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I look forward to meeting Dr. Haldor Lillenas in heaven someday. This pastor/evangelist was a prolific writer of some 4,000 hymns and sacred songs extolling the Bible as God’s Word and focusing on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, his most famous hymn is the much-loved “Wonderful Grace of Jesus.” He has been with the Lord for many years, but a song he wrote almost 100 years ago has had a lasting impact on my life. I sang “The Bible Stands” many times as a young person, and its truth rings in my heart to this day. Some of you may have a similar testimony. The hymn goes like this:

_The Bible stands like a rock_
_undainted_
_'Mid the raging storms of time;
_Its pages burn with the_
_truth eternal,
_And they glow with a_
_light sublime._

Secular education cannot void the Bible as God’s truth, and no “cutting-edge theology” can negate its time-tested message.

_The Bible stands like a mountain towering_
_Far above the works of men;
_Its truth by none ever was refuted,
_And destroy it they never can._

There is a choice to be made, and it is not complicated: Either we believe the Bible, or we do not. Theologies that attempt to occupy the middle ground fail miserably in meeting the needs of the human heart.

We at The Friends of Israel understand that some of the greatest evidences of the truth of God’s Word are available for the entire world to see. They include God’s miraculous preservation of the Jewish people and His fulfilled prophecy related to Israel.

For millennia the world has served up one satanically inspired evil after another to try to destroy God’s ancient people. Violence, dispersions, crusades, pogroms, and the Holocaust represent a few. However, He promised His ultimate protection: “Yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone” (Ezek. 11:16).

The birth of modern Israel in 1948—the literal fulfillment of the prophet Ezekiel’s vision of dead, dry bones coming to life—was no surprise to those of us who believe the Bible. Ezekiel 36:28 boldly proclaims, “Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers.”

Yet Satan’s emissaries continue to portray Israel as illegitimate, arguing that the Jewish state has no right to exist. The proliferation of Israel Apartheid Weeks on campuses throughout the United States and Canada, as well as church-sponsored boycotts and divestment initiatives, are among the latest of many attempts to thwart what God loves.

For Bible-believing Christians, Israel is much more than a political issue. It is evidence of God’s truth springing from His Word. Israel is a vital part of our biblical faith.

Over the centuries, millions of Christians have paid a steep price for their faithfulness to Scripture. It cost Czech reformer John Huss his life in 1415 as he stood courageously against the erroneous theologies and tyrannies of the established church. Church authorities burned his writings. Then, when he remained steadfast, they burned him at the stake.

Today Christians in many Muslim-dominated countries are paying a huge price for their devotion to Scripture and their Savior Jesus Christ. In America, we, too, may someday pay the price as Satan’s forces relentlessly attack biblical truth and those who adhere to it.

We thank the Lord for Haldor Lillenas and for a song with an eternal message that people everywhere can grasp and apply to their lives.

_The Bible stands though the hills may tumble,_
_It will firmly stand when the earth shall crumble;_
_I will plant my feet on its firm foundation,_
_For the Bible stands._

These powerfully wonderful words reflect the beliefs and ministry of The Friends of Israel’s publications staff in bringing you this important edition with its focus on God’s Holy Word.

William E. Sutter is the executive director of The Friends of Israel.
A different atmosphere has emerged in Egypt since President Hosni Mubarak’s departure. The Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, and Iran are no longer viewed with disdain; and Hamas has an office in Cairo. In fact, Cairo recently hosted secret talks between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority’s (PA’s) Fatah, two long-standing rivals that now claim they have created a unity government.

Fatah is headed by Mahmoud Abbas and considered by Israel and the West to be a legitimate peace partner. Hamas, on the other hand, is a ruthless terrorist organization that refuses to recognize Israel’s existence and states in its charter, “Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it. . . . There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad.”

Abbas’s willingness to team up with Hamas shows how weak he is and what measures he will take to stay in power. The alliance bodes nothing good for Israel.

FOX News Middle East correspondent Reena Ninan said a new Pew research poll reveals “more than 50 percent of Egyptians want the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt to end.”

Arutz-7 has reported that a new map by the pro-Israel Americans For A Safe Israel (AFSI) “shows that a Hamas-Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority state, with or without all the borders the PA demands, would leave all of what would remain of Israel within Katyusha missile range.”

The map was created by Mark Langfan, a New York attorney and expert on military and strategic issues, who has frequently appeared at congressional committees on Capitol Hill.

“A Hamas-Fatah PA state would allow the Hamas terrorist organization, whose stated aim is the destruction of Israel, to deploy Iranian and Syrian-supplied Katyusha missiles near all Israel urban centers,” the news service stated.

Arutz-7 said the AFSI map points out that 70 percent of Israel’s population and 80 percent of its industrial base are located in the coastal region that includes Netanya and metropolitan Tel Aviv. Furthermore, “Jerusalem would be within easy range of Jericho, where the PA army is trained on a United States-funded base by American military officers. Be’er Sheva already has been attacked by Grad Katyusha missiles from Gaza, as have been Haifa and the Galilee.”

David Horovitz, editor-in-chief of The Jerusalem Post, wants to know: “Where is the outrage? I waited for the global condemnation for the Palestinian Authority and its president for choosing to tie their fate to an organization ideologically bent on wiping out the Jewish state.” The answer to Horovitz’s question is that there was no outrage, only silence.

So far, the Obama administration “has only stated that it is ‘studying’ the new agreement,” Arutz-7 said, while, in typical fashion, “former U.S. President Jimmy Carter stated he thinks it is a great idea.”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reacted to the news from Cairo by telling the PA it “must choose peace with Hamas or with Israel; not both.” He knows that an alliance between the PA and Hamas is certain to crush any vestiges of hope for a peace agreement.

When King Solomon was faced with the awesome task of ruling Israel, he asked the Lord for wisdom. In the reality of today’s Middle East, we hope that Israel’s leaders will take a page from Solomon’s book and ask God to grant them His guidance and wisdom so that they are able to protect the tiny Jewish nation.

by Steve Herzig
A recent report that Guantanamo's Muslim detainees have convinced the U.S. prison not to fly the American flag where they can see it is consistent with the inexplicable descent into the absurd now commonly practiced by U.S. officials. The rationale for this essentially bizarre action is the fear of offending the sensibilities of Islamic jihadists in U.S. custody.

Recent rhetorical gyrating over what should or should not be exposed about the demise of archterrorist Osama bin Laden is an example of a seeming obsession with not offending Islamists because it may enflame their anger toward America—as though they were not already angry. The intensity of their fanaticism can hardly be cooled by our condescending excursions into self-effacing acts that must appear to them as an apology and manifestation of weakness.

But condescend we do. As long ago as 2003, the Pentagon issued detailed rules on handling the Qur'an at the Guantanamo Bay detainment complex off the Cuban coast. On May 17, 2005, The Washington Post reported the following:

Only Muslim chaplains and Muslim interpreters can handle the holy book, and only after putting on clean gloves in full view of detainees. The detailed rules require U.S. Muslim personnel to use both hands when touching the Koran to signal "respect and reverence," and specify that the right hand be the primary one used to manipulate any part of the book "due to the cultural associations with the left hand." The Koran should be treated like a "fragile piece of delicate art." . . . The Pentagon memo, among other directives, barred military police from touching the Koran. If a copy of the book was to be moved from a cell, the memo said, it must be placed on a "clean, dry detainee towel" and then wrapped without turning it over at any time. Muslim chaplains must then ensure that it is not placed in any offensive area while transported.

Contrast those regulations with the treatment of Bibles sent to an evangelical Christian soldier in Afghanistan by his church. He received copies of the New Testament in the local Dari and Pashto languages. Understanding that Central Command General Order No. 1 forbids "proselytizing of any faith, religion, or practice," he intended to distribute them, without comment, as gifts to anyone who wanted one. However, fearing the Bibles would be viewed as encouraging conversions and would anger local Muslims, the U.S. military confiscated and destroyed the lot of them.

How they were destroyed was described by Christian Broadcasting's David Brody: "The Bibles were burned because the rules on the base say that all garbage is burned at the end of the day."

Asked why the commanders did not return the Bibles to the sending church, the reply was that they might be sent to some other soldier and distributed. So they burned God's Word instead.

This is the situation confronting America at this time in our history. Our government treats the Qur'an with kid gloves but burns the Bible. It bows to Islamist terrorists for fear of reprisals but ignores Christians because we obviously do not riot in the streets, burn down buildings, and otherwise create mayhem.

A deplorable condition has crept into our society that tolerates, or openly repudiates, the faith upon which this nation was brought into being. At the center of the core values of the most benevolent, unique, caring and sharing nation in world history is the Word of God. To belittle the Book and, with increasing evidence, the people who have found life and true redemption through its message, is no minor transgression.

Bowing to the bad guys is not the way to go. They are not people who will reach out to us in love and compassion if they win the day. Let's pray that burning Bibles is not symbolic of the wave of the future.
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A Nation Mourns

At 11 A.M. on May 9, a two-minute siren brought Israel to a standstill. It was national Remembrance Day, when Israel remembers the 22,867 soldiers, police officers, and civilians who have died defending the nation since 1860—the year Jews first moved outside Jerusalem’s Old City walls and began reclaiming their ancient homeland.

Following the siren, memorial ceremonies were held at 44 cemeteries around the country. The opening of Remembrance Day was marked at Jerusalem’s Western Wall, Judaism’s holiest site. Speaking at the Western Wall ceremony, Israeli President Shimon Peres said, “We didn’t seek war. It was imposed upon us. But when we were attacked, we didn’t have the possibility to lose, even one war. And when we won, we returned to seek peace.”

In accordance with the sunset-to-sunset order of days in Israel, those who only hours earlier were visiting the graves of lost loved ones were preparing to mark the start of Israel’s 63rd Independence Day that evening.

As in other countries, Independence Day in Israel kicks off with numerous fireworks displays and mass celebrations. Nearly every Israeli visited one of the nation’s parks in order to barbecue and celebrate with family and friends.

In few, if any, other countries on Earth is the deep sadness of Remembrance Day meshed with the overriding joy of Independence Day. There is hardly an Israeli who does not know someone who has died defending the nation, and every Israeli is aware that the nation’s survival and independence remain threatened.

by Israel Today, www.israeltoday.co.il

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A More Perfect Union

by Craig L. Parshall

Being Right in a Rough World

When the news first broke that Osama bin Laden had been killed in Pakistan, television captured images of college students celebrating in Washington, DC, and National Public Radio gave unlightened coverage of the opinions of American youth—all of whom were mere children when the September 11, 2001, terror attacks had masterminded occurred.

Politicians rushed to the cameras; CNBC asked, “Should bin Laden Have Been Taken Alive?”; and congressmen offered their reflections.

However, Christendom’s reaction was the most interesting. On more than one Christian radio program, hosts grappled with how to respond to the shooting death of a heartless terrorist. Some were particularly concerned about avoiding any appearance of satisfaction or glee, although I note that the Israelites danced in the streets when David killed Goliath (1 Sam. 18:6). Since it appears that bin Laden was unarmed, Rowan Williams, archbishop of Canterbury, declared he was “uncomfortable” with the circumstances surrounding the terrorist’s death.

I don’t think the ethics of war require that your enemy always be fully able to defend himself before he can be dispatched. Resourceful Jael killed an enemy general by luring him into her tent to rest and then drove a tent peg through his head while he slept (Jud. 4:17–22).

Two questions are implicit in the U.S. military operation in Pakistan: (1) Was it legal to kill bin Laden? (2) Can Christians ethically support the U.S. government’s deliberate targeting of individuals for death?

Although several U.S. presidents issued executive orders prohibiting political assassinations, the orders did not define assassination. Furthermore, those orders certainly did not apply to war-related activities pursued for national defense. Law Professor Robert F. Turner, cofounder of the University of Virginia’s Center for National Security Law, has opined that the shooting was clearly legal, comparing it to the intentional downsing in 1943 during World War II of a transport aircraft carrying Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the mastermind of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Regarding the second question, Christians who urge pacifism by citing Jesus’ commandments about peace (i.e., Mt. 5:9) miss the point. They fail to recognize the theological distinctions between individual responsibility to seek peace with others (Rom. 12:18) and the corporate responsibility of government to use lethal force (the “sword,” Rom. 13:1–7) to protect citizens from “evildoers” (1 Pet. 2:13–14).

Osama bin Laden was a perfect example of an evildoer who planned to continue his reign of terror. The dozens of agents and special operations forces that meticulously tracked and killed him were pursuing a lawful, if astonishingly dangerous, mission that was ethically consistent with the Bible’s view of the role of government. In all of the New Testament references to soldiers and Roman centurions, there is no suggestion that their work, which often involved using force and violence against others, was somehow sinful or inappropriate.

The news media’s microscopic examination of the bin Laden operation raised questions about whether he was armed, whether he tried to surrender, and the extent of the “fire fight” that ensued just before he was shot. Those are common questions in civilian settings when, for instance, a police officer fatally shoots a suspect. People ask whether the officer responded with excessive force.

But it is wrongheaded to apply this highly refined legal and moral analysis to armed-combat situations. While the Christian theory of the “just war,” begun with Augustine (A.D. 354–430), lists “proportionality” of force as a factor to be weighed, it is absurd to believe the theory should be applied with the same degree to military operations.

There are geopolitical aspects to this issue as well. The International Criminal Court says it has authority to enforce its war-crimes code against any military officer who uses excessive and disproportionate force during a combat offensive. That particular section has yet to be tested. However, we live in a global atmosphere of anti-American sentiment, and someday our brave soldiers in the field may face the prospect of UN war-crimes charges for trying to protect us.

In the end, Christians should not evaluate the bin Laden affair based on global theories of justice or the liberal leanings of the press or the opinions of a culture too often misinformed by Hollywood’s constant depiction of the American military as sinister. Rather, our worldview should be shaped, informed, and instructed by God’s Word applied in a thoughtful way to world events.

For me, the killing of Osama bin Laden not only was necessary, it was right.

Craig L. Parshall is senior vice president and general counsel for the National Religious Broadcasters. His newest novel, Thunder of Heaven, coauthored with Tim LaHaye, is now available online and in bookstores.
A wise man once gave the formula for a struggling nation to become great: Start a war with the United States and lose. Sage advice once, but it may not apply anymore. Today there are never supposed to be clear winners. Conflict must stop short of humiliating either side so that losers can claim victory, and winners can fill the coffers of their former enemies with goodies.

Sound absurd? Then consider what’s taking place today.

Martin Indyk, former U.S. ambassador to Israel, recently declared, “Unless the US, Israel and the Palestinians have an alternative, the Palestinian [Quartet peace] plan can not [sic] be won. . . . If there isn’t anything else, then in September [2011] there will be a vote in the UN that will recognize a Palestinian state, just like the UN recognized Israel in 1948.”

“The real question,” Indyk opined, “is to find a way to return to the negotiating table”; and he recommended Israel recognize a Palestinian state in pre-1967 borders.

Pragmatically, on April 27, Palestinian Authority (PA) leader Mahmood Abbas hammered out an implausible deal to unify the PA and its former archenemies, Hamas, the terrorist rulers in Gaza. The deal was designed to create the illusion that the Palestinians have a regime capable of being, as one PA leader put it, ready for statehood.
Obvious to all who are not suffering from self-induced blindness is the fact that the deal will never produce unity or two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace. What it actually embodies is one more not-so-stealthy attempt to wipe Israel off the map.

Truth be told, neither Hamas’s intractable thugs nor Abbas, a Yasser Arafat clone in a suit, have any intention of making peace with the Jewish state. Indyk’s position that Israel retreat to the pre-1967 “borders” is only the first slice of the proverbial salami before Islamists take Israel apart one piece at a time until there is no Jewish state left.

Prof. Barry Rubin observed, 

Hamas is probably quite happy with the idea that many countries—and perhaps the UN—will recognize an independent Palestinian state unconditionally. In other words, there will be a widely, or internationally, accepted Palestine without the need to make peace with Israel. No concessions need be made. The Palestinians will get everything and give up nothing. They will not be bound in any way by border changes or security guarantees. The struggle to wipe Israel off the map can continue. It’s Hamas’s dream come true.3

Buoying the enthusiasm for making the move now must be the spontaneous crusade for freedom ostensibly sweeping the Middle East. However, the race for undefined change may, in fact, end up moving the region from partially regrettable regimes to insufferable, repressive Islamist dictatorships. The West has not yet caught on to the fact that the revolution in Egypt was not a win for democracy.

Ousted President Hosni Mubarak—a friend of America and Europe and a respecter of Egypt’s peace treaty with Israel—now lives under the specter of a hangman’s noose. The radical Islamic Brotherhood, implicitly involved in the 1981 assassination of Anwar Sadat, Mubarak’s predecessor, has captured the flag; and the free world will have to live with what it naively cheered on.

The same will be true with a Palestinian state. Hamas terrorists will seize control, as they have in Gaza, and Islamist radicalism will enslave the nation. Western recognition of the tragic error will come too late.

Today the homes and greenhouses below are only a memory. They were a small part of what Israel built and relinquished when it left the Gaza Strip in August 2005. Afterward, the Palestinians destroyed almost everything. The sign in Hebrew reads “Morag. This is my home.” (Hanan Isachar)

Forfeited Territory

The bulk of the argument for nonnegotiated Israeli concessions is that the “occupation” of Arab and Palestinian lands must be redressed and the areas returned to their “rightful owners.” Unfortunately, most of the world’s political, social, and academic elitists have bought into the delusion that forcing Israel to surrender the territories and a hefty chunk of Jerusalem will atone for so-called Jewish transgressions.

In reality, the territories under dispute are not occupied. They are forfeited. The Arabs lost them in the course of executing wars to annihilate Israel. It is all but forgotten (and if not forgotten, certainly ignored) that little Israel was forced to fight for its survival multiple times and against overwhelming odds. The aggressors were overconfident Arab opportunists, such as Egypt, Syria, and (in 1967) Jordan, that launched attacks with one objective in mind: the total destruction of the Jewish state.
They lost; and, in the process, they forfeited the Golan Heights, Judea/Samaria (West Bank), and Jerusalem. They were the architects of their own defeat. Any other generation would have felt the bullies reaped their own reward. Not until the current crop of international surrealists took their seats, declaring the losers to be the winners, was the occupation issue even raised.

Indyk also called the pre-1967 lines “borders,” which, of course, they were not. They were armistice lines, drawn in 1949 when the exhausted Arabs conceded their inability to destroy the fledgling Jewish entity populated by impoverished Holocaust survivors. So it was agreed that future negotiations between the parties, Jews and Arabs, would be conducted to establish permanent, secure, and defined borders.

The partition plan adopted by the UN in November 1947 created Jewish and Arab territories, with the Arabs getting the lion’s share. The Arabs, however, rejected the offer. Israel agreed and became a bona fide member of the international community. Thus, when Mr. Indyk stated that, in September, the UN “will recognize a Palestinian state, just like the UN recognized Israel in 1948,” he neglected to say the UN already did so—in 1948. It was the Arabs, now dubbed Palestinians, who rejected statehood and opted instead for war.

Now, 63 years, four wars, two intifadas, and innumerable deadly skirmishes later, the Arabs are back. This time, however, they bring with them a gang of anti-Israel UN compatriots in an attempt to obtain what could not be bought with bombs.

Charging Israel with intransigence and accusing it of blocking the way to peace will not wash. Israel has demonstrated its sincerity time and again:

- In 1979 it ceded the vital Sinai Peninsula back to Egypt in exchange for a “cool” peace.
- In 2000 Israel abandoned the security zone in South Lebanon, only to see it seized by Iranian-inspired Hezbollah terrorists armed to the teeth.
- In August 2005 it gifted the Palestinians with beautiful homes, thriving farms, and greenhouses when it evacuated the Gaza Strip. Hamas took control and dismantled everything.

Western leaders, far from the scene and further from having a clue about the situation, keep insisting Israel must make hard decisions for peace. The concessions Israel has already made were hard decisions. Each was followed by demands to cede even more land in exchange for promises that Arabs have never honored in the past and are not likely to honor in the future.

I’ve heard it sung, “All or nothing at all.” The Arab/Islamic world and UN are cooking up another version: “All [from Israel] for nothing at all [from the Palestinians].”

**A Blossom in the Desert**

When all is said and done, what will the result be? Israel will remain the Jewish homeland, while Arab radicals will continue buffing and puffing about orchestrating its demise. This will, of course, be nothing new. It’s been going on since before Israel was miraculously reborn as a modern state.

Therein is an inscrutable irony. The history of the Jewish state can be summed up by the phrase *against all odds*. Scattered to the four winds for 2,000 years of exile, the Jewish people should not have survived. After the horrors of the 1930s and ’40s, the tattered remnant of Jewry struggled back to its infant state only to be attacked by five Arab nations. Humanly speaking, these people should not have made it through. And after six decades of bellicose promises to wipe out what justice and sanity have restored, Israel, against all odds, not only has survived but thrived!

Journalist Caroline Glick validated the point that, despite the ballyhooed pariah-state nonsense leveled against it, Israel is far ahead of the game where the ability to compete and succeed counts:

> According to the latest data released by the Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel’s economy grew 7.8 percent in the last quarter of 2010. International trade is rising steeply. In the first quarter of 2011, exports rose 27.3%. They grew 19.9% in the final quarter of last year. Imports rose 34.7% between January and March, and 38.9% in the last quarter of 2010. The Israel-bashing EU remains Israel’s largest trading partner. And even as Turkey embraced Hamas and Iran as allies, its trade with Israel reached an all time high last year. These trade data expose a truth that the doom and gloomers are unwilling to notice: For the vast majority of Israelis the threat of international isolation is empty.¹

So why is the most progressive, entrepreneurial, technologically superior, economically stable, Western-oriented, democratic country in the Middle East odiously accused of apartheid behavior by the very countries that should, in fact, admire and emulate its achievements?

Furthermore, why do the democratic nations that benefit most from Israel’s industry, loyalty, and standing as the only real force for freedom in the region choose to coddle its most notorious enemies? Why do they ask Israel to honor repressive regimes by surrendering its security? Why do they want to put the nation in a perpetual state of war?

Beyond all of the politics, posturing, and wrongheaded thinking, the reality is that the Jewish state endures as a perennial blossom in the arid desert of the Middle East. That fact brings to mind God’s promise that someday the Jewish people will be fully restored to their place of places and will at last live the vision of Isaiah 35:1: “The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.”

In this day of faint hearts and failing spirits, we can all be reminded that, against all odds, God’s promises endure forever.

**ENDNOTES**

2 Ibid.

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**Quoteworthy**

> “Satan never gets very far from the Bible. And every one of the cults, even Satanism, uses the Bible.”

—J. Vernon McGee on the importance of discernment
Muslims Murder a Convert. Two Muslim extremists in Somalia murdered a member of a secret Christian community in Lower Shabele region in April as part of a campaign to rid the country of Christianity.

An area source told Compass Direct News two al Shabaab militants shot 21-year-old Hassan Adawe Adan after entering his house at 7:30 P.M. They “dragged him out of his house, and after 10 minutes they fired several shots on him,” said the source. “He then died immediately.” The militants then shouted “Allahu Akbar [Allah is great]” before fleeing.

Adan, single and living with his Muslim family, was said to have converted to Christianity several months earlier. Area Christians said they suspected someone told the Islamic militants of his conversion. One source said a relative who belonged to al Shabaab told Adan’s mother that he suspected her son was a Christian.

“This incident is making other converts live in extreme fear, as the militants always keep an open eye to anyone professing the Christian faith,” the source said.

The al Shabaab insurgents seek to impose a strict version of Sharia (Islamic law), but the transitional government in Mogadishu fighting to retain control of the country treats Christians little better than the al Shabaab extremists do. While proclaiming himself a moderate, President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed has embraced a version of Sharia that mandates the death penalty for those who leave Islam.

On January 7, a mother of four was killed for her Christian faith on the outskirts of Mogadishu by al Shabaab members who cut her throat in front of villagers. She leaves behind her children—ages 12, 8, 6 and 4—and her husband, all of whom have fled to an undisclosed location.

Malaysian Christians Want Bibles. Christian importers of Bibles that Malaysian officials detained are balking at conditions the government has imposed for their release, such as defacement by official stamps.

The Home Ministry stamped the words This Good News [Malay] Bible is for use by Christians only on 5,100 Bibles without consulting the importer, the Bible Society of Malaysia (BSM), which initially refused to collect them, as it had neither accepted nor agreed to the conditions. The Home Ministry applied the stamp a day after the government issued a release order for the Bibles, which had been detained in Port Klang since March 20, 2009.

Another 30,000 Bibles, detained since January 12 on the island of Borneo, remain in port after the Home Ministry told the local chapter of Gideons International that it could collect them if the organization would put the stamp on them. The Gideons have declined to do so, and a spokesman said in April that officials had already defaced the books.

A significant 64 percent of Malaysian Christians are indigenous people from Sabah and Sarawak states who use the Malay language in their daily lives, and having the Bible in the Malay language is considered critical to the practice of their Christian faith.

In the case of West Malaysia, however, in view of its larger Muslim population, the government imposed the condition that the Bibles must have the words Christian publication and the sign of the cross printed on the front covers.

Christians make up more than 9 percent of Malaysia’s nearly 28 million people, according to Operation World.

Compiled from reports filed by Compass Direct News
Leaning on His Word

by Richard D. Emmons

(David Joel/Media Bakery)
Wisdom Is Key

First, he reminded them that trials produce maturity, so we should accept them joyfully: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials” (Jas. 1:2). Trials should make us anticipate God’s wisdom, which comes only from His Word. Consequently, we must apply Scripture diligently, being “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (v. 22). God’s wisdom always works. It is perfect. When we obey the Word, we overcome sin and prevent the trial (which is neutral) from turning into a temptation (which is negative).

Second, James reminded suffering believers that if you have faith without works, you really don’t have faith: “Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (2:17). This section is not about being born again or saved from sin. It is about being delivered from trials. When James asked, “What does it profit, my brethren, if some one says he has faith but does not have works?” (v. 14), the answer is no. Faith without works will not see you through your struggles. Your faith must be active.

For example, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?” (v. 21). The word justified here does not mean “born again.” In verse 23 James cited the fact that Abraham was granted spiritual life in Genesis 15 when he believed God’s promise to give him a son. Here James explained that Abraham was shown to be righteous when he prepared to sacrifice that son approximately 40 years later. Abraham was 75 when he was granted spiritual life and 115 when he placed Isaac on the altar. Abraham was willing to trust God’s instruction and to respond based on God’s Word, despite the fact that he didn’t understand how everything would transpire.

Romans 4:19 says, “not being weak in faith,” Abraham trusted God. That is what God wants us to do as well. He’s telling us, “When you go through a tough time, trust Me. Live by My Word. Let Me make you a person of faith whom I can use in marvelous ways in My Kingdom.”

Advice Is Cheap

When seeking God’s wisdom, avoid cheap advice. James 3:1 says, “Let not many of you become teachers.” This verse does not refer to the formal role of a teacher. The context involves trials. When we see someone going through trials, we often love to give advice. I love to give my opinion. If you want to know what type of car to drive, what type of cereal to buy, what type of shaving cream works best, just ask me. I’ll tell you!

However, Scripture warns us to be careful so that we don’t give the wrong advice. Most people respond to things emotionally. Peter responded emotionally to Jesus after Jesus “began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day” (Mt. 16:21).

“Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!” declared Peter (v. 22). Jesus then rebuked Peter and said his response was “not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (v. 23).

Christians can give ungodly advice. Sometimes it is emotionally oriented, sometimes practically oriented. Either way, it is not from God. For God’s advice we must consult His Word.

Perhaps if we had been with Jesus when Satan tempted Him to “command that these stones become bread” (4:3), we might have said, “I don’t think God will be upset if You turn one little stone into a Big Mac. After all, You’ve been out here for 40 days with nothing to eat. Surely God doesn’t expect more from You than that.”

How often have you tried to comfort a hurting friend by saying, “You have suffered for so long. Don’t you think it’s time to cut your losses? You have stuck it out long enough. Surely God doesn’t expect more from you than that.” Perhaps, like Peter’s, your advice was not from God.
There are two sources of wisdom in this world, God’s and the Devil’s; and they lead us down two different paths:

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy (Jas. 3:13–17).

King Solomon put it this way: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Prov. 14:12). The majority opinion is usually of the world. God tells us, “‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’” (Isa. 55:8–9).

God functions on an entirely different plane from human beings. He has a different set of values and different ways to respond and act. He wants us to lock onto His truth, walk with Him, and understand where He is going.

We need God’s wisdom to endure trials. We also need faith. We must be willing to trust God by humbling ourselves under His hand in order that He might lift us up and bring us to maturity.

Do you have financial troubles, medical problems, difficulties at home? Then get down on your knees and beseech Him to provide for you. Take the steps indicated in His Word, and wait on Him (Jas. 5:7). Navigating trials requires patient endurance. It requires trusting God day by day and waiting on Him to make things come around.

In the end, Jesus promises a crown of life to those who love Him despite their trials and who endure by leaning on His Word (1:12).

I don’t know about you, but I want to be grown up. I’m still working toward that day. I want to stand before Jesus and have Him say, “You grew up pretty well. It took a long time, but you grew up. Well done, good and faithful servant.” When this life is over, our struggles will have been worth it all.

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Even in the best of times, life can get you down. Perhaps that is why the Psalms are particularly suited to comfort people going through tough times. Who hasn’t been comforted by the verse “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (46:1)? Or “Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved” (55:22)?

These words resonate when we encounter life’s uncertainties, and people turn to the Bible as a point of reference to make sense of difficult times. What the heart craves is not often found in the distraction of trendy magazines and light fiction kindly proffered by well-meaning souls. No, it is the prophecies of God’s Word that truly provide the solid proclamation from which to evaluate and gain perspective on life.

Prophecy is a graphic reminder that experiences in our lives are more than arbitrary events that happen by coincidence. Prophetic passages underscore the fact that the scope of human history is orchestrated by the infinite God of creation and that every detail is important in the fulfillment of His will and purpose. How the events of individual lives mesh with the broader span of history is a mystery beyond our comprehension, but the assurance that they are part of God’s overall plan brings an eternal perspective that sees beyond immediate circumstances.

No matter how difficult things become for us personally, we can join with Job who, despite his anguish, could assert, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25–26).

At the end of Job’s ordeal, God spoke to him. In His monologue He reminded Job, “Everything under heaven is Mine” (41:11). “Then Job answered the Lord and said: I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You” (42:1–2).

God’s words to Job assure us that He is in control and that we can trust Him to fulfill His purposes in our lives. Our circumstances are not spiraling out of control. God has the reins. And even if we succumb to death from old age, illness, or persecution, our future is secure if we have put our trust in Him.

The book of Revelation is a confirmation that our confidence in God’s Word is justified. God will ultimately prevail. Christ will return in power and glory to rule the earth. Satan and the current evil world system will be destroyed. Everything responsible for the heartache, pain, and suffering in this world eventually will be eradicated.

We can take heart in the apostle Paul’s resounding anticipation of the moment when “the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Th. 4:16–17).

There is so much more to life than what we actually experience; and God, who perfectly governs the entire scope of time and space, will accomplish what is best for us for our good and for His glory.

by Charles E. McCracken, Canadian director of FOI Gospel Ministry in Brampton, Ontario.
The Uniqueness of God’s Word

by David M. Levy

The Bible is unique. There is no book in the world like it. It covers a period of 1,600 years (1500 B.C. to A.D. 100) and was written by 40 different men from all walks of life. Some were kings, priests, and prophets; others were simple fishermen and farmers. Some were highly educated, like Moses and the apostle Paul; others had no formal education.

More than 3,000 times, these men claimed what they wrote came directly from God (Moses: Ex. 17:14; 24:4; 34:27. Paul: 1 Cor. 14:37. Peter: 2 Pet. 1:16–21. John: 1 Jn. 4:6.) As utterly impossible as these facts seem, the record speaks for itself.

Jesus stated that the Old Testament is God’s Word (Mt. 5:17–18; 24:15; Lk. 24:44; Jn. 10:35). He confirmed the authorships of Moses, King David, and the prophets Isaiah and Daniel. He validated the truth of such historical events as God’s creation of Adam and Eve, Noah and the universal flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Jonah being swallowed by a great fish.

When tempted by the Devil, He did not answer with His own words of wisdom but countered each temptation with “It is written,” followed by quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures (Mt. 4:4, 7, 10).

In Luke 4:25–27 Jesus confirmed the divine miracles recorded in the Hebrew Bible and, concerning Old Testament revelation, stated, “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Mt. 5:18). In other words, Jesus affirmed the inspiration, inerrancy, and accuracy of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The books in the Old Testament were canonized throughout Israel’s history and divided into three sections: the Pentateuch (Five Books of Moses), Prophets, and Writings. Jesus accepted these three divisions and the books contained therein as God’s Word (Lk. 24:44); and He taught the authority, reliability, unity, clarity, sufficiency, historicity, inspiration, revelation, inerrancy, infallibility, and indestructibility of the Old Testament.

One sure way to prove the Bible’s accuracy and veracity is to analyze the Hebrew Scriptures’ prophecies. The number of events foretold by the prophets is enormous, and the events themselves are so specific they could only have been known and revealed by God.

Pastor and theologian Mark Hitchcock wrote,

*Unlike the self-proclaimed prophets of yesterday and today, such as Nostradamus, Edward Cayce, or Jeanne Dixon, Jesus and the biblical prophets did not peddle predictions that were so vague and general they could be adjusted to any situation. The prophecies recorded in the Bible are very precise and so specific that when they are fulfilled, it’s very clear there’s something unique and special about them... More than one-fourth of the Bible was prophetic at the time it was written. The Bible is a book of prophecy. It contains about 1000 prophecies, about 500 of which have already been fulfilled down to the minutest detail. With this kind of proven track record—500 prophecies fulfilled with 100 percent accuracy—we can believe with confidence that the remaining 500 yet-to-be-fulfilled prophecies will also come to pass at their appointed times... Prophecy is the most credible proof of the uniqueness and divine inspiration of the Bible... Fulfilled prophecy also demonstrates that the Bible’s content is not man-made, but rather has its origins outside our own time-space continuum.*

For example, 25 Jewish writers provided prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures detailing the life and ministry of the Messiah. The Messiah is the only Person in history to have had His ancestry, birth, character, teaching, career, reception, rejection, death, burial, and resurrection prewritten at least 500 years before His birth. Jesus Christ clearly fit all the descriptions and fulfilled all the prophecies, including those that foretold of the Messiah’s birthplace (Mic. 5:2; Mt. 2:1), manner of death (Isa. 53:8; Lk. 23:46), and resurrection (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:29–32).

There are also numerous prophecies concerning Israel’s ruin (Dt. 28:15–68) and restoration (Ezek. 36:25—37:28). Some have been fulfilled, and others will be fulfilled.

**How do we know the Bible we possess today is God’s Word?** First, Jewish scribes were meticulous in copying the Hebrew text and counted every letter they wrote. If a mistake was made, the text was not corrected but, rather, immediately discarded. The nation of Israel collected and accurately preserved manuscripts of the Law of Moses and the Prophets through the centuries (Dt. 31:26; 1 Sam. 10:25; 2 Ki. 23:24; Neh. 9:14, 26–30; Dan. 9:2, 6, 13).

Second, the Dead Sea Scrolls provide evidence of this extraordinary preservation. For example, the book of Isaiah—discovered in its entirety within the ancient Dead Sea Scrolls that date from 125 B.C. to 100 B.C.—contains the same Isaiah text we possess in our Bibles today.

The same can be said about the inspiration and inerrancy of the New Testament, which was written after Jesus ascended to heaven. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles in writing the content of the New Testament (Jn. 14:25–26). The Holy Spirit superintended the revelation the apostles wrote, providing the New Testament’s content and accuracy.

**How was each book selected to be in the New Testament canon?** There were at least four basic questions that had to be answered with a yes:

1. Was it written by an apostle, or was the writer in close relationship with an apostle, as were Mark and Luke?
2. Was the content of high spiritual character that merited it being included with the other books written by apostles?
3. Did the church universally accept the book?
4. Did the book provide internal evidence of being inspired?

**What about variant readings in the New Testament?** Wrote Bible scholar Norman L. Geisler:

*When a comparison of the variant readings of the New Testament is made with those of other books which have survived from antiquity, the
results are little short of astounding... In light of the fact that there are over 5,000 Greek manuscripts, some 9,000 versions and translations, the evidence for the integrity of the New Testament is beyond question... Thus, the New Testament has not only survived in more manuscripts than any other book from antiquity, but it has survived in a much purer form than any other great book, whether or not they are sacred works, a form that is over 99 percent pure.

Over the centuries, both the Old and New Testaments have undergone extensive microscopic analysis conducted by renowned scholars who specialize in biblical history, literature, grammar, and archaeology. Although some textual critics have pointed out what they consider discrepancies, errors, and contradictions within the Bible, centuries of careful analyses have never conclusively proven the Bible text to be in error. While variant readings exist within the copies, they are minor and relate to spelling and word order. They affect no major doctrine of Scripture.

To have 40 different authors over a period of 1,600 years write a unified book without error or contradiction is unique indeed in both ancient and modern history.

The Bible is unique in its history, message, universality, influence, fulfilled prophecies, preservation, power to change lives, and testimony throughout history. God’s oversight and providential preservation give us assurance that today we possess the verbal, inerrant, and infallible Word of God. It stands alone as the most unique Book of all time. And it will stand forever.

ENDNOTES
We all leave footprints on the sands of time, made by the imprints of our devotion to Christ and the effect of our lives on others. And the impressions we leave behind enhance the lives of our friends and loved ones, giving them footprints to follow.

Thoughtful estate planning is one means we have to make an imprint that helps others recall our priorities. For example, consider the effect of a plan that provides for family members and leaves resources for the Lord’s work through The Friends of Israel.

When you include The Friends of Israel in the final disposition of your estate, you declare to your family and friends that you believe in and care about the mission of The Friends of Israel.

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There is something about a well-planned estate gift that influences others to “go and do likewise.” When you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received of the goods of this life—only what you have given. By God’s grace and careful planning, your footprint can be one worth following.

**Your Footprint**

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City: ___________________________________ State: ________
Zip: __________________ Phone: ___________________
E-mail: ___________________________________________
Date of Birth: __________________ (Suggested minimum age of 60)
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Tom Geoghan  
Vice President for Ministry Advancement
WHAT THE BIBLE

THE BIBLE

All Scripture is God-breathed (inspired). The Holy Spirit enabled the human writers to produce the Bible without error. God’s Word is forever settled in heaven.

Ps. 119:89; Mt. 24:35; Jn. 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:12;
1 Pet. 1:25; 2 Pet. 1:21

CREATION

God took nothing and made everything in six literal, 24-hour days. (“So the evening and the morning were the first day,” Gen. 1:5.)

Gen. 1:1; Ex. 20:11; Job 38:1–7;
Ps. 8:3; 19:1; 33:6; Isa. 40:25–28;
Mt. 19:4; Mk. 10:6;
Rom. 1:18–20; Col. 1:16

MAN’S NATURE

Everyone is born with a sin nature (a disposition of enmity against God). No one seeks God, and no one would come to salvation without God’s help.

Ps. 14:2–3; 51:5; Eccl. 7:20;
Jn. 6:44; Rom. 1:18–32; 3:23; 5:12;
6:23; 8:7; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 4:18

ETERNAL REWARD

Heaven is God’s dream for man. It is not the sky or the afterlife, but a real location that will be discerned by humans when they come to the end of their earthly destiny of all the right things.

Ps. 11:4; Isa. 66:1;
Jn. 14:2; 1 Pet. 1:4;
Rev. 7:9; 20:5

Satan

A magnificent angel who rebelled against God, Satan is called “the god of this age” and appears as an “angel of light.” But he works to thwart God and destroy those who love Him. He is the chief accuser of the brethren.

Ezek. 28:11–17; 2 Cor. 4:4; 11:14;
1 Tim. 3:6; Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8;
Rev. 12:9; 20:10

Good Works

Good works do not help one go to heaven or remove one’s sin. People who have obtained salvation through faith should perform good works.

Isa. 64:6; Eph. 2:8–10;
Ti. 3:5; Jas. 2:17–18

God’s Love

God loves many things, including Israel, Jesus, the world, and believers. Nothing can ever separate a believer from God’s love.

Dt. 7:7–8; Jer. 31:3;
Mt. 3:17; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8;
8:37–39; 1 Jn 3:1; 4:9–11

God’s Wrath

God is merciful and patient, but He is also suffering. His wrath will be poured out on the unsaved and their world.

Ex. 20:5; Num. 14:
Heb. 10:31; Rev.
15:1; 19

(Top row, panel 1: dove, Photosforme/FOI Image Archive; Bible, makkayak/iStockphoto. Panels 2, 4, 5: Photosforme/FOI Image Archive. Panel 3: Thomas E. Williams.)
The Holy Spirit is placed securely into the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit also gives Christians spiritual gifts to enable them to minister and edify the body. As we behold (Gal. 5:22–23). (The Greek words and their meanings are from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.)

All souls do not go to heaven. No souls are annihilated. The Lake of Fire is the eternal destination of souls who reject God’s plan of redemption.

Ps. 9:17; Prov. 27:20; Isa. 13:11; 33:14; Lk. 12:5; 2 Th. 1:9; Rev. 20:11–15

Jesus is the virgin-born Messiah of Israel and Son of God. He came to die as the final sacrifice for sin. He arose from the dead and will return as King of kings.

 Isa. 7:14; 52:13—53:12; Lk. 2:11; 19:10; Rom. 5:6–8; 1 Cor. 15:3–4; 1 Pet. 3:18; Rev. 19:11–16

Salvation is permanent deliverance from God’s judgment. It is the possession of those who trust in Christ alone for the forgiveness of sin.

Jn. 1:11–13; 3:16–17; 5:24; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9–10; 1 Jn. 1:9

Marriage was established by God and is to be between one man and one woman. Adultery, fornication, homosexuality, and bestiality are sins. Believers are not to marry unbelievers.

Gen. 2:18–24; Ex. 20:14; Lev. 18:22–23; Mt. 19:4–6; 1 Cor. 6:9, 13; Heb. 13:4

Evil should be punished swiftly and decisively. The Lord loves justice and will dispense it to the world when He rules from His throne in Jerusalem.

Gen. 9:5–6; Dt. 19:19; Ps. 37:28; 45:6; Eccl. 8:11; Isa. 11:1–5; 42:1–4; 61:8; Mic. 6:8; Rom. 13:1–4

The entire environment will be destroyed in the judgments described in Revelation. However, in the Millennial Kingdom to follow, it will become like the Garden of Eden again.

Isa. 11:6–9; Mt. 19:28; Acts 3:19–21; Rev. 6:12–14; 8:1–13
Fortress of Faith, Castles of Sand

When someone is said to be harboring a “fortress mentality,” it is not intended as a compliment. In Washington, DC, it usually implies one has pulled up the mental drawbridge and is overly defensive.

But fortresses have a function. My wife, Janet, and I have seen a number of them in our travels. I particularly remember the castle fortress in Saint Andrews, Scotland, that housed a dark, foreboding jail known in the 16th century as the “bottle dungeon” because of its shape. It lay beneath the castle floor and was accessible only through a small hatch.

Christian evangelist and reformer George Wishart was imprisoned there before he was finally dragged out, lashed to a stake, and burned alive for his bold proclamation of salvation by grace through faith.

When the fires of the Protestant Reformation swept through Scotland, the fortress switched hands. John Knox and his Bible students found solace there until a fierce military bombardment by anti-Reformation forces occurred. When the smoke cleared, Knox was captured and chained as a rowing slave in the hold of a French galley ship.

Fortresses were built because war and conflict, tribulation and social tempest were inevitable; and high, thick walls and guarded gates made good military defenses. In America the church of Jesus Christ is under attack. Though the force is not military, it is formidable nevertheless.

The Masters of Media and Entertainment

One of the surest signs of rising anti-Christian bigotry in America is the mainstream press’s boldness in slandering believers. In October 2009, when MSNBC’s Chris Matthews said on national television that the “group in this country that most resembles the Taliban, ironically, is the religious right,” it was hard to believe the news media’s treatment of conservative Christians could get any worse. But it has.
Enter liberal TV commentator Lawrence O’Donnell. In March 2011, while scoffing at end-times discussions on Glenn Beck’s television program on FOX News, O’Donnell used his own television show to proclaim, “The book of Revelation is a work of fiction describing how a truly vicious God would bring about the end of the world. Now, no half-smart religious person believes the book of Revelation anymore.” O’Donnell finished his diatribe by describing God as “a malicious torturer and mass murderer beyond Hitler’s wildest dreams.”

In his column in the Chicago Tribune this year, Clarence Page complained that too much is being made of the link between Islam and terrorism. Then he posited that such a link is equal to the connection “between the evangelical Christian community and the bombers of abortion clinics.” And when National Public Radio’s (NPR’s) fund-raising executive, Ron Schiller, was caught on videotape in a Washington, DC, restaurant castigating (among other things) evangelical Christians, it confirmed a bias many of us had suspected within NPR.

This bias is not limited to the liberal mainstream press. Large communications titans that own new media platforms are exercising a powerful and disturbing form of anti-Christian censorship. In November 2010, for example, Apple banned from its iTunes store an application (app) from the Manhattan Declaration, blocking it from its hugely successful iPhone. The reason? The Declaration contained a statement of Christian orthodoxy on sexuality and opposed gay marriage.

A few months later, in March, Apple banned a second Christian iPhone app. This one, from the ex-gay organization Exodus International, Apple considered “offensive” because the ministry sought to introduce homosexuals to Jesus Christ, a source of liberation from that lifestyle.

Meanwhile, Facebook officials have promised to block “hate-speech” critical of gay rights but will make no promise to protect Christians’ rights to post Bible-based statements about homosexuality.

In the entertainment world, the 2011 Sundance Film Festival shows how easy a target conservative Christians have become. Red State, a horror film about a Christian fundamentalist family that tortures and kills some teenagers, was promoted at the festival to throngs of enthusiastic supporters.

Another film, Higher Ground, is about a woman who leaves the “Jesus movement” because, as the director told The Huffington Post, it was “an impoverished expression of the Christian religion.” Another featured film was a documentary about a former Liberian soldier’s conversion to Christ. According to reviewer Dick Staub, it shows “the messiness of his redemption.”

In the world of television, former Saturday Night Live regular Victoria Jackson, outspoken about her Christian faith, has been excoriated by the entertainment industry because she dared to criticize a scene in the sitcom Glee where two gay characters kiss. When interviewed on Headline News’s Showbiz Tonight, she was asked the now standard, politically correct, politiburo-type question of whether she was “homophobic.”

**Judicial Blindside**

While large segments of the popular culture seem to be aiming their arrows at Bible-believing Christians, we are still apt to ask, “Our basic religious freedoms under the Constitution are still intact, right?” Well, yes and no.

The full effect of the Supreme Court’s devastating decision last year in Christian Legal Society v. Martinez has yet to be felt. In a closely divided ruling, the court held that a Christian ministry may be banned from a public university if it sticks to its statement of faith and refuses to open its leadership to atheists, agnostics, and members of other religions. We do not yet know how this ruling might be used to bar biblically sound Christian organizations from receiving public services, benefits, and ministry opportunities.

On the positive side, the high court rightly decided Snyder v. Phelps this year. Despite the sympathetic losing party and the repugnant winning party, the ruling was sound. The court struck down, on free-speech grounds, a large monetary damages award against Fred Phelps.

Phelps, the leader of a small, angry group that misapplies Bible verses, had picketed the funeral of a young man killed during military duty in Iraq. The grieving father brought the suit. The court noted that Phelps’s group had obeyed police and stayed peacefully on a public sidewalk, 1,000 feet away from the funeral. Had the Supreme Court ruled otherwise, responsible, legitimate, Bible-preaching Christians would become the next defendants in such lawsuits.

But there is a catch: In his concurring opinion, Justice Stephen Breyer, leader of the court’s liberal faction, warned that the ruling did not extend First Amendment protection to religious speech over the airways (i.e. television) or Internet. The implication is that “hate speech” laws could well be used to stifle the gospel over those venues.

Most cases, of course, never reach the marble steps of the Supreme Court. Their ultimate fate rests with the army of lower court federal judges. So it is important to see what types of judges America has in its future. Will they respect the fundamental, constitutional liberties of Christians, or will they bow to prevailing opinion?

In 2010 influential U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) recommended Daniel Alter for the U.S. District Court in New York, saying he hoped to make him “the first openly gay male judge” in America. Since then Schumer has supported President Barack Obama’s nominee to the New York federal bench, Paul Oetken, a homosexual-rights activist who argued an amicus curiae brief in favor of homosexual rights in the notorious Lawrence v. Texas case, the decision that reversed Supreme Court recognition of the Judeo-Christian roots of America’s social disapproval of homosexuality.

These are the future judges who will weigh the rights of Christians against the radical “anti-discrimination” laws that demand that Christians ignore their consciences. One example looming is the
Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) that would make it illegal for employers to consider the homosexuality, bisexuality, or “gender identity” of a job applicant.

I testified before both the House of Representatives and Senate on behalf of the National Religious Broadcasters, indicating that the bill’s so-called exemption for religious groups is more mirage than reality. ENDA would apply to every for-profit Christian ministry and many non-profit Christian organizations as well. The bill has been reintroduced in the House again this year.

Troubling Our Own House

Not all threats to the gospel occur from outside Christianity. Some come from within. These present a particular challenge. We continue to see debates in some denominations over the plenary inerrancy and inspiration of the Bible. That is a most troubling problem because God’s propositional truth about Himself and about us is in His Word. When we ignore the principle of sola Scriptura, we set ourselves adrift.

Earlier this year the battle for the Bible took a new turn. When prepublication marketing began for Pastor Rob Bell’s new book, Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived, a firestorm erupted within the evangelical community. An editorial vice president of a Christian publishing house criticized the book’s liberal treatment of hell and salvation on a blog and, within a few days, sparked some 1,000 comments and some 24,000 Facebook shares. The subject has since gone “viral” on the Internet and Twitter.

I have reviewed Rob Bell’s book, and it is highly problematic. To characterize it generally, I quote emerging church leader Brian McLaren who said both Bell’s views and his depart from the traditional biblical view of hell because they “can’t in good conscience defend that view any longer.”

The existence of hell is clearly taught in Scripture by our Lord (Mt. 5:22; 10:28; Mk. 9:47), the apostle Peter (2 Pet. 2:4), and the apostle Paul (2 Th. 1:8–9). Furthermore, it was adopted by the church Fathers and every major Christian thinker from Augustine to Martin Luther to John Calvin to America’s great colonial preacher and theologian Jonathan Edwards, as well as by other preachers of the Great Awakening and all of the great Christian missionaries and evangelists throughout history.

Bell’s book goes even further. It challenges God’s revealed truth about salvation itself:

Will everybody be saved, or will some perish apart from God forever because of their choices? Those are questions, or more accurately, those are tensions we are free to leave fully intact. We don’t need to resolve them or answer them because we can’t, and so we simply respect them, creating space for the freedom that love requires.

If there was ever a time for evangelical Christians to know exactly what we believe and why and then to live it out lovingly, humbly, and courageously before a confused and hostile world, it is now. We dare not decide these matters by majority vote or popular opinion. We must not first see who agrees with us before we decide what the truth is. We must see what God says on the subject.

Our Fortress

All that we truly know about God’s greatness, goodness, and grace toward sinners is contained in His Word. As Jonathan Edwards observed, “The reality of Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world and the great things that He has revealed concerning Himself and His Father are no longer matters of speculation.”

Our fortress, our ultimate defense, will never lie in our own strategies or cleverness or even in learning the true doctrines of the faith. Rather, our ultimate defense will always reside with Him, the living God. As King David wrote under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling” (Ps. 46:1–3).

God is telling us that, in our present troubles, He is a comforting presence. Our destiny is not merely a better life or a peaceful present; it is a bountiful and blessed future: “There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High” (v. 4).

Those who have trusted in Christ are inheritors of eternal life—a continuum that covers our past sin, empowers our present walk, and guarantees our future blessing in His presence. Whatever rises up against God’s truth will inevitably prove to be not an impregnable castle, but merely shifting sand. Jesus declared it plainly: “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33).

ENDNOTES

3 Dick Staub, “Spirituality is the Star at Sundance,” The Huffington Post, 2011 <tinyurl.com/3gj9694>.

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One of my favorite sites in Israel is the Sea of Galilee. It’s a great experience to take a boat ride across its calm and quiet waters. Although we know its reputation of violent, sudden storms, we still venture out.

Being a follower of Christ does not immunize us against trouble. Our lives are still susceptible to sudden “storms.” But we venture out anyway, trusting God who promises, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you” (Isa. 43:2).

Like the storms on the Sea of Galilee that come furiously without warning, three major storms, all within a year’s time, hit my wife and me unexpectedly several years ago. But we knew that Jesus, the God-Man, calmed the wind and waves with His word. He never abandoned His disciples in their time of trouble. Therefore, we knew He was with us, and we clung to the promise, “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 first storm that rocked our boat was four years ago when I was diagnosed with a cancer called multiple myeloma. It couldn’t have come at a worse time. I was engrossed in producing the gospel movie Rossvally: From the Synagogue to the Saviour. I was completely absorbed in writing, rewriting, acting, and doing all that is involved in filmmaking. I went to the doctor for my normal checkup and learned I had cancer. Because I was so wrapped up in the project, I felt no symptoms. We were shocked. Why would God allow this to happen now?

During the long, intense treatments and through the horrid “mind fog” caused by powerful, toxic medications, I struggled to read the book of Psalms. There were many passages that sustained me. Since I portrayed a military surgeon in the film, I personalized Psalm 20:7. “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.” In my devotions I viewed the chariots and horses as all my healthcare workers and medical treatments. Although they were all great and needful, I leaned on the Word that spoke of the Lord as our ultimate help: “My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (Ps. 121:2).

Eight months later, while I spent 19 days in the hospital for a particularly difficult treatment, our third stormy wave hit. Alzheimer’s disease had overcome Janis’s dear mother. Through the years, as she lived with us, we gradually saw the disease coming on. It eventually became almost unbearable to watch this sweet lady transform into someone who was constantly negative. There were times when Janis thought she could not handle it anymore.

Yet, through it all, she leaned on the comfort of the Lord’s voice through His Word. “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).

Eventually, these distressing circumstances began to subside. God’s Word was like the balm of Gilead to us. Through it, He told us that He was in our boat, so to speak. The storms would not overcome us. The Lord helped us through. The many prayers of God’s faithful people also gave us the added strength to stay afloat. “He calms the storm, so that its waves are still” (Ps. 107:29). Praise His holy name.

by Peter Colón
A young Jewish man began to read, “He was wounded for our transgressions” (Isa. 53:5). As he read, he heard what seemed to be a voice screaming, *Stop! It sounds like Jesus!* Simultaneously, a quieter voice told him, *Don’t stop. It sounds like Jesus.*

The young man kept reading: “He was bruised for our iniquities.” All the while he read from Isaiah 53, two voices seemed to argue inside his head. For a fleeting moment he even questioned his sanity. *Why would any sane Jewish person ever consider Jesus to be the promised Messiah?* he asked himself.

He took a deep breath and reminded himself of a few facts. This was the book of Isaiah (a Jewish prophet) from a Jewish Bible published by the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) and given to him by his Orthodox synagogue. What’s more Jewish than that? He soon learned there were other places in the Hebrew Scriptures that described Jesus. And each verse was clear and concise.

The more he read, the more certain he became that what he read was true. A strange sense of calm and peace suddenly seemed to enfold him.

The same peace is described in the New Testament book of Hebrews: “For we who have believed do enter that rest” (4:3). “That rest” is God’s rest. It is the rest that settles on a person who, by faith, trusts in Jesus as Savior. It is the rest associated with inner peace and freedom, regardless of circumstances.

Every person who has ever entered into that particular rest has done so by faith after hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). God’s Word is like nothing else in the world and has power to change people in amazing ways: “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

God’s Word is alive. It is active and inherently powerful, and the Almighty uses it as a surgeon uses a scalpel, cutting straight to the heart and changing its readers forever. This marvelous transformation happens every day to countless numbers of people from all types of backgrounds all around the globe. Here are a few examples.

**Transformed Ethiopian**

Acts 8 records the story of a Gentile Ethiopian eunuch who was sitting in his chariot in the desert reading the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. God sent Philip, a Jewish believer in Jesus, to speak to the man precisely when he was reading. Philip greeted him with a question: “Do you understand what you are reading?” (v. 30).

The eunuch answered with a question: “Of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” (v. 34). Philip used the Hebrew Scriptures to show that Jesus was the One of whom the prophet spoke. The Word transformed the eunuch. He received the Messiah and was immediately baptized.

**Nina’s New Life**

Nina was a Jewish woman raised in an Orthodox home. She retired in the 1960s in what she called “God’s country”—Atlantic City, New Jersey. One day, while sitting on a bench on the boardwalk, she received a New Testament from a
passerby. Every day from then on, Nina sat on a bench on the Atlantic City boardwalk and read a few chapters from her new book. The more she read, the more convinced she became that she was reading a “Jewish book,” as she put it.

Soon Nina began to notice little changes in her life. No longer did she display a nasty temper or tell fibs to smooth over social situations. She was not working to make these changes, yet she knew they were occurring, Nina was confused. She knew she was not the same.

Searching for answers, she approached a Christian friend to help her understand what was happening. She learned that reading God’s Word was transforming her. She realized the Bible was like no other book. It was powerful, so powerful that it convinced Nina to trust Jesus. It was then Nina began her new life.

Power to Forgive

Corrie ten Boom grew up in Holland before World War II. She and her family were regular readers of God’s Word and devout believers in the Lord Jesus. Though the ten Boom were Gentiles, they loved God’s Chosen People and paid the ultimate price for their faithfulness to them. As punishment for hiding Jews from the Nazis, they were sent to concentration camps. Corrie and her sister, Betsie, ended up at Ravensbruck where Betsie died. Corrie survived. Years later God’s transforming power manifested itself in a marvelous way. Wrote Corrie in her book The Hiding Place:

“It was at a church service in Munich [in 1947] that I saw him, the former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing center at Ravensbruck. He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there—the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie’s pain-blanchèd face. He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. ‘How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein,’ he said. ‘To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!’

“His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often to the people in Bloemendaal the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side.

“Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.

“I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness.

“As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder down to my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me. And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world’s healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself.”

From Terrorist to Zionist

Another dramatic example of how God’s Word changes lives involves Walid Shoebat, a Bethlehem-born, Palestinian Jew-hater from the cradle. His chief goal in life was to kill Jews and die a martyr for Allah.

In the mid-1970s he became active in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and was doing everything he could to help accomplish his life’s goal, including carrying out terrorist attacks in Israel.2

Walid moved to America to attend college, all the while raising funds for the PLO. In 1993 he married a Christian. “I wanted to convert her to Islam,” he told BBC News. “I told her Jews had corrupted the Bible.” She asked him to prove it. So he bought a Bible.

For six months he studied the Word intensely from cover to cover and discovered the truth. He renounced terrorism, repented of his sin, gave his life to Jesus Christ, and was made a new creation in Christ Jesus—all because he read God’s Word with a sincere heart that wanted to know the truth.

Today he is a devout Christian Zionist dedicated to exposing the lies of Islam and supporting and encouraging Israel and the Jewish people. His Muslim family has disowned him. His father said he should be killed. And at one point he was certain the PLO was planning his demise. But Shoebat is undaunted and remains outspoken in his love for Jesus and for a Jewish Israel. You may visit his Web site at www.shoebat.com.

God’s Word is living and powerful. It discurs the thoughts and intents of the heart and changes lives for all eternity. I know it for a fact because the young Jewish man who experienced such profound peace 36 years ago started reading his JPS Bible was me.

God’s Word—both the Old and New Testaments—is absolute truth. If you want to know God personally and experience a peace that passes all understanding, read God’s Word and let it pierce your heart. I promise you will never regret it.

Endnotes


2 "From Terrorist to Zionist,” Israel My Glory 62, No. 3 (May/June 2004), 32–33.

Steve Herzig is the director of North American Ministries for The Friends of Israel.

"You can’t do the will of God if you don’t know the Word of God."

—Jack Wyrtzen
were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Lk. 24:44). Both the Lord’s admonition and that in 4QMMT extol the worthiness of the Word of God. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain the oldest collection of Old Testament manuscripts ever found. Before their discovery in the 1940s and 1950s, the oldest Old Testament document was the Masoretic Text, which dates from the ninth through the 11th centuries A.D. The Dead Sea Scrolls are at least a thousand years older, even predating the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament produced in Egypt in the third and fourth centuries B.C. Since the original texts of the Bible books are not available, the Scrolls help scholars compare today’s Bible text with the ancient wording. This branch of literary analysis is called textual criticism. Among the many tattered Dead Sea Scrolls are the books most frequently quoted in the New Testament: Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and the Psalms. Most important, these scrolls discovered in caves confirm the trustworthiness of Scripture and its central Messianic Savior, Jesus.

The Law of Moses

Deuteronomy is the fifth of the Five Books of Moses. Genesis, Exodus,
Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are known as Torah (Law). The ancient rabbis referred to Deuteronomy as Mishnah Torah, meaning “the Repetition of the Torah,” because it reviews or repeats the laws that were first mentioned in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

One of Deuteronomy’s main prophecies is 18:18–19, which speaks of a Messiah who, like Moses, will have special authority from God. An English translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls on this text reads, “[I will raise for them a prophet like you among your countrymen; I will put my words in] his mouth, and he will speak to them [all that I command him. And whoever does not listen to my words which] he will speak in my name, I [will hold] that person [accountable.”] The translators used brackets in the verse to indicate damaged phrases or words. Clearly, there is no difference between the ancient text and modern Bibles.

In Acts 3:22–23, the apostle Peter quoted the Deuteronomy prophecy in his sermon. Commenting on it and on Acts 3:22–23, Dr. Thomas L. Constable, senior professor of Bible Exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary, said, “I will raise for them a prophet like you among your countrymen; I will put my words in] his mouth, and he will speak to them [all that I command him. And whoever does not listen to my words which] he will speak in my name, I [will hold] that person [accountable.” The translators used brackets in the verse to indicate damaged phrases or words. Clearly, there is no difference between the ancient text and modern Bibles.

Among the collection was this interesting scroll. It was unrolled in 1961. It is written on 17 sheets of parchment a national treasure. Since 1965, a copy has been on display at the Shrine of the Book museum in Jerusalem.

The most quoted passage in the New Testament is the prophecy of Isaiah 52:13—53:12. Apart from some insignificant differences in spelling and grammar, nothing challenges the veracity of the prophecy regarding a suffering Messiah. God has preserved this passage from Isaiah so as to remove any doubt regarding its meaning.

Victor Bukoszben (1903–1974), the first executive director of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, wrote in his excellent exposition of Isaiah 53, Generally, there is little difference between Jewish and Christian translations of this majestic passage of Isaiah, apart from a few words of secondary importance. However, there is a profound and basic difference in the interpretation of the text. For many centuries, ancient Jewish tradition has seen Isaiah 53 as a portrait of God’s suffering servant, the Messiah. Christians, following the ancient Jewish tradition, maintain that Isaiah 53 speaks of Messiah. Consequently, they see it as an amazing prophecy concerning Jesus, “the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29).4

The Psalms

The book of Psalms is the most copious of all the Bible books discovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Apparently, this fact reflects its importance for liturgical and study purposes. The Hebrew word for “psalms” is tehillim, which means “songs of praise.” In the New Testament, only the book of Isaiah is referred to more than the Psalms. The Great Psalms Scroll is the largest collection among the Dead Sea documents discovered in 1956. It was unrolled in 1961.

King David wrote most of the Psalms. Among the collection was this interesting text about David, found in the 11QPσ Psalter (“David’s Compositions”): “And David, the son of Jesse, was wise, and a light like the light of the sun, and literate.” £ And the total of his psalms and songs was 4,050. All these he composed through prophecy which was given him from before the Most High.” 5

Truly, the Bible is the only manuscript inspired by God and is profitable (2 Tim. 3:16). It was God’s choice to move human writers by His Spirit to produce the Holy Scriptures: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20–21).

Despite some damage by cave worms, the verses and sections that are decipherable are the same as in modern translations. This is also true regarding the other Bible scrolls discovered. “As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is proven. He is a shield to all who trust in Him” (2 Sam. 22:31).

The Word of God stands sure forever, but its main focus should never be overlooked. The great English preacher G. Campbell Morgan (1863–1945) put it this way: “There is no life in the Scriptures themselves, but if we follow where they lead, they will bring us to Him, and so we find life, not in the Scriptures, but in Him through them.”6

Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him (Ps. 2:12).

ENDNOTES

1 The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 509.
2 Ibid., 172.
5 “Qumran Psalms Scroll (11QPσ/11QPσ-a)” <www.biblical-studies.ca/docs/overview/81-11QPσ.html>.

Peter Colón is the Southeastern States director for The Friends of Israel.
May 2, 2011, commemorated a special day in printing history. It was the 400th anniversary of the first printing of the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible, one of the most beloved English translations of all time.

The actual translation work began in January 1604 at the order of King James I of England and was completed in 1611. It came as a result of the Hampton Court Conference at the request of the Puritans, who insisted that people know God’s Word.

The king, however, had a different motive: He wanted a translation that would unify the Church of England. The translation team consisted of about 50 men who were university scholars. Then it was reviewed by bishops. Because the KJV alone was authorized by the king of England to be read in churches, it came to be known as the “authorized version.”

The KJV has been the standard translation for millions of people for hundreds of years. At one time it was the only Bible available in the English language. Today there are many translations, but the King James Version remains a top seller around the world. In the original 1611 printing, the translators dedicated their scholarship to the man who authorized the project, King James I. Here is the dedication in modern English spelling:

TO THE MOST HIGH AND MIGHTY PRINCE, JAMES by the grace of God, king of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c. THE TRANSLATORS OF THE BIBLE, wish Grace, Mercy, and Peace, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord. . . . And now at last, by the Mercy of God, and the continuance of our Labours, it being brought unto such a conclusion, as that we have great hope that the Church of England shall reap good fruit thereby; we hold it our duty to offer it to your Majesty, not only as to our King and Sovereign, but as to the principal mover and Author of the work. . . . So that, if on the one side we
shall be traduced by Popish persons at
home or abroad, who therefore will
malign us, because we are poor
Instruments to make Gods holy Truth
to be yet more and more known unto
the people, whom they desire still to
keep in ignorance and darkness.\(^3\)

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changes lives. Their work continues
hundreds of years later, impacting
lives for eternity.

Today most Bible publishers outside
Great Britain have no problem securing
the King James text because it passed
into the public domain many years ago.
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still held by the British Crown under
perpetual Crown copyright. Publishers
must be licensed to reproduce the
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and Northern Ireland, the rights are
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Today in England, Wales, and
Northern Ireland, the Queen’s Printer
is Cambridge University Press.\(^4\) Other
royal charters also grant Oxford
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from the Scottish Bible Board. The
terms prohibit anyone other than the
holders, or those authorized by the
holders, from printing, publishing, or
importing the King James Version into
the United Kingdom.

**ENDNOTES**


\(^2\) Ibid.


\(^4\) “King James Bible Copyright Status,” Mid-America
Christian University <kingjamesbible.info/king-james-bible-copyright-status.php>.

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Thomas C. Simcox
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Keeping Up With False Teaching

Throughout history God sounded the alarm to His people to be on guard for false teachers. The Torah warns of false prophets (Dt. 18:20–22). The Gospels warn of wolves dressed in sheep’s clothing (Mt. 7:15), and the Epistles warn of false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1–3). False teaching brings confusion to the body and can keep people from the truth of the gospel message.

Today false teaching seems to be springing up regularly, even within some evangelical circles. Periodically someone will emphatically declare when the Rapture will take place and when God will judge the ungodly. Christians who read the Bible regularly know these predictions are wrong. Why? Because Jesus said, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Mt. 24:36).

The ancient Mayans predicted December 21, 2012, will bring the end of the world. Unfortunately, many evangelicals believe the Mayans. But Christians who truly know and believe God’s Word do not. Mayan texts are not Scripture.

Currently the trendiest teaching—though not new—is universalism. It maintains that all people will eventually be saved.

Rob Bell, the 41-year-old founder and pastor of Mars Hill Church in western Michigan, has recently joined the ranks of the new universalists with his megapopular book *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived.* On March 23 the book soared to the number two spot on *The New York Times* best-seller list.

For Bell, no one goes to hell because God’s love will save all people, even after death. God’s love wins out.

The 224-page work has ignited such a storm of controversy that *Time* magazine’s April 25 cover story was
Three things keep people from intimacy with God: pride (thinking they don’t need Him), rebellion (sin), and being in a hurry. Said Charles Stanley, senior pastor of the First Baptist Church of Atlanta, Georgia: “It takes time to read His Word and meditate upon it and listen to Him. The more you listen, the more you’ll hear. The more you hear, the more excited you’ll get about hearing. And the more excited you get about hearing, the more you’ll listen.”

A 22-year-old college senior from Missouri has won The Friends of Israel’s first annual Go Israel Essay Contest and is in Israel enjoying the fruits of her labor.

Katie Goldstein of Missouri won a free place on this year’s monthlong ORIGINS trip to Israel with her one-page essay “Why I Love Israel and the Jewish People.” She said her father read about the contest in Israel My Glory magazine and encouraged her to enter. This year’s prize was worth $3,595.

Second place went to Hannah Grothe, 17, of Minnesota. The Friends of Israel paid for half of her trip.

Third place went to Rachel Graves, 18, of Florida, who won a free course of her choosing at our online Institute of Jewish Studies.

The ORIGINS tour, under the direction of Friends of Israel staffers Bruce Scott and Chris Katulka, left for Israel June 14 and will return July 13. ORIGINS stands for Our Resolve Is Giving Israel Never-Ending Support. The trip is for people ages 17 to 26.

To read Katie’s essay and see the exciting things she’s experiencing, log on to www.foi.org/essaywinner.
The Father of Faith

Now the book of Hebrews moves from the faith of men before the flood to the faith of men in the patriarchal period. The author uses Abraham’s faith to illustrate the type of commitment Jewish believers in Christ should emulate.

SUBMISSIVE FAITH

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called” by God and immediately left Ur of the Chaldeans, “not knowing where he was going.” With his wife, Sarah, and nephew Lot, he traveled to Canaan, which became the land of promise that “he would receive as an inheritance” (Heb. 11:8).

By faith, Abraham settled in this foreign country “with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise” (v. 9). He lived a nomadic life, dwelling in Shechem, Bethel, Hebron, and Beersheba. The only land Abraham owned in Canaan was the burial plot at Machpelah that he purchased for Sarah (Gen. 23).

Abraham had no permanent house (he lived in a tent) throughout his life because “he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). His eyes were not fixed on an earthly city but on a heavenly, eternal one—the New Jerusalem whose architect was God (v. 16; 12:22; 13:14; Rev. 21:1—22:5). Since Abraham’s faith was fixed not on his temporal but on his ultimate destiny, he could wait obediently with patient endurance until God’s promises to him would be fulfilled.

Keep in mind how great Abraham’s faith was: He trusted God totally for the route he would take from Ur; he had no promise of inheriting any land during his journey because God only told him of the land inheritance after he reached Shechem (Gen. 12:6); and though he was promised the land by divine decree, he never took possession of it during his lifetime.

SARAH’S FAITH

Along with Abraham, Hebrews calls Sarah a person of faith: 

By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore (Heb. 11:11–12; cf. Gen. 11:29—23:2).

Sarah knew God had revealed to Abraham that He would give him a son. But her faith wavered because she was barren for years and well past the age of childbearing. On hearing the news, she laughed at such a thought (Gen. 18:10—15); but a year later (after Isaac’s birth), she laughed with joy. Sarah had exceptional faith to believe she would become pregnant, carry the child to full term, and have the strength to survive childbirth at 90 years of age (17:17).

All commentators consider the phrase received strength to conceive a difficult text. Scholars take various positions on whether it refers to Abraham receiving strength to impregnate Sarah or Sarah receiving strength to conceive. The first position teaches that Abraham’s faith is the subject of the phrase and that he alone caused Sarah to conceive. Because of Abraham’s faith, Sarah received “strength” (power) to conceive after menopause. Therefore, God honored the faith of Abraham, not Sarah, in giving him Isaac.

The second position says Sarah is the subject of the verse and that it should be read that, even at her advanced age, she did her part in conceiving a child. Whichever interpretation one takes, Sarah possessed exceptional faith in this situation.

Hebrews 11:12 concludes, “Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.” A number of wonderful applications can be made. First, every Jewish person ever born was conceived because Abraham exercised faith and trust in God’s promise. Second, God was willing and able to provide the promised son, but He acted on the basis of Abraham’s faith. Third, Abraham, though 90 years old, did not waver at God’s promise but, by faith, claimed the impossible. Fourth, God honored Abraham’s faith and gave him a vast multitude of descendants. Fifth, the key to the impossible is faith in God.

STEADFAST FAITH

In the midst of talking about Abraham and his descendants, the author stopped abruptly to reflect on how these patriarchs lived by faith (Heb. 11:13–16). All of them (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph) died in faith, never receiving the promises given to
them—many of which were contained in the Abrahamic Covenant that was passed down to Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 12:1–7; 26:2–5, 24; 28:10–15; 35:9–12; 46:2–4). These men steadfastly clung to the promises, though they saw them “afar off” (Heb. 11:13).

Although the patriarchs could only view these promises from a distance, they “were assured of them, [and] embraced them” (v. 13). Their faith gave them inner conviction that all God promised them would eventually be theirs—if not in their lifetimes, in the generations to follow.

They “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (v. 13; cf. Gen. 47:9; Ps. 39:12). They had no citizenship in the land in which they lived and “declare[d] plainly that they [sought] a homeland” (Heb. 11:14), but one much different from Ur in Mesopotamia or the land of Canaan.

Truly, if Abraham had yearned to return to Ur, he had many opportunities to do so (v. 15), but he and his posterity “desire[d] a better, that is, a heavenly country” (v. 16). The word desire means to “stretch out, yearn and strive after”; it was a continual, consuming desire that pervaded their lives on Earth.

The patriarchs were steadfast in their faith with a view to the promises of God: “Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (v. 16). In other words, Abraham and his posterity did not go back to where they came from or doubt God’s promises. Thus God was not ashamed of them, nor were they ashamed to call Him their God. The precise nature of the city they were looking to view is described in Hebrews 12:22–24 and Revelation 21:1–22:5.

**SACRIFICING FAITH**

Abraham’s character and faith were tested to the ultimate degree. He was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac: “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ’In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative [parable] sense” (Heb. 11:17–19; cf. Gen. 22:1–19).

God told Abraham to take Isaac to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him as a burnt offering. Although Ishmael (through Hagar) was Abraham’s first son, Isaac is identified as “his only begotten son” (Heb. 11:17). This means that Isaac was unique and irreplaceable because he was the only son promised through Sarah and the son who would inherit the covenant promises passed down from Abraham.

The words offered up (v. 17) appear twice, first in the perfect tense then in the imperfect tense. In God’s mind, the act of offering Isaac was already completed, and He had already accepted it before Abraham put Isaac on the altar. Abraham’s obedience was a great act of faith. He knew God had promised him many descendants through Isaac who was the long-awaited son of promise and miraculous child of his old age. Abraham must have struggled trying to reconcile God’s command to offer Isaac and the promise of descendants through Isaac; but neither Genesis nor Hebrews addresses this issue. It seems that Abraham left the problem with God (Rom. 4:20–21).

So convinced was he that God would fulfill His promises that he believed God would raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:19). In fact, Abraham had told his servant, “The lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you” (Gen. 22:5; emphasis added). Abraham must have been convinced that, if God could birth Isaac through two reproductively dead bodies (Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born), He could raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:12). The phrase also received him in a figurative sense (v. 19) means Abraham received Isaac from the dead, not literally but symbolically.

**SONS OF FAITH**

The book now moves from Abraham’s faith to that of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. It mentions incidents near the end of their lives, probably to emphasize that they, like Abraham, trusted God’s promises throughout their lives.

- **“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come”** (v. 20; cf. Gen. 27:1—28:5). Isaac was a man of faith and believed in God’s promises to Abraham his father (Gen. 28:4).
- **“By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph”** (Heb. 11:21; cf. Gen. 48). Although Jacob blessed all his sons while on his death bed (Gen. 49), the author only mentioned the blessing of Joseph’s sons. Jacob knew he would die before God’s promises would be fulfilled, yet by faith he passed the blessing on according to God’s will. Both Isaac and Jacob manifested the same faith in the promises given to Abraham.
- **“By faith Joseph, when he was dying . . . gave instructions concerning his bones”** (Heb. 11:22; cf. Gen. 50:24–26). The author could have illustrated Joseph’s faith many ways, but he chose this incident because it clearly shows how strongly Joseph believed God would fulfill the promises made to his forefathers. His request was the same as his father Jacob’s, yet he knew he would never live to see the promises fulfilled. During the Exodus, Moses honored Joseph’s request and brought his bones up from Egypt (Ex. 13:19; Josh. 24:32).

The men of faith who lived in this period of Israel’s history were highly cherished by the Jewish people. During times of persecution, the patriarchs’ faith and endurance gave them hope and encouraged them never to give up their faith. The hope was that Jewish believers would emulate these men of faith.
The Love of God
(Part 5)

This article continues our study of God’s love as expressed in the New Testament.

God’s Philanthropia Love of Man

In Titus 3:3 the apostle Paul presented a graphic description of unsaved man’s fallen disposition. He wrote to Titus, “We ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” In essence, he said that fallen, unsaved people are self-centered. They want every circumstance of life to please them and every human being to treat them the way they desire. In light of this fallen disposition, unsaved people deserve God’s judgment.

In Titus 3:4 Paul contrasted unsaved humanity’s self-centered disposition with God’s disposition toward unsaved humanity. Using a Greek word that emphasizes contrast, he wrote, “but when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared . . .” Paul’s point was that unsaved people deserve God’s judgment because of their self-centeredness, but God is kindly disposed and loving toward them.

The word translated “kindness” also means “goodness” and “generosity.”

The Greek word translated “love” (philanthropia, literally meaning “love for mankind”) refers to “benevolent condescension,” “help in time of need,” and “what is ‘useful’ to man.” In Paul’s statement it refers to “favour of God to man.”

In Titus 3:4 Paul also referred to the time “when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared.” The word translated “appeared” belongs to a family of Greek words that sometimes refer to “a visible manifestation of a hidden divinity, either in the form of a personal appearance, or by some deed of power by which its presence is made known.” Consequently, Paul indicated that there was a time when God, who is invisible to mortals (Jn. 1:18; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16), revealed His kindness and love for them “through some wondrous act that awes and impresses.” That act was God’s sending of His eternal Son from heaven to Earth to become incarnated in human flesh so that He could die as the substitute sacrifice for mankind and be resurrected from death. Through that act, God provided for man salvation from eternal judgment and the gift of eternal life.

Paul indicated this is so by referring to God as “our Savior” and declaring, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Ti. 3:5–7; cf. 2:10–14; 1 Jn. 4:9–10).

God’s Agapao Love of Believers

Scripture indicates God loves people who have placed their faith in Christ His Son and that no person, thing, or event will ever be able to break God’s bond of agapao love for His believers. Paul emphasized this fact in Romans 8:37–39:

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The fact that Paul used the Greek word agapao for God’s love for believers instead of philanthropia, the love He has for unsaved man, indicates that these are different types of love. Therefore, God’s love for believers has distinctive characteristics that His philanthropia love for unsaved man does not have, as indicated by the family relationship that exists between God and believers.

The apostle John wrote to believers, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! . . . Beloved, now we are children of God” (1 Jn. 3:1–2). John also declared, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (5:1).

Paul told believers in Galatia, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’ . . . and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Gal. 3:26; 4:6–7).

He told believers in Rome, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. . . . You received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry
out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:14–17). And he called Thessalonian believers “brethren beloved by the Lord” and referred to “our God and Father, who has loved us” (2 Th. 2:13, 16).

Thus John and Paul indicated that God, on the basis of His agapao love for believers, established a family relationship in which He is the Father and they are His children. Good parents have a special love for their children that is different from the love they have for others. So, too, the apostles imply that God’s agapao love for believers is different from His philanthropia love for unsaved man. Believers belong to God’s family; unbelievers do not.

Paul indicated that God loves not only Jewish believers but also Gentile believers so that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, . . . He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. . . . As He says also in Hosea: “I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ there they shall be called sons of the living God” (Rom. 9:23–26).

The participle translated “beloved” is in the Greek perfect tense, which indicates that, once something takes place, it continues into the future. Thus, once Jews or Gentiles place their faith in Jesus Christ, they become objects of God’s agapao love and remain so forever.

Paul’s concluding words to the church in Corinth were as follows: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen” (2 Cor. 13:14). This was the apostle’s expression of wishes for this congregation plagued with conflict and problems. Some people associated with the church were living contrary to how they should have as believers. Since believers are special objects of God’s agapao love, Paul’s expression “the love of God be with you all” may have been a wish that every person associated with that church be a genuine believer in Jesus Christ.

**God’s Agapao Love of a Cheerful Giver**

In 2 Corinthians 9:7 the apostle Paul declared, “God loves a cheerful giver.” Paul described a cheerful giver as one who gives “as he purpose in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity.”

The word translated “purposes” means “determine, decide, make up one’s mind” concerning a situation that involves more than one option. The word translated “heart” refers to “the center and source of the whole inner life” involving thoughts, emotions, and the will. The word translated “grudgingly” refers to “grief, sorrow, pain of mind or spirit,” and in Paul’s statement can mean “reluctantly.” The word translated “necessity” refers to “compulsion of any kind, outer or inner.” Paul’s description indicates that God has agapao love for believers who give gladly without coercion.

**God’s Agapao Love of Believers Whom He Chastens**

God also loves believers whom He must chasten and scourge. Hebrews 12:5–6 declares, “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”

The words translated “chastening” and “chastens” refer to corrective discipline that may involve punishment. The word translated “rebuked” means “to show someone his sin and to summon him to repentance.” The word translated “scourges” figuratively refers to “torment, suffering (sent by God to men).”

God does these things to His believing children for their profit, that they may be partakers of His holiness (Heb. 12:10).

**Endnotes**


2. Ibid., “chrestotes,” 894.

3. Ibid., “philanthropia,” 866.


5. Ibid., 111.

6. Arndt and Gingrich, *“epiphaneia,”* 304.


8. Arndt and Gingrich, *“agape,”* 396.


10. Ibid., “lupe,” 483.

11. Ibid., “anangke,” 52.


Quoteworthy

“God wants you to understand the Word of God. The Bible is not a mystery book. It’s not a book of philosophy. It’s a book of truth that explains the attitude and the heart of almighty God.”

—Charles Stanley on the importance of Bible reading and prayer
Life after the expulsion

In August it will be six years since 10,000 Jews were expelled from 21 beautiful communities in Gush Katif/Gaza and the Shomron (Samaria). Most still live in trailer towns like Nitzan, in range of the Kassam rockets that Hamas fires daily into the Negev. The Israeli government sent them old sewer pipes to use as shelters when the red alert sounds, warning of an incoming rocket. Rachel Saperstein, a resident of Nitzan, tells what life is like for her. (Used by permission.)

Another war is coming. I sleep in thick sweats and woolen socks. Friday night. I don’t sleep well. At 4 A.M. the siren wails. I put on my thick red robe and wake my husband. “Are you going into the sewervilla?” I ask.

“I’d rather die comfortably in bed than in a sewer pipe filled with screaming people,” he says and goes back to sleep.

The neighbors across the way open their door. I wave and walk over to them. “Are you going into the sewer pipe?” I ask.

“I don’t think so. It’s too cold.” The siren continues to wail. The rocket is still on the way. None of the other neighbors appear. I return to the caravilla [trailer].


Morning comes and I dress for the synagogue. I need to pray. I need to see people. I need to hear and speak to friends. I wonder why I am having such a severe reaction to one attack when I lived through years of bombardment in Gush Katif. My friends admit they, too, are feeling the strain. We can’t explain why.

We joke about how we need new robes for our sewer-pipe appearances. One husband suggests a wardrobe full of robes. “A woman should never be seen in the same robe night after night,” he quips.

Everyone is exhausted. No one was able to go back to bed after the sirens.

Shabbat afternoon. The holy Sabbath and holidays have always been a favorite time for attacks on Jews. At 4 P.M. a large group of girls were standing in a circle near our caravilla and singing the Bnei Akiva youth group hymn. The sirens wailed, and a mass of shrieking girls ran toward our sewer-pipe shelter. The girls laughed nervously, and one who cried was comforted by her friends. There was barely enough room for me and the neighbors.

Two loud booms meant impact close by. The children returned to their afternoon activities. The tension was gone, for now. The reality of our lives in Israel returns . . . living on the edge.

Goldstone recants

“If I had known then what I know now,” Judge Richard Goldstone wrote recently in The Washington Post, “the Goldstone Report would have been a different document.”

Goldstone, who chaired the UN fact-finding mission on Israel’s 2009 incursion into Gaza, now says Israel did not intentionally target civilians and that his 575-page report denouncing Israel would have been different had he known the truth. The UN said in April it has no intentions of repealing the report.

The Wall Street Journal online declared, “We would welcome this apologia if we didn’t think a jurist of Mr. Goldstone’s stature should have known the difference between a democracy like Israel with a history of investigating its own failings . . . and a self-avowed terrorist state like the one Hamas runs in Gaza . . . . As our friends at the New York Sun note, Mr. Goldstone should now have the decency to retire from public life.”
Did ‘Son of Hamas’ Dupe Christian Zionists?

When Mosab Yousef, the son of a prominent Hamas leader, converted to Christianity and wrote a book chronicling his years of clandestine collaboration with Israeli security forces, he became a sensation among pro-Israel Christians in his adoptive homeland of America. But all is not as it seems.

Mosab’s “tale has since been revealed to be a ‘long con,’ the evidence coming from when he speaks publicly in Arabic,” charged Walid Shoebat, a former Palestine Liberation Organization terrorist who came to faith in Jesus in 1994 and has since been an ardent Christian Zionist.

In an op-ed published online in May, Shoebat warned, “Mosab did not convert to what the West would recognize as Christianity, but to a fiery, Palestinian brand of the faith that is vehemently anti-Israel.”

Indeed, there is a growing trend among evangelical Christians, both Palestinian and Western, to adopt what has been termed Palestinian Liberation Theology. The teaching is Replacement Theology in a new guise, as it denies that modern Israel has anything to do with the Bible or biblical prophecy.

Shoebat believes Mosab Yousef, riding the popularity of his book Son of Hamas, is trying to further advance this teaching among evangelicals in America. In a recent interview with the Arab satellite network Al-Arabiya, Mosab told Arabic viewers, “During my tours in universities and even churches, [I found] the real support for Israel stems from the church in the West. . . . Israel is the problem and as an occupation it needs to end. . . . We will have our victory against Israel.”

Despite his past service to Israel, Mosab “clearly hates Israel and has no understanding of the biblical prophecies concerning same,” Keith Davies, executive director of the Walid Shoebat Foundation, told Israel Today. “We are doing our best to warn the church,” he said.

“Mosab is now touring churches to end Israel’s lifeline,” warned Shoebat. “Many Jews and Christians in the West are unable to determine friend from foe in the Mideast; they are not able to read what is said in Arabic. They must seek translations and must be aware of double agents like Mosab.”

by Israel Today, www.israeltoday.co.il

Making a Will That Works

Each day we are given opportunities to glorify God. Using our time well, exercising the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us, and making wise use of our finances are a few of the many ways we can honor Him. Another way is by making sure what the Lord has entrusted to us remains His when we no longer need it.

Sadly, if you have no legal will in force, the laws of your state will intercede and make a will for you when the time comes. Does your state know how you want your estate handled? Unfortunately, your desire to see the Lord’s work benefited is likely to go unfulfilled.

If you would like to have a will written but don’t know where to start, let us help. We would like to send you our informative brochure Making a Will That Works at no cost and without obligation. It is our way of helping you become a wise steward over all the Lord has entrusted to you. To receive Making a Will That Works, simply check the appropriate box on the envelope in this magazine; or write to Tom Geoghan at The Friends of Israel, P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099.
Something happened recently that was hard even for me to believe. But as we say here in Israel, “When God wills it, everything is possible.”

Not long ago my wife was in the hospital. When I went to visit her, I would speak to people at the hospital. It is not a place where you can speak openly about faith in Christ. You must be very careful. There are many Orthodox who believe it is their duty to watch those who visit and to prevent them from sharing the gospel of Christ. In fact, they work very hard to make sure no one mentions the faith. If you are quick to speak, you are quick to be thrown out.

Many people I met, however, were open to hearing about the faith. In fact, they sincerely desired to have a long conversation only on this subject. One day I met a man who was a patient, as my wife was. He, more than anyone else, wanted a long conversation about Christ. As a visitor, however, I had to be careful.

“Please come back,” he said.
“I will do my best,” I told him.
“So, you will come, then?” he implored.
“I will try,” I assured him.

Soon my wife returned home from the hospital. I was doing everything I could to help her because she needed much help. I did not forget the sick man who wanted to know more about the Savior, but I could not figure out how I would be able to make the time to go to the hospital. I did not want to break my promise to him, but I knew it would be difficult to speak about salvation in that place.

Several days later I was not feeling well. In fact, I had become very sick. My wife quickly called an ambulance, which came and took me to the hospital. And to which of our many hospitals was I brought? To the same hospital where I was supposed to visit the sick man who wanted so desperately to know about salvation through Christ.

And into which of the hospital’s many rooms was I placed as a patient? Into his room! When I arrived he was greatly surprised. He looked at me and said, “You said one day you would visit me! And here you are! I am sure this is not the way you meant to arrive.”

He was certainly right. It is still hard for me to believe what happened. “You are here,” the man said. “But, of course, it was not your will to come in such a way.”

I knew, however, that it was God’s will because now we would have all the time we needed to have a long conversation about faith in Christ without worrying about the Orthodox throwing me out.
The answer to false teaching is not to shout louder but to live purer.

—Richard D. Emmons

So I said, “You see, I am ready to talk about faith.”

His first question was, “How did you come to know the Lord? Please tell me.”

I told him I learned about the Lord from the Holy Bible, not from the rabbinical commentaries that the Orthodox prize so highly. “It is clearly written in the Bible, ‘You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you’ [Dt. 6:14]. Now look around,” I told him. “Most of the people here worship their rabbis and do not realize it. They respect their rabbis so much that they listen to them instead of following what is written in God’s Word.”

“So where is it written in the Bible about this one in whom you have believed?” he asked.

I replied, “This is the best question.” I opened my Bible to Isaiah 53 and began reading: “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (vv. 5–6).

I told him much about Jesus our Savior. We had a very long conversation, and I was able to tell him everything he wanted to know.
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PROGRAM DETAILS
FRIDAY: Registration 4-6 p.m.; dinner 6:15 p.m.; concert 7:30 p.m.
SATURDAY, SUNDAY, MONDAY: Sessions 9 a.m. to noon, 7 to 9 p.m.
(Sunday 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.)
TUESDAY: 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. The Shadow of the Messiah, The Shadow of Messiah’s Atoning Work, and The Present Reality.

SPECIAL FEATURES
Concert with Diane Susek, Friday, September 9, at 7:30 p.m. in Statesman Hall.
Foreign Field Update in Poland with Waldemar Bolkowski, Saturday, September 10, at 10 a.m.
Golf Outing Saturday, September 10, Tee Time 1:15 p.m.
Focus on Israel Night, Monday, September 12, at 6:45 p.m. with Benyamin Korn, director of Jewish Americans for Sarah Palin. Followed by a concert featuring Jewish/Israeli music.
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For more details please call The Friends of Israel at 800-257-7843 Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. and ask for Lisa Grosso at extension 139. Or visit our Web site at www.foi.org.