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ABOUT THE COVER

Our stunning cover photo of moonrise over the Tower of David brings together the ancient and contemporary in the imperishable life of Jewish Jerusalem. Constructed by Herod the Great as a citadel guarding the northern entrance to the city, the structure was named centuries later by Byzantine Christians inspired by a phrase from the Song of Solomon (4:4). Destroyed and rebuilt a number of times, the Tower of David endures as a distinctive link to the past. Today the grounds and Tower house a magnificent archaeological museum that contains artifacts dating back 2,700 years, unfolding the history of Jerusalem before thousands of visitors annually through magnificent light shows, displays, and archaeological gardens (Hanan Isachar/Hanan Isachar Photography).

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In March our Up to Jerusalem tour visited The Jerusalem Great Synagogue. It was a highlight of our trip to the only city in the world where God has chosen to place His name. Even Jesus visited synagogues during His time on Earth.

The Great Synagogue was founded in 1982 and is dedicated to the memory of the 6 million Jewish people who died in the Holocaust and to those who gave their lives to establish and defend the modern State of Israel.

The building’s magnificent architecture and design make it truly stunning. The exterior resembles the ancient Temple, with its towering façade. On entering the main sanctuary, your eyes are drawn to vivid stained-glass windows that tell the history, past and future, of the Jewish people.

Rabbi Zev Lanton, director general of the Great Synagogue of Jerusalem, graciously escorted us into a prayer and study room where he shared the story of the synagogue. Rabbi Lanton explained some of the basic elements of Judaism, focusing particularly on prayer.

He demonstrated how a Jewish man drapes a tallit (or talis), a four-cornered prayer shawl, over his shoulders and often his head before praying to God.

Though the Lord did not directly command Jewish men to wear tallitot (or taleisim), He did instruct them to attach tassels to the four corners of their outer garments (Num. 15:38–40; Dt. 22:12). The tassels were to include a blue thread to help them remember the Lord’s commands and do them and to remember to be holy before God.

Today, said Rabbi Lanton, the tallit is placed over the outer garments and symbolizes the way to approach the holy God of the universe: by covering oneself.

It is common in Jerusalem to see people praying. At the Western Wall, the holy site closest to where the Temple once stood, people openly gather to offer up prayer to God day and night. Both men and women pray at the Western Wall.

The prayers of the Jewish people remind me of the importance of communicating with God. It is the prayer of the righteous that moves His heart. Prayer is how we commune with our heavenly Father and offer Him praise and thanksgiving for all He has done, is doing, and will do for us.

It was through prayer that God’s own Son, who became flesh and dwelt among us, communicated with His Father. He discerned God’s will through prayer. Through prayer He asked His Father to care for His disciples’ needs. In His greatest hour of trial, just prior to His arrest and torture, Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane praying to His Father. I cannot fathom the amount of prayer that has been lifted up on behalf of The Friends of Israel over the years. But I can appreciate that, without all those who labored to pray for this ministry, we would not be celebrating our 75th anniversary.

Through your prayers, God opens eyes to see; minds to understand; and hearts to believe and receive the wonderful, life-giving message of His Messiah.

Listening to Rabbi Lanton at the Great Synagogue in Jerusalem, I couldn’t help but think that, though we do not follow the tradition of covering ourselves with a tallit prior to praying, the tallit nevertheless reflects our stature before God: We should go before His throne of grace in humility, as the creation before the great Creator.

The tassels with the blue thread remind us that God is holy, and He desires that we know His Word and live righteously before Him. As James wrote, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Jas. 5:16). I am deeply grateful for your ministry of prayer for The Friends of Israel.
What exactly was the *Mavi Marmara* situation? Since the 2005 Gaza War, Israel set up an internationally legal, naval blockade in the international waters of the Mediterranean Sea. The blockade is used to prevent arming Hamas, the terrorist organization that controls Gaza and has launched thousands of missiles into Israeli cities. Hamas has routinely killed innocent Israeli citizens, damaged property, and inflicted terror on an entire generation of Israeli young people. Controlling Gaza’s airspace and borders, both land and sea, is imperative to Israel’s security.

Before the Turkish vessels set sail, Israel warned them not to come. Israel was already providing humanitarian aid to Gaza by sending tons of food and medicine on a regular basis. Israel knew that among the “humanitarians” on board the flotilla were members of Insani Yardim Vakfi, the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation, a radical Islamic organization linked with Hamas. Video footage clearly shows that the flotilla’s mission was military, not humanitarian. As soon as the Israeli soldiers were lowered onto the ships, they were attacked. The struggle and ensuing fight left nine Turkish passengers dead and 14 Israeli soldiers injured. Turkey claimed Israel used excessive force; but had the Israelis not acted as they did, they likely all would have been killed.

In the wake of the incident, Turkey withdrew its high-level diplomats from Israel and froze deals with Israel’s military. What was once a cordial, even militarily strategic friendship became a breakup in need of repair.

Kerry’s ill-suited comparison failed to point out a major difference: People in Boston who came to watch a race were maimed and murdered by terrorists. Those who died on the flotilla were terrorists themselves, on their way to maim and murder Israelis.

When will Washington get it?

---

by Steve Herzig, director of North American Ministries for The Friends of Israel
Pretend Nazis

Proof of the collapse of common sense and sensitivity in today’s hedonistic culture has again reared its head, this time in the form of a bizarre writing assignment from an Albany High School English teacher in Albany, New York. The project was due prior to the class’s reading of the memoir Night by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel.

The Albany Times Union reported, “For the assignment, the teacher asked students to research Nazi propaganda, then write a letter trying to convince an official of the Third Reich ‘that Jews are evil and the source of our problems.’

‘Review in your notebooks the definitions for logos, ethos, and pathos,’ the teacher’s assignment said. ‘Choose which argument style will be most effective in making your point. Please remember, your life (here in Nazi Germany in the 30’s) may depend on it’”

The assignment admonished the 10th graders to “argue Jews are evil, and use solid rationale from government propaganda.”

Solid rationale? Joseph Goebbels, the Nazis’ chief propagandist, created the rationale for killing 6 million Jewish people through lies told often enough to make genocide acceptable to the Germans. Why should his twisted thinking be revisited by historically limited, impressionable American students?

One 16-year-old who refused to participate expressed his rationale for defying the instructor: He didn’t want to say anything negative about Jewish people. It made more sense to him to pretend to be Jews arguing against Nazis. The student showed more intelligence than his teacher.

After a parent blew the whistle on the project, the district superintendent apologized, saying she did not think the assignment was malicious, but “it displayed a level of insensitivity that we absolutely will not tolerate.” The teacher was placed on leave.

Does it really matter that the teacher may have harbored no thoughts of hate mongering? No. What matters is that the instructor was forcing students to think like Nazis. Why would any American teacher want to do such a thing? It is unacceptable to encourage students, under any circumstances, to think like murderers who rationalized their cruel and savage attempts to exterminate Europe’s entire Jewish population.

The Holocaust involved the brutal slaughter of 6 million innocent Jewish people. About 60 million people died in World War II. This was no trivial incident and does not deserve to be reduced to a classroom assignment that defends the unspeakable atrocities committed by the Nazis.

Some Americans still remember the Nazi indoctrination of Germany’s Hitler Youth and the scenes of Hitler reviewing his young defenders of the Third Reich. Some remember their loved ones going off to war and dying on foreign battlefields. More than 100,000 American soldiers are buried in Europe after fighting the Nazis until their dying breath, and it is abhorrent to expose our children to pro-Nazi propaganda.

Beyond that, it is potentially dangerous. In the current cultural morass, where hate-breeding brutality and fantasy violence flood the social media and invade the minds of impressionable children, telling students to think like Nazis may eventually result in them acting like Nazis. Violence is on the increase, and many young people today imitate the actions of socially maladjusted individuals whom they look up to as role models.

Our language, manners, public conduct, and most of what has been the acceptable standard in the past have deteriorated—along with sensitivity and common sense. The qualities necessary for an orderly, law-abiding society are disappearing. Political correctness has skewed our sensitivities. Some groups of people are treated with kid gloves. Others, like Christians, Jews, and conservative Americans, are treated with contempt.

When a war against Christians is conducted, Holocaust denial is often unchallenged. And when the hardline, godless secularists propagate the country, truth and propriety must answer. An encouraging example of truth at work was seen when one third of the three classes given the Nazi assignment refused to participate, followed by the outrage of parents who called for action by school administrators.

Sadly, in the world we live in, silence is no longer golden. We must stand up, speak up, and demand corrective action. You have a voice; use it. Do not go quietly into that good night.
Better Than Gold and Silver – Psalm 119:72
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Life
From the
Inside Out

(Linda Yolanda/iStockphoto)
As I sat in the pew at church a few Sundays ago, the speaker read a verse from 1 Samuel that struck me as the explanation for why we in America find ourselves in the condition we’re in:

*But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart”* (16:7).

Samuel was at the home of Jesse in Bethlehem, anointing a successor to failed King Saul from among Jesse’s eight sons. As Eliab, the eldest, passed before him, Samuel was sure he was the man for the job. Eliab appeared to have all of the right attributes to be king.

However, the Lord disagreed. He told the wise old prophet that he was about to make the same mistake the Israelites made with Saul, who pleased them simply because of his good looks and imposing stature.

In fact, they had made three errors: (1) They demanded a king because they preferred to be like the nations around them, rather than to be led by God (8:5–7); (2) they evaluated Saul based on outward appearance; and (3) they failed to assess inward character and ability to serve God. What they needed was a man like David, whom Samuel later described as “a man after His [God’s] own heart” (13:14).

**Ask a Simple Question**

Why do people persist in making the same mistakes over and over again? What has happened to common sense? Why, for example, would the most successful nation in history deliberately denigrate and reject the fundamental elements of its greatness and allow the lifeline of its spiritual and moral values to be severed? The simple answer is that humanity, for all of its ability to create gadgery, has not evolved one iota. In fact, it has devolved because of man’s inherent sin nature. That truth is evident in virtually every walk of life, and it results in the irrepressible drive to be like everyone else, rather than be set apart for a higher purpose.

We often hear talk these days—and see evidence in profusion—that America has lost the world’s respect due to our extravagant economic excesses, failed foreign policies, and degrading morals that we’ve peddled to the global community. Regrettably, the truth hurts.

A number of years ago, members of our *Up to Jerusalem* tour to Israel were on a ship docked on the Sea of Galilee, ready to depart on an evening cruise. As was the custom, the crew raised the American flag, and Kate Smith’s rendition of “God Bless America” rang through the evening air. In the slip next to ours was a boat filled with Israeli teenagers. When they saw the flag and heard the strains of Irving Berlin’s song, they ran to the rail of their boat, began to cheer us loudly, and joined in the singing.

Contrast such spontaneous displays of affection, respect, appreciation, and unity with the snarling mobs burning American flags and chanting, “death to America.” Sadly, one need not go abroad to see this type of deplorable hatred; it is being manifested on some of our own streets and is encouraged in many of our institutions of higher learning that have been infiltrated with ideologies honed to bring down this country.

**Exemptions Not Tolerated**

Like many of the Israelites long ago, today’s generation of Christians appears to be preoccupied with looking on the outward appearance. Twenty-first-century America is image-driven. Even much of our music in church has become focused on entertainment rather than worship that is consistently biblical. The same can often be said of what passes for pulpit ministry.

Certainly, there are many blessed, responsible preachers and teachers wholly dedicated to bringing people the entire counsel of God’s Word. But all too prevalent seem to be the churches that ask, “What do you want to hear? Tell us, and that’s what you’ll get.” Change is inevitable; that is true. The issue is what trajectory the change takes: Does it at least stay on track or does it veer hopelessly off course?

It is a grim fact of life that the rapidly paganizing culture we inhabit is out to destroy the knowledge of God, the Christ we serve, and the Bible we revere. Part of the game plan seems to involve ridiculing Christianity and intimidating Christians into submission or silence. While atheists, deviants, and extremists successfully demand total acquiescence to their wishes and even force the passage of laws sanctifying their preferences, there is zero tolerance for anyone or anything that even faintly implies faith in Jesus Christ or utters His name in public discourse.

A nauseating example of how far things have gone occurred recently in New Jersey when a substitute teacher was fired because he shared a
Scripture verse with a student and later gave him a copy of the New Testament. According to reports, the instructor quoted Matthew 20:16, “So the last will be first, and the first last,” to a boy who was last in line. The student asked where the quotation came from and was told it came from the Bible—and to go home and look it up. The boy replied he did not have a Bible. So the teacher gave the boy his pocket New Testament, causing the subsequent uproar and the school district’s dismissal of the teacher.

The district justified its actions by claiming educators must remain neutral while discussing religious materials and said policy prohibits distributing religious literature on school grounds.

However, the teacher did not discuss Scripture. He merely quoted it in a way that could not possibly be construed as an attempt to proselytize. In addition, the giving of one New Testament did not constitute “distribution”; it was a personal gift to a single student.

Such incidents cannot be chalked up to mere colossal voids of common sense. Rather, they clearly demonstrate an official repudiation of the Bible and the Christian faith and warn all of the penalty they will pay if they dare to say anything that offends the no-God squads patrolling our institutions.

From the Heart Out

After the prophet Samuel had all the “acceptable” sons of Jesse pass before him as candidates for king of Israel, he asked Jesse if there were any more prospects. Only one, Jesse replied: a ruddy youngster who was off tending the sheep grazing on the terraces near the town. He was an outsider of sorts—not considered worthy of taking part in the process of choosing a king. Yet what Jesse’s youngest son, David, had going for him was something no one but God could see. It was not on display as the comeliest of outward appearances. To find it, you had to look from the inside out. It was his heart.

It won’t be the crowd pleasers and yes-men who will be around when the issues are settled. It will be the people who stand up for the Lord. God deals in remnants. It’s always the few against the many. But in the long run, the odds will always favor the remnant because of Who is in command.

Frankly, despite all that is happening, I am encouraged. It may well be that adversity, in whatever form, will bind together those who have hearts for God, His Word, and His people, thus making them more effective for Him. That’s what has happened in the past. And it is happening today where believers are under severe persecution.

As a parent, grandfather, and great-grandfather, I often wonder what the future holds for my family. But whatever comes, the certainty is that our God is faithful; and among the masses will be a godly remnant of true believers with hearts wanting to serve the Lord. Our obligation is to prepare such people with the truth and inspire them to stand firm in perilous times.

We also must recognize that on this earth, evil will always be around until Jesus returns. Nothing happening today is new under the sun. It has happened before and will happen again. The overwhelming reality is that our vision is limited to the small space of time we occupy. But God sees the big picture. His knowledge surpasses anything our fragile minds could conceive or understand, and He is on the throne.

What we can hold on to in the most encouraging light are the sentiments of Abraham as he pleaded for souls in Sodom: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25). He has, and He will. We can count on it.
A mass exodus of Christians is currently under way. Millions of Christians are being displaced from one end of the Islamic world to the other. We are reliving the true history of how the Islamic world—much of which prior to the Islamic conquests was almost entirely Christian—came into being.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recently said, “The flight of Christians out of the region is unprecedented and it’s increasing year by year.” In our lifetime alone, “Christians might disappear altogether from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Egypt.”

Ongoing reports from the Islamic world certainly support this conclusion. Iraq was the earliest indicator of the fate awaiting Christians once Islamic forces are liberated from the grip of dictators.

In 2003, Iraq’s Christian population was at least 1 million. Today fewer than 400,000 remain—the result of an anti-Christian campaign that began with the U.S. occupation of Iraq, when countless Christian churches were bombed and countless Christians killed, including by crucifixion and beheading.

The 2010 Baghdad church attack, which saw nearly 60 Christian worshipers slaughtered, is the tip of a decade-long iceberg.

In October 2012 the last Christian in the city of Homs—which had a Christian population of some 80,000 before jihadis came—was murdered. One teenage Syrian girl said, “We left because they were trying to kill us . . . because we were Christians . . . Those who were our neighbors turned against us. At the end, when we ran away, we went through balconies. We did not even dare go out on the street in front of our house.”

In Egypt, some 100,000 Christian Copts fled their homeland soon after the “Arab Spring.” In September 2012, the Sinai’s small Christian community was attacked and evicted by al-Qaeda-linked Muslims, Reuters reported.

But even before that, the Coptic Orthodox Church lamented the “repeated incidents of displacement of Copts from their homes, whether by force or threat. Displacements began in Ameriya [62 Christian families evicted], then they stretched to Dalshur [120 Christian families evicted], and today terror and threats have reached the hearts and souls of our Coptic children in Sinai.”

Iraq, Syria, and Egypt are the Arab world. But even in “black” African and “white” European nations with Muslim majorities, Christians are fleeing.

In Mali, after a 2012 Islamic coup, as many as 200,000 Christians fled. According to reports, “the church in Mali faces being eradicated,” especially in the north “where rebels want to establish an independent Islamist state and drive Christians out . . . there have been house-to-house searches for Christians who might be in hiding; church and Christian property have been looted or destroyed, and people tortured into revealing any Christian relatives.” At least one pastor was beheaded.

Even in European Bosnia, Christians are leaving en masse “amid mounting discrimination and Islamization.” Only 440,000 Catholics remain in the Balkan nation, half the prewar figure. Problems cited are typical: “While dozens of mosques were built in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo, no building permissions were given for Christian churches.”

“Time is running out as there is a worrisome rise in radicalism,” said one authority, who further added that the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina were “persecuted for centuries” after European powers “failed to support them in their struggle against the Ottoman Empire.” And so history repeats itself. One can go on and on.

Raymond Ibrahim, a widely published author and Middle East and Islam specialist, is a Shillman Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center and an Associate Fellow at the Middle East Forum.

(Used by permission.)

Editor’s Note: The following is an excerpt from “The Mass Exodus of Christians from the Muslim World” by Raymond Ibrahim on RaymondIbrahim.com. To read the entire report, go to tinyurl.com/ibrahimexodus.

Egyptian Christians attend a mass funeral for Copts killed recently. Mourners were pelted with stones (Tareq Gabas / APA Images / Corbis).
Introduction to Jeremiah
The prophet Jeremiah ministered from 627 to about 585 B.C., more than 100 years after the trauma of Assyria’s destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. Yet the consequences of that tragedy were still apparent. The southern kingdom of Judah should have taken a lesson from Israel’s divine judgment. However, the Judeans apparently rationalized that the Temple’s presence in Judah protected them from Israel’s fate (Jer. 7:4).

They were wrong. God severely judged them for forsaking Him, sent the Judeans into captivity in Babylon, and allowed the Babylonians to destroy the Temple King Solomon had built. In fact, the theme of Jeremiah is “the judgment of Jehovah.”

The Political Situation

Judah had a scare in 701 B.C. when the Assyrians defeated every town in Judah except Jerusalem. God heard godly King Hezekiah’s plea for help and rescued Judah. Sadly, Hezekiah’s son Manasseh ushered in a colossal period of apostasy during his 55-year reign, even stooping to child sacrifice (2 Chr. 33:6). Tradition says the prophet Isaiah was martyred by Manasseh.

In an amazing display of grace, God drew Manasseh to Himself; and, at the end of Manasseh’s reign, the king repented of his wickedness. His godly son Josiah succeeded him in 640 B.C. and eventually sparked the last revival in Judah before the Babylonian Captivity. Jeremiah would have participated in the preaching that accompanied that revival.

Meanwhile, Assyria continued to dominate regional politics. Judah looked to Egypt for potential help and had to evaluate the role the rising Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) Empire would play. In 612 B.C. Babylon conquered Nineveh, the Assyrian capital. The Assyrian army fled westward to Carchemish, where it regrouped.

In Egypt, Pharaoh Neco decided it would be advantageous to keep Assyria in existence as a buffer against Babylon. In 609 B.C. he therefore made his way north through Israel to join the Assyrian defenses far north of Israel at Carchemish, about 450 miles from Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, Josiah did not ask the Lord what to do. He tried to stop Neco and was killed in the Valley of Armageddon. Neco continued on to Carchemish where he and the Assyrians were eventually routed by the Babylonians in 605 B.C. General Nebuchadnezzar of the Neo-Babylonian army pursued the Egyptians southward and attacked Judah. Nebuchadnezzar’s father died about this time, and Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon.

This event started the three Jewish deportations that constitute the Babylonian Captivity. The prophet Daniel and several thousand upper-class citizens were taken to the capital city of Babylon in 605 B.C. In 597 B.C., the prophet Ezekiel and many common citizens were force-marched to the countryside of Babylonia, about 50 miles outside the capital. In 586 B.C. Jerusalem fell, the Temple was destroyed, and the majority of Judeans were deported.

The Babylonian Captivity was a bitter pill for the Jewish people, who longed for their homeland:

*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill!* (Ps. 137:1, 4–5).

Although God punished the Jewish people for their disobedience, He was also faithful to His promise to bring them back to their land after 70 years (Jer. 25:11–12).

Around the 70th anniversary of Daniel’s deportation, Zerubbabel brought almost 50,000 people back to Judah (Ezra 1—6). By the 70th anniversary of the Temple’s destruction, the second Temple was dedicated on the same site as the first (516 B.C.; see Haggai and Zechariah).

Jeremiah’s Background

Jeremiah is called the “weeping prophet” because of the tragic historical events surrounding his ministry and his emotional response to them. Of all the prophets, Jeremiah is the one on whom we have the most information concerning his deepest emotions, thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and interpersonal conflicts. Jeremiah is also considered the author of the book of Lamentations, which eloquently expresses the broken heart of this man of God, even when he was convinced God’s judgment was just and deserved.
any of them. (The Zephaniah mentioned in Jeremiah was a priest of the tribe of Levi, not the prophet Zephaniah who was from the tribe of Judah.)

Elsewhere in Scripture, the books of Ezra and Matthew refer to Jeremiah’s writings. Second Kings and 2 Chronicles mention him in the history of the period.

Jeremiah was from the tribe of Levi (the priestly tribe). His hometown of Anathoth was also the home of Abiathar, the high priest deposed by Solomon in 1 Kings 2:26. Jeremiah never married as per God’s request (Jer. 16:1–2). When God called Jeremiah, He warned him of the trouble to come: brutality from the Gentile enemy (Babylon) and persecution from the Jewish leadership (vv. 3–4).

From 627 to 609 B.C. Jeremiah might have enjoyed some popularity under godly King Josiah. He participated in the revival of Temple worship and the public reading of the Law found when the Temple was being refurbished (2 Ki. 23:2). Josiah’s premature and tragic death certainly rocked Jeremiah’s world. The kings who followed were neither godly nor sympathetic to Jeremiah’s ministry and resented him for condemning pagan idol worship, criticizing violations of the Law, and exposing the deceit of false prophets. Wicked King Jehoiakim prohibited him from entering the Temple or the royal palace and then cut up his writings and fed them to a fire, causing Jeremiah’s poor secretary, Baruch, to rewrite all the prophecies.

Eventually, King Zedekiah arrested Jeremiah, calling him a traitor for predicting Jerusalem would fall to Babylon. When the Babylonians conquered the city, they freed Jeremiah out of appreciation for his predictions.

The prophet continued to minister in Jerusalem after the majority of Judeans were deported. In the end, fellow Jews kidnapped him and fled with him to Egypt. As far as we know, Jeremiah died in Egypt.

Interestingly, about 100 years later, a temple to Yahu (possibly meaning Jehovah) in southern Egypt (at Elephantine) was mentioned in the correspondence of the Persian Empire. Jeremiah would not have encouraged the construction of such a temple, but its existence underscores the fact that a significant Jewish population existed in Egypt after the Babylonians captured Judah.

The history of this period is verified by the Babylonian Chronicles; the Lachish Letters; a seal belonging to Gedaliah; and a seal belonging to Jeremiah’s scribe, Baruch. The Babylonian Chronicles are tablets describing Babylon’s history from 2350 to 539 B.C. The Lachish Letters are written reports from a town about 30 miles from Jerusalem. The seal of Gedaliah is a signature device perhaps belonging to the man the Babylonians placed as governor of Judah, according to Jeremiah.

The book of Jeremiah is a collection of the prophet’s sermons to the people of Judah. They are not in chronological order. (The Zephaniah mentioned in Jeremiah was a priest of the tribe of Levi, not the prophet Zephaniah who was from the tribe of Judah.)

Jeremiah lived in Jerusalem. Frequently his prophecies are dated by the reigns of various kings. Here are the dates of the five kings and one governor under whom he ministered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RULER IN JUDAH</th>
<th>DATE OF REIGN</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King Josiah</td>
<td>640–609 B.C.</td>
<td>31 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Jeremiah’s ministry began in the 13th year of King Josiah—627 B.C.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Jehoahaz/Shallum</td>
<td>609 B.C.</td>
<td>3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Jehoiakim/Eliakim</td>
<td>609–597 B.C.</td>
<td>about 11 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Jehoiachin/ Jeconiah/Coniah</td>
<td>597 B.C.</td>
<td>3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Zedekiah/Mattaniah</td>
<td>597–586 B.C.</td>
<td>11 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor Gedaliah</td>
<td>586 B.C.</td>
<td>2 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
order. Jeremiah 44 is actually Jeremiah’s final sermon. The theme, “the judgment of Jehovah,” comes from Judah’s refusal to forsake pagan worship and obey the sabbatical-year laws for 490 years.

Amazingly, there is one verse in Aramaic, the Gentile language of the region. It certainly is a theme verse for Gentile readers of Jeremiah. It warns, “But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, and the nations will not be able to endure His indignation” (Jer. 10:10).

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**End Notes**


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**Bible Study Helps**

**Noteworthy Predictions in Jeremiah**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22:30</td>
<td>God curses Jeconiah, promising that no descendant of this wicked king would succeed on the throne of David.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23:5–6</td>
<td>The Messiah will be the righteous Branch of David.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25:11</td>
<td>The Babylonian Captivity will last for 70 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29:11</td>
<td>God promises to bless the Jewish people after the captivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30:7</td>
<td>The Tribulation is called the “time of Jacob’s trouble.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31:31–34</td>
<td>The New Covenant is promised. (Quoted in Hebrews 8, it is the longest Old Testament passage quoted in the New Testament.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32:40</td>
<td>The Eternal Covenant is promised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33:19–26</td>
<td>The Davidic Covenant is guaranteed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43:11</td>
<td>Babylon’s invasion of Egypt in 567 B.C. is predicted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51:11</td>
<td>The Medes’ ascendency over Babylon is predicted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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For the first time since the establishment of the State of Israel, a Russian warship has docked at Haifa. The Azov came to Israel in May to help celebrate the anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany.

Israeli officials say the Arab Spring has improved Russia’s view of Israel. “There are things on which we do not agree with Russia, but . . . they share our concern over Islamic fundamentalism taking over the Middle East,” said an Israeli official.

The Russians loudly publicized the Azov’s visit and the decision to mark the victory over the Nazis together with Jewish veterans. “Russia is proud of its connection to this historical event and wants to remind everyone that we fought on the right side,” read a statement from the Russians. “There is something to be understood from this for the contemporary Middle East. Where we decided to make anchor is a clear statement, both to the Israelis and the entire region.”

Israeli officials did not deny they are open to further cooperation with Moscow.

Israel Today (israeltoday.co.il)
God’s Everlasting Love
(Jeremiah 30—31)

The fact that the Jewish people are with us today testifies to God’s love for them and His power to preserve them. Here Israelis celebrate a bris—the circumcision ceremony for an 8-day-old boy (Israel Talby/Israel Images).
Parenting is not easy. Over the years we may excuse some infractions, but we must punish our children’s blatant disobedience. So it was in the days of the prophet Jeremiah. The Israelites were blatantly breaking God’s law; still worse, they didn’t care.

God warned them through prophet after prophet. Finally fed up, He allowed Assyria to conquer the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. and delivered the southern kingdom into the hands of Babylon 136 years later. From 605 B.C. to 586 B.C., Babylon subjugated Judah, then destroyed Jerusalem and Solomon’s Temple in 586 B.C. and forced the survivors into captivity.

Scripture teaches, “Whom the LORD loves He chastens” (Heb. 12:6). The Jewish people have endured their share of chastening over the years. Yet, in Jeremiah 30—31, God, like a loving parent, explains that He still loves them, will forgive them, and will return them to their land. Out of love, He mercifully left them key men of God who continued to declare His Word despite the nation’s impending doom. Jeremiah was one of those men:

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, “Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying: ‘Write in a book for yourself all the words that I have spoken to you. For behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,’ says the LORD. ‘And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it’” (Jer. 30:1–3).

Later and Still Later

The context of the return is rooted in the distant future. Jeremiah saw the immediate Babylonian Captivity, but he also saw far past it: “Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he [Jacob, meaning Israel] shall be saved out of it” (v. 7).

The “time of Jacob’s trouble” is the future, seven-year Tribulation. Jesus echoed Jeremiah: “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Mt. 24:21).

Perhaps God links Israel’s return from Babylon with the Tribulation because the times of the Gentiles began with the Babylonian Captivity and will conclude when Jesus returns to rescue Israel at the end of the Tribulation and establish the Davidic, Millennial Kingdom.

God’s greatest desire for the Jewish people has always been for them to serve Him with willing hearts. He desires no less for His children through the church. In fact, born-again believers have less excuse for their disobedience than the Israelites had because, unlike them, believers are indwelled with the Holy Spirit and possess the complete and readily available (at least in the West) Word of God. Based on God’s principle “to whom much is given, from him much will be required” (Lk. 12:48), disobedient Christians may deserve the greater chastisement.

Yet God is the God of redemption. His goal is to restore people, not to reject and abandon them: “‘Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,’ says the LORD, ‘nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity’” (Jer. 30:10).

God not only promises long-range, future restoration, but also an eventual release from the immediate punishment. He also promises to punish Israel’s oppressors: Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished. For I will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds (vv. 11, 17).

God continually reminds the Jewish people of His unfailing love and protection and their future restoration. What a wonderful model He establishes for earthly parents. Though we are forced to correct our children, we must never stop loving them or seeking their best interests. Whom the Lord loves He chastens. But God’s chastening does not last forever. He loves Israel and will protect it and keep His promises.
Many people fail to realize the New Covenant is Jewish. It was given to the Jewish people through the prophet Jeremiah. Jesus ratified it with His blood on Passover, when He went to the cross.

All covenants must be ratified with blood, which is how Moses ratified the Mosaic Covenant: “Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you according to all these words’” (Ex. 24:8).

The New Covenant is found in Jeremiah 31, a chapter filled with divine assurances of God’s love for and redemption of the nation of Israel in the midst of the chaos of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. God, who knows the end from the beginning, allowed Jeremiah to look into the future to give His Chosen People hope and a glimpse of the day when they will be back in their land and dwell in safety. He declared His unending love for them and promised them a new covenant that they would not be able to break.

As the southern kingdom of Judah’s demise drew near, God declared, “Behold, I will bring back the captivity of Jacob’s tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; the city [Jerusalem] shall be built upon its own mound [meaning on the same spot as the first Temple]. . . . I will multiply them, and they shall not diminish; . . . I will punish all who oppress them. At the same time,” says the Lord, “I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people” (30:18–20; 31:1).

God also affirmed His eternal love for the Jewish people: “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you” (31:3).

The Hebrew word translated “lovingkindness” is hesed. Hesed connotes faithful, unflagging, absolutely steadfast love. It is found more than 250 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and usually refers to God’s love for His covenant nation. Explained Bible scholar Dr. Charles Ryrie, “In the O.T. [Old Testament], communion, deliverance, enabling, enlightenment, guidance, forgiveness, hope, praise, [and] preservation are all based on God’s hesed.”

Throughout Jeremiah 31, God reminds His people they have a future: Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; . . . Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth. . . . They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. . . . For I am a Father to Israel. . . . “He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.” For the Lord has redeemed Jacob (vv. 7–11).

Today many teach God has rejected Israel and replaced it with the church. But this concept is foreign to Scripture. God repeatedly declares exactly the opposite, particularly in the New Covenant: Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke. . . . I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; . . . I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more (vv. 31–34).

The first covenant revealed a need. It pointed out how helpless we are because of sin. The New Covenant addresses that need through “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29).

God made one more monumental promise. With unmistakable majesty, He decreed the permanence of Israel’s existence: Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (the Lord of hosts is His name): “If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever.” Thus says the Lord: “If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the Lord” (Jer. 31:35–37).

The apostle Paul, a Jewish rabbi, told the Gentiles in the church in Rome not to think more highly of themselves than they think of the Jewish people because God has a plan for Israel: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins” (Rom. 11:26–27).

Nations will come and go. Israel will remain forever. And someday “all Israel will be saved” (v. 26), to the glory of God.

ENDNOTE


by Thomas C. Simcox
T
imes have changed. In ancient
days, the poet Virgil began the
_Aeneid_—his famous ode to na
tional and military exploit—with the
celebratory words, “I sing of arms.” In
April, the UN overwhelmingly passed
its first Treaty on Arms Trade, which
focuses on the “victims of armed con
flict” and has the stated aim of “reducing
human suffering” caused by weapons.

The treaty seeks to constrict the way
nations disseminate military armaments
and to regulate “conventional arms” like
warships and missiles. But its language
also encompasses “small arms and light
weapons.” Some U.S. senators vowed to
fight the treaty in the Senate, calling it a
violation of the Second Amendment to
the Constitution.

The Treaty on Arms Trade would
create a global weapons bureau head
ed by a newly established office of
“Secretariat” of arms. One senator
said the measure would hamper U.S.
efforts to provide military equipment
to legitimate nation-states. Thus it
could seriously impair America’s
long-standing, defensive arms sup
port of Israel.

The attorney general of Texas wrote
to President Obama urging him not to
sign the treaty if the Senate ratifies it
and promised to fight it in court if
necessary. The United States already
voted in the UN General Assembly in
favor of it.

At first glance, the issue simply
looks like the gun-control debate in
grander form. But larger issues are at
play. The Preamble to the U.S.
Constitution states that one of the pur
poses for which our constitutional form
of government was framed was to
“provide for the common defense.”
Though proponents of the treaty could
argue the treaty does nothing to violate
that principle, the fact is that it does.
The final draft states the Treaty on
Arms Trade was drafted in accordance
with “the inherent right of all States to
individual or collective self-defense as
recognized in Article 51 of the Charter of
the United Nations” (emphasis added).

Article 51 of the UN Charter provides
cold comfort. The UN conditions the
right of national self-defense on two
things: (1) “an armed attack” against a
member nation and (2) UN Security
Council oversight. So, technically, pre
emptive strikes against a clearly
involuntary enemy attack are not expressly
condoned, and the right of national
defense is made subject to the Security
Council. Thus the treaty would fail to
recognize American sovereignty in mat
ters of national defense.

This slow encroachment on sov
eign American interests by such interna
tional mandates also has biblical
implications. A true Christian worldview
requires a healthy respect for the
national sovereignty of legitimate
nations. The apostle Paul pointed to
God’s overarching design for nations
and their boundaries in his exposition

Furthermore, God’s treatment of the
people trying to build the tower of Babel
on the plain of Shinar paints a vivid pic
ture of the dangers of excessively cen
tralized power: “Now nothing that they
propose to do will be withheld from
them” (Gen. 11:6). Individual nations are
God’s checks and balances against the
consequences envisioned in Lord John
Acton’s famous dictum, “Absolute
power corrupts absolutely.”

The Arms Treaty is not the only
encroachment. While it deals with war,
other international protocols impact
freedom of speech. The UN’s Human
Rights Council has adopted Resolution
16/18 proposed by the Organization
for Islamic Cooperation. It does no
thing to address rampant persecution of
Christians in Islamic countries, and its
history suggests it is simply the newest
Islamic attempt to stifle criticism of
Islam. It seeks to suppress otherwise
lawful expression on matters of reli
gion by applying standards that fall far
below those embedded in our First
Amendment and upheld by the U.S.
Supreme Court. Sadly, our current
White House administration has
embraced this resolution.

Of course, UN resolutions and treaties
should always be evaluated on the basis
of their stated texts. But they should also
be analyzed through the application of
first principles. We should weigh interna
tional proposals against the transcendent
values of constitutional rule and those
self-evident rights recognized by our
Founding Fathers. If we fail to do so, we
could progressively and unwittingly end
up placing our nation, our freedoms, and
the freedoms of our posterity under the
yoke of international bureaucracies.

And make no mistake: Global agen
cies will neither understand nor care
about American liberty and will most
certainly disregard the biblical consen
sus that informed our founders when
they penned our Constitution.

Craig L. Parshall is senior
vice president and general
counsel for the National
Religious Broadcasters and
director of the John Milton
Project for Free Speech. Friend
him on Facebook at Craig Parshall, Author.
The prophet Jeremiah served the Lord prior to and during the Babylonian Captivity, warning the Israelites to avoid idolatry or expect judgment. Chapters 32—33 follow the specific promises of Jeremiah 31 and continue their spirit of assurance for God’s chosen nation.

At the end of chapter 31, the promise of the New Covenant reassures the Jewish people that, despite any temporal judgment the Lord sends their way, a day is coming when they will experience a spiritual restoration with absolute forgiveness of sin (vv. 31–34). Associated with that pledge is God’s promise that the descendants of Israel will always exist as a nation before Him (vv. 35–37). The next two chapters develop these promises.

Jeremiah Redeems a Field

When Babylon’s armies besieged Jerusalem, Jeremiah found himself in prison, put there by Zedekiah, king of Judah (32:1–2). Why? Zedekiah had rejected the messenger because he did not like the message.

Jeremiah had told him, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; and Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape from the hand of the Chaldeans’” (vv. 3–4). Rather than repent, Zedekiah placed Jeremiah under arrest in the prison court.

Although the situation was not a positive one for Jeremiah, God is able to turn ashes to beauty and bad to good. Several features of Jeremiah 32 point Jeremiah’s readers to the God for whom nothing is too hard. Even though Jeremiah was in prison, God asked him to buy a field, a piece of land: “Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you, saying, ‘Buy my field which is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is yours to buy it’” (v. 7). Anathoth was located in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin.

This event transpired as the Lord had said. Jeremiah did business with his relative who came to the prison. In purchasing the land for 17 shekels of silver (v. 9), the prophet fulfilled his duty as the kinsman-redeemer according to the Law (Lev. 25:25–34). As F. B. Huey noted, “Family land was considered to be a sacred inheritance. It was important to keep it from passing into the hands of someone else (1 Kgs. 21:3).” Jeremiah was the nearest

Israel’s Assur

(Jerem...)

A field in Israel (Hanan Isachar/Hanan Isachar Photography).
and put commodities at a premium, so the purchase of land was a special occasion. More important, the Babylonians were about to conquer the city and the land, as Jeremiah had prophesied. Pagans were going to own the territory, and the children of Israel would lose immediate benefit of possession.

Why would God want Jeremiah to purchase a field that would soon vanish from his grasp? The answer is found in the formal way the deed was signed and set aside for safekeeping. Jeremiah signed the document before many witnesses (Jer. 32:12), charging Baruch his scribe, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Take these deeds, both this purchase deed which is sealed and this deed which is open [a copy], and put them in an earthen vessel [clay jar], that they may last many days’” (v. 14).

Why would God give such instructions? The Bible gives the answer in the next verse: “For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land’” (v. 15).

despite the dismal prospects of impending Babylonian conquest, the children of Israel could have hope and exercise faith. God, who had promised the land to them as an everlasting possession through Abraham their father (Gen. 15:18; 17:7), was assuring them through the picture of the field bought by Jeremiah that they would possess the land again. After the Babylonian Captivity was over, Jeremiah (or his kin) would be able to find his preserved deed and reclaim the family’s rightful inheritance.

It is no wonder Jeremiah then launched into a lengthy prayer extolling God’s past great deeds for Israel (Jer. 32:16–25). In the same way, God could be trusted to handle the nation’s present and future circumstances. God responded by justifying the coming judgment (vv. 28–36).

Israel and Judah deserved what was about to befall them, which included the destruction of the Temple. Their idolatry had led to this moment in history. However, though God will judge severely and rightly in the short term, He will not forsake His people. At the end of the judgment, the Lord will bring them back: “I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger; . . . I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely” (v. 37).
The language of this section of the chapter strongly ties the Lord’s teaching back to the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31.

Here it is the “everlasting covenant” (32:40) that the Lord will fulfill for the nation, and the people will not depart from Him.

This wording shows fulfillment that goes beyond the Jewish people’s return after the exile in Babylon, only to be judged later in A.D. 70 through the Romans. This promise of God extends to the nation’s ultimate restoration to spirituality, as well as glory in the end-times. Jeremiah’s field reminds us that nothing is too hard for the Lord (v. 17).

**END NOTES**


Mike Stallard is the dean of Baptist Bible Seminary in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania. He is also professor of systematic theology and the director of the seminary Ph.D. program.

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**ZECHARIAH:**

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In Jeremiah 33, the Lord gave Jeremiah a message that all of Judah's efforts to fight against Babylon will fail miserably (33:1–5); but God will work to bring the nation back to its land, rebuild it, and forgive it (vv. 6–8). Jerusalem, the city of desolation, will be transformed into a place where the voice of joy is heard and the people will prosper (vv. 9–13).

However, the promise of Jeremiah's message in this chapter is the Messianic and the Davidic Covenant. Three specific elements appear in the flow of Jeremiah's prophecy.

First, the Lord tells Israel and Judah, “In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth” (v. 15). The “Branch” is the Messianic King, alluded to in Jeremiah 23:5, who will rule and prosper. This same term is also used of the Messiah in Isaiah 11:1 and Zechariah 3:8; 6:12. This Messiah is called “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 33:16).

This promise is more other than the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the context does not point to the First Advent but, rather, the Second Advent. The prophecy highlights the fact that God's ultimate plan for Israel's Restoration is something far greater than the nation's return from exile in Babylon.

The second element of this prophecy is God's promise, “David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel” (v. 17). While somewhat comforting to the people of Israel, this statement causes a certain amount of theological consternation. Clearly, no Davidic king has ruled after Zedekiah was taken to Babylon. What does God's statement mean?

The question is compounded by the promise that the Levitical priesthood would be as permanent as the Davidic kingship (v. 18). Some commentators say such a statement forces Christ's First Coming to be in view rather than the Second Coming, because the book of Hebrews teaches Christ's sacrifice dealt with payment for sins once for all (Heb. 9).

However, even under Mosaic Law, Levitical and sacrificial functions were not solely salvific provisions. For example, some Levitical sacrifices in the Old Testament were thanksgiving offerings (Lev. 2), while others included memorials of special events (23:33–44). Such approaches in the future Kingdom would not be inconsistent with the sacrifice of Christ for sin.

As to David's throne, the later context of the chapter points to the ongoing multiplication of Davidic sons (Jer. 33:21). No doubt those who heard Jeremiah remembered Moses had warned the Israelites of the curse of being cast out of the land due to sin (Dt. 28), followed later by restoration (chs. 29—32). Nonetheless, the Davidic line would not be broken. There are probably descendants of David alive today. Furthermore, Jesus—a descendant of David—is alive and waiting to take His place on David's throne.

Third, Jeremiah invoked the permanence of the Davidic Covenant to assure Israel that God will never cast His people away forever:

Thus says the LORD: “If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne” (Jer. 33:20–21).

God reasons from the impossible, telling people that, if they could stop the orderly succession of day and night, then it would be possible for the line of David to be broken. In this way, He acknowledges the ongoing, permanent nature of the Davidic Covenant, which He initiated in 2 Samuel 7. Such a promise would give the Jewish people hope for the near future, when they returned from exile. However, it would also cause their minds to walk down the corridor of time toward the endtimes glory of the Messiah reining over Israel forever. Israel is a nation that God will never cast away for good. It will remain the apple of His eye.

END NOTE


by Mike Stallard
It's a fact. The deeper archaeologists dig, the more Jewish history they find. With so much physical evidence to support the Bible, it's amazing so many people remain unresponsive toward Scripture. Yet, in these last days, God is supporting His truth, literally from out of the ground: “Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven” (Ps. 85:11).

During the 1970s and early 1980s, some remarkable finds were uncovered in Jerusalem. Excavators came upon a cache of various clay bullae. A bulla is a small, flattened lump of hardened clay that was used as a seal on official documents. The sender’s name or signet ring image would be impressed on the clay. It served much like a postal stamp. Apparently, the fire that destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C. actually hardened the clay seals and preserved them. Many of the bullae found contained the names of individuals mentioned in
Baruch ben Neriah: Faithful

It was a time of impending calamity for the southern kingdom of Judah. One man, Jeremiah, stood practically alone, seeking to stem the tide of the nation’s apostasy. By his side was his faithful scribe, Baruch ben Neriah. Baruch’s ministry was to write down accurately all of the prophet’s messages. A bulla seal that came to light was studied by a prominent Israeli archaeologist was that of Jeremiah’s scribe. The inscription reads, “Berekhyahu son of Neriyahu the scribe.” Baruch’s full name was Berekhyahu, meaning “the blessed of Yahweh.”

Jeremiah gave Baruch a difficult assignment:

Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah; and Baruch wrote on a scroll a book, at the instruction of Jeremiah, all the words of the LORD which He had spoken to him. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, “I am confined, I cannot go into the house of the LORD. You go, therefore, and read from the scroll which you have written at my instruction, the words of the LORD, in the hearing of the people in the LORD’s house on the day of fasting. And you shall also read them in the hearing of all Judah who come from their cities. It may be that they will present their supplication before the LORD, and everyone will turn from his evil way. For great is the anger and the fury that the LORD has pronounced against this people” (Jer. 36:4–7).

This was a critical moment in Judah’s history. If the nation repented, the Lord would forgive. If not, God was ready to unleash the might of Babylon as His divine judgment.

So Baruch went to the Temple and read Jeremiah’s prophetic messages of warning (v. 8). He then was led into a room in the palace where all the king’s officials gathered. He sat and read the scroll before them (vv. 11–15). They trembled over what they heard, saying the king must also hear Jeremiah’s messages (v. 16).

But after hearing God’s warning, wicked King Jehoiakim cut the scroll into pieces and tossed it into the fire. Neither he nor his officials showed any godly fear over what they heard (vv. 21–24).

Baruch did not see any response of repentance, but he was faithful to his ministry. He went as instructed and read God’s words. As his name indicates, he was blessed as God’s minister. He was also a source of God’s blessing as a bearer of God’s Word.

Results and outcomes in ministry are in God’s hands. Baruch’s testimony, represented by a small bulla now in the Israel Museum, is faithfulness. Some will hear and receive the Word; others will not. Nevertheless, we continue to minister. As Paul told Timothy, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2).

Gemariah, Son of Shaphan: Courageous

“Nevertheless Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah implored the king not to burn the scroll; but he would not listen to them” (Jer. 36:25)

Another artifact that has come to light is a clay-disk bulla seal that reads, “belonging to Gemaryahu, son of Shaphan.” Gemaryahu (English, Gemariah) had a chamber in the Temple. It was in his room Baruch the scribe stood and read Jeremiah’s alarming prophecy before all the people (v. 10).

Gemaryahu means “Yahweh has accomplished or perfected.” He and two other officials demonstrated moral courage and conviction when they pleaded with King Jehoiakim not to burn the scroll (v. 25).

Interestingly, one of the officials mentioned was Elnathan. It was he who previously hauled the prophet Urijah from Egypt, resulting in the prophet’s murder by Jehoiakim (cf. 26:20–23). After that event, he appears to have been a changed man.
After Baruch read the prophecies in the Temple, an official requested the scroll be read “in the hearing of the king and in the hearing of all the princes [rulers] who stood beside the king” (Jer. 36:21). This included Elishama the scribe. Baruch left the scroll for safekeeping in Elishama’s manuscript chamber.

Later the king had someone fetch the scroll and read it before him. Elishama probably saw the king desecrate the document (vv. 11–23).

The episode closes with, “Yet they were not afraid, nor did they tear their garments, the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words” (v. 24). Unlike Gemariah and others, “Elishama, servant of the king” did not beg the king to stop his sacrilege. His name in Hebrew means “God has heard.”

God certainly heard his silence by his inaction. There will always be those who fear man rather than God. The king may have cut and burned the scroll, but Elishama chose to shred the Word in his heart, showing neither fear nor repentance.

The excavated seal-bullae found in Jerusalem are insightful. They verify the existence of the individuals in Jeremiah 36 whose names are full of personal meaning and application. It is interesting to see how different people responded to God’s Word.

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account (Heb. 4:12–13).

Baruch the scribe, Gemariah son of Shaphan, and Elishama the scribe all lived during tumultuous times. Today is equally as ominous. How will you respond to Scripture while there is still time?

Perhaps Elnathan’s change of heart was due to Gemariah’s witness and testimony. It was during the reign of godly Judean King Josiah when the scroll of the Law was discovered in the Temple. Shaphan, Gemariah’s father, had the Scripture read to the people. A great renewal of obedience and faith resulted (cf. 2 Ki. 22:3—23:3).

We don’t know what happened to Gemariah. He may have perished during Babylon’s siege of Jerusalem or died in captivity in Babylon. But the discovery of Gemariah’s bulla is a reminder of someone who honored God’s Word despite the danger and lived out Psalm 31:1: “In You, O LORD, I put my trust; let me never be ashamed; deliver me in Your righteousness.”

Elishama the Scribe: Unreceptive

Another interesting bulla from the Jerusalem hoard was impressed with the name of Elishama the scribe. The inscription actually read, “Elishama, servant of the king.”

Baruch the Scribe: Unreceptive

Another interesting bulla from the Jerusalem hoard was impressed with the name of Elishama the scribe. The inscription actually read, “Elishama, servant of the king.”

Peter Colón is the creative resources coordinator for The Friends of Israel.


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Josh Reinstein, director of the Christian Allies Caucus of Israel’s Knesset, recently praised Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper as a “role model for world leaders.” He made the remarks to The Friends of Israel’s Up to Jerusalem tour group in Israel.

Charles McCracken, Canadian director of FOI Gospel Ministry in Canada and a tour cohost, commented, “There is no question Prime Minister Harper’s policies have resulted in a shift in Canadian attitudes toward Israel. It is significant that Canadian Christians are investing time and effort to visit the land of the Bible.”

Canada’s attitude toward Israel has not always been so warm. Historically, it maintained a neutral position in the Arab-Israeli conflict. That attitude changed dramatically, however, when Harper became prime minister in 2006.

Shortly after taking office, he pushed his government to delegitimize the Palestinian Authority (PA) by cutting off diplomatic relations and financial aid when Hamas gained control. Later that year, as Israel defended its borders against a Hezbollah attack from Lebanon, Harper, wrote World Affairs Journal, “staunchly defended Israel’s ‘right to defend itself,’ and, more controversially, supported what he called its ‘measured’ response.”

Unlike most Western leaders, Harper laid blame for the conflict squarely on Hezbollah.

World Affairs Journal has characterized Canada as “the single most supportive nation of Israeli policy, exceeding even the United States, Israel’s traditional senior partner.”

Harper was one of only a handful of leaders who recently opposed (although unsuccessfully) granting the PA observer status in the UN. He was also the first world leader to boycott both Durban I and II on the grounds that these so-called anti-racism conferences were little more than forums to condemn Israel.

In a 2010 speech to the Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Anti-Semitism, Harper declared, “When Israel, the only country in the world whose very existence is under attack—is consistently and conspicuously singled out for condemnation, I believe we are morally obligated to take a stand. . . . As long as I am prime minister, . . . Canada will take that stand, whatever the cost.” Harper has been true to his word.

That Canadian attitudes toward Israel have changed was evident on the recent Up to Jerusalem tour where almost a third of the participants were from Canada. To show their support, members of the group proudly wore Canadian/Israeli flag pins and were frequently greeted with smiles and thanks for making Israel their March-break vacation destination.

FOI Gospel Ministry, as it is known in Canada, operates in fellowship with The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc. The Canadian office in Brampton, Ontario, was opened in 1998 to minister to Canadian constituents and reach out in love to the Jewish people of Canada.

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2 Ibid.


by FOI staff
It was where the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) ceremony was conducted in ancient days. The high priest sprinkled blood on the Mercy Seat of the Ark, providing a national covering for sins (Lev. 16). According to the ancient rabbis, the Messiah would provide an atonement (cf. Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 36.1; Zohar II. 212a).

Theologically, Jesus fulfilled the service performed on Yom Kippur, but with an outstanding exception: His sacrifice and shed blood provided something far better—eternal redemption: “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12).

The prophet Jeremiah spoke of a future time when Israel’s ceremonies at the Ark will no longer be needed or come to mind. The reason is simple when considering the New Testament counterpart to Jeremiah 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16). John 3:17 is equally as wonderful: “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

by Peter Colón

“Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days,” says the L ORD, “that they will say no more, ‘The ark of the covenant of the L ORD.’ It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore” (Jer. 3:16).

The Ark of the Covenant represented God’s presence and His footstool (Ex. 25:22; 1 Chr. 28:2; cf. Ps. 99:5; 132:7).
In 586 B.C. the Babylonians captured Judah, destroyed Jerusalem, and deported the Jewish people to Babylon. Only a remnant of poor Judeans were left in the land to care for and cultivate it. The Babylonians released the prophet Jeremiah and gave him a choice to remain in Judah or immigrate to Babylon. He chose to remain. The king of Babylon then appointed an Israelite named Gedaliah as governor to oversee the remnant.

What transpired next reveals that God is never unwilling to provide guidance, even when He knows people will not follow it. In their stubbornness, the Judeans chose to do things their way; and they paid a heavy price for their decision.
Johanan (a Jewish leader of the remnant) heard King Baalit (an Ammonite) had sent Ishmael the Ammonite to assassinate Gedaliah. He immediately warned Gedaliah, but Gedaliah did not believe him and denied Johanans request to kill Ishmael (Jer. 40).

So Ishmael and his men visited Gedaliah; ate with him; and murdered him, along with the Jewish people who were with him and some Chaldean warriors. Then they fled, taking captives. When Johanans heard of the murders, he pursued Ishmael. A battle ensued. Though Ishmael and eight of his soldiers escaped, they left the Judean captives behind (41:1–15).

Despite returning the captives to Jerusalem, Johanans was afraid his good deed might backfire. He feared King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon would blame him for Gedaliahs murder and take revenge by slaughtering him and the Jewish remnant (vv. 16–18). So he and the remnant decided to flee to Egypt. Before doing so, however, they asked Jeremiah to pray for God’s will and guidance on their decision (42:1–3).

That was the scenario when Jeremiah agreed to pray. He told the people he would reveal God’s entire message, whether good or bad (v. 4). The remnant promised, “Whether it is pleasing or displeasing, we will obey” (v. 6). But the Israelites were like many today who dislike what God says because His Word contradicts their own desires.

God’s Reply

Ten days later, the Lord answered Jeremiah’s prayer. The news was good. The Judeans were told to stay in the Promised Land. If they obeyed, God would do three things: He would (1) plant them in the land and not pluck them up; (2) manifest His presence and power, preserving them from Babylons attack; and (3) show them mercy and compassion (vv. 7–12).

God also included a strong warning: If the remnant disobeyed the Lord and fled to Egypt, everyone would be destroyed by the sword, famine, and pestilence (disease). The remnant did not know the Babylonians would soon invade Egypt. Jeremiah informed the Judeans they would be cursed, become a reproach (cf. Dt. 28:37), and never see the Promised Land again if they went to Egypt. Jeremiah reemphasized that this warning was from the Lord (Jer. 42:13–18).

The prophet was no fool. He knew these Israelites’ request for prayer was hypocritical because they had already planned to flee to Egypt; and he told them so. They were not truly seeking Gods will but merely hoping to have Him approve their plans. Again Jeremiah warned them they would die in Egypt (vv. 19–22).

Instead of heeding the prophet, they accused Jeremiah of lying and fled to Egypt anyway. They also falsely accused Baruch (Jeremiah’s scribe/secretary) of influencing Jeremiah to halt their escape and of secretly working as a spy for Babylon in order to put them to death or take them captive.

Judah’s Rebellion

So the remnant of Judah fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them (43:1–7). After Jeremiah arrived there, the Lord told him to bury large stones at the entrance to Pharaoh’s house in Tahpanhes. When Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt, he would capture many Egyptians, kill others, destroy and burn the houses of the Egyptians’ gods, burn their golden idols, and set his throne over the stones Jeremiah buried (vv. 8–13).

We can learn many lessons from chapters 42–43. First, the Judean remnant was wise in seeking divine guidance about whether to stay in the land or flee to Egypt. The decision would be life-changing, affecting Judah for years to come.

Second, the Judeans were correct in disclosing their dilemma to Jeremiah, a prophet of God who could intercede for them to help them discern the Lord’s will regarding which path to take.

Third, the remnant did not become discontent but waited patiently 10 days until Jeremiah provided the Lord’s answer. And God promised deliverance if Judah obeyed His instructions.

When we face a dilemma, it is only proper to request God’s guidance. We must wait patiently until our prayer is answered before making a decision. When the answer comes, we must not be discontent or disobedient to Gods reply but obey His instructions, although doing so might be distasteful and not in accordance with our desires.

However, we must not approach God as the leaders of the remnant did, using deception and double talk, promising to obey while knowing they had made up their minds. The remnant defamed Jeremiah’s character by calling him a liar and saying his message was untrue (43:2).

In defiance to God’s revelation, these people traveled to Egypt (v. 7). They were self-deceived, believing their plan was correct and that the Lord would not carry out the promised judgment against them—even though He repeatedly warned them that death awaited them in Egypt (vv. 10–11).

They also failed to use discernment and to remember their past history, which was filled with Gods judgment on their disobedient forefathers (cf. Lev. 26:14–39; Num. 14—20; Dt. 28:15–68; 2 Ki. 17:4–23).

God is gracious and always willing to provide wisdom and guidance. Let us not succumb to praying hypocritically while all along planning to do our own will in disobedience to Him. The consequences, as they were in Jeremiah’s day, can be devastating.

David M. Levy is the director of International Ministries for The Friends of Israel.
Open Resistance

In chapter 43, Jeremiah denounced those who fled Judah to escape the prophesied Babylonian Captivity. In chapter 44, he addressed their continued practice of worshiping other gods, specifically the “queen of heaven.”

In Egyptian culture, the queen of heaven was known as Isis, the counterpart to the Canaanite goddess of fertility, Ashteroth. Idolatry was one of the sins that provoked God to judge Judah and send the nation into exile. Unfortunately, idolatry was not a passing trend. It was an entrenched lifestyle that had been ongoing for more than a generation (44:21).

Through Jeremiah, God appealed to those worshiping false gods:

I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, "Oh, do not do this abominable thing that I hate!" But they did not listen or incline their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense to other gods. So My fary and My anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem (vv. 4–6).

Their pursuit of other gods exhibited their open resistance to Jeremiah’s message. Although he reminded them that such behavior precipitated God’s desolation of Judah and their beloved city of Jerusalem, they insisted on attributing their past prosperity to the queen of heaven:

We will not listen to you! But we will . . . burn incense to the queen of heaven . . . For then we had plenty of food, were well-off, and saw no trouble. But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine (vv. 16–18).

The women chimed in, “And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, did we make cakes for her, to worship her, and pour out drink offerings to her without our husbands’ permission?” (v. 19).

Twisting the Law of Moses (Num. 30:6–7), the wives argued that, because they had their husbands’ consent, Jeremiah had no right to interfere.

The arrogant response to Jeremiah is shocking: “As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not listen to you!” (Jer. 44:16). Consequently, God promised only a handful of them would survive the sword and famine to return to Judah:

“And all the remnant of Judah, who have gone to the land of Egypt to dwell
mary of Jeremiah 43—46

What to expect as a consequence of defying God. Definition of defiance: open resistance, bold disobedience.

The Israelites failed to believe God’s Word as spoken through the prophet Jeremiah and were defiantly disobedient, provoking God’s anger and judgment.

They failed to acknowledge their sin of idolatry. They spoke defiantly of their desire to continue baking cakes for and burning incense and pouring out drink offerings to the queen of heaven. They attributed their calamity to their failure to continue worshiping the queen of heaven when they had vowed to do so.

God is sovereign and preserves the life of a faithful servant.

God brings judgment against Egypt but offers comfort to Israel, with a promise of a future despite judgment.

Bold Disobedience

Ironically, by fleeing to Egypt to escape God’s chastening, the Judeans actually ran headlong into it. Jeremiah had forewarned them, “For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘As My anger and My fury have been poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so will My fury be poured out on you when you enter Egypt’” (42:18).

God also gave a sign: “Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies and into the hand of those who seek his life” (44:30). Though few from Judah would live to see the sign fulfilled, history records that Hophra lost his throne in 570 B.C. Jeremiah used four metaphors to underscore the Egyptian army’s vulnerabilities. The first is an image of Egypt described as a “very pretty heifer” about to be destroyed (46:20). The second is of mercenaries who constituted Egypt’s armies, characterized as “fat bulls” awaiting slaughter (v. 21). In the third metaphor, Egypt’s braggadocio and posturing is pictured as little more than the hissing of a serpent that slithers away in the face of real danger (v. 22). The fourth depicts the Babylonian army as covering Egypt like a cloud of grasshoppers, devastating the forest with axes (v. 23).

The Babylonians conquered Egypt in 568–567 B.C., fulfilling Jeremiah’s prophecy. The people of Judah’s bold disobedience perpetuated a misplaced trust in Pharaoh and his armies, which all were powerless to protect them.

Comfort and Promise

God’s messages of hope are often embedded in warnings of impending judgment. At the conclusion of Jeremiah’s message to the Jewish inhabitants of Egypt, He promised His Chosen People they ultimately will return from captivity:

“Do not fear, O Jacob My servant,” says the LORD, “for I am with you; for I will make a complete end of all the nations to which I have driven you, but I will not make a complete end of you. I will rightly correct you, for I will not leave you wholly unpunished” (Jer. 46:28).

God promised, “But do not fear, O My servant Jacob, and do not be dismayed, O Israel! For behold, I will save you from afar, and your offspring from the land of their captivity; Jacob shall return, have rest and be at ease; no one shall make him afraid” (v. 27). It is a message of comfort to Israel, with a promise of a future despite punishment and judgment.

Jeremiah 45 is a parenthetical notation that contains another embedded message of hope. During the challenging years of Jeremiah’s ministry, a faithful scribe named Baruch recorded the unpopular prophet’s messages. At a moment of extreme disillusionment, God spoke comfort to Baruch through Jeremiah as Baruch documented prophecies of judgment. Reminding the scribe of His sovereignty over the nations, God informed Baruch, “What I have built I will break down, and what I have planted I will pluck up. . . . But I will give your life to you as a prize in all places, wherever you go” (45:4–5).

Sandwiched between a warning to the people of Judah living in Egypt and a word of judgment against the Egyptian empire, God declared His authority to judge those who defy Him. Yet only a loving God would respond to Baruch’s mournful sighing with the comfort that his life would be spared no matter where he lived.

Jeremiah, by then an old man, was taken to Egypt against his will by unbelieving Judeans; and there he probably died. Baruch experienced the horrors of exile in Egypt as God’s judgment was poured out. Sometimes the righteous suffer with a disobedient generation. But they can be assured that whatever may happen, God is with them; and their hope is secure in Him.

by Charles E. McCracken
The United States has asked Israel and the Palestinian Authority to exercise restraint after Israeli police arrested the grand mufti in May for throwing chairs at Jewish people on the Temple Mount. In response to the incident, Jordan’s parliament has demanded its government expel Israeli Ambassador Daniel Nevo.

“We’re concerned about the recent tensions surrounding the Temple Mount, Haram al-Sharif, including the detention today of the grand mufti,” U.S. State Department Deputy Spokesman Patrick Ventrell, told reporters, according to Agence France Presse. “We understand that he was released,” he said. “But we urge all sides to respect the status quo of this holy site and to exercise restraint and refrain from provocative actions.”

Meanwhile, members of Jordan’s parliament demanded Jordan expel Nevo. “The (150-member) lower house of parliament unanimously demanded the government ask the Israeli ambassador to leave Jordan, and recall the Jordanian ambassador in Israel,” Jordanian official Walid Obeidat said, adding that the vote came in response to “Israeli occupation measures at Al-Aqsa mosque.”

After Israel liberated the Temple Mount during the 1967 Six-Day War, it left the Waqf in charge of the compound. The Waqf, in return, has removed every sign of ancient Jewish presence at the Jewish holy site and has consistently destroyed Jewish antiquities on the Temple Mount in direct violation of a ruling by the Supreme Court.

*Additional shipping charges apply*
People frequently become confused between the northern and southern kingdoms. Although both were Jewish, only one was Davidic.

Originally, all the tribes of Israel were united throughout the reigns of Saul, David, and David’s son Solomon. The united kingdom was called Israel.

However, despite all Solomon’s wisdom, he forsook God and began serving pagan deities. So God waited until Solomon died, then He used the foolishness of Solomon’s son King Rehoboam to divide the kingdom around 922 B.C. (1 Ki. 11:9–13). The 10 northern tribes (Reuben, Simeon, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun) became the northern kingdom, using the name Israel. The tribe of Judah (David’s tribe) and the small tribe of Benjamin became the southern kingdom, using the name Judah.

Originally, the Levites were scattered throughout all the tribes; but after the division, most ended up in Judah, where the Temple stood.

Judah was the Davidic Kingdom, and all its kings were descendants of David. Israel had a string of murderers and usurpers as kings, including Ahab; and none was a descendant of David. Eight of Judah’s kings were righteous; none of Israel’s kings was righteous.

Jerusalem, which David made the capital of the united kingdom around 1000 B.C., continued as the capital of the southern kingdom until Judah was captured by Babylon in 586 B.C. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom.

By the time the prophet Jeremiah arrived on the scene at 627 B.C., the northern kingdom had already been swept away by Assyria. Twenty-two years after Jeremiah began prophesying, the Babylonians subjugated the southern kingdom and began deporting Judah’s best and brightest to Babylon.

By the time Babylon burned Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C., it had become a world power. So all the Israelites previously captured by Assyria fell under Babylonian dominion. When Babylon fell to the Medo-Persian empire in 539 B.C., all the Jews captured by both Babylon and Assyria became subjects of Medo-Persia, thus making it possible for Jewish people from all the tribes to return to their land when King Cyrus of Persia released them from captivity in 538 B.C.
Fellowship with God

Fellowship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ is the message the apostle John proclaims throughout this epistle. For believers to have fellowship with God, they must walk in the light revealed by His Word. A professing believer cannot claim to know God and say he walks in God’s light while indulging in habitual sin.

Yet John faced this situation in the church of his day, and he called on all those indulging in duplicitous practices to stop. He concluded his message in this section with a word of hope: To all who confess their sin, there is cleansing, forgiveness, and renewed fellowship with God.

**Character of God**

“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (literally, “not one single bit of darkness”; 1 Jn. 1:5). What John and the apostles heard was a direct message from God the Father through Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God (cf. Jn. 1:18). It unveiled the nature and character of God the Father and His Son. This was a new revelation, and John and the other apostles were commissioned to “declare” to the world what they had received from Jesus.

John’s message is both positive and negative when it comes to explaining God’s nature. His declaration “God is light” (1 Jn. 1:5) implies more than the absence of darkness. It does not say God has light or created light, but that He is uncreated light, which states the essence of God’s nature.

Scripture says God was covered with light (Ps. 104:2) and dwelt in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16) before He created anything. Throughout Scripture, light symbolizes God’s purity, holiness, virtue, morality, truth, character, and glory. Thus light best defines and describes God’s true nature.

John added, “and in Him is no [Greek, “no, not in any way’] darkness at all” (1 Jn. 1:5; cf. Jas. 1:17). He emphasized there is not a bit of darkness in God. Darkness, like light, is used symbolically in Scripture and always speaks of evil, wickedness, and deception; and it ultimately leads to death.

God’s nature became visible in the person of Jesus Christ at His Incarnation. Jesus Himself said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (Jn. 8:12). Just as light is necessary for physical life on Earth, so spiritual light is necessary for one to have spiritual life. Christ is the true Light of the world (1:9).

**Conduct Before God**

John listed a number of conditions that inhibit believers from having fellowship with God and other believers. Beginning with 1 John 1:6 through the end of the chapter, he used five clauses that all hinge on the word *if*. (He also used another in 2:1.) He did not point out a specific case but was hypothesizing that some professing believers were leading double lives before God. They claimed to walk intimately with Him, but were walking in the darkness of sin.

John did not exclude himself from this possibility, using the word *we*. It is possible for Christians to believe they walk in true fellowship with God and be unaware of their actual spiritual state concerning sin in their lives.

“If [So] we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth” (1:6). The phrase *walk in darkness* refers to the wickedness of a person’s thoughts and deeds. In this context, someone who professes faith in Christ but practices sin as a way of life shows he is not saved. Such a person speaks falsely and neither lives nor practices the truth found in the gospel.

“But if we walk in the light as He [Himself] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (v. 7). True believers consistently and continuously order their lives in the light they have received from God. Their thoughts and conduct revolve around God’s light, which others see in them; and they have true, unbroken fellowship with God.

Two results are evident in the lives of true believers: fellowship and cleansing from sin:

1. “We have fellowship with one another” (v. 7). Naturally, when Christians walk in the light, they will be in fellowship with God and other Christians. Scholars are divided on whether this verse refers to fellowship...
with God or with fellow Christians. Most lean toward fellowship with God because of the theme in verses 5-7.

The words we and one another seem to speak of the believer’s fellowship with God and God’s fellowship with him or her through the relationship with Jesus. Christians must have fellowship with God before they can have fellowship with one another. If a believer has trouble fellowshipping with Christians who walk in the light, then that individual had better question his or her claim to having fellowship with God.

(2) “And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (v. 7). John emphasized a number of key issues in this short phrase. First, believers are cleansed through “the blood of Jesus [His human name] . . . His Son [His divine name].” John’s point puts to rest the Cerinthians’ heretical teaching that Jesus was only a man and not divine, as well as the teaching of Docetism that Jesus’ humanity was not genuine.

Second, Jesus voluntarily shed His blood on the cross as an atonement that has the power to cleanse believers from every sin. The word cleanses is present tense and speaks of continual cleansing from sin. This cleansing removes sin and its guilt at the time of salvation and continues to cleanse from sins of omission and commission—no matter what form they take or how they are manifested while the believer walks in God’s light on Earth.

**CONFESSION TO GOD**

John also addressed a hypothetical objection from those claiming to walk in fellowship with God: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (v. 8). The word sin is plural, meaning the confession should include naming specific sins when asking God’s forgiveness. This is the only place in the New Testament where the word confess is used in reference to sins.

God will be “faithful” or trustworthy to perform what is true to His own nature and to keep His promises. He is also “just” (righteous), meaning He acts in agreement and conformity to His own nature, which demands it. The price for sin was paid by Jesus Christ through His shed blood, making it possible for God to forgive all who repent (cf. Rom. 3:23-26).

God responds in two ways to all who confess their sins: He will “forgive and “cleanse . . . from all unrighteousness” (v. 9). When God forgives, He remembers that sin no more. The same is true concerning cleansing. The moment someone sincerely confesses sin to God, the defilement of that sin is removed; and the individual is restored to fellowship with Him.

John addressed a final claim that some professing believers might make: “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us” (v. 10). People who vehemently refuse to admit they have ever committed sin contradict God’s revealed Word and claim He is a liar. Such heretical beliefs directly attack God’s nature, character, and veracity and indicate that person does not possess saving faith in Jesus Christ nor believe the gospel message nor believe in the inerrant revelation of His Word. Unless such people recant their ungodly positions and confess their sin with repentant hearts, they are without hope and cannot walk in God’s light.

We all need to examine our lives and see if there is any known sin that needs confessing, so we can enjoy true fellowship with God.

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**Excuse Our Typo**

In the March/April 2013 issue of Israel My Glory, there was a typographical error in David M. Levy’s article, “The First Epistle of John.” The quotation from Daniel L. Akin on page 36 should have read, “in our unredeemed state,” rather than “in our redeemed state.” Please accept our apologies.

David M. Levy is the director of International Ministries for The Friends of Israel.
The Grace of God (Part 5)

The Bible provides evidence that, through Jesus, God established grace as the new way of administering His moral absolutes over humanity.

The First Evidence

The apostle John taught that God established the Mosaic Law as a means of administering His eternal, moral absolutes over His chosen nation of Israel, but “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (Jn. 1:17).

The Second Evidence

In Romans 6:14, the apostle Paul confirmed that fact: “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” Paul clearly asserted that Christians are not under the Mosaic Law.

By making the terms law and grace objects of the preposition under, he implied the grace he had in mind had the same function as the Mosaic Law. That function cannot be eternal salvation because the Law was never a means of salvation. To be under the Law or grace meant to be subject to the “power, sovereignty, command” of the Law or of grace as rules of life. Therefore, Paul referred to the Law and grace as ways God administered His moral absolutes.

Paul taught that being under the grace administration instead of the Law administration frees Christians from mastery by the sin nature. In verse 14 he declared, “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” Thus it is advantageous to be under grace, which is superior to Law: “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh” (8:3).

However, being under grace does not give Christians liberty to sin (to be lawless): “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!” (6:15). The other instances refer to the sin nature people inherit at the moment of conception (Ps. 51:5).

The sin nature is a disposition of enmity toward God: “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7).

Paul described the sin nature’s relationship to the unregenerate person as that of master to slave. He referred to sin reigning “in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts” (6:12); being “slaves of sin” (v. 6); and “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” (v. 16).

The word death. An unregenerate person is so thoroughly locked into the master-slave relationship that only death can break the bond. Either the sin nature or the unregenerate person must experience a form of death.

In Romans 6:1–4 Paul used a marriage analogy to explain his teaching in Romans 6:14. A woman is bound in marriage to her husband as long as he lives. But his death terminates her marriage and frees her to marry another man. So death terminates a binding relationship and sets one free to enter another relationship.

Paul used the analogy to indicate that Jewish Christians were freed from the binding Mosaic Law administration of God’s rule through their association with Christ’s death, and they were now free to enter a binding relationship with the grace administration of God’s rule.

The Nature of the Association With Christ’s Death

To understand the nature of a person’s association with Christ’s death, it is necessary to examine several words Paul used in Romans 6—8.

The word sin. Paul used it 25 times in Romans 6:1—7:13, but only once does it refer to an act of sin (“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!” 6:15). The other instances refer to the sin nature people inherit at the moment of conception (Ps. 51:5).

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Romans 6:1–13 indicates that when an unregenerate person becomes a Christian, he is identified with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. There is a sense in which the unregenerate person actually dies with Christ at the time of salvation. One way Paul expressed
this truth is found in verse 6: “Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” The “old man” refers to the type of person an individual is spiritually in his or her unregenerate state. When people become saved, they die in the sense that they are no longer unregenerate spiritually. They are now new people spiritually, regenerate people.

The “old man” that died is not the sin nature. Paul made that fact clear: “For he who has died has been freed from sin” (v. 7) so “that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (v. 6). In verse 2 Paul referred to “we who died to sin”; and in verse 11 he exhorted believers, “Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin.” In the parallel Galatians 2:20 passage, he declared, “I have been crucified with Christ.”

When a person becomes saved, he dies with reference to the sin nature (Rom. 6:2). Through his death with Christ, he loses completely the master-slave relationship he had with his sinful disposition (sin nature) while in his unregenerate state.

### Purposes of the Death

The accomplishments or purposes of death are the following:

1. In Romans 6:6 Paul declared that one purpose for an unregenerate person’s crucifixion with Christ is “that the body of sin might be done away with.” The expression _body of sin_ refers to an unregenerate person’s body that is possessed or controlled by the sinful disposition. The literal meaning of the expression _done away with_ is “to dissolve relationships.” When an unregenerate person dies spiritually with Christ, his physical body terminates its obligation to function as an instrument of sin. It ceases to be “the body of sin.”

2. Death with Christ also permanently terminates a person’s relationship of slavery to his sinful disposition into which he was bound for life: “We should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin” (vv. 6–7). The expression _be slaves of sin_ refers to “one that is in a permanent relation of servitude to another, his will altogether swallowed up in the will of the other.”

3. In verse 4 Paul stated a third purpose for dying with Christ: “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Newness of life is possible because “if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection” (v. 5). Paul taught that someone who believes in Christ is resurrected in that he becomes regenerate—the “new man”—with the new, favorable disposition (new nature) toward God. It is a spiritual resurrection. The new disposition and Holy Spirit give such people newness of life, which produces a new walk or way of life.

The new walk is to be characterized by righteousness: “Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (v. 13).

I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness (v. 19).

### The Result of the Death

In Romans 6:7 Paul stated the result of spiritual death with Christ: “He who has died has been freed from sin.” There is a sense in which a person who dies spiritually with Christ is freed from his sinful disposition, though he is not freed from its presence. Romans 7:14–25 indicates that the sinful disposition remains an active, unwanted guest within the Christian.

However, through spiritual death with Christ, a Christian permanently loses his _position_ of slave under the sinful disposition; and the sinful disposition permanently loses its position of master. Thus, death with Christ results in permanent loss of obligation to yield to the sinful disposition’s control. For he who has died has been freed from sin. “The idea is that of a master claiming legal possession of a slave: proof being put in that the slave is dead, the verdict must needs be that the claims of law are satisfied and that he is no longer answerable; sin loses its suit.”

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckoning yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. But present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace (6:14–18).

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Israel launches news network

Communications mavens have been saying for years that Israel needs to get its message to the world via an Israeli-type Al Jazeera. Various business people have dipped their toes in the water, but until now no one was prepared to actually take the plunge. French businessman Patrick Drahi, owner of the controlling interest in HOT cable television, has decided to be one of the financiers of i24 NEWS despite the heavy financial losses he incurred at HOT.

i24 NEWS was founded by Frank Malloul, a former adviser to the French government, who will act as its CEO. i24 NEWS will operate on a 24/7 basis and will have a website that will deal with politics, international affairs, culture, sports, and other subjects.

Although no date has been announced for its launch, i24 plans to begin broadcasting this summer and will be headquartered at Jaffa Port.

The Jerusalem Post (jpost.com)

Poverty rating high in Israel

Despite Israel’s overall economic resilience and strong global market presence, the Jewish state continues to struggle with high poverty levels. A survey published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has revealed that Israel has the highest rate of poverty among all developed nations.

Nearly 21 percent of all Israelis live below the poverty line. That’s even higher than the poverty rate of Mexico, which stands at 20.4 percent. Israel scored a little better when it came to the gap between rich and poor, placing fifth behind Chile, Mexico, Turkey, and the United States.

In today’s economic climate, “middle class” Israelis live from paycheck to paycheck and can no longer afford to buy a home. Those who live at a lower economic level are worse off, and many of the welfare programs they rely on are facing what Finance Minister Yair Lapid calls “necessary cuts” to get Israel back on track fiscally.

Those who often suffer most are the children.

Israel Today (israeltoday.co.il)

Mega drought?

Israel has just overcome a seven-year drought, and the country’s natural water reservoirs are finally relatively stable following years of severe depletion. But Israelis shouldn’t get too content, as experts with the Water Authority’s Hydrological Services predict the next drought will hit in 2015 and will make the previous dry spell seem like a picnic.

It will last up to 20 years and will have an “exceptional” negative impact on the region’s fresh water resources, according to a report published by the Water Authority. However, the Authority is confident “all of Israel’s water needs will be fulfilled.”

Israel has made great strides in reclaiming wastewater for agriculture, and its expanding desalination program should cover consumer water needs in the near future.

Israel Today (israeltoday.co.il)

PA Arabs gifted Israeli citizenship

Several thousand Palestinian Authority Arabs living in certain neighborhoods on the Israeli side of the security fence are to be “gifted” with Israeli citizenship. They will be eligible to vote and receive National Insurance and other benefits that come with Israeli citizenship.

After research, the State Attorney said it was decided that, because the Arabs live on the Israeli side of the fence and work inside Israel, there are sufficient grounds to make them citizens. These Arabs have lived in this location since before the fence was built.

Israel Today (israeltoday.co.il)

Google officially OKs ‘Palestine’

Israel has expressed its displeasure at Google’s official decision to recognize “Palestine” as an independent state.

Until recently, anyone visiting the localized version of google.ps would see the label “Palestinian Territories.” Now that page simply labels the localized version of Google as belonging to “Palestine.”

Google officials said the move was in line with the UN’s recent upgrading of “Palestine” to non-member state status, a de facto recognition of its independence, as well as the United Nation’s Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO’s) open acceptance of a sovereign Palestinian state.

Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Ze’ev Elkin stated in a letter to Google CEO Larry Page that the Internet giant’s new policy will actually complicate reaching a peace agreement that results in the creation of a real Palestinian state. “This is intervention by an international company in local politics, [and] does not serve the interests of either party in the long-term,” wrote Elkin. He called on Google to rethink its “erroneous decision.”

Israel Today (israeltoday.co.il)

IDF gets riot suits

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Central Command has begun receiving new riot dispersal equipment, including protective suits for soldiers and an advanced GPS system, according to the official blog of the Israel Defense Forces. The new tools are being integrated as part of the IDF’s range of measures for curbing violent riots in Judea and Samaria.

Soldiers of the Central Command have already begun using protective suits, and they will receive hundreds more. The suits are designed to absorb shocks, stones, and clubs.

“Such a suit provides a wider possibility for the soldiers to approach and even to run, and it gives the soldiers more confidence,” said Maj. Yuval Yaron. He said the suits are lightweight and extremely effective.

Arutz-7 (IsraelNationalNews.com)
The father of 24-year-old Salam al-Zaghal has openly defended his son’s recent, brutal murder of an Israeli Jew in Samaria. The victim, Eviatar Borovzky, a 31-year-old husband and father of five small children, was beloved throughout the Jewish communities of central Samaria.

A day after the murderous stabbing, the Fatah party of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas hailed the killer on its official Facebook page. Such glorification of those who murder Israeli Jews is commonplace in the Palestinian Authority (PA) and is one of the chief reasons peace remains so elusive.

“What he has done is the duty of all Palestinians who suffer from the aggression of the army and the settlers,” stated al-Zaghal’s father, Ali al-Zaghal.

It should come as little wonder that average Palestinians think this way about their Jewish neighbors when their leaders in the PA set such a terrible example.

Abbas, hailed the world over as a “moderate,” insisted recently that Palestinian Arabs who murder Israeli Jews cannot be punished for their crimes. He was hosting a two-day “Freedom and Dignity” conference in Ramallah to mark the 11th anniversary of Israel’s arrest of Marwan Barghouti, a senior Fatah member who was convicted of directing numerous terrorist attacks against Israelis.

At the event, Abbas declared that whether or not Israel frees the thousands of jailed Palestinian terrorists will determine its true commitment to peace. However, many of those jailed took part in attacks that killed innocent Jewish men, women, and children. Most of the rest were captured while trying to do so. According to Abbas, these killers and would-be killers must not be held accountable for their crimes.

Israel Today (israeltoday.co.il)
Many people here know I believe in Christ. So they come to me wanting to know why I changed my faith. I tell them I have not changed my faith. I am still a Jew, but I believe in God according to the Holy Scriptures, not according to rabbinical stories.

“But you believe in This Man,” one insisted. “We believe in God.” We had come quickly to the best part of the conversation. These men were ultra-Orthodox. They wore long black garments and payis (curled sidelocks) behind their ears. They studied much, but they did not know the truth.

“Can you show us where it is written in the Bible about This One in whom you have believed?” one asked. They thought they had asked me a difficult question. They did not know I had been waiting for that question for two hours.

So I asked them, “Have you ever read Isaiah 53 from the Holy Bible?” They said they had not and wanted to know why it is important.

“But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (vv. 5–6).

“Why is it forbidden for us to read this?” one asked.

“That is a good question,” I replied. “And I am going to give you the answer. Your teachers do not want
you to know the truth. They cannot explain it. This was written by the Holy Spirit of God and not by those many rabbis who come to you, spend long hours with you, but do not teach you what you truly need to know.”

Jewish people have great difficulty understanding that God is three Persons in one. They are almost afraid to believe Jesus is God.

“But our rabbis have spent many years studying. They are great men. And what is more, they were taught by great men. We must learn from our great teachers,” one replied.

“It is good to study,” I agreed, “but not to bow down before your teachers. You spend much of your life in those religious schools. But what have you learned there? To pray from your many prayer books. The Holy Bible does not take first place.”

“But we are students,” one said. “We must follow everything our teacher says. What would you advise us? Not to listen to our great rabbis?”

This time I replied, “I am not like your great teachers who learn from rabbinal stories. I read the Bible. That is why I know the truth. You must study the Holy Bible. It will show you whom you must follow.”

“If you know the Bible, show us what is written that is so important for us to know. We want to see what our great rabbis have failed to teach us. Show us, if you can. But do not show us Isaiah 53.”

I replied, “Here is the Holy Bible. You can see with your own eyes what I tell you.” I showed them Deuteronomy 6:13–14, which they pray every morning: “You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him. . . . You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the people who are all around you.”

They were surprised. “Whom are you following?” I asked. “God, or your rabbis?”

Please pray these men will read the Bible and follow the Lord only. Then He will open their eyes and lead them to the truth.
# ISRAEL, THE RAPTURE, THE TRIBULATION, AND THE KINGDOM

## THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL

### LANCASTER PROPHECY CONFERENCE

**SEPTEMBER 6–10, 2013**

**DOUBLETREE RESORT • 2400 WILLOW STREET PIKE, LANCASTER, PA 17602**

**CONFERENCE COST:** $519 per person single/double occupancy  
Registration and Final Payment are due at The Friends of Israel Thursday, August 1, 2013.

## SPEAKERS

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### SESSIONS

#### FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6
- **Steve Herzig**: The Rapture: What Is the Purpose?
- **Levy / Rabiner**: Foreign Update Poland and Ukraine
- **Rennie Showers**: The Rapture: When Will It Occur?
- **Tom Simcox**: The Rapture: Who Is Left Behind?
- **Jim Showers**: Israel and the New Anti-Semitism

#### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7
- **Clarence Johnson**: The Tribulation: What Is the Purpose?
- **Rennie Showers**: The Tribulation: Gospel Warnings
- **David Levy**: The Tribulation: The Horrors
- **Tom Simcox**: The Tribulation: The Characters
- **Jim Showers**: Israel and the New Anti-Semitism

#### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8
- **Chuck McCracken**: Israel, the Middle East, and the U.S.
- **Rennie Showers**: The Kingdom: The Prophets and Apostles Speak
- **Steve Herzig**: The Kingdom: The Coming King
- **Tom Simcox**: “Hot Button Issues”
- **Jim Showers**: Israel and the New Anti-Semitism

#### MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9
- **Chuck McCracken**: Israel, the Middle East, and the U.S.
- **Rennie Showers**: The Kingdom: The Prophets and Apostles Speak
- **Steve Herzig**: The Kingdom: The Coming King
- **Jim Showers**: The Kingdom: Final Rebellion
- **Timothy Rabiner**: Poland and the Ukraine

#### TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10
- **8 A.M.**: David Levy – The Kingdom: The Great Society
- **9 A.M.**: Clarence Johnson – The Kingdom: Worship
- **10 A.M.**: Jim Showers – The Kingdom: Final Rebellion

### FOCUS ON ISRAEL NIGHT:
- Guest Speaker: Avi Zimmerman
- Executive Director, American Friends of Ariel

### FOREIGN UPDATE:
- Timothy Rabiner
- Poland and the Ukraine

### CONCERT:
- Diane Susek Friday, September 6, at 8:30 P.M. at Statesman Hall

### GOLF OUTING:
- Saturday, September 7
- Tee Time: 1:15 P.M.

### SESSIONS ONLY:
- For those in the Lancaster area, join us for sessions only at no charge. Register with an FOI staff member upon arriving at the DoubleTree Resort.

For more details, please call The Friends of Israel Monday through Friday between 8:30 A.M. and 4:30 P.M. at 800–257–7843, and ask for Lisa Grosso. Or visit our website, www.foi.org.