EXCLUSIVE:
While we were sleeping—Page 8
Seeds of the great persecution—Page 12
The everlasting hatred—Page 16

Plus:
Heroism in Indonesia—Page 15
Nonie Darwish and ArabsforIsrael.com—Page 34
This Page
Is Intentionally
Left Blank
While We Were Sleeping
by Elwood McQuaid ...............................8
Unbelievers will go to the mat to prevent
dog fighting, but believers won’t do the
same to prevent worldwide persecution
of their brethren in Christ. Read what is
happening while we sleep.

Seeds of the Great Persecution
by William L. Krewson .............................12
Ancient Rome was no friend to
Christianity. Christians simply didn’t fit
in, and they paid a heavy price. Is
America following in Rome’s footsteps?
See for yourself.

The Everlasting Hatred
by Thomas C. Simcox ..............................16
Born-again believers and Jewish people
have been persecuted for millennia. And,
unfortunately, the worst is yet to come.
Why? Because of the everlasting hatred.

They Feared Man So Little
Because They Feared God So Much
by Charles E. McCracken ..........................18
They were boiled in oil, tortured, and
persecuted in the most heinous ways. But
they endured because they understood an
important, eternal truth that we should
not forget today.

They Say ‘Peace, Peace’
When There Is No Peace
by Dave Hunt ...........................................26
Islam professes to be a religion of peace.
But what many Muslims say and what
they do are two different things.

The silence about Christians suffering in
massive numbers around the world is
mystifying. Evangelicals are supposed to
be, by definition, compassionate people.
Why then do they refuse to respond to this
horrendous problem? And why do they
refuse to alert others to it? In this issue of
Israel My Glory we attempt to provide
information and insight into how our
brethren overseas are struggling. We are
not sensationalizing the situation or trying
to depress you. In fact, despite tremendous
persecution, many of these believers are
praising God for how He is adding to the
daily church. Here are some of their stories.
We offer them in the hope that they will
help the Western church find its voice and
move it, in love, closer to the heart of Christ
and the persecuted church. Our cover
shows the ruins of a West Bank church that
was destroyed by Islamic violence in 2006.
A boy who worshiped there found the
cross in the rubble (JAFAAR ASHTIYEH/AFP/
Getty Images).

Also Featuring
From Bill Sutter’s Desk ......................... 4
Eye on the Middle East ......................... 5
Editorial ......................................... 6
Bernsteins Today, Baptists Tomorrow .... 11
‘Amisha’: The Heroic Housewife .......... 15
Persecution Update .......................... 14, 21, 29, 37
God’s Promises to His Children .......... 22
Making Melody in Your Heart ............. 24
The Book of Jonah ......................... 30
The Foundations of Faith .................. 32
Now They Call Me Infidel ................. 34
Isaiah 53 and the Messiah of Israel ...... 38
Learn What Lies Ahead .................... 39
Israel in the News ......................... 40
Columbia University Does It Again ...... 41
Zvi ................................................. 42

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This year—2008—marks the 60th anniversary of the rebirth of the nation of Israel. On May 14, 1948, the Jewish People’s Council assembled at the Tel Aviv Museum to approve the historic proclamation known as The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel. Throughout 2008 Jewish people around the world will celebrate what, for millennia, they never ceased to pray and hope for: their return to Israel and, as the Declaration states, “the restoration in it of their political freedom.”

As Christians, we can express our support of the Jewish state by attending “Israel at 60” events being held by Jewish organizations worldwide to celebrate Israel’s history and culture. Many of the larger Jewish communities are scheduling activities each month throughout the year. Others are holding their events closer to the May 14 anniversary of the founding of the modern State of Israel.

Information can be found online by searching “Israel at 60,” as well as in Jewish-community newspapers and national publications. These events are usually open to the public, and there is sure to be a warm welcome for Christians who support Israel.

In recent years, more churches have expressed their friendship with the Jewish people by posting encouraging messages of support on their church signs, such as, “Happy Hanukkah to Our Jewish Friends” or “We Wish Our Jewish Friends a Happy Rosh Hashanah.”

Israel’s May 14 anniversary is a wonderful opportunity for the signs in front of our churches to proclaim, “We Salute Israel at 60.” Your suggestion to your pastor and/or church board may be all that’s needed.

Of course, there is no more tangible way to show support for the Jewish state than by visiting it. The Friends of Israel sponsors and cosponsors up to five trips annually to the land of the Bible. This land given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and his descendants through God’s “everlasting covenant” is steeped in historical and prophetic significance (Gen. 28:13; Ps. 105:10). Our tours include soul-stirring visits to ancient biblical sites, as well as lots of interaction with the people and places of modern Israel. Go to Israel, and you will never be the same.

Visiting a synagogue is another practical way we can demonstrate our friendship. Thomas C. Simcox, our Northeastern States director, does so with the students of our Institute of Jewish Studies. The Bible is a Jewish book, and Jesus worshiped in a synagogue. We suggest attending a Friday evening service. You may want to phone ahead for the time of the service and to explain that you are interested in visiting as a Christian friend of Israel. Conservative dress is always in order. Men may pick up a kippah, a small skullcap, at the sanctuary entrance to show respect in the synagogue. Many Christians find it reasonably easy to follow the order of service because prayer books frequently have Hebrew on one page and the English translation on the adjoining page. Simply be respectful, and you will find the Jewish people warmly accepting of your presence.

One of our friends tells of his first visit to a synagogue. He introduced himself to the rabbi by saying he was a Christian interested in visiting the synagogue because Jesus worshiped in a synagogue, and he wanted to experience what Jesus experienced. The rabbi’s response was an enthusiastic, “Welcome!”

If you have further questions, I encourage you to contact Tom Simcox by e-mail at TSimcox@foi.org, or by calling him here at The Friends of Israel and leaving a message with our North American Ministries secretary. Tom will be sure to get back to you.

I hope you understand the wonderful range of opportunities “Israel at 60” gives us as Christians to show our Jewish friends and neighbors our support and friendship. Don’t let Israel’s 60th anniversary pass without taking advantage of these open doors.

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William E. Sutter is the executive director of The Friends of Israel.

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ENDNOTE

A man identifying himself as a “missionary in Jerusalem” wrote a scathing response to an op-ed piece I wrote recently for The Jerusalem Post. The writer castigated me for my apparent lack of love for people of all feather, be they Jewish, Christian, or Muslim. He was particularly rankled over my lack of compassion for Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the current anti-Semitic heir to the late and lamented Adolf Hitler.

As a Christian, I was admonished to love all people and to reflect the attitude of Jesus who made a practice of hanging out with Pharisees and prostitutes—those whom His contemporaries considered the lowlifes of society.

In my defense, I will not for a moment align Ahmadinejad with the poor, downtrodden prostitutes of Christ’s day or even with the misinformed Pharisees. Rather, I’d compare him to Herod the Great—the fanatical, obsequious impersonator of the true King of the Jews—who slaughtered the infants of Bethlehem in the hope of slaying the infant Jesus whom Herod believed to be a threat to his coveted position.

There is a world of difference between being a judgmental person and being a person of rational judgment. The Holy Scriptures admonish all of us to exhibit wisdom and biblical discernment. Unfortunately, contemporary secularists—both religious and irreligious—deem all criticism inappropriate, politically incorrect, and socially out of bounds. In other words, don’t criticize another’s religion, cult, heresy, apostasy, opinion, values, lifestyle, or whatever because you will be labeled judgmental and abrasively incorrect.

But think for a moment. When British Lord Neville Chamberlain came back to his country in 1938 waving a certificate of promise for “peace in our time” (which Adolf Hitler fully intended to violate), should Christians have embraced it charitably as a random act of Nazi kindness? Or should we have resisted it with every fiber of our being as a deplorable atrocity in the making? Of course, we did not resist; and history has recorded the shame of our inconstancy.

Let us not deceive ourselves. Our enemies are determined to set a course of destruction or subservience for Israel and the West. If you are willing to accept this from the likes of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his militant Islamist compatriots, so be it. Pray for them, and lay down the red carpet when they enter your sphere. But remember this: you will be among the first to go to the chopping block for your “infidel” faith.

Yes, we pray. And we hope our enemies will come to the light. But, at the same time, when they have openly declared that they plan to unleash another Holocaust on our only friends in the Middle East, we cannot be so naïve as to think they will not do it.

We made that mistake once. And any afternoon, a walk through the Yad Vashem memorial to the Holocaust in Jerusalem should jar us to reality. Hitler slaughtered 50 million Europeans, including 6 million innocent Jewish men, women, and children. As a Christian, I would invite my well-intentioned but vastly misguided friends in the faith to take a walk down the Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles and spend a little time at the memorials to Oskar Schindler and Corrie ten Boom.

I think, at least I hope, that it will help you come away with a prayer for those who continue to suffer and for our self-avowed enemies as well.

by Elwood McQuaid
Mainline or Out of Bounds

Leaders of the National Council of Churches U.S.A. (NCC) are fond of reminding us of its size and influence. In fact, a Web site reviewing the organization’s newest yearbook called the NCC “the ecumenical voice of America’s Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, historic African American and traditional peace churches,” boasting “35 communions with 45 million faithful members in 100,000 congregations in all 50 states.”

Impressive indeed. However, in reality, the NCC and its alter ego, the World Council of Churches, is a polyglot of religious organizations that defy the traditions and norms of the Christian faith. In their zeal to identify with radical influences, they often run afoul of conservative, evangelical Christians whose views they tag as the scourge of liberal progress and whose methods and ideology they equate with the likes of the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

For all of its self-presumption, the NCC can hardly be justified in its claim to be the religious voice of American Christianity. In fact, for many decades it has been viewed as out of bounds and inconsequential to society’s survival and to the rational conduct of national and international affairs.

A case currently before us makes the point. When Iranian despot Mahmoud Ahmadinejad came to our shores in September 2007, his visit caused a firestorm of protest from the halls of Congress to the streets of America. Our guest was the same man who almost daily flaunts his intention to wipe Israel off the face of the earth and then bring down the West. He denies the Holocaust, asks our president to convert to Islam, calls Zionists the most detested people in all of humanity, subverts governments, arms and trains jihadists, and declares his intent to possess nuclear weapons.

Despite his track record and rap sheet, an “interfaith delegation” made up of more than 100 liberal religious representatives, including Catholics, United Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Unitarians, sat down with Ahmadinejad for an hour-long chat. The purpose of the powwow reportedly was to stress the need for diplomacy to prevent war. After hearing the man of the hour attempt to tell them what they wanted to hear, one delegate left the meeting “hopeful because of the statements Ahmadinejad made about the renunciation of war in the quest for peace.”

The New York meeting was a follow-up to two other meetings by interfaith ecumenical groups. The first was in New York in September 2006; the second, in Tehran in February 2007. The Tehran meeting demonstrated painfully who is influencing whom. The “Christian leaders” came away oozing kind words for the man who represents the antithesis of peace and tranquility.

The NCC’s associate general secretary for interfaith relations, Rev. Dr. Shanta Premawardhana, was impressed.

He praised Ahmadinejad as a pious and witty man. “Ahmadinejad,” he said, “comes across as a very religious man.” J. Daryl Byler, director of the Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office, referred to Iran’s president as speaking in measured tones, seeming reasonable, and having a witty personality.

So taken was Mr. Byler with Ahmadinejad that even before the February trip, he wrote to President Bush saying he wished the president would meet with his Iranian counterpart, whom he described as “bright and engaging.” And, he wrote, “Like you, Ahmadinejad is a religious man. I believe you would enjoy one another’s company. Your conversation could signal a positive change in a relationship severed more than 25 years ago.”

It is remarkable that Byler implied an equivalency between conservative Christianity and radical, Iranian-style Islam.

Four days after meeting with the NCC delegation, where he exuded goodwill to all and a hunger for peace, Ahmadinejad reportedly told an audience in the Sudan, “Zionists are the true manifestation of Satan.”

Malcolm I. Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, said it best when speaking of the religious leaders’ mission to Tehran: “They’re not going to convince him. Their very presence there gives him respectability.” How true.

The persistent imposition of moral equivalence on the Palestinians and Israelis who are attempting to negotiate a settlement is, at the very least, an encouragement to continued aggression by those who aspire to destroy the State of Israel. It can be viewed as the diplomatic equivalent of our American-style, no-fault insurance that does not blame either party when vehicles collide. In military terms, it pulls back forces just short of final and complete victory in order to save some dignity for the bad guys who started the fight in the first place. In this scenario, no one loses face; and, as is often the case, both sides can claim victory.

In reality, imposed equivalence is a disservice to both sides. While terrorists continue to pound Israel with rockets, roadside shootings, and accusatory media blitzes, Israelis are defending their right to survive. Comparisons that cast the Jewish state as the perpetual aggressor with no legal, moral, or historical right to exist not only fuel the conflict but assure Israel’s attackers of international justification to keep up the fight.

In the end, the primary victims will be the core of decent Palestinians who only want normal lives for themselves and their children. Cheering on jihadists and the likes of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sends the worst possible message and exposes leftist religionists for what they truly are.
Millions of American Christians pray in their churches each week, oblivious to the fact that Christians in many parts of the world suffer brutal torture, arrest, imprisonment, and even death— their homes and communities laid waste— for no other reason than that they are Christians. The shocking, untold story of our time is that more Christians have died in this century simply for being Christians than in the first nineteen centuries after the birth of Christ. They have been persecuted and martyred before an unknowing, indifferent world and a largely silent Christian community. And as their suffering intensifies, our silence becomes more stark. . . . Western Christians must take the lead in breaking the silence. If they don’t speak out, no one will.1

These words were penned more than a decade ago by Nina Shea in her book *In the Lion’s Den*. Her call was an urgent appeal for American Christians to wake up to the brutalization of our brothers and sisters who are bleeding their lives out in other lands. Has her call been heeded? Have 10 intervening years made a difference? Have a significant number of us been shaken from our lethargy? You can answer that question for yourself.

*● In September 2007 rampaging Muslims attacked Christians in a town in Nigeria. Compass Direct News reported the violence left 10 Christians dead, nine churches destroyed, 61 people injured, and 500 people displaced from their homes. Pastor Rabiu Danbawa watched helplessly as his home and church went up in flames. “There was nothing I could do,” he said. “I did not know the fate of my wife and my children.” The pastor hurried to the local police station, only to find Christians who had fled there for safety being turned away. “We were told to leave, as our safety could not be guaranteed. Women and children all scampered to the bush, only to be attacked by the Muslims who already hid themselves there awaiting their Christian prey,” he said in tears.*

*● Also in September a suicide bomber killed five Christian young people and*
wounded 20 at an outdoor church meeting in Khorfulus, Sudan. Compass Direct said about 34 Christian teens and preteens were singing worship songs when a man dressed in military fatigues approached. Suddenly, he detonated a grenade attached to his belt. Ten young people are still listed in serious condition; four are still critical.

- In October 2007 Muslim extremists in Kaduna, Nigeria, killed Emmanuel Ogbaje, 24, with a sword and bludgeoned another young Christian to death with clubs. Compass Direct reported that the attacks followed Sheikh Gumi’s televised appeal during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan to wage violent jihad against young Christians. A Nigerian Christian told Compass Direct, “He specifically called for a jihad, and that when they go killing they should not kill elderly people, because the elderly have spent their years already, but that Muslims should kill young Christians.”

- Also in October police discovered the body of 29-year-old Christian bookshop proprietor Rami Ayyad in Gaza. He had been shot in the head and stabbed multiple times. In addition to his work at the Palestinian Bible Society shop, Ayyad served as youth leader at the Gaza Baptist Church. Compass Direct reported that Muslim extremists had threatened the Gaza store many times and had bombed it in April. Rami, who is survived by his pregnant wife and two children, is remembered as “a good natured guy. He was the most tender-hearted guy, like a teddy bear,” said a friend.

Add these recent reports to the hundreds that pour in from manifold parts of the world every week and you can easily answer the question, Has Christian persecution subsided? Unfortunately, there is unabated Christian suffering. Furthermore, Christians as a whole will not break their silence, nor will they take the lead in speaking out against the outrageous slaughter of innocent believers who live outside the circle of Western self-interest.

**It Doesn’t Add Up**

Think about it. A few months ago Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick got busted for owning, financing, and participating in a heinous dog-fighting operation. Outraged animal lovers lobbied for hard time and severe penalties for the former superstar and his cronies, and their efforts captured hours of media exposure.

Then there was the anguished river of tears shed on camera by TV personality Ellen DeGeneres after a doggie placement agency confiscated a pooch she had given to her hairdresser’s family in breach of contract with the agency. The founder of an animal rescue group declared, “I’m overwhelmed with the e-mails about this. People are so upset. People are asking, ‘What can you do? Please get Ellen’s dog back!’” Needless to say, there’s plenty of angst out there.

The majority of people involved in animal-rights and environmental-protection groups are pounding their chests where their hearts are. Most of them care much more about dogs, cats, and trees than they do about a few hundred thousand Christians who are not listed among their most favored species.

But then there are the rest of us. Charles Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship International, wrote, “We must feel a sense of moral outrage that Christians, in this day and age, are being sold into slavery, and are being tortured for their faith.”

But the question is, Do we? And where are the millions of reputed massed and muscle-bound members of the evangelical right who, once awakened, ostensibly can move mountains of moral corruption, shake and shape the political landscape, and stand as protector of the innocent and aggrieved? As far as the world’s suffering saints are concerned, we are fast asleep. And while we sleep, their blood continues to cry out.

**Telegraphing a Dismal Message**

When the megalomaniac, little Iranian Hitler landed on our shores last fall, he received a clear message from those who dutifully shook his hand, listened attentively to his lies, and complimented him for his quick wit and self-assured composure. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took home no new ideas but, rather, a confirmation of old ones—chief of which is that the United States has a weak underbelly and is looking for a way to bail out of bad international situations. In the end, that may not be the way it is; but that’s the way he and his ilk perceive it to be. Consequently, as President George W. Bush said, Ahmadinejad may well take us to the brink of World War III.

In the matter of persecuted Christians, there is an unfortunate corollary. As long as the Christian majority—and we are a majority religious faction in the world—allows Islamists, militant Hindus, Communists, and assorted others to get away with slaughtering our brethren, they will continue to delight to do so.

Islamists have long declared that they will cleanse the Middle East not only of Israel and the Jewish people but of every Christian “infidel” as well. Listen to the voices of Christians streaming out of Iraq, once the home of the most ancient, enduring Christian body in the region. They are being singled out by militants for expulsion or elimination. That is what they are telling us. They are calling for help, but help is not coming.

I remember well, during the 38-day Palestinian-terrorist occupation of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in 2002, the photograph of an old priest holding up a sign he had made from a strip of linen. It said simply, “PLEASE HELP.” Help came in the olive green uniforms of the Israel Defense Forces. And the old priest went back to his duties at the church, secure in the fact that it wouldn’t happen again. Why? Because terrorists learned that they couldn’t get away with it.

**Let’s Tell It Like It Is**

Unpleasant as it may seem to many of us, there are some nasty realities we must deal with, or we will endure the consequences.
In their book, *Their Blood Cries Out*, Paul Marshall and Lela Gilbert astutely assess the American media and general attitudes of our people:

What David Stravers [former vice president of The Bible League] wrote so accurately about American Christians can be applied to Americans generally—they “for the most part are not interested in anything that happens outside the boundaries of the United States...” Coupled with this is the fact that many of the atrocities we have described occur in remote areas. . . . But beyond these particular reasons is a pervasive cultural mindset that is either ignorant of, skeptical of, or occasionally antithetical to religion—especially Christianity.

The unpalatable fact is that Christians—not all, but most—who call themselves evangelical fall somewhere within the general parameters of this analysis. If such were not the case, we would be hearing much more about the widespread persecution of Christians.

Many believers do not hesitate to tell their pastors they are not interested in hearing the unpleasant facts of life abroad. In addition, many pastors are uninformed about the wholesale slaughter of Christians because it occurs outside the circle of their primary responsibilities. And how many of our leaders these days major in giving the masses what the masses wish to hear?

I can attest to the fact that, on an average Sunday morning, the average Christian in America will hear many more sermons about how to succeed in relationships, business, and society than about what’s going on in the world that directly affects his or her witness and obligation toward others. And these include television and radio sermons. This isn’t a pleasant or easy thing to say, but it is true.

Without fail, being uninformed produces indifference and self-obsession. And believe me, at this juncture in history, we can ill afford either. For anyone who has access to a computer and the Internet, there are scores of organizations that provide up-to-the-minute reports on what’s happening in your world—that is, the world of the Bible-believing church. You can be informed. But it’s up to you. Don’t expect your pastor to be concerned if you are not. Don’t ask your local, state, or federal officials to act if you are not willing to act yourself. The burden is yours and mine. Our suffering brethren are out there, and they are waiting to hear from us.

Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, “Surely we did not know this,” does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds? (Prov. 24:11–12).

ENDNOTES

1 Nina Shea, *In the Lion’s Den* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 1, 7.

Elwood McQuaid
is executive editor
for *The Friends of Israel*
When ultra-Orthodox Rabbi Avraham Bernstein of Freehold Township, New Jersey, decided to hold a Friday evening Shabbat service in his home almost ten years ago, he had no idea he would become the object of secret, municipal surveillance and the plaintiff in a federal lawsuit.

The township claims Rabbi Bernstein is violating Freehold’s zoning laws, newly amended on September 25, 2007, that ban places of worship in residential neighborhoods without a permit. Bernstein claims the zoning laws violate his First Amendment rights. He has filed suit and is represented by the Rutherford Institute in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Interestingly, Freehold’s laws do not prohibit someone from inviting friends over to drink beer, eat pizza, and watch sports on television. They only prohibit praying. Nor do they ban Monday night football or weekly scrapbooking parties. They only ban studying the Scriptures and addressing the Almighty.

To ascertain the number of people walking to Rabbi Bernstein’s home (his guests park no cars there because they do not drive on Shabbat), the township mounted a camera on the window of the municipal building across the street and secretly filmed what it claims to be between 35 and 50 people attending the Friday evening service.

No, this did not happen in Russia. It happened in America, where the First Amendment to the Constitution states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble.” In other words, if Rabbi Bernstein and his friends want to assemble peaceably to exercise their religion freely in a private home, the government should not be able to stop them. But it is trying, nevertheless. And if it succeeds, the implications will be far-reaching.

If Freehold wins this lawsuit, it will be free to shut down home Bible studies and prayer meetings, which actually generate vehicular traffic. And if Freehold gets away with this zoning sleight of hand, what’s to stop other municipalities from doing likewise?

Of course, we’ve seen all this before—only not in America. For example, around 167 B.C., when the madman Antiochus Epiphanes ruled the Promised Land and was determined to exterminate Judaism, he made it illegal for Jewish people to study Torah and pray. So when authorities raided a Jewish home, the Jews quickly hid their Scriptures and pretended to play games, such as dreidel (spinning top)—which evidently was okay with Antiochus, as it would be with Freehold.

Christianity has a long, distinguished history of meeting in homes to study, pray, and sing. When an angel freed the apostle Peter from prison, Peter went “to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying” (Acts 12:12). To the Corinthians the apostle Paul wrote, “The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house” (1 Cor. 16:19). In America, many churches emerged from weekly home Bible studies.

Today Christians are being persecuted around the world by the hundreds of thousands. America is one of the few countries left where citizens are supposed to be able to practice their religion freely. But even in America, a big blaze begins with a little spark. If you don’t douse a fire when it’s small, you may end up watching helplessly as it burns everything in sight. If Freehold succeeds in dismembering the Shabbat service in Rabbi Bernstein’s home, it may only be a matter of time before Baptists see their home Bible studies go up in flames.
Genuine Christianity has never been popular. Christians are tortured and killed today throughout the world, following in the footsteps of their brethren in the early church who endured persecution and martyrdom at the hands of Rome, rather than renounce their faith in Jesus as Lord.

*Martyr* is a Greek word that means “witness.” In the New Testament, it is used for those who bore a faithful testimony for Christ. It is also used for those whose faithful witness ended in a faithful death (Rev. 2:13).

As ancient Rome’s persecution of Christians increased, more believers were called on to forsake their faith or face death. These godly men and women have been known as martyrs of the early church. And as the world today grows steadily more hostile to Christianity and the Christian gospel message that salvation comes through Christ alone, the early church’s history grows ominously more relevant.

**Rome and Politics**

In its earliest days, the Christian church enjoyed protection from the Roman authorities since it was identified as a branch of Judaism. But when the largely Gentile church outgrew its Jewish connection in the second century, Rome began to view it with suspicion. Such seeming disloyalty soon led the authorities to fear rebellion from the followers of Jesus—an act punishable by death.

Roman persecution of Christianity was at first sporadic and local. An example of it is revealed in an Emperor Trajan’s correspondence in A.D. 112 with Roman Governor Pliny in Pontus. After asking how to treat Christians who had been accused of disloyalty, the emperor replied,

*It is impossible to lay down a general rule to a fixed formula. These people must not be hunted out; if they are brought before you and the charge against them is proved, they must be punished, but in the case of anyone who denies that he is a Christian, and makes it clear that he is not by offering prayers to our gods, he is to be pardoned.*

As the church grew, Rome saw it as a threat because the Christians’ supreme allegiance was not to the Roman Empire but to God and church. The authorities considered such attitudes disloyal and even treasonous, especially since Christians would not serve in the Roman army because it required sacrifice to the Roman gods for protection.

Threats from the northern barbarians, as well as natural disasters, caused the Empire to seek a scapegoat. And the emperor found one in Christianity. Rome’s easiest explanation was that disloyal Christians had displeased the gods. In addition, the 1,000th anniversary of the Roman Empire reminded the Romans of their religious roots in the ancient deities.

To placate the “offended gods,” Emperor Decius issued an edict in A.D. 250 forcing all citizens to sacrifice yearly
to the Roman deities and the “divine” emperor. Although some Christians denied their faith, others remained steadfast and entered eternity as martyrs. Emperor Valerian resumed severe persecution in 257, seizing church property and executing many church leaders. This onslaught lasted only one year due to the emperor’s death, but it prepared the church for worse days to come.

Those days arrived when Emperor Diocletian issued an edict in 303 ordering the destruction of church buildings, the imprisonment of church leaders, and the burning of Christian Scriptures. The edict also demanded every citizen publicly sacrifice to the pagan gods.

Countless believers lost their lives during this time, known as the Great Persecution. The oppression ended when Emperor Galerius issued an edict of toleration in 311, followed by the Edict of Milan in 313, instituted by Emperor Constantine. The latter granted freedom of worship to all religions and ended the empire-wide persecution and martyrdom of the previous 10 years.

**Christian Devotion and Absolutes**

The simple confession of those about to be martyred was, “I am a Christian.” These followers of Christ were marked by their devotion to the lordship of Jesus Christ, their separated lifestyles, and their adherence to scriptural absolutes. Before they became believers, they lived in Rome’s pluralistic society where multiple gods were worshiped and all gods were respected. The Christian message conflicted with their society’s values. Christians did not attend the theaters or worship at the pagan temples. They appeared to be antisocial because they lived differently and refused to worship the emperor or honor the pagan gods. “Jesus is Lord” was their motto.

Word began to spread that these Christians were cannibals since the Lord’s Supper was misunderstood as eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ. Believers further were accused of incest because they referred to themselves as brothers and sisters in one community. Their godly lives contrasted dramatically with the physically sensuous, religiously tolerant world around them. In short, Christian absolutes conflicted with Roman tolerance, much as they conflict with the West’s idea of tolerance today.

In loving deeds and bold words, the Christians made exclusive claims to truth. Clashing worldviews brought Christians under the empire’s wrath. Their leaders encouraged them to be faithful if put on trial, yet many succumbed to pressure and recanted their faith.

Unlike today’s Muslim suicide bombers, these Christians never sought death or viewed martyrdom as an act of war. They simply saw themselves as imitating the faithful men and women of previous generations who were led to the slaughter for their faith in Christ. Their primary example was their Lord and Messiah who had also given His life.

Instead of reducing the church’s influence, however, death only promoted its growth. Around A.D. 200, Tertullian wrote, “The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed.”

Eusebius, the first church historian (A.D. 260–339), declared that persecution came to the church because of its “arrogance and sloth”:

> We began enraging and attacking one another, making war on ourselves with weapons formed from words. Church leaders attacked church leaders and laymen formed factions against laymen, while unspeakable hypocrisy and pretense reached their evil limit.

Eusebius laid the blame for persecution on a sinful church, ripe for discipline by her Lord:

> I saw with my own eyes the houses of worship demolished to their foundations, the inspired and sacred Scriptures committed to flames in the middle of the public squares, and the pastors of churches hiding shamefully in one place or another, or arrested and...
COMPASS DIRECT NEWS—A Pakistani official in the northern district of Swat has urged female teachers and students to don Islamic garb, citing threats from Taliban extremists, according to an article that has appeared in a regional newspaper. Extremists in Swat have conducted a campaign of Islamization in the district against all things deemed un-Islamic since early July 2007, when a government crackdown on militants at the Lal Masjid mosque in Islamabad triggered violent reactions nationwide.

"Due to continuous threatening letters from the Taliban directing female staff and students to wear burqas . . . the Executive District officer has instructed [them] to comply with the orders," the Daily Mashriq article stated. The order may affect Christians at the Catholic-run public high school in Sangota. The all-girls school had already closed down for a week in September 2007 after being threatened with suicide attacks for supposedly converting students to Christianity.

Pakistani human-rights activists march in 2007 against radical Islam while holding up a banner of burqa-clad Islamic seminary students (AAMIR QURESHI/AFP/Getty Images).

Martyrdom and Its Aftermath

Eusebius’ eyewitness account is powerful: I myself saw some of these mass executions by decapitation or fire, a slaughter that dulled the murderous axe until it wore out and broke in pieces, while the executioners grew so tired they had to work in shifts. But I also observed a marvelous eagerness and a divine power and enthusiasm in those who placed their faith in Christ: as soon as the first was sentenced, others would jump up on the tribunal in front of the judge and confess themselves Christians. Headless of torture in its terrifying forms but boldly proclaiming their devotion to the God of the universe, they received the final sentence of death with joy, laughter, and gladness, singing hymns of thanksgiving to God until their last breath.

When persecution waned in the fourth century, Christians hungered for signs of devotion in a church that was growing increasingly comfortable and corrupt. They looked back to the past and glorified those who had had the spiritual courage to experience martyrdom. Christians began to celebrate the anniversary of a martyr’s death with a religious feast and to venerate relics of the bodies of the martyrs.

Sadly, the Christian church twisted the memory of godly heroes into objects of worship and prayer. The absence of martyrs at that time caused Christians to seek alternative signs of sacrifice. They may not have had to die physically for Christ, so they explored ways they could die spiritually. Thus began the monastic movement. Those who embraced this calling died to the duties of marrying, parenting, working, and socializing. The monks promoted such denial as the ultimate act of sacrificial devotion. In so doing, the church corrupted the image of godliness into an unnatural, unscriptural, man-made version of holiness.

As the world grows steadily colder to Christianity, the church of Jesus Christ must remember her heroic past and look to her heavenly Lord for strength and boldness to continue proclaiming the good news of the Messiah in an evil, hostile world.

ENDNOTES

4. Ibid., 290
5. Ibid., 298.
‘Amisha’: The Heroic Housewife

Editor’s Note: Following is the story of a 24-year-old Indonesian Christian whose Muslim husband attacked her when he found her reading the Bible. A few days later the Voice of the Martyrs (VOM) air-lifted her to its medical base. There she told her amazing story, which we’ve excerpted. She is now home and VOM’s Indonesian staff supports her work in ways it cannot disclose. (Used by permission of The Voice of the Martyrs, www.persecution.org.)

I had never seen a Bible or even touched one. In 2001 I was living with my uncle who abused me and threw chairs at me. I went to a friend’s house to watch DVDs about Jesus. I had read a few lines about Jesus in the Qur’an. My friend finally gave me a Bible. It was amazing. It gave me peace. I kept it at her house and read it every day for two years.

I moved back to my own island with my family but read the Bible secretly for five years. My family arranged for me to marry a Muslim man, but even then, I was secretly baptized in the ocean. I would slide the Bible out from under the bed and read it in the dim light, lying on the floor. My husband would hit me when he found me reading it. He kicked me until I bled and called me a kafir, or apostate. When he slammed my head into the wall, I would become dizzy.

One day I met five ladies standing outside the market. They looked confused, lost. I said, “Where are you from?” They were from out of town. They invited me to their home. My husband was at work.

The first time I visited them I did not share about Jesus. I always prayed before I took the bus to see them. I asked the Holy Spirit to open their eyes so it would be easy to teach them. God answered my prayer. One of them asked, “What does a Bible look like?” I had made six visits to them by this time.

I went back to my house and took my second Bible out of hiding. My husband had taken the first one out in the yard and poured gasoline on it. He had burned it while the neighbors watched.

I bought some chicken so it would look like our group was going to have a picnic. When we got on the bus we did not carry towels, so no one would know where we were going.

When we walked across the beach, they looked at the water. No one else was there watching us. I baptized them. We did not yet know anyone who would risk baptizing a former Muslim. In the water I asked each one, “Do you believe in Jesus?” They said, “Yes!” I asked about their salvation then said, “After this you will be a follower of Jesus.” They were so happy coming out of the water. One said, “The Lord is so refreshing!”

I asked her, “Is it because of the water?” Another, shaking the drops off her head, said, “No. It is because we have a new spirit.” We sang songs learned from Christian cassettes I had taken to the house meetings. Without towels we laughed, drying off in the sun.

The next day I took the second Bible and presented it to the ladies. On this day of the seventh meeting, we had grown to 10 women. All 10 of them wanted to be baptized.

One week later, five more women wanted to be baptized. Now we were 15 women. After my husband went to work, I bought some chicken so it would look like our group was going to have a picnic. When we got on the bus we did not carry towels, so no one would know where we were going.

When we walked across the beach, they looked at the water. No one else was there watching us. I baptized them. We did not yet know anyone who would risk baptizing a former Muslim. In the water I asked each one, “Do you believe in Jesus?” They said, “Yes!” I asked about their salvation then said, “After this you will be a follower of Jesus.”

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We sang songs learned from Christian cassettes I had taken to the house meetings. Without towels we laughed, drying off in the sun.

continued on page 36
Are you Christian or Muslim?”

That was the question Sudan’s Muslim government asked men and women captured in the upper Nile region of the country in 2002. If a woman responded “Muslim,” her captors set her free. But if she answered “Christian,” they gang-raped her, cut off her breasts, and left her to die “as an example to others.”

Although the situation in Sudan supposedly has improved, it is no secret that in many countries, faith in Jesus brings torture and death. In fact, more Christians were killed for their faith in the 20th century than in all previous centuries combined. And the situation is getting worse.

Why do unbelievers despise Christians so? How can some people hate so intensely that they devise vicious, diabolical tortures with which to inflict others and then laugh at the pain and ultimate death they have caused?

In July 2006 anti-Semites damaged the Jewish monument erected in 1991 near Kiev in the Ukraine to memorialize the 100,000 Jewish people whom the Nazis lined up at the edge of the Babi Yar ravine in 1941 and shot. The following month, anti-Semitic slogans were again found in a bustling Ukrainian city. Anti-Semitism, in fact, is rising so rapidly around the world that many Jewish college students even here in America are afraid.

Persecution is a real part of the 21st-century world. It is the result of unchecked, unmitigated hatred that began with Satan (Lucifer) and will not end until he is banished to the Lake of Fire for all eternity (Rev. 20:10).

He is the author of lies and the source of hatred, evil, murder, and deceit (Jn. 8:44). In the Garden of Eden, he declared war on the Lord by enticing the first man and woman to turn away from God and follow him. And though he despises all humanity, he reserves his most venomous hate for Jewish people and born-again Christians because they obstruct his proud, selfish plan to dethrone Almighty God (Isa. 14:13). For him to succeed, he must exterminate them both. And torture and persecution are his tools of choice.

Satan vs. Israel

Lucifer was created an angelic cherub (Ezek. 28:14). Cherubs are associated with God’s holiness and surround His throne. They each have six wings and are “full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’” (Rev. 4:8).

Lucifer was probably the highest-ranking angel because he was “the
promised Davidic Kingdom, and against all who are truly born again because they love the Lord and follow Jesus (Jn. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:23; 1 Jn. 5:3).

Despite Satan’s everlasting hatred, however, God gives a strong and resounding promise of eternal security to Israel and a warning to any who would attempt to annihilate it:

Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night. “If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the LORD, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever” (Jer. 31:35–36; cf. Ps. 89:36–37).

Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths (Zech. 14:3–4, 12).

Victory in Jesus

Nor will Satan’s everlasting hatred of Christians prevent our ultimate victory: “I will build My church,” Jesus said, “and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:18).

Jesus said, “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33). “And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 Jn. 5:4–5).

Today American Christians do not face torture and death for their faith, as do the brethren in Islamic regions and countries like Sudan. But a far worse day is coming. In fact, several Jewish news agencies have attempted to sound a clarion call regarding the

continued on page 20
During a few short years of my childhood, our family lived in southern England. Surrounded by relics of the past, I had many adventures while on holiday, visiting places that made history books come alive.

Of all the landmarks and historic sights intriguing to a boy of eight, the most memorable was Westminster Abbey. As we crossed the threshold of this imposing edifice, we entered the cavernous nave and almost 700 years of history. After coming to grips with the fact that people were actually buried inside the abbey, I became intrigued with the epitaphs on headstones embedded in the floor. One in particular impressed me. It stated simply, “He feared man so little because he feared God so much.”

The poignancy of the declaration did not elude me as I pondered the words that afternoon. In fact, it articulates a stance taken by hundreds of thousands throughout the church’s
suffered a similar fate.

words, he was immediately seized and shackled by political correctness—tend to be more cowardly than courageous, we can learn from the undeniable testimony of these devout men and women of faith who feared man so little because they feared God so much.

During the rule of Marcus Aurelius, persecution was so gruesome that spectators themselves shuddered in horror, yet were consistently astounded by the Christians’ resolve. A young man named Germanicus is a striking example. Sentenced to death by wild beasts, he was so fearless that “several became converts to a faith which inspired such fortitude.”

Marcella and her daughters Rhais and Potainiena were set afire after being doused with boiling pitch. An army officer named Basilides witnessed Potainiena’s execution and was emboldened to become a Christian. When he refused to take a pagan oath to swear by Roman idols, “he was dragged before the judge, committed to prison, and speedily afterward beheaded.”

Endowed with God-given endurance, many actively shared their faith even while subjected to the most violent brutality. Living in Marseilles, France, Victor tirelessly ministered by night to afflicted Christians and spent a fortune helping those who had lost property and position because of their faith. Eventually arrested, he was bound, dragged through the streets, and “treated with all manner of cruelties and indignities by the enraged populace.” His refusal to capitulate and renounce his faith was misconstrued as stubbornness. So he was stretched on the rack.

Praying that God would “endue him with patience,” he bore repeated torture. John Foxe wrote, “After the executioners were tired with inflicting tortures on him, he was conveyed to a dungeon. In his confinement, he converted his jailers, named Alexander, Felician, and Longinus.” Upon receiving Christ as Savior, the jailers were immediately beheaded; and Victor, following additional torture, was thrown into a mill and crushed.

Another example of faithfulness under the direst of circumstances is the account of two men, the husband and brother of a young lady named Cecilia. Because of her testimony, they became Christians. They were subsequently arrested and sentenced to beheading. The two men shared the gospel with the officer leading them to execution who, after placing his faith in Christ, was also beheaded. Cecilia herself endured horrendous torment in a scalding bath, “and having continued there a considerable time, her head was struck off with a sword.”

Marcus and Marcellianus grew up in a pagan household but were tutored by devout Christians. When they gave their lives to Christ, family and friends used every means available to try to turn them from Christianity. Eventually, as a result of their consistent testimony, their immediate family also put their faith in Jesus Christ.

The entire household was subsequently arrested and tied to posts. Their feet were pierced with nails, and after several days they were impaled with lances. Before they died, their testimony caused Zoe, wife of the jailer, to become a Christian. Because of her decision to follow Christ, she was “hung upon a tree, with a fire of straw lighted under her. When her body was taken down, it was thrown into a river, with a large stone tied to it, in order to sink it.”

Rome’s Attempt to Exterminate Christianity

History reminds us that during the most intense times of persecution, untold thousands lost their lives. Around the turn of the first century, Pliny the Second, a Roman naturalist and writer, “seeing the lamentable slaughter of Christians, and moved therewith to pity, wrote to [Roman Emperor] Trajan, certifying him that there were many thousands of them daily put to death, of which none did any thing contrary to the Roman laws worthy of persecution.”

After Trajan, Adrian brutally persecuted Christians with the same vehemence. In this new round of persecution, such influential Christian leaders as Alexander, bishop of Rome; his two deacons; many prominent Christians and their families; and at least 10,000 others were put to death.

A time infamously referred to as the Era of the Martyrs was incited by Galerius, Emperor Diocletian’s adopted
son. Provoked by his pagan mother, he continuously badgered Diocletian to begin a major persecution of Christians. Diocletian finally yielded; and February 23, 303, was declared Terminalia: a day the pagan world hoped to exterminate Christianity.

Churches were stormed and sacred books seized and thrown onto fires. Not content with merely burning the books, Diocletian and Galerius had a church leveled, ordered the same for all other churches in the empire, and declared Christians outlaws. As a result, “All the Christians were apprehended and imprisoned; and Galerius privately ordered the imperial palace to be set on fire, that the Christians might be charged as the incendiaries and a plausible pretence given for carrying on the persecution with the greater severities.”

Entire households were burned in their homes. Others were chased from their houses, tied together with stones fastened around their necks, and driven into the sea. In some cases, whole villages were slaughtered and burned because the inhabitants refused to renounce their faith in Christ.

Wrote John Foxe: “The persecution became general in all the Roman provinces, but more particularly in the east; and as it lasted ten years, it is impossible to ascertain the numbers martyred, or to enumerate the various modes of martyrdom.”

Not even the Roman military was immune to persecution. A remarkable account of courage is recorded about the Theban Legion, composed entirely of Christians. Maximian ordered a pagan sacrifice requiring the legion not only to participate but also take an oath of allegiance swearing to eradicate Christianity from Gaul. The entire legion refused and so enraged Maximian that he ordered every tenth man killed. When the remaining 90 percent still refused to comply with the order, every tenth man again was killed. When those still standing refused to recant, Maximian, in a fit of rage, ordered all surviving 5,400 soldiers executed. The sentence was carried out by other troops who hacked the Christians to pieces with their swords.

In the final verses of Hebrews 11, the author recounted people of faith who braved almost every conceivable abuse. Summarizing, he said they “obtained a good testimony through faith,” demonstrating fearlessness despite intense persecution (Heb. 11:39–40). He continued: “Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (12:1).

The witnesses are those who were persecuted, as cited in the previous chapter. They are witnesses to us, providing an unswerving testimony of courage, endurance, and faith in the face of the ultimate trial.

There is no way to ascertain how many hundreds of thousands have perished for their faith in Christ through the centuries of church history. Nor is there space here to rehearse the myriad perverse methods used to torture and kill them. What seems obvious, however, is that these Christian martyrs took to heart the words of Jesus Christ who warned, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mt. 10:28).

In this age of political correctness, the words of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, should encourage believers not to fear men but to fear God alone. Condemned as a Christian and transported to Rome for execution, he declared, “I care for nothing, of visible or invisible things, so that I may but win Christ. Let fire and the cross, let the companies of wild beasts, let breaking of bones and tearing of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malice of the devil, come upon me; be it so, only may I win Christ Jesus!”

Endnote


Charles E. McCracken is the Canadian director of FOI Gospel Ministry in Brampton, Ontario. Thomas C. Simcox is the Northeastern States director for The Friends of Israel.
COMPASS DIRECT NEWS—Pastor Mark Jaikumar was recovering recently in a private care facility in Bangalore, Karnataka state, India, after being kidnapped and blindfolded and overhearing Hindu extremists’ plans to kill him. This was his second abduction in one week.

Pastor of the Divine Gospel Church in Chelekere village, Bangalore, Jaikumar was kidnapped from the church compound on August 25. “They kept cursing and mocking the Christian faith in filthy language and told each other that all my conversion activities would end once they killed me,” he told Compass. He managed to escape after a commercial bus he and one of the kidnappers had gotten on broke down.

Three days earlier, the pastor had been kidnapped from an orphanage he was visiting. “They kept cursing the Christian faith and made allegations of converting the orphans. Then they tore my shirt and tried to strangle me, while one of the attackers took a big stone to crush my head,” he said. The headlights of an approaching vehicle beamed onto them, and the assailants fled.

India: Pastor Kidnapped Twice, Nearly Killed

An Indian woman in a sari prays in a Christian church in Bangalore, India (David H. Wells/Corbis).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMFORT AMID DISCOURAGEMENT</th>
<th>GUIDANCE AMID CONFUSION</th>
<th>PEACE AMID TROUBLES</th>
<th>COURAGE AMID FEAR</th>
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<td>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you (Isa. 43:2). In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (Jn. 16:33). And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 Jn. 5:4–5).</td>
<td>I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye (Ps. 32:8). For this is God, our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even to death (Ps. 48:14). The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought (Isa. 58:11). 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).</td>
<td>For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11). The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him (Nah. 1:7). Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (Jn. 14:27).</td>
<td>Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you (Dt. 31:6). The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe (Prov. 18:10). Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (Isa. 41:10).</td>
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(panels: 1-2, 4, 8, Getty Images; 3, 5-6, Corbis; 7, FOI Archives; 3, 7, digital enhancement by Thomas E. Williams)
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>TO HIS CHILDREN</strong></th>
<th>by Thomas C. Simpson</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STRENGTH</strong></td>
<td><strong>FORGIVENESS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>AMID WEAKNESS</strong></td>
<td><strong>OF SIN</strong></td>
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| **Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me? (Jer. 32:27). All things are possible to him who believes (Mk. 9:23). My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13). And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).** | **As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us (Ps.103:12). Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool (Isa.1:18). You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Pet. 1:18–19). If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9).** | **He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life (Jn. 5:24). I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live (Jn. 11:25). Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor. 2:9).** | **I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands (Isa. 49:15–16). For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (Jn. 3:17). But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! (1 Jn. 3:1).** |
Being a believer in Jesus is not always easy. In fact, more often than not it brings persecution, trials of all kinds, and many deep valleys through which the child of God must walk. The up side is that we do not endure these hardships alone. In God’s Word He promises, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5).

Through the ages, many believers learned the truth of the Lord’s presence during testing. Often these hardships were put on paper and later set to music. Many became some of the great hymns of the faith.

**How Firm a Foundation**

In 1787 John Rippon (1751–1836), a 36-year-old Baptist minister, used Hebrews 13:5 as the basis for this greatly beloved hymn.

When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;
For I will be with thee thy trouble to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not harm thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.

**God Leads Us Along**

George Young was a 19th-century preacher and carpenter who ministered in country churches. He often received no regular salary, which made it difficult to provide for his family. Finally, George built a modest home for his family. But while he was away teaching the Word, locals who disliked the gospel message burned his house to the ground. Out of that loss in 1903, Pastor Young penned these moving words and composed the melody:

Though sorrows befall us and evils oppose,
God leads His dear children along;
Through grace we can conquer, defeat all our foes,
God leads His dear children along.

Some through the waters, some through the flood,
Some through the fire, but all through the blood;
Some through great sorrow, but God gives a song,
In the night season and all the day long.

**I Must Tell Jesus**

Elisha A. Hoffman (1839–1929), the son of a minister, was himself ordained in 1868. He was the author of some well-loved hymns, including “Are You Washed in the Blood?” “Down at the Cross,” “Is Your All on the Altar?” and “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms.” This one gives instructions for trials:
I must tell Jesus all of my trials;
I cannot bear these burdens alone;
In my distress He kindly will help me;
He ever loves and cares for His own.
I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus!
I cannot bear my burdens alone;
I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus!
Jesus can help me, Jesus alone.

**Blessed Assurance**

Fanny Crosby (1820–1915) is probably one of the best-known and best-loved hymn and gospel songwriters of all time. She is believed to have written more than 8,000 hymns. Blinded in a medical accident when she was merely an infant, she could have been bitter but instead chose to invest all her energies in praising God. Her astounding spiritual sight enabled her to “see” far better than any physical eyes ever could, as demonstrated in these words:

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior, all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior, all the day long.

**I’d Rather Have Jesus**

The words to this beautiful song came from a poem written in 1922 by Rhea F. Miller. George Beverly Shea wrote the music. According to the late evangelist Jack Wyrtzen, George’s mother had placed the poem on the family piano so George would see it when he returned home after receiving a lucrative singing offer in the secular world. After reading the poem, he chose to serve the Lord and wrote the music to this famous and beautiful hymn. Bev Shea will be 99 in February. And as of this writing, he is still singing.

I’d rather have Jesus than silver or gold,
I’d rather be His than have riches untold;
I’d rather have Jesus than houses or lands,
I’d rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.
Than to be the king of a vast domain
Or be held in sin’s dread sway,
I’d rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today.
I’d rather have Jesus than men’s applause;
I’d rather be faithful to His dear cause;
I’d rather have Jesus than worldwide fame,
I’d rather be true to His holy name.

by Thomas C. Simcox
They Say ‘Peace, Peace’ When There Is No Peace

Jean Joseph Benjamin Constant’s 1876 oil-on-canvas depiction of the Turks of Mohammed II (1432-1481) entering Constantinople in 1453 (The Bridgeman Art Library/Benjamin Constant/Getty Images).
With fanatic determination, radical Islam daily heaps one proof on another of the macabre nature of the popular slogan, “Islam is a religion of peace.” Incredibly, this soothing lullaby’s appeal only increases as greater evidence to the contrary mounts around a Western world that refuses to see.

The repetition of this naked lie by Western religious and political leaders in their attempt to keep oil flowing has gone far beyond political correctness and ecumenical delusion. It has become insanity obsessed with self-destruction.

We are fast approaching the point beyond which it will be too late to escape the tsunami begun by Muhammad. Overwhelmed by its giant waves of immigration and terrorism, the West will at last enjoy in its final destruction the very Islamic “peace” it has praised for so long. Only God can deliver us. But why should He rescue a proud, amoral Western culture that grows ever more brazen in its rebellion against Him?

When Muhammad first proclaimed, “Allah has commanded me to fight against all people until all confess that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is his only messenger,” he could not have imagined that Islam would ever be called a “religion of peace.” Islam began with Muhammad’s first murders in Jewish Yathrib (now Medina) of about 25 key opposition figures. The sword was Islam’s unmistakable trademark from its beginning. Plundering caravans and villages; enslaving women and children; and torturing, mutilating, and beheading the males who surrendered to the promise of peace (900 Jews at Yathrib, 2,000 Crusader knights at Caesarea, etc.) have been the modi operandi for “converting” the world to Islam that Muhammad and then his followers have used for some 1,300 years.

After Muhammad’s death (he was poisoned by the widow of a man he had murdered) in A.D. 632, much of Arabia tried to leave Islam, having been forced into it by the sword. But Muhammad’s edict (in obedience to Allah) that all who abandoned Islam were to be killed resulted in the slaughter of about 70,000 ex-Muslim Arabs during the Wars of Apostasy (632–634), fought to “reconvert” Arabia.

**Muslim Against Muslim**

Islam’s endemic violence soon reaped its inevitable fruit as Muslims turned on one another in the many wars they fought among themselves to establish the first caliphates. Three of the four “Rightly Guided Caliphs” who succeeded Muhammad were murdered. In the process of establishing their vast empire, Muslims killed more than 100,000 fellow Muslims within a few years after Muhammad’s death.

Conversion-by-conquest of “pagans” soon left a bloody trail of unrivaled destruction, slaughter, and slavery from France to China. Muslims killed more in India alone than Hitler killed in Europe, North Africa, and Asia. The same misguided zeal to convert by force drives radical Islamic terrorism today.

Scarcely a Muslim regime today is not ruled by a dictator who seized power from other Muslims. There have been more revolutions, political assassinations, and terrorist acts in Muslim countries, Muslim against Muslim, than in all the rest of the world combined. Just in the short period from Israel’s independence to the Yom Kippur War (1948–1973), there were 80 revolutions in the Islamic world (30 successful), including the murder of 22 heads of state.

During its entire history, except for isolated pockets here and there, Islam has never brought peace. The 14-year revolution in Algeria has cost more than 110,000 lives. In Afghanistan, Islam has ruled for centuries without bringing peace. And the country would erupt in civil war between rival warlords were Western troops to leave.

**Dealing With the People of the Book**

Islam’s “peace” lies in either death or subjection, with two supposed exceptions: Christians and Jews, whom the Qur’an calls “the people of the book,” meaning the Bible. To the demand “convert or die,” a third option was added: people of the Book might pay the exorbitant jizya tax and live as dhimmis under Muslim “protection,” with virtually no rights.

Islamic persecution, enslavement, and periodic slaughter of professing Christians have rivaled the treatment of Jews. In Spain, where Islam was “the most humane,” the garri-son of Muez was slaughtered in A.D. 920; Pamplona was put to the sword in 923; then followed Cordova, Zaragoza, and Mereda, with all adult males killed and women and children enslaved. During the 400-year rule of the Ottoman Turks, Christians lived in daily fear of murder, rape, torture, and genocide—as they still do today in most Muslim countries.

In A.D. 635 the Christians of Damascus were beheaded when they surrendered, and their churches were burned to the ground. So it was with the nearby Christian village of Qara, where all adults were massacred and children enslaved. When the Christians of Acre asked for the privilege to properly bury the Damascus-Qara dead, the Muslims marched to Acre and slaughtered every Christian they could find along the coast. In 1403 some 700 large villages and small towns were massacred and all Christian churches razed. At Sivas, 4,000 Christians were buried alive. At Tus there were 10,000 victims. About 100,000 were
killed at Saray, 90,000 in Baghdad, and 70,000 in Isfahan. We can only recite a small fraction of such massacres. The Nestorians and Jacobites of Mesopotamia never recovered.

The terror and slaughter of the Ottoman Christians (Greeks, Syrians, Lebanese, et al.) is beyond description, including the massacre of more than 1 million Armenians. The destruction by Ataturk’s army of Christian Smyrna in September 1922 (some 200,000 murdered) is a tale of indescribable cruelty and horror told in the book *The Blight of Asia* by U.S. General Consul George Horton, an eyewitness. In its foreword, James W. Gerard, former U.S. ambassador to Germany, described Horton’s book as “the whole story of the savage extermination of Christian civilization [by Muslims] throughout the length and breadth of the old Byzantine Empire.”

Horton said this extermination was “carried on . . . with fixed purpose,” and systematically involved “painstaking minute details” and “unspeakable cruelties.”

Fundamental Islam has not changed. Most of us remember watching Muslim mobs around the world dance for joy in the streets and shouting *Alahu Akbar* (“glory to Allah”) when the World Trade Center’s towers came down in New York City on September 11, 2001. However, the footage was quickly taken off Muslim TV.

## Christians Under Islam

After Islamic cleric Sheikh Youssef al-Badry deceptively stated on Egyptian television that “in some cases a Muslim may leave Islam,” 24-year-old Mohammed Hegazy made history by filing suit against Egypt for refusing to recognize his and his wife’s conversion to Christianity. Muslim clerics quickly countersued, and an outraged public demanded the young couple be beheaded, as Islam requires. Yet forced conversions of Christians to Islam are an almost daily occurrence, and young girls are kidnapped off the streets and forced into Islamic marriage.

Last year Theresa Ghattas was missing for three weeks. She had been imprisoned in a Cairo apartment and forced to “convert” before reappearing with a Muslim family, wearing the full veil. Recently 19-year-old Ingy Nagy Edwar disappeared after boarding a bus. She reappeared in court wearing an Islamic veil, forbidden to speak to parents and family who were ordered never to contact her again. Many similar examples could be given.

While boasting that Christians have freedom, Egypt requires the “express permission” of its president for any repairs to a church. In fact, no permissions have been granted in the 25 years of Hosni Mubarāk’s presidency. Having unsuccessfully sought such permission for more than a year, a church in upper Egypt repaired a desperately needed toilet. The church was heavily fined, and authorities demolished the toilet.

In April 2007 in the central Turkish town of Malatya, one German and two Turkish employees of the Zirve publishing house that distributes Bibles endured three hours of intense torture, hands and legs bound, before their throats were slit. Scores of similar attacks on Turkey’s small Christian minority (1 percent of the population) continue. Hoping to join the European Union, Turkish authorities officially condemn such crimes, but they never criticize Islam.

In Islamic Uzbekistan, raids continue against home fellowships. Leaders and families (including children) are being arrested, beaten, imprisoned, and fined. After Daniel, an 11-year-old Christian living in Toba Tek Singh, Pakistan, was beaten by Muslim friends for not playing with them, Daniel’s parents confronted the Muslim family (a dangerous mistake). The family called the police and falsely claimed Daniel had blasphemed Muhammad. Daniel’s Christian family now faces a heavy fine, possible life imprisonment, or the death penalty. In November 2006, Shahzad and Saraj Bashir, 18 and 20 years old, were kidnapped and held prisoner by their employer and tortured to “convert” to Islam. Managing to escape, they have since moved far away.

In contrast, since its takeover of Bangladesh in January 2007, the military interim government has begun to convict and even execute Muslims guilty of murdering Christians. Yet in August 2007, in Bangladesh’s Nilphamari district, recently baptized converts to Christ were kidnapped and forced back into Islam under public threats of violence. Their means of income is cut off, their cooking utensils are forcefully taken, their homes are vandalized, and their lives are threatened. Yet they are offered jobs and other rewards to return to Islam.

The above is a small fraction of the persecution and martyrdom Christians suffer today at the hands of Muslim fundamentalists.

Scripture teaches that faith in Jesus Christ alone brings salvation: “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Let us pray and do all we can to get the gospel to these people, since they are held in bondage, afraid to believe on the Christ who alone can liberate them to follow the path of true peace that His death has bought at infinite price.

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1 James W. Gerard, foreword, *The Blight of Asia* <ellopos.net/polities/turkey-blight/foreword.asp>.


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Dave Hunt is the founder of *The Berean Call*, Bend, Oregon. He is also a well-known author and international speaker for the organization.
Eritrea: Christians Tortured to Death

Citing Christian sources in the East African nation of Eritrea, Open Doors said in a statement that it has confirmed that 33-year-old Nigisti Haile was killed for refusing to sign a letter recanting her faith. Held at the Wi’a Military Training Center 20 miles south of the Red Sea port of Massawa, Haile was one of 10 single Christian women arrested at a church gathering in Keren who have spent 18 months under severe pressure.

Eritrea outlawed independent Protestant churches in May 2002, closing their buildings and banning them from meeting even in private homes. Haile was a member of a Rhema church, an independent Protestant group, according to Open Doors. Before her arrest, according to the organization, Haile worked for a relative while studying to complete high school-level education.

In February 2007, Magos Solomon Semere died under torture at the Adi-Nefase Military Confinement facility outside Assab, four and a half years after the Eritrean regime jailed him for worshiping in a banned Protestant church. According to one source, the 30-year-old Semere died “due to physical torture and persistent pneumonia, for which he was forbidden proper medical treatment.”

In August 2007, Open Doors became aware that the 10 Christian women arrested earlier were separated from other prisoners and taken to the Wi’a military center, where they underwent torture for refusing to recant.

On August 19, ten members of the Full Gospel Church were arrested as they gathered in a house in Kahawata, a suburb of Asmara, sources said. On August 12, Leul Gebreab, 35, a pastor at the evangelical Apostolic Church, was arrested in Asmara.

Amnesty International said the detainees from the Full Gospel Church are believed to be held without charge or trial in the Karchele security prison, together with dozens of other pastors and members of banned evangelical churches.

More than 2,000 Eritrean Christians are imprisoned in Eritrea. All have been denied legal counsel or trial, with no written charges filed against them. Amnesty reported that most of the more than 2,000 imprisoned Christians have been held for more than two years in harsh conditions, with little or no medical treatment.

“Members of evangelical churches have been subjected to arrest, torture and coercion by the security forces to try and force them to deny their faith,” Amnesty reported.

Since May 2002, Eritrea has officially recognized only Islam and the Orthodox, Catholic, and Lutheran Christian churches. At the same time, Amnesty noted, religious persecution has also affected the Orthodox and Catholic churches.
Jonah’s Rancor

EDITOR’S NOTE: With this article, we conclude our series on the book of Jonah. In the next issue, David Levy will begin a series on the New Testament book of Hebrews.

If we were writing the book of Jonah, how would we end the story? We’d probably have Jonah rejoicing over being restored from disobedience, rescued from the belly of a fish, recommissioned in the Lord’s service, and returned to Nineveh to preach a great revival.

However, God’s ways are not our ways. In chapter 4, the book concludes by contrasting Jonah’s ungodly attitude toward Nineveh’s redemption with God’s love and grace toward all people. Keep in mind that Nineveh was located in the country we know today as Iraq.

Jonah’s Reaction

Jonah was an unhappy prophet, to say the least. God did exactly what Jonah expected He would do. He spared Nineveh from judgment when the city repented (3:10). But God’s action “displeased Jonah exceedingly [it was evil to Jonah], and he became angry [literally, “became hot”]” (4:1).

How out of character for a prophet to see the at seeing God extend grace to a nation that turns to Him. Jonah should have rejoiced and thanked God for what He had accomplished in bringing Nineveh to repentance. But the picture we see here is far different. Jonah was embittered and indignant. Why? Because he considered God’s clemency a great evil.

Note the interesting comparison. Like Nineveh, Jonah had been the object of God’s extreme displeasure and divine anger; but the prophet was shown mercy. Jonah had been saved from a storm, drowning, and death in a fish’s belly (1:4–5, 15, 17). But hatred and prejudice blinded Jonah to the fact that God had bestowed on him the same mercy He had extended to Nineveh.

In anger, Jonah prayed to the Almighty and had the audacity to rebuke Him for forgiving Nineveh:

So he prayed to the Lord, and said, “Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm” (4:2).

He quoted Joel 2:13 almost word for word, proving he knew God’s nature was one of grace and compassion. So he fled to Tarshish because he did not want to preach to Nineveh and see God save the nation. He knew the Lord would have mercy on the city if it manifested any sign of repentance (cf. Ex. 34:6–7). Without shame, the prophet laid bare the motivating impulse of his heart: an unbelievable loathing for Nineveh that was deplorable for anyone, let alone for a prophet of God.

Jonah’s Request

Jonah became so despondent and depressed over God’s gracious stay of execution that he prayed for God to take his life: “Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!” (4:3).

Earlier Jonah had prayed to live and rejoiced when God delivered him from death. But now, like a fickle or spoiled child unable to get his way, he prayed to die. Jonah’s prejudice shows the depth of his depravity—and that of all humankind.

Jonah’s prayer is indefensible. First, he discriminated against the people of Nineveh. Second, he had a spiteful, unloving spirit toward those outside Israel. Third, he discredited God by criticizing His wisdom in showing grace and mercy to Nineveh. Fourth, he disdained God’s divine love for Nineveh. Fifth, he was defeated by his own selfish thoughts. In essence, he told God, “Your way of dealing with sinful people like the Ninevites is not the right way. If You are going to show mercy to Nineveh, count me out. I do not want to serve You anymore. Just let me die.”

Sixth, he wanted to die, which was selfish in itself. Seventh, he allowed the Devil to gain a foothold in his life through discouragement, which led to depression, then to defeat, and then to a death wish.

How did God respond to Jonah’s prayer? God never answered it directly. The Lord knew Jonah’s request was irrational and that if He granted it, He would have greatly dishonored Himself. Jonah was distraught because God showed mercy to Nineveh, yet he was blind to the mercy God was showing him. The Lord could have taken Jonah’s life but did not. Instead, He showed him mercy, love, and patience.

And He asked him a simple question: “Then the Lord said, ‘Is it right for you to be angry?’” (v. 4). In other words, “Jonah, do you have any right to question My ways and purposes with humankind?” The answer is no. The Creator has the right to do with His creation whatsoever He purposes (cf. Rom. 9:14–24). Jonah was so upset that he never answered God’s question.

Jonah’s Response

The prophet immediately left the city but not the area:

So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city (Jon. 4:5).
The east side of Nineveh was hilly and high, so Jonah could view the entire city. There he built a crude booth, or hut, similar to those built during the Feast of Tabernacles. It was made of woven branches to protect him from the sun’s hot rays. So Jonah sat in his hut, waiting to see if God would accept Nineveh’s repentance or bring judgment on the city.

Jonah’s desire to see Nineveh destroyed was a rebellious, ungodly attitude for God’s servant. Undoubtedly, Jonah was backslidden. Unfortunately, some of God’s servants today are not that different from Jonah. They grumble, rebel, break fellowship with God, and sulk in self-pity because they do not get their way.

In a show of mercy, God prepared a gourd to shade Jonah from the sun:

*And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant (v. 6).*

This vine may have been a castor oil plant that grows quickly in the Middle East’s hot climate. It possesses a shallow root system, produces one huge leaf, and can grow 12 feet tall. The Lord prepared, or appointed, the gourd to sprout; and it grew up overnight to shade the rebellious prophet.

Beneath the gourd’s shade, Jonah’s spirit quickly changed from displeasure to delight. He was overjoyed at receiving comfort from the gourd God had created. But the ungrateful prophet never once thanked God for His mercy and kindness; nor did he rejoice that God spared the Ninevites from judgment because they repented.

To get Jonah’s attention, the Lord destroyed the gourd:

*But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement [i.e. sultry] east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah’s head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, “It is better for me to die than to live” (vv. 7–8).*

After the worm destroyed the gourd, Jonah again felt the sun’s scorching heat. Then God brought a searing sandstorm known as a sirocco in the Middle East. It is a suffocating, dry wind that fills the air with sand. The prophet could hardly breathe. Heat exhaustion set in, causing Jonah to lose consciousness. In his affliction, the prophet asked God to grant his earlier request to die. Jonah became so caught up in his own distress that he sought death, rather than deliverance.

**Jonah Reprimanded**

Again God asked Jonah a question: “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?” (v. 9).

This time the defiant prophet answered, “It is right for me to be angry, even to death!” (v. 9). Such an insolent response could have provoked God’s wrath. But the Lord continued showing pity and mercy to Jonah despite the prophet’s self-centeredness, pressing home the practical lesson on His compassion, mercy, and love. If it were not for God’s great love, He could have removed His hand from the prophet and allowed him to die.

Jonah is like many people who stubbornly maintain unreasonable anger and tenaciously hold selfish biases even when their positions are irrational and often devoid of substantiating facts. Even Jonah’s near-death experiences of being thrown into the sea, swallowed by a great fish, vomitted onto land, and surviving extreme heat and dust produced no change in his life. He stubbornly held his ground and felt more compassion for a plant than for the people of Nineveh.

In verse 10, God arrives at the main lesson of the chapter:

*You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night (v. 10).*

The Lord told Jonah he had no reason to be angry. Jonah did not create the gourd, sustain it, or cause it to grow or die. Jonah’s compassion was misdirected and his rancor misplaced.

To care for a worthless plant that had no soul—that is here today, gone tomorrow—was foolish and selfish.

Then God drives home the key issue of the book:

*Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock? (v. 11).*

In other words, were God’s mercy, grace, and love to be withheld from the needy Gentiles? Here was a huge city of people who had cried out in repentance to God, covered themselves in sackcloth and ashes, and turned from their violent and evil ways. Should not God show mercy to them, along with the 120,000 innocent children and beasts of the field? Are these not better than any plant? The answer, of course, is yes. The gourd was worth little compared to human beings and animals. And the souls of men are of infinitely greater value than plants.

Chapter 4 closes with Jonah giving no reply to God. The prophet neither rebutted nor agreed. He showed no signs of repentance and never acquiesced to showing mercy to Nineveh. Perhaps if Jonah had reflected on his anger, selfishness, bitterness, and critical spirit, he, too, would have come to God in repentance.

Jonah’s experience is like a mirror that reflects our walks with God. Like the prophet, we often have difficulty surrendering to God’s will. We, too, often harbor anger, prejudice, and hatred toward others who are of a different nationality, race, or religious background. And, like Jonah, we have been shown God’s love and mercy and should extend these graces to others. Let’s learn from Jonah’s failure and submit our wills to the will of God.

David M. Levy is the director of International Ministries for The Friends of Israel.
The Heart’s Reflection in the Eyes

In two previous articles concerning morality, we observed biblical descriptions of various types of eyes that reflect the moral condition of a heart. After examining one more type, we will consider two other areas of biblical teaching concerning the eyes.

Non-seeing Eye. “Hear this now, O foolish people, without understanding, who have eyes and see not, and who have ears and hear not” (Jer. 5:21). The word translated “foolish” refers to a person who lacks both “moral or spiritual sense” and “spiritual comprehension.” He trusts his “own resources, without dependence on God,” has “twisted values,” and is a spiritual apostate.1

The Lord told the prophet Ezekiel, “Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, which has eyes to see but does not see, and ears to hear but does not hear; for they are a rebellious house” (Ezek. 12:2).

In Isaiah, He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive’” (6:9).

A person with non-seeing eyes observes visible evidence of God’s existence or sees God’s Word fulfilled but does not discern, recognize, comprehend, or accept its implications for himself. This type of eye reflects a self-sufficient heart of rebellion against God and His truth. As a result, such a person does not comprehend ultimate reality:

Now Moses called all Israel and said to them: “You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land—the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great wonders. Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day” (Dt. 29:2–4).

The Eyes’ Relationship to Going Astray

Scripture indicates that what the eyes see can lead people to stray into internal and external sin and to make wrong evaluations.

Numbers 15:39 signifies that what the eyes see can incline someone toward harlotry.

An example of spiritual harlotry is the worship of the heavenly bodies as a result of seeing them and becoming unduly fascinated with them:

And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage (Dt. 4:19).

Such activity involves worshiping and serving the creation instead of God the Creator (Rom. 1:25).

Spiritual harlotry can also involve the worship of man-made idols as a result of seeing them with the eyes: God said, “I was crushed by their adulterous heart which has departed from Me, and by their eyes which play the harlot after their idols. Their eyes were fixed on their fathers’ idols” (Ezek. 6:9; 20:24).

A person reveals a wicked heart if, as a result of observing things with his eyes, he selfishly withholds what he owes another person and abuses that person by so doing:

Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, “The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,” and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the Lord against you, and it become sin among you (Dt. 15:9).

Based on what they see, some people compare themselves with others and think more highly of themselves than they should. Their self-evaluations are faulty and contrary to reality:

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts. There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness. He [the wicked] flatters himself in his own eyes. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! (Prov. 21:2; 30:12; Ps. 36:2; Isa. 5:21).

When the majority of people in a society function by doing what is right in their own eyes, chaos ensues. This fact was true of Israel during the period of the judges: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Jud. 17:6; 21:25). The situation led to lawlessness, violence, false worship, perverted practices,
and judgment at the hand of foreign oppressors. The period graphically demonstrated the veracity of a principle stated in Ecclesiastes 11:9: “Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.”

A gift offered as a bribe can blind the eyes of a judge or official to what is right: “You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous” (Dt. 16:19). The prophet Samuel asked the Israelites, “From whose hand have I received any bribe with which to blind my eyes?” (1 Sam. 12:3). Samuel, of course, received none.

Certain sights can lead a man into external sexual sin. That was certainly true for King David:

_He saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold.

So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, “Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, “I am with child.”_ (2 Sam. 11:2–5).

This situation, in turn, prompted David to arrange the murder of Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband, to cover up his sin of adultery (vv. 14–17).

Certain sights can also lead a man into internal sexual sin: Jesus said, “I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?” (Job 31:1). Bible scholar Franz Delitzsch said this verse meant Job determined never to look at a virgin young woman with lustful desire or imagination.²

Second, don’t let your heart walk after evil things that your eyes see. Job requested the following test: “Let me be weighed on honest scales, that God may know my integrity. If my step has turned from the way, or my heart walked after my eyes, or if any spot adheres to my hands” (Job 31:6–7). Delitzsch indicated that Job referred to the heart as following “the drawing of the lust of the eye, viz. to obtain by deceit or extortion the property of another.”³

Third, refuse to set anything wicked before your eyes, and don’t let evil things cling to you. David declared, “I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me” (Ps. 101:3). Willem A. VanGemeren stated that David “vows to have nothing to do with any ‘vile thing’ (v. 3; lit., ‘a thing of Belial”).⁴

Fourth, turn your eyes away “from looking at worthless things,” and revive God’s influence in your life (119:37). The word translated “worthless” “designates anything that is unsubstantial, unreal, worthless, either materially or morally,” including false objects of worship.⁵

Fifth, focus your attention on God and His truth. Don’t allow anything to divert your attention from that focus:

_Your eyes are ever toward the LORD, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net. Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. In that day a man will look to his Maker, and his eyes will have respect for the Holy One of Israel._ (25:15; Prov. 4:25; Isa. 17:7).

Sixth, “Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil” (Prov. 3:7).

Seventh, the righteous, upright person “despises the gain of oppressions,” refuses bribes, “stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil” (Isa. 33:15).

Eighth, Jesus said, “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.” (Mt. 5:29). Jesus was not teaching mutilation of the body. “In fact,” wrote commentator F. F. Bruce, “it is not recorded that anyone ever mutilated himself because of these words in the Gospels.”⁶ Jesus was saying that you must pursue the course that would have the same effect as tearing out an eye—the effect of preventing you from seeing things that entraps you to sin.

For example, you should permanently rid yourself of all sources of pornographic material. Just as tearing out an eye would require strong, forceful determination or commitment, use that same determination to rid yourself of everything that entraps you to sinful, sexual lust.

Ninth, Jesus said, “anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see” (Rev. 3:18). He was speaking of appropriating “the cure for spiritual blindness.” The cure involves two ministries of the Holy Spirit: the convicting ministry to remove things that cause spiritual blindness and “the teaching ministry of the Spirit that provides illumination following conversion.”⁷ Reject the things that cause spiritual blindness and apply God’s truth, which produces spiritual enlightenment or spiritual sight. The purpose of anointing is “that you may see.”

**_**ENDNOTES**_**


3 Ibid., 177.


5 Victor P. Hamilton, “shav,” in Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 908.

6 F. F. Bruce, Hard Sayings of Jesus (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 55.


8 Ibid.
EDITORS NOTE: Nonie Darwish is a courageous, Egyptian-born Muslim who has dared to speak out against Islamic terrorism and suppression. Her father, Mustafa Hafez, was a high-ranking Egyptian military officer who died in 1956 leading attacks against Israel in Gaza. But Nonie loves her adopted country, America. And she loves Israel. We are privileged to reprint this excerpt from her outstanding book, Now They Call Me Infidel by Nonie Darwish.

Israel has been the object of constant terrorism—a barrage of 9/11s all through its history. As a percentage of their total population, Israel has lost far more lives to terror than the United States did in 9/11. Arabs have always rejected peace with Israel, using Israel as their excuse for a jihad that has now reached all corners of the globe. The way the Jews have been treated in the Middle East is tragic and a disgrace. And the world—including much of the West, with the exception of the United States—has abandoned Israel in order to appease twenty-two Arab countries with large oil reserves.

My position on Israel is in sharp contrast with the majority of the Muslim world and Arab Americans. It is even more unusual coming from an Arab woman. But the stalemate in the Arab-Israeli crisis will not be solved by Arabs and Muslims clinging to the same old outlook toward Israel. There must be a new paradigm, a fresh perspective by Arab countries if they are serious about peace and ending the stalemate.

As my articles in support of Israel began appearing, I started receiving e-mails from Arabs and Muslims who had begun to circulate my articles inside the Arab world. Some supported my views on Israel; I discovered I was not alone in my wish for peace with Israel. There were Arabs just like me who wanted peace and were ready to move beyond the conflict. But almost all of them told me not to post their names. Some of what they told me was very personal, private, and moving. It was a call for help from inside the Muslim and Arab world. The e-mails streamed in from Egypt, the West Bank, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Algeria, Yemen, Malaysia, Tunisia—from all over the Arab world. Many of them told me, “You are right on the money!” or “You have the courage of ten Arab
men!” Through the e-mails that flooded in, I heard of the suffering on both sides, the Arab and the Israeli. In February 2004, I founded the Web site www.ArabsforIsrael.com as my answer to this tragedy, my attempt to bring a voice to all these people who needed to express their views without fear. Thank God for the Internet. ArabsforIsrael.com now provides a forum for Arabs and Muslims who want to express their support for Israel. Tragically, Israel has few friends at this point in history, and I wish through my actions to convey to every Israeli and Jew around the world, that, yes, there are Arabs and Muslims who support them and wish for their well-being.

Some Arabs asked me, why not call the Web site something like “support Israel and Palestinians.” To them I say: there is nothing new about an Arab supporting Palestinians; that will not bring any new perspective to solving the crisis. Palestinian Arabs already enjoy the encouragement and support of all Arab and Muslim countries as well as many non-Muslim countries around the world. What we need now is a revolutionary idea, a new perspective—one that regards Israel as an asset and not as an enemy in the region. This new outlook is necessary if our common goal is peace. I was convinced that “Arabs for Israel” was the right name for the new perspective I was advocating. I want to tell Palestinians that they have a neighbor who could be an honest partner with them. Having a neighbor of a different religion and perhaps a different culture can be an asset and not the handicap that the Arab world has been telling them it is for fifty-eight years.

The so-called support the Arab world gives Palestinians is poisonous. In setting up the Web site, I wanted to distance myself from the kind of support twenty-two Arab countries have been giving to Arabs of the West Bank and Gaza. I have seen it, lived it, been immersed in it for too long. Life has gotten only progressively worse for Palestinians since the days when I lived as a child in Gaza. These twenty-two powerful Arab countries have brought nothing to the Palestinians but defeat after defeat, failed promises, and feelings of despair and victimhood. All sorts of tactics have been used in their quest to bring “justice” for the Palestinians: manipulation, shaming, blaming, and rewarding terror. All of it has been done at the expense of a stable life for the Palestinians. In the process, Palestinians have nothing to show for all these decades of war and terror.

Like most of the Arab world around them, Palestinians are predominantly poor, living under corruption, mismanagement, and chronically high unemployment. Conditions for the majority of poor in Egypt are no better. Instead of Palestinians lining up for work on their borders with Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, or Syria, they have been lining up for work inside Israel—the very country Arabs expect them to terrorize. Several generations of Palestinians have forgotten what life in a normal setting is and are immersed in self-pity. In the midst of the false pity the Arab world around them dishes out, some Palestinians have begun to feel that the world owes them. They don’t remember a society with respect for the rule of law, a society in which citizens produce what they need to live on instead of waiting for handouts from around the world.

Geographically, Gaza is untenable. It has too many
people crowded into a tiny strip of desert that cannot possibly economically support that size of a population. It is an artificial and unnatural situation allowed by surrounding Arab countries to purposely keep Gaza an overcrowded tinderbox of unrest. The Palestinian family unit has been shattered and ripped apart by jihad and terrorism. Encouraged by Arab countries, jihad has become a greater value than motherhood. Women are urged to become terrorists as much as men are. And mothers are brainwashed to be proud when their children blow themselves up to kill Jews.

Arab “love” and “support” of Palestinians has been extremely self-serving, manipulative, and crippling, and has kept them in constant turmoil, terror, and war. They are literally loving them to death. The two regions—the West Bank and Gaza—have simply been cynically used and abused by Arabs as launching grounds for war and terror against Israel. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict represents the focal point of the larger confrontation of the Muslim world against the non-Muslim world. Israel may be the frontline enemy, but beyond the Mediterranean and the ocean is the non-Muslim world that Muslims believe they need to conquer for Islam. In the process, Palestinians have been sacrificed and kept hostage as the human frontline of Arab jihad.

No, I do not want to give that kind of support to Palestinians. They have been used and abused enough by the Arab world. Palestinian children deserve better.

They don’t need hatred; they need hope. They don’t need jihad; they need jobs. I reject such eternal jihad and terrorism. I can no longer wish this on any Arab child. That is why when people disparagingly ask me, “Don’t you support Palestinians?” I say to them, “Yes,” but not in the same way as the rest of the Arab world. I no longer want Palestinians to be hostages to Arab dreams of a caliphate.

In the meantime, supporting Israel and the Jewish people who have contributed to the Middle East culture for thousands of years is simply good, right, and the honorable thing to do.

The following are the principles that I and other like-minded Arabs have enumerated for the Web site ArabsforIsrael.com:

**We Are Arabs and Muslims Who Believe . . .**

- **We can support Israel and still support the Palestinian people. Supporting one does not cancel support for the other.**

- We can support the State of Israel and the Jewish religion and still treasure our Arab and Islamic culture.

- There are many Jews and Israelis who freely express compassion and support for the Palestinians. It is time that we Arabs express reciprocal compassion and support.

- The existence of the State of Israel is a fact that should be accepted by the Arab world.

- Israel is a legitimate state that is not a threat but an asset in the Middle East.

- Every major world religion has a center of gravity. Islam has Mecca, and Judaism certainly deserves its presence in Israel and Jerusalem.

- Diversity should not be a virtue only in the United States, but should be encouraged around the world. We support a diverse Middle East with protection for human rights and respect and equality under the law to all minorities, including Jews and Christians.

- Arabs must end the boycott of Israel.

- Palestinians have several options but are deprived from exercising them because of their leadership, the Arab League, and surrounding Arab and Muslim countries who do not want to see Palestinians live in harmony with Israel.

- If Palestinians want democracy, they can start practicing it now.

- We stand firmly against suicide/homicide terrorism as a form of jihad.

- We are appalled by the horrific act of terror against the USA on September 11, 2001.

- Arab media should end the incitement and misinformation that result in Arab street rage and violence.

- We are eager to see major reformation in how Islam is taught and channeled in order to bring out the best in Muslims and contribute to the uplifting of the human spirit and advancement of civilization.

- We believe in freedom to choose or change one’s religion.

- We cherish and acknowledge the beauty and contributions of the Middle East culture, but recognize that the Arab/Muslim world is in desperate need of constructive self-criticism and reform.

(“Arabs for Israel,” from **NOW THEY CALL ME INFIDEL** by Nonie Darwish, copyright © 2006 by Nonie Darwish. Used by permission of Sentinel, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.).

**‘Amisha’: The Heroic Housewife from page 15**

the breeze. When we climbed back on the bus, we were almost dry.

I have given a few small gospel books to two of the women who can read. Now I also have a second group of women closer to my house. We are planning to have a baptism in a few months. I thank God my husband does not come back from work before I return home. I pray for him.

I am completely surrendered to Jesus. He was crucified for me, so what I suffer is very little. I pray for Christian women in Iran, Iraq, and Nigeria whose husbands are not yet Christians.
India: Hindu Extremism Increasing

COMPASS DIRECT NEWS—Christians rallied in Karnataka’s capital of Bangalore, India, in September 2007 to protest a growing number of Hindu extremist attacks on church meetings in Mysore district and other areas. “The Global Council of Indian Christians [GCIC] is in possession of concrete evidence of a conspiracy of the Hindu extremists allegedly belonging to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS] and the Bajrang Dal, who plan to launch a serial attack against Christians in HD Kotte and different parts of Mysore,” organization president Dr. Sajan K. George told Compass.

He said Pastor Yeravasan Kalla Suresh of Ebenezer Full Gospel Church in HD Kotte is in “grave” danger. Two Bangalore-based extremists have been holding meetings in different parts of Mysore, George said, indoctrinating young people in hateful propaganda. “The anti-Christian attacks are alarmingly increasing day by day,” George said. “There have been 70 reported cases of attacks against Christians in the last 18 months.”

Bangladesh: Christian Villagers Again Beaten, Threatened

COMPASS DIRECT NEWS—Islamic radicals in a Bangladesh village have meted out more beatings and death threats to Christians after a special police force meant to offer protection for three months withdrew after only a week.

The Islamic extremists in Durbachari village, Nilphamari, have continued their violence against Christians. Moreover, a national newspaper has clearly named—and thus targeted—the Rev. Albert Adhikari as a key advocate for Christians in the area.

Muslim villagers had seized a local Christian, known only as Hatem, in July 2007. They beat Hatem, a fruit salesman, and questioned him about his conversion from Islam before binding him with ropes and leaving him in a food storage area overnight.

When Hatem’s friends phoned the village chairman in the morning and asked for help, the chairman intervened and Hatem was released. Adhikari later visited Hatem and found him lying in bed, covered with bruises.

On July 12, Adhikari and a local Christian known only as Sanjoy visited several Christian homes in the area to assess the situation and encourage the believers.

Later that night, as Sanjoy was preparing to return home, Christians in the village phoned him and warned him not to return by his usual route, as Muslim villagers were waiting with sticks and other homemade weapons. Forewarned, Sanjoy took a longer route and arrived home about two hours later.

On Sunday (July 15), Adhikari learned that nine people carrying guns and other weapons had visited the home of another Christian in Durbachari, issuing death threats. Thankfully, the believer, known only as Barek, had taken shelter elsewhere in the village and escaped injury. That same day the Inkekhab, a Bengali daily newspaper, published an article calling for a ban on the activity of Christian individuals, churches, and nongovernmental organizations throughout Bangladesh.
Who is the Servant of the Lord presented in Isaiah 53? The answer is critical to understanding the great price God paid for our redemption. Some believe Isaiah 53 does not describe a real person, but rather the nation of Israel. Is this correct? Or does it describe Almighty God who came to Earth? Verses 6 through 9 have the answers.

ISAIAH 53:6: 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. This Servant of the Lord gives His life to save us. While we were all far from Him, He offered His life as a total sacrifice for transgressors and sinners, revealing His great love for us: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ [Messiah] died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

The prophet emphasized that this Servant of the Lord carries (takes on Himself) our sins. Who is qualified to do such a thing? Who is able to forgive our sins and declare us righteous?

Isaiah himself said only God can wipe away our sin: “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins” (43:25). God says in Isaiah 44:22, “I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”

Thus the Servant of the Lord must be God Himself. Otherwise He could not forgive our sins.

The words and the Lord has laid on Him reinforce the truth that there are multiple entities in one Godhead. The word Him refers to the Servant of the Lord who is obviously the Lord Himself. This plurality also appears in Proverbs 30:4, which refers to both God the Father and Son: “Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son’s name, if you know?” (See also Psalm 2 and Daniel 3:25.)

The Suffering of the Servant

Only one Person in all of history has ever fit the description of the suffering Servant of the Lord as portrayed in Isaiah 53: Jesus Christ. He is El Shaddai who took on the form of man and came into the world to atone for our sins. (See “One God, Three Entities,” in the 2007 issues of Israel My Glory.)

ISAIAH 53:7-9: He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its sheapers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. The Servant of the Lord here accepts unjust treatment with humility and without objection. He does not fight or rebel but does as He is told.

The word oppressed means He was beaten by oppressors. His silence and obedience are likened to that of a lamb taken to the slaughter. The people of Israel are described as in need of a sacrifice for their transgressions: “for the transgressions of My people He was stricken” (v. 8). But the Servant who was “stricken” for those transgressions is described as having done no wrong (v. 9). Isaiah aptly portrayed Him as a lamb: the Lamb of atonement, spotless and perfect, like a lamb for sacrifice. Such was the Servant of the Lord.

The Israelites knew that only perfect animals could
be used for sacrifices. Yet these animals were only shadows, symbols of the final sacrifice that would be offered for the sins of mankind on the appointed day. Isaiah stated clearly that the Servant of the Lord is the real and eternal Sacrifice (cf. Heb. 9—10).

For this reason, John the Baptist cried out when he saw Jesus, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn. 1:29).

Some argue that Jesus complained and rebelled by asking God the Father to take “this cup” from Him (Mt. 26:39). But such is not the case. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, knew purity and holiness and understood well the pain that awaited Him. He knew the effect of the sin curse that He was about to take on Himself.

When He asked the Lord to remove the cup from Him, He actually asked if there was another way through which He could redeem mankind. Jesus did not intend to abandon humanity to Satan and did not regret having come to redeem it. He merely wanted to avoid being separated, for even one moment, from God the Father (“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Ps. 22:1; Mk. 15:34).

But He knew there was no other way. There was no solution apart from shedding the pure, atoning blood of the Servant of the Lord—Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.

continued next issue

As we head into 2008, we’ve noticed more spine-chilling movies and television shows about demonic, supernatural phenomena and attempts to foretell the future than ever before. That’s because “the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1).

But the Bible actually has a great deal to say about the future and what will happen on Earth both before and after the Lord Jesus returns. Such Scripture is called prophecy. The Bible is filled with it and is accurate 100 percent of the time.

We encourage you to join The Friends of Israel as we open the Bible and see what God says about the future. Find the location nearest you and save the date so you can join us for a “Day in the Prophetic Word With The Friends of Israel.” For more information concerning cost and details, call us at 800-257-7843 and ask us to send you a flyer.

Clementon, New Jersey—January 12, Laurel Hill Bible Church.
Sun Valley, California—January 19, Grace Community Church.
Tampa, Florida—January 25, Comfort Inn.
Fort Myers, Florida—January 26, Ambassador Riverfront Hotel.
Deerfield Beach, Florida—February 9, First Baptist Church.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin—April 19, Best Western Milwaukee Airport Hotel and Conference Center.
Richmond, Virginia—April 25–26, Immanuel Baptist Church.
Bloomington, Minnesota—May 17, Embassy Suites Hotel.
Knoxville, Tennessee—October 11, Hilton Knoxville Airport.

by Meno Kalisher, pastor of the Jerusalem Assembly House of Redemption in Jerusalem, Israel.
Arab-Israeli VIP disses Israel

**Arutz 7**—The Jewish state’s first Arab minister, Raleb Majadle, has declared that Israeli sovereignty over the Temple Mount is nonexistent and that he will always give his allegiance to Islam over Israel. The minister spoke from the Knesset podium in his official capacity as minister of science, culture, and sport.

The comment came in reply to a question regarding the Muslim Waqf’s unsupervised digging and use of heavy machinery on the Temple Mount.

Asked pointedly, “Does Israeli law apply on the Temple Mount or does it not?” Majadle answered, “In my opinion, certainly not.”

When reminded he speaks for the entire government, Majadle replied, “I will say my opinion. Before I am a government minister I am first and foremost a person and a citizen and a Muslim. . . . Therefore, I say clearly al-Aqsa, al-Haram al-Sharif [as Muslims call the Temple Mount] cannot be under the authority of Israeli law.”

When reminded he had sworn allegiance to the State of Israel and its laws, Majadle declared, “I hereby inform you, esteemed MK [Aryeh] Eldad, that I may be a minister for one, two, or 10 years; but I was born a Muslim, and a Muslim I shall die. I respect Israeli law, but if there is a contradiction between the law and my deep faith as a Muslim, I announce that I will know what to choose.”

Eldad immediately wrote to the prime minister demanding Majadle be fired. In addition, he asked the attorney general to open a police investigation against him on suspicion of breach of trust.

Hamas army coming soon

**Arutz 7**—Hamas in Gaza is two to three years away from becoming a real army and reaching the same capabilities of Hezbollah, according to Defense Ministry sources.

Hamas has amassed weapons in underground bunkers that were dug below bushes and houses, leaving them undetected from the air. It also has built an underground network of tunnels for smuggling weapons and transporting terrorists.

“They dig holes in the roads, place powerful explosive devices inside and cover them with asphalt, so that it’s impossible to detect them,” said the IDF Logistics Branch.

The IDF said Hamas terrorists are using new skills they acquired at universities, and that he will always give his allegiance to Islam over Israel. The minister spoke from the Knesset podium in his official capacity as minister of science, culture, and sport.

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U.S. fed info to Hezbollah

**Arutz 7**—U.S. authorities have discovered that an FBI agent and CIA analyst leaked classified information to the Hezbollah terrorist organization via American Hezbollah sympathizers. Two of her family members had even attended a Hezbollah fund-raiser.

According to CBS News, the female agent, Nada Nadim Prouty, pleaded guilty “to charges involving her disclosure of information” to parties sympathetic to Hezbollah, who then passed it to the Iranian-backed group.

The woman is of Lebanese background and became a U.S. citizen through marriage. CBS says the marriage was faked in order to obtain citizenship. In 2003 she searched computerized FBI files on an investigation involving Hezbollah, though unauthorized to do so.

There is not enough evidence against her to charge her with espionage. But it remains to be seen what sentence will be handed down and how it will compare with the life sentence Jonathan Pollard is now serving after his conviction of one count of passing information to a friendly U.S. ally. The prosecution is reported-ly seeking just 16 years in prison in Prouty’s case.

Arab-Hebrew University campus.

An Arab student attacked Eddie Freiman, chairman of Im Tirtzu, as Freiman sat at a booth with two other activists. “While I was unfurling the Israeli flag above it, . . . dozens of Arab students started streaming towards the booth opposite us, all wearing shining black and red kaffiyehs and some with PLO-flag shirts. There were about 50-60 of them, and they gathered in a large circle, jumping and yelling insults towards us.

“I couldn’t believe that I was being attacked on the campus of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem for having an Israeli flag and playing Hebrew music.”
Columbia University Does It Again

As if Columbia University’s flap over hosting Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in September were not enough, its women’s division—Barnard College—has now awarded tenure to an anthropology professor whose book denies the existence of ancient Israel and claims the Jewish people fabricated archaeological data to cover up their colonization of Palestinian land.

Nadia Abu el-Haj was born in America in 1962 and earned a doctorate at Duke University. She claims to be of Palestinian descent. Her book, Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society, published in 2001 by the University of Chicago Press, has been overwhelmingly criticized as shoddy scholarship in both anthropology and archaeology.

Yet it has won kudos around the world and is being heralded as a groundbreaking work. In fact, the Middle East Studies Association chose it “as one of the year’s two best books in English about the Middle East,” reported The New York Times.

Before Barnard granted tenure, Candace de Russy, a writer and trustee of the State University of New York, criticized Columbia in FrontPageMag.com:

"The particular theory that el-Haj puts forward is that the "ancient Israelite origins" of the Jews is a "pure political fabrication"—a machination she proceeds to blame on "Israeli archaeologists" who were called upon to "produce . . . evidence of ancient Israelite and Jewish presence in the land of Israel, thereby supplying the very foundation, embodied in empirical form, of the modern nation's origin myth." Deploredly, in the rarified air of Morningside Heights, some Columbia faculty appear to celebrate this sort of "liberation" of scholarship from any necessity to encounter verifiable facts.

Clearly, she wrote, "The artifacts that archaeologists have discovered in the ground in the Middle East are plain enough," and credible archaeologists all know Israelite society predates modern Palestinian claims. Aren Maeir, the archaeologist heading the dig at Gath of the Philistines, deems el-Haj’s book “ludicrous,” de Russy wrote.

“El-Haj’s goal is transparent,” she added. “According to her political convictions, the Jewish State was born in sin. It is guilty, she claims, of ‘Jewish settler-colonial nation state-building.’ If, however, the Jews can carry a continuous heritage back to a series of ancient Hebrew kingdoms, Israel cannot be delegitimized by calling it a colonial settler state.”

So el-Haj “demonizes” and slanders Israeli archaeologists to promote her political views. Wrote de Russy: “If Barnard had simply insisted on hiring faculty who—whatever their political opinions—employ evidence to support the ideas they publish, it would not now have to explain why the college is considering granting tenure to a professor who regards the extensively documented history of the Israelite and Judean kingdoms as a mere politically motivated invention.”

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[Image of Students on the steps of Low Memorial Library at Columbia University in New York City (Lee Snider / Photo Images/Corbis).]
Our Muslim neighbors are doing all they can to begin a new war. If they succeed, it will not be the first time. I have lived in Israel 60 years, and it is like living on an active volcano. Our enemies are a mighty majority that refuses to rest. Why? Because they see this tiny nation is still on the map and they cannot erase it.

Because they are great in number—1.5 billion—and we have only 6 million people, they believe they can achieve a great victory over us. I have many Arab neighbors and have lived here a long time and speak their language, so they speak with me often. They boast of their strength and tell me that soon Israel will be wiped off the map. Every day they wait for our destruction.

Recently I told several of them, “You spend your lives thinking about how you will destroy us. But take a good look. Read what is written in the Bible.” And I gave them an Arabic-language Bible so they could read Exodus 15:4 and 19:

Pharaoh’s chariots and his army
He has cast into the sea; His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. For the horses of Pharaoh went with his chariots and his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them. But the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

So they read. When they learned what happened to Pharaoh and his army during the days of Moses and the Exodus, one man asked, “Who was this One who did these things and hurled the chariots into the sea?”

“Ask your great sheikhs,” I replied. “Perhaps they will know.” But they wanted to know immediately. So I told them, “The Lord God Almighty.”

“That happened many years ago,” another said, scoffing.

“Ask your great sheikhs,” I replied. “Perhaps they will know.” But they wanted to know immediately. So I told them, “The Lord God Almighty.”

“That happened many years ago,” another said, scoffing.

So I explained. “You can see for yourself that we are like a poor, little worm [Isa. 41:14]. And you are like the mighty locusts. Yet we are still here. So who is on our side?”

After thinking awhile, someone replied, “That was a long time ago, but no more. These are only stories about Israel’s many victories.”

Now we had come to the point. I told them about the many wars they started against us, determined to destroy us: 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, and many others. “But we are still here,” I said. “We won all these wars against you.”

“No,” he said. “This cannot be! You are believing fairy tales!”

So I showed them my certificate of discharge from the Israel Defense Forces and told them that I did not put my faith in foolish stories; I saw with my own eyes because I fought in all these wars.

“This is impossible to believe,” one said. But now they began asking many questions. “How could it be that you defeated us in 1948? You were only half-a-million people and had no weapons, and we were a multitude from five Arab countries. How could you win such a big victory over us? How could this be?”
We had finally arrived at the most important issue. "I will show you," I said. This time I opened the Bible to the book of Psalms and read for them Psalm 124:1–8 where it is written,

“If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,” let Israel now say—“If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive.”

Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth (vv. 1–3, 8).

“Here we are,” I said. “And you, with all your mighty power of 1.5 billion people and 56 Muslim countries, you are the ones who are lost and living in a fantasy. We are only 6 million, but look who is on our side! If this were not so, where would we be today?”

Then I showed them what God has promised His Chosen People. I read it to them so that they will know:

But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, . . .

You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, . . . and said to you, “You are My servant, I have chosen you and have not cast you away: Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isa. 41:8–10).

When I finished reading, they asked where they could buy a Bible. I told them, “In the Old City of Jerusalem, on the Jaffa Road. There you will find Bible shops.”

“We have heard much from you,” one said. “But now we must read so that we will know more about the Bible. We also want to buy one for our sheikhs so they will know with whom we are dealing.”

We talked a long time, and I had waited hours for us to come to this point. But, as the Lord says, the servant of the Lord must be patient. And He is right.

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