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Plus:
No surprises, please—Page 10
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Inside

The Great Star
The Great Star broke through darkness to send a shaft of light
shining upon the tiny star and before we knew
Gazing empty, world already, as a stable was the place
where she would be born.

The world woke to see, staggered with wonder and
hearing news of star by star, they set out to see this new,
owning. It was silent there, soGazing empty, world already, as a stable was the place
where she would be born.

When the Great Star shone, they set out to see
Another news and a song, a light and a
Wishing you a joyous Hanukkah season.

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Inside

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Tel Aviv, on the picturesque shores of the Mediterranean Sea, has always been a Jewish city. Founded on April 11, 1909, by several dozen families, Tel Aviv has grown over the years to a population of 410,000 and is almost completely Jewish. In the late 1930s, the city built a promenade to separate the beach from the walking areas. During the days of the British Mandate, the beaches were abandoned and neglected. In the 1980s, the State of Israel rejuvenated the entire area and has built a series of beautiful promenades where people can stroll or bike for miles along the sea.

Our cover, by Israeli photographer Hanan Isachar, is of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Promenade that spans 8.7 miles and shows how hard Israelis have worked to develop their coastline and bring to life what was once a barren, desolate land.

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**No Surprises, Please**
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This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Jewish state’s Yom Kippur War. And what helped Israel then is the same thing Israel needs now.

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Do you have a family history? The Jewish people have one too. And it includes promises in which they have trusted even before the Bible was written.

**Land Rights of the Patriarchs**
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If you own land, don’t you have the right to deed it to whomever you wish? God owns all the land on Earth, and He chose to deed some of it via an everlasting covenant.

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Many people today don’t understand how the State of Israel came into existence. Israel never even received all the land it actually was supposed to get. Here is what happened.

**The Continual Jewish Presence**
*by Christopher J. Katulka.....................31*

Israel today is accused of being an illegal occupier of “Arab territory.” But the genuine occupants for thousands of years are not the Arabs, as you’ll see here.
Israel’s enemies at it again. The latest attack comes from the Church of Scotland in its document *The inheritance of Abraham? A report on the ‘promised land,’* which refutes Israel’s God-given right to the land and reinterprets well-known biblical concepts.

The report initially challenged Israel’s right to exist at all. But a strong outcry from the Jewish community led to a revision that concedes Israel’s right to exist but denies the State of Israel is God-sanctioned. The situation is a replay of Psalm 83:

*They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted together against Your sheltered ones. They have said, “Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more.” For they have consulted together with one consent (vv. 3–5).*

The document also claims the concepts of Israel, Temple, Jerusalem, and land are reinterpreted by the New Testament. So, according to them, not only does the Promised Land not belong to the Jewish people, but the land promise is not even literal. The Church of Scotland would have us believe *land* is a metaphor for the way things ought to be in the church, and *Israel* means Christians—a tenet of Replacement Theology.

Dennis Prager, an Orthodox rabbi and popular radio host, commented, “Imagine if a major Muslim body declared that Jesus means Muhammad; Christ means Quran; crucifixion means Islamophobia; and resurrection means the Hajj.”

Even more troubling is the Church of Scotland’s method of interpretation. It presumes you cannot interpret the Old Testament until you first interpret the New. This is a new hermeneutic, a new way of interpreting God’s Word.

We believe the Bible should be interpreted literally—in its grammatical, historical context. We also believe in the progress of revelation, meaning we interpret the Bible in the order God revealed it to man. God has revealed Himself to us through His Word. Although the New Testament often enhances our understanding of such concepts as Israel, Temple, Jerusalem, and land, it does not radically change their meaning.

But there is an even bigger issue: The Church of Scotland’s hermeneutic attacks God’s character, integrity, and honesty. It presents a God who revealed His Word but made it impossible for people to interpret it for hundreds of years because they did not have the New Testament. What kind of God is that?

The Church of Scotland is saying God gave Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob revelation that misled them into believing (1) they were a chosen people and (2) that He promised them an actual piece of real estate. Its view would make the physical boundaries God gave for the land in Genesis 15; Exodus 23; Numbers 34; and Ezekiel 47 a lie, as well God’s declaration that He chose Jerusalem to be Israel’s capital and that He wanted the Jewish people to build a Temple where He would be worshiped.

The Church of Scotland presents a God who can’t be trusted. How can it be sure God won’t reveal further written revelation that will change its interpretation and understanding of key concepts in the New Testament?

What a sad day for the Church of Scotland. It used to be a staunch supporter of Israel and the Jewish people’s right to the land God promised to them. From the early 19th century, influential Church of Scotland leaders encouraged the idea of a Promised Land. Its Rev. Alexander Keith even cited the phrase “a land without a people, for a people without land.”

As for me, I will stick with following the progress of revelation and the literal interpretation of Scripture. That is the normal way we understand spoken and written words in everyday life, and I believe it is the way God intended for us to interpret His Word.

Interpretation is a critically important issue today when so many are trying to transform Scripture to suit themselves. We need to stand up for proper interpretation of God’s Word because it affects our understanding of God, Israel, and His plan of redemption.

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ENDNOTES


James A. Showers is the executive director of The Friends of Israel.
though lacking the pizazz of typical rags-to-riches stories, the saga of the thousands of Ethiopians who have immigrated to Israel is one worth telling. In many ways, their experience is similar to those of others who came: They endured anti-Semitism and persecution, and many heard an inexplicable voice calling them to their ancient homeland.

But their story is also different because they faced challenges unlike those of other immigrants, most of whom came from developed nations; and knitting the Ethiopians into the fabric of the tiny country has posed a unique challenge. But Israel has risen to the occasion.

In Ethiopia, these people are known as Falashas (“aliens, outcasts”). They lived and scratched out an impoverished existence like many other Africans, and the color of their skin makes them look like other Africans. But the government treated them like outcasts to the point of exile and starvation. Why? Because they are Jews. They call themselves Beta Israel (“House of Israel”). From the squalor of their thatched huts, they read from the Torah, followed biblical practices, and considered Jerusalem the Holy City.

Though the chief rabbis from 45 countries affirmed them as Jewish in 1908, the Ashkenazic and Sephardic chief rabbis did not concur and worried they would present a shanda fur di goyim (Yiddish for “an embarrassment in front of the non-Jews”). In the first 25 years of its existence, the State of Israel did little to advocate for Beta Israel.

Meanwhile, these Ethiopian Jews endured more persecution, mass starvation, and sometimes even slavery. Finally, in 1972, Sephardic Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef declared, “Falashas are Jews.” Three years later Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren agreed, calling them “brothers” and declaring, “You are Jews.”

Once this official declaration was made, four waves of immigration spanning more than 30 years brought 33,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel. Operation Moses, which flew more than 7,000 to Israel in approximately six weeks, and Operation Solomon, which flew 15,000 in a mere 36 hours, are among the greatest immigration achievements in Israel’s history.

But mainstreaming Beta Israel into Israeli society has been a challenge. Unlike previous immigrants, who were well-educated and white, these immigrants from the Third World were primitive and black.

To say they experienced culture shock in Israel is an understatement. They were not familiar with bathrooms, electricity, or the Hebrew language—to name a few things. To address their situation immediately, the government created absorption centers to house and train these new Israelis for at least a year, teaching them the language and culture.

For many, especially the elderly, adjusting to Israeli life remains a challenge. In a recent survey, the Industry, Trade and Labor Ministry found that Ethiopians are the least likely people to be hired. They rank last by employers, even behind Muslim Arabs.

Yet the story here is the determination of Israel and Beta Israel to work together to overcome these challenges. In 1999 Avraham Yitzhak became the first Ethiopian immigrant to earn a medical degree. In 2000 the female-owned Ethiopian Embroidery Center was established, selling its goods to a fair-trade store in Tel Aviv. In 2009, Tzion Shenkor became the first Ethiopian to be promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Israel Defense Forces. In February 2012 the Foreign Ministry named Belaynesh Zevadia the first Israeli of Ethiopian origin as ambassador to Ethiopia. This past January, the first Ethiopian woman was elected to the Knesset; and in February, 21-year-old Yityish Aynaw was crowned Miss Israel 2013.

When Foreign Minster Belaynesh Zevadia was interviewed about the challenges Ethiopians face in Israel, she said, “We start with one. . . . Our community has a lot of problems, yes, but we ourselves are the solution.”

In a world that condemns Israel as an apartheid, racist, imperialist country, the Beta Israel story is one that proves the world wrong.
The craft has been around forever, but now lying has reached new heights. Even the most salacious prevaricators over past centuries did not take it on themselves to alter the history of the Jewish people, their attachment to the Holy Land, or their allegiance to the city of Jerusalem. That all changed when Yasser Arafat, the late Palestinian leader, instituted a strategy of creating new “truth.” His first assertion was viewed as laughable: Jesus, he said, was actually a Palestinian freedom fighter battling the Romans just like Arafat and his ilk were battling the “illegal” Jews “occupying” the so-called Arab land of Israel.

His bizarre assertion of prior claim and Israeli theft started a new trend in how to bring a final solution to the Jewish presence in the Middle East. Like Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels, Arafat cunningly planted lies that eventually yielded a bumper crop of fictitious “facts.” These lies masquerading as truth not only have subverted real history but have slowly criminalized the State of Israel.

Arafat’s plan, in fact, had nothing to do with fact. It was all about changing perceptions. Considering how little people in the West know about the actual history of the Middle East, fantasy could easily pass for fact and, in time, change the game entirely.

Changing perceptions about himself and the Palestinians was something Arafat proved extremely adept at doing. One of the world’s chief terrorists, he orchestrated terrorist activities against Israel from around the world, including the hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise ship on October 7, 1985. To everyone’s horror, Palestinians boarded the ship and shot Jewish passenger Leon Klinghoffer as he sat helplessly in his wheelchair. Then they dumped his body overboard. Less than 10 years later, Arafat was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Stunningly, the preposterous has become the norm in many circles; and it is the rationale for displacing the Israelis and reconfiguring the Jewish state into a Palestinian fiefdom. Who would have believed that a day would come when the contention that the Jewish people never existed as a presence in the Middle East would be taken seriously? Or that there was no physical evidence the Jewish Temples stood on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem? Who would ever have thought that anyone would believe the Jewish refugees who arrived in the country after World War II were invaders fleeing a Holocaust that never existed? And who would have dreamed of entertaining the notion the Jewish people concocted the idea of the Holocaust to dupe the world and elicit sympathy for themselves?

We live in a culture that allows con artists to ply their merciless trade on uninformed, trusting, well-intentioned people. Petty frauds and promises of huge rewards delude millions and rob them of their hard-earned savings annually. Yet no con can equal that being practiced by Israel’s enemies. They hate the Jewish state and will do anything to bring about its destruction.

Their success is the direct result of society’s failure to propagate the facts and confront the lies with unassailable truth. The pattern we need to follow is laid down in Deuteronomy 6:6–7:

> And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

The antidote for error is truth. And there is no battlefield on Earth where more is at stake. The world becomes susceptible to lies when it becomes more enamored of pleasure and distractions than of serious study of facts.

For this reason, The Friends of Israel has produced this issue of Israel My Glory. We are attempting to set the record straight—biblically and historically—in order to help clarify the truth about Israel.

Jesus told us that the truth will make us free (Jn. 8:32). The truth will also keep us free.

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Five hundred people from all walks of life gathered at The Mansion in Voorhees, New Jersey, on May 30 to help The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry (FOI) celebrate its 75th anniversary and give thanks to God for His goodness and faithfulness through the years.

Prior to the meal, everyone stood to sing both the American and Israeli national anthems. Yaron Sideman, consulate general of Israel to the Mid-Atlantic Region, briefly addressed the crowd, which then viewed a seven-minute DVD of FOI’s history, created especially for the occasion.

FOI chief photographer, Walter Homan, captured the event in pictures. Here are a few:

(1) From left: FOI board of trustees member William (Bill) Sutter, who served as executive director from 2001 to 2012; board member Elwood McQuaid, executive director from 1989 to 2001; and James (Jim) Showers, executive director from 2012 to present.

(2) Alan Respler (left), former executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Southern New Jersey, speaks with Diane and Jim Showers.

(3) Dr. McQuaid delivers the keynote address.

(4) Tzvia Wexler sings “Jerusalem of Gold.” Ms. Wexler is executive director of The Friends of the IDF (Israel Defense Forces), Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey branch.

(5) FOI board chair James P. MacLean welcomes the group.

(6) From left: Mrs. Joshua (Andy) Friedman, Judge Joshua Friedman, Mrs. Bill (Annette) Sutter, Bill Sutter, Mrs. Michael (DeeDee) Fein, Mrs. Ken (Dorothy) Gohagan, and Dr. Ken Gohagan.

(7) Rabbi Dr. Bernhard Rosenberg of Congregation Beth-El in Edison, New Jersey, offers the opening blessing.
It is well known that Christians are being viciously persecuted in countries with Muslim majorities. Now, however, Muslim violence is spreading to areas where Christians are the majority, such as Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda—countries that have welcomed missionaries and Bible translators for years.

According to the Voice of the Martyrs (VOM), Islamists are “pouring resources into east Africa, radicalizing the Muslim population with an objective to drive Christians out. The effect has been three years of ever increasing attacks against Christians.”

VOM reported that in Kampala, Uganda, where more than half the population attends evangelical churches, Islamists are vowing to finish what they started when they tried to kill Senior Pastor Umar Mulinde of Gospel Life Church International. Shouting “Allahu Akbar” (“Allah is great”), they threw acid on him last year, nearly destroying his entire face. He is recovering from facial reconstruction in Israel at Sheba Medical Center in Tel Hashomer near Tel Aviv, according to Morning Star News (MorningStarNews.org). Mulinde left Islam for Christianity, an offense Muslims punish with death.

Pastor Mulinde wrote to Morning Star News from Israel, where he has had six operations so far: “Acid damaged my face beyond what we had initially thought, causing a very terrible wound, nearly cutting off my head, right eye, ear, nose and causing serious deforming scars; but praise God that He helped me to get good medication and prayers of the saints worldwide, otherwise I almost died.”

The father of six still faces a long road ahead with many more complex surgeries. “During his hospital stay,” reported Morning Star News, “Mulinde’s wife and twin 4-year-old boys have been with him in Israel, while a family friend cares for his older children in Uganda.”

“We still need provision for the two adult caretakers of our children, school tuition for all our six children, daily upkeep of our family in Africa and Israel, prescribed medication for my treatment and grace of God to overcome the remaining treatment period and the emotional pain involved,” he told the news agency.

Mulinde has been an outspoken critic of Sharia (Islamic law) courts in Uganda, a nation that is said to be 85 percent Christian.

Morning Star News also filed a report about Aisha Logose Jenifer, 45, who lives in Uganda and turned to Christ from Islam. When her husband discovered she was a Christian, he tried to strangle her and beat her so badly she was hospitalized.

“The youngest three of her children are staying with her at the home of an elder of her Pentecostal Assemblies of God Church under Pastor Olupot Pison,” Morning Star News said. She is still extremely ill and Muslims are not allowing her to see her older four children.

In Kenya, Al Shabaab has been terrorizing the country, which is nearly 83 percent Christian. Members of the terrorist organization based in Somalia threw an explosive into an evangelical service in June, seriously injuring 17 people, including a 10-year-old boy, according to International Christian Concern (ICC). One pastor is in critical condition with two broken legs, and another pastor sustained serious hand and neck injuries.

In Tanzania, wrote ICC, “Churches have been bombed, pastors have been murdered and Christian girls have been targeted for brutal attacks.” Radical Muslims are growing in numbers and in one church set fire to the chairs, musical equipment, and Bibles.

In an attempt to force obedience to Allah, Islam reaches even to the West. Raymond Ibrahim, an expert on Islam with the David Horowitz Freedom Center, reported recently that a 43-year-old former Muslim from Iran who has embraced Christianity was found murdered in Holland, where he was living.

According to the world watch list, 11 countries are severely persecuting Christians, North Korea being the worst, followed by Saudi Arabia; and 12 more are inflicting “moderate” persecution. With persecution spreading so rapidly, more people now agree it’s only a matter of time before it reaches America.
On October 6, 1973, 40 years ago, Israel was wrapped in prayer, observing the holiest of Jewish religious observances, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). Radio was silenced; transport, public and private, was off the streets.

On the Bar Lev Line in the Sinai, as well as on the Golan Heights, Israeli troops were pared down to a skeleton force. It was the one day each year when...
the nation’s citizens stood before God in silence and contemplation, removed from the frenzy of the world around them.

The silence that day, however, would be short-lived. At 2:00 in the afternoon, Egyptian forces crossed the Suez Canal, overran the young soldiers manning the Bar Lev Line of defense, and pushed into the Sinai. Simultaneously, the Syrians sent hundreds of tanks streaming into the Golan, crushing the opposition and taking control of most of the southern portion of the Golan Heights. History records, “On the Golan Heights, 150 Israeli tanks faced 1,400 Syrian tanks and in the Suez region only 500 Israeli soldiers fought 80,000 Egyptian soldiers.”

Over the next few traumatic days, while Israeli reserves were being organized and deployed to meet the attacks, enemy forces were creating a havoc that threatened the very existence of the Jewish state. When Israel launched its first counterattack on October 8, its forces were repelled in a near catastrophic loss of planes, tanks, and equipment.

Israel needed its allies, and needed them desperately. The Egyptians, with the largest Arab army in the Middle East, pressed the attack as the Russians poured in military supplies to try to ensure an Arab victory. It was alleged, and probably with good reason, that it was the Russians who suggested Yom Kippur as the best day to begin the war.

In the meantime, Israel looked for help from its chief ally, the United States. In a revealing postwar interview, then President Richard Nixon said he asked Secretary of State Henry Kissinger how many of America’s large cargo planes were being used to supply the Israelis. When Kissinger replied two or three, Nixon asked, “How many do we have?”

“Twenty-five,” the secretary replied.

“Send them all,” Nixon said.

True allies provide more than warm words and best wishes when a friend is being threatened with annihilation. There are perhaps few better examples of quality friendship than that shown Israel during the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

By October 10, when the tide began to turn in favor of Israel, Egypt and Syria cried for Russia to intervene. Bolstered materially by American supplies and equipment, Israelis were on their way to Damascus in the north and Cairo in the south. As Egyptian President Anwar Sadat urged the Russians to petition the UN for a ceasefire, the war moved into a larger arena. The two superpowers, the United States and Soviet Union, seemed ready to collide.

As it became increasingly obvious the Israelis were defeating the Arab invaders, the Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin, told Kissinger that Soviet airborne troops were preparing to intervene to save Damascus, Syria. If the Soviets intervened, said Kissinger, they would be met by American forces. The United States would not tolerate Russian intervention, even if it brought the two powers to the brink of nuclear confrontation. The Soviets backed down.

When hostilities finally ceased, people began to ask, “How could this have happened?” For the first time in its modern history, Israel was caught by surprise. Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir explained that, though informed of the amassing Egyptian and Syrian forces, she did not order a preemptive strike because she did not want Israel to be accused of firing the first shot. If there was to be war, Israel’s enemies would have to strike first.

It was a near fatal decision. More than 7,000 Israeli soldiers were killed or wounded, and many distinguished military and political careers were almost destroyed, including that of Defense Minister Gen. Moshe Dayan, a hero in the 1967 Six-Day War, who resigned in disgrace.

In the aftermath, a national state of depression set in. A prominent Israel Defense Forces general told me in 1975, “It is only now, after all this time, that our people are beginning to recognize that we actually won the war.” What was lost, however, was the sense of invincibility that had infuriated Israel after the Six-Day War and perhaps had made many overconfident.

What befell Israel in 1973 is not simply fodder for a disposable page of history. In this day and age, we had better take seriously the components that caused a country to win or lose.

Israel’s enemies are as devoted to its annihilation today as they were in 1973. As much as we’d like to ignore the grim reality, every free, democracy-loving country in the world is in a constant state of war with people determined to destroy it. That is why bodies were shredded in the streets of Boston in April; dedicated American soldiers were murdered in November 2009 at Fort Hood, Texas, by a terrorist shouting “Allahu Akbar” (“Allah is great”); and the World Trade Center in New York City was destroyed in September 2001. The shout “Allahu Akbar” frames the declaration of perpetual war, certified by vengeful attacks on innocent people.

If a democracy is to exist, it has only one option: survival through strength. In 1973 Israel was determined to see the conflict through and win, demonstrating its understanding of the consequences of failure. Decades earlier, many Israelis had experienced in Europe the effects of such deep hatred and had not forgotten its blood-soaked ugliness.

Friendship is a virtue that has charted the course between Israel and the United States for 65 years. In 1948 President Harry Truman, against almost all advice, made America the first country in the world to officially recognize the State of Israel. Nixon did not shrink from Russian imperialists and was willing to fight to prevent the destruction of a trusted ally. In 1917 and during the war-torn years of the 1940s, Americans marched to the aid of their allies, valued as friends in need.

A war of words waged on the floor of a debating society can be entertaining and concluded with no casualties. Unfortunately, reality doesn’t work that way. For more than two centuries, Americans have lived relatively secure, safe, healthy, and prosperous lives in a country that has kept us free. The United States of America has been a bulwark of strength—moral, industrial, and military. We have demonstrated fidelity to our Constitution, maintained a reasonable political consensus, and had unwavering love for our country.

Are all these things slipping away? In many respects, the answer is yes. The greatest dangers we face today are from within. A great infiltration has occurred and is destroying the society and culture that have made America great. We must decide whether to surrender or survive.

Scripture provides the wisdom America needs: “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Ps. 33:12). Believing that truth would be a step in the right direction.

ENDNOTE


Elwood McQuaid is consulting editor for The Friends of Israel.
"Then I [Ezekiel] heard Him speaking to me from the temple. . . . 'Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever.'" —Ezekiel 43:6–7
Earlier this year a former intelligence defense contractor named Edward Snowden made some stunning disclosures. His revelations pertained to federal government surveillance via two programs. One, pursuant to the Patriot Act, involves collecting vast amounts of telephone-call information from everyday citizens, detailing numbers called from what location, on what date, to what receiving number, and how long the call lasted. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) can access that information when investigating terrorism. Both the FBI and National Security Agency (NSA) then can intercept and record actual calls linked to suspicious numbers.

The second program, dubbed PRISM, gathers e-mails and other Internet activity of foreign-based people who use Web-based devices and communication platforms of companies like Google, Apple, Microsoft, Facebook, and Yahoo through specific requests from federal officials as authorized by our secret FISA Court—the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court—a judicial body whose proceedings are rarely made public. Some of the gathered data could involve innocent e-mails and Web postings from people overseas (think about the foreign missionaries you support) who connect with people inside the United States.

There is no question these programs are rooted in a national security need to stop terrorists before they strike. Christians need to analyze this situation, not merely from a political or legal standpoint, but from a biblical one as well.

Historically, these programs take us back to the Bill of Rights and the origins of the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Legal historian Leonard W. Levy, in his Original Intent and the Framers’ Constitution, made a persuasive argument that these issues may go back to a young John Adams who listened to arguments before the high court of Massachusetts prior to America’s birth. The issue was whether a “general writ of assistance” was all agents of the British crown needed to ransack colonists’ homes in search of goods for which custom fees had not been paid.

Such writs were never specific and gave frightening powers to break into homes and businesses and terrorize the occupants. As the story goes, Adams was electrified by the need to remedy this abuse, and he later drafted Article XIV of the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights of 1780, which influenced James Madison to write the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and require search warrants based on “probable cause.”

The Founding Fathers wanted to protect the lives, homes, and private papers of innocent citizens from the whim of government officials to forage for information that could be used for evil, rather than good.

The Bible provides a few spiritual insights on the subject. In the Old Testament, homes were considered gifts from God and were formally dedicated to Him (Dt. 20:5). A break-in was considered so serious that deadly force could be used to thwart it, at least at night (Ex. 22:2–3).

In the New Testament, when Jesus spoke of spiritual preparedness, He referred to a homeowner’s natural right to protect himself from intrusions. He said His followers should be like the homeowner who is alert enough to know when a break-in is about to take place (Lk. 12:39).

However, it used to be that personal property and personal information were found only on one’s person or in one’s physical surroundings, like the home. Today things are different. Our identities, as well as our most intimate communications, telephone records, financial data, relationships, contacts with groups we associate with, travel plans, and family and church activities, are all online. So we have a legitimate interest in knowing who is accessing our information without our knowledge or consent and how that information will be used.

Yet Americans face dangers from terrorists. National defense, homeland security, and gathering intelligence data are all top priorities. So how do we balance national security with personal liberty?

It is naive to believe the government will never use personal communications against people whose viewpoints are “politically incorrect.” The scandal earlier this year involving the Internal Revenue Service’s targeting of conservative organizations, including some Christian ministries, proves that point.

So let us be both wise as serpents and harmless as doves. The apostle Paul spoke of people who were “secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage)” (Gal. 5:1).

In the current political context, we need to advocate for proper limits against those who would “spy out our liberty”—in this case our civil liberty—so our freedoms are not reduced to a different type of “bondage.”
The call of Abraham in Genesis 12 is one of the most significant events in the biblical record. Although there is no way to know when the patriarch was born, scholars place his birth around 2166 B.C. Scripture teaches that Abraham obeyed God by journeying to the land of Canaan, which he entered when he was 75 years old. And thus began the Jewish presence in the land.

God made a covenant with Abraham (originally called Abram), promising him land, seed, blessing (Gen. 12:1–3), and an heir in his old age (15:4). The promise went down through the family to the Jewish people.

When Abram was 99, God expanded on His promise and changed Abram’s name to Abraham, meaning “father of a multitude,” and Sarai’s name to Sarah, meaning “princess”
God then promised him, “Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him” (v. 19).

The Lord restated the promise to Isaac: “I will be with you and bless you; to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham. . . . And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (26:3–4).

From then, the promise went to Isaac’s son Jacob:

I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed (28:13–14). God later changed Jacob’s name to Israel.

God’s promise of the land was so deeply embedded in Abraham’s family history that his great-grandson Joseph trusted in it even when he grew old in Egypt and knew he would die there. Joseph had been sold into slavery by his brothers when still a youth and never lived in the Promised Land again. But before he died at 110 years old, he demonstrated his faith in the promise the Lord had made, instructing his family, “I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here” (50:24–25).

Many years later, when Moses led the children of Israel home to the land God had given them, he brought Joseph’s bones with him. As the book of Joshua draws to a close, it includes this beautiful testimony:

The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph (Josh. 24:32).

In 1375 B.C.E. the next major phase of the Jewish presence in the land began, as the Lord raised up judges to lead His people because “in those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Jud. 21:25).
For centuries people have argued over who has the legitimate claim to the land known today as Israel. The Arab-Israeli conflict has raged for decades, with both sides claiming exclusive rights to the territory.

The Israelis trace their ownership to a biblical promise given by God some 4,000 years ago. The Arabs claim their descendants owned the land before the Israelites conquered it. Legitimate claim can only be determined by examining the historical record. But the record must be one that transcends historians on both sides of the issue, stands the test of time, and predates both Jewish and Arab occupation of the land.

The Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron
(Jon Arnold/Corbis).
The only such record is the infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of God. The scriptural record predates Abraham and his sons Ishmael and Isaac, out of which this controversy arose.

Neither Israel nor the Arabs originally owned the land. God Himself owns the Promised Land, as well as the whole earth (Ex. 9:29; 19:5; Lev. 25:23; Ps. 24:1). It is God who has the right to give land to the people He chooses, and He does so at His pleasure.

When God arranged and determined the boundaries of nations, He marked out a specific portion to be set aside for His people Israel. The size of the land grant was determined “according to the number of the children of Israel” (Dt. 32:8). God’s decision to grant the land on which the State of Israel resides today was made long before His promise to Abraham.

Two Old Testament covenants spell out Israel’s legal right to the land: the Abrahamic and Land Covenants.

In the Abrahamic Covenant, God divinely bestowed what was formally called the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed Isaac (Gen. 17:19–21) and to Isaac’s son Jacob (26:3; 28:13) as an eternal possession in perpetuity (12:7; 13:15; 17:8). Canaan is legitimately and legally owned by Israel today.

The land promise in the Abrahamic Covenant was later confirmed through Moses in what is commonly called the Land Covenant, also made with the nation of Israel (Dt. 28—30). There, Moses stipulated the conditions of obedience Israel needed to meet to remain in the land and be blessed. Disobedience to God’s commandments would lead to the nation’s dispersion. Although Israel was dispersed from the land, the covenant also promised restoration to the same land once Israel repented of sin.

The Arabs are quick to point out that Ishmael was Abraham’s elder son and would have first rights to the Promised Land. But that argument is fallacious because God specifically declared that His covenant promises would go through Isaac and Isaac’s seed after him (Gen. 17:18–21). Never did the promise go to Ishmael.

When it came time for the Israelites to take possession of the land, God gave Joshua divine authority to destroy and conquer the inhabitants on the east and west sides of the Jordan River—a total of 31 kings and their cities (Josh. 12:24; cf. 6:1—12:24). God then divided the land among the 12 tribes of Israel (chaps. 13—21), giving them authority to drive out the Canaanites over time.

Israel became a theocracy for the next 332 years and was ruled by judges after Joshua’s death (Jud. 3:9—16:31; 1 Sam. 7:6, 15).
For 332 years (1375–1043 B.C.), judges ruled over Israel. When the prophet Samuel, Israel’s final judge, was old, he appointed his sons to take his place. However, the Israelites rejected Samuel’s choice and demanded a king. Though displeased with the request, Samuel followed God’s instructions to give Israel what it wanted (1 Sam. 8:1–7, 22).

So Samuel anointed Saul as king over Israel (9:2; 10:1). Saul willfully disobeyed the Lord during his reign, and God finally rejected him (15:22–23, 28), replacing him with David, a man after His own heart and for whom He expanded the Abrahamic Covenant that gives the Jewish people the land of Israel.

Samuel anointed David king over Israel (16:1, 13). David went to war against Israel’s enemies and acquired land God promised to the Jewish people in the Land Covenant He made with them (Dt. 28–30; see “Land Rights of the Patriarchs,” page 16). David also captured the Jebusites’ land, which later became Jerusalem.

It was David’s desire to build a Temple for the Ark of the Covenant. 

Land Rights of the Kings
(1 Samuel–Jeremiah)
However, through Nathan the prophet, God informed David He would make an eternal, unconditional, covenant with him. This expansion of the earlier Abrahamic Covenant is the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:9–17).

It contains five provisions—all promises made to David:

1. His name would be great (v. 9).
2. He would have rest from his enemies (v. 11).
3. He would have a son (Solomon) who would build a house (Temple) for God (vv. 12–13).
4. Solomon’s kingdom would continue forever; his ruling dynasty would never cease (v. 13).
5. David’s house (descendants), kingdom, and throne would continue forever (v. 16).

These promises are reiterated throughout Scripture and will never be broken (1 Chr. 17:11–27; Ps. 89; Jer. 33:14–22; Ezek. 37:24–25; Lk. 1:32–33). They also have prophetic implications:

- Israel must be a nation in the land before the seven years of tribulation that will come on all the earth begin, as indicated in Scripture (Dan. 9:27; Zech. 12—14).
- Jesus Christ, who is in the line of David, must return to reign and rule on David’s earthly throne (Lk. 1:32).
- At His Second Coming, Messiah Jesus will set up a literal Kingdom on Earth in Israel, and His Kingdom will be eternal (v. 33).

In time, God instructed David to erect an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah, which is Mount Moriah. David purchased the land for 50 shekels of silver (2 Sam. 24:18, 24). Scripture records that today Israel still holds the title deed to Mount Moriah, where Solomon’s Temple once stood.

Before the Babylonians carried Judah into captivity (597–586 B.C.), the prophet Jeremiah declared that God would make a New Covenant with Israel and Judah (Jer. 31:31–40; 32:40–44). The New Covenant guarantees Israel’s return to the land after being gathered from the nations of the world (31:1–9).

God said with absolute certainty Israel will never be completely destroyed or cast off as a people or nation, and it will occupy Jerusalem as long as the sun and moon rotate in their orbits (cf. Jer. 30:11; 31:35–40).

His New Covenant promises are unconditional and eternal and will come to fruition in their fullness after Christ’s Second Coming before the Kingdom Age.

The New Covenant is a continual reminder that God will keep His promises to Israel and preserve the Jewish people in their land forever.
As the prophet Jeremiah had foretold, the Jewish people remained captives in Babylon for 70 years. When they returned home, they no longer were subjects of a Jewish king. With the demise of the southern kingdom of Judah, the world had entered the “times of the Gentiles” (Lk. 21:24).

Though God temporarily exiled the Israelites from their land due to their disobedience, He nevertheless brought them back to it. In 539 B.C., after Medo-Persia rose to power over Babylon, King Cyrus of Persia let them go home:

_The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem_ (Ezra 1:1–3).

Those who came home joined a small, impoverished remnant that never left. Jeremiah spoke of this band of survivors when he explained his own circumstances before he was taken to Egypt against his will by a group of fellow Israelites: “Then Jeremiah went to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, to Mizpah, and dwelt with him among the people who were left in the land” (Jer. 40:6).

Those “who were left” were “the poorest of the land who had not been carried away captive to Babylon” (v. 7). They were expected to care for the land and the vineyards and eek out a living amid the ruins of the fallen kingdom of Judah.

Cyrus’s edict, foretold more than 150 years earlier by the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 44:28—45:1), opened the door to allow the Jewish people to begin rebuilding their lives.

The first return is identified with Zerubbabel: “The whole assembly [that returned] together was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty” (Ezra 2:64), plus 7,337 servants and 200 singers (v. 65). Nehemiah led the second return in 445 B.C., and Ezra led the third return.
Under Zerubbabel, the Jewish people began rebuilding their Temple. Later Herod the Great modified it through a massive building project that took 46 years (Jn. 2:20). Jesus often visited this Temple before it was razed by Titus Vespasian and the Roman legions on the ninth of Av in A.D. 70.

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From Rome to the Turks

For hundreds of years, the Roman Empire ruled much of the known ancient world. Most of that time, Jewish people remained in their land. Then two major events occurred that resulted in their dispersion: the first and second Jewish revolts against Rome.

From A.D. 66 to 70, the First Jewish Great Revolt took place. Jesus predicted this conflict: “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near” (Lk. 21:20). In the larger context, Jesus exposed end-times conditions before the Second Advent (see Matthew 24).

The impoverished Jewish peasants were being crushed under heavy Roman taxation. Many sold their land to pay their taxes. Simmering anger resulted in sporadic violence.

The situation grew worse in A.D. 63. Many in Jerusalem suddenly became unemployed when the renovation of the Jewish Temple was finished. The peasants; artisans; and Zealots, who wanted to rid their homeland of Roman rule, all had a reason to fight. The revolt that...
followed ended badly for the Jewish people. Roman might was too powerful to defeat. Many were slaughtered, and others were taken captive to Rome.

Nevertheless, Jewish people still remained in their land. An estimated two-thirds of the population in the Galilee was Jewish, as was one-third in the coastal region. In fact, after the destruction of the second Temple in A.D. 70, several rabbinical academies were established.

From A.D. 132 to 135, the Second Jewish-Roman War occurred. In 130, Emperor Hadrian visited Jerusalem to construct a Roman city with a temple dedicated to Jupiter. This insult sparked a massive Jewish revolt. Seasoned Roman battle legions crushed the rebellion.

Adding insult to injury, Hadrian renamed Israel “Syria Palaeestina,” from which the English word Palestine is derived. He also renamed Jerusalem “Aelia Capitolina” and banned Jewish people from the city.

Again there was a dispersion from the land. However, as in the first war, a significant portion of the Jewish population relocated to areas outside Jerusalem, particularly to the Galilee region.

For the next 1,500 years, Jewish people living in their own land had to endure occupation under a host of foreign powers, including the Byzantines; violent Islamic sects; and worst of all, the vicious, anti-Semitic Crusaders.

For the Jewish remnant, life was a constant struggle to survive discriminations, persecutions, and massacres. Still, the promise of God’s watchfulness remained: “Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Ps. 121:4).

In the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire (Muslim Turks) began to rule over Israel, which constituted only a small portion of a vast kingdom. Religious minorities—Jewish and Christian—lived through both prosperity and persecution. In 1917 British General Edmund Allenby conquered Jerusalem during World War I. The Holy Land then came under the control of Great Britain, and the Ottoman Empire died.

Although robbed of their land heritage, Jewish people have maintained a well-documented, unbroken presence in Israel for well over 3,000 years. A pilgrim (who did not like Jewish people) visited Jerusalem at the close of the 15th century and recorded a keen observation in his journal:

The heathens oppress them at their pleasure. They know that the Jews think and say that this is the Holy Land that was promised to them. Those of them who live here are regarded as holy by the other Jews, for in spite of all the tribulations and the agonies they suffer at the hands of the heathen, they refuse to leave the place.1

The land and all its cities, especially Jerusalem, are inextricably intertwined with the life of the nation of Israel. The Muslims’ most sacred place is Mecca in Saudi Arabia. But for Jewish people, no place but Israel will ever be holy. Their heart sentiment is clearly expressed in Scripture: “If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth—if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy” (Ps. 137:6).

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Peter Colón is the creative resources coordinator for The Friends of Israel.
Whether or not the Jewish people were faithful to God, their behavior never invalidated their rightful ownership of the land of Israel.
Disobedience cost them possession of it from time to time, but never their God-given title to it.

For born-again believers, the situation can be likened to the doctrine of eternal security. Salvation in Jesus Christ is a gift from God. Once received, it cannot be lost (Jn. 3:16; 10:28). Bad conduct on the part of an individual who possesses this gift may quash blessings, but it cannot nullify God’s promise of eternal redemption (6:37–39; 1 Cor. 3:15).

The Jewish people own the Promised Land based on the fact that God gifted it to them via an eternal, unconditional covenant. Some Jewish notables actually purchased parcels of their own land from the inhabitants. Abraham bought a cave from Ephron the Hittite in which to bury his wife, Sarah (Gen. 23:16). Jacob bought land from Hamor in Shechem (33:19).

Even King David, who ruled the entire land for 40 years, spent money to purchase a threshing floor from Ornan the Jebusite (2 Sam. 24:21–24; 1 Chr. 21:22–25). Today that threshing floor is known as the Temple Mount—the property where two Jewish Temples once stood and where the Muslim Dome of the Rock sits.

Prior to the birth of modern Israel, Jewish people continued to buy back their own land. Wrote foreign policy expert Mitchell G. Bard, “From the beginning of World War I, . . . part of Palestine’s land was owned by absentee landlords who lived in Cairo, Damascus and Beirut. About 80 percent of the Palestinian Arabs were debt-ridden peasants, seminomads and Bedouins.”

Investors purposely sought property that would not displace Arabs, so they purchased tracts that were largely unwanted, uncultivated, and swampy. “It was only after the Jews had bought all of the available uncultivated land,” wrote Bard, “that they began to purchase cultivated land. Many Arabs were willing to sell because of the migration to coastal towns and because they needed money to invest in the citrus industry.”

A top British official in 1930 observed, “They [Jews] paid high prices for the land, and in addition they paid to certain of the occupants of those lands a considerable amount of money which they were not legally bound to pay.”

By 1944, Jewish investors continued to pay exorbitant prices to wealthy landowners for small parcels of arid or semiarid lands. Land records from 1880 to 1948 show that 73 percent of Jewish plots were purchased not from the poor Arab peasant farmers or agricultural laborers, but from large landowners.

The policy worked until the Palestinian Authority under Yasser Arafat issued a death penalty for all Arabs who sell land to Jewish Israelis. In 1997 a 70-year-old Arab real-estate dealer was murdered after he violated the edict. In the same year, three more Arab land dealers were killed, and a fourth disappeared. To this day, Arafat’s successors have not repudiated this decree.

It has been calculated there are at least 170 references in Scripture stating God gave the land to the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Bible records that God confirmed the gift 55 times with an oath. Twelve of those times, He calls His covenant “everlasting.”

God also declares, “The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me” (Lev. 25:23). Who can tell the Almighty what He can or cannot do? He has the right to give the land to whomever He pleases because, in the end, He is the Owner.

ENDNOTES

2 Ibid.
The British Mandate

World War I (1914–1918) changed the map of the old Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. The region was split into two great sections. The northern half went to France (the French Mandate), which included what today is Lebanon and Syria. The southern half, including the west bank of the Jordan River westward to the Mediterranean Sea, went to England (the British Mandate). The British called their occupied area by the geopolitical term Palestine.

Britain’s specific task was to create a homeland for the Jewish people. History shows that what actually transpired was far different.

As the war was ending, British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour made a momentous declaration on November 2, 1917, announcing the British government was prepared to establish a Jewish home on the Jewish people’s ancestral land. The document became known as the Balfour Declaration. An estimated 85,000 to 100,000 Jewish people lived in Israel at the time.

The prospect for the Jewish people was promising. However, certain pro-Arab leaders and political figures in the British Foreign Ministry had other plans. They got busy carving up the territory. In 1920 Britain created Iraq. In 1921 it took 77 percent of the remaining territory, all of which was supposed to go to the Jewish people, and created Jordan—which did not include the west bank of the Jordan River. (Jordan captured the West Bank in 1948, made it off-limits to Jewish settlement, and expelled all the Jewish people living there.)

Though aware of Britain’s actions, Jewish people continued to immigrate. It has been suggested that between 1919 and 1923, about 35,000 came to the land. Between 1924 and 1928, another 80,000 arrived. Then between 1929 and 1939, as Nazism was overtaking Germany, an estimated 250,000 Jewish people returned to their ancestral homeland.

From 1929 to 1939, Arab riots broke out. Many Jewish people were massacred. The situation grew so intense Britain forsook the Balfour Declaration and in 1936 convened what became known as the Peel Commission. It restricted Jewish people to a tiny piece of land along the Mediterranean coast and a small area in the north, on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Yet even this small concession to the Jews irritated the Arabs, who reacted to the Peel Commission proposal with uprisings that lasted until 1939.

The concession was never initiated. However, Britain failed to uphold the Balfour Declaration. Instead, it issued a new policy called the MacDonald White Paper. From 1939 to 1943, when Jewish people were still able to escape from World War II Europe, desperate to find refuge from the Nazis, Britain limited Jewish immigration to the Promised Land.

After the war, a few Jewish groups fought Arab and British oppression. Eventually, the British had enough. They handed the entire problem over to the UN.

On November 29, 1947, the UN gave the Jewish people a meager 11 percent of the land that had been designated for them. All the rest went to the Arabs. And much of the land the Jews received was barren, uninhabitable, and too narrow a sliver to defend. But even that was more than the Arabs were willing to concede.

Five Arab armies descended on the newborn State of Israel, certain they would be able to destroy it. Instead, the Arabs lost the war, and Israel had gained an additional 2,500 square miles. After 2,000 years, Israel was again in Jewish hands. Wrote Bible scholar Dave Hunt, “No other people have returned to reestablish their own nation and language after being cast out of their land for such a period of time.”

God has promised the Jewish people, “Behold, I will bring back the captivity of Jacob’s tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; . . . I will multiply them, and they shall not diminish; . . . and I will punish all who oppress them” (Jer. 30:18–20).

Israel’s rebirth is a pinnacle event in history and shows that God keeps His promises and continues to fulfill His prophecies.
Harold LeRoy Gardner, The Friends of Israel’s Midwest representative in the Department of Ministry Advancement, was called on May 29 to meet the Savior whom he had so passionately dedicated his life to serve.

LeRoy, or “Lee,” was born on November 24, 1940, at the family home in Pine River, Minnesota, the seventh of nine children. After graduating high school, he began a 20-year career as a meat cutter. A trip to a steakhouse with Lee was always an education.

In 1961 he met the love of his life, Sharon O’Brien; and they soon committed their lives to each other in marriage. The Lord blessed them with four children.

Sensitive to God’s leading, LeRoy felt the Lord calling him to ministry. In 1976 he left his meat-cutting position to attend Bible college. After graduating, he began another nearly 20-year career as a pastor with Village Missions, pastoring five churches in the West.

With the children grown, Lee embarked on a third career, this time with The Friends of Israel. He spent more than 13 years ministering in a 12-state region to people who support The Friends of Israel through their prayers and gifts. His pastoral training served him well, as he and Sharon traveled extensively throughout the Midwest. His love for the Lord and passion for sharing biblical truth were evident every time he spoke with supporters of this ministry.

Besides Sharon, Lee leaves behind three children: Kevin, Cindy (Mrs. Darwin) Davies, and Philip (married to Tali). Their son Jeff preceded Lee into glory. He also leaves nine grandchildren.

Scripture says, “For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints” (Heb 6:10). Neither will we forget. LeRoy’s warm personality, deep love of Christ, work of faith, and labor of love will be greatly missed by all of us at The Friends of Israel.
A prevailing sentiment around the world seems to be that if Israel had never gained its independence, the Arabs would be happy; and there would be peace. But Arab terrorism started long before the State of Israel existed.

When the Allied Powers defeated the Ottoman Turkish Empire in World War I, they found a Middle East in need of stabilization and direction. The San Remo Conference of 1920, held to determine a strategy for the region, ruled that Great Britain would oversee the area that included what are today Israel, Jordan, and Iraq.

Arab nationalists were angered by British rule, in part because of Britain’s 1917 Balfour Declaration that viewed “with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” Encouraged by British Christians who favored the plan, the Balfour Declaration’s allotment for a Jewish homeland approximated the biblical land grant. According to British historian Sir Martin Gilbert, “The total area of Arab lands in Arabia was 1,184,000 square miles. Palestine, the only portion of former Turkish territory set aside for a Jewish National Home, covered less than 11,000 square miles.” But even that tiny slice of territory was more than the Arabs were willing to let the Jews have.

Haj Amin al-Husseini, an Arab nationalist who had served in the Ottoman army and later partnered with Adolf Hitler, began organizing small groups of Arabs called fedayeen (Armenian, “those who sacrifice themselves” or “redeemers”). The fedayeen attacked Jewish farms in the Jordan Valley and Galilee, trying to discourage Jewish immigration and drive Jewish people from the land.

Most Jews were not intimidated. They organized themselves into paramilitary groups, one of which was the Haganah (Hebrew, “defense”), the forerunner of today’s Israel Defense Forces.

During Passover of 1920, Arab violence from the north spread into Jerusalem. For three days, Arabs attacked Jewish bystanders with sticks, knives, and stones. The Jews defended themselves. But British response was slow, and five Jews and four Arabs were killed.

By 1921 Haj Amin al-Husseini organized more fedayeen to terrorize Jewish residents. He instigated riots in Jaffa and Petah Tikvah. Dozens of Jews were killed and hundreds wounded. Yet they continued to immigrate to their homeland, hoping to leave anti-Semitism and poverty behind.

The Jewish population of Palestine doubled to 150,000 by 1929. Arab terrorists waged constant anti-Zionist campaigns. By then, Haj Amin al-Husseini was the grand mufti of Jerusalem. When thousands of Jewish people gathered at the Western Wall on August 15, 1929, for Tisha B’Av to commemorate the destruction of their Temple, they were met by Arab mobs pelt ing them with stones. These mobs had been told the Jews had cursed Islam and were meeting to destroy the al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock. The Arab cry was to defend the holy sites and drive out the Jews.

On August 23 more than 1,000 Arabs attacked the Jewish people in Jerusalem. In all, 133 Jews were killed and 339 wounded. The British killed 116 Arab jihadists. Anti-Jewish propaganda spread quickly, as faked pictures of a destroyed al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock were circulated in Jerusalem and Hebron.

Hebron was a community of Arabs and Jews who had lived together for centuries. They shared a holy site, the Cave of the Patriarchs, which Abraham purchased as a burial place for his wife Sarah (Gen. 23). Also buried there are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Rebecca, and Leah. The Arabs base their claim to the site on their association with Abraham, making this City of the Patriarchs sacred to both religions.

As the August 23, 1929, riots in Jerusalem raged, 700 Arabs congregated in Hebron, armed with sticks, axes, and knives. Initially, they were going to Jerusalem to defend the al-Aqsa Mosque, believed to be under attack.
Archaeologists dig up King David’s palace

An excavation has unearthed a palace of King David’s. “This is indisputable proof of the existence of a central authority in Judah during the time of King David,” said researchers Prof. Yossi Garfinkel and Saar Ganor. Until now, no palaces were clearly attributable to the early 10th century B.C. The site, Khirbet Qeiyafa, was probably destroyed in a battle against the Philistines in 980 B.C.

Recent excavations indicate a well planned, fortified city in Judah. Khirbet Qeiyafa is located 30 km (18 miles) southwest of Jerusalem on a hill that borders the Elah Valley—a strategic location in the biblical kingdom of Judah and where the battle between David and Goliath took place.

Such urban planning has not been found at any Canaanite or Philistine city, nor in the northern kingdom of Israel. Khirbet Qeiyafa is the earliest known example of this city plan and indicates this pattern had already been developed by the time of King David.

The city came to a sudden end, as indicated by hundreds of pottery vessels, stone utensils and metal objects left on the floors of the houses. Rich assemblages of pottery, stone tools, and metal objects were found, as well as many cultic objects, scarabs, seals and the most famous Khirbet Qeiyafa ostracon, an inscription written with ink on a pottery sherd.

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Instead, they overpowered the lone British policeman stationed to keep the peace and began a house-to-house, search-and-destroy mission against the Jewish people of Hebron.

Two dozen Arab officers were supposed to be assisting the British police, but they did little to stop the angry mob. On the other hand, several Arab families rescued hundreds of Jews, providing shelter in their own homes.

The killing rampage left 64 Jews slaughtered, nearly 10 percent of the Jewish population of Hebron. The brave Arab families that sheltered their Jewish neighbors saved an estimated 400 Jewish people. When British reinforcements finally arrived, they evacuated the surviving Jews.

Jewish people returned to Hebron in 1931 and stayed until 1936 when Arab riots again forced the British to evacuate them. Hebron stayed Jewless until after the 1967 Six-Day War.

Today Hebron is the largest city in Judea-Samaria (West Bank) and is home to about 130,000 Arabs, 530 Jews, and three Christians, according to the Jewish Virtual Library. The city has continued to know incidents of violence and bloodshed ever since the Arab riots of the 1920s.

Throughout the 1920s, the Arabs attacked Jewish settlements. In 1929 in Safed, they killed 20 Jewish people, mostly children and old people; wounded 32 others; and tortured several.

The Arabs were no happier before Israeli statehood than they are now. Their goal then was the same as it is today: the elimination of all Jewish people from Israel and the Middle East.

The archaeological site Khirbet Qeiyafa where Israeli archaeologists say they have found a palace of King David and a large storeroom (Skyview/AP/Corbis).
In November 1947, the UN General Assembly passed a plan to partition what was left of British Mandate Palestine and establish separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem an international city. Though accepted by the Jewish leadership, the plan was rejected by the Arab League, which immediately began forming volunteer armies to prevent partition. One of the most infamous Arab attacks came five months after the partition plan was passed.

By early 1948, relations between Arabs and Jews were extremely tense. British forces were charged with keeping the peace. But with the end of the British Mandate in sight and the withdrawal of British troops only months away, the task grew more difficult.

Earlier in 1947, Arab leaders called for the bombing of Hadassah Hospital to frighten the Jewish people. By January 1948, in light of their impending departure (May 1948), the British had eased their security. Thus the Jewish enclave had become increasingly cut off from the main sections of Jewish Jerusalem.

The hospital is located on the campus of The Hebrew University on Mount Scopus. The only access to the hospital and university campus was via a narrow, mile-and-a-half-long road that passed through several Arab neighborhoods. The Arabs blocked access to both the hospital and the university, and Arab nationalists infiltrated the neighborhoods and made plans to ambush Jewish travelers who already were in grave danger from Arab snipers. The Hadassah staff was keenly aware of the perils of traveling the road and constantly asked British forces to guarantee their safety to the hospital.

At 9 A.M. on April 13, 1948, a medical convoy was dispatched to take supplies to the hospital. Physicians, medical students, nurses, patients, family members, and university lecturers were traveling that day. At approximately 9:45 A.M., the convoy made its way around a steep curve in the narrow road when the lead vehicle struck a mine planted by Arab terrorists. Immediately, they all came under a barrage of heavy machine-gun fire.

Five vehicles managed to escape; but the armored vehicle, ambulance, and two buses were trapped. Several passengers waved white flags to surrender, but the gunfire did not cease. Gasoline began leaking from one of the vehicles. Soon, Arabs tossed Molotov cocktails onto the fuel. The vehicles exploded, and everything went up in flames. In all, 80 people were murdered, including one British soldier. Dr. Chaim Yassky, director general of Hadassah Medical Organization, lay among the dead.

Journalist Daniel Greenfield wrote, “The barbarity of the attack was then followed by snapshots of the dead, who in some cases had been decapitated, being sold as postcards as yet another reminder that the enemy was operating on a whole other notion of morality.”

The British never prosecuted anyone. Hadassah allegedly has proof of British collaboration with the Arabs to allow the attack, which senselessly massacred a group of people vital to the region’s health. Hadassah Hospital was the area’s most modern facility, as well as the first teaching hospital. And it served both Jews and Arabs.

Sixty-five years later, not much has changed. Radical Islamists operate in exactly the same fashion as the terrorists on the road to Hadassah. Their actions not only harm innocent Jews but hurt their own people as well.

Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, thinks nothing of firing thousands of rockets into southern Israel in an attempt to kill as many innocent Israelis as possible. Ironically, Hamas targets the Israeli power station that is the main source of electricity for its own people.

Each year on the 4th of Nissan, the date on the Jewish calendar of the Hadassah massacre, a caravan drives the mile-and-a-half-long road as a reminder of the brutal killings. This year marks the 65th anniversary of those deaths. Yet Islamists present an almost daily reminder of the Hadassah Hospital massacre as they continue their senseless acts of terrorism.

EDITOR’S NOTE: To read more about Hadassah Hospital and how it changed healthcare in the region, log on to foi.org/imgextras.

END NOTE


by Steve Herzig
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is convinced the phrase “2,000 years of exile” is inaccurate. It is used to describe the almost 2,000-year dispersion of the Jewish people between the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948.

The common thought is that everything Judaic in the Holy Land was eradicated when the Romans besieged Judea and Samaria in A.D. 70. Though Jewish people were banned from Jerusalem, small, vibrant pockets of Jewish communities have always kept the Hebrew heart beating in the cities of the Holy Land.

History discloses that the Jewish people have had a steady presence in their homeland since the days of Joshua.

In 212, for example, Roman Emperor Caracalla granted citizenship to subjects of the Roman Empire, providing they had a homeland. Caracalla bestowed Roman citizenship on the Jewish people since it was understood they had a country of their own: the Promised Land.1

In the 7th century the Jewish population in Jerusalem and surrounding cities had grown so much that more than 20,000 Jewish fighters participated in the siege of Tyre.2 The Jews of Jerusalem also joined forces with the Persians to defeat the Byzantines in hopes of regaining their independence in 614.

However, as the 7th century ended, the Jewish population in the land declined under Arab rule; but it was not destroyed. Between the 7th and 10th centuries, the cities of Tiberias and Jerusalem were centers of Jewish scholarship. A group of Jewish intellectuals from Tiberias, the Masoretes, worked tirelessly to fix the pronunciation and cantillation of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) by adding vowel points between the Hebrew consonants. Even today their work affects modern translations of the Old Testament.

In the 11th century, when the Crusaders arrived in Jerusalem, they killed thousands of Jewish people there. Interestingly, when the Muslims under Saladin overthrew the Crusaders in 1187, they allowed the Jews to live in Jerusalem.3

In 1492, when Christopher Columbus prepared to sail west, Spain expelled its entire Jewish community—more than 200,000 people. Many managed to make it east, to a small city in northern Israel called Safed.

The Jewish population of Safed grew exponentially. Over time it went from a town of three synagogues to the epicenter of Jewish life in the Holy Land in the 16th century, with 21 synagogues and 18 Jewish houses of study.4

In the years leading up to the 20th century, the land of Israel saw a massive influx of Jewish settlers from Russia and Europe. Between 1882 and 1948, thousands of Jewish immigrants established themselves in cities like Rishon LeZion, Petah Tikva, and Tel Aviv. In fact, many influential Israelis who were critical in establishing the modern State of Israel were born in the Holy Land.

To name a few, Moshe Dayan, Israel’s late defense and foreign minister, was born on a kibbutz near the Sea of Galilee under the rule of the Ottoman Turks in 1915, 33 years before Israel gained its independence. Ariel Sharon, Israel’s 11th prime minister, was born in British Mandate Palestine in a village northwest of Tel Aviv in 1928, 20 years before statehood.

There is no doubt the Roman destruction of Jerusalem was instrumental in forcing many Jewish people into exile, but it did not eliminate them from the land. History reveals their long and unbroken presence in the land of Israel and their legitimate claim to it as their national home.

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2 Ibid.
3 “The Crusaders” <safed.co.il/the-crusaders.html>.
4 “Looking Back at Safed in the 16th Century” <safed.co.il/safed-golden-era.html>.

by Christopher J. Katulka, Church Ministries representative in Texas with The Friends of Israel and coleader of ORIGINS.
On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly approved Resolution 181, a plan to partition what was left of British Palestine into two states: one Arab, one Jewish. Seventy-seven percent of the territory had already been given to the Arabs.

The Jewish people living in the land accepted the resolution, despite their meager allotment. The Arabs, however, rejected it and immediately turned to violence against the Jewish people.1

In Jerusalem an Arab mob attacked a Jewish marketplace near Jaffa Gate, forcing the Haganah (today the Israel Defense Forces) to defend the site, albeit unsuccessfully. Eventually, the Arabs severed Jerusalem from the rest of Israel’s Jewish communities. Israel’s War of Independence would have its beginnings even before the Jewish state was established.

Six months after the UN approved the partition, Israeli statesman David Ben-Gurion and the provisional government signed Israel’s Declaration of Independence on May 14, 1948. A few short hours later, Egyptian aircraft bombed Tel Aviv. By early morning on May 15, Iraq, Transjordan, Lebanon, and Syria invaded the new State of Israel. The Jordanian army pushed into East Jerusalem, occupying much of the Old City and expelling all of the Jewish people from the Jewish Quarter.

The first days of the war were devastating for Israel. The Haganah lost its footing on all fronts. Syrian tanks advanced on small Jewish villages in the north near the Sea of Galilee. Jerusalem was already isolated, and Iraqi troops were pushing forward toward the middle of the country while Egypt advanced from the south on Tel Aviv.2

Even though the Arab armies were progressing on all sides, Ben-Gurion believed the heart of the war was in Jerusalem and that Jerusalem was where Israel’s efforts should be invested. Yigael Yadin, the head of operations, had a different opinion. Yadin believed the Haganah should focus on southern Israel in the Negev to prevent Egypt from moving on Tel Aviv.3

Eventually, Yadin pushed back the Egyptians and gained ground in the south. The Haganah also gained territory in the north from Nazareth to Haifa, later creating a route from the coast to Jerusalem. As the dust settled, it became evident Israel had acquired more land than the tiny sliver allotted it by the UN.

However, Jerusalem was still separated. The place where the Haganah forces were able to stop the Jordanian army became the dividing line between Jewish and Jordanian Jerusalem for 19 years.

Jordan desecrated the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, and it fell into utter ruin. Synagogues, like the famous Hurva Synagogue, that once served as vital places of worship in the Jewish Quarter were destroyed by the Arab Legion. Ancient Torah scrolls were burned,
Is a ruin still a ruin when it is rebuilt? It is when the ruin is a synagogue located in the Old City in what today is called East Jerusalem. The Hurva (Hebrew, "ruin") Synagogue was dedicated on March 15, 2010, in the presence of rabbis, Israeli politicians, and dignitaries from around the world. It stands as a witness to the strength and resilience of the Jewish people who live in such a violent neighborhood.

Founded in 1701 by Polish Jews who made aliyah ("ascended" to Israel), it was originally named Beit Ya’akov ("House of Jacob"). Construction was not yet complete when Muslims leveled it to the ground in 1721. It stood in ruins for nearly 140 years until disciples of the great Talmudist and scholar, the Gaon of Vilna (Vilnius, Lithuania), began to rebuild it in 1836. Completed in 1864, it was a fixture in Jerusalem’s skyline for more than 80 years.

By May 15, 1948, the day after Israel gained its independence, five Arab nations attacked the fledgling country, determined to drive it into the Mediterranean Sea. At the time, thousands of Jews lived in the Old City. Elite Jordanian forces overpowered them, forcing them to flee. The Jordanians quickly set explosives and blew up the synagogue, hoisting their flag on its ruins.

Thousands of Jewish people in East Jerusalem became refugees, including all who lived in the neighborhoods of Nahalat Shimon (established in 1891) and Shimon HaTzadik (purchased in 1876), settled by Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews.

East Jerusalem was Jewless for 19 years. No Jewish people were permitted to live there. In 1950 Jordan annexed it. With the Jewish presence extinguished, 35 of the 36 synagogues in the area were destroyed. Materials from Jewish homes, synagogues, and other buildings were used to build hen-houses and stables.

Headstones from Jewish graves on the Mount of Olives were used to line the floors of public bathrooms, construct military installations, and pave roads. In all, 38,000 Jewish graves in the ancient Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives and multitudes of Jewish homes, synagogues, and businesses were destroyed.

These Jewish people were forced to flee their homes and way of life with little more than what they could carry. Where did they go, and what did they do?

Unlike the Arabs who left their homes before the War of Independence and then received no help from surrounding Arab nations, the Jewish refugees from East Jerusalem were able to rebuild their lives inside the newly formed State of Israel. Their Jewish countrymen helped them and absorbed them into the rest of the population.

After heavy labor (five years of construction) and sizeable cost ($6 million), Hurva Synagogue was rebuilt. Today, with its classic, white Neo-Byzantine dome, it is again distinguishing itself in the Old City. It is truly a symbol of the Jewish families—citizens of Jerusalem—who rebuilt their lives in what had been their homeland for centuries.

by Steve Herzig
Levy said the scroll represents even more: It “reveals the judgments of God to be poured out on the earth, Christ’s Second Coming to rightfully inherit and implement the title deed of redemption to planet Earth, and His righteous rule in the Millennial Kingdom.”

Only the Messiah of Israel has the right to take the scroll and bring all of human history to a close. He is the Redeemer, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8).

Israel is represented as a woman about to deliver a child: “Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth” (12:1–2).

John F. Walvoord, late president of Dallas Theological Seminary, explained, “The woman symbolized Israel, as indicated by Genesis 37:9–11, where the sun and the moon referred to Jacob and Rachel, Joseph’s parents. The stars in the woman’s crown clearly related to the 12 sons of Jacob and identified the woman as Israel fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant.”

Revelation 12:1–2 summarizes the history of the Jewish people. They travailed “and cried out in labor . . . to give birth” to the most wonderful gift the world could ever receive: the Messiah, who came to redeem humanity from Satan’s (the dragon’s) clutches and provide eternal life to all who believe in Him.

Jewish history has been filled with persecution and suffering, yet Israel’s national destiny is to fulfill the promise God swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: “in you [through the Messiah] all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3).

Revelation 12 continues: Another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red...
The Division and Desecration of Jerusalem, from page 32

and thousands of Jewish tombs that dotted the Mount of Olives were shattered and used for building materials. To make matters worse, Jewish bodies were exhumed and discarded to make way for a road to lead to a Jordanian hotel atop the Mount of Olives.

Such devastation might have caused many to throw in the towel. However, the Israelis refused to succumb to defeatism.

Today Jerusalem has a completely different countenance. In the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel again took control of the Old City. The Jewish Quarter has been restored to its former glory and continues to be updated to accommodate the millions of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim worshipers who fill its streets. The Hurva Synagogue has been rebuilt, and the Mount of Olives is part of an ongoing restoration project.

Yet as glorious as this restoration to the land has been, God promises an even greater restoration:

Thus says the Lord God: “Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel, . . . Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore” (Ezek. 37:21–22; 26).

That restoration will be glorious indeed.

ENDNOTES

1 David M. Levy, Revelation (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel, 1999), 78.

by Thomas C. Simcox

ENDNOTES

God’s Provision for Sin

God is light (1 Jn. 1:5). Light defines and describes God’s true nature and symbolizes His purity, character, and glory. To have true fellowship with God, Christians must have a vital relationship with Him through Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world (Jn. 8:12).

In 1 John 1 the apostle John made it clear a person cannot walk habitually in the darkness of sin and have fellowship with God. Such a person is a liar—devoid of truth (1 Jn. 1:6). People who boast that they have no sin (i.e., sin nature) are self-deceived and lack truth. God’s Word is not in them; they accuse God of lying (vv. 8, 10); and they directly attack God’s nature, character, and veracity. There is no hope for these people unless they repent, confess their sin, and begin to walk in God’s light.

In 1 John 2:1–2 John presented the purpose for writing this epistle: to teach that when Christians sin, a remission for Sin

Christian Purity

In the previous chapter, John had used the first-person plural “we.” But in chapter 2 he spoke in the first-person singular, addressing the reader directly: “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin” (v. 1). The phrase "my little children ("little born ones") does not imply John viewed his readers as immature, nor that they were necessarily his converts. Rather, it conveys pastoral affection, love, and the responsibility John felt for those he was addressing. This is a favorite phrase of tenderness that John used often (2:12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). As a spiritual and loving father, he was providing necessary direction and warning to those under his care.

The phrase “these things I write to you” applies to the entire epistle, including his previous instruction concerning the incarnation of Christ, and false teachers and their twisted attitudes on sin.

John wrote this epistle to guide Christians so that they will “not sin” (2:1). John did not say this epistle will help Christians never to sin again. Sin is always possible as long as believers possess the old sin nature. And the sin nature will not be removed until believers receive their glorified bodies.

John acknowledged Christians will succumb to sin sometime in their lives: “And if anyone sins” (v. 1). The word if in the Greek text is translated “since” and assumes believers will sin sometimes.

Christians who walk in the light of God’s Word will still face temptations, but the Lord promises to provide a way of escape so they will not succumb. The apostle Paul wrote,

“No temptation has overtaken you except as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

In other words, applying the teaching of John’s epistle and yielding to the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit will strengthen the believer’s resolve not to succumb to sin when tempted by Satan. Remember, no act of sin, no matter how insignificant, can remain unconfessed if you want to walk consistently in fellowship with God.

Christ’s Provision

It is inevitable believers will fall into sin, but God does not intend for them to flounder around in it, trying to figure out how to be restored to fellowship with Him. God has provided for restoration in Christ: “And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 Jn. 2:1). John said he himself (“we have”) needed an Advocate, just as they did. The Advocate was not someone who would appear at a specific, future time to bring restoration; He was there before John ever wrote the epistle.

The word for “Advocate” is the Greek word Paraclete. It refers to someone who is summoned alongside of another person to provide comfort, encouragement, exhortation, and help. John used the word in his Gospel, referring to the Holy Spirit’s ministry in the life of a Christian (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). Jesus Christ not only described Himself as the Comforter (Helper) but stated that God the Father will be the Holy Spirit described in chapter 2: “And the Advocate, the Father’s Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (14:16). The word “another” (Greek allos) means another of the same kind.

In other words, the Comforter sent by God the Father will be the Holy Spirit (a member of the Godhead), who is the same kind of Comforter as Jesus Christ. He indwells believers (v. 17) and carries out Christ’s ministry within them on Earth, while Christ is their Advocate in heaven.
Thus, Christ’s advocacy functions in three ways for Christians: (1) He is their Legal Defender; (2) He is their Intercessor, seated at God’s right hand and making intercession for them (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25); and (3) He confesses their names before God the Father because they confessed Him before men (Mt. 10:32).

**Christ’s Propitiation**

John then connected the self-sacrifice of Christ as the basis for His advocacy: “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1 Jn. 2:2).

The text does not say Jesus is the propitiator. Nor does it say He functioned like the Old Testament high priest who, on the Day of Atonement, sprinkled blood on the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies to cover sin. The priest did this once a year to appease God’s wrath so He would bestow mercy on Israel. The text says, “He Himself is the propitiation.” Yes, Jesus is the High Priest. But more than that, He is literally the “propitiation,” giving Himself for the believer’s sins. Notice, the text does not say Jesus was the propitiation but, rather, He is the propitiation, meaning His propitiation ministry continues from its inception and into the future for the sins of the world.

The word *propitiation* means to appease, expiate, or make atonement. Propitiation is used in Scripture to describe an offering for sin that will satisfy the righteous demands of a holy God and assuage His divine wrath against sin. Thus it is a sacrificial term that denotes the means by which sins (1) were covered on the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament and (2) are today remitted and removed through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. In other words, propitiation does not placate a vengeful God but, rather, satisfies the righteousness of a holy God, thereby making it possible for Him to show mercy righteously.

Propitiation is needed because man’s sin of rebellion against God and His commandments has alienated him from God. God’s holiness leaves Him only two choices: remain alienated from sinners, leaving them eternally damned; or lovingly devise a plan for forgiving their sins and reconciling them back into fellowship with Him. Through grace, God provides the only possible means of propitiating Himself—the sacrifice of His Son as a substitution for sinners. Christ came to Earth to pay in full the penalty for sin through His death on the cross. This made it possible for God to be propitiated; for sin to be expiated; and for people to be justified, forgiven, and restored back to fellowship with God.

Christ’s propitiation was efficacious “for [the sins of] the whole world” (v. 2). The preposition *for* is repeated three times in the last phrase to emphasize that Christ’s propitiatory sacrifice is for people everywhere. The word *world* refers to the entire scope of unsaved humanity that is condemned because of sin.

John taught that Christ’s redemptive death is universal for all humanity, but he did not teach that everyone will be saved. Jesus made it clear not everyone is going to heaven. Those who reject God’s gift of salvation in Christ will in no way receive eternal life but are eternally damned (cf. Jn. 3:16, 18, 36; Rom. 6:23; Heb. 2:3).

Praise to God for His wonderful plan of salvation through the advocacy of Jesus Christ! We who were once condemned are now eternally justified, and can walk in fellowship with God.
Because of God's grace, the church was able to grow. This article on the grace of God in the New Testament will observe how God, through grace, administered His eternal, moral absolutes over all mankind to establish and grow His church.

Grace and the Church

After the church was born in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, large numbers of Jewish people were placing their faith in Christ because of the miracles and bold witness of some of the apostles (Acts 2—3). After Israel’s rulers, elders, scribes, and high priest sternly rebuked Peter and John because of their bold witness concerning Jesus, the Holy Spirit filled the apostles and Jewish believers in Jerusalem; “and great grace was upon them all” (4:1–33).

The Jewish church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch to check out reports that many Greeks there had turned in belief to Jesus through the witness of scattered Jews. Barnabas recognized this work as “the grace of God” (11:10–23).

In Antioch Paul and Barnabas persuaded many Jewish people and devout Gentile proselytes “to continue in the grace of God” (13:42–43).

At Iconium Paul and Barnabas stayed a long time, “speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace” (14:3). As a result, “a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed” (v. 1).

The church at Antioch had “handed over” Paul and Barnabas “to the grace of God for the work which they had completed” (13:1–3; 14:26). Later the same church “handed over” Paul and Silas to “the grace of God” as they started out on another missionary journey (15:40).

As Gentiles were placing their faith in Christ, certain Jewish believers insisted believing Gentiles must also be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses to be saved (vv. 1, 5). A council of church leaders in Jerusalem decided Jews and Gentiles alike were saved exclusively “through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 11).

A brilliant Jewish believer named Apollos “greatly helped those who had believed through grace” (18:27).

The apostle Paul declared that the ministry he “received from the Lord Jesus” was “to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (20:24).

The last time Paul met with the elders of the church at Ephesus, he entrusted them “to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (20:32).

The Apostle Paul’s Grace Statements to the Church at Rome

Paul declared that it was through the resurrected Christ that he and the other apostles “received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name” (Rom. 1:5).

Paul used the following salutation to the believers in Rome: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 7).

Paul made it clear all people “have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” but can be “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (3:23–24). The word translated “freely” means “as a gift, without payment.”

Paul said a person who thinks he can earn justification through good works, such as keeping the Mosaic Law, believes God owes it to him: Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness (4:4–5).

The law brings about wrath (v. 15). Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace (v. 16).

Because we are “justified by faith,” not by works, “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (5:1–2).

Death awaits all of us because of the original sin of our common ancestor, Adam: “Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (v. 12). But “the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ,” provided the solution to our predicament (v. 15).

Jesus died to pay the penalty of mankind’s sin and thereby provide forgiveness of sin and the gift of...
eternal life for those who place their faith in Him. Thus, “as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (v. 21).

Paul exhorted the believers of the church at Rome not to present their bodies as instruments of unrighteousness to sin. Instead, they were to present themselves to God as people alive from the dead, and the members of their bodies as instruments of righteousness to God. They were to do so because “sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (6:13–14).

Paul told the saints at Rome they were saved solely on the basis of God’s grace, not on the basis of their personal works. And since it is by grace, “then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace.” And if it were by works, then “it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work” (11:5–6).

Paul emphasized that because of God’s grace given to him to be an apostle, he had authority to declare to every believer in the church at Rome that none was “to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith” (12:3).

There are many members in a local church, but all do not have the same God-given abilities to minister (v. 4). Since God by His grace has distributed various gifts of ministry to the members of local churches, all the gifts should be used (v. 6). The apostle Peter taught this same concept: “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:10).

The church at Rome existed before Paul ever arrived in that city. Therefore, it was not established by or through him. As a result, there would have been a natural tendency to ignore what he wrote as an authoritative spokesman for God. Thus Paul told the Roman believers he had a purpose for “courageously” writing to them about a certain “matter.” His purpose was to remind them “because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:15–16). He indicated that by God’s grace he was an authoritative spokesman for God and they needed to heed what he wrote to them.

Paul concluded his epistle to these saints at Rome twice with the same benediction: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (16:20, 24).

### The Apostle Paul’s Grace Statements to the Church at Corinth

In opening his first letter to the saints in the church at Corinth, Paul used the following salutation: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:3). In addition, he asserted, “I thank my God always concerning the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus” (v. 4). That form of God’s grace involved imparting all the utterance and knowledge gifts available to a local church during the time of the apostles (vv. 2–7).

Paul said the church saints at Corinth were “God’s field” and “God’s building” (3:9). Paul planted the field, and later Apollos watered it; but God caused it to grow (v. 6). Thus Paul could claim, “According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it” (v. 10). He also said, “I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (15:9–10).

Paul closed his letter with this benediction: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (16:23).

In Paul’s second letter to the church at Corinth and all the saints in Achaia, he and Timothy expressed the following salutation: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 1:1–2).

Paul assured his readers he and other servants of God conducted themselves in the world “in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you” (v. 12). They did all things “for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God” (4:15). Therefore, they as workers together with Christ, “plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain” (6:1).

Paul exhorted the saints in Corinth and Achaia to follow the example of the churches in Macedonia. Despite their great affliction and deep poverty, they gave to help saints in greater need than their own (8:1–4). Paul did not command, but urged, those in Corinth and Achaia to “abound in this grace also” (vv. 6–8).

He reminded them, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (v. 9). And “God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” (9:8).


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2. Ibid.


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EU sanctions hurt Palestinians

Now even Palestinians are fighting a recent European Union (EU) decision to boycott all Israeli businesses in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. A senior Palestinian Authority (PA) official who spoke on condition of anonymity told Israeli media, “We have a number of officials at the European Union who are trying to reverse the decision.”

The new directive forbids nations in the euro zone from doing business with “Jewish settlers.” Not only will it weaken the Israeli companies, but it will hurt the Palestinian economy because thousands of Palestinian Arabs work for those companies.

A Palestinian employee at a Jewish-owned greenhouse said, “The decision affects everyone, whether Jew or Arab. If they (the EU) take away our livelihood, what kind of peace will then prevail here?”

Israel Today (israeltoday.co.il)

No mourning on Temple Mount

Jewish people marked the solemn fast of Tisha B’Av in July, commemorating the destruction of the Temple and other Jewish tragedies. However, under threat of Muslim violence, Israeli police barred them from the Temple Mount, a situation many said proves the Tisha B’Av tragedies have not ended despite Israel’s rebirth.

A few hundred Jewish worshipers ascended the Temple Mount the previous evening, only to be confronted by a hostile mob of Muslims who witnesses said appeared ready to riot before the Jews were evacuated by police.

Israeli Knesset Member Danny Danon said enough is enough. “We are in favor of freedom of religion on the Temple Mount, and that means freedom for all religions,” he told Arutz-7. “That includes Jews. We must take steps to ensure that Jews are not only able to visit the Temple Mount, but are also able to pray there. I see no logic in allowing Muslims to pray there, but not Jews.”

Israel Today (israeltoday.co.il)

Never again!

The Katif Center, established to maintain the legacy of the destroyed Jewish communities of Gush Katif and northern Samaria, recently marked eight years since the forced displacement of some 10,000 Jewish people. The Center showed a documentary featuring 800 interviews with former residents. Gush Katif, in the Gaza Strip, was handed over to Palestinians (and subsequently to Hamas) in August 2005.

Speaking at the event, Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat called on the nation’s leadership to realize there “must never be a second disengagement.” Barkat noted that the Gush Katif settlements, much maligned on the international stage, had “been established by governments from across the political spectrum . . . [in order to] meet a very real need to settle the land and establish security in the south.”

The decision to uproot Gush Katif under American and Western pressure “was a national trauma,” he said. “Anyone who was there was scarred for life.”

Israel Today (israeltoday.co.il)

Arab Christians enter politics

Tired of being lumped in with Arabs who dislike Israel, Arab Christians in northern Israel have launched a new political party. Sons of the New Covenant (Hebrew, Brit Haladashah) hopes to take part in future Knesset elections.

In an interview with the Israeli daily Israel Hayom, party founder Bishara Shlayan said difficulties in helping his son and nephew join the Israeli army prompted him and other like-minded Christians to establish a forum to encourage Christians to enlist in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

The forum significantly boosted the number of young Christians joining the IDF and resulted in the Israeli army appointing a dedicated coordinator for the Arab-Christian sector.

But Shlayan knew they had to go a step further. “We saw that we have to establish a political party, so we advertised in local Arab newspapers and the initiative took off, [attracting] Christians who recognize that the Land of Israel belongs to the Jews,” Shlayan said.

He lamented that for 65 years, the Christian community has allowed anti-Israel Arab parties to represent it in the Knesset, noting that these parties are working for a Muslim agenda that holds no benefit for Christians.

Israel Today (israeltoday.co.il)

Israeli college in Tanzania

An Israeli college will soon be established in the African nation of Tanzania. The Atid Network, the largest privately owned educational network in Israel, has signed an agreement with the Tanzanian government to establish the college in Dar es Salaam, the former capital and Tanzania’s largest city.

It’s expected to open with 700 students and expand within two years to approximately 4,000. Typical courses will last six months and give students a trade skill and a certificate of graduation from the Tanzanian Ministry of Education.

Atid Network currently operates smaller colleges and training centers in other parts of Africa, including Nigeria.

Israel Today (israeltoday.co.il)

Moving to Israel from the USA

El Al flight LY3004 from New York landed in July at Ben Gurion Airport with 231 new Israeli citizens aboard, including a record 106 children. More than 1,000 children are expected to immigrate in 2013 through Nefesh B’Nefesh. This is a 20 percent increase over last year.

Former Israel Defense Forces captive Gilad Shalit was on the flight as a show of support and appreciation for the thousands of North Americans fulfilling their dream to return to Israel and contribute to the Jewish state.
The Rambam Health Care Campus in Haifa has done something no other hospital has done. It has built the world’s largest, fortified, underground emergency facility that is a 1,500-car parking garage during peace and a 2,000-bed hospital during war.

The three-story underground structure covers 60,000 square meters, about 646,000 square feet. It is fully fortified against conventional, chemical, and biological warfare, with cement walls and ceilings 40 cm (15.75 inches) thick and tens of thousands of ventilation and air filtration units that are 98 percent effective in filtering out biological and chemical agents.

The initiative to build the structure came after the Second Lebanon War in 2006, when 45 missiles landed near the hospital. “For 33 days, while the battle raged and we were taking care of all civilian and army casualties, the hospital itself was also under attack. This was not something that we could have ever anticipated—that an institution which saves lives could be vulnerable to the loss of life due to deadly missile attacks,” said Prof. Rafi Beyar, director and CEO of Rambam.

If a war is suddenly declared, the parking lot will transform within 72 hours into a fully sealed off, self-sufficient emergency hospital, able to store enough breathable oxygen, drinking water, and medical-gas supplies for up to three days.

The cars will be removed immediately. Then the floors and walls will be scrubbed thoroughly and the hospital equipment brought in, including the beds, hundreds of portable toilets and showers, medical-gas supplies, air conditioning systems, and multiple other items from an off-campus hangar—all of which will be installed in pre-determined places.

“The threat of war has not disappeared and has unfortunately grown stronger,” said Beyar. “As the main referral hospital for over 2 million people in the north of Israel, we are determined to have the capabilities of providing acute and chronic hospital care under fire to all those who need it.”

Rambam is the tertiary referral center for 12 district hospitals, the Israel Defense Forces Northern Command, the U.S. Navy’s Sixth Fleet, and the UN Peacekeeping Forces posted in the region. It is the exclusive provider in northern Israel of comprehensive treatment in such disciplines as neurosurgery, oncology, and major trauma.

For more information about Rambam, visit www.aforam.org.
New neighbors have moved into our area in Jerusalem, and they think their duty is to fight against people who want to share their faith in Christ. It is not difficult for them to find those of us who believe in Yeshua, especially me. I have lived in this neighborhood for more than 35 years, and people know me well. I have had long conversations about my faith with many, even rabbis. And over the years we have become friends because they have come to understand that I believe the Holy Bible.

Recently three men came to our home. At first they were friendly. But I have had much experience with such people. I knew they were not visiting me out of friendship. No, they wanted to argue with me and ridicule me.

Yet I received them as friends. My wife even brought them something to eat. Then the questions began. “Do you pray every day? Show us from which book you pray.”

Jewish people do not pray in their own words. They use a prayer book and recite the words that are written. I told them, “I do not pray from books. I pray from the depths of my heart.”

“How can you pray without using a prayer book?” one asked.

“I pray,” I said, “as our ancient forefathers did before there were prayer books. I pray as King David prayed. What did he say when he was in a bad situation?”

I opened my book of Psalms and read for them: “Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me” (51:11).

Now they began to challenge me. They did not like to hear the words Holy Spirit. “The three of us go every day, three times a day, to pray in the synagogue. What do you have to say about that? You do not do that!”

I replied, “My answer will come from the book of Psalms.” And I read to them: Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust, and does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies (40:4). In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? (56:11). O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You! (84:12). It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man (118:8).

By now they were agitated. “Do you also have conversations with people about your faith?” one asked.

“Yes, I do,” I said. “But you see, I bring people the Word of God. I show them what is in the Bible. I do not go to them with fables and stories written by men, as you do.”
Then they began to fight with me and grew angry. They did not like that I had read to them about the Holy Spirit, and they demanded to know, “How did you come to believe like those Christians?”

I told them what King David believed is clearly written in the Psalms. The Holy Spirit was important to him, as he mentioned in his prayer. This time I gave them my book of Psalms. “Here! Read!” I said. “It is important to pray as King David did in Psalm 51:11—from his heart. Was King David a Jew? And he spoke in his prayer about the Holy Spirit. According to you, speaking of the Holy Spirit must mean he was a Christian!”

After a long conversation, one man finally asked, “How did you come to know This Man?” meaning Jesus. They will not speak the name “Jesus.” I knew eventually they would want to know the answer to that question, and I was ready.

“We are ready to see,” one replied. “But show us only from the Bible.”

I opened my Bible to Isaiah 53, the “forbidden chapter” that is not read in synagogues. “Now read! And think about what you are reading and about whom it is written.” There they read, 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).

I told them, “For so many years you have studied, but now you still do not know what you have studied. What have your studies benefited you?” They replied, “We must speak to our rabbis.” Please pray they will begin listening to what God says in His Word.

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