason has harbored [welcomed] them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus” (vv. 6–7).

Jason and the others were charged with treason. They were charged with causing a revolution, breaking the Pax Romana (Roman Peace), and trying to overthrow the Roman government to set up a king in place of Caesar. There was an element of truth to the accusations. Jesus is a King, and He will one day judge and rule the earth. But the accusers misinterpreted the circumstances and timing of Christ’s rule. In no way were the Christians inciting disloyalty to Caesar or attempting to establish Christ’s Kingdom rule in place of Roman rule.

The mob’s charges alarmed the citizens and politarchs of Thessalonica: “They troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things” (v. 8). Disturbing the peace was a serious charge that could bring Roman sanctions on the city and its rulers. However, the Thessalonian leaders did not panic, unleash violence on the Christians, or imprison them. They acted reasonably and prudently. They heard all the charges and then pronounced their verdict based on these factors:

1. Paul and Silas were missing and thus could not be judged.
2. No evidence showed that Jason or other Christians were propagating Paul’s teaching.
3. The leaders received scanty proof of wrongdoing and probably saw through the plot after weighing the evidence. They surmised the accusers were motivated by jealousy, rather than loyalty to Rome and Caesar.

Judicial action was taken against Jason and the others: “So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go” (v. 9). The word security means the Christians posted a financial bond. This was not a payoff but, rather, an assurance that if they caused another disturbance, they would lose all they owned and be imprisoned; and the church would be disbanded.

The church made an agreement with Paul and Silas that the two men would leave the city: “Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea” (v. 10). Under the shroud of darkness, Paul and Silas left that night for Berea, approximately 40 miles southwest of Thessalonica.

Plight of the Thessalonians
Upon Paul’s departure, this extremely young church was devoid of mature leadership to provide counsel and discipleship; and it would continue to suffer persecution (1 Th. 2:14–16).

Paul knew severe suffering would be this church’s lot, and he warned about it. The apostle was continually concerned for the well-being of the brethren in Thessalonica and repeatedly prayed and agonized over their situation. He sent Timothy to comfort the Thessalonian Christians and report back on their spiritual condition. Timothy returned with an encouraging report of the church’s faith and love (3:4–7). Greatly relieved, Paul dictated his first epistle to the Thessalonian church.

Rejoicing over the Thessalonians’ faith and service for the Lord, Paul filled his letter with love and instruction on how to live in these last days as believers, anticipating the Lord’s return.

by David M. Levy, the director of International Ministries and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel
Christian liberty is a gift from God. Scripture says Christians are free to practice whatever God’s moral absolutes do not prohibit (Gal. 2:4; 5:1), providing they do not violate their own consciences (Rom. 14:22–23).

However, believers should restrain their liberty if exercising it offends another’s conscience (v. 21).

Why, some Christians wonder, must we curb our liberty for the sake of someone else (1 Cor. 10:29–30)? Scripture clearly answers this question by describing four problems that may develop if believers offend others in exercising their liberty.

**PROBLEM #1: Church unity may become disrupted.**

Because of different cultural and/or subcultural backgrounds, some believers may feel a certain action is sinful and become repulsed if they witness another Christian practicing it. They might conclude they can no longer fellowship with that person.

The church council of Jerusalem faced this type of situation and reacted to prevent division within the church (Acts 15). Christians should “pursue the things which make for peace” (Rom. 14:19). Unity and peace within the body of Christ take precedence over the full exercise of personal Christian liberty.

Bible scholar F. F. Bruce explained, “Christians are not isolated individuals, each living to himself, but members of a fellowship, and it is the responsibility of all, and especially the stronger and more mature members, to promote the well-being of the fellowship.”

**PROBLEM #2: Weaker Christians may stumble.**

If Christians see another believer doing something they consider sinful, they might engage in the activity but then suffer spiritual and psychological problems because their consciences condemn them. God holds freer Christians responsible for the harm and considers their actions sin against weaker Christians and against Christ (vv. 13–23; 1 Cor. 8:10–13).

Theologian Charles R. Erdman said, “Even indulgence which in itself may not be wrong may be sinful if it causes others distress or if it leads others astray.”

Bible scholar James M. Stifler said stronger Christians who lead weaker Christians to offend their consciences fight against God by “pulling down the gracious work which he has done in the weaker brother” (Rom. 14:20).

Stronger or freer Christians should not seek their own good but, rather, the good of their weaker brethren, even if it means restricting their own liberty in order “to bear with the scruples of the weak” (15:1–2; cf. 1 Cor. 10:24). Stronger Christians must recognize that a weaker Christian’s spiritual welfare takes precedence over the full exercise of their own Christian liberty.

So is it best to avoid weaker Christians? Or try to argue them out of their views? The answer to both is no (Rom. 14:1). Bruce explained, “A Christian’s ‘faith’ in many respects might be weak, immature and uninstructed; but he must be welcomed warmly as a Christian and not be challenged forthwith to a debate about those areas of life in which he is unemancipated.”

Stifler said a weak Christian should “be received into Christian fellowship, but not to be disputed with about his thoughts. . . . He cannot be argued out of his views; argument would only confirm him in them.” He further explained that weak Christians “must grow out of them.” Stronger Christians must love weaker Christians, not criticize them.

**PROBLEM #3: Unbelievers may become deterred from becoming Christians.**

The apostle Paul urged Christians to “give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks” (1 Cor. 10:32). The terms Jews and Greeks (or Gentiles) refer to unsaved people because the same verse separates them from “the church of God.” According to Gustav Stählin, avoiding offense “must be a guiding principle not only in relation to brethren in the congregation but also in relation to those who are outside as represented by the two groups [Jews and Gentiles].” He said Paul meant Christians should avoid doing anything that might “keep them Jews and...
Gentiles] from faith and thus prevent their . . . salvation.6

Most unsaved people misunderstand Christians. They think believers have simply reformed their moral behavior based on a higher code of conduct. But Christians are individuals who, through faith, have experienced an inner transformation through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Many unbelievers hold professing Christians to a higher code of conduct than they do others, including themselves. In fact, many even expect more from Christians than God expects from them.

Because of this misunderstanding, Christians should sometimes restrict their liberty so that their actions do not hinder someone’s salvation. The unrestricted exercise of Christian liberty can become a stumbling block for the unsaved in two ways: (1) If unbelievers see Christians doing the same things they do, they might conclude that Jesus has nothing more to offer them than what they already have. (2) If the unsaved see Christians acting contrary to how they think Christians should act, they might reject Christianity. Many times, after seeing Christians exercise their liberty, unbelievers have made such comments as “If that’s what Christianity is, I want no part of it.”

Christians must recognize that the eternal destiny of the unsaved takes precedence over the full exercise of personal Christian liberty. Christians must not try to avoid unbelievers because doing so would make evangelism impossible. Instead, they should associate with the unsaved but conduct themselves wisely before them.

PROBLEM #4: Ministry may be rendered ineffective.

Even if the unwise exercise of Christian liberty does not cause weaker Christians to sin against their consciences, it may cause them to lose confidence in other Christians and their ministries. And even if it does not deter unbelievers from seeking the Lord, it may cause them to lose respect for and disregard the testimonies of Christians who have unwisely exercised their liberty.

Paul expressed concern about this problem when he ministered in Corinth (1 Cor. 9). Paul had the liberty to marry a Christian woman and collect income from those to whom he ministered, but he voluntarily refused to exercise those rights so that people would not question his motives or lose trust in him and his work.

Bruce described Paul’s actions this way: “The interests of the gospel and the highest well-being of men and women were paramount considerations with him, and to these he subordinated everything else.”7

Erdman provided two helpful principles for applying Paul’s standards: First, he said Christians “should be willing to sacrifice much that may seem innocent to us in case our indulgence might in any wise endanger our work for Christ.”8

Second, he explained “indulgence in a practice which he [the Christian] regards as innocent may destroy a man’s influence over whether his course is theoretically right but whether, in itself innocent, it may be open to such criticism as to jeopardize his work for Christ.”9

Paul acknowledged that, as a believer, he was “free from all men.” Yet he voluntarily became “a servant to all” so that he could minister effectively (v. 19). All Christians should strive to do likewise, restricting their personal liberty when necessary. This restraint for the sake of another’s salvation is what Paul meant by becoming “all things to all men” (v. 22). Today people commonly mistake Paul’s statement to mean he conditioned complying with the wrong actions and immoral practices of others. He was not approving the maxim “When in Rome do as the Romans do.”10 To the contrary, Paul repeatedly urged Christians not to conform to the sinful pattern of this world (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 6:9–11).

Lest believers conclude that suppressing their liberty places an unfair, unbearable demand on their rights, they should remember that, as Paul pointed out, even unbelievers practice this principle when in pursuit of things they consider more valuable (9:24–27).

For example, athletes voluntarily deny themselves legitimate things while in training so that they can do their best during competition. Sometimes, to do otherwise could even disqualify them. Enslavement to liberty might even cause them to lose the valuable prize.

Likewise, businessmen willingly restrict themselves from certain practices to gain more customers. Musicians make sacrifices to spend more time practicing. So if others willingly forfeit their rights for the sake of temporal, corruptible rewards, how much more should Christians do it for the sake of Christ and eternal, incorruptible rewards?

The effectiveness of Christian ministry takes precedence over the full exercise of personal Christian liberty. Although all questionable things are lawful, not all are profitable, not all edify, and not all can be done to the glory of God (6:12; 10:23, 31).

ENDNOTES

1 F. F. Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963), 251.
3 James M. Stifler, The Epistle to the Romans (New York, NY: Fleming Revell, 1897), 246.
4 Bruce, 243.
5 Stifler, 239.
7 Bruce, 243.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 86.
**Israeli consulate opens in China**

The Israeli Foreign Ministry has announced it will close its Philadelphia consulate in the United States and open a new consulate in Chengdu, China. This is a significant move since Philadelphia represents the sixth largest Jewish community in the United States, with an estimated Jewish population of 214,000.

Israel is reshaping its political relationships and economic focus. China is Israel’s third largest trading partner (after the U.S. and Europe) and its largest business partner in Asia. Chengdu is the fifth largest city in China and has become the economic engine for western China. Thus this shift in embassies may represent a larger shift of Israel’s geopolitics from West to East and its expanding political and economic relationships with other countries.

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**Send them to Gaza!**

An Israeli woman whose daughter-in-law was recently among the many Israelis being knifed by Arabs has come up with an idea for dealing with the problem: Deport the terrorists to the Hamas-run Gaza Strip.

“It is very clear to me that until the families of terrorists are expelled from here to Gaza, [the terror] will not stop,” Rebbetzin Hadassah Froman told Arutz-7. Her pregnant daughter-in-law, Michal Froman, was at work in a clothing store in Tekoa, southeast of Jerusalem, when she was stabbed. She underwent surgery and will recover.

The day before, an Arab broke into the Otniel home of Dafna Meir, a 38-year-old Israeli mother of six, and brutally stabbed her to death in front of her 17-year-old daughter. Mrs. Meir was a nurse at Soroka University Medical Center in Beersheba, The Jerusalem Post reported. He fled when he couldn’t pull the knife out of her body to use it on someone else.

“How is it that Dafna’s face is not on the front page of every newspaper? How did we get to a point when the world looks at us and doesn’t care that a woman was stabbed at the entrance to her home?”

This was the first time terrorists have executed a fatal attack inside an Israeli West Bank town since March 2011, when Arabs stabbed to death five members of the Fogel family inside their home, including the Fogels’ 3-month-old daughter, whom they decapitated.

*Compiled from news reports*

**Israelis find new cure for blood cancer**

Tel Aviv University (TAU) researchers have developed an innovative system that may treat an incurable blood cancer called mantle cell lymphoma (MCL).

Led by professor Dan Peer of TAU’s Department of Cell Research and Immunology, the research team found that using RNA therapy can successfully stop the reproduction of cancer-related protein in white blood cells in both animals and samples from human MCL patients. MCL is the most aggressive blood cancer, affecting 3,000 Americans every year.

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**Ariel University wins case against Spain**

The Spanish government recently compensated Samaria-based Ariel University (AU) for barring AU students from an international academic competition in 2009.

Under pressure from Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) activists, the Spanish Housing Authority banned the Jewish students because they studied in territory located beyond Israel’s 1949 armistice lines.

AU responded via a five-year legal battle, demanding the housing authority compensate the school or overturn its decision. In 2014 the Spanish government officially admitted that disqualifying the Israeli students had no legal basis and was unjustified, and recently the university officially accepted the housing authority’s offer for compensation.

*JNS.org*

**Robotic ‘locusts’ may boost security**

Israeli researchers at Tel Aviv University have designed a small robot inspired by locusts that may significantly aid surveillance and emergency response.

Lead developer, professor Amir Ayali stated, “The locust, being a large insect that has wonderful jumping performance, had offered itself as wonderful inspiration for this specific idea of a . . . miniature jumping robot.”

Made from carbon rods, steel springs, and 3D printed plastic, the robots are powered by a lithium battery and can reach up to 1,000 jumps per charge. They will be used for surveillance and for entering situations and locations hazardous to humans, such as oil spills.

*JNS.org*

**Germany builds new Israeli submarine**

Israeli leaders recently celebrated the arrival of the Jewish state’s newest Dolphin-class submarine, the INS Rahav, the fifth submarine in its class. Germany built and partially funded the INS Rahav, which costs $406 million.

Submarines give Israel a powerful defensive strategy. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu explained, “Our submarine fleet serves as a deterrent to our enemies who seek our destruction. . . . Israel is capable of hitting with very great force anyone who tries to harm us.”

The Dolphin-class submarines are capable of carrying nuclear weapons and provide Israel with second-strike capability, a necessary asset for responding to nuclear attacks with nuclear retaliation.

*JNS.org*
Orthodox Rabbis Embrace Jesus

More than 50 Orthodox rabbis worldwide have called for Jewish people to embrace Jesus as a Law-abiding Jew and to work with Christians for the betterment of society.

The “Orthodox Rabbinic statement on Christianity” is groundbreaking in light of the centuries of persecution Jewish people have suffered at the hands of organized Christendom and the distrust it fomented.

“The real importance of the Orthodox statement is that it calls for fraternal partnership between Jewish and Christian leaders, while also acknowledging the positive theological status of the Christian faith,” said Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, who founded the interfaith organization that published the statement. The statement declares, Christianity is neither an accident nor an error, but the willed divine outcome and gift to the nations. In separating Judaism and Christianity, G-d willed a separation between partners with significant theological differences, not a separation between enemies.

However, the “significant theological differences” center on the identity of Jesus. The rabbis correctly identify Him as a good, Law-abiding Jew. But since Jesus identified Himself as God and Messiah (Jn. 4:26; 8:57–58), He is either who He claimed to be or a liar. Who He is remains of utmost importance.

The rabbis’ statement is available online at tinyurl.com/jhcrilbq.

Compiled from news reports
I told them, “You would be surprised how many believe in Him as their Savior among our own people, the Jews. The apostles and the first believers were all Jews, and they believed what is written in Deuteronomy 18:15.”

Over the years, the Lord has taught my wife and me to freely welcome people into our home. Guests are always coming and going, and some even sleep here. Once each year an elderly Christian gentleman from Germany visits Israel and usually stays with us.

When he visited this year, he said, “Zvi, I am 80 years old now. Before I die, I want you and your wife to visit me in Germany. I want to repay some of the kindness you have shown me over the years.”

My wife had not been outside Israel in 48 years; but, as it is written in Ecclesiastes 11:1, “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.” So off we went to Germany.

When we arrived, my friend surprised me with an invitation to speak to a congregation of 400 people, most of whom were Russian immigrants. Because I know both German and Russian, it was a wonderful opportunity for me to speak about our Savior, Yeshua Hamashiach (Hebrew for “Jesus the Messiah”).

Although many of those present were believers, there were some unbelieving Jewish people in the crowd. I was reminded of King Solomon’s words, “There is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9). They reacted exactly like their brethren in Israel. I knew exactly what they were going to ask.

“Did you come here to make us Christians?” one demanded.

I replied, “I have come here to make you good Jews. I want you to turn back to the Bible, and then you will know the whole truth about the Lord and what He expects of us. He wants us to tell of His salvation to the ends of the earth. Because you do not know what the Bible says and do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, I am not surprised you asked such questions.”
But now that you have heard the truth, you are responsible before God."

This was the first time someone from Israel had spoken to them about Christ—and in their own language: Russian.

Just as Jewish people in Jerusalem always want to see for themselves what I am reading from the Bible, so did the Jewish people in Germany. When German believers spoke with them about Christ, they did not believe them because they were Gentiles and were using what Jewish people call the "goyisheh [Gentile] Bible." Of course, I was glad to show them my Hebrew-language Bible so they could see for themselves that I was speaking from God's Holy Word.

My host had another surprise for me during our visit. One day, two leaders from the congregation where I preached visited us, and I recognized them immediately. They had stayed in our home a few years earlier. They were Russian immigrants; and though they had lived near the town of Hanover, Germany, for several years, they still did not know German.

It was a great blessing for me, a Jew from Israel, to preach about our Savior Jesus Christ to so many people and to spend time with two of the leaders of this wonderful assembly. I encouraged them to continue reading the Bible and trusting in the Lord.

I told them, "You would be surprised how many believe in Him as their Savior among our own people, the Jews. The apostles and the first believers were all Jews, and they believed what is written in Deuteronomy 18:15: 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.' When we trust in the Lord and His Word, we always move ahead spiritually, never backward."

There is a Yiddish saying, "How can a cat cross the sea?" Likewise, how can a Jew from Jerusalem go to another country and preach the gospel of Christ? It seems impossible, but it happened. I was thrilled the Lord gave me the special privilege of preaching to so many people, many of whom had never heard the gospel. Truly, as it is written in Isaiah 2:3, "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The Lord brought forth much fruit, for which we sincerely thank Him.

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