# ISRAEL, THE RAPTURE, THE TRIBULATION, AND THE KINGDOM

Plus award-winning American-Israeli journalist Caroline Glick

## THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL

WINONA LAKE PROPHECY CONFERENCE

**JULY 21-26, 2013**

The Orthopaedic Capital Center • Grace College & Seminary • 610 Wooster Road, Winona Lake, Indiana 46590

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### Special Seminar

**Professor Mathias Kern**

Mr. Kern is a regular commentator about European politics and transatlantic relations for newspapers and radio programs in Europe and the United States. He has taught international relations in Europe and is a visiting professor of international relations at The Master’s College.

### Update on the Jerusalem Assembly in Israel with Pastor Meno Kalisher

**Meno Kalisher**

### Special Music Daily and Concerts

Sunday and Tuesday evenings with G’Sherim

### FOCUS ON ISRAEL NIGHT

Ms. Glick is the chief diplomatic correspondent for Makor Rishon newspaper and deputy managing editor of The Jerusalem Post. She is also the senior fellow for Middle East Affairs of the Washington, DC-based Center for Security Policy. In 1997–1998 she served as assistant foreign policy advisor to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. She holds a master’s degree in Public Policy from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government and served as a captain in the Israel Defense Forces.

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### Children’s Program

Sunday through Friday during all sessions, Orthopaedic Capital Center (upstairs room #201).

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Israel My Glory
Volume 71, Number 3 • May/June 2013 USPS 270-660
ISSN 8755-402X • Color Used: 3000K 40672070

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Israel My Glory (ISSN 8755-402X) is published bimonthly for $19.95 per year by The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1179 Almonesson Road, Deptford Township, Westville, New Jersey 08093. Periodicals postage paid at Westville, NJ, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Israel My Glory, P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099-0908.
I often hear people say, "I think the Rapture is close!" or "I believe we are living in the last days just before the end-times." Many people have a profound feeling this world can’t continue on its current path much longer, and world events seem to point to the soon-coming of our Lord.

One of the marks of the last days is increased apostasy within the church. So it is important to be able to recognize apostasy and deal with it.

The word *apostasy* comes from a Greek word meaning "to stand away from, to depart from." When applied to the church, it refers to people who left the truth of God’s Word, particularly the gospel.

Concerning the great apostasy of the last days, the New Testament teaches (1) it will come to the church, (2) it will occur within the Church Age, and (3) it will mark the end-times of the Church Age.

Its characteristics include denying God (2 Tim. 3:4–5), Christ (2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Jn. 2:18; 4:3), Christ’s return (2 Pet. 3:3–4), the faith (1 Tim. 4:1–2), sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3–4), the importance of a separated life (3:1–7), morals (vv. 1–8, 13; Jude 18), and authority (2 Tim. 3:1).

During the “perilous times” that will affect the church in the last days (v. 1), many will have a “form of godliness” but deny its power (v. 5). They will have an insatiable desire to learn about God but will never be able to come to know His truth, revealed through His Word (v. 7).

Furthermore, the church will not endure sound doctrine. Instead, people will follow their own desires and surround themselves with teachers who tickle their ears with fables, rather than truth (4:3–4).

Apostasy is not an attack from the outside world; it is an attack from within the church. How can we recognize it? Here are four signs:

(1) **HUMAN EXPERIENCE.** Apostasy uses human experience to determine truth (vv. 3–4), overemphasizing the experience of self-discovery and focusing on social programs, with a goal of reforming humanity. However, our lives should be centered around God and His glory, not on ourselves.

(2) **SENSUALITY AND GREED.** Apostasy exploits and maligns God’s truth and teaches that God only wants us to be happy and enjoy life (2 Pet. 2). However, God’s primary goal is not our happiness; it is our holiness. He does not call us to sensual pleasures and worldly indulgences.

(3) **MOCKING GOD’S WORD.** Apostasy denies Scripture’s clear teaching and ignores God’s past work in history (chap. 2). Considering how many deny the literal six days of creation, it is no wonder so many deny God’s literal words that He will return to judge the earth and re-establish His Kingdom on Earth, with the Messiah sitting on His throne in Jerusalem.

Today many within the church mock the Rapture, Tribulation, and Millennial Kingdom. Yet the fact that God fulfilled prophecy in the past should be sufficient grounds to believe He will fulfill it in the future. Eschatology (the study of future events) is not a science created out of thin air; it recognizes the continuation of God’s plan of redemption, which He has revealed in His Word.

(4) **UNGODLY LIFESTYLE.** Apostasy teaches an ungodly lifestyle (Jude), turning God’s grace into a license to sin and denying Jesus Christ as Lord and Master. Apostates recast Christ into an image that suits them, rather than accept the Person presented in the Bible. How often do you hear sin and eternal judgment preached? Yet churches that fail to teach that people are sinners and God hates sin provide an incomplete picture of Christ: who He is, what He did, and how He expects us to live. When church leaders sanction sin, it is a sign of apostasy.

God tells us to disassociate ourselves from such people and preach His Word (2 Tim. 3:5; 4:2). In fact, in the midst of his discourse on apostasy, the apostle Paul declared, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (3:16). The apostle Peter also said to trust God’s Word (2 Pet. 1:16–21). Scripture is to be trusted and used to teach His truth because people desperately need it.

*Israel My Glory* has been teaching God’s Word since its first issue in 1942. And with His help, we will continue to do so until He comes!
How often have you seen a household appliance create an international commotion? Apparently, when an Israeli company manufactures it, people become agitated.

SodaStream International is an Israeli company selling a kitchen appliance that turns ordinary tap water into carbonated water. It also sells more than 100 flavorings that mimic well-known sodas and other beverages, so you can make virtually anything you like at home.

The company is traded on NASDAQ; and the soda maker is sold in 55,000 stores—including Bed Bath & Beyond, Costco, Walmart, Target, and Macy’s—in 43 countries. In February it advertised during the Super Bowl, becoming the first private Israeli company ever to air such a commercial. The message: Using SodaStream saves the planet myriads of unnecessary plastic bottles.

But saving the planet apparently isn’t the prime consideration for the Islamic and political organizations that want to put SodaStream out of business, despite the fact that it employs more Arabs than Jews.

One of its factories is located in Mishor Adumim, an industrial park in Ma’aleh Adumim, located less than 15 minutes west of Jerusalem. Although some consider the area “occupied territory,” Ma’aleh Adumim actually is located in Area C, which, according to the Oslo accords, is considered “disputed territory.” The documents signed by Israel and the Palestinian Authority leave the area under Israel’s control until a final agreement can be reached.

That fact, however, does not impress the Interfaith Boycott Coalition, an advocate of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS). The Coalition advocates boycotting SodaStream, claiming that buying the soda maker is the same as supporting the occupation of the West Bank.

An online petition asks stores not to carry SodaStream. According to Kristin Szremski, a spokesperson for the Coalition, “The boycott of SodaStream felt like it was a great opportunity to raise awareness about settlements and thwart SodaStream’s effort to get into the American market.”

The Interfaith Boycott Coalition sees itself as the faith-based wing of the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation. Its members include the Presbyterian Church USA’s Israel-Palestine Mission Network, Episcopal Peace Fellowship’s Palestine Israel Network, United Church of Christ Palestine Israel Network and Response, Jewish Voice for Peace, United Methodist Kairos Response, and others.

The website to boycott SodaStream, sodastreamboycott.org, showcases support from Imam Zaid Shakir, an Islamist cleric with a history of incendiary rhetoric. It also boasts support from Karen Danielson, outreach director of the Muslim American Society, which federal prosecutors say was founded as the overt arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in America.

SodaStream would seem like the last company to offend anybody. It employs 500 West Bank Palestinians, 400 Arab Israelis, and 200 Israeli Jews and foreign workers (including African refugees).

CEO Daniel Birnbaum says the company is committed to “practice equality and full cooperation both on the job and off it.” Every day his workforce practices that philosophy by working and eating together at the plant. Employees enjoy the same medical insurance coverage and equal wages. They can worship at either the mosque or synagogue built by the company and located in the factory. Jewish male employees openly wear yarmulkes, while the Muslim women wear their hijabs.

Isn’t this what a peaceful Middle East could look like? Would not both Palestinians and Israelis want this? Not according to Interfaith spokesperson Szremski, who dismissed the argument that hurting SodaStream will hurt the livelihoods of Palestinians: “The fact that a worker goes to work every day does not indicate that it is a good thing.”

Yet SodaStream believes it is a good thing to be responsible for contributing to the Palestinian community by supplying jobs. More than 3,000 Palestinians rely on the income and medical benefits these jobs provide.

If you love soda, are interested in saving the planet from plastic bottles, and believe that Genesis 12:3 promises a blessing to those who bless the Jewish people, I say buy SodaStream.
Ties That Bind

Have we forgotten, or pushed out of mind, a phrase often quoted and fondly embraced in other days?

*I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed* (Gen. 12:3).

Well, if we have, the twin commemorations of Israel at 65 and The Friends of Israel at 75 will jog our memories. Israel and Bible-believing Christians are joined in clearly defined programs that can never be altered. Among the most consequential proclamations ever directed to spiritually impoverished humankind was this one: “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” In the parlance of our pop culture, it was a game-changer.

Over the past few years an unfortunate slippage has occurred in the thinking of some evangelicals. They’ve moved from staunch support for Israel and the Jewish people to a not-so-sure-anymore posture. A portion of the redefinition can be credited to a new wave of theologians who invalidate Israel’s future and Old Testament promises. Their vocalized and often mean-spirited put-downs of people who believe God’s plan for Israel is intact and vital to deciphering the future seem to intimidate some members of the evangelical clergy into silence or into skirting prophetic teaching.

Such should not be the case. To be sure, preachers face many issues today—some subtle, some aggressive, and still others that are potentially lethal. But there is an unavoidable bottom line. In the spiritual/biblical realm, commitment to truth in its entirety must be a priority. We should believe God means what He says and ask ourselves, “How does that apply to me?”

The Bible says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

This statement means simply that everything transmitted to us through the whole of Scripture, Old and New Testaments, is profitable and has something to say that we can ill afford to disregard, reject, or minimize.

The question is often raised, Why has America prospered and been such a favored nation? Ingenuity, energy, and an entrepreneurial spirit have played their part. But undergirding all of these positive attributes has been the foundation of compassion and commitment to faith. America’s Christian heritage was based on biblical standards of truth, morality, justice, and tolerance.

A second factor was that the United States has opened its arms, as few countries before it, to the Jewish people and staunchly supported their right to a home in the land of their fathers. America was the first nation to recognize the legitimacy of the newly born State of Israel in 1948 and was at the front of the line in standing with Eretz Yisrael in defense of the country.

The fact that history’s landscape is littered with the remains of nations that cursed Israel and its people should be sufficient warning against endorsing the anti-Semitic enterprise.

America is in the throes of an all-out revolution. Politics and ideologies foreign to our republic’s moorings are taking hold. And foremost among them is the dismantling of biblical foundations. God is out, Christianity is anathema, and anti-Semitism is a growing menace.

Americans were promised “change.” But if that change degenerates into full-blown, godless extremism, it will produce a transformation the nation cannot survive.

Israel and true Christianity are inseparably linked, bound together by the same God who made the rules—set down in the Scriptures—and provided the means for blessing to be opened to “all families of the earth.” The question is not whether God is finished with Israel and has replaced it, giving all rights and privileges to the church. Israel has in no way been replaced. God will deliver every promise, in every aspect, in its time and in full measure.

The primary division today between Christians and Jews is over the identity of the Messiah, which will be conclusively resolved for Israel at His appearing.

The material question is this: Does God keep His word? When He said “forever” to Israel about giving the Jewish people a land, a people, and a King, did He change His mind? If He did, then we Christians cannot have a single shred of assurance that He won’t change His mind about us.

“Standing on the Promises” is more than a song. It is the bedrock of our security.
FOI at 75—Looking Back to See the Future

Friends of Israel ministering at the Kaplan Medical Center in Israel. Left to right: Two Hesed Project volunteers clean air conditioner filters; Chris Katulka, one of our ORIGINS leaders, washes dishes. (Clarence Johnson/FOI Image Archive; digital composition and enhancement, Thomas E. Williams.)
The world has come full circle. Seventy-five years ago, Adolf Hitler was gearing up the greatest killing machine the world had ever known, implementing the strategy of his book, *Mein Kampf (My Struggle)*. Its thesis was the elimination of what he deemed the single greatest threat to civilized humanity: “the Jewish peril.”

Yet Europe and America could not convince themselves to take him at his word. For naïve British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Hitler’s issue was land; give him the Sudetenland, Chamberlain said, and there could be “peace in our time.”

That stupendous blunder was followed by the rumble of German tanks and the beginning of a war that would cost 60 million lives, bring catastrophic ruin to the cities of Europe, and obliterate more than a third of the world’s Jewish population.

England, America, and the West, all in a state of denial regarding Hitler’s intentions to slaughter the Jews, did nothing to stop him until it was too late.

You could almost hear the ancient Jewish prophet Jeremiah weeping for his people in their hour of deepest peril: “Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which has been brought on me” (Lam. 1:12).

**Men Who Read the Handwriting**

While the halls of great governments were silent, there were those who understood and were prepared to act. Among them was a brilliant young professor in Poland who sensed the anti-Semitic tidal wave sweeping over Europe. Victor Buksbazen was fluent in eight languages and served as assistant professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at the University of Warsaw. Already the young teacher was watching the anti-Jewish rallies in Germany and hearing the songs of the Third Reich, with such lyrics as “When Jewish blood from the knife spurts, things will go better for us.”

While time was still on his side, Victor left his beloved Poland and went west. Had he not done so, he no doubt would have been among the group of intellectual Poles murdered by the Nazis after they invaded Poland on September 1, 1939.

By God’s grace, Dr. Buksbazen ultimately arrived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In due time he was invited to become the first general secretary of the fledgling Friends of Israel Refugee Relief Committee, founded in 1938 by a group of Christian pastors and businesspeople who had heard the cries of Europe’s Jews and were not willing to stand by silently while they were annihilated. Years later the ministry was renamed The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc. (FOI).

Under the capable leadership of Victor and his wife, Lydia, the organization set the course for what would grow into an incredible ministry. It burst on the scene with a unique passion, vision, and love for the Jewish people and has adapted to innovation, opportunities, and new technologies, while never deviating from the steadfast commitment to defend and propagate the truth of God’s Word. “For such a time as this” would become a biblical injunction as applicable today as in the days of ancient Israel when Queen Esther was called on to risk everything to save her people from certain death (Est. 4:14).

**Foundations That Matter**

The ministry was committed to a balanced application of making Christ known to Jewish people and Gentiles alike. In addition to evangelism came a hands-on aid emphasis that would embody God’s compassion and love for Israel as expressed in Isaiah: “Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” (Isa. 40:1).

Through its rapidly expanding staff, the ministry disseminated the good news of life in the Messiah to an ever-widening circle, while continuing to send aid to people in 18 countries. By 1944 The Friends of Israel had workers across the United States, including Washington, DC; Atlanta, Georgia; Brooklyn, New York; and San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Oakland, California.

In fact, after World War II The Friends of Israel was the first mission to send a worker to spiritually ravished Warsaw, Poland, to supply material and spiritual help to Holocaust survivors.

Dr. Buksbazen’s contribution—as well as the addition of workers and expansion of influence through new fields in Canada, Argentina, Israel, England, India, and Germany—was the harbinger of a fundamental development in the ministry’s emphasis. Reaching out to Jewish people (the ministry’s central focus) would be supplemented by extensive programs of teaching in churches regarding the dangers of anti-Semitism; explaining the responsibilities of Bible-believing Christians toward the Jewish people; and teaching prophetic truth related to the church, Israel, and the end-times.
Victor Buksbazen’s vision and leadership laid the foundation and set the course for those who would succeed him following his death in October 1974.

Israel Finds a Friend

Since the rebirth of Israel, FOI has been a premier voice of support both inside and outside the Jewish state. In almost all aspects of the ministry, God has blessed FOI with positive, warm relationships with Israeli officials at all levels. And as the situation in the Middle East and America deteriorates and anti-Semitism and hatred toward Israel grow, the bond between FOI and the Jewish community grows stronger.

Jewish people who once believed most Christians only thought of them as “Christ killers” have seen, through FOI and our friends, that there are Christians who are true and unshakable friends of Israel and the Jewish people.

We once said The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry had workers in seven countries. At the time it was a worthy accomplishment. But as we lay down the 75th marker on our years of existence, that number has grown exponentially. Today, through staff, technology, and print resources, there is virtually no country in the world FOI cannot reach with ministry tools for growth and education.

The Future Is Now

How does all of this affect the future? Unfortunately, as I said earlier, the world has come full circle. Understanding the core issues of the end-times and being able to have a discerning ministry require recognizing the perpetual, satanic obsession to annihilate the Jewish people.

A prime illustration surfaced in a dispatch from London as America and its allies celebrated victory in Europe (V-E Day) following World War II. The dispatch reported the following from an underground Nazi radio station: “It is possible that we have lost the war, but we have not lost the war against the Jews. Against them we shall continue to fight.”

That demonic mentality has Israel under attack to this day. Anti-Semitism and violence against the Jewish people are on the rise. At the UN, forces are aligned against Israel and erroneously regard the Jewish state as an oppressive, apartheid regime. Even some Christian churches and organizations denounce and ridicule Jewish people and their evangelical friends.

Many of the warning signs that existed in the early 1930s are back. And the tragic, genocidal atrocities of that era, which was touted as a time that would be remembered forever, are being forgotten. The truth of the statement that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it is being demonstrated around the globe.

No Immunity for Christians

Unfortunately, another deadly component has come on the scene with a vengeance. Not only is there a war against Israel and the Jewish people, but there is a war against God and Bible-believing Christians. And it grows more aggressive and dangerous by the day. Already, many of our brethren abroad are being murdered or driven out of home and country. These tragedies increase our obligation to make the truth known and prepare believers for what lies ahead. And FOI is well-equipped to do so.

The essentials of good and evil never change. Evil men are as capable of unspeakable atrocities as were Hitler and his henchmen. On the other hand, through self-sacrifice and compassion, godly people can do all that can be done to reach out to the persecuted and suffering. Our great advantage over the past is that we have the ability to reach people needing help. That is the challenge of the day; the possibilities and necessary assets have been provided by the hand of God.

We are more privileged than all who have gone before us, and we at The Friends of Israel are challenged and humbled by being placed at the center of what is unfolding on the stage of world history.

At this historic moment, the closing words of Dr. Buksbazen when he stepped down as general director are appropriate: “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto His name be glory. He who has been with us till now will surely be with us in the days to come and will guide the Society [The Friends of Israel] to do even greater things for His glory.”

Elwood McQuaid
is consulting editor
for The Friends of Israel.
Our mission at The Friends of Israel is focused. We are a world-wide Christian ministry communicating biblical truth about Israel and the Messiah, while fostering solidarity with the Jewish people. Here are some milestones:

- 1938—The Friends of Israel Refugee Relief Committee is founded in response to Hitler’s war on the Jews of Europe.
- 1942—Israel My Glory magazine is introduced as a 16-page, small-sized publication with a subscription rate of 50 cents per year. Its emphasis laid the foundation for its present status as a major Christian publication read by about half a million people.
- 1943—Victor Buksbazen becomes general secretary.
- 1944—Material aid for suffering Holocaust victims is accelerated. One thousand Jewish refugees, brought to Oswego, New York, by President Franklin Roosevelt, are met a day later by Victor and his wife, Lydia. Wrote Victor, “How ragged and dejected they were is hard to imagine. Immediately we went shopping in Oswego for shoes, underwear, and outer garments of all sizes and brought one taxiload after another carrying the most urgent items. . . . How grateful they were.”
- 1945—At war’s end, we become the first Jewish ministry to enter Warsaw, Poland, to aid Jewish survivors.
- 1946—Among the refugees aided and mentored by Dr. Buksbazen personally is a young survivor, Zvi Kalisher. In fact, Victor became so dear to him that Zvi named his firstborn son Victor. Today Zvi is known and loved by thousands as The Friends of Israel’s man in Jerusalem.
- 1947—Halina Ostik joins the mission at Dr. Buksbazen’s invitation. Victor knew her when she was a child in Poland. During World War II, she served as a lieutenant in the Polish Home Army and distinguished member of the resistance, rescuing Jewish people from the Nazis. Halina directed the establishment of our dynamic Polish ministry.
- 1948—FOI moves into Israel with material aid and assistance workers.
- 1958—Filming of Lydia Buksbazen’s bestselling book, They Looked for a City, begins.
- 1960—Extensive ministry to churches begins. FOI’s teaching ministry and its work providing materials on Israel, the Jewish people, anti-Semitism, and prophetic truth grow into an integral element of FOI’s outreach.
- 1970—The ministry headquarters moves from Philadelphia to Collingswood, New Jersey.
- 1973—Dr. Busksbazen retires, and Marvin Rosenthal becomes executive director.
- 1974—The organization’s name becomes The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc.
- 1984—The mission purchases 138 acres in Deptford, New Jersey, to develop as a permanent home.
- 1986—The Institute of Biblical Studies (later called the Institute of Jewish Studies) is launched. It has since evolved from a confined campus location to an international, online school providing education and training worldwide.
- 1989—Elwood McQuaid is appointed executive director.
- 1991—FOI radio broadcasts, hosted by Elwood, debut on six stations. They later are picked up by more than 500 outlets, as well as international satellite.
- 1994—A spacious medical facility is purchased for The Friends of Israel Medical Clinic in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Today our clinic provides top-notch, free care around the clock.
- 2001—William (Bill) Sutter is named executive director.
- 2004—Relations with Israeli and U.S. Jewish organizations are greatly enhanced.
- 2009, 2012—ORIGINS and Hesed, two volunteer ministries in Israel, are introduced.
- 2012—James (Jim) Showers is named executive director.
- 2013—A state-of-the-art website (www.foi.org), accompanied by ever-expanding technological advances to reach people all over the world, opens new vistas that could never have been envisioned by our founders and early leaders. Seventy-five fruitful years on the cutting edge of ministry assures that The Friends of Israel is keeping pace with the biblical and spiritual mandate to reach the world with the good news of the Messiah.
Israel: Thriving at 65

Progress in modern Israel. Left top, bottom: A solar-powered water-management computer controls irrigation and fertilization at a kibbutz in the desert (Nathan Benn/Ottochrome/Corbis); a field of colorful ranunculi flowers (Shai Ginott/Corbis). Middle top, bottom: A lab technician works on a computer (Douglas Kirkland/Corbis); dishes on a solar farm at a kibbutz in central Israel (Baz Ratner/Reuters/Corbis). Right: Israeli flags wave outside the Israeli stock exchange in Tel Aviv (Ariel Jerozolimski/Bloomberg via Getty Images).
Golda Meir, Israel’s fourth prime minister, once joked, “Let me tell you something that we Israelis have against Moses. He took us forty years through the desert in order to bring us to the one spot in the Middle East that has no oil!”

Golda had a clever way of using her sense of humor to expose a serious issue: How could this tiny country thrive without a stable export like oil?

So Israelis looked past the typical way of building wealth in the Middle East and invested their time, money, and energy in an uncommon venture: technology and innovation. As a result, Israel’s tech-savvy communities have become a resource to several Fortune 500 companies looking for the next big discovery.

Israeli ingenuity has made little Israel seem much bigger than it is. Many of today’s technological advancements in agriculture, computing, medicine, telecommunications, and military defense originated in the minds of Israelis.

**Agricultural Success**

Following the War of Independence and signing of the armistice in July 1949, Israel’s borders started to take shape. Yet a map from that period would reveal that more than 60 percent of Israel’s land was desert. This fact created a serious dilemma for the fledgling state because much of the arid region was unusable.

Most people would consider this predicament a major setback for the Israelis, who were eager to settle and work the country they had been fighting so desperately to defend. However, as commentator Dr. Tal Ben-Shahar in the documentary *Israel Inside* said, the situation provided an opportunity to turn “adversity into advantage.”

Simcha Blass, a Polish-born Jew who immigrated to Israel in the 1930s and headed Mekorot, Israel’s national water company, made a discovery that changed agriculture. Blass planned and managed the pipeline that pumped water from the Sea of Galilee to the Negev (the desert in southern Israel). One day he noticed a tree blooming in the desert. He discovered that an underground pipe with a slow leak was feeding the tree a manageable amount of water every day, keeping it healthy.

The knowledge inspired Blass to create Netafim, a company that produced the world’s first drip irrigation system, which consists of a series of plastic pipes with small holes that lie on the ground.

Blass’s drip irrigation system revolutionized the way Israelis managed the desert land, fulfilling the dream of Israel’s first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, to “make the desert bloom.” Netafim’s drip irrigation systems have been used for the past four decades, helping Israel become a leading supplier of fruits, vegetables, and flowers to the European market.

Today Netafim is the number one provider of drip irrigation systems in the world. This low-tech yet highly efficient company conducts business in 110 countries spanning five continents. Netafim’s irrigation techniques help produce 50 percent more crop yield while using 40 percent less water, which benefits countries like India, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

**Technological Innovation**

A little south of San Francisco, California, sits a region familiar to many as Silicon Valley. Known for high-tech innovations, the area is home to companies like Apple, Hewlett-Packard, Intel, and Google. One element these tech companies have in common is a desire to establish research and development (R&D) centers in Israel. In fact, like Silicon Valley, the coastal plain of Israel has been dubbed the Silicon Wadi.

Recently the UN’s International Telecommunication Union reported that, by the end of 2011, more than 6 billion cell phone subscriptions were activated. Today many of these handheld devices that connect family and friends have more technology powering them than all the computers used to send NASA’s Apollo 11 team to the moon.

Motorola, a pioneer in telecommunications, was one of the first corporations to invest in Israel. It opened an R&D center in 1964. This daring move proved to be extremely profitable for the famous telecom giant because much of the technology used in modern mobile communications was invented and implemented in Israel. In fact, several Israeli corporations have become vital to the economies of China, India, and Latin America because of Israel’s early push to make telecommunications a priority.

Fifteen years ago my father bought our first family computer. It was a large, expensive desktop with an enormous monitor that connected to the Internet through our home telephone line. Little did I know then the microprocessor powering our first family computer was designed and manufactured in Israel.

Intel manufactures microprocessors for computers used around the world. In 1974 the company established its first overseas R&D center in Israel. The relationship between Intel and Israel has grown since and proven to be a
valuable resource for both the multi-billion-dollar corporation and Israel.

For instance, Intel is the largest private-sector employer in Israel, with more than 8,000 employees, four design centers, and two manufacturing plants. The Israelis who manage the R&D centers are responsible for much of the microprocessor innovation over the past 20 years, developing chips for large desktop computers, laptops, tablets, and smartphones.

Most of these common household devices and the networks they connect to would not be possible had it not been for the research and development that originated in Israel.

How will God bless the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen.12:2; 17:21; 28:13–14). Not only is God faithful to protect Israel from the myriad of enemies that surround it, but He also has brought sustainable economic development within its borders, enabling this small country to thrive well past the age of 65.

The Secret of Success

How does Israel do it? What is the secret to Israel’s success? Two elements within Israeli culture explain this phenomenon:

First, Israelis have a high view of education. Its importance is embedded in Jewish culture and can be traced back millennia, even to the origins of the synagogue. In fact, before Israel was an official state, Jewish people living in British Palestine established prominent universities, such as the Technion in Haifa, the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Graduates of these schools have become innovators in Israel’s tech industry.

Second, Israel has mandatory military service. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) offers young adults a perfect combination of education and experience. For instance, a few months ago I visited an IDF training base and met a 19-year-old girl preparing to become a nuclear ballistics engineer.

Soon after finishing their service, many young veterans apply what they’ve learned and practiced in the IDF to their university education.

Israel’s unwavering commitment to education and experience, coupled with its investment in technology and innovation, will continue to reward the Israelis long after the last drop of oil is pumped from the Middle East.

Economic Stability

Since 2008 the global economic system has been on a fiscal rollercoaster. First the United States suffered a devastating economic recession from which it is still trying to recover. Then the European Union’s economy plummeted, creating even more economic uncertainty for both the United States and Europe.

Israel felt the pinch of the worldwide recession; yet, according to U.S. government sources, its economy “has recovered better than most advanced, comparably sized economies.”

Israel has merely 8 million citizens and is equal in size to the state of New Jersey. However, it manages the most unique and diverse economic system. After the United States, this small country has the most publicly traded companies on the NASDAQ Stock Market. That means Israel has more publicly traded companies than the entire European continent, Korea, India, and Singapore.

Savvy investors want a piece of what Israel has to offer. In 2008, $2 billion in venture capital streamed into Israel’s economy. That’s more venture capital than was invested in the United Kingdom, Germany, and France combined.

While no economic system is perfect—and Israel has certainly felt the effects of the worldwide recession—it has made the most of its resources through hard work, innovation, and creativity.

E N D N O T E S

1 Israel Insider: How a Small Nation Makes a Big Difference, directed by Wayne Kopping (2011 JerusalemOnlineU.com Productions), DVD.
4 “UN says world has 6 billion cell phone subscribers, 2.3 billion Internet users,” FoxNews, October 11, 2012 <tinyurl.com/FoxNews6billion>.
7 Senor and Singer, 13.

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A Look at the Persecution of Christians Around the World

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

A n angry mob of Muslims burned down almost 200 Christian homes in Pakistan in March, leaving nearly 400 Christian families homeless. International Christian Concern (ICC) reported that most of the families now live in tents and “have nothing more than the clothes on their backs as all their belongings were destroyed or looted.”

The trouble began when Muslims became enraged over a report that a Christian man had blasphemed Islam, supposedly making derogatory remarks about the prophet Muhammad. A mob of about 3,000 Muslims torched the homes and two churches, ICC said, and the Christians are terrified of returning to the area.

Pakistan is a Muslim-majority nation where Christians are often accused of blasphemy. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, composed of 56 Muslim nations, is pushing hard for universal blasphemy laws that would apply even in the United States. Its goal is to make it a global crime to speak ill of Islam or the prophet Muhammad. “In practice,” wrote ICC, “blasphemy laws provide cover for personal vendettas against religious minorities.” The penalty can be life in prison or death.

Raymond Ibrahim—an expert on Islam, the Middle East, and Christian persecution—has deplored the egregious use of such laws to persecute non-Muslims. Furthermore, he said, Muslims receive a free pass no matter what they do. In an article titled “Why Christian Persecution Is Islam’s Achilles’ Heel” on his website, raymondibrahim.com, he explained why rationalizing Muslim violence does not work and also why Muslims hate Israel:

They may be screaming and rioting, firing rockets and destroying property—all the while calling for the death and destruction of the “infidel” West and/or Israel to cries of “Allahu Akbar!” Still, no problem. According to . . . pundits, apologists, academics, and politicians, such bloodlust is a natural byproduct of the frustration Muslims feel as an oppressed minority, “rightfully” angry with the “colonial” West and its Israeli proxy. . . . But if Muslims get a free pass when their violence is directed against those currently stronger than them, how does one rationalize away their violence when it is directed against those weaker than them, those who have no political influence whatsoever? Consider the most obvious of these scenarios, the growing epidemic of Muslim persecution of Christians. From one end of the Islamic world to the other . . . wherever Muslims are a majority . . . Christians suffer untold atrocities.

The rationalizations used to minimize Muslim violence against the West and Israel simply cannot work here—for now Muslims are the majority, and they are the ones violent and oppressive to their minorities, often in ways that would make the worst Israeli treatment of Muslims look kind and benevolent.

In short, Christian persecution is one of, if not the clearest reflections of Islamic supremacism. Vastly outnumbered and politically marginalized Christians simply wish to worship in peace, and yet still are they hounded and attacked, their churches burned and destroyed, their women and children enslaved and raped (see monthly “Muslim Persecution of Christians” reports for an example). . . . Such is the true nature of Muslim rage throughout the world: it is a byproduct of doctrinal intolerance if not downright hatred. . . . Accordingly, while Christian persecution is the clearest example of this hate, it also explains why others are so despised, for example, Israel.

Consider: Christians and Jews are both constantly castigated in the Quran: Muslims are admonished not to befriend either of them (5:51) and to fight and subjugate them. . . . Christians under Islam are suffering accordingly—as despised dhimmis, abused and “brought low,” routinely plundered of their lives, dignity, and possessions.

On the other hand, Israel—the dhimmi that got away—actually has authority and power over Muslims. Now, if dhimmis are supposed to be kept in total submission to Muslims, how then when one of them actually lords over Muslims?

Hence Islam’s immense and existential rage against the Jewish state.
You will never understand the faithfulness of God by taking the short view.”
—Paul S. Rees

A
fter the destruction of the second Jewish Temple in A.D. 70, a group of rabbis accompanied Rabbi Akiva up to Jerusalem. When they reached Mount Scopus and the site of the Temple came into view, they tore their garments. When they reached the Temple Mount, they saw a fox dart out from the spot where the Holy of Holies had stood in the Holy Temple. The other rabbis began to weep, but Rabbi Akiva laughed.

“Akiva,” they said to him, “you never cease to amaze us. We are crying, and you laugh!”

But Rabbi Akiva asked, “And you, why are you crying?”

The rabbis responded, “What? Shall we not weep? The place about which Scripture states, ‘and the stranger who draws close shall die,’ has become a den of foxes. Indeed, this is a fulfillment of the verse, ‘For Mt. Zion which lies desolate, foxes prowl over it.’”

“This is exactly why I laugh,” Akiva replied. “For just as we have seen the prophecies of Jerusalem’s destruction come to pass, so, too, know that the prophecies of her future consolation shall also be fulfilled. I laughed because I remembered the verses, ‘Old men and old women will once again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with his staff in his hand because of advanced age; ...
and the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.'

The Holy One, blessed be He, has declared that, just as the first prophecies have been fulfilled, so shall the latter. I am joyous that the first have already come to pass, for the latter shall be fulfilled in the future.

Rabbi Akiva was absolutely right. God is faithful. He is faithful to His promises and to His people. Yet we must remember, as did Rabbi Akiva, that God’s faithfulness cuts both ways. We often think of it only in terms of reassurances and blessings. But He also is faithful to carry out His threats and curses. Israel has been the recipient of God’s faithfulness in both areas.

Because people throughout history have witnessed the Jewish people’s distress, deportation, and even near-destruction, they are tempted to say God has forgotten His ancient people and cast them aside. But nothing could be more misguided.

God has been unswervingly faithful to His covenant. Through Moses, God told the Israelites what would happen if they obeyed Him and what would happen if they disobeyed. Deuteronomy 28 clearly explains the covenant blessings and curses. The fact that God is faithful in following through with His curses actually proves He will be equally as faithful in bringing forth His blessings.

Just as the curses were literal, the blessings are literal. Israel’s scattering was literal, and so is Israel’s regathering.

In the darkest book of the Bible—Lamentations—the city of Jerusalem and the Solomonic Temple lie in ruins. In the midst of the devastation, the prophet Jeremiah, like Rabbi Akiva, saw a ray of hope: “Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies” (3:32).

Even in times of stern discipline, God has faithfully preserved His people. Have you noticed that every time someone has tried to wipe out the Jewish people, they have ended up with a holiday? Pharaoh tried, and they received Passover. Haman’s attempt backfired, and they got Purim. The anger of Antiochus IV in the Intertestamental Period resulted in the Feast of Lights, usually called Hanukkah. And Hitler’s hatred led to the May 14, 1948, founding of the modern State of Israel.

At every twist and turn, God has been faithful to Israel. Despite numerous deportations, with the final one lasting for 1,900 years to 70 nations, the Jewish people remained distinct. In the late 19th century, even the Hebrew language was revived and restored. The formation of modern Israel against all odds—often called the “Miracle on the Mediterranean”—may be the greatest miracle of the 20th century. Wrote Randall Price, an archaeologist and president of World of the Bible Ministries,

*The fact of the Jewish people’s continuity is even more remarkable in light of the testimony of history to exile and return. In all of human history there have been less than ten deportations of a people group from their native land. These people groups disappeared in history because they assimilated into the nations to which they were exiled. However, the Jewish people did not simply experience a single exile, but multiple exiles. . . . The contrast here with other historical exiles should not be overlooked. While other people groups were exiled to one country, the Jews were dispersed to many different countries, and in fact were scattered to every part of the earth. . . .*

Moreover, the Jewish people are the only people to have returned en masse to their ancient homeland and to have restored their national independence by re-establishing their former state. . . . Any one of these facts of Israel’s survival would be remarkable, but taken together they are miraculous.1

The establishing of modern Israel is astounding in itself, but the fact that the country is surviving and thriving for 65 years in the middle of a sea of enemies is further testimony to God’s faithfulness to His promise, “He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Ps. 121:4). In these events, God is setting the stage for the events of the end-times and His people’s final restoration to the Promised Land.
Whether or not newly arrived Jewish immigrants can yet read the words, the lesson is understood; for they who are coming home are part of God’s present purpose in regathering His people in faithfulness to the fulfillment of His ancient promise.

Someone might ask why it is so significant to Christian believers today that God is faithful to Israel. The reason is simple and sublime. If God was and is faithful to Israel, then we can have firm confidence He will be faithful to all who trust in His Son. The same God who made His promises to Israel and faithfully fulfilled them will keep His Word to all of us who trust in Him to save us and see us through to the end (Phil. 1:6).

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it (1 Th. 5:23–24).

ENDNOTES


2 Dr. Randall Price, Jerusalem in Prophecy: God’s Final Stage for the Final Drama (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1998), 220.

Mark Hitchcock is a leading Bible prophecy expert, prolific author, and senior pastor of Faith Bible Church in Edmond, Oklahoma.
Providing for the Common Defense

If you’re an American, you probably recognize the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution.

We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

To provide for the common defense is an artful, 18th-century phrase that some have tried to modernize to mean to “defend our country from other countries.” Yet national defense can also involve nonstate entities. In the 1980s America declared a near state of war against Manuel Noriega, whose titular leadership of an international drug cartel had infested the government of Panama and whose murderous activities directly affected U.S. interests. The U.S. military invaded Panama and captured Noriega in December 1989.

Another example is America’s war on terrorism. Prior to 9/11, terrorist cells enjoyed the full license to train for and prepare attacks against the United States in places like Afghanistan and Libya. Today providing for the common defense must include military actions against hybrid entities like these.

When the movie Argo won Best Picture at the Academy Awards in February, it was heralded as a film that extolled the bravery and skill of American CIA operatives in rescuing a handful of U.S. Embassy personnel in Tehran, Iran, after the fall of the shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Though the shah served American interests, he was a brutal dictator.

He was replaced by the even more brutal and decidedly anti-American Ayatollah Khomeini, who ushered in a radical Islamic government. The shah had run a secular government. According to a February 24, 2013, article in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, 1,500 Israelis and many Americans lived in Iran under the shah in relative tranquility. Not so after Khomeini and his thugs moved into power.

Argo dramatically portrays the Islamic radicals storming the American embassy in Tehran when Jimmy Carter was president. It then focuses on the six embassy staffers who had made their way to the Canadian embassy where they were temporarily, but heroically, protected until their rescue. However, 52 other American diplomatic employees remained in the harsh custody of Islamic extremists for 444 days from November 1979 until January 1981. They were finally released minutes after Ronald Reagan became president.

Jimmy Carter collaborated on Argo and actively promoted it. But the facts show a different angle on the Iranian crisis than does the film.

It is an undisputed tenet of international law that foreign embassies are considered the territory of that nation. The assault on the American Embassy in Tehran was an attack on the United States. Haaretz reported that, at the demise of the shah’s regime, a group of Iranian generals “were begging Washington, heretofore their patron, for logistical assistance in staging a coup.” That could well have bought enough time to secure the American Embassy or to remove American personnel.

However, that help did not come from the Carter administration. Instead, as Haaretz documented, “a feckless response from Jimmy Carter’s White House proved that [the opposition forces against Khomeini] had reached the endgame: The road was paved for an Islamic takeover and, by implication, for summary execution of hundreds of government and military officials,” and, of course, the lengthy hostage crisis. Today a nuclear Iran casts its shadow over the world—a result of the Islamic takeover due, in part, to the failure of American foreign policy on matters of “common defense.”

Unfortunately, history tragically repeats itself. Some of our leaders do not fully understand, or fail to believe, the values set forth in the Preamble to our Constitution. On September 11, 2012, the American consulate in Benghazi, Libya, was attacked by Islamic radicals. U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens had begged the State Department for increased security, but his pleas were ignored. Eventually, he and three other Americans were murdered and 10 others injured.

These instances are not merely matters of constitutional neglect. They reflect how political correctness, timidity, and other similar failures of political will can tragically contradict God’s plan for government.

Government is sent by God “for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good” (1 Pet. 2:14). The apostle Paul gave us similar instruction that government does not wield the sword in vain (Rom. 13:3–4).

These are the principles that informed our founders’ worldview when they drafted the Preamble. The further we move away from these biblical roots, the more certain we are to set our ship of state adrift on deadly seas without the hope of rescue.

Craig L. Parshall is senior vice president and general counsel for the National Religious Broadcasters.
Some of Israel’s best and brightest high school graduates are delaying military service for a year of character-building in pre-army academies.

It’s still dark in Upper Nazareth as Nadav Cohen, 19, delivers a pithy, inspirational talk to his comrades—choosing Bob Dylan’s *The Times They Are A-Changin’* for his theme. On a previous morning, another student talked about the journey to Ithaca in Homer’s *The Odyssey*. That poem begins, “When you set out on your journey to Ithaca, pray that the road is long, full of adventure, full of knowledge.”

Approximately 35 students, young men and women in workout clothes, have packed into a room overlooking the lower Galilee. All are recent high school graduates who have postponed their compulsory military service (two years for women, three years for men) in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to take Mechina Academies: Israel’s Gap-Year Phenomenon
part in this mechina. It is one of a score of preilitary academies offering one-year programs that are becoming increasingly popular among Israel’s most committed, idealistic, and gifted youth.

The mechina (“preparatory”) phenomenon began in 1988 in Eli, a Jewish settlement in Samaria near Shiloh, to prepare (not merely physically) Orthodox, religious young men for the rigors of army life.

Socially, Israel’s army is like a great melting pot where young people from across the country’s astoundingly diverse society rub shoulders in basic training. That is why the Orthodox young men at the Bnei David-Eli, The Military Yeshiva Academy of Israel, need to be fortified for the culture shock of secular society where they’ll encounter comrades with little knowledge of, or commitment to, the religious values they uphold.

For religious reasons, most Orthodox high schools are all male. Yet in the army, strict separation of the sexes is difficult to uphold. Your instructor for the state-of-the-art Tavor rifle could well be a pretty 19-year-old girl from Ramat Aviv, an upscale north Tel Aviv neighborhood.

Indeed, Israel’s small Messianic Jewish community faces a similar challenge in upholding religious and social values. The Jerusalem Post recently reported that the Messianic community has run a short, preparatory summer program known as the Nestor mechina to ease the transition into army life for its young people.

By 1997, the Eli mechina had been joined by other preilitary academies. Today academies cater to the secular; to young Orthodox women; and to those who want a combined, coed, secular-religious environment.

**Rigors of Mechina Life**

The Midreshet Lindenbaum on the southern outskirts of Jerusalem offers no fewer than five separate tracks for Orthodox women who want to engage in advanced religious studies (Bible, Talmud, philosophy) before, during, or after their military service. Noa Binnes wants to go into IDF intelligence and opted to study at Lindenbaum “because I think it will help me come to the army a more mature person.”

Today, with hundreds of former students, Ein Prat, The Academy for Leadership, located in the Judean desert east of Jerusalem, is arguably the most prestigious of the pre-army academies. Its ethos calls for bridging the gap between Orthodox, theologically progressive, and altogether nonobservant Israelis, says Noam Arbel, an Ein Prat graduate now responsible for alumni affairs.

This year’s students, for example, are one-third Orthodox; one-third secular; and one-third traditionally observant, Conservative, or Reform. Arbel explains that the program combines community service with advanced Zionist and religious studies and, naturally, physical fitness.

All of Israel’s pre-army academies tend to have rigorous admissions policies and generally require parents to pay tuition, which means most of their students come from middle-class homes.

None are primarily government funded, relying instead on philanthropic support. The AVI CHAI Foundation, in the vanguard of the mechina movement,
supports 19 mechina academies, including Ein Prat, which also enjoys the backing of the Tikvah Fund.

The various mechina programs are well regarded by the army, which sees them as a means of delivering more motivated, more mature, and better prepared recruits. There is, of course, one unavoidable side effect: By the time these young people finish all their military service and start university, they’re 24 or so—about the age their American counterparts are receiving advanced degrees.

Devotion to Community Service

Nadav Cohen’s academy, Tavor Mechina, now in its third year, is of the secular variety, emphasizing physical fitness, personal development, self-discipline, social commitment, and leadership skills—all combined with plenty of community service.

Some students, working in teams, mentor Upper Nazareth elementary school or high school students—Jews and Arabs—from less privileged homes or with learning disabilities. They take the children on wilderness hikes or play sports and games with them to instill in them an esprit de corps. Other students work with after-school youth groups for children with special needs.

On other days, Tavor focuses more on learning. Students learn Western philosophy, covering such thinkers as Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato, with emphasis on the values of fidelity to principles and commitment to the law. Other lessons focus on military leadership, where students study such Zionist legends as Joseph Trumpeldor (1880–1920).

Afternoons might find the students in makeshift classrooms learning about national security. Evenings are taken up with less formal lessons. Recently a shepherd-philosopher engaged the students in a discussion about spirituality, identity, relationships, and trust—geared to building group dynamics.

The days at Tabor are typically long and grueling, not ending until the exhausted students fall into bed late at night.

In contrast to Nadav Cohen’s regimented mechina, Yoni Jenson’s academy seems more like a laid-back, urban kibbutz where the 52 students are empowered to make most decisions.

Jenson, 19, put off his army service to enter the mechina in Jaffa, loosely affiliated with Israel’s Reform branch of Judaism, where the mission is to train students for leadership. He plays down the leadership part. “I think of it more as an academy that will prepare me for life, enlighten me, and bolster my self-discipline,” Jenson says.

It was the students’ choice, for instance, to keep a kosher communal kitchen in deference to the needs of only three students who adhere to traditional Jewish dietary regulations that forbid the mixing of meat and dairy. In making their decision, the students studied the basics of what keeping kosher entails while learning a lesson in tolerance: how a majority can uphold its values and respect the needs of a minority.

On a typical day, Jenson might attend an interdisciplinary course about Israeli society that doesn’t sugarcoat the country’s failings. Or he may go to a lecture on the politics of the media. Two periods a week are carved out for meditation and nonconformist prayer. Some of the students organize an optional Hebrew Bible study after hours in their rooms. On alternate weekends the group remains at the mechina for a traditional Friday night Sabbath meal.

There’s a once-a-week workout session under the tutelage of a physical instructor from the army. Jenson, who aims to get into the IDF National Search and Rescue Unit, enjoys regular runs along the Mediterranean coast.

The biggest emphasis at the Jaffa academy, however, is community service. Jenson spends three weekday mornings at a daycare center for disadvantaged children who range in age from three to six. A fourth day is spent at a senior citizen center helping to run its glee club. Other students are assigned to a local scout troop to help with daily activities. This combination of learning and volunteer work is intended to help students formulate their Jewish-Israeli identity in harmony with a modern lifestyle.

Orit Gold, 20, didn’t “do mechina” but chose another form of one-year service before her call-up. Now serving in the IDF Intelligence Corps, Gold (not her real name) put off her army service to spend a year working as a Jewish Agency Shin-Shin—a yearlong volunteer emissary in the United States. It was a broadening experience that exposed Gold, who comes from a secular household in Netanya, to a welcoming, multifaceted Jewish community in the Midwest. Paradoxically, she returned to Israel with an enhanced appreciation of her Jewish identity.

On the down side, Gold’s transition to army life was hardly seamless. In America she was essentially her own boss, running youth programs, addressing local schools and churches about Israel, and managing her own busy schedule. In the IDF, Gold abruptly found herself in basic training with younger girls and under the thumb of a drill instructor her own age. Fortunately, the maturity she honed while abroad helped her deal with whatever the army has thrown at her.

“I learned that you need to take things in stride. The army is a rite of passage for all Israelis, so why not make the most of it, have fun, and learn from the challenges placed before us,” says Gold.

No matter which road they take on their journey to the army, mechina academy alumni arrive better prepared and a little wiser. Nadav Cohen concurs. “The mechina experience takes you off the treadmill of life and puts you on ‘pause’ so that you can purposefully think about your direction.”

Elliot Jager is a writer and lecturer living in Jerusalem. He may be contacted at elliot_jager@yahoo.com.
His dark eyes brimmed with sincerity and love for his people. Having grown up in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, the man who sat across from me in the coffee shop once attended Akiba Hebrew Academy in Lower Merion Township. I listened intently as Benjamin Goldstein began describing his effort to help the Israeli economy.

Ben is the founder and president of TranscriptSure Legal Services Inc., described as an innovative and unique solution of off-shoring legal work to Americans living in Israel.

“One of the biggest challenges facing the Israeli economy today,” Ben said, “is that 20 percent of the population in Israel is ultra-Orthodox. These people find it difficult to integrate into the workforce because of language and cultural barriers, flexibility issues, and issues of modesty.

So Ben came up with a way to help Americans who live in Israel and are often ultra-Orthodox and much more traditional for family and religious reasons.

TranscriptSure Legal Services, with an office in Moorestown, New Jersey, offers legal services to people outside Israel using religious, American Jews living in Israel. Ben runs the firm from America and employs six workers in Israel.

He began his company in 2008 toward the beginning of the economic slow-down. It was then he recognized he could offer legal assistance at substantial cost savings and still provide high quality service. Ben said the firm attracts top American graduates from such universities as Harvard, Yale, University of Pennsylvania, and New York University.

“People don’t realize the workforce in Israel is very talented and qualified,” Ben said, “and they treat Israel as a charity case and not as an economic business partner. Israel has now reached a point where it has developed tremendous innovation and talent, ready to become an active player in the business world.”

Israel also struggles because it has few natural resources. Yet it produces products through sheer innovation and talent. Unfortunately, many countries have a negative perception of Israel because they erroneously see Israel as an oppressor of the Palestinians. So they boycott Israeli-made products, hurting the tiny Jewish state.

TranscriptSure, which can be found on the Web at www.transcriptsure.com, provides quality assistance to the legal community, insurance companies, and other agencies nationwide, specializing in various medical, paralegal, and back-office functions commonly performed throughout the litigation process. Its services include, but are not limited to, medical record review and summary, medical and legal research, online investigative research, deposition transcript summary, and general litigation support.

Connecting Ben to American firms is the best way to aid TranscriptSure and help support this small Israeli business. Ben added, “Israel can flourish again in the business sense, and we have the great privilege of being a part of that.”
Israel is a thoroughly modern country with major cities, modern highways, and mass transit. But have the picturesque sites and ancient customs from the Bible vanished amid all the urban sprawl? Thankfully, the answer is no. While some views and vistas have disappeared, many remain. And those visiting Israel today actually have opportunities to connect with their biblical roots in ways that weren’t possible a few decades ago.

I’ve watched Israel develop and change over the 30 years I’ve been traveling there, and in some places progress has resulted in the loss of those “Kodak moments” that helped illustrate the Bible. I still sigh as I drive past a modern town that now covers the hillside where a natural cave served as a sheepfold that helped bring John 10 to life. Yet for every spot that has disappeared, new sites have been uncovered.

In fact, now is the best time for those searching out their biblical roots
to travel to Israel. And I say that for three practical reasons.

(1) Increased Availability of Sites

My first trips to Israel were with student groups. We visited sites not accessible to most tourists. In those days visiting Mount Arbel meant driving along an unpaved road through a Jewish farming community and then hiking nearly a mile up a dirt path. Today the site is a national park. The road is paved, and the walk is less than a quarter mile. As a result, more people can now enjoy that unforgettable overlook of the Sea of Galilee.

A few decades ago, visiting Beth-Shean meant driving to the ruins of the Roman theatre and staring out over a grassy field to the hill where the Old Testament city once sat. Today tourists walk from the theatre toward the hill on an ancient Roman street, visit the bath complex, and stand beside columns toppled in a massive earthquake that destroyed this once-great city. Beth-Shean is Israel’s Pompeii, and the ruins (still being uncovered) are fascinating.

Visitors to the Golan Heights today can drive up into Mount Bental, an extinct volcanic crater that houses a deactivated Israeli army base. The site, opened to the public only a few years ago, provides an unparalleled view of Mount Hermon and Syria—and helps visitors truly understand the geographical significance of the Golan Heights.

Even Jerusalem has more available sites. After Israel reunified the city in 1967, archaeologists finally had an opportunity to do widespread excavations there. What they have uncovered is simply astounding. Now you can visit the Southern Steps that once led up to the Temple Mount, walk on the street that extended from the Temple to the Pool of Siloam, or snake your way through a Canaanite tunnel that diverted water from the Gihon Spring into the Kidron Valley—quite possibly the “water shaft” Joab traversed to capture the city for David (2 Sam. 5:8).

The list of new sites throughout Israel is impressive, and it continues to grow. The water tunnel at Beersheba. The gate complex and high place at Tel Dan. The first-century Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem. These are all relatively recent additions to the growing list of places open to tourists. And all are worth seeing!

(2) Increased Accessibility of Sites

Biblical sites are not only more numerous, they’re also more accessible. My first visit to the Bell Caves at Beit Guvrin was a bus ride up a dusty road, followed by a strenuous climb over a high embankment. And as for rest-rooms? “Men to the right and women to the left.” Today the site is a national park, and a paved road leads to well-marked paths and modern restrooms.

As a result, more people can now enjoy that unforgettable overlook of the Sea of Galilee.

The Tel Dan Nature Preserve is an amazing slice of Israel that surprises most visitors with its rushing water and thick vegetation. A visit in the past required the nimbleness of a mountain goat, but today a wooden walkway with handrails makes at least part of the site accessible for the less mobile.

The land of Israel is hilly and rocky, and many sites still pose challenges. But Israel is doing much to make those sites more user-friendly. Places like Masada are becoming more wheelchair accessible, and even the Garden Tomb now boasts wheelchair ramps. Mobility-impaired visitors now have greater access to sites than at any time in the past.

(3) Increased Visualization

Availability and accessibility are important. But being able to reach a site doesn’t necessarily mean visitors will understand its biblical significance. I remember countless times when people would bring me their pictures from Israel and ask, “Now, what am I looking at here?”
For decades the best tool for understanding Jerusalem at the time of Jesus was the Model of Jerusalem at the Holy Land Hotel. The model has now been moved to the Israel Museum. And the best news is that it’s being joined by a host of other efforts to visualize sites and discoveries throughout the land. In fact, one of the greatest changes in Israel over the past few years has been the addition of signage, models, movies, and other immersive experiences to help visitors visualize the sites and grasp their biblical and historical significance.

These new signs and models are helping to bring many sites to life. At some sites, like Megiddo, the improvement is as simple as a sculpture of a horse next to a stone manger. At other sites it might be the addition of a Bible verse, like the one at the high place at Tel Dan recounting Jeroboam’s construction of a temple there.

More high-tech changes appeal to a younger generation. The short film near the entrance to the Southern Steps in Jerusalem helps visualize the grandeur of Herod’s Temple. The 3-D movie at the City of David tells the story of Jerusalem in a biblically accurate and visually compelling manner. And the new film at Caesarea enables visitors to trace the history of the site from Herod the Great until today.

Perhaps the greatest impact on visitors today is taking place in the immersive experiences now part of so many trips to Israel. The old boat ride across the Sea of Galilee in white tour boats has been replaced with outsized replicas of boats from the time of Jesus—complete with demonstrations of casting a fishing net into the water.

Spending a few hours at Nazareth Village is a journey back to Christ’s day. You can watch a farmer plow, plant, and harvest; see a shepherd watching over his flock; visit a first-century carpenter’s shop; look into a cistern; or gaze at the feeble light given off by a first-century oil lamp.

These are visceral experiences that make the images and illustrations of the Bible come alive. In the same way, Old Testament agricultural imagery takes on new meaning after walking through the Biblical Landscape Reserve at Neot Kedumim. Then you understand what the Bible means when it says wise king Solomon “spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall” (1 Ki. 4:33).

Can visitors to Israel today still uncover their biblical roots? The answer is a resounding yes. Today more than ever, the storied locations of the Bible await your arrival. But make sure you prepare yourself before you go. Read up on the sites you will visit. Take along a good digital camera and additional memory cards. And be prepared to have your knowledge of the Bible increase exponentially as you encounter the land where it all took place.

Charles Dyer is professor-at-large of Bible at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois, and host of “The Land and the Book” radio program.
With 10 suitcases and three small daughters in tow, Robby and Tzippi Lasman began their journey from Israel to the United States in hopes of finding a niche for Israeli products in the American market.

They sold everything they had in Israel, quit their jobs, and lived for a while with a distant relative in Teaneck, New Jersey, until they could get on their feet. But if you were to ask them about their decision, they would tell you it was all worth it to begin G.I.T. USA Inc., an extension of Galilee International Trade Company, a distributor and seller of food products in the United States for small businesses in Israel.

Based in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Robby and Tzippi Lasman sell quality Israeli-made products to stores and consumers in Florida, the Northeast, Chicago, and Boston.

The anti-Israel political climate makes it especially difficult for small, start-up businesses in the Jewish state to function in today’s economy. It is particularly challenging for them to compete against large, well-established companies and conglomerates. G.I.T. USA provides an export market where these small companies have an opportunity to grow.

If you have attended a Friends of Israel prophecy conference in Winona Lake, Indiana, or Lancaster, Pennsylvania, you probably have seen Rob and Tzippi there, manning a booth filled with wonderful delicacies from Israel. They sell everything from gift baskets to juice to olive oil to hummus.

G.I.T. USA’s website, giffood.com, tells how the Lasmans made the leap of faith to establish the company in America in 2003:

“Our story is a true story of entrepreneurship; after losing my job in Israel as a marketing consultant because of the deteriorating economy in Israel, I started to sell health and natural foods to stores in Israel. Soon after starting selling, some Israeli manufacturers that I worked with received invitations to participate in fairs in the US to help the Israeli economy. They offered to me the option to go and represent them in those fairs.

“After a few visits to the US, I decided to relocate to the US with my wife and our 3 lovely daughters so that we can sell the products we had directly to the retailers. We had a small budget when we started and no support or financial backing from any entity. It was me and my wife Tzippi who did all the hard work of introducing new products into the very competitive US food markets.

“Today they have connections with the biggest retailer for kosher products in the United States: ShopRite. Their Israeli-made candies, honey, jams, Bible breads, olive oils, and other unique items can now be purchased there, as well as at Wegmans, Whole Foods Markets, Zabar’s, and Foodtown. They also market through Web businesses, gift basket companies, and regional distributors.

“Though the movement to isolate Israel and boycott Israeli products grows stronger around the world, we can help Robby, Tzippi, and the struggling small businesses in Israel they represent. Here are some suggestions:

○ Order their products online at www.giffood.com or by phone.
○ Invite them to an event or fair in your area.
○ Sell their products on consignment.
○ Use their products for fundraisers.
○ Connect them with businesses in your area that could carry their products.
○ Purchase their products from local merchants and tell the store manager how much you like the products.

by Bonnie Pearson
Thank you so much for organizing this sales event,” a grateful Israeli vendor told Paula. “You helped me pay my rent this month.”

Paula Joffe, a member of the Jewish Federation of Southern New Jersey and the National Council of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), just smiled. She was thrilled to be able to help.

Born and raised in New York City, Paula developed a strong love for Israel through her work as the chairman of the Philanthropic Leadership Council for Philadelphia and executive director of the America-Israel Chamber of Commerce for the Central Atlantic region.

She is keenly aware that one of the factors affecting Israel today is the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, a worldwide campaign organized for the sole purpose of undermining the Jewish state’s economy. Some college cafeterias have gone so far as to boycott hummus because it is made in Israel.

To help Israeli businesses, Paula began her own business—encouraged largely by readers of Israel My Glory.

It all began several years ago when Bill Sutter, then executive director of The Friends of Israel, asked Paula to speak at a pastors’ conference to explain how people can support Israel. Bill also wrote a companion article for Israel My Glory.

Paula was overwhelmed with letters and e-mails from people saying how much they love Israel. The experience so deeply influenced her that she decided to start a business that would deal directly with Israeli companies.

Through various twists and turns, she was eventually introduced to Israeli jewelry designers interested in marketing their beautiful, handcrafted jewelry in the United States.

Today Paula handpicks items from Israeli designers and sells them on her website, FromIsraelToYou.com. She also markets the jewelry at conventions, trade shows, Friends of Israel events, and numerous other venues. Paula fondly recalls arriving at a Friends of Israel prophecy conference more than an hour early to find a line of people waiting to make purchases.

She uses 12 vendors from Israel. One of her vendors from Galilee not only makes

From Israel to You

FOI’s Bill Sutter speaking at an FOI prophecy conference in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where Israeli products are sold (Walter E. Homan/FOI Image Archive).
fashion and Judaica pieces, but also religious jewelry. Some of the crosses, for example, are crafted from Roman glass dating back to the time of Christ.

Paula had some suggestions for others who, like her, want to help stimulate the Israeli economy. She recommended seeking out Israeli products at local stores, asking a store manager what Israeli products the store carries, requesting specific items, and choosing Israeli-made products over those from other countries. She said there are even many clothing items made in Israel.

Buying Israeli products directly impacts the lives of those who live there. “Give your dollar some meaning,” she said. “Give your money a voice!”

by Bonnie Pearson

Paula Joffe

Quoteworthy

“I don’t understand politics. I only know that when I see the United Nations becoming a spectacular forum of anti-Semitism today, it’s rather disgusting. Who are these nations that have dared to judge Israel? The great democracy of Uganda under Idi Amin? The great democracy of Libya under Qaddafi? Iran under Khomeini? It’s a farce. . . . It’s a cynical experiment in history, and history will never forgive it.”

—Elie Wiesel, 1982

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attitudes about preaching. In light of what the Bible is (inspired by God, 2 Tim. 3:16) and what it does (thoroughly equips, v. 17), the apostle Paul’s last charge to his beloved protégé Timothy was, “Preach the word!” (4:2).

This powerful passage has implications for all of God’s people. Since God wants every believer to listen regularly to the public teaching of Scripture, what can we do to regain the respect and joy that listening to biblical preaching deserves?

**Listen in Awe of God**

Paul could not have given Timothy more serious or emphatic instruction: 

*I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at*
His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching (vv. 1–2).

The term for “charge” was an emphatic form of “warn” and a solemn word from the courtroom. A preacher answers to the Judge of the universe, and the listener should realize it is God Himself speaking through a human being.

Paul praised the Thessalonians’ response to preaching: “When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1 Th. 2:13).

When your pastor opens the Bible, picture him with his shoes respectfully removed, standing in the throne room of almighty God. Heaven awaits your respectful attention and worship.

Listen in Awe of God’s Word

Awe of God Himself produces awe of His Word. The phrase preach the word employs the verb “to proclaim as a herald.” The herald’s job was to announce the message loudly and clearly. He came from the king’s court; and listeners were held accountable to the king, not to the messenger.

When people object to the Bible, their real problem is with God Himself. If someone comes to me to argue against biblical truth, I simply encourage him to take it up with the Lord, the author of the Book.

Instructions to the preacher also have implications for the listeners. The fact that Pastor Timothy was told, “Be ready in season and out of season” implies God orchestrates the timing of particular sermons. Our sovereign God has a reason for your hearing a particular message at a particular time.

Since Timothy was instructed, “Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching,” listeners should ask God to use His Word to correct errors in their lives, rebuke them when they are wrong, and also to encourage them.

The term exhort indicates coming alongside to help with whatever is needed—encouragement, comfort, counsel, admonition, etc. God can supernaturally use His Word to provide each of these things to multiple individuals through the same sermon. The Holy Spirit, who is called “the Helper” (Jn. 15:26), accomplishes this feat because He comes alongside as the Word is proclaimed.

Believers always need the preacher’s patient “teaching” so that they are constantly learning more of God’s truth and being reminded of truths they have forgotten.

We need the awe of God’s Word as described in Isaiah 66:2: “Says the Lord, ‘But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.’”

On your way to hear a sermon, ask God to speak to you personally. Tell Him you will seek to obey whatever He says. You likely will never hear God’s voice from a burning bush; but wherever His Word is preached, the ground is holy.

Listen While Avoiding Distractions

Paul’s prediction has never been truer:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables (2 Tim. 4:3–4).

We live in a more distracted generation than perhaps any in history. Rather than hunger for the healthy meat of the Word that nourishes their souls, people with itching ears (they want to hear what they want to hear) seek spiritual junk food. And that junk food is readily available.

They shop around for a preacher who tells them what they want to hear or who is entertaining. As a result, they are distracted from God’s truth and end up believing the lies or half-truths (“fables, myths”) of our culture. If you minimize Scripture, you are vulnerable to any deception.

Appreciate God’s Servant and Pray for Him

Paul’s instructions to Timothy provide an effective way to pray for your pastor (v. 5). Pray he will be mentally and spiritually alert, willing to suffer, effective in sharing the gospel, and faithful to carry out the full requirements of His God-given ministry.

A seminary professor recently asked aspiring pastors in his class which preachers had impacted them the most. They named many well-known writers and radio or television speakers. None of them named their home pastor or the preacher they listen to on Sundays. What a shame! A pastor you appreciate and pray for will make more of an impact in your life.

The words that emanate from pulpits weekly are greatly underestimated and often diminished by preacher and listener alike. But, Jesus warned, “Take heed how you hear” (Lk. 8:18).

Does your attitude toward biblical preaching show that you realize your pastor is standing on holy ground? Perhaps we all should take off our shoes, so to speak, when we prepare to hear God’s Word.

Mark Johnson is the pastor of Independent Bible Church of Martinsburg, West Virginia.
A correct perspective on world history provides a proper framework for living and prevents us from being easily deceived or led astray. One day, life as we know it will cease. Through Jesus, God will bring His plan for this planet to fruition. This truth brings us to the seventh and final key to understanding history: consummation.

**The Rapture of the Church**

The next event on God’s calendar is the Rapture of the church. The Rapture brings the Church Age to an end and introduces the next phase of God’s program: the Millennial (Messianic) Kingdom. If you are a born-again believer and the Rapture were to occur today, you would be changed in an instant, meet Jesus in the air, and be with Him in glory.

At the Rapture, everyone who has trusted Jesus as Savior since Pentecost (Acts 2) will be caught up to be with Jesus in the air (1 Th. 4:16–17). The Church Age will end, and the 70th week of Daniel will begin, as God
resumes His program for the nations and Israel.

The 70th Week of Daniel

The term 70th week of Daniel comes from the revelation the Jewish prophet Daniel received in Babylon (Dan. 9:24–27). The prophet Jeremiah referred to the same period as “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7), and Jesus called it “great tribulation” (Mt. 24:21).

All these designations refer to the Tribulation, seven years that will be dominated by the Antichrist. With the Tribulation, God begins to consummate His plan for humanity. When this terrible period is over, the world will finally know true and lasting peace.

Earth will enter the 70th week of Daniel when the Antichrist, “the man of sin,” is revealed (2 Th. 2:3). The 70th week will end “the times of the Gentiles,” which began when God gave Judah’s King Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar’s hand (605 B.C.) and Nebuchadnezzar subsequently destroyed Solomon’s Temple in 586 B.C. (Lk. 21:24; cf. Ezek. 30:3). God demoted Israel from prominence in the days of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and reduced the nation to servitude and insignificance for failing to remain faithful to Him. The 70th week will conclude Gentile world domination.

According to Daniel 9:27, in the middle of the 70th week (after three and a half years), the Antichrist will break a covenant he made earlier with Israel and seek to destroy the Jewish people:

*Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.*

Jesus referred to this teaching:

“When you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet,” then run for the hills; “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. 24:15, 21).

Revelation 6—18 elaborates on both teachings. Three sets of divine judgments (seals, trumpets, bowls) will be sent to Earth. At the beginning of the 70th week, Jesus breaks the first seal, summoning the first of the four horsemen of the apocalypse: the Antichrist, the rider on the white horse (Rev. 6:2). The seal judgments destroy 25 percent of the world’s population (v. 8).

Then 144,000 Jewish men are sealed (apparently as evangelists for the Kingdom of God), 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel (7:4–8). They are supernaturally protected through the first half of the 70th week (we see them on Mount Zion in heaven in Revelation 14:1–5), as they work to bring about Israel’s reconciliation to the Messiah.

The trumpet judgments follow as God increases the intensity of His wrath (chaps. 8—9). These judgments destroy another 25 percent of Earth’s population (9:18), fitting with both Daniel’s and Jesus’ prophecies (Dan. 9:27; Mt. 24).

In Revelation 11—13, we reach the midpoint of the 70th week. The Antichrist’s covenant with Israel is broken: “But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months” (11:2).

God sends “two witnesses” (v. 3) to replace the 144,000 for a testimony during the second half of the 70th week. The “dragon” (Satan) goes after the Jewish people, trying to destroy them (12:3–17). However, they are protected at that point. The Bible says the wings of a great eagle were given to them, and they flee into the wilderness where God protects them for “a time and times and half a time” (42 months; v. 14).

Then the bowl judgments are poured out, destroying an unspecified percentage of Earth’s population (chaps. 15—16). God’s wrath is intensified again on the Gentile nations. Yet

**Artist Stan Stein’s rendering of the Millennial Temple depicting the Holy of Holies revealed to the prophet Ezekiel in 572 B.C. (Stan Stein/FOI Image Archive).**
He preserves and protects the Jewish people, drawing them away from the Antichrist who is trying to destroy them. In Revelation 17, God judges the major economic and political systems of the world, represented by a woman and the city of Babylon.

The Return of the King

The wedding of the Lamb takes place in heaven with Christ and His raptured church (19:7–9). Finally, Jesus returns. With Him come the armies of heaven, including the Church Age saints. In our glorified, resurrected, transformed bodies, we will return with Jesus as He comes to defeat the Antichrist, rescue the Jewish people, and assume His Kingdom on Earth:

And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet. . . . These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse (19:19–21).

The “beast” is the Antichrist (13:1–10). He and his false prophet (vv. 11–18) are thrown alive into the Lake of Fire. There is no additional judgment for them. This is the fulfillment of Daniel 9:27: “And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.” The Antichrist who makes desolate will be utterly destroyed.

The kings and the Gentile armies will perish “with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh” (Rev. 19:21). Satan is bound and imprisoned for 1,000 years—the entire duration of the Messianic Kingdom:

He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while (20:2–3).

The Reign of the King

Jesus will come in the clouds of heaven (Mt. 24:29–31). He will descend

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to Earth physically and visibly and take His throne as King of the earth. No longer will He be the meek and mild Lamb He was in His First Coming. He will be the Lion of Judah who judges, wages war (Rev. 19:11), and rules with a rod of iron.

What began in Genesis 3 is brought to an end in Revelation 20. Jesus returns to bring order and righteousness and to reign on the throne of His father, King David of Israel (Lk. 1:32).

The Millennial Kingdom is primarily a Jewish kingdom. It is a Jewish King who is returning. His throne will be in the Jewish city of Jerusalem, and a Jewish Temple will be built. After the thousand years, Satan will be released and lead a final rebellion. Then he, too, will be thrown into the Lake of Fire; and the Kingdom will move into eternity.

Church Age believers will not be Kingdom citizens. Rather, we will reign with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4, 6). That is Jesus’ calling for His church. God’s calling for the Jewish people is to occupy the land promised to them forever and to “possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever” (Dan. 7:18). No longer will they be persecuted and oppressed, for Israel will be the head of all nations; and their Messiah will rule the world.

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** This concludes the series on The Seven Keys to History, which began in the May/June 2012 issue of Israel My Glory.

Richard D. Emmons is a professor in the School of Divinity at Cairn University in Langhorne, Pennsylvania. He is also senior pastor of GraceWay Bible Church in Hamilton Township, New Jersey.

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**Question:** What has God done for those who have placed their faith in Christ?

**Answer:** “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:13–14
Christ’s Incarnation

Before the apostle John wrote 1 John, he had already lived through the inception, expansion, and persecution of the first-century church and had dealt with many doctrinal errors. He was on the Jerusalem council that addressed issues unique to the early church on whether Gentiles could be saved if they did not follow the “custom of Moses” (circumcision, Acts 15:1). He also confronted some of the seven churches of Asia Minor that had allowed false teachers to gain a strong foothold within the church, calling on them to repent.

When John began this letter, he did not take time to write a formal salutation but launched immediately into a theological statement concerning the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. The Incarnation is the cornerstone of the Christian faith and the standard by which all doctrines concerning Christ must be judged. To deny Christ’s Incarnation exposes false teachers as unbelievers.

With this epistle, John again picked up his pen to address doctrinal error, this time within a new generation of Christians who were being inundated with false teachers, calling on them to repent.

John proved three truths about the incarnate Christ: (1) Christ is God, coequal with and of the same substance and essence as God the Father; (2) Christ possesses the attributes of omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, immutability, and eternity that belong only to God; and (3) Christ is the eternal Son of God who took on human flesh and now exists as the God-Man.

From its inception, the gospel message of mankind’s redemption and reconciliation to God began with the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. It is central to the faith, belief, and life of all true Christians.

In two short sentences (one long sentence in the Greek text), John explained Jesus is the incarnate Word of life. The first four verses reveal that (1) John personally experienced Christ in the flesh, (2) Jesus came from God the Father to declare eternal life, and (3) all Christians can have the same fellowship with Jesus that he and the other apostles possessed.

CHRIST’S EXISTENCE

The first verse contains four relative clauses relating to Jesus Christ that begin with the word which:

- “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life.”

The clauses do not refer to Christ personally but, rather, to things that are true about Him from the beginning. The word was is a verb of being, not of coming into existence; and it shows Jesus always existed—a claim for Christ’s eternity.

Commentators interpret the first clause, “that which was from the beginning,” to mean one of the following: the initial creation of all things (Gen. 1:1), Christ’s preexistence (Jn. 1:1), Christ’s Incarnation (v. 14), the beginning of Christ’s proclamation of the gospel, or the beginning of the apostles’ teaching about Christ’s ministry (words and works). The key is what the word from refers to.

It would seem, from the other three relative clauses, that the emphasis is not on tracing Christ back to His preexistence but, rather, looking from His Incarnation forward. That is, John was not proving Christ’s deity, as he did in his Gospel (Jn. 1:1); he was assuming Christ’s deity and proving the divine Christ is totally human. He wanted to refute the heresies of Docetism and Gnosticism (that Christ’s humanity was not real and that He was merely an emanation from God and only seemed human).

John and the other apostles were eyewitnesses to Christ’s humanity. They ministered with Him for more than three years and knew for certain He had come in the flesh (1 Jn. 4:2–3). They saw His suffering, death, and resurrection. Since John spoke of hearing, seeing, and touching the Lord, he likely was referring to the Incarnation as “the beginning.”

- The second clause, “which we have heard,” indicates John and the apostles received a revelation from Christ that they understood in human terms. Their personal, intimate fellowship with Him produced an undeniable, unshakable assurance that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, who had come in the flesh.
- The third clause, “which we have seen with our eyes,” indicates John and the others visually encountered the incarnate Christ and understood His significance. The words with our eyes reinforce the fact that Jesus was not a spiritual emanation from God, a phantom-like figure, or a vision; He was God in the flesh. The words have seen (Greek perfect tense) indicate what John saw of Christ's existence.
during His earthly ministry was still visible in His mind’s eye.

- The fourth clause, “which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled,” provides further evidence of the Incarnation. John and the apostles examined Christ so intently and completely they had no doubt about His literal, physical humanity. They did more than simply look at Him; they actually “handled” His body, which gave them conclusive evidence of His Incarnation.

John closed verse 1 with a summary: “concerning the Word of [the] life.” The Greek text has the definite article the before life. In other words, Jesus is the “Word” (Greek, logos) of God (cf. Jn. 1:1), the One who sets forth the truth of and about God; and eternal life resides in Him. He is the source of life and the light of man’s salvation (cf. Jn. 1:4). Thus Christ is both the Preacher of God’s message and the Message of life (i.e., gospel) itself. Both reside in Him.

CHRIST EXPERIENCED

John often repeated himself to emphasize his point. In 1 John 1:2 he did so to further explain the concept of life in the phrase Word of life:

> The life was manifested [made visible], and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father [depicting a face-to-face relationship with, but distinct from, God the Father] and was manifested to us.

The life to which John bore witness was with God the Father in eternity but appeared in the physical person of Jesus Christ on Earth as a historical reality. John affirmed with apostolic authority that Jesus is “the life” (Jn. 14:6), or eternal life, who is coequal and coeternal with the Father. John said so with assurance because he had “seen,” “[borne] witness,” and “declare[d]” that Jesus is eternal and provides eternal life to all who believe.

Jesus displayed the life that was in Him: He raised people from the dead, giving physical life back to Jairus’s daughter (Mk. 5), the son of the widow of Nain (Lk. 7), and Lazarus (Jn. 11). He also promised to give eternal life to all who believed in Him (6:47; 17:2).

John’s personal experience with Jesus; his affirmation of who He is; and his authoritative, apostolic proclamation of the message provided to him by the risen Christ (Mt. 28:18–20) are proof enough that Jesus Christ is the God-Man. The use of we throughout these verses indicates all the apostles bore the same testimony and proclamation of Christ.

John repeated the words was manifested to us (1 Jn. 1:2) to emphasize and highlight Christ’s Incarnation, this time personalizing it by saying “to us.” The point is that John and the apostles had close, personal relationships with the incarnate Life in the person of Christ.

CHRIST ENJOYED

By restating the words seen and heard, John reminded his readers of his message and its purpose, while explaining the importance of Christ’s Incarnation for himself and all believers: “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (v. 3).

The phrase you also means believers who did not enjoy a personal relationship with Christ during His earthly life can still have spiritual fellowship with Him.

The word fellowship (Greek, koinonia) means “common” and denotes a sharing of an object or belief with another. Here it refers to sharing the faith in Christ proclaimed in John’s gospel message. John stressed that this bond of fellowship transcends the earthly and is “truly” with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Rejecting John’s message and the fellowship indicates an insincere profession of faith. In reality, such people have no fellowship with God.

The definite article the before Father indicates both the Father and Son are equally God and are one in the Godhead. Here John explicitly declared the divine nature of the incarnate Christ. This teaching leaves no room for such heresies as Gnosticism or Docetism.

What an amazing, marvelous, and high privilege of fellowship God has granted all believers. To fellowship with the Godhead through Jesus Christ is unfathomable.

John closed this section by giving the reason for his letter: “And these things we write to you that your [our] joy may be full” (v. 4). The phrase these things we write emphasizes that John’s letter agrees with all the other apostles’ witnesses in that they were commissioned to define, describe, and defend the reality of Christ’s Incarnation.

Full joy within Christian fellowship is produced by a personal (intimate and intelligent) relationship with Jesus Christ in salvation, studying God’s Word, and yielding one’s life to the Holy Spirit’s ministry. Although we can experience overflowing joy in the Lord today, the joy we experience will never be full and complete until we get to heaven. Then we will see Christ face-to-face and experience a fullness of joy that will last for eternity.

Until that day, our faith does not focus on some abstract idea of Jesus but, rather, on the incarnate Christ, the God-Man, revealed in Scripture (Jn. 1:1–2, 4, 14). We live by faith, with hope and joy—a joy that is full of glory in Christ.

David M. Levy is the director of International Ministries for The Friends of Israel.
The Grace of God (Part 4)

The New Testament, as well as the Old Testament, speaks of God’s grace. In fact, God administers His moral absolutes through grace.

Key New Testament Words for Grace

The New Testament Greek noun related to grace is charis. It refers to “favor, grace, gracious care, help, goodwill” bestowed on a person or group. It is “that which affords joy, pleasure, delight.” The word charis contains the idea of kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved. It is “used of the kindness of a master towards his inferiors or servants, and so esp. of God towards men.”

Charis appears 131 times in the Greek New Testament. It “does not appear in Matthew, Mark, 1 and 3 John.” In the Gospel of John, it appears “only at 1:14–17.” The fact it appears so many times implies grace is a major subject of the New Testament.

The Greek verb that is the counterpart to charis is charidzomai. It appears in Luke and in the apostle Paul’s writings. The verb “does not have the precise sense of the noun. It is always to be construed in terms of the basic sense ‘to give.’” In fact, it means to “give freely or graciously as a favor.”

The following are examples of this meaning:

And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work (Rom. 11:6).

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God (1 Cor. 2:12).

For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise (Gal. 3:18).

New Testament Examples of God’s Grace

Grace for Mary. God sent the angel Gabriel “to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary” (Lk. 1:27). Gabriel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!” (v. 28). “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God” (v. 30). The expressions highly favored and found favor are derivatives of the Greek noun charis.

As a result of God’s grace, Mary became His chosen vessel through whom His eternal Son would become incarnated as the promised Messiah who will rule from the throne of His ancestor David forever (vv. 31–33).

Grace and Jesus. As a child in His humanity, Jesus “grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him” (2:40). As a boy, “Jesus increased . . . in favor with God and men” (v. 52).

As an adult, Jesus spoke “gracious words” in the synagogue of Nazareth (4:22). John the Baptist declared that Jesus, “whom God has sent speaks the words of God” (Jn. 3:34). Jesus claimed His words were the Father’s words:

For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak (12:49–50).

Speaking to God concerning His apostles, Jesus said,

I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I have given them Your word (17:8, 14).

Thus it appears the gracious words Jesus spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth were the words God told Him to speak.

John 1:14 indicates that, while Jesus was on Earth during His First Coming as God’s eternal Son in human flesh, people noticed His glory. The word glory refers to what is impressive or influential concerning a person. People were impressed and influenced by the fact Jesus was “full of grace and truth.”

The word translated “full” is used “of persons who are complete in a certain respect or who possess something fully.” The word translated “truth” in this context refers to what is “genuine” or “reality.” These words
confirm the reality that Jesus genuinely and completely possessed grace to its fullest extent.

Consequently, Scripture asserts, “of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace” (v. 16).

**Grace: The New Way of Administering God’s Moral Absolutes**

Several New Testament passages indicate that, during His First Coming, Jesus established grace as God’s new way of administering His moral absolutes. Scripture says, “For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (v. 17). During His First Coming, Jesus brought into existence a new form of God’s grace—one that had not existed in Old Testament times.

Two facts indicate this truth: First, in the statement “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ,” the verb translated “came” means “come to be, become, originate.” Thus some form of grace that previously did not exist came into being or originated through Jesus Christ during His First Coming.

Second, in the assertion that Jesus’ “fullness we have all received, and grace for grace” (v. 16), the expression grace for grace means “grace after or upon grace (i.e., grace pours forth in ever new streams).” Again the implication seems to be that, during Jesus’ First Coming, He enlarged God’s grace by adding a new form of it to those that had already existed.

Furthermore, the new form cannot be that which brings salvation from the penalty of sin for the following reasons:

1. In Romans 4:1–16 Paul taught that both Abraham (who lived prior to the Mosaic Law) and David (who lived under that Law) were justified from the penalty of sin by grace.

2. John 1:17 seems to imply the new form of grace was intended to serve as the contrasting replacement of the Mosaic Law. In other words, it was to have the same basic function as the Mosaic Law, but it was to fulfill that function in a significantly different way.

It is important to note that the Mosaic Law never functioned as a means of eternal salvation. No person has ever been justified through the Law. The apostle Paul wrote, Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith (Rom. 3:28–30).

We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes from the law, then Christ died in vain. But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith” (Gal. 2:15–16, 21; 3:11).

In fact, instead of saving people, the Mosaic Law was “the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones” (2 Cor. 3:7), “the ministry of condemnation” (v. 9), and “brings about wrath” to those who are under it (Rom. 4:15).

In light of these statements, it would appear Scripture teaches the following concept in John 1:17: God established the Law through Moses as a way of administering His eternal, moral absolutes over His chosen nation of Israel. But through Jesus Christ, He established grace as the new way of administering His eternal, moral absolutes over mankind.
Getting ready for third Temple

Jewish groups held a mock Passover sacrifice in March opposite the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The ritual slaughter, they said, was practice in advance of the reconstruction of the Temple.

The sacrifice has been held annually for several years. Rabbi Yehuda Glick told Arutz-7 the ritual was carried out with as much biblical accuracy as possible. “We took the goat, as the Torah commands, we had an altar built like the real one, and a cooking pit built according to halacha [Jewish law],” he said. “We slaughtered the goat with Leviim [Levites] singing and priestly clothing, just like in the real Passover sacrifice.”

Arutz-7 (IsraelNationalNews.com)

Italy’s Grillo hates Israel

Beppe Grillo, the comedian turned politician, has become the leader of Italy’s largest party, the Five Star Movement. He got one fourth of the popular vote. He is the idol of Italy’s youth. He is the anti-corruption crusader. He is the guru of biblical accuracy as possible. “We are in the hands of Hezbollah terrorists, as well as “the possibility that chemical or other weapons of mass destruction will fall into the hands of terrorists. We have said that if there is an attempt to transfer these weapons we will stop it.”

Grillo’s Facebook page and weblog, which is one of the few non-English language platforms that has become wildly popular worldwide, is full of anti-Jewish attacks from Grillo’s readers, fans, and supporters: “Israel is like Nazi Germany,” “I hope that someone will use any means to stop this killer state,” “The Jews are God’s cursed people,” “Zyklon B for you; peace and justice in Palestine,” “the Israeli leaders are monsters,” “Hamas is much better than all the Zionist governments.”

People laugh all the time at Grillo’s shows and speeches. His obscene sneer, which conquered the most popular spot in Italy’s elections, shows a primitive hatred for Israel and Western values. Behind this orgy of Judeophobic vulgarities, you find Europe’s old anti-Semitic hatred resurrected by a clownish trifle.

by Giulio Meotti, Arutz-7

If Assad falls, Israel suffers

Ehud Barak said recently the certain fall of Syria’s Bashar Assad will not be good for Israel.

“There are two major issues,” Barak said in his final appearance before the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee as defense minister. “We are on alert for the transfer of advanced weapons from Syria to Lebanon into the hands of Hezbollah terrorists, as well as “the possibility that chemical or other weapons of mass destruction will fall into the hands of terrorists. We have said that if there is an attempt to transfer these weapons we will stop it.”

Barak said Hezbollah has more than 60,000 rockets and missiles. “The Middle East today is far less stable because the forces leading much of it are Islamist. We can redefine the Arab Spring as an ‘Islamic Winter,’ as we see radicals leading it to social and national extremes.”

Arutz-7 (IsraelNationalNews.com)

Neo-Nazis in Jerusalem

Anti-Semitic graffiti found recently in Jerusalem may indicate a Russian neo-Nazi gang is back in business. The graffiti was found in the neighborhood of Pisgat Ze’ev in northern Jerusalem. It included swastikas and praise of Hitler.

Anti-Jewish graffiti in the capital is usually attributed to Arabs. However, Rabbi Zalman Gilchinski, who heads a center to assist victims of anti-Semitism in Israel, said, “The style of writing is not an Arab style.”

He said it “could be from the anti-Semitic gang Patrol 36. It’s a gang that serves as a local branch for Russian neo-Nazism.”

Arutz-7 (IsraelNationalNews.com)

Farmers fight Arab crime

Desperate Jewish farmers in Judea and Samaria are tired of looking for help that does not come in fighting an Arab crime wave. Now many of them are taking security into their own hands with Hashomer Yosh, a new civilian security group.

More than 1,000 cattle, sheep, and goats were stolen from Jewish farmers in Judea and Samaria over a two-month period alone. Agricultural theft caused millions of shekels in damage.

The stolen livestock is taken to Palestinian Authority-controlled areas where Israeli police have no power to act, leaving Israeli farmers with no way of retrieving their animals.

“The Arabs are using these thefts to damage the development of Jewish agriculture in Judea and Samaria,” said Shmuel Herzlich, whose father Avraham recently lost a huge herd to Arab thieves.

Hashomer Yosh volunteers will assist farmers in setting up a rotation of guards to watch over their flocks.

Arutz-7 (IsraelNationalNews.com)

Tour Israel!

The Israel Ministry of Tourism has launched a new advertising campaign geared toward Christian travelers in cities across the United States. The new billboards feature images of the Old City of Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee, two of Israel’s most important sites for Christians. The billboards can be seen on major city highways across the United States, including Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, and Tampa.
If your will is up-to-date, you enjoy a certain peace of mind. The fact that a plan is in place to care for your loved ones and favorite charities is a reason to sleep well. It’s comforting to know you have thoughtfully arranged your affairs before you go home to be with the Lord.

Yet our world is changing rapidly. In these uncertain times, you may be wondering if your will can withstand the changes that lie around the corner. In light of today’s realities, it might be a good time to review your estate plan. Or perhaps you have yet to “get your house in order” and are looking to take that first step. Let us help. We can put you in touch with a capable professional to work around the uncertainties of the times.

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I f news broke of locusts swarming over Egypt, Israeli farmers trembled. Locusts can cause millions of dollars of damage to crops. Pesticide experts went on high alert and eventually were deployed.

But when Jerusalem Chef Moshe Basson heard about the locusts, he thought about two things: schnitzel and social justice. Schnitzel, because that’s his favorite way of eating locusts. A light dusting of bread crumbs, fried up in olive oil, served with a touch of salt. And social justice?

"Locusts eat the rich peoples’ food, and poor people eat the locusts, and they get an excellent source of protein for free," explained Basson, an award-winning chef who owns the Eucalyptus Restaurant in Jerusalem that specializes in local heritage and biblical foods.

Despite many clients clambering for a taste of the crunchy pests, you won’t find locusts on the menu at Eucalyptus. That’s because locusts exist in a kosher gray area. But that doesn’t stop Basson from frying them up for dozens of curious clientele and foreign journalists.

The current swarm of locusts first appeared near Cairo on March 2. After massing near the border, they descended on Israel on March 6, and the Israeli Agricultural Ministry took aggressive steps to stop the swarm from continuing northward. So after the pesticide spray, it’s been hard for Basson to get fresh locusts.

When he drops the live ones in boiling oil, they make a hissing sound, just like shrimp, as the air escapes from their hard shells. Their brown bodies turn a brilliant red as they cook.

Basson makes both savory and sweet locusts. In one dish, he sautés deep fried locusts with a yellow sauce made from pickled lemon and saffron, mixed with a fresh roasted red pepper salsa and freshly blended almond milk.

In the next dish, he creates a candied locust caramel. After removing the head and wings (the parts with no nutritional value that tend to get stuck in your throat), Basson pours boiling caramel over the bodies and detached legs, creating an amber-colored locust candy that he sticks in a mound of coconut whipped cream, decorated with beet leaves.

I couldn’t help but think, if Israel had to experience one of the Ten Plagues before Passover this year, I’m sure glad we didn’t end up with lice.

by Melanie Lidman
The Jerusalem Post (jpost.com)
This week I was preparing to visit an ultra-Orthodox synagogue when my wife, Naomi, said to me, “Zvi, you know I have much trouble with my feet. Please, go to the store and buy for me what I have written on this piece of paper.” So I took the paper and left. When I finished the errand and walked out of the store, what do I see outside but an elderly woman speaking with several ultra-Orthodox men. She was telling them about Isaiah 53. I moved a little closer to hear what they were saying. Before long they became angry with her and threatened to make trouble for her. I moved still closer and joined the conversation to take her side. Suddenly, the lady left; and there I stood with the angry men.

Then they became angry with me. “Are you like her? Do you believe in This One?” one asked, referring to Jesus. The ultra-Orthodox will not say the Savior’s name.

I replied, “I believe in what is written in the Holy Bible by the Holy Spirit of God.” When they heard me say “Holy Spirit,” one man immediately asked, “What do you have left to say to us that this woman has not said?”

I told them she knew what she was talking about. “What she said is all written in the Bible. She did not read rabbinical stories or fictitious tales to you. She read to you what is written in the Scriptures,” I said.

Then they became much against me and demanded I prove to them from the Bible that what she said was true.

First I opened my Bible to Isaiah 49:3–6 and gave it to them to read. There it is written, “And He said to me, ‘You are My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified’” (v. 3). I explained that, as servants of God, we are obligated to bring His truth to people who do not know it. “You think you are being faithful,” I explained. “But you do not know the truth, and you fight against such people as this woman and me who try to tell you what is written in the Holy Bible.”

“Are you telling us that everything you say about This One before whom you bow is written in the Bible?” one asked. “We do not believe what you say. Show us from our Bible, not from one of your Christian books!”

This was not the first time I have been asked such a thing. “You will see

EDITOR’S NOTE: Please pray for Zvi and Naomi Kalisher, two choice servants of God. Due to health issues, Zvi has been unable to send in his column. So we are sharing with you a column he wrote before he became ill. We know he would appreciate you upholding them before the throne of grace.
with your own eyes,” I said. “You will read about This One, and you will know about whom we speak, about whom the prophet Isaiah wrote, and what He did for us all.”

Much tension filled the air. “We want to be friends,” one of the men said. “We are truly interested and want to know. Please do not be angry with us.”

“Now you will know,” I said gently. “You will know who He is.” So I opened my Bible to Isaiah 53 and told them to read the chapter. There it is written,

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).

They asked me if I was reading from a Christian Bible. Since I had planned to go to the ultra-Orthodox synagogue, I had a synagogue Bible with me as well. So I opened that Bible, and gave it to them. Then they read with their own eyes and saw that the chapter was exactly the same in both Bibles.

“Why have we studied so long about our faith and we have never before read this chapter? Why? I don’t understand,” one man said.

“Many other things are also written in the Hebrew Scriptures about This Man,” I said. “God clearly told us who He is and what He has done for us, again and again.”

“We have been with you only a few hours,” one said, “and we have learned more than we have learned in years. We have not enough words to thank you. We will come to you often. This is a promise. We also will confront our teachers because we want to know what they will tell us about what we have read.”

I told them I would be happy to meet with them anytime. “Do not read fictional stories about God,” I said. “Read only the Bible. Then you will know the truth.”
Our October Up to Jerusalem/Standing With Israel tour will mark 36 years of journeying to the land of the Bible. Never has there been a more exciting time to be in the land given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The prophetic significance is overwhelming; the historical significance, unprecedented. Meeting Jewish people who have come home from more than 100 countries is an exhilarating experience. And meeting believers in Israel will revitalize your prayer life and your commitment to Israel and its people.

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