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Israel My Glory (ISSN 8755-402X) is published bimonthly for $19.95 per year by The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1179 Almonesson Road, Deptford Township, Westville, New Jersey 08093. Periodicals postage paid at Westville, NJ, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Israel My Glory, P. O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099-0908.

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ON THE COVER
Clay jars in Nazareth village
(Walter Homan/FOI Image Archive)
One thing I loved about being a newspaper reporter was going where the action was. Although I never went anywhere particularly exciting, it didn’t matter. I was involved with history in the making, and that was good enough for me.

When I came to The Friends of Israel, I was certain those days were over. Then in 1991 a telephone call came from the Madrid Peace Conference for our executive director, Elwood McQuaid. It was from someone in the Israeli government who wanted Elwood to provide biblical information from a Christian perspective that could be used at the negotiating table in the world’s attempt to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict through talks in Spain.

Then another telephone call came. This one was from Randall Price. “Please tell someone to go downstairs and get Elwood,” his secretary said. “Randy Price is on the phone from Jerusalem. Something is happening on the Temple Mount.” If memory serves me correctly, Elwood was in the radio room preparing to do one of our broadcasts, which aired daily.

“So who is Randall Price?” I asked. I soon learned he is a real-life version of Indiana Jones. College professor. Renowned archaeologist. Author. But Dr. Price is something extra that the fictional action hero is not—a devout, Bible-believing Christian.

As founder and president of World of the Bible Ministries, Dr. Price brings God’s truth to people around the world through archaeology and history. He is a prolific writer whose works, to name a few, include Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Searching for the Original Bible, The Temple and Bible Prophecy, Jerusalem in Prophecy, and The Stones Cry Out. He has also contributed to many other books, including the New Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible, Encyclopedia of Apologetics, and the Dictionary of Premillennial Theology.

His relationship with The Friends of Israel began in 1972. “I heard Elwood speak and started collecting articles from Israel My Glory for my files,” Dr. Price told me. He also spent time in Israel with Elwood, who appears in his video The Coming Last Days Temple.

We are extremely blessed to have Dr. Price contribute to this issue of Israel My Glory. He goes where the action is; and through his writing, so can you. Enjoy!

Waiting for His Appearing,
Lorna Simcox
Editor-in-Chief
Jewish people often ask us, “How long have there been Christians who support Israel?” Over the years, we have come to appreciate their question because Christians, more than any other group, have persecuted and tortured the Jews for two millennia.

Christianity has been at the forefront of Jewish persecution for much of the Church Age. The rise of Replacement Theology in the second and third centuries turned love and appreciation for the children of Jacob into hatred and rejection. As the church began to believe it had superseded Israel, its disdain for Jewish people coalesced into anti-Semitism and violence against them in the name of Christ—teaching them to be extremely cautious, if not fearful, of Christians.

No wonder they are often surprised to learn The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry was founded by Christians in 1938, 10 years before the modern State of Israel. Yet, from our inception, the words The Friends of Israel have been a part of our name. That is why Jewish people also ask us, “You mean, before there was a State of Israel, there were friends of Israel?”

Absolutely. Despite the prominence of Replacement Theology, evangelical Christians have long felt an affinity for Israel. It is not a recent phenomenon; nor did it begin in 1938. The apostles and early church fathers looked favorably on Israel, as seen in the New Testament. This outlook also appears in church history, dating to the Reformation.

However, the winds of change are blowing; and while support for Israel remains strong among older people, younger ones are falling away.

A 2013 Pew survey showed 7 in 10 American evangelicals sympathized with Israel. Pew also surveyed the general public and found a significant generational difference. Of Americans 50 to 64 years old, 59 percent sympathized with Israel; but the number declined to 36 percent among those 18 to 29. A significant number, 34 percent, or one-third, of those 18 to 29 offered no opinion.1

A 2015 survey by LifeWay Research produced similar results. While a whopping 80 percent of evangelical pastors surveyed supported Israel, only 42 percent of Americans did. Of Americans 45 and older, 52 percent saw a tie between Israel and the book of Revelation, while only 36 percent of those 18 to 24 did.2

The generational difference reflected in these polls is concerning. In our ministry in churches, we find similar patterns: Older adults show significantly stronger support for Israel and interest in future events than do younger adults.

Dispensationalism and Zionism have become distasteful words in many corners of Christian higher education. The study of eschatology (the doctrine of future things) is diminishing at schools that have historically been dispensational; and the next generation of ministry leaders sees little or no value in studying future prophecy or, worse, views it as something to be avoided entirely.

Dispensationalists are seen as doom-and-gloom people. Even some who hold a dispensational, Zionist view of Israel—born out of a literal interpretation of Scripture—are quick to distance themselves from what pro-Israel theologian Craig Blaising called “wild, crazy popular apocalypticism.”3

There is a real danger that, if young evangelicals follow the general trend and drift from supporting Israel, they will follow the pattern of church history—beginning to despise Israel, then eventually becoming anti-Semitic. America, the friendliest nation toward Israel, may follow the path of European churches and begin persecuting Jewish people, blaming them for all of the country’s problems.

This is why we are committed to communicating biblical truth about Israel and the Messiah. We must not lose sight of God’s promises to Israel and the fact that He loves it with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3). His promises are bound up in His faithfulness; and He tells us, “I am the LORD, I do not change” (Mal. 3:6). God has promised a blessed future for Israel, as its most famous Son, the Messiah, comes to complete His redemptive plan.

ENDNOTES


by James Showers, executive director of The Friends of Israel
KUDOS TO CANADA

When Canada’s parliament condemned the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel in February, Israel advocates worldwide probably sighed with relief. BDS is a vicious, anti-Semitic movement that is trying to cripple the Jewish state financially by encouraging universities, hospitals, and businesses to pull out their investments in Israel.

Passing such legislation under Canada’s conservative, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper would have come as no surprise. But after holding power in Parliament for nine years, Harper and his Conservatives were voted out and replaced by Justin Trudeau and his Liberal Party. Harper was a strong advocate for Israel, and most political pundits assumed Trudeau and the Liberals would turn against Israel. In fact, immediately after the election in October 2015, Josh Tapper wrote a Times of Israel piece that bore the headline, “Will Justin Trudeau win erode Canada’s support for Israel?”

During the campaign, Trudeau promised an “enduring bond of friendship, rooted in our shared commitment to peace and democracy.” He called Hamas “a terrorist organization” and upheld Israel’s right to defend itself. He also labeled BDS a “new form of anti-Semitism in the world.”

However, one of the first official statements from his government came from Canada Foreign Affairs Minister Stéphane Dion who said, “Canada will strive for a more balanced policy, more of an honest broker if you will, regarding the Middle East. Siding with Israel only, as the Harper government had done, is in nobody’s interest.” Israel advocates would do well to keep their eyes on Canada’s new government and its seemingly mixed message.

What most people fail to realize is that BDS will hurt Palestinian Arabs more than Israelis because they are the first to be laid off from jobs in Israel; and Palestinians who work for Israelis earn up to three times as much as those who do not.

The ultimate goal of BDS, of course, is to dismantle Israel. The movement refuses to acknowledge any Arab wrongdoing in the Arab-Israeli struggle. Most BDS leaders are not interested in a two-state solution and believe Israeli Jews should become the minority, thereby eliminating a unique Jewish state.

Although they claim to be interested in correcting injustice, they fail to condemn any of Israel’s neighbors whose citizens are far less free than non-Jews in Israel. They claim to be non-violent, yet violence and threats of violence arise. In fact, an incident occurred recently on the campus of the University of Chicago when BDS supporters threatened the life of a Palestinian human-rights activist because he condemned Hamas.

Thankfully, Canada has stepped up to the plate to stop BDS, and the U.S. Congress has moved forward as well. In February, Senators Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Robert Dold (R-IL) introduced the Combating BDS Act of 2016. It seeks to authorize state and local governments to divest assets from and prohibit investment in any entity that “engages in a commerce or investment-related boycott, divestment or sanctions activity targeting Israel.”

According to an article by Ron Kampeas with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “Illinois and South Carolina, passed laws . . . mandating state divestment from companies that boycott Israel. . . . Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Virginia—are considering similar laws. Kansas and Pennsylvania are debating legislation that would defund universities that participate in an Israel boycott. And another six states are considering or have adopted nonbinding resolutions condemning Israel boycotts.”

A recent cartoon sent to constituents by the pro-Israel group StandWithUs needed few words to illustrate the silliness of BDS. A patient is lying in a hospital bed and the doctor tells him, “Sorry, Mr. Smith, we can’t do the surgery because you boycott Israel and the equipment and drugs are produced in Israel.” When the patient asks if he can call home, the answer is, “No. Your cell phone was designed in Israel.” Kudos to Canada and those who recognize the BDS fallacy.

by Steve Herzig
After nearly six years of discord, Turkey and Israel are working to repair bilateral relations. Reconciliation is said to be imminent.

Analysts say Turkey is motivated by a desire to obtain access to Israeli natural gas in order to reduce its dependence on energy resources from Russia.

Turkey currently imports half of its natural gas and 10 percent of its oil from Russia. But Turkish-Russian relations have been in turmoil since November 24, 2015, when a Turkish fighter jet shot down a Russian warplane that veered into Turkish airspace. Russian President Vladimir Putin retaliated against Turkey with a range of trade sanctions, although he has not cut off energy supplies.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, apparently seeking to preempt Putin, is urgently looking for ways to diversify energy supplies away from Russia.

The Turkish-Israeli agreement, the broad contours of which have been hammered out in secret meetings in Switzerland, is said to include a provision for joint cooperation in the field of natural gas, including the possible construction of a pipeline to carry natural gas from Israel to Turkey. Erdogan apparently hopes such a pipeline will, over time, reduce Russia’s leverage over Turkey.

At the same time, Turkey has insisted that lifting the Israeli blockade on Gaza is essential to any bilateral rapprochement. This may be in Israel’s interest. In February, Maj. Gen. Herzl Halevi, the head of the Israel Defense Forces’ Military Intelligence Directorate, reportedly told a Knesset committee that the deteriorating economic situation in the Gaza Strip may lead to violence against Israel.

More problematic, however, are reports that Turkey has demanded unrestricted access to the Gaza Strip, ostensibly to deliver humanitarian supplies and build infrastructure. However, the demand may have more nefarious motives. Other reports indicate that Ankara is demanding the construction of a seaport in Gaza that would be controlled by the Turkish military.

Russia is said to be opposed to any deal that boosts Turkey’s influence in the Middle East. This message was delivered to the director general of Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dore Gold, during a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Moscow on February 18.

Egypt is opposed to the prospect of more Turkish influence in Gaza, which borders the restive Sinai Peninsula. Egypt fears that Erdogan, a committed Islamist, will bolster the popularity of Hamas, which is closely tied to the Muslim Brotherhood that Egypt’s leader, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, ousted from power in 2013.

As part of a deal, Israel wants Turkey to clamp down on Hamas operatives based in Turkey who are accused of directing terrorist operations in the Palestinian territories. Specifically, Israel wants Turkey to expel Saleh al-Arouri, a senior member of Hamas’s military wing, who is based in Istanbul.

Senior Israeli officials, including Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon, are reportedly asking whether a deal with Turkey is worth the potential damage to Israel’s strategic alliance with Egypt. Even if a deal is reached that satisfies all parties, relations between Turkey and Israel are unlikely to be as close as they once were.

“The golden era of cooperation in the security and intelligence fields between the two countries up until a decade ago will certainly not come back,” according to veteran Israeli analyst Yossi Melman. “If the golden formula is found, and the crisis is indeed solved, it will be part of a three-way deal: Israel-Egypt-Turkey, in which the strategic alliance with Egypt is much more important to Israel than rehabilitating ties with Turkey.”

by Soeren Kern, a senior fellow at the Gatestone Institute, a nonpartisan foreign-policy think tank based in New York City
G’sherim is a nine-month internship program for young adults interested in full-time Jewish ministry, hosted by The Friends of Israel. Hebrew for “Bridges,” G’sherim is an amazing opportunity for young people to receive hands-on experience volunteering in the Jewish community in Las Vegas.

Throughout this life-changing ministry opportunity, interns will show love and support to the Jewish community by interacting with Holocaust survivors, standing with Israel on the UNLV campus, attending the AIPAC conference in Washington, DC, and ministering to churches throughout the Southwest.

See if full-time Jewish ministry is for you. Find out more at foi.org/events/gsherim
PAKISTAN—A group of Muslim men in Pakistan recently abducted a 7-year-old Christian boy, gang-raped him, then strangled him to death with a rope.

One week later, in a different region of Pakistan, another group of Muslim men mauled three young Christian girls—killing one—for fleeing the men’s unwelcome sexual advances.

According to Raymond Ibrahim, an expert on Islam and Christian persecution, the Muslim men went into the Christian district of the Bahawalnagar region of Pakistan to kidnap the young boy, and locals found the child’s body dumped in a field the next day.

Wrote Ibrahim, “Interestingly, while the NY Daily News, the Independent, and other media state that the boy was seized from a ‘Christian district,’ the original report . . . in the International New York Times’ Express Tribune, avoids mentioning the religious identity of either rapists or raped. It even fails to mention that this atrocity took place in Pakistan and merely names the region, Bahawalnagar. . . . Perhaps the NYT’s Express Tribune does not want readers to connect the dots and realize that ‘rich and drunk’ Muslims regularly rape and kill Christian ‘infidels’ in Pakistan.”

Although homosexual rape is unIslamic, Ibrahim explained, dehumanizing and killing non-Muslims is Islamic. That is why, he said, “even non-practicing Muslims—such as drunk and/or homosexual Muslims—are conditioned to look down upon Christian ‘infidels,’ deeming it their right to use and abuse them at will.”

Ibrahim said according to Wilson Chowdhry, chairman of the British Pakistani Christian Association, “Parts of Pakistani culture have a strong homosexual pederast culture, and Christian and other minority boys are especially susceptible to rape and abuse because of the powerlessness of their community and their despised status.”

In another article, Ibrahim reported that a week after that murder, four young Muslim men accosted three young Christian girls—ages 17, 18, and 20—in the Lahore region while the girls were walking home from work. “The men ‘misbehaved,’ yelled ‘suggestive and lewd comments,’ and harassed the girls to get in their car for ‘a ride and some fun,’” Ibrahim said.

When the girls refused, Ibrahim said, the men grew more violent and began to threaten them. Terrified, the girls tried to run away. According to Ibrahim, Chowdhry reported that one of the men yelled, “How dare you run away from us! Christian girls are only meant for one thing—the pleasure of Muslim men.”

Ibrahim continued, “The Muslim men chased the girls and ran their car into them. Two girls crashed to the ground; one’s hip was broken, the other’s ribs were shattered. The youngest, Kiran Masih, aged 17, flew up in the air and crashed into the speeding car’s windshield. The Muslims, laughing and with the girl still on the windshield, accelerated. Eventually the driver slammed on the brakes, hard. The force of the stop catapulted the girl into the air. She then crashed to the ground, cracking her skull open and smashing her bones. Within minutes she was dead.”

Such accounts are common in Pakistan. A local source told Ibrahim, “It is shameful. Such incidents occur frequently. Christian girls are considered goods to be damaged at leisure. Abusing them is a right. According to the community’s mentality it is not even a crime. Muslims regard them as spoils of war.” Pakistani police, Ibrahim said, are reportedly doing little to apprehend the perpetrators.

For the full articles, go to RaymondIbrahim.com.
THE STONES CRY OUT

by Elwood McQuaid
A growth-inspiring experience of a lifetime is to walk among the artifacts of empires, civilizations, and societies that have lived and died and, in many respects, shaped our world. For those of us living in the United States, a relatively young country, touring abroad can impart a fresh, transforming perspective. For Christians, standing before the judgment seat in ancient Corinth, where Paul likely stood accused before the Roman proconsul Gallio, or climbing the steps to Mars Hill in Athens, where he shattered the philosophers’ folly of worshiping many gods, is a breathtaking revelation of what has gone before.

Spiritually, experiencing Israel and its crowded bazaars; the Garden Tomb; Gethsemane; Nazareth; Bethlehem; and Jerusalem, with its Temple Mount and adjacent Western Wall, instills a sense of quiet awe. Within the confines of tiny Israel, every life-changing aspect of the believer’s existence transpired. History and faith come alive in an inescapable fashion, and true Christians come away changed. Humility, reverence, perspective, discernment, certainty, devotion, mission, and appreciation for the Book and its people inescapably tug the heartstrings of believer pilgrims.

MARKED FOR DESTRUCTION
However, if the hordes of the Islamic State (ISIS) sweeping through much of the Middle East have their way, every vestige of the past will be destroyed. Every archaeological relic that bears witness to the ingenuity, skill, and sheer genius of the ancients will be obliterated.

For more than 1,400 years, the monastery of St. Elijah near the city of Mosul, Iraq, stood as one of the

MAY / JUNE 2016  11
Perhaps ISIS’ most revealing atrocity is its systematic destruction of libraries and its massive book burnings.

ISIS set about eradicating every trace of the Christians, even the silent stones of their now forlorn monasteries, due to its sacramentalized hatred of “infidels.” . . . This ideological hatred encompasses all of Nineveh’s Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Christians, as well as its Yazidi community. And, alarmingly, it is being indoctrinated into the next generation with school textbooks that direct children to hate and kill the Nazarenes, that is, the Christians, and the Yazidis, condemned as “polytheists” and “devil worshippers,” respectively.

UNDERSTANDING THE CALIPHATE
Under the revisionist, politically correct policy of offending no one, apologists claim belligerent radicalism is isolated—that it is restricted to aggrieved elements of society settling the score with people who mistreated them. Great care is taken to eliminate radicalized religion as a significant component of terrorism. Discounting religion, however, is fatal because religion is essential to understanding ISIS’ nature and its rules of engagement.

The late al-Qaeda leader Yussuf al-Ayyeri, an intimate associate of terrorist Osama bin Laden, summarized the ultimate goal of caliphate devotees in his book The Future of Iraq and The Arabian Peninsula After The Fall of Baghdad. Writer Amir Taheri said the book claims, “As far as belief is concerned, the absolutely final version is represented by Islam, which ‘annuls all other religions and creeds.’ Thus Muslims can have only one goal: converting all humanity to Islam and ‘effacing the final traces of all other religions, creeds and ideologies.’”

Taheri also said the point of the book is to teach that “it is not the American war machine that should be of the utmost concern to Muslims. What threatens the future of Islam, in fact its very survival, is American democracy.”

Obviously, all Muslims do not adhere to ISIS ideology. Those who do are as eager to destroy mosques and kill noncompliant Muslims as they are to kill Christians, Jews, and other dissenters. Wrote Kareem Shaheen in theguardian.com,

Yet the damage wreaked by Isis, not just on ancient monuments but also on rival Muslim places of worship, has been far more extensive. . . . It destroyed the tomb of the prophet Jonah in Mosul. Isis has also attacked Shia places of worship and last year gave Mosul’s Christians an ultimatum to convert to Islam, pay a religious levy or face death by the sword.
The goal for the Islamic caliphate is first to rule the Arabian Peninsula, then to move westward, destroying democracies and all related political, spiritual, social, and cultural institutions and ways of life. If successful, it then would institute Muslim Sharia law universally as the only legal system for all surviving subjects.

To achieve this caliphate, its devotees use lethal brutality and destroy churches, shrines, and significant religious artifacts or evidences of competing faiths. They also loot valuable artifacts and sell them to enhance their weapons arsenals. They seduce young recruits around the world, teaching them to commit random acts of terrorism in their own countries or abroad to spread fear and intimidation, making clear their global endgame.

Perhaps ISIS’ most revealing atrocity is its systematic destruction of libraries and its massive book burnings. All totalitarian systems, like Nazism, feel constrained to deprive people of access to information that might expose their fallacies and barbarism.

**DESTINED TO FAIL**

In the end, as with all who have gone before, the merchants of terror eventually will fail. Knocking down walls, destroying ancient temples, and jackhammering artifacts from sanctuaries in an attempt to destroy a faith are futile. Faith does not depend on stone and mortar to survive. Scripture makes that fact clear:

> God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands [emphasis added]. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things (Acts 17:24–25).

No one can dethrone the Almighty. Faith in Jesus Christ is God-ordained. And no one will ever discover His remains by digging among ancient tombs. God’s Word tells us His whereabouts:

> God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands [emphasis added]. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things (Acts 17:24–25).

When we worship the Savior, we do so in a sphere that despots and unbelievers cannot comprehend. Radical Islamists boast that peace will come only when Islam has subdued the world through murder and brutal conquest. But the future holds, not a caliphate, but a Kingdom established by the King of kings and Lord of lords—the only true God of peace—who will mete out divine justice when the time is right.

His is the global Kingdom anticipated 2,000 years ago when Jesus’ disciples cried, “‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” (Lk. 19:38).

When religious objectors called for a rebuke, Jesus replied, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out” (v. 40).

Perhaps the stones being razed from ancient sanctuaries, stained by the blood of modern Christian martyrs, are crying out today, “Even so, come Lord Jesus!”

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**ENDNOTES**

2. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

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* Another view of the now-extinct monastery of St. Elijah.
MOUNT MORIAH OR THE CITY OF DAVID?

Locating the true site of the Jewish Temple . . . and why some people got it wrong

BY RANDALL PRICE
For years scholars have argued about the precise location of the first and second Jewish Temples on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, almost all archaeologists agree they were situated at or near the Muslim Dome of the Rock. Recently, however, a popular book claims the Temples never stood on the Temple Mount at all.

In Temple: Amazing New Discoveries that Change Everything About the Location of Solomon’s Temple, Robert Cornuke makes the startling claim that they were built in the City of David, over the Gihon Spring. Cornuke’s sensational conclusion is that accepting this location resolves the political and religious impasse between Jews and Muslims over the controversial site and allows for biblical prophecies related to rebuilding the Temple to be fulfilled today.

The Temple location is important, and Cornuke’s popular book, written to a general audience, is confusing many Christians.

A former police detective, Cornuke based his book on a more academic one by the late Ernest Martin, who originated the theory almost 20 years ago. At that time, many people criticized it, as did I in my book The Temple and Bible Prophecy: A Definitive Look at Its Past, Present, and Future (1999). Now Martin’s theory is coming to the fore again, even though it cannot be sustained for three main reasons:

1. **GOD** established the location for the first Temple, and that location has never been forgotten or confused throughout Jewish history. Medieval Jewish scholar Moses Maimonides, in his massive commentary, Mishneh Torah, contended that once the Temple site was fixed in the days of Samuel and King David, it could not be changed (Beth Ha’behira 1:3–4). The Bible supports this view in its description of the official rebuilding of the structure after the Babylonian exile:

   And he [Persian King Cyrus] said to him [Sheshbazzar], “Take these articles; go, carry them to the temple site that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its former site.” Then the same Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem (Ezra 5:15–16).

Therefore, the second Temple was built on the restored ruins of King Solomon’s first Temple (9:9). Herod the Great’s renovation to the second Temple was completed on this same foundation (Josephus Antiquities 15.388–89, 391). Even before Herod, there was a
monumental extension of the eastern enclosure wall. It has enabled scholars to identify the original Temple Mount platform, which was designed to level off the natural topography of Mount Moriah and support the first Temple. Based on these remains and others visible in and around the Temple platform, it has been possible to deduce the original 500 x 500 cubit (861 x 861 feet) square Temple Mount upon which the first and second Temples were built. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus confirmed this equilateral square shape and asserted the Temple was built on top of a hill (Antiquities 15. 398–400). This is a significant point because, whatever location one argues for the Temple, it must be able to accommodate a platform this size.

In Mark 13:2 (cf. Mt. 24:2; Lk. 19:44), we read that Jesus predicted the Temple “buildings” would be leveled to the ground. His prophecy did not include the Temple’s foundation stones, retaining walls, or platform, which technically are not buildings and therefore not the structures to which Jesus referred.

The Jewish people deeply revered this site. Not only did they pray toward it three times a day, but they also saw it as the symbol of hope for Israel’s redemption and restoration in the Messianic age (cf. Dan. 9:17). In fact, the restoration text of Isaiah 66:14 is carved into the Temple Mount’s southwestern retaining wall.

According to archaeologist Meir Ben-Dov, who served as codirector of the excavations in this area, the inscription most likely reflects the excited hope of a third-century Jew who returned to Jerusalem when Roman Emperor Julian offered the Jewish people an opportunity to rebuild their Temple. It is clear by where he recorded this act of devotion and expectation that he did not believe the Temple was in the City of David. This unbroken testimony continues through the Jewish pilgrim accounts and letters between Jewish people in the Diaspora and those who remained in the occupied land of Israel.

After the Romans destroyed the Temple in AD 70, it is said that pilgrims visited a barren protrusion of stone (called the Pierced Stone) for centuries thereafter, identified as the location of the former Holy of Holies. For this reason, after the Muslims conquered the land in AD 638, the Islamic Caliph Abd al-Malik erected the Dome of the Rock over the spot (AD 691). Evidence comes from the Armenian historian Sebeos (AD 660):

I will relate a little more about the intentions of the rebellious Jews, who having earlier received help from the leaders of the children of Hagar, conceived a plan to rebuild the Temple of Solomon. Having discovered the place, which is called the Holy of Holies, they then built on its foundations, a place of prayer for themselves. However, the Ishmaelites, jealous of them, drove them from this place and called it their house of prayer.

History, then, attests to today’s Temple Mount as the location of the former Temples.

THE ORIGINAL 861’ x 861’ square Temple Mount does not fit physically in David’s City, as Cornuke’s theory proposes. By laying the dimensions over the 1864–65 “Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem” (a topographical map of Jerusalem prepared by British Captain Charles Wilson, below), you can see the problem: The Temple Mount square fits on the present elevated platform but not down in the City of David. In fact, when forced into the City of David, it covers the remains of the Iron Age houses in the residential area on the eastern slopes of the city, which were built after the time of the First Temple, including burial tombs used throughout the Israelite period on the adjacent slopes within the present-day village of Silwan. Had the Temple Mount been in the City of David, it also would have dammed up the Kidron Valley and created a lake to the north of the theological Temple complex.

Further, Josephus recorded that extensions were added to this square Temple Mount by the Hasmoneans, Herod the Great, and Agrippa II—a feature present on the hill above David’s City but not possible down in the ancient city itself. The Bible also states Solomon built the Temple on Mount
Moriah, which was also the site of the threshing floor of Araunah (Ornan) the Jebusite (2 Chr. 3:1). Threshing floors are always outside cities and usually elevated to harness the wind power. Only the northern site outside and above the City of David fits this description.

This fact is likewise understood in 2 Chronicles 5:2–7, which talks about bringing the Ark of the Covenant “up from the City of David” (v. 2) to install it in the first Temple. It was “brought up” by the Levitical priests (v. 5) “to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple” (v. 7). The clear direction was outward and upward.

Archaeological discoveries make an indisputable case for the Temples having been built on the current Temple Mount. One of the important finds uncovered in the massive excavations at the foot of the Temple Mount shortly after Israelis returned to the area in 1967 was a monumental stone balustrade containing the Hebrew inscription, “to the place of trumpeting.” This clearly was one of the first stones the Romans toppled from the Temple Mount to the street below because it was found directly on the first-century AD pavement at the southwest corner of the Temple Mount—the very place Josephus mentioned in his description of the Temple:

“...at another corner opposite the lower town [at the southwest angle of the Temple]. The last was erected above the roof of the priests’ chamber, at the point where it was the custom for one of the priests to stand and give notice, by sound of trumpet, in the afternoon of the approach, and on the following evening of the close, of every seventh day, announcing to the people the respective hours for ceasing work and for resuming their labors (Wars 4.581–583).

Here we have a direct connection between an archaeological discovery and an ancient literary source that describes the activity of Temple priests.

Clearly, the archaeological evidence supports the Temple Mount, not the City of David, as the site of the Jewish Temples.
near the Dome of the Rock, Islamic authorities unintentionally uncovered part of a wall surrounded by pottery from the eighth century BC. Archaeologists who studied photos of the wall and examined the pottery concluded that the wall formed part of the House of Oil within the first Temple.6

Clearly, the archaeological evidence supports the Temple Mount, not the City of David, as the site of the Jewish Temples.

ENDNOTES


6 For additional information see Leen Ritmeyer’s account and interpretation, along with photographs at his website: www.ritmeyer.com.
FOOTSTEPS IN THE STONES

HOW THE ADVENTURES OF AN ARCHAEOLOGIST DEEPENED HIS FAITH IN GOD AND THE BIBLE

by Randall Price
I SAW ISRAEL FOR THE FIRST TIME when I moved my family to Jerusalem in 1979 to study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Even though I had a master’s degree in biblical studies, I learned quickly I was not prepared to live in the world of the Bible.

Our first apartment was in East Talpiot in the same building as The Friends of Israel’s late and much-loved worker Zvi Kalisher and his family. In those days, the area lay on the outskirts of the city, next to Arab houses. On my first morning in Jerusalem, after being awakened at dawn by the Muslim call to prayer, I walked down the dirt road behind the apartments and watched an Arab family butcher a goat. I quickly realized, to borrow a line from The Wizard of Oz, “We’re not in Kansas anymore!”

That day was the first in a series of days in which the “newness” of the ancient world started to change my old understanding of the Bible. I came to realize I had embraced popular misconceptions and had an unrealistic view of life in the Middle East. I came to understand that geography, environmental conditions, and even social customs had not changed drastically since ancient times; and as a result of walking daily in the footsteps of the patriarchs, prophets, Jesus, and the apostles, I began to think seriously about what it meant to live—and exercise faith—in this context.

Before the Israeli government returned the Sinai to Egypt, I retraced Moses’ footsteps with other believers. Several days into our wilderness experience, we got lost and for the next several days wandered around (this was before cell phones), worrying about our lives. Since then, I have never judged the Israelites for complaining to Moses in this desert because we reacted to our situation and leader in the same way.

One of the courses I took at Hebrew University was in archaeology. Our classroom was the world of the Bible, and every class was a field trip. As I visited ancient sites and connected them to historical events and biblical truths, my faith began to grow in unexpected ways. I came to terms with the heroes of Hebrews 11, including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who lived by faith as aliens in the Land of Promise, dwelling in tents.

Moses by faith chose to suffer hardship with the people We live in a physical world where God knows we need tangible evidence of His truth. The purpose of archaeology is not to prove God, but to present God; not to create faith, but to cultivate it.
of God and passed through the Red Sea with them, fleeing Egypt. Joshua by faith captured the city of Jericho. Through faith Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets, though weak, were made strong.

Others were tortured, mocked, scourged, sawn in two, afflicted, tormented, and “wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb. 11:38; cf. vv. 35–37). All these gained approval through their faith. If they lived out their faith in this world of heat and dust and long walks on difficult terrain, then my faith in my world had to be just as real.

The course in archaeology set me on a path of digging in the world of the Bible for more than 25 years. During that time I have learned to respect and appreciate God’s footprints in the stones. We live in a physical world where God knows we need tangible evidence of His truth. The purpose of archaeology is not to prove God, but to present God; not to create faith, but to cultivate it. Let me offer some examples.

In recent years, the site of Göbekli Tepe (Potbelly Hill) has gained international attention. In a field in the Harran Plain, where Terah and his son Abram would settle for a time (Gen 11:31; 12:1–5), excavations have uncovered rings of standing pillars (the largest are 18 feet tall and weigh 16 tons) decorated with carved wolf heads, pigs, storks, foxes, fawns, scorpions, snakes, and headless human figures. There are also stylized human figures with hands reaching toward their loincloths that may depict priests who served as guardians of the Göbekli Tepe sanctuary.

This ceremonial center dates to the earliest period of human activity after the Noahic flood. It is located in the vicinity of Mount Ararat, where Noah’s ark landed and its cargo of animals was released again into the world.

The site, which contains at least 20 more rings of pillars underground, was deliberately buried by the ancients in order to preserve it. Such a level of cooperation required a hierarchical organization and suggests a patriarchal social system, and the archaeological evidence of the native lifestyle fits with Scripture’s description of the lifestyles of Noah and his descendants after the flood (9:20; 10:8–9). If this site is being properly interpreted as a ceremonial site, then it provides new evidence of the biblical account of Noah’s ark and the return of men and animals after the flood.

In another recent excavation in the Ophel, located between the Temple Mount and City of David, an impression of an ancient royal seal (a bulla) was discovered bearing the inscription in ancient Hebrew, “belonging to Hezekiah [son of] Ahaz king of Judah.” This is the same biblical king who reigned from 727 to 698 BC and did what was “good and right and true before the Lord his God” (2 Chr. 31:20). Hezekiah prayed for and witnessed God’s miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian army (2 Ki. 18:13—19:37;
Perhaps an act of Providence is revealing this past testimony of God's power to save Jerusalem when today both site and city face their greatest challenges politically and spiritually. These examples can be multiplied a thousandfold and are readily available in books and magazines on biblical archaeology. The psalmist said, “Truth shall spring out of the earth” (Ps. 85:11). These small snapshots of the world of the Bible have been given to us, not for the sake of curiosity, but to increase our faith. They confirm to us that God has done what He said, and therefore we can trust in His future promise to do what He says He will do. The adventure of archaeology leads us to the even greater adventure of following God in faith throughout our lives.

The course in archaeology set me on a path of digging in the world of the Bible for more than 25 years. During that time I have learned to respect and appreciate God’s footprints in the stones.

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ENDNOTES

1 Israel captured the Sinai from Egypt in 1967 and, in an unprecedented move, returned it (more than 23,000 square miles) to Egypt beginning in 1979 as part of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty, signed that year.


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At the southeastern end of the old city of Jerusalem lies an impressive series of burial caves. Most date to the time of Jesus. Archaeologists recently have taken a closer look at them and have turned up something fascinating: a postscript to the legacies of Christ’s three inquisitors: Annas, Caiaphas, and Pontius Pilate.
Archaeologists have noticed that some of the caves, one in particular, contain the same intricate, decorative designs as the Jewish Temple. The entrance to one of the main tombs is embellished with tall columns; and the ceiling dome features a beautiful, large, ornately carved rosette. After much investigation, it is now believed that the lavishly decorated tomb was probably the burial cave of Annas, before whom Jesus stood after His arrest (Jn. 18:12–13).

Annas was the patriarch of a powerful Sadducean family. He served as high priest in Jerusalem for 10 years until he was deposed by a Roman procurator. Nevertheless, he exerted his influence over each of his five sons and son-in-law, Caiaphas, who served as his puppet high priests.

During Annas’s life, the Jewish people cursed him and his entire family for their corruption and cruelty (Talmud, Pesachim 57a). After Jesus was arrested, He was first brought before Annas, who questioned Him about His disciples and doctrine. It is probable Annas gave the order for a nearby officer to strike Jesus with his hand (Jn. 18:13, 19–23).

What does archaeology say about Annas? His final, lavish resting place for centuries has been used as a garbage dump. Squatters and Bedouins have lodged inside his ornate tomb. Even goats and horses were penned inside. Fires were built there; and the soot has stained and darkened the walls and ceiling, obscuring all the decorative detail.

What a stark contrast to where Jesus was buried. Pilgrims from around the world come to see and remember where Jesus probably was laid and rose again.

**IT WAS A COLD DAY IN NOVEMBER 1990** when a construction crew accidentally stumbled on a cave many people believe to be Caiaphas’s family burial chamber. Located in a forest preserve south of the Old City, the tomb was a spectacular find.

The chamber contained 12 boxes called ossuaries, used to collect decomposed human skeletal remains. Ossuaries freed a tomb’s ledge to be used again.

This particular limestone box, believed to contain Caiaphas’s bones, was uniquely decorated and inscribed with his name in Aramaic. His bones reveal he was about 60 years old at the time of his death. After the customary investigation of the bones in all 12 boxes, Caiaphas’s and the others were reburied on the Mount of Olives in a cemetery the Jewish people have used continually for more than 3,000 years. Rabbis believe that when the Messiah comes, He will first resurrect the dead buried there and then enter Jerusalem with them (cf. Zech. 14:4). The Mount of Olives is also where Jesus ascended to heaven and where He is expected to return bodily at His Second Coming (Acts 1:9–11).
The use of ossuaries was considered a reflection of belief in the physical resurrection of the human body. That is why the bones were collected and preserved. However, Scripture states that Caiaphas was a Sadducee. Sadducees did not believe in bodily resurrection (Mk. 12:18; Acts 23:8).

The fact that Caiaphas’s bones were placed in an ossuary and buried on the Mount of Olives is inconsistent with his belief and character, but consistent with the truths taught in Scripture. It was Caiaphas who unknowingly made the astonishing prophecy, “It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish” (Jn. 11:50). Without realizing what he was saying, he articulated God’s plan that Messiah Jesus become the final sacrifice for sin, not only for Israel’s but for that of the whole world (cf. 1 Jn. 2:2). This same Jesus will raise everyone from the dead—some to life and others to condemnation (Jn. 5:28–29).

It also was Caiaphas who asked Jesus the greatest of all questions:

> “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ [Messiah], the Son of God!” Jesus said to him, “It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Mt. 26:63–64).

Yet Jesus is remembered by countless millions in a much different way, as attested to by the 19th-century hymn “Fairest Lord Jesus”:

> Beautiful Savior! Lord of all the nations! Son of God and Son of Man! Glory and honor, praise, adoration, now and forevermore be Thine.

Judgment awaits Caiaphas when God raises him from the dead to stand before Him (Rev. 20:11–15).

**M ost People Know the Name Pontius Pilate.** In the days of Jesus, he was governor of Judea and represented the might of imperial Rome. History, however, literally has trampled on his name.

Between AD 26 and 36, Pilate dedicated a pagan temple in Caesarea to honor Roman Emperor Tiberius. Caesarea, on the Mediterranean coast, served as the Roman capital of Judea. A dedicatory inscription bearing Pilate’s name was embedded on the temple’s stone wall. It contained four lines in Latin, designed to force the city’s residents to learn and read the imperial language. Eventually, due to the city’s violent history, the temple was destroyed. The undamaged stones were reused elsewhere, and the inscription was lost until 1961.

An Italian team excavating the city’s Roman theater discovered the inscription. It turned out that this extremely significant stone was being used as a landing step for a flight of stairs to the theater seats. So the only physical evidence of the man who once told Jesus, “I have power to crucify You, and power to release You” (Jn. 19:10) was being walked on for centuries. Restored as much as possible, the inscription is now on display at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

Within 40 years after Jesus’ death and resurrection, the house of Annas, with all its power and wealth, was destroyed. Caiaphas was deposed a year after the crucifixion, and Pontius Pilate was banished to Gaul where he committed suicide.

Archaeology has presented the world with a desecrated tomb, dishonored bones, and a disrespected inscription—all tributes to the ignominious legacy of the three inquisitors who dared to interrogate the incarnate God.

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The Underlying Proof

Much of Israel’s history lies underground. And sometimes, even skeptics can’t deny the evidence.

by Randall Price
Khirbet Qeiyafa is a provincial town located about 19 miles from Jerusalem in the Elah Valley, where a young David slayed the Philistine giant Goliath. Today, 30 centuries later, it is contributing the most to the archaeological proof of a Judean kingdom.

Identified with the biblical city of Shaaraim (1 Sam. 17:52) because two gates (Hebrew, shaaraim) from the 10th century BC were found there, Khirbet Qeiyafa is helping to silence critics who discount the Israelite kingdoms of David and Solomon as historical fiction.

Archaeologists Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor uncovered impressive fortifications, parts of the city wall, an administrative center, a palace, a royal storeroom, a pillared building, and 10 houses that date from the late 11th to the early 10th centuries BC (the days of Kings Saul through Solomon). Here, too, were found inscriptions in either Canaanite or early Hebrew, possibly indicating an archive. The presence of such written documents supports the literary activities ascribed to David and Solomon. Archaeologists claim the palace and storeroom were under David’s administrative control and therefore were linked to his rule in the capital city.

Even more startling was the discovery of cultic shrines and objects, such as clay model temples that had features similar to those that would one day adorn the first (Solomonic) Temple in Jerusalem. These were probably votive objects used during local worship since the Tabernacle and tent of meeting were pitched at a distance.

These objects reveal active religious practice; and with the size and scope of the administrative, social, and literary activities in the town, they argue for a well-developed state. If such a small outlying site was this developed in the 10th century BC, there can be no doubt the larger city of Jerusalem was a Judean kingdom.

More than a decade ago, Tel Aviv University archaeologist Israel Finkelstein and coauthor Neil Silberman declared in their popular book, The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts, “Not a single trace of 10th-century Judahite literary activity has been found. . . . In light of these findings, it is now clear that Iron Age Judah enjoyed no precocious golden age.” In other words, there was no capital city of Jerusalem as described in the Bible.

Archaeology, however, is ever-changing our view of history and proving the Bible’s accuracy.

Israeli archaeologists Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron uncovered walls and fortifications associated with the ancient City of David that were built on the remains of earlier Canaanite and Jebusite fortifications and water systems. Previous excavations under Yigal Shiloh revealed a massive, 12-story-high, stepped-stone structure from the 13th century BC upon which David began to build his city (2 Sam. 5:9). This foundational structure may have served as a retaining wall, buttressing the “stronghold of Zion” (v. 7).

Archaeological evidence demonstrates the Bible’s description of the early history of Israel is accurate and argues for accepting the maxim, “Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.”

Just above, monumental buildings probably associated with that structure were uncovered by Hebrew University archaeologist Eilat Mazar. She also found the broken rim of a large ceramic jar with a 10th-century inscription in an early Canaanite dialect. Since the jar predates Israelite rule, it is likely the Jebusites wrote the inscription. They constituted part of the city’s population in the time of Kings David and Solomon.

At Tel Zayit, a large limestone boulder with a bowl-
A professor at Union Theological Seminary confessed,...

“I believe that other scholars and I were ill advised in reading too much into the relative absence of data for writing in the 10th century B.C.E.”

shaped hollow ground into one side contained two lines of alphabetic writing, known as an abecedary. Found in a clearly stratified 10th-century context, it contained all of the letters of the Canaanite alphabet, revealing that a literate culture already existed when David conquered Jerusalem. It reveals the existence of Judean-Israelite scribes, indirectly supporting a Davidic-Solomonic kingdom (where court documents would be archived).

Based on this find, David Carr, a professor at Union Theological Seminary, confessed, “The discovery of the Tel Zayit Inscription proves just how dangerous it can be to base arguments about early history on gaps in the historical record. Therefore, I believe that other scholars and I were ill advised in reading too much into the relative absence of data for writing in the 10th century B.C.E.”

Archaeological evidence demonstrates the Bible’s description of the early history of Israel is accurate and argues for accepting the maxim, “Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.” Simply because we do not yet have evidences from archaeology to support certain statements in the Bible does not mean the Bible is wrong. Archaeological discoveries show that the biblical details of political and religious life, as well as Temple construction, could only have been provided by someone who lived during that time, rather than by a later storyteller.

Even though we may never find archaeological support for everything in Scripture, the evidence we have discovered is sufficient to show God’s Word can be trusted and should be our priority in any study of its historical context.

ENDNOTES


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THE LATE JUSTICE SCALIA: JUDGMENT AFFIRMED

A few days after Justice Scalia’s death on February 13 at age 79, I was debating a well-known leader on the separation of church and state. I praised Scalia, but my opponent condemned him, claiming he had caused great social harm. Such was the controversial impact of the longest-serving member of the current Supreme Court.

Part of Justice Scalia’s influence may have come from the sheer force of his personality; his brilliantly incisive, often biting dissents; and his unrelenting and even humorous exchanges during oral argument with lawyers whom he thought had missed the mark. But he was controversial for more important reasons that reveal a danger in the way liberal activists view both the role of the U.S. Constitution and the limitless power of the government.

First and foremost, Scalia was a “textualist,” meaning he believed the beginning point for a court’s work should always be the actual words of the law—in context and using the plain, commonly understood meaning of the words themselves.

When the Supreme Court, for the second time, upheld Obamacare, it did so by mangling the meaning of the law’s key phrase: “an [insurance] Exchange established by the State.” Simply put, if the phrase actually means what the words say, namely, that a “state” insurance exchange is not an insurance exchange created by the federal government, Obamacare would be doomed.

Faced with that prospect, a majority of justices willingly ignored the rules of the English language to hold that the word state really meant “federal government,” a notion that would have shaken the Founding Fathers to the core. In his dissent, Scalia railed against that betrayal of the judging profession. Words in laws actually matter, and no one argued more passionately for that logic than Antonin Scalia. The issue is not merely about linguistics; it is about the power of judges to ignore what words truly mean so that they may abandon their constitutional role and act as “superlegislators,” twisting the law to create a result they deem desirable. When the basic rules of language no longer apply, public servants suddenly acquire the power to become unanswerable rulers.

Justice Scalia was also an “originalist.” He believed the only legitimate way to interpret the Constitution is to adopt, as much as practical, the original understanding given by the Founding Fathers. The liberal wing of the Supreme Court has abandoned this approach, leading to a stunning destruction of the idea of freedom itself. When the court in 2015 voted 5 to 4 in Obergefell v. Hodges that states are not free to define marriage as one man with one woman but must allow same-sex marriage, Scalia dissented:

“This practice of constitutional revision by an unelected committee of nine, always accompanied (as it is today) by extravagant praise of liberty, robs the People of the most important liberty they asserted in the Declaration of Independence and won in the Revolution of 1776: the freedom to govern themselves.

When federal judges, selected for life, use standardless constitutional activism to yank basic freedoms out of the hands of the American citizenry in order to be politically correct so that they may fulfill a liberal, social agenda, the end of the rule of law and the beginning of rule by black-robed oppressors cannot be far behind. Antonin Scalia foresaw this eventuality and passionately warned us. It remains to be seen, both in the coming national election and the appointment of his successor, whether we are closer than we ever imagined to the waning of day and the coming of night in America.

AUTHOR CARL SANDBURG popularized an old lumberman’s saying when he wrote, regarding the death of President Abraham Lincoln, “A tree is best measured when it is down.” The news that U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia passed into eternity was barely hours old when the Twittersphere and Internet burst with measurements of his legacy.
Christians are to honor God’s holiness by keeping His commandments. But what about gray areas where the Bible is silent? In those cases, followers of Jesus must not offend their consciences or those of other believers. This guideline raises several questions:

1. **How far must Christians go to avoid giving offense?**

   If you look long enough and far enough, you can find people who are offended by everything. Should Christians try to please all Christians everywhere? Scripture provides no instant formula to solve this problem, nor do I.

   But we cannot use this lack of formula as an excuse to ignore God’s guideline not to offend the consciences of fellow believers. Consider the expression “look long enough and far enough” as a clue to the solution. We must look long and far for those who are not close to us, so we probably need not be concerned about offending them.

   We must only strive not to offend those within our direct culture and subculture. We should find out which questionable things offend the consciences of both unbelievers and believers in our immediate settings and then conform our actions accordingly.

2. **Why does God require stronger Christians to sacrifice their liberty because of the scruples of weaker Christians? Why does He not require weaker Christians to yield to the stronger believers?**

   The answer is found in Romans 14:22–23: “Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.” The apostle Paul explained that if weaker Christians go against their consciences, they sin and will experience spiritual and psychological problems.

   On the other hand, if stronger Christians restrict practices that their consciences permit, they are not sinning. Stronger Christians should be more mature and therefore more flexible to yield their liberty for the sake of their weaker brethren—unless they are enslaved by those practices. Enslavement is a sign of immaturity. Relinquishing certain practices should not be bothersome if the stronger believer is truly mature and thus not a slave to those practices.

3. **Will stronger Christians be guilty of hypocrisy if they conform their actions to the scruples of weaker Christians?**

   Some weaker Christians believe attending movies at commercial motion-picture theaters is wrong, but they are fine with watching movies at home. If stronger Christians conform to this scruple, won’t they be hypocrites, following a double standard?

   Scripture says no. Rather than being inconsistent, they are consistently following God’s guideline not to offend another’s conscience.

   Paul followed this principle. He ate pork while with Gentiles but did not eat pork while with Jewish people (1 Cor. 9:19–22). God gives weaker Christians the right to have qualms about questionable things, regardless of whether a stronger Christian views their convictions as hypocritical or inconsistent (Rom. 14:1–12).

   Paul instructed stronger Christians, “Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things” (v. 1). Stronger believers must not judge these scruples as inconsistent, hypocritical, or wrong.

4. **Will stronger Christians become bitter and cause dissen- sion in the body of Christ if they must restrain their liberty?**

   Paul answered this question in Romans 14:18: “For he [the stronger Christian] who serves Christ in these things [restraining Christian liberty] is acceptable to God and approved by men.” Since they will be approved by both men and God, they will not become bitter and frustrated unless they are immature and enslaved by certain practices.
Motivation for Following the Guidelines

Why should Christians follow God’s guidelines for Christian conduct? What should motivate us? The answer is found in one word: love.

If we truly love God, we will not violate His moral absolutes (Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 5:3). If we love ourselves, we will not offend our own consciences; and if we truly love others, we will not offend their consciences (Rom. 13:8–10; 14:15; Gal. 5:13–14).

True love shows more concern for the welfare of another than for oneself (Jn. 3:16; 15:12–13). This is why Paul wrote, “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification” (Rom. 15:1–2; cf. 1 Cor. 8:13; 10:24, 33). If we truly love others, we willingly sacrifice the full exercise of our liberty to avoid offending another’s conscience.

The opposite of love is selfishness: being more concerned for one’s own welfare than for the welfare of others. If we refuse to sacrifice our liberty or do so grudgingly, we are selfish at heart. We can talk all we want about love, but we really don’t have it (1 Jn. 3:18).

Abstaining from practices for the sake of others is not legalism. It is not giving up liberty for law; it is giving up liberty for love. And love characterizes Christianity more than liberty. Theologian Charles Erdman explained that a Christian “who determines to act solely in accordance with what is theoretically allowable has not yet learned the Christian way of life.”

Bible scholar James Stifler said, “If it should seem burdensome and grievous to some strong [Christian] to live narrowly for the sake of the weak, the consolation and dignity of such a life are that Christ also lived it.”

Christ set the example we should follow. To sacrifice what would benefit us so that others might benefit is to be Christ-like; it is to have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 10:32—11:1; Phil. 2:1–8). Wrote theologian F. F. Bruce,

Who was more free from taboos and inhibitions than He? Yet who was more careful to bear with the weaknesses of others? It is so easy for a man whose conscience is quite clear about some course of action to snap his fingers at his critics and say “I’ll please myself.” He has every right to do so, but that is not the way of Christ. His way is to consider others first, to consult their interests and help them in every possible way.

In other words, Bruce said, “Christ came not to receive service, but to give it.” Christians are to do the same (Jn. 13:13–17, 34).

Applications of Guidelines on the Institutional Level

While biblical guidelines for Christian conduct certainly apply to individual Christians, do they also apply to Christian institutions, such as schools? Should such an institution require its members to adhere to a standard of conduct based on its application of scriptural guidelines?

Yes. The reasons are both logical and scriptural.

A Christian institution is an individual entity responsible to God for its practices, just like individual Christians. Because Christians are to follow biblical guidelines for Christian living, so Christian institutions must follow biblical guidelines for Christian conduct. Institutions that do otherwise are irresponsible.

A Christian institution is composed of many members. Since each member’s actions reflect on the institution, all members must conform to the scruples of conscience belonging to the saved and unsaved people of that community if the institution is to maintain a consistent Christian testimony.

In addition, following a common set of guidelines will help to prevent division among the institution’s members. Since unity is crucial to a Christian ministry’s effectiveness, the institution must protect the scruples of its weaker members.

The main incentive for a Christian institution to require its members to adhere to a set standard of conduct is love. If the institution genuinely loves God, it will require its members to conform to God’s moral absolutes. If it genuinely loves both the saved and unsaved people in its community, it will require its members not to offend their consciences. And if it genuinely loves its own members, it will seek to protect the consciences of those who are weak.

Membership in Christian institutions is voluntary. Therefore, if you disagree with an institution’s code of conduct, simply refrain from joining or voluntarily and cheerfully submit to the organization’s guidelines while in membership. You must decide whether your membership in that particular institution or the full exercise of your individual liberty is more important.

ENDNOTES
3 F. F. Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963), 253–254.
4 Ibid., 255.
INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1

First Thessalonians is a key book for every Christian, whether a new believer or seasoned saint. The theme is the coming of the Lord, and each chapter builds on an aspect of the believer’s life in light of it, tackling such vital subjects as perseverance through suffering; election; the Rapture; and much, much more.

The apostle Paul established the church in Thessalonica on his first missionary journey (see “The Thessalonian Church” in the March/April 2016 issue). But Christian persecution led believers to persuade Paul and his coworker Silas to leave the city in the darkness of night.

Unable to return and disciple the fledgling church, Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica in his place. Timothy’s report greatly encouraged the apostle, relieving his anxiety over the church’s spiritual condition.

SPECIFICS ON THE LETTER

Although some Bible translations read, “The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians,” this title was not part of the original text. It was added, not by the author, but by someone else to designate the author and destination of the document. Such titles were added to all the Pauline Epistles to identify them from other manuscripts. That said, most scholars agree Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians.

Paul mentioned Silvanus and Timothy in verse 1 because they were instrumental in establishing the church. Some scholars rejected Paul’s authorship, but most today reject their arguments. Early church leaders, such as Irenaeus, Ignatius, and Polycarp, accepted Paul as the author.

After leaving Thessalonica, Paul traveled to Berea (Acts 17:10–15) and Athens (vv. 16–34), finally arriving in Corinth where he ministered for 18 months (18:1–11). Most scholars believe Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians while in Corinth during his second missionary journey.

Although no date is given for the letter, certain historical events in Corinth make it possible to approximate. It was written when Gallio was proconsul in Corinth for one year (v. 12). Paul probably arrived in late AD 50 and composed the epistle in 51 or early in 52, which was early in his ministry.

Unable to return to Thessalonica and instruct the young church, Paul did the next best thing: He dictated an extremely personal letter. He wrote to express his joy over hearing the Thessalonian believers were steadfast in their commitment and faithfulness to Christ and had shown a determination to stand against opposition and persecution. Paul was overjoyed to know of their resolve to live godly lives, walk by faith, and serve the Lord as they awaited His return.

It also was necessary that Paul discredit the malicious reports being circulated against him, his teaching on the Messiah, and his mission ministry. Aggressive Jewish opposition was aimed at turning the devotion of new believers away from Paul and his message. The persecutors would spread the lie that missionaries like Paul were only interested in money. Paul countered this charge in 1 Thessalonians 2. They also claimed he fled Thessalonica immediately when opposition to his teaching arose, leaving his converts to face the consequences.

If these charges went unanswered, the faith of the new believers might have been destroyed, ruining Paul’s missionary work in this area of Macedonia. Paul hoped his epistle would give direction and hope to the young church and help it remain steadfast and faithful to Christ. Sending Timothy back to disciple the Thessalonians demonstrated Paul’s concern for their spiritual well-being (1 Th. 2:17—3:5).

The New Testament, remember, was not penned yet; and Paul’s stay in Thessalonica was too brief for him to establish the believers in the true doctrines of the faith. Thus many misunderstandings and misinterpretations were starting to emerge within the church, and Paul knew from experience that doctrinal errors needed to be corrected immediately.

A personal letter from Paul was definitely in order and timely. He knew his praise for their commitment would encourage the Thessalonians and be greatly appreciated.

SYNOPSIS OF THE LETTER

This is an extremely important book. It addresses major themes, such as salvation of the individual, service for the Lord, sanctification of believers as they are conformed to Christ, surety of the believer’s resurrection, and security of all believers in Christ in relation to the
Day of the Lord and God’s wrath.

Within these subheads, the epistle teaches on perseverance through suffering, election, living a pure life in an unsaved world, the Rapture of the church, the coming of Antichrist, apostasy, the wrath of God on an unsaved world, edification of Christian brothers and sisters, obedience to church leaders, disciplining the unruly, supporting and encouraging the weak, thankfulness, being yielded to the Holy Spirit, the importance of prayer, and Christ’s Second Coming.

**SALUTATION OF THE LETTER**

The letter begins, “Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church was not with Paul and Silvanus when they planted the church, without being encumbered by Jewish traditions of circumcision world, the Rapture of the church, the coming of Antichrist, disciplining the unruly, supporting and encouraging the weak, thankfulness, being yielded to the Holy Spirit, the importance of prayer, and Christ’s Second Coming.

Paul always called his coworker “Silvanus” (proper Roman name), not “Silas,” as Luke did in the book of Acts. Silvanus is mentioned second because he was chosen by Paul to accompany the apostle on his second missionary journey (15:40). A Jewish man with a Roman name, Silvanus was a Roman citizen (16:37) and a member of the Jerusalem church. The apostles and elders, with the entire church, chose him to accompany Paul to Antioch (15:22).

Silvanus agreed with Paul during the Jerusalem council that Gentile believers should have liberty to practice their faith without being encumbered by Jewish traditions of circumcision and keeping the Mosaic Law (v. 24). Silvanus was also called a “prophet” (v. 32). After he left Paul at Corinth, nothing more is heard from him in Acts or Paul’s epistles. It was proper to name Silvanus second in the salutation because he was Paul’s senior worker.

It was also appropriate for Paul to mention Timothy because he worked closely with the Thessalonian church. Although he was not with Paul and Silvanus when they planted the church, Paul sent Timothy there soon after (1 Th. 3:1–2, 6). Timothy had a Jewish mother and a Greek father and was reared in a pagan community (Acts 16:1). He was Paul’s son in the faith and was personally discipled by him. He is mentioned in the salutation of four other Pauline Epistles: 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

Interestingly, Paul never referred to himself as an apostle in this epistle, as he did on other occasions. He spoke to the Thessalonian Christians on a personal level since he was their spiritual father, and his character and conduct convinced them they should follow his instruction and teachings.

Paul addressed the “Church of the Thessalonians.” The word church (Greek, *ekklesia*) is made up of two Greek words: *ek* (out of) and *kaleo* (to call). It was used in Greek culture for any group or assembly of people and did not have a religious connotation. In Scripture, the word church refers to a Christian assembly of people who believe in Jesus Christ. It never refers to a building. Throughout this epistle, the word refers only to a local assembly, not the universal church.

The phrase *in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Th. 1:1) clarifies whom Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy worshiped and distinguished the church from association with pagan religions or a political group of that day. Mentioning “the Lord Jesus Christ” identifies the church as Christian, and not Jewish in beliefs.

The makeup of this group was twofold: Many were Gentiles who became believers, and a few were Jewish people like Jason (see Acts 17). Salvation in Christ gave Gentiles and Jews equal social standing and a new relationship in life, love, and communion with one another—something no other religion in the world could do.

Paul’s greeting, “Grace to you and peace,” was common (1 Th. 1:1). But under the inspiration of God, the words grace and peace became invested with new meaning. They expressed the truth of the gospel.

Grace can be defined as an attribute of God, a part of His character, which he expresses through His goodness to undeserving, sinful humanity.

Peace enters our lives when we are born again and yield to the control of the Holy Spirit, who gives us a calmness of spirit and sense of well-being because we have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

The next article will begin an exciting, in depth, verse-by-verse study of this key epistle, which spoke to first-century believers in Thessalonica and still speaks to us today.

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**by David M. Levy,**

the director of International Ministries and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel
Yousef Nadarkhani, 38, is an Iranian-Christian pastor. He spent three years in prison and was sentenced to death by hanging on charges of apostatizing from Islam and evangelizing Muslims. Although released in September 2012, he was rearrested and released on January 7, 2013.

His wife, Fatemah, was arrested in 2010 for apostasy and sentenced to life in prison but was released after serving four months. They live under constant threat of arrest and worse.

The Islamic State (ISIS) is crucifying and beheading Christians and, according to the express.co.uk, is sending “teams of trained killers” disguised as refugees into refugee camps to “kidnap and kill vulnerable Christians” and murder them “in their beds.”

Why does God allow such persecution? Clearly, He is able to protect. He protected the prophet Daniel’s friends—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego—from being burned alive by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 3). Yet, God’s ways are not our ways (Isa. 55:8). His plans and ways are inscrutable.

Consider China. The first known missionary to China was Alopen in AD 635. His love for Jesus initiated a period of evangelistic activity that produced several churches. Then in 845 China banned all foreign religions. There was no evidence of Christianity there for the next 10 centuries.

The first modern missionaries were Robert Morrison (coastal areas) in 1807 and Hudson Taylor (inland) in 1853. God used their pioneering efforts to recruit about 50 missionaries to China by 1860. During the next 40 years, that number mushroomed to an estimated 2,500 missionaries in 1900, with an estimated 100,000 Protestant Christians. For the next 50 years, the number of Protestant Christians grew to an estimated 700,000 in 1950.

Then, just as Christianity was starting to flourish, all foreign missionaries were expelled in 1953, when Mao Tse Tung rose to power. The Christian world wondered what would happen to the church in China. Could not God have kept the Communists from power? Could He not have...
protected the missionary movement, which was beginning to produce solid results for the Kingdom of God? Why would He let all of the sacrifices those missionaries made go to waste?

**But God had a bigger plan.** Today China has more than 163 million Protestant Christians. BillionBibles.org provides logical, conservative estimates based on the number of baptized Christians in the country’s state-sanctioned Three Self churches.

The last 60 years of Communist domination have produced explosive church growth. Today there are more Christians in China than in America, though the number of Christians still represents merely 12 percent of China’s 1.4 billion people. The Spirit of God has produced exponential growth, with approximately 128 million people attending house churches all over China.

**Consider Iran.** It ranks ninth among the 50 worst nations in the world for religious persecution, according to the 2016 Open Doors World Watch List. This aggressively Islamic country fiercely opposes Christianity and persecutes believers in the extreme.

Yet one ministry working in Iran estimates there are approximately 370,000 Muslim Background Believers in Iran today, up from a mere 200 in 1975.

In an October 2010 article, Charisma magazine reported that Iranian-born evangelist Lazarus Yeghnazar claims 3,000 Iranian Muslims convert to Christianity every month through his Farsi-language TV and Internet programs. Charisma also reported the following:

More than 200 former Muslims were baptized during a training conference in Europe. Brenda Ajamian, a former missionary to the Middle East, said the event was unlike anything she’d seen during her 15 years ministering in Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan.

“That many Muslims who converted to Christ in one place boggled my mind because missionaries have worked in the Arab world and Muslim world generally for years and without much fruit,” Ajamian said. “God is at work among Muslims.” Ajamian said she was told at the conference that drug addiction and depression run rampant in many nations, particularly in Iran, where the cleric-led government has attempted to squash pro-democracy movements. “People are so fed up with the kinds of lives they lead. . . . They’re turning to Christ even in spite of the very real possibility of persecution and death and imprisonment,” she said.


Rather than inhibiting Christianity, God is using persecution and martyrdom to spread it.

When Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt, they had no idea God had planned to use their evil deed for good. When they saw Joseph again many years later, he was the most powerful ruler in Egypt apart from Pharaoh; and he told them, “You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive” (Gen. 50:20).

So it is with persecution. Jesus said, “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:18). God will forge ahead His way, and nothing will be able to stop Him.

**NOTES**

1 Nick Gutteridge, “Heading for Britain: ISIS sends ASSASSINS into UN refugee camps to murder Christians,” Express, October 24, 2015 <express.co.uk/news/world/614249/ISIS-sends-ASSASSINS-UN-refugee-camps-could-come-Britain>.
4 Sarah Stegall, “Evangelists Say Muslims Coming to Christ at Historic Rate,” Charisma, August 20, 2010 <tinyurl.com/jbq7url7>.
5 Ibid.

Richard D. Emmons is a professor in the School of Divinity at Cairn University in Langhorne, Pennsylvania. He is also senior pastor of GraceWay Bible Church in Hamilton Township, New Jersey.
La Plata High School, a public school in Charles County, Maryland, is being sued in federal court for allegedly making students profess the Muslim statement of faith and memorize the Five Pillars of Islam, while a charter-school empire owned by a Turkish civilizational jihadist is collecting millions of dollars in U.S. taxpayer money.

The Thomas More Law Center has filed a lawsuit against La Plata High School on behalf of John and Melissa Wood who said their daughter was forced “to disparage her Christian faith by reciting the Shahada, and acknowledging Mohammed as her spiritual leader;” Thomas More’s President Richard Thompson said, as Todd Starnes of Fox News reported.

In an article “Lawsuit: Public school forced my child to convert to Islam,” Starnes said the suit also claims the school teaches that a Muslim’s faith is stronger than that of average Christians. “And when Mr. Wood complained – the school banned him from campus,” Starnes reported.

“The Shahada,” wrote Starnes, “is the Islamic Creed, ‘There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.’” Starnes said the suit alleges students spent only one day studying Christianity and two weeks studying Islam, which they were told is a religion of peace. In addition, Starnes said, “Students were also allegedly instructed that ‘the Islamic religion is a fact while Christianity and Judaism are just beliefs.’”

Meanwhile, WND.com’s Leo Hohmann has reported that Muhammad Fethullah Gülen is directing “his cult-like Islamic movement from a guarded compound in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania,” raking in “tens of millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars every year” for his charter schools.

Hohmann called Gülen “a Turkish Islamist, writer and preacher with a secret plan for bringing Shariah law to America” and “Turkey’s most influential spiritual leader for the past 50 years.”

The schools, “which have innocent-sounding names like the Horizon Science Academies in Illinois, Harmony Schools of Excellence in Texas, Dove Science Academies in Oklahoma and Magnolia Science Academies in California—have long been the subject of investigations into alleged corruption scandals involving influence peddling and visa abuse,” Hohmann wrote.

Most of the parents of students who attend Gülen charter schools have no idea about Gülen’s background as a Turkish Islamist and believer in civilizational jihad—which is a form of nonviolent jihad focused on infiltrating and overcoming Western nations over time through immigration and exploitation of the civil liberties available in those nations,” Hohmann reported.

Anti-Sharia activist Pamela Geller told WND.com, “It has been widely reported for years that he wants ultimately to restore the Islamic caliphate in Turkey. That alone should make his charter schools in the U.S. a subject of law enforcement scrutiny, but it largely hasn’t.”

A complete list of Gülen’s schools is available at tinyurl.com/7uxruyr. Starnes’s article is available at tinyurl.com/zhulgfx, and Hohmann’s article at tinyurl.com/jtpjtza.
ISRAEL MAKES MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGHS

Israeli researchers have made three recent medical breakthroughs: a new treatment for leukemia, a blood test to screen and diagnose Alzheimer’s, and a new anti-radiation cell therapy.

JNS.org reported that researchers from the University of Pennsylvania’s Abramson Cancer Center have used the research of professor Zelig Eshhar of Israel’s Weizmann Institute of Science to genetically modify the T-cells of 29 leukemia patients, which resulted in the remission or cure of cancer in 27 of them. “I’m not surprised to hear about the results,” Eshhar said. “In our lab, we cured many rats and mice of cancer. I have been saying for years that we could do this in people.”

Gil Ronen of Arutz-7 reported on another new discovery concerning Alzheimer’s. Professor Illana Gozes of Tel Aviv University is leading the research on a new process of screening and diagnosing the disease. The study proposes a new biomarker—activity-dependent neuroprotective protein (ADNP)—for cognitive aging and Alzheimer’s disease. “This study,” Gozes stated, “has provided the basis to detect this biomarker in routine, non-invasive blood tests. . . . Early intervention is invaluable to Alzheimer’s patients.”

The Jerusalem Post reported an Israeli biotech company, Pluristem Therapeutics, has developed an anti-radiation therapy that the U.S. government will likely begin stocking next year. The placenta-based cell therapy consists of injecting patients who have been exposed to lethal doses of radiation. Clinical trials have yielded a near 100 percent recovery rate for animals.

From news reports

CHANGES AT THE WALL

The Israeli cabinet has voted to allow non-Orthodox Jewish prayer in a specially designated place at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, with plans to build a new plaza where both men and women can pray together.

The decision is a “dramatic, unprecedented and critical acknowledgement” by Israel, said a statement by the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA). “Though much work regarding the implementation of this decision still remains, . . . we are measurably closer today to the ultimate symbol of that reality—one wall for one people,” the statement said.

JNS.org

UNHRC ‘BLACKLISTS’ JEWISH STATE

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is calling for a database of businesses “involved in activities” in Judea and Samaria and wants to be informed of the “human rights and international law violations involved in the production of settlement goods.”

Danny Danon, Israeli ambassador to the UN, called the database a “blacklist” and said the UNHRC is acting “obsessively” on the issue of Israel. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the UNHRC an “anti-Israel circus,” and said it “attacks the only democracy in the Middle East and ignores the gross violations of Iran, Syria, and North Korea.”

The measure’s passage comes in the wake of the UNHRC’s appointment of Canadian legal expert Michael Lynk, who has expressed anti-Israel views in the past, as special rapporteur on human rights issues affecting the Palestinians.

JNS.org

IDF DEVELOPS NEW FOG TECHNOLOGY

The Israel Defense Forces have developed a new system for locating and identifying terrorists in fog and haze.

Based on the drone system, it is an advanced, specified spy package, containing all of the regular equipment but including an option for seeing through fog. The specialized camera, called Savir, allows one to see and photograph people and moving objects in high resolution through fog or cloudy conditions from more than a mile away.

Arutz-7 (IsraelNationalNews.com)

BOY FINDS ANCIENT CANAANITE FIGURINE

A 7-year-old Israeli boy discovered a 3,400-year-old Canaanite figurine while hiking with his father and friends in the archaeological park Tel Rehov. The family reported the finding to the Israel Antiquities Authority, and a representative awarded the boy with a certificate of appreciation for good citizenship.

The ceramic statuette is of a nude woman, which was made by pressing soft clay into the mold. Amichai Mazar, professor emeritus at Hebrew University, who led a delegation of archaeological excavation representatives in the area, inspected the statuette and noted, “It is typical of the Canaanite culture of 15th to 13th centuries BC. Some researchers believe the figure represents a woman of flesh and blood, and others see it as Astarte, goddess of fertility, known from Canaanite history and the Bible.”

Arutz-7 (IsraelNationalNews.com)
Once every two months, I take my wife to the hospital for an eye checkup following a cornea transplant. The last time we were there, two Russian-Orthodox priests sat next to us. We began conversing, and our discussion quickly turned to the matter of faith.

Like the many ultra-Orthodox Jews I have spoken to over the years, they were very sure of themselves and showed me their commentaries, which they were positive contained the root of faith. They trusted in the words of men, rather than in the living Word of God.

I showed them my small Bible and asked, “Which book is of greater value?” One of the priests answered, “We do not want to see anything in Hebrew because we do not speak that language.”

I know Russian, so I replied, “If you like, I will give you a complete translation of any passage in this book.” Then I asked, “Have you ever heard about the Bible?”

“Oh yes,” he said. “Do you have a copy with you?” To their surprise, I told them the little book I held in my hand was the Holy Bible.

When we began to speak about Jesus, the priests were sure they knew everything. I told them, “We must believe in Jesus Christ, not according to commentaries—which are merely the words of men—but according to the Holy Bible. This book alone shows us how to come to God.”

New Russian-Jewish immigrants in the waiting room also listened attentively to our conversation, and most of them agreed that true faith in God comes only according to the Bible.

I told them, “For the millions of genuine Christians, the most important book is the Holy Bible.” Although they believed themselves to be Christians, these people were walking in darkness because they had never found the true way to faith in Christ.
was not surprised when one of the priests asked, “How did you, a Jew, come to believe in Christ?”

I replied, “I can tell from your question how blind you are; you do not even know from which people Jesus came. You must read the Bible, not your fictitious books.”

They asked where in the Bible it was written that Jesus was Jewish. I said, “Moses spoke of Jesus coming from the Jewish people.” I then read Deuteronomy 18:15, 18: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear. I will . . . put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.”

I continued, “The Bible clearly explains Christ’s earthly heritage. The Bible is the root of our faith, not your books.”

After we talked more, one of the Jewish immigrants asked, “How can a Jew be so faithful to another religion?”

I responded, “I know you believe yourselves to be good Jews because you follow the rabbinical traditions. But you must take a good look at the Holy Bible and see what the Lord truly wants from us. He wants us to love Him and obey His commandments. In the Holy Bible we read of the faith of our fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and the words of our prophets. This book has been hidden from you in Russia for a long time. Even here in Israel, you are only told about the Old Testament. But if you would study that carefully—especially Isaiah 53, which is never read in the synagogues—you would see for yourselves it speaks of Jesus Christ.”

They were very surprised. “That is impossible!” one exclaimed.

I replied, “It is true.” I then read Isaiah 53 to them and carefully explained what it meant.

This was a wonderful witnessing opportunity. After my wife’s examination was finished, I spoke with these people for another half hour.

As it is written in Isaiah 9:2, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.” I pray the light of Jesus will shine in their hearts and they will understand what it means to truly love God.

—The Friends of Israel Archives, 1998

Zvi Kalisher (1928–2014) was known for his unswerving faithfulness to the Lord and his bold witness in Jerusalem. He was with The Friends of Israel for more than 55 years.
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