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In a flash of boyish inspiration, a young Bedouin shepherd picked up a pebble and threw it into a cave jutting out of the chalky formation near the Dead Sea. Hearing the shattering of a clay pot, he dropped into the cave for a look. That pebble, from the hand of a simple shepherd, would answer one of the enduring questions of our time. The scroll of Isaiah, 66 chapters, all pristinely preserved and dated at least 1,000 years before the oldest versions available up to that time (1947), was part of the find. In this dynamic issue you will discover why the Lord preserved these invaluable biblical treasures. Charts, articles, and snippets of Isaiah’s timeless message will inspire, instruct, and direct your life. Look, read, learn, and absorb His Word for your life today.

Gracing our cover this issue is a dramatic panorama of the Sea of Galilee taken by Israeli photographer (Israel Talby/Israelimages).
From Bill Sutter’s Desk

EDITOR’S NOTE: It is with sadness that we acknowledge this is Bill Sutter’s final column as executive director of The Friends of Israel. His immense knowledge, wisdom, and insight made this column an important voice in Israel My Glory. We know God will bless Bill and continue to use him mightily during his much-deserved retirement.

The Friends of Israel is known for being a forward-looking ministry. Though not neglecting important lessons of the past and working to keep abreast of the impact of current events, this ministry is keenly focused on God’s plans for the future as set forth in His Word. We understand Bible prophecy is God’s road map, and we know the importance of keeping an eye on Israel and the Jewish people as a reflection of His plans and purposes.

So, within this framework, I offer several thoughts I trust will be meaningful to all of us in the days ahead.

First, let’s never be caught off guard by waves of unbelief that repackage themselves as new insights bolstered by an amazing degree of repetition over time. While offering up trendy theological expressions, they carry the same ages-old, destructive baggage of denial of God’s eternal truth. Going forward, we need to continue standing boldly with the Bible as God’s timeless Word that always meets mankind’s important needs.

Second, we must not surrender to the world’s terminology. People often use terms that are hostile to biblical truth. This problem occurs frequently in relationship to God’s ancient people—the Jewish people—and God’s land of promise—Israel.

One of our good friends in the Jewish community, Michael Perloff, chairman of the MERCAZ Israel Advocacy Committee, accurately documents how indiscriminate use of damaging terminology undermines Israel’s continuing efforts to live in peace with its neighbors. By diverting attention from Israel’s substantial contributions to the world, such terminology minimizes the Jewish state’s achievements, devalues Israel’s dramatic responses to worldwide humanitarian crises regardless of politics, and denies Israel’s democratic values and freedoms.

The term settlements is a good example. Arab communities developed in the midst of largely Jewish areas are not called settlements. Yet many people try to discredit legally established Jewish communities in the midst of predominately Arab populations by using this faulty term that supports increasing demands to remove Jewish “settlements.” In reality, the demands are a call for the ethnic cleansing of Jewish people from their homes and communities.

West Bank is another such term that strikes at the heart of biblical truth. Prior to the Jordanian invasion in 1948 when the Arabs ethnically cleansed the area of Jewish people, the so-called West Bank was referred to by its rightful, biblical names of Judea and Samaria. We must affirm proper biblical terminology, not the world’s corrupted, agenda-driven designations.

Perhaps the most disingenuous term of all is East Jerusalem. It refers to neighborhoods on the east side of Israel’s capital as if they were a distinct municipal entity. The move is really a setup to give them over to a new Palestinian entity.

So-called East Jerusalem is Israel’s original capital and the location of the holiest Jewish and Christian sites. Jerusalem’s reunification as Israel’s capital in 1967 under Israeli sovereignty reversed a forced 19-year division of the city and ended the ethnic cleansing of Jewish people following the 1948 Jordanian invasion, occupation, and tearing apart of Jerusalem.

The reunification is rightly viewed as a defeat of religious apartheid and the ethnic cleansing of Jews by Arabs.

For us to accommodate ourselves to the world’s damaging terminology not only strikes at the heart of God’s promises to Israel and the Jewish people but also denies proper biblical theology.

An important concluding thought: We should demonstrate to Jewish people everywhere that today’s Bible-believing Christians who readily embrace the term Christian Zionists, as we do, are not simply a friendlier version of what Jewish people have known Christians to be throughout much of history. We must demonstrate we are substantively different and totally separate from centuries of corrupt, man-centered theologies supported by the oppressive, ecclesiastical structures of “big religion.”

We do this best by demonstrating personal faith and godly living reflective of our study, belief, and application of the Bible as God’s Holy Word, which will stand forever.

William E. Sutter is the executive director of The Friends of Israel.
32-year-old cold, but stable, peace at Israel’s southern border. Turkey, once an ally and good friend, has downgraded its formal diplomatic ties with Israel and suspended its military cooperation. Today the relationship is strained. North Korea regularly supplies military arms to many of Israel’s enemies and nuclear technology to Iran. No one knows for sure where the new, young Supreme Leader Kim Jong-Un will take his country and how that direction will affect Israel. Then, of course, there is the looming menace that is Iran. Israeli President Shimon Peres has called Iran “the greatest threat faced by Israel.” For the past several years, Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has continually called for Israel’s destruction.

With all these threats swirling around, what is happening at the prime minister’s residence? Benjamin Netanyahu has decided to do something that can never hurt. He will host a Bible study at his official residence. Reported Israel Today, “Netanyahu made the announcement on the 30-day anniversary of the passing of his father-in-law, Shmuel Ben-Artzi, who was a respected Israeli poet and Bible teacher. Ben-Artzi used to attend the regular Bible studies hosted by Israel’s first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion.”

Netanyahu said, “Ben-Gurion understood that the Book of Books is our mandate for our country. He viewed the Bible as the wondrous story of the Jewish people, the unique spiritual, cultural and historic heritage of our people, and also as one of the cornerstones of all of human culture.”

The study will be open to researchers, public officials, and invited guests. “The father of Netanyahu’s Likud Party, Menachem Begin, also used to host regular Bible studies at the prime minister’s residence,” reported Israel Today. “Netanyahu said he wanted to reinstate that practice in order to encourage love of the Bible among government officials, and by extension, the nation.”

Whether he realizes it or not, this action could lead Netanyahu and his country to great success. Joshua 1:8 promises success for the one who meditates on the Book of the Law. In 2 Kings 22:8 a young King Josiah recovered the “Book of the Law in the house of the LORD.” Upon hearing what was written, he tore his clothes as a sign of repentance (v. 11). Other Jewish leaders, such as Moses and Nehemiah, recognized the wisdom of applying one’s heart to God’s Word.

So as events unfold in the Middle East and “experts” provide their solutions, let’s pray the prime minister’s Bible study will give him God’s own solutions. Let us also pray that his study will encourage many Israelis to follow suit.

by Steve Herzig

For nearly all of its 64 years, the State of Israel has faced constant threats to its survival as a democratic, Jewish nation. The courage, tenacity, ingenuity, and determination with which it has consistently and successfully faced those threats are nothing short of amazing.

Yet current threats seem even more alarming than previous ones. However, something is afoot at the prime minister’s official residence that can only help the struggle against uncompromising enemies.

Why uncompromising? Because despite talk about “peace,” Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh has said Hamas will never alter its long-term goal of eliminating Israel.

In Egypt, the previously outlawed Muslim Brotherhood has now risen to power and poses a great threat to the
Some Good News for A Change

There’s Good News Tonight.” That was the lead each evening on Gabriel Heatter’s national news broadcast during World War II. Known for exuding a “dignified optimism,” Heatter brought to the air human interest narratives that became, as some said, “a bright light in a dark time for America.”

More than six decades later, we often find it difficult to locate any good news. But something good almost slipped by most of us during the previous years.

On July 9, 2011, a new nation was born: the Republic of South Sudan, a region comprised mostly of Nuba Christians who had suffered systematic, genocidal persecution at the hands of Islamist Arabs who killed almost 2 million Nubas.

Now the remnants of this beleaguered but tenacious people have walked into what Mr. Heatter might have called the bright light of a better world. Among the first to recognize the fledgling state was Israel. In return, South Sudan President Salva Kiir Mayardit chose Israel for one of his initial presidential visits in a trip described as “low-key” and “under-the-radar.”

South Sudan not only has recognized the Jewish state’s legitimacy but reportedly plans to become the world’s only nation to do the right thing and place its embassy in Jerusalem. The gesture demonstrates there are still rare instances of national integrity, when leaders know how to say thank you to allies who have stood with them in their struggle for survival and independence.

With only hours in the land, President Kiir scheduled time to tour the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem. All Western leaders should be required to do the same. Kiir is not tainted by revisionist teaching; he understands Yad Vashem because he has walked in the blood of his own fallen people.

But why low-key and under-the-radar? Whom do we fear? The radical thugs in Khartoum? The Arabs? Or perhaps the Islamist invaders of the West whom fearmongering intimidates politicians, journalists, law enforcement agencies, and ordinary citizens?

The principle issues recall the 1940s when Israel’s rebirth was prominent on the world stage. U.S. President Harry S. Truman’s character, political decisiveness, and strength of leadership were severely tested. In November 1947, the UN partitioned what was left of British Mandate Palestine into two states: one Jewish and one Arab. The Jewish people accepted the plan and announced they would declare their independence; the Arabs rejected the plan.

Arabists in the U.S. State Department, as well as other presidential advisors, demanded Truman not recognize the Jewish state, viewing such a move as catastrophic. Nonetheless, on May 14, 1948, Jewish statesman David Ben-Gurion stood in what is now the Israel Museum in Tel Aviv and read Israel’s Declaration of Independence. Defying his advisors, President Truman conveyed America’s official recognition of the State of Israel 11 minutes later.

America’s president had taken the long view. The United States became the first government to recognize Israel. Had Truman not been a man who knew how to honor a commitment, the Middle East would be a very different place today.

Why did he do it? First, he had made a promise to Chaim Weizmann, a brilliant Jewish scientist who would become Israel’s first president. Weizmann visited Truman at the White House in March 1948 in a meeting arranged by Eddie Jacobson, Truman’s former business partner in Kansas City, Missouri. Truman called Weizmann “one of the wisest men I’ve ever met” and gave him his word that, if a Jewish state was declared, he would recognize it.

The second reason was noted by Clark Clifford, special counsel to Harry Truman from 1946 to 1950, in his memoirs Counsel to the President, published in 1991. Truman, he wrote, “was a student and believer in the Bible since his youth. From his reading of the Old Testament he felt the Jews derived a legitimate historical right to Palestine, and he sometimes cited such biblical lines as Deuteronomy 1:8: ’Behold, I have given up the land before you; go in and take possession of the land which the Lord hath sworn unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.’”

Despite the new winds of hardline secularism blowing through the halls of statehouses and the steeples of mainline churches these days, most Americans still agree with Truman. Thus the birth of a pro-Israel, pro-Semitic, pro-Christian nation in Sub-Saharan Africa should give us all a reason to feel good. Yes, we can say loudly, without apology or under-the-radar trepidation, a burgeoning South Sudan “is good news tonight.” I think Gabriel Heatter would be glad to hear it.
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Bible-believing Christians hold fast to many cardinal doctrines of the faith, such as the virgin birth, inspiration of Scripture, substitutionary atonement, justification by faith, and the plurality within the Godhead (the Trinity). If you conducted a survey concerning these doctrines, you probably would find that most people think they come entirely from the New Testament. But all of them are contained in the book of Isaiah, including the doctrine of the Trinity.

Trinitarianism, as it is often called, simply means there is one Deity manifested or revealed through three distinct personalities. The word trinity can denote the number three or a group of three. Although much of Christendom uses Trinity to identify God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the term triunity is slightly more accurate. It embraces the plurality yet identifies a stronger, consistent accord between the three Persons.

The doctrine of the Triunity is difficult to grasp even for Christians who have known the Lord for many years. Nothing compares to it, so it cannot be explained in human terms. There is only one God: the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yet He somehow exists in three Persons who are identical in substance and form the Godhead.

Isaiah alluded to the Triunity when he prophesied; but it is likely he, too, did not fully understand it.

In chapter 48 God says through the prophet, “Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, My called: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last. Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth” (vv. 12–13). Clearly, the speaker is the God of Israel.

Then God says, “Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord God and His Spirit have sent Me” (v. 16).

If God is speaking, then who are “the Lord God” and “His Spirit” and “Me”? More confusing still is the fact the Lord God and the Holy Spirit sent the One who is called the First and the Last—the One who laid the foundation of the earth.

Clearly, all three of these entities are God. Isaiah unveiled all three Persons of the Godhead: “the Lord GOD,” referring to the Father; “His Spirit,” referring to the Holy Spirit; and “Me,” referring to the speaker, who later identifies Himself as the “Redeemer” (v. 17). Thus the speaker is the Messiah.

More than 700 years after Isaiah prophesied, Jesus was born as a Jewish baby in Bethlehem of Judaea, fulfilling Micah 5:2 and many other Hebrew Scriptures. He performed miracles only God could do, including raising the dead, and admitted to being the Messiah (Mt. 26:63–64; Jn. 4:25–26).

Many years after His death and resurrection, He appeared in a vision to the apostle John, also Jewish, on the island of Patmos: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8).

Paul, another Jewish apostle, educated believers at Colosse concerning Jesus, echoing Isaiah: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth” (Col. 1:15–16).

God exists in three Persons, yet there is only one God; and Bible-believing Christians who accept the Triunity worship only the God of Israel who spoke through the prophet Isaiah.

by Thomas C. Simcox, Church Ministries training coordinator for The Friends of Israel.
The Nails and Streams of Liberty

The familiar words of the U.S. Declaration of Independence remind us we are endowed by God “with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Happily, our Founding Fathers also proclaimed that the business of legitimate government is “to secure these rights.” In the practical sense then, the grand architecture of American liberty depends on the “nails, rivets, and screws” that fasten into place our most fundamental freedoms.

So when I read a decision from a federal judge in Hawaii recently, I could almost hear the creaking sound of nails being yanked out. Emmanuel Temple v. Neil Abercrombie was brought by two Christian churches days before the effective date of Hawaii’s new law protecting civil unions among homosexuals. The churches argued that Hawaiian laws could now be used to prosecute them if they refuse to rent their facilities for same-sex ceremonies—particularly because the state legislature deliberately declined to exempt churches and other houses of worship.

Nevertheless, the U.S. District Court rebuked the plaintiffs, denying their request to be protected from future discrimination lawsuits that seem likely in light of Hawaii’s elevation of homosexual rights. What makes this decision so astounding is the court’s apparent bewilderment: It asked why “a same-sex couple would desire to solemnize a civil union on a premises owned or operated by an entity clearly hostile to same-sex couples.”

Such naïveté ignores the entire history of the gay-rights movement (and numerous other social movements) where test cases are often used to force the expansion of legal rights.

But the problems with this case don’t end there. The same decision actually recognizes that the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission already accepted a complaint by a same-sex couple who wanted to sue another church for refusing to rent its facilities for their intended marriage. Nevertheless, the court still ruled the churches had not shown a high enough risk of harm to their rights to warrant legal protection.

As cases have been brought to advance homosexual rights in the last few decades, religious-liberty attorneys have been warning the ultimate endgame will be the evisceration of the fundamental freedoms of Christians. Evidence indicates this endgame may be closer than we think.

Equally remarkable is that many of our law schools and our nation’s highest court are complicit in this result. In 2010 the U.S. Supreme Court voted 5–4 to affirm the right of the University of California’s Hastings College of the Law to deny official campus recognition to the Christian Legal Society (CLS). It ruled that the school’s non-discrimination policy trumped CLS’s Bible-based charter that did not permit people actively engaged in homosexuality to vie for leadership in the organization.

Ironically, a few weeks before the Hawaii decision, a panel discussion on “hate crimes” was held at Wayne State University Law School in Detroit, Michigan. According to pridesource.com, a pro-gay website, participant Denise Brogan-Kator, executive director of Equality Michigan, specifically mentioned people (presumably Bible-believing Christians) whom she said use their “warped theology” to block homosexuals from achieving “full equality and respect.”

The solution? “Change the environment that allows hate to openly express itself through discrimination—in our schools, our workplaces, our neighborhoods, our stores and restaurants, hospitals, and government institutions,” she said.

Over the years, the handy “hate” label has often been used to intimidate into silence the voices of Christian conscience. At stake is America’s entire social environment, which if changed to suit Equality Michigan, would radically reduce the First Amendment rights of most Bible-believing Christians.

There is a need for an equally vibrant, countervailing movement in America’s judiciary to return to the business of securing the God-given rights of religious freedom envisioned by our Founders. Otherwise the rights of Christian free speech, worship, and assembly will eventually be destroyed.

Americans have a vital role to play in this drama. Federal judges are appointed by a president and confirmed by the Senate. Presidents and senators are elected. Although the economy and many other issues dominate the political landscape, let us not forget the critical issue of judges when we vote. As followers of Christ, we have no business simply wringing our hands or cursing the darkness. If we want, as the prophet Amos said, “justice [to] run down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream” (Amos 5:24), we should make our votes count.

ENDNOTES

3 Ibid.

Craig L. Parshall is senior vice president and general counsel for the National Religious Broadcasters.
Brits protest against Sharia law in London’s Hyde Park. The event, held several years ago, was organized by the Iran Solidarity movement, which stands with the people of Iran against the Islamic regime, and the One Law for All campaign against Sharia law in Britain (Teofil Rewers / Demotix / Corbis).
The professor entered the classroom feeling a bit of angst over yet another depressing report about how Americans weren’t standing to the mark on the economic, political, social, and educational facts of life as he saw them.

The professor’s take on the situation could be summed up in two words: ignorance and indifference. He then challenged his students by asking them what they felt could be done to remedy the condition. One quickly replied, “I don’t know, and I don’t care.”

The story, of course, is apocalyptic. A decade or so ago it was told as a joke to Americans who would not abide being accused of ignorance or indifference. Unfortunately, that was then; and this is now. And though I could cite a host of illustrations, I’ll confine myself to only a few that bear potentially devastating consequences for us all unless we are shaken back to the real world and its real problems.

In September 2010, a video was smuggled out of Pakistan. It documented the public stoning to death of a Muslim woman by members of the Taliban. Her crime was walking with a man, presumably not her husband. Her demise was excruciatingly prolonged as, one by one, her executioners meted out “justice” under Islamic Sharia law, which they interpret as sacrosanct to their religion. This is the same judicial mindset that justifies murdering Christian converts from Islam (see “They Cry in Silence,” page 13) and conducts “honor killings” in the United States and Europe, as well as in Muslim countries.

The periodic slaughter of Christians in Nigeria and other African nations passes with little notice, making one wonder why such atrocities are being ignored. To make matters worse, Sharia law, which advocates such brutality, is being promoted in non-Muslim countries as an acceptable legal alternative or adjunct for Muslim immigrants.

Unblissful Ignorance

It seems the ignorance-is-bliss formula is being used as a convenient escape mechanism by people who wish to avoid unpleasant facts of life. In reality, however, ignorance is never a solution. It only postpones dealing with the problem until the ugly consequences take over to make disaster imminent. Pleading ignorance is never a way out. If you need a practical illustration, try telling a police officer he should not ticket you for speeding because you were ignorant of the speed limit.

Biblically, the warning signs are clear and serious. Addressing the matter of the suffering and persecuted, Proverbs 24 says, "Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, "Surely we did not know this," does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds? (vv.11–12).

How many times must people see the obvious before they give even a tepid response? Calculated, self-imposed ignorance seems to be the fashion, both inside and outside the Christian community.

Immobilizing Indifference

The apathy inherent in self-induced mental and moral impotence has an even more serious side: Knowing the facts—assenting to the issue’s legitimacy—and then choosing to ignore them is even more pernicious. Yet we witness this attitude repeatedly in some evangelical Christian circles, particularly in the mystifying refusal to teach the whole counsel of God as it has been given to us in His Word. It is astonishing that some of our leaders say, in effect, “Although we believe the prophetic aspects of Scriptural revelation, we avoid teaching on end-times events in favor of a more suitable, life-related approach.”

Given the fact that the world is coming apart around us and the only reliable source of truth concerning what’s happening, where we are going, and our hope for the future is in God’s Word, indifference to the truth of prophecy is a spiritually indictable offense. We are not at liberty to excise major portions of divine revelation because we prefer something more upbeat and palatable. That is one of the most egregious errors of Replacement Theology: It obliterates indispensable portions of Scripture by declaring Israel nationally dead in favor of a superimposed formula declaring the church to be spiritual Israel.

Americans are now soberly asking themselves if there is a future for this country or if it will morph into something repressive and unrecognizable. Without the Bible’s chart for the future, there is a void. With the Bible, that void is filled by the visibly unfolding promises of God. To be indifferent to communicating such immutable truths is not an option.

The Heart of the Matter

What sets pure Christianity apart as a peerless faith of hope that believers, for more than 2,000 years, have been willing to give their lives for? And why would its enemies relentlessly attempt to exterminate people who would do them no harm? One answer is that our faith is incomparable. No amount of envy or animosity can destroy or diminish its appeal and attraction to heart-hungry, world-weary souls. Moreover, no death-sentence threats or roving hit squads are needed to keep believers in Jesus in the fold.

Consider Jesus’ ministry to the woman taken in adultery in John 8.
Zealous Pharisees and scribes condemned her and demanded she be stoned. But Jesus dispersed them, saying if there was one among them who was so devoid of sin, he could cast the first stone:

Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more” (vv. 9–11).

There was no circle of scowling executioners stoning the poor woman to death that day. Before Jesus, she found grace and mercy with the admonition to be pure.

As we remember the resurrection of our Lord from the dead this time of year, we might well recall that it was Mary Magdalene, a formerly demon-possessed woman delivered from a notorious past, who was first to meet the risen Savior outside the empty tomb. Yes, there really is a difference between Christianity and other faiths. And we cannot be ignorant or indifferent to it because it is a difference that changes lives.

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The Jewish population in Judea and Samaria (West Bank) soared to 342,414 in 2011 and probably will pass 350,000 this year. The figure exceeds the 300,000 estimate of most news agencies. There are also an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 Jewish people in Jerusalem neighborhoods claimed by the Palestinian Authority for its desired new country within Israel’s borders.

Elwood McQuaid is consulting editor for The Friends of Israel.

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A Look at the Persecution of Christians Around the World

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

W when this column first appeared in our May/June 2001 issue, it was intended to inform our readers about persecution of the brethren in faraway places. Living in the West tends to isolate believers from the body of Christ’s terrible suffering elsewhere, particularly in Muslim-majority countries where Christians are being ruthlessly murdered for their faith in Christ.

This column is a little different. This incident occurred in St. Louis, Missouri, and should convince even the most naive that Sharia law and religious freedom cannot coexist.

Author and poet Alaa Alsaegh, an Iraqi immigrant and convert to Christianity from Islam, was driving in heavy traffic in broad daylight in St. Louis when another car suddenly cut him off. A second car stopped behind him, trapping him. Three Muslims emerged, entered Alsaegh’s vehicle, shoved him against the steering wheel, and stabbed him. Then they carved a huge Star of David into his back, all the while laughing at him and reciting his pro-Jewish poem, “Cries From the Heart of the Holocaust.”

The Arabic poem, posted on Nonie Darwish’s website ArabsForIsrael.com, “expressed its Arab author’s love for the Jewish people and his mourning over what happened to them in the Holocaust,” Ms. Darwish wrote in FrontPageMag.com.1 Because of his love for Israel, Mr. Alsaegh received death threats in Missouri and was branded a traitor and infidel.

The FBI considers the incident a hate crime. But to date we have seen nothing indicating the attackers were apprehended. Even in the United States, Islam tolerates nothing but devotion to Islam.

Raymond Ibrahim, with the David Horowitz Freedom Center and Middle East Forum, reported, MEMRI*, for instance, recently published a report titled “The Sheikh of Al Azhar in an Exceptionally Tolerant Article: Christianity, Judaism Share Basic Tenets of Islam.” Of course, the day after this report appeared, this same sheikh—Islam’s most authoritative figure—insisted that the American ambassador wear a hijab when meeting him: just as Muslim “radicals” compel Christian girls to wear the hijab, “moderate” Al Azhar compels U.S. diplomats.

Wrote Ibrahim, “The persecution of Christians in the Islamic world is on its way to reaching epidemic proportions.” In Egypt, “A Christian student was strangled and beaten to death by his Muslim teacher and fellow students for refusing to cover his cross. When the headmaster was informed of the attack in progress, he ignored it and ‘continued to sip his tea.’”

In Somalia, a 17-year-old was decapitated for converting to Christianity the previous week. And in Pakistan, “A Christian mother of four was slaughtered by a Muslim colleague in Pakistan after she resisted his attempt to rape her at the factory where they worked.”

Such is the world of Islam. Wrote Ms. Darwish, “Crimes done by Muslims against other Muslims who are considered apostates should alert the American public of what is coming to American streets if Muslims start increasing in numbers. The dirty little secret of Islamic hate and intolerance is clear, . . . and no one in the media cares to expose it and alert the American public.”

ENDNOTES

4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Darwish.
It's amazing what can be accomplished if one doesn't care who gets the credit," says Dr. Howard Hendricks, longtime professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. That statement could well have served as the epitaph on the tombstone of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah prophesied both judgment and deliverance for Jerusalem and Judah, with no thought of himself. Arguably, he was the greatest prophet in history after Moses; yet, amazingly, little is known about the individual behind this impressive ministry.
The Person

Isaiah identified himself only as “Isaiah the son of Amoz” (Isa. 1:1). There are 12 other such references, including three in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. Amoz is never identified, described, or even mentioned apart from this statement. Though some have suggested Isaiah may have been of priestly lineage, nothing in the Bible supports that view. Isaiah means “salvation is of Yahweh” or “Yahweh is salvation.” His name is probably significant, but it is never explained or elaborated on.

The only other autobiographical information concerns Isaiah’s family and is provided in conjunction with his ministry to Judean King Ahaz. When Judah was threatened by the Samaria-Syria Alliance (Isa. 7—12), the Lord instructed Isaiah, “Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub your son” (7:3). God then gave stubborn Ahaz a sign:

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings (vv. 14—16).

Isaiah said his second son was the near-view fulfillment of this prophecy for Ahaz:

Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the Lord said to me, “Call his name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz; for before the child shall have knowledge to cry ‘My father’ and ‘My mother,’ the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria (8:3—4).

Isaiah called his wife a prophetess, making her one of only four women so positively labeled in the entire Old Testament. His home appeared to have been a godly one.

His ministry and writing reveal additional characteristics. His ministry spanned 60 years, from the end of King Uzziah’s reign through Jotham, Ahaz, and all of Hezekiah’s reign; and Isaiah appeared comfortable moving in and out of the presence of these kings.

Many Old Testament scholars note his rich vocabulary. H. C. Leupold wrote, “Hardly anyone would question the claim that Isaiah is a prince among prophets. His eloquence is very evident. . . . He has at his command a vocabulary richer than that of any prophet, even more comprehensive than that of the Book of Psalms.”

Certainly not a shepherd like the prophet Amos, and likely not a priest like Ezekiel, Isaiah was a prophet of the princes and a prince of the prophets. His writing gives the impression that he moved with grace through the culture of his day. He spoke forcefully and specifically to the international issues of his time, even looking far ahead to the judgment of Babylon and the rise of Cyrus of Persia.

But personal holiness in the midst of a spiritually declining culture often comes with personal and professional loneliness.

The Place

The glory days of Kings David and Solomon were 200 years in the past. The southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel had coexisted reasonably well. Israel consistently resisted a genuine relationship with Yahweh, while Judah vacillated between good and bad kings. The good kings provided positive spiritual encouragement, though they did not rise to the level of their father David.

Isaiah was sent to a nation whose faith had become jaded. Amaziah, who reigned 29 years, is described as a good king who “did what was right in the sight of the LORD, yet not like his father David; he did everything as his father Joash had done. However the high places were not taken away, and the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places” (2 Ki. 14:3—4). Uzziah (also called Azariah), who reigned 52 years, and Jotham (reigned 16 years) are described with nearly identical words (15:3—4, 34—35).

Then came Ahaz who reigned 16 years:

He did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord his God, as his father David had done. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel; indeed he made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out from before the children of Israel (16:2—3).

By contrast, Hezekiah, probably due in part to Isaiah’s godly ministry, was a righteous king:

He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him (18:3—5).

These were prosperous times for Judah. The Lord blessed Judah’s kings when they ordered their ways before Him, but He chastised them when their pride turned them away.

Each cycle of chastisement and blessing seems to have produced a cumulative downward spiral in the nation’s spiritual health. Personal comfort often produces spiritual carelessness. Sin, even after it is forgiven, leaves lasting consequences on everyone it has touched.

The Preaching

After receiving a personal vision of the Lord’s glory, Isaiah was sent to proclaim God’s judgment on his people. Sadly, God warned him that their hearts would be “insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim” (Isa. 6:10 NASB). When the prophet asked, “Lord, how long?” God replied, “Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate” (v. 11).

Isaiah’s prophecy has two distinct parts. Chapters 1 through 39 focus
primarily on God’s impending judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (also on the surrounding nations, notably Babylon some 200 years in the future). Throughout these messages, Isaiah reminded his people that deliverance was available at the sovereign hand of their God. The first half ends with the detailed account of Hezekiah’s prayer that God would hallow His name, which Assyrian official Sennacherib was belittling, and that God would remove Jerusalem’s chastening:

Therefore please hear this, you afflicted, and drunk but not with wine. Thus says your Lord, the LORD and your God, who pleads the cause of His people: “See, I have taken out of your hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup of My fury; you shall no longer drink it” (51:21–22).

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying (65:17–19).

God’s warnings to His people are always buffered with words of hope, and His promises of deliverance are usually sobered with reminders of chastening. Isaiah prophesied both judgment and deliverance for Jerusalem and Judah with no thought (and hardly any mention) of himself. The result is the majestic presentation of Yahweh’s glory and His promise to glorify His people through the future Servant’s Kingdom.

ENDNOTE


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Not long ago an amazing discovery was made near Tel Megiddo in northern Israel. It was a Greek dedicatory inscription found in the remains of a third-century church. The inscription read, “The God-loving Akeptous [the name of a woman] has offered the table [possibly a communion table] to God Jesus Christ as a memorial.”

The words God Jesus Christ reveal how early Christians—made up of believing Jews and Gentiles—viewed Jesus even before the Nicene Council of A.D. 325, which upheld that God is a Trinity. Approximately 1,000 years earlier, the Jewish prophet Isaiah had alluded to the same thing (Isa. 48:16).

So many of Isaiah’s prophecies, in fact, focused on mankind’s sinfulness and a coming, divine Redeemer that Isaiah often is referred to as the Bible’s first evangelist; and the book of Isaiah often is called “The Book of Salvation.”
Dr. Victor Buksbazen, whose commentary on Isaiah is the definitive work on the subject, wrote, In Isaiah Biblical prophecy reached its inspired climax. What Demosthenes was to Greek oratory, Isaiah was to Hebrew prophecy. He was God's voice to Israel, the conscience of the nation, the herald of the Messiah and of His universal Kingdom. . . . For many centuries Isaiah has been known as "the Old Testament evangelist" and his prophecies have been described as "the Gospel according to Isaiah." The prophet Isaiah was more often on the lips of our Lord and of His apostles than any other prophet.1

Proclaimer of the Messiah

Jesus read from Isaiah when He was at the synagogue in Nazareth. "As His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read" (Lk. 4:16):

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel [good tidings] to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (vv. 18–19; cf. Isa. 61:1–2).

He then handed the scroll back to the attendant and sat down. With all eyes fixed on Him, He declared, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk. 4:21). Jesus was telling them He was the divine Servant, the "Anointed One" (Hebrew, Moshiach) about whom Isaiah spoke.

Wrote Buksbazen, "Jewish commentators apply these words to the prophet himself. But no prophet ever spoke of himself in this manner. . . . The mission described in verses 1–3 is of such a sweeping nature that only God Himself is able to perform it."2

The book of Isaiah contains many direct and indirect references to the Messiah, calling Him "the Branch of the Lord" (4:2), the "Rod from the stem of Jesse" (11:1), “[God’s] Servant” (42:1), and “[God’s] Elect One in whom My soul delights” (v. 1).

It declares Him to be the rightful heir to the throne of David (9:7; cf. Lk. 1:32–33) and says He will authenticate His Messiahsip by healing the blind, deaf, and lame (Isa. 29:18; 35:5–6; cf. Mt. 11:3–5; Lk. 7:22). He also will establish a New Covenant (Isa. 55:3–4; cf. Lk. 22:20) and will someday establish a literal, Messianic Kingdom over which He will reign and in which He will be worshiped (Isa. 9:7; 66:22–23; cf. Lk. 1:32–33; 22:18, 29–30; Jn. 18:36).

Isaiah's One and Only Savior

The people of Israel viewed God as their Savior (Isa. 43:3; 45:15, 21). The experiences of the Exodus and their desert wanderings convinced them only God could save. Under inspiration, Isaiah prophesied of a Redeemer who would come into this world as a babe: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and His Name is called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (9:6). Wrote Buksbazen, His birth as a child indicates His humanity. That He is given "unto us" (lanu) as a son, emphasizes the fact that He is God’s gift to His people. His supernatural character is further indicated by the fact that . . . in a peculiar way God has entrusted to Him the rule over His people. . . . The peculiar double-membered four names given to the child underline His divine character.3

Buksbazen also said Jewish commentators did not dispute the Messianic nature of the prophecy “until modern times, when the Christological controversy became very heated.”4 In fact, Targum Jonathan, a first-century Aramaic translation and commentary of the Hebrew Bible, paraphrased Isaiah 9:6 this way: For to us a Son is born, to us a Son is given: and He shall receive the Law upon Him to keep it; and His Name is called from of old, Wonderful, Counselor, Eloha [God on High], The Mighty, Abiding to Eternity, The Messiah, because peace shall be multiplied upon us in His days.

This rabbinc view agrees with the prophet Isaiah, that the Son who is “born” and “given” is God.

Anyone who knew and understood Isaiah’s prophecy must have rejoiced when they learned what the angel told the shepherds in Bethlehem: “For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Lk. 2:11). The divine Messiah had come, and He would redeem His people.

ENDNOTES

2 Ibid., 163.
3 Ibid.

Peter Colón is the creative resource coordinator for The Friends of Israel.
by David M. Levy

Isaiah Sees Israel’s Future

Clockwise from left: Man dressed like ancient prophet (Erik Stenbakkken/Goodsalt). Passover celebration at the Western Wall, Jerusalem (Arkady Mazor/istockphoto). Annual Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) parade in Jerusalem (Baz Ratner/Reuters/Corbis).
Isaiah’s prophetic vision of Israel’s future was written during the reign of four kings over a span of 60 years. The prophet wrote a detailed revelation of Israel’s sinfulness, judgment, exile, and restoration and spoke extensively of Israel’s Messiah, salvation, and Kingdom blessings.

Isaiah expressed God’s love for Israel in a parabolic lyric, comparing the nation to a beloved vineyard that God created and placed on a fruitful hill. The garden was cultivated, cleared of all stones, and planted with the choicest of vines. In the vineyard was a winepress for processing the grapes and a watchtower for protection. Israel was expected to produce good grapes, symbolic of godliness. Instead, it produced wild grapes, symbolic of its idolatry, social and political injustice, and gross immorality (Isa. 5:1–7).

God reasoned with Israel to repent of its wickedness and return to Him in righteousness, whereby it would be rewarded with agricultural prosperity and national security. Israel rejected God’s request, so the Lord punished the nation and sent it into exile (1:11–20; cf. Lev. 26; Dt. 28:15–68). However, throughout Israel’s judgment and exile, the nation remained God’s chosen servant (Isa. 41:8–9; 42:20–21).

The book of Isaiah expresses God’s deep love for Israel using vivid metaphors. God is portrayed as Israel’s husband (54:5–8) and shepherd (40:11); He shows compassion for Israel like a mother for her child (49:15); He has engraved Israel’s name on the palms of His hands (v. 16); and He shows pity to the nation, eventually bringing redemption to a remnant (63:9).

The remnant that survives judgment becomes seed for the nation’s future restoration (6:12–13). Israel’s restoration and return from the Babylonian Exile is a picture of its final, future redemption and restoration to its Promised Land at the Messiah’s Second Coming.

That restoration is detailed in chapters 40 through 66, which is divided into three sections of eight chapters each (40—48; 49—57; 58—66). Two sections conclude with “There is no peace . . . for the wicked” (48:22; 57:21); and the last section describes the destiny of the wicked (66:24). In these chapters, God foretells Israel’s repentance and redemption and the renewal of its covenant relationship through the Messiah.

Israel’s Messiah

Israel’s relationship with its Messiah is central to the prophet’s vision of the nation’s future. In numerous passages, Isaiah identified the Messiah as the Servant of Jehovah (chaps. 42; 49). The New Testament clearly validates that Jesus Christ fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecies.

Isaiah also revealed the Messiah is a God-Man (9:6). He is virgin-born (7:14), a descendant of Jesse and King David (11:1, 10), and the Suffering Servant who gave His life to provide redemption for both Jews and Gentiles (53:1–12) through the blood of the New Covenant (49:7–8).

In chapter 54, Israel is presented as Jehovah’s barren, desolate wife who will eventually be brought into covenant renewal with Him. An urgent call goes out to Israel, inviting the nation to renew its covenant relationship with the Lord, as David did. If Israel seeks the Lord, it will find Him (55:6–13). During both His First and Second Advents, the Messiah’s ministry is both Holy Spirit-filled and directed (42:1; 61:1–2; cf. Lk. 4:18).

At the end of the Great Tribulation, a remnant of Jewish people will cry out in repentance to God, praying that He spare them from annihilation (Isa. 64:1–12). The Messiah will answer them and arrive as a conquering King in the day of vengeance to judge the city of Bozrah in Edom—a nation He greatly despises for its persecution of Israel (cf. Obad.). Then He will save the remnant of Israel, treading over its enemies as one treads grapes in a winepress. His garments are described as red because they will be splattered with the blood of Edom, where Jewish people will hide from the Antichrist’s wrath during the Great Tribulation (Isa. 63:1–6; cf. Rev. 19:13, 15).

Israel in the Millennium

Israel will be delivered from its enemies at the Messiah’s Second Coming, after which will be a golden age of peace, prosperity, and plenty. In theological terms, this is the Millennium. The word millennium means “thousand years” and refers to the 1,000-year reign of Messiah Jesus in Israel.

Isaiah revealed that Israel will be gathered and restored to the land after the Messiah’s return. Jerusalem will be rebuilt to a greater glory than it has ever known throughout its long history (Isa. 2:2; 11:11). Previously called Forsaken and Desolate, it will be renamed Hephzibah (“My delight is in her”) and Beulah (“Married”). God has promised by an oath to restore Jerusalem and set a watchman within the city as a continual reminder of His promise. A highway will be prepared for the people to return to Israel during the Millennium (62:4–7, 10).

Israel will be changed in eight ways:

1. Peace will flow from Israel to the entire world (2:4; 26:12; 66:12).
2. Personal and political justice will emanate from the Messiah’s righteous rule (11:3–5).
3. Psychological changes will be manifest in Israel as weeping is abolished and replaced with rejoicing (30:19; 65:18–19).
4. Physical changes will abound as life is prolonged (65:20), sickness abolished (33:24), infant death eliminated (65:23), and those entering the Millennium are physically healed (35:5–6).
5. Protection from invading Gentile nations will not be needed (65:21–22).
6. Productivity in Israel will be unprecedented (vv. 21–22), and the desert will become fertile (35:1–2).
7. Prayers will be answered before being uttered or while the person is speaking (65:24).

continued on page 30
JUDAH AND JERUSALEM (1—12)
Condemns Judah and Jerusalem’s extreme ungratefulness and moral debauchery.

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit” (14:12–15).

ISRAEL’S NEIGHBORS (13—23)
Condemns Moab, Babylon, Philistia, Egypt, and Assyria; reveals Satan’s desire to be God and prophesies his downfall.

“Apoocalyptic Prophecy
Reveals future, universal judgment and a refuge in a time of storm; a ‘holy mount at Jerusalem’” (27:1–14).

END OF BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY PROPHESIED (40—48)
Names Cyrus, king of Persia, as God’s instrument to let the Jewish people return home to Israel.

“Come, comfort My people!” says your God. “Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins”’ (40:1–2).

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD
Speaks of the Messiah, the suffering servant for the sins of Israel.

“Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He is exalted and increased above all men, and set for the transgression of many nations; in His name shall the Gentiles hope” (49:6).

“‘As one whom his mother bore, so was He the least among His brethren;’ and the servant of the Lord was obedient unto the will of the Lord” (48:13).

“Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings: I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me”’ (45:1; 4).

“‘For behold, the Lord cometh forth out of Sidon, and He cometh out of Egypt; and His glory shall cover the Baalbek, and His glory shall be upon Migdol; and He shall rest upon his sanctuary, as the days of old, even from ancient times; and all the Gentiles shall go up to the mountains of the Lord, and to the hill of the assemblies, to do sacrifice to the LORD, and to swear to the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. He shall reign in strength from sea to sea, and from the river of Egypt to the utmost sea’” (47:10–12).

“The lion has come up from its lair, and the wolf will not lie down; they will lie down together, and rise up and never be disturbed. ‘The calf and the lion shall lie down together, the little lamb shall rest with the lion; the child shall lead the blind, the lame shall leap over a wall, the weakling’s rod shall be the staff of his oppressor. ‘The wolf will eat what the lamb eats, and the serpent shall eat dust. They shall not hurt or destroy on all My holy mountain,’ says the Lord” (11:6–8).
OF ISAIAH

Prophecies (24—27)
Foretells Israel’s captivity; warns Jerusalem; beckons the Israelites to repent and be healed.

Woes (28—35)
Foretells Israel’s captivity; warns Jerusalem; beckons the Israelites to repent and be healed.

Historical Events (36—39)
Records Assyria’s siege of Jerusalem; King Hezekiah’s prayer, illness, recovery, and folly; foretells the Babylonian Captivity.

God comes out of His place to of the earth for their iniquity; disclose her blood, and will n” (26:21). gathered one by one, 0 you shall be in that day: The great eye will come, who are about to ria, and they who are outcasts shall worship the LORD in the “(27:12–13).

“Woe to the rebellious children,” says the LORD, ‘who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who walk to go down to Egypt, and have not asked My advice” (30:1–2).

“Return to Him against whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. For in that day every man shall throw away his idols of silver and his idols of gold—sin, which your own hands have made for yourselves” (31:6–7).

The Lord (49—57)
Foretells Israel will become a blessing to the world and Jerusalem will spiritually lead all nations, as Messiah rules the world.

The Messianic Kingdom (58—66)
Reveals Israel will become a blessing to the world and Jerusalem will spiritually lead all nations, as Messiah rules the world.

You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD delights in you” (62:4).

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind” (65:17).

“It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer. . . . The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,” says the LORD” (vv. 24–25).

Resource, NY. Bottom row, left to right: Mausoleum of Cyrus the Great, King of Persia (Gianni Dagli Orti/The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY); Crown of thorns (Walter Homan/FOI Image Archive); Depiction of Millennial Temple (Stan Stein/FOI Image Archive). by Thomas C. Simcox
The Great Solution: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

On Easter Sunday we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What a great day it is for believers to rejoice together. The world doesn’t comprehend it, and that’s a pity because the resurrection solves humanity’s three greatest problems: spiritual death, physical death, and life without hope.

Life in Christ

Everyone has problems, difficulties, and hardships. But few understand their true source. The apostle Paul put it this way:

And you . . . were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, . . . among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others (Eph. 2:1–3).

All of us were born with an old nature, rendering us spiritually dead—cut off from God. We may think we’re free, but we’re trapped in sin. Some people realize that fact when they come face-to-face with God’s Word and find the answers they’ve been looking for.

When we receive the gift of spiritual life, we are set free: “God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” (vv. 4–5).

Jesus’ resurrection makes it possible for you and me to receive the gift of spiritual life through God’s grace, which reaches down to us and restores our relationship with Him, providing forgiveness of sin: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (vv. 8–9).
Everyone can receive this gift. And I’m glad it is a gift because without it, the only way we can pay for our sins is to die for them ourselves. We must receive Christ as our Savior. He is God’s solution. Our sins were placed on Jesus. He died in our stead that we might receive the gift of eternal life through God’s grace. Jesus Himself said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (Jn. 5:24).

John Newton’s life was transformed when he discovered God’s grace. The British captain of a slave-trading ship, Newton came to understand his sinfulness and need of a Savior. After his conversion in 1748, he wrote the timeless hymn “Amazing Grace,” celebrating what God had done for him.

Resurrection Life

The second problem everyone shares is physical death. We all will die. Not a single individual on this planet will escape death unless Jesus returns first.

Spiritual death begot physical death: “Through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). The day Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, he died spiritually (Gen. 2:17). That death ushered in physical death. In Adam, all die. Physical death, in fact, is proof of spiritual death—that we are all born alienated from God.

Correcting the problem of spiritual death does not reverse physical death. We still have funerals, mortuaries, and graveyards. So what fixes mankind’s problem of physical death? “For if by the one man’s [Adam’s] offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17).

Because of Jesus’ resurrection, God can now give us the gift of resurrection life. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). That’s the promise and hope Jesus provides: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (Jn. 11:25).

Are you going to die? Yes. But if you have received Jesus as your Savior, you will live again in a place of blessing. The resurrection is our future because of Him.

There were people who were resurrected during Christ’s time on Earth. But they all died again. Jesus is the first one to die physically and be resurrected in a glorified resurrection body. He is the firstfruits, and believers will follow in His steps:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming (1 Cor. 15:20–23).

The operative phrase here is in Christ. If you have received the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, you have been granted spiritual life for today and resurrection life for eternity. There is no need to fear physical death. Jesus came to deliver those who live in fear of death all their lives (Heb. 2:9). If we have accepted Jesus as our final, perfect sacrifice for sin, our bodies will exit the graves, and we’ll live wondrously for eternity. It is Jesus’ resurrection that provides such life.

Life Abundant and Free

Many people lead unfulfilled lives, with no real purpose. Those who live merely to satisfy their own desires often feel empty. As King Solomon wrote, “I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, . . . and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind” (Ecc. 2:10–11). Paul described the situation spiritually:

For we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter (Rom. 7:5–6).

Jesus’ resurrection solves the problem of hopelessness. People who live with no eternal purpose often ask themselves, “What’s the meaning of life?”

On the other hand, if you have Christ as your Savior, you’ve been given a new life that you can live for Him. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17).

“We were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

If we are “in Christ,” we have newness of life because we have been identified with Him in His death and resurrection. God wants us to live abundantly and enjoy a life full of purpose: “I have come that [you] may have life, and that [you] may have it more abundantly” (Jn. 10:10).

Someday we’ll all stand before Jesus, and He will scrutinize our deeds. What we did through our own efforts apart from God’s directives, will be destroyed. But what we did for Him will last forever (1 Cor. 3:12, 14). Jesus’ resurrection has made it possible for us to have joy and fulfillment in the here-and-now and then to live beyond the grave.

Oh, friend, if you could only understand that the joy of living is in dying to yourself, as Jesus did. And when you die to yourself and give to others, God showers you with joy and fulfillment despite the heartaches that everyday life can often bring. But first you must acknowledge that you are a sinner and accept Him as your Savior. Then you’ll have heaven to look forward to and purpose while you’re here on Earth.

Don’t waste your life. Jesus’ resurrection makes it precious. Receive Him as your Savior, and who knows what great things God may accomplish through you.

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The 19th century saw the rise of higher criticism, which to this day rejects the idea that the Bible is historically true as written. In addition, higher critics doubt that any portion of the Bible contains predictive prophecy. In their minds, the ancient prophets made no predictions ahead of time that later came true. In essence, they deny supernaturalism.

A favorite target of higher critics is the Old Testament book of Isaiah. As far as they are concerned, the book has no real unity and can be divided into two or three parts, each written by a different author (with possible editors) who lived in different time periods. The notion that there was a lone, eighth-century B.C. prophet named Isaiah
whom God inspired to give us the entire book is, according to the higher critics, a dishonest presentation.

**The Assertions**

Following a commonly proposed threefold scheme, higher critics divide Isaiah’s 66 chapters into the following sections:

- First Isaiah: chapters 1—39
- Second Isaiah: chapters 40—55
- Third Isaiah: chapters 56—66

In this scenario, Second Isaiah is written during or perhaps after the Babylonian Captivity. The prophet Isaiah has been dead for a century and a half when this part is produced. Third Isaiah is fashioned much later, even close to the time of Jesus. A critic who summarized the entire view characterized the three sections as “presumably originating in the public proclamation of three discretely inspired individuals or schools, spanning a period of several centuries, if not more—right up to the Christian era itself.”

A twofold view is also widely held, for which Second Isaiah, commonly called deutero-Isaiah, covers chapters 40 through 66. Both approaches deny the supernatural character of a divinely produced and historically accurate book.

What are the reasons the higher critics give for their views? In general, they highlight differences throughout the 66 chapters to make a case for their position. In particular, they say the divergence of themes and topics in the arrangement of the book destroys the concept of unity and authorship. For example, they point out that various subjects in Isaiah span several centuries. Consequently, they advocate that no one author could write material to cover such a wide range of events and conditions; several authors and editors would be needed.

So the critics argue that, though a person named Isaiah may have written chapters 1—39, he would not have known many of the details of Second Isaiah. They cite, for example, allusions to the Babylonian Captivity in chapters 40—43, the reference to Medo-Persian ruler Cyrus in 44:28, and the fact that Isaiah’s name is not mentioned in the later chapters.

**Evidence to the Contrary**

Despite such claims, Bible believers possess many compelling arguments to reject the higher critics’ assertions about the book of Isaiah. Oswald T. Allis gave the general sentiment rather forcefully:

*Only those who are unfamiliar with the statements of the Bible itself will be impressed by the oft-repeated claim of the critics that their theory regarding prophecy is based on a careful, objective, and scientific study of the Biblical data. When the Biblical witnesses are allowed to testify and their testimony, as recorded in the Bible, is accepted as trustworthy, the result is very different. It is in fact a complete exposure of the falsity of the claims of the critics.*

The higher critics’ so-called scientific study leads them to conclude that one man would have been incapable of generating the variety offered in the various sections of the book. This position is somewhat surprising on the face of things. If Charles Dickens in the 19th century could write a multilayered novel with astonishing intricacies, why would it have been impossible for Isaiah to present variety and diversity?

Higher critics tend to reject the book because, in many places, it predicts the future. Yet many of the predictions have already been fulfilled. Allis was right when he said the critics do not really present a scientific study of the Bible, as they claim. They simply assume that supernaturalism is impossible.

Also contradicting their views is manuscript evidence. There is no indication that the Septuagint (LXX), a Greek translation of the Old Testament dated 250 B.C. to 150 B.C., sees any part of the book of Isaiah as being written over time.

Similarly, the Great Isaiah Scroll (dated around 150 B.C.), part of the discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls, contains all 66 chapters of Isaiah. Interestingly, chapter 40, which higher critics say starts Second Isaiah, begins on the same scroll column as chapter 39. Isaiah 40:2 is split, with part of the text on the same column and the remainder continuing onto the next column of the scroll. Wrote Allis,

*The last words on the one column are “cry unto her [Jerusalem]”; and the first words on the next column are “that her warfare is accomplished.” Obviously the scribe was not conscious of the alleged fact that an important change of situation, involving an entire change of authorship begins with chapter 40.*

The entire book was viewed as a whole, with no evidence of different authors.

Another evidence of the book’s unity is the common themes or topics that flow throughout the entire work. In fact, they pose a problem for the higher critics. For example, Second Isaiah (starting in Isaiah 40) highlights Babylon, along with Judah’s future captivity and deliverance. This focus is one of the reasons higher critics developed the idea of a Second Isaiah. However, Babylon was introduced in chapter 39, where Judean King Hezekiah shows his treasures to the Babylonian officials, probably in the late eighth century.

More revealing, however, is Isaiah 13. Here the prophet looked down the corridor of time and saw the Medes overtaking the Babylonians, which did not happen until the end of the Babylonian Captivity, two centuries later. Thus, both First Isaiah and Second Isaiah see future Babylonian domination being brought down by the Median empire, with Second Isaiah actually citing the name of Medo-Persian ruler Cyrus (45:1).

Some higher critics say references to Babylon and the Medes in First Isaiah are simply “evidence of literary additions—at times sporadic, on other occasions more comprehensive—supplied by editors under the influence of Second Isaiah chapters.”

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ISRAEL MY GLORY 27
This phrase occurs 25 times consistently throughout Isaiah. It occurs 12 times in chapters 1—39, 11 times in chapters 40—55, and twice in chapters 56—66. The consistency forces the higher critics to see small pockets of editorial work to try to salvage their approach. On the other hand, the same consistency lends itself readily to the conclusion that one author wrote one harmonious book. Tracing other themes and topics in the book, such as that of child or land, leads to a similar conclusion.

For Christians, perhaps the strongest theological reason for accepting the unity and reliability of Isaiah is that the New Testament understands the book as being written by a single author. In one passage, the apostle John put together Isaiah 53:1 and Isaiah 6 (Jn. 12:38–41), citing both as from Isaiah. Jesus Himself read from

In other words, they claim editors later reworked the prophet’s earlier writings. However, the need to do this actually admits that the text as we have it possesses unity. It also demonstrates again the critics’ unfortunate assumption that the prophet could not predict the future.

A second common thread of the book also shows its unity: the use of the divine designation Holy One of Israel.

Higher critics often point to differences within the book of Isaiah to prove their theory of multiple authors and time periods. However, many common themes run throughout the book and argue against such a conclusion. One such theme is that of son/child. Other Old Testament prophets who lived when critics say later sections of Isaiah were produced scarcely used the terms.

However, in Isaiah, the word son occurs 54 times. Around 20 of those simply describe a man as the son of his father (1:1; 2:1; 13:1). The most famous uses of son are in the prophecies traditionally understood as referring to the Messiah: “The virgin shall conceive and bear a Son” (7:14) and “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given” (9:6). Another Messianic passage describes the sin-bearing Messiah by saying, “So His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men” (52:14).

A passage referring to Lucifer, or Satan, calls him the “son of the morning” (14:12). Isaiah 19:11 refers to judgment on Egypt with this question for Pharaoh’s counselors: “How do you say to Pharaoh, ‘I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?’”

Several passages speak of the sons of Israel (45:11; 49:15, 17, 22; 60:4, 9) or the sons of Jerusalem (51:18, 20). Sometimes such passages speak of future deliverance for the nation, while others speak of future judgment. The sons of foreigners are also mentioned (56:3, 6; 60:10; 61:5; 62:8). All in all, the term son recurs frequently in all sections of Isaiah.

In some of the same passages, the word child is coupled with the word son (9:6; 49:15). The use of the terms child, children, and offspring is even more telling in showing Isaiah’s unity. Early in the book, Israel is described in national and spiritual restoration, when the Messiah will rule and the Jewish people will be in the land (chap. 11). At that time, the earth will enjoy many changes, highlighted by the prediction, “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb” (11:6). In that Kingdom era, “a little child shall lead them [the animals]” (v. 6) and the “nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole” (v. 8).

Near the end of Isaiah, a similar prophecy says Israel will one day enjoy its land: “They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. . . . They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble” (65:21, 23).

Then it is restated that “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together” (v. 25). This theme stands almost as bookends for the entire book of Isaiah, revealing a common thread from the earliest to the latest sections. Such wording cannot be written off as the mere use of common cultural terms across time. The prophet Zechariah, for example, who lived during the time that critics say later sections of Isaiah were produced, scarcely used the terms son and child.

Another common scriptural image in Isaiah is that of a pregnant woman or one nursing a child (26:17–18; 49:15; 54:1). This image runs throughout sections that higher critics often claim were written by different authors. The abundance of such similar threads unifies the book and strongly supports the belief that it was written by a single author whose name was Isaiah.

by Michael D. Stallard
Isaiah 61:1–2, a section higher critics deny Isaiah wrote (Lk. 4:17–21). But both John and Jesus saw the passages as predictions by Isaiah.

With such strong testimony, followers of Christ can be assured of the divinely provided unity and historical reliability of the book of Isaiah.

ENDNOTES


Imagine a clay pot complaining about the potter who created it! The thought is absurd. The lump of clay is nothing. In fact, it’s completely worthless until the potter skillfully molds it into whatever he desires.

In biblical imagery, the potter usually refers to God, and the clay to mankind. Yet people always complain about God. In fact, many deny He even exists. Here’s what the prophet Isaiah had to say on the subject:

Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth!
Shall the clay say to him who forms it, “What are you making?” Or shall your handiwork say, “He has no hands?” (Isa. 45:9).

How strange that people today tell the Potter what He should do or how He should think. More ridiculous still is the “clay” denying the Potter even has hands. Yet the world is filled with people who claim God does not exist.

“Woe” to them, Isaiah said of such folly. “Surely you have things turned around!” (29:16). People who presume to dictate to God or deny His existence don’t know their true standing in life. They have foolishly tried to put themselves in God’s place:

Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; for shall the thing made say of him who made it, “He did not make me”? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, “He has no understanding”? (v. 16).

A potter shapes the soft clay with his hands into any shape he desires. As Isaiah declared, “But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand” (64:8). God is sovereign. He does as He wishes. He creates and shapes each individual for His own purposes (Jer. 18:6; Rom. 9:20–21). It is up to us to do His will—not the other way around.

by Peter Colón
Israel, Egypt, and Assyria will be God’s chosen people in that day: “Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance” (Isa. 19:25).

Israel’s Ministry

In the Millennium, Israel will be priests of the Lord and servants of God. Israel’s priestly capacity will be recognized and accepted around the world, and the priests and people of Israel will eat of the wealth of the nations (60:1–22; 61:6; cf. Zech. 8:23). In other words, Gentile nations will serve Israel and bring their wealth to build up the nation because Jehovah will have sanctified Israel and put His sanctuary in Jerusalem. What a great day of rejoicing this will be for Israel and the entire world.

“The expression ‘the Holy One of Israel’ occurs twelve times in the first part of Isaiah (1—39), and seventeen times in the second part (40—66). Chief rabbi Luzzato of Rome years ago made this observation: ‘The prophet as if with a presentiment that the authenticity of the second part of his book would be disputed, has stamped both parts of his book with the name of God “the Holy One of Israel,” as if with his own seal.’”

—Victor Buksbazen in The Prophet Isaiah

(8) Creation’s plight will be completely reversed, as the curse is removed and all animals live peacefully (11:6–9; 65:25).

In the Millennial Kingdom, peace will come to the Middle East. Hostilities between Israel, Assyria, and Egypt will be replaced by friendship because of their common faith in the Messiah (19:18–25). In fact, an international highway will run from Egypt through Israel and up to Assyria (v. 23). The word highway means a causeway or raised superhighway that will be visible to all, and it will provide unrestricted access from Egypt to Assyria.

In that day Egypt will have been converted (v. 20) and speak Hebrew, the language of “Canaan” (v. 18). The Messiah will be Egypt’s Savior, and there will be an “altar” for worship and “a pillar” identifying the Egyptians as accepted by the Lord (v. 19). They will bring sacrifices and offerings and make vows to the Lord in Egypt and worship at the Millennial Temple in Jerusalem (v. 21; Zech 14:16–19).

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

For the Love of Zion

Elwood McQuaid
After 25 years of faithful service to The Friends of Israel, Rev. William E. Sutter will retire May 1 as president and executive director. Bill’s retirement was announced recently by The Friends of Israel’s board of trustees. Bill said his decision to retire was “of the Lord and simply a part of God’s continued oversight and direction of FOI’s great and unique ministry.”

Board Chairman James P. MacLean said the trustees “accepted Mr. Sutter’s retirement with the highest commen-dation and thanks to him for his godly and capable service to the Lord and the FOI ministry; and, as a measure of the board’s esteem for him, he has been elected to continue service as a member of FOI’s board of trustees.”

Under Bill’s leadership, God has expanded the organization’s global outreach and forged a bond between The Friends of Israel and the Jewish community that is unprecedented in Christian work. His sincere love for Israel and the Jewish people, his strong stand against anti-Semitism, and his unwavering commitment to the truths of God’s Word have made him one of the most highly respected evangelical leaders to the Jewish community.

“Bill’s incredible impact on the ministry of FOI cannot be overstated,” said James A. Showers, FOI’s chief financial officer and executive vice president. “Bill is leaving an undeniable mark of great stewardship and wise leadership. It is the measure of this faithful servant of God.” The board of trustees has appointed Jim to succeed Bill as president and executive director.

Bill came to The Friends of Israel in 1987 as chief financial officer and its first director of finance, leaving his highly successful consulting practice where he served many Christian ministries. Later he was named executive vice president and chief operating officer. He became FOI’s fourth executive director in 2001 when Elwood McQuaid stepped down to devote more time to writing and to his positions as editor-in-chief of Israel My Glory and head of FOI’s radio broadcast ministry.

“Bill has demonstrated that loving Israel, the Jewish people, and the worldwide ministry of FOI was much, much more than a job to him,” said Elwood, who himself retired several years ago and is now consulting editor for The Friends of Israel. “It was a passion that has grown with the years. Bill’s unique association with Jewish leaders in Israel and the United States is a worthy legacy that can be claimed by a very few in Christian circles. It has been my distinct pleasure to serve with him, and my prayers go with him and Annette as they move into a new phase of their lives and service for Christ.”

Bill is a 1964 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business and holds a master of business administration degree from New York University. He also holds a master of divinity degree from Faith Theological Seminary and is an ordained minister.

As a testimony to Bill’s wise and skillful leadership, The Friends of Israel received certification as a best Christian workplace in 2009 by the Best Christian Workplaces Institute and was honored by the Christian Leadership Alliance for its “high level of trust between senior leadership and employees.” The Friends of Israel also has been a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability since 1989.

“Many times I’ve thought how it has been a privilege beyond belief to be vitally associated with such wonderful servants of the Lord at The Friends of Israel,” Bill said. “It is a ministry whose mission is unquestionably close to the heart of our Savior.”

Bill’s wife, Annette, retired last year from the School District of Philadelphia after 44 years of teaching.

All of us at FOI are sad to see Bill relinquish his responsibilities in the day-to-day operation of the organization, but we wish both him and Annette God’s peace and mercy in their retirement and thank him for his 25 years of service to the Lord through The Friends of Israel.
Who Is Like You, Eternal One?

Do you have trouble or heartache in your life? Does the world situation worry you? Then the book of Isaiah should be a great comfort because it makes clear there’s a God in heaven who is unique, sovereign, and has everything under control.

Every Shabbat, Jewish worshipers extol His uniqueness and sovereignty with the Hebrew prayer “Mi Khamokha.” It means “Who Is Like You?” and begins, “Who is like you,
Eternal One, among the gods worshiped? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders?"

He alone is sovereign. His very being is superlative. Excellent. Supreme. Autonomous. Paramount. Absolute. He rules over individuals and nations. He is over all the earth.

The theme of God’s sovereignty and grandeur pervades the book of Isaiah, which exalts “the Holy One of Israel” as Creator of all things and Ruler over heaven and earth. He “has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth” and “weighed the mountains in scales” (40:12).

He “sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers” (v. 22). He is “the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, [who] neither faints nor is weary” (v. 28).

It’s difficult to imagine someone could read Isaiah and not be awestruck by God’s incomparable majesty and power. Isaiah experienced these attributes firsthand, which may be why his prophecies project such a strong, imposing image of God as sovereign King:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; . . . And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!” (6:1–3).

Seeing this manifestation of the Lord made Isaiah so acutely aware of his own sinfulness that he trembled for his life: “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (v. 5). Yet God, ever merciful, purged Isaiah’s sin as soon as the prophet confessed his unworthiness (vv. 6–7).

World Events

He is also sovereign over nations and world events: “The nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales” to God (40:15). He establishes them and destroys them. He used the cruel, pagan Medes, calling them “My sanctified ones” (13:3), to inflict judgment on Babylon. He devastated Egypt with civil war (19:2), drought, and economic calamity (vv. 5–10); and yet, one day, in God’s sovereignty, Egypt will possess a blessed position in His Kingdom (vv. 21, 25).

God judged Assyria when the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers threatening Jerusalem (37:36). He imposed His sovereign rule on the Gentile nations of Philistia (chap. 14), Ethiopia (chap. 18), Moab (chaps. 15–16), Damascus (chap. 17), Edom (chap. 34), and Tyre (chap. 23). All are His subjects.

And He is ever watchful over Israel: I will not forget you [Zion]. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands (49:15–16). I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children (v. 25). With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you (54:8).

He alone is God. He is the King of Israel; the Redeemer; the Lord of hosts, who says of Himself, “I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God” (44:6).

The same sovereign God desires to bring comfort to His often wayward, disobedient children: “Comfort, yes, comfort My people! . . . Speak comfort to Jerusalem, . . . that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins (40:1–2).

In His sovereignty lies the promise and hope of salvation. More than 700 years before Jesus’ birth, Isaiah prophesied that God would send a unique sin-bearer, born of a virgin (7:14), who would be “exalted and extolled and be very high” (52:13). Yet He would be “wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities” (53:5). “The chastisement for our peace [would be] upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (v. 5).

Do you have troubles? Trust your life to the sovereign God. No one can help you like He can.

Steve Herzig is the director of North American Ministries for The Friends of Israel.
Most Replacement theologians use a particular set of verses to argue that God no longer views the Jewish people as His Chosen People and has replaced Israel with the church. But is that what the verses really mean? Scrutiny shows the fallacy of the Replacement interpretation.

**Paul’s Words**

**Romans 2:28–29.** Here Paul said, “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.” Replacement theologians use this passage to say the term Jew has been changed to include Gentile believers and that being a true Jew is not based on ethnicity but, rather, on an inward commitment to God. Thus they claim the passage proves God has redefined Israel to mean the church.

Their interpretation is based on the assertion that Paul included Gentiles when he spoke of him who “is a Jew.” However, these verses fall into the larger section of Romans 2:17—3:20 in which Paul’s subject is ethnic Israel. In Romans 2:28–29 Paul spoke exclusively of Jewish people. He was making the point that a true “Jew” is one who trusts in God through faith in Christ. These verses cannot teach that Gentiles are spiritual Jews because Gentiles were not even being discussed. Paul was simply distinguishing between Jewish people who believe in Jesus and Jewish people who do not.

**Romans 9:6.** Another text is Romans 9:6: “But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.” Replacement theologians claim Paul was distinguishing between ethnic Israel and spiritual Israel. They believe he taught that spiritual, or “true,” Israel is comprised of all believers, including Gentiles, and is made of those who are spiritually, not physically, related to Abraham.

However, as in the previous passage, Paul was not speaking of Gentiles. He was speaking exclusively of the Jewish people, teaching there is spiritual Israel inside of physical Israel; and he identified the believing Jewish remnant as true Israel. So not all of Jacob’s physical descendants will inherit God’s promises to Israel. Nevertheless, this verse does not say the church has replaced Israel or that God has rejected the Jewish people.

**Romans 11:26.** Here Paul said, “And so all Israel will be saved,” which is problematic for Replacement theologians. They are divided on this verse and offer differing interpretations. The most common are these:

1. “All Israel” refers to the elect, both Jewish and Gentile. However, the language in Romans 11:25 makes this view a difficult fit.
2. “All Israel” refers only to elect Jews and not to all Jewish people.
3. “All Israel” refers to a future time when a majority of Jewish people will embrace the Messiah.

None of these interpretations explains Paul’s argument in Romans 11. There are 10 other references to Israel in chapters 9 through 11, and each refers to physical Israel—the Jewish people. The obvious implication is that Romans 11:26 can only refer to physical Israel.

Taken in the context of the verses that precede it, the grammar argues for a sequence of events. In 11:25 Paul spoke of a period of Jewish spiritual blindness, when salvation is readily available to Gentiles. But there is a future time when all Israel will be saved (v. 26). So Paul’s teaching in Romans 11:26–27 links Israel’s national repentance with Old Testament promises of Israel’s restoration (Jer. 31—32; Ezek. 36; Zech. 12).

Through the apostle Paul, God clearly declares there is indeed a future for Israel, meaning the Jewish people. Not only does Romans 11:26 not teach Replacement Theology, but it teaches precisely the opposite.

**Peter’s Words**

1 Peter 2:9–10. The apostle Peter wrote, *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*

Replacement theologians say Peter used Old Testament descriptions of Israel to identify the church, thereby redefining Israel as the church. They also say Peter taught that the church is new Israel and that God’s “chosen people” are now the spiritual, rather than physical, descendants of Abraham.

To understand Peter’s teaching, it is necessary to know whom Peter was addressing. He likely was addressing Jewish believers who had been dispersed throughout the Roman Empire. Peter was first and foremost an apostle to the Jewish people, according to Paul’s testimony in Galatians 2:7–8 and Peter’s ministry in Acts. In 1 Peter 1:1, Peter addressed the “pilgrims of the Dispersion,” a title that would naturally fit first-century Jewish believers but not Gentiles.

In addition, Peter used the Septuagint to quote the Old Testament. It would be highly unlikely he would use the Septuagint for Gentiles but natural to use it when speaking to Jews. In fact, Peter’s arguments in 1 Peter would have been difficult for Gentiles to grasp; but a Jewish audience would have understood them easily.

Since Peter likely was writing to Jewish believers, he would have found it natural to use Old Testament titles of Israel. Peter was not teaching that the church has appropriated the Old
Testament titles of Israel; rather, he used words his Jewish audience would readily identify with. This passage does not teach God has replaced Israel or made the church the new or true Israel.

None of the New Testament passages that are favorites with Replacement theologians contain an actual statement by God that He has replaced Israel with the church. At most, they teach that the church shares the spiritual promises given to Abraham. This is inclusion of the church, not exclusion of Israel.

* Unless otherwise specified, all references to the church refer to the church in its broadest sense, including Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and evangelical.

James A. Showers is executive vice president and chief financial officer for The Friends of Israel.

Britsh Students Assault Jewish Man in Nazi Game

St udents from the prestigious London School of Economics recently assaulted a Jewish man who objected to a Nazi Ring of Fire card game while on a ski trip with fellow students. The same university last year accepted a huge donation from a foundation headed by Saif al-Islam al Qaddafi, a son of the former Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi, reported Arutz-7.

The student said he could not stand silent during a game in which cards were laid out to form a swastika. Participants then had to "salute the Fuhrer."

The London Guardian reported in January that 12,000 Facebook friends followed the game on the social network site.

"I am sad the nerdy Jew lost the fight with the fake Nazi, but successful Jewish violence usually creates nastier headlines than more usual Jewish passivity," the Guardian’s Tanya Gold wrote.

"Non-murderous anti-Semitism usually does not bother me," she said. "It feels essential, however, to place this game in context because Jews are becoming afraid. We sniff the air and feel a change because anti-Semitic discourse is more acceptable now than at any time since the 1930s."

"It is a sickness," she said, "that emerges from generation to generation. . . . Anti-Semitic discourse is now mainstream and to say it all comes from the crimes of the Jewish state feels disingenuous and a denial of the past.

"The incidents mount up—the heckling of an Israeli orchestra, the graffiti on university walls, the demand that Jews denounce Israel if they wish to be accepted in polite society, the plays and TV films written without context, the violence against Orthodox Jews (visible Jews), the sale of anti-Semitic toys in Poland, the terrible fact that 12,000 Facebook users think to mock the Holocaust, not lament it."

Nazi parties are common in Britain. A rising star in British politics, Member of Parliament Aidan Burley was booted from a senior post in the government after being photographed next to a bachelor dressed in a Nazi uniform at a stag party in the French Alps, said Arutz-7.
The book of Hebrews was written to provide evidence of Jesus Christ’s divinity, confirm that the Mosaic Law had been both fulfilled and abrogated in Christ, and exhort Jewish believers to remain steadfast in their faith and continue to spiritual maturity.

Three times in the first three verses of Hebrews 12, Jewish believers are commanded to endure persecution patiently for their faith in Christ. To encourage them not to vacillate, the author provided two examples of those who endured persecution. First, he mentioned Old Testament believers who exemplified living by faith. Then he provided the supreme example: Jesus Christ, who was faithful even to death.

PRIOR ENCOURAGEMENT

The chapter begins with a word of encouragement:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (v. 1).

The word cloud is used metaphorically to speak of a huge group of believers in heaven. The word witness (Greek, marturon) means one who testifies to what he has seen, heard, or knows personally. In the first century, it referred to someone who witnessed the signing of a contract or legal document. Thus the phrase cloud of witnesses refers to those cited in Hebrews 11 as examples of faith throughout Jewish history. These Old Testament believers were approved by God because of their faith. Thus they showed the early church the type of faith that pleases God.

All believers, especially during times of persecution, should study the lives of these men and women, be greatly encouraged by them, and emulate their faith. They were able to endure, and we must do likewise.

A word must be said about what the phrase cloud of witnesses does not mean. It does not mean these “witnesses” are looking down from heaven on believers and know how they are living out their faith. Often Christians find comfort in thinking their loved ones can see them and know the struggles they face here. These may be nice thoughts, but Scripture does not contain this teaching.

PRACTICAL EXHORTATION

The author used the concept of a foot race to illustrate the type of faith believers should have. The word race (Greek, agona) is the English word for “agony” (v. 1). Pictured here are runners in a marathon, like those in the Grecian games. The race was an agonizing, grueling ordeal; and winning required self-discipline, stamina, strategy, and patient endurance.

Consequently, Scripture says, “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (v. 1). The phrase let us is used throughout Hebrews, challenging readers to apply the truths they have heard (cf. 4:1, 11, 14, 16; 6:1; 10:22–24). The phrase is a gracious way to exhort people to embrace what is being taught.

Believers are exhorted to do three things to run the race of faith.

(1) “Lay aside every weight” (v. 1). The word weight means “bulk” or “mass.” It could refer to excess body weight; a heavy, bulky garment; or anything binding the runner’s body and thus encumbering him. For Christians, it means ridding themselves of everything that retards their progress, even though some hindrances may not be sinful. In context, it refers to the Jewish traditions that hindered these believers from growing in their faith.

(2) “Lay aside . . . the sin which so easily ensnares [besets] us” (v. 1). The Greek word for “ensnares” is used only here in the New Testament and conveys the idea of sin encircling someone, impeding his progress. The definite article preceding the word sin denotes a particular sin: that of believers returning to their Jewish roots. Today believers might apply the exhortation to a specific sin in their lives that needs to be discarded.

(3) “Run with endurance the race that is set before us” (v. 1). This race is not a sprint. It is a marathon that requires endurance to finish. Runners must shed all unnecessary weights, patiently pace themselves, and persistently endure as they faithfully struggle through life to the finish line.

PERFECT EXAMPLE

The greatest encouragement to persevering in faith is the supreme example of Jesus Christ: “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,
who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (v. 2).

The word looking means to turn one’s eyes away from all distractions and fix them continually on one thing. In context, that means fixing one’s eyes on Jesus. A runner must focus on the course and goal before him, not on his surroundings, or he will be distracted, lose his stride, slacken his pace, and even fall.

In the race of faith, the believer’s ultimate example is not the witnesses in Hebrews 11, but Jesus, who is “the author and finisher of our faith.” The word author connotes an originator, founder, or chief leader. Jesus is the “forerunner” (6:20) of the faith, setting the supreme, perfect example that all Christians are to follow. He is the greatest example of patient endurance under severe persecution, having been tried illegally and crucified (cf. Isa. 53:7; 1 Pet. 2:21–23). Jesus is also the “finisher” or “completer” of the believer’s faith; through His death and resurrection, He secured eternal salvation for all who trust in Him (Heb. 5:9).

Jesus endured the cross “for the joy that was set before Him” (12:2). Clearly, His joy was not in being crucified. It was the most disgraceful and dehumanizing death known. Yet He did not allow the privation, suffering, contempt, and cursing to dissuade Him from God’s will. He freely bore the shame and disgrace to provide for our salvation.

The “joy that was set before Him” was His final victory over Satan and sin, thus completing God’s work of redemption, bringing glory to God the Father by implementing His plan of salvation, and being reunited with the Father in heaven.

After His postresurrection ministry, Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:8–10) and “sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2: cf. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12). The word sat is in the Greek perfect tense, meaning that, at a point in time, Jesus took His seat on a throne at the Father’s right hand and remains there, signifying the completion of His ministry. His seated position at the Father’s right hand is a sign of triumph and foreshadows or portends His and all believers’ future and final victory (cf. 1:13–14).

**PERSONAL ENDURANCE**

Scripture then commands readers to analyze Christ’s suffering: “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls” (12:3).

The word consider (Greek, analogizomai) is our word analogy and means to reckon, add up, and weigh Christ’s sufferings against our own. Ponder this: Jesus was born in a stable to poor parents who fled Jerusalem with Him to save His life; He was reared in a deplorable city, lost His family, hated and opposed by the religious leaders, forsaken by His disciples, tried illegally, and scourged and beaten before He was finally crucified.

Looking at His suffering would make theirs seem insignificant. Thus they “should not become weary and discouraged in [their] souls” (v. 3). The word weary means to become exhausted and possibly ill due to persecution. Some Jewish believers had grown weary, which led to discouragement. They became faint-hearted, lost confidence and enthusiasm, and had slackened in their commitment.

Then the text goes one step further in comparing the Jewish believers’ suffering to that of Jesus: “You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin” (v. 4). “You” refers to believers who had previously faced persecution at the hands of their brethren (10:32–34). They had suffered physically and materially: but none had endured the suffering Jesus had, nor had anyone given his life for the gospel. These believers needed to ponder afresh the Messiah’s suffering and renew their commitment to Him, thus gaining strength to persevere in the race of faith.

They were still “striving against sin” (12:4). The word striving means to contend, as in a race, or to engage in conflict, as in a boxing match. Their conflict required them to stand against sinful men wanting to harm them as they harmed Jesus and against the sin of renouncing their faith in Christ by returning to their Jewish roots.

In our race of faith, we must heed the admonishment to consider all Jesus faced as the Originator and Completer of our faith. We, too, must remain faithful and not become weary or discouraged but persevere patiently, with endurance, to the finish line.

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

*“Isaiah was not just another voice, however powerful . . . Isaiah was, above all, the prophet of undaunted faith and undying hope in God’s redemptive purpose for Israel and for all mankind. It was his vision of the kingdom of God under the rule of the Messiah, which left its most indelible imprint upon his own contemporaries and subsequent generations.”* —Victor Buisbazen in _The Prophet Isaiah_
The previous article introduced key Greek words for God’s mercy in the New Testament and noted the relationship of God’s love to His mercy. This article examines more examples of God’s mercy as expressed through those words.

God’s Eleos Mercy Related to Salvation

Ephesians 2:1–6. The apostle Paul graphically described unsaved people as spiritually “dead in trespasses and sins.” He said they walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others (vv. 2–3). Their spiritually dead nature and ungodly lifestyles destined them for God’s wrath. However, Paul also wrote, But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (vv. 5–6).

Romans 9:22–24. People who do not become saved are called “vessels of wrath” (v. 22), and those who do become saved are “vessels of mercy” (v. 23). Since all people are conceived and born in a state of sin (Ps. 51:5) and have sinned against God (Rom. 3:9–18, 23), they are all sinners both by nature and action and deserve God’s wrath. It is only by God’s mercy that any become “vessels of mercy” and are saved from God’s wrath through faith in His Son.

Romans 11:30–32. Paul wrote, For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their [Israel’s] disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

These statements explain how God’s mercy brought salvation to both Gentile and Jewish people alike. In Old Testament times, God worked primarily with the Israelites; and the majority of Gentiles were disobedient to Him by worshiping false deities. But when most of Israel rejected Jesus as its Messiah, it also became disobedient. As a result, Jesus provided salvation for Jewish and Gentile people alike through both His death for their sins and His resurrection, enabling God to have mercy on all.

Romans 15:8–9. One of the reasons “Jesus Christ has become a servant” was so “that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.”

1 Timothy 1:13. Paul gave his personal testimony of God’s saving mercy toward him: “I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” Before his salvation, Paul blasphemed Jesus Christ, God’s divine Son; persecuted Jewish people who accepted Jesus as their Messiah and Savior; and was insolent. The word translated “insolent” refers to an arrogant person who “invades the sphere of another to his hurt.”

Paul, therefore, deserved God’s wrath. But God was merciful to him and graciously saved him.

1 Timothy 1:14–15. Paul enlarged his testimony of God’s saving grace and mercy: “And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant” (v. 14). The word translated “exceedingly abundant” means “to be overwhelmingly abundant” or “excessive.” This overabundant grace of God is associated with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. It is so associated because “this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (v. 15). The word translated “faithful” means trustworthy, dependable.

Paul thus asserted that the statement “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” is so dependable and trustworthy that all people should accept it as absolute truth. The fact that Christ came to save sinners is what made it possible for God mercifully to
exercise overabundant grace to save sinners from His wrath.

The word translated “chief” means “foremost” or “most prominent.” Thus Paul said he was the foremost or most prominent type of sinner—the worst of sinners.

1 Timothy 1:16. Paul explained why God, who is holy and judges sinners as “vessels of wrath,” would be merciful to him—the worst type of sinner—and save him by His overabundant grace: “However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.”

The word translated “longsuffering” refers to patient, steadfast “endurance.” The word translated “pattern” means “prototype.” A prototype is the “original or model after which anything is formed.”

Paul indicated Christ knew Paul would eventually believe on Him for eternal life—despite Paul’s persistent blasphemy of Him, persecution of believers, and insolent invasion of the sphere of others to harm them. But because Paul was the worst of sinners and would strongly resist coming to faith in Him, Christ exercised the most patient, steadfast endurance because doing so would bring Paul to salvation.

Thus Paul declared the reason he received God’s mercy to be saved by His overabundant grace was to demonstrate that Christ Jesus is able to exercise the patient, steadfast endurance necessary to bring to eternal salvation anyone who eventually believes on Him. The fact that Christ saved the worst of sinners demonstrates He is able to save any sinner, and the way Christ brought Paul to salvation is how He brings other sinners to eternal life.

New Testament scholar Homer A. Kent, Jr., wrote, “No one can say he is too sinful to be saved since Christ has saved Paul. Furthermore, no Christian should regard any sinner as a hopeless case.” And “No other conversion has been recounted so profitably to the winning of sinners to Christ.”

Titus 3:4–6. Paul declared, But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 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.

1 Peter. 1:3. The apostle Peter wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Because of God’s great mercy, people who trust Christ as Savior experience a second birth. The first birth leads to physical death. The second birth leads to eternal life. Eternal life is guaranteed by the fact that Jesus Christ, who died to provide such life, was resurrected bodily, never to die again.

1 Peter 2:10. Peter wrote primarily to Gentiles “who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” Most Old Testament Gentiles were pagans. They were not part of God’s Chosen People of Israel and not subjects of His mercy. But once Christ died, Jewish and Gentile people alike became subjects of God’s mercy for salvation. And both, when they repented and received forgiveness through Christ, became part of a new people of God: the church.

Jude 21. Jude exhorted believers to be “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” The word translated “looking for” means “wait for, expect.” It is in the Greek present tense, which normally indicates continuous action. The same word also appears in Titus 2:13, exhorting saved people to be “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Both passages exhort Christians to look continuously for the merciful coming of Jesus Christ to rapture them from Earth to heaven and into the realm of eternal life.
It’s cyber war

A cyber war between Israel and its enemies is heating up, with both sides hacking into each other’s websites.

Hackers recently brought down the El Al and Tel Aviv Stock Exchange sites, stole credit card information of Israelis, and broke into the Israel Fire and Rescue Services website to put up anti-Israel text and images.

They posted a picture of Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon with Arabic text that read, “Hamas, Fatah, Islamic Jihad and all the Palestinian factions will fight your army. All prisoners will be released from your prisons. Freedom for Palestine.” They also wrote “Death to Israel” in red Hebrew letters. Ayalon’s site was itself “Death to Israel” in red Hebrew letters. Ayalon’s site was itself breached but was back up within half an hour.

In retaliation, Israelis hacked into the websites of the Saudi Arabian and United Arab Emirates’ [UAE’s] stock exchanges and are threatening to take down even more sites in Arab countries: “We will decide on our next actions based on the actions of the terrorists, who seek to interfere with normal life in Israel,” the group said in a statement. “If there is no change in their policies in the near future we will also take down banking, stock, and government sites in the UAE,” it added.

In January a pro-Israel hacker named Hannibal said he would post details of 100,000 e-mail and Facebook accounts belonging to Arabs from Saudi Arabia and other countries.

Earlier, hackers calling themselves Nuclear Group published details of 4,800 credit cards allegedly belonging to Arabs from Saudi Arabia and other countries.

The cyber war began when a Saudi-based hacker published the credit card information of thousands of Israelis. The same hacker later called on Arab hackers to unite against Israel.

CEO talks back

The CEO of the Dis-Chem pharmacy chain in South Africa recently faced down a boycott threat over its decision to sell Israeli Dead Sea skin-care products. An Arab woman complained to the company, claiming the products come “from a country whose human rights violations replicate Hitler’s Nazism.” Dis-Chem would not remove the products, and the company’s CEO told the woman that likening Israel’s supposed human rights violations to the Nazis was “a scurrilous slur that you have clearly chosen to employ in order to give maximum offence.”

He then added, “If it is your intention to boycott Israeli products, you need to be consistent if your gesture is to have any meaning. I hope you don’t use an Intel chip in your computer with which you probably wrote your e-mail because it was invented in Israel.

“I hope that you stay in good health because if you need preventative surgery against a heart attack, you will have to boycott the procedure because guess what? The stent was invented in Israel!

“Likewise, I hope you are never prescribed any patch for diabetes, to deliver medication and other drugs. If you are an asthmatic you may have to use a new type of inhaler (Spin) invented in Israel. So please check!

“Israel has given the world the system of drip irrigation which is being widely adopted in SA [South Africa] with water shortages like many countries. Should you boycott all fruit and vegetables grown by this method? The list that Israel has given the world is very lengthy. Check very carefully before you boycott.”

Russia hugs Iran

Russia has given Iran its bear hug and warns Israel and the West an attack on Tehran will be considered an attack on Moscow. Russia’s outgoing ambassador to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, told reporters, “If Iran is involved in any military action, it’s a direct threat to our security.”

Kremlin Security Council head Nikolai Patrushev accused Israel of provoking the United States toward war against Iran and has come to the defense of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, warning Western nations not to intervene in Syria with military forces. Russia is a major arms supplier to Syria and has a heavy investment in Iran’s nuclear facilities.

Logic or lie?

Hamas says if only Jews were still in Gaza, it would be able to stage peaceful protests. Without them, the only choice is violence.

The odd logic came from senior Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar. “Against whom could we demonstrate in the Gaza Strip? When Gaza was occupied, that model was applicable,” Zahar said.

Gaza was home to more than 9,000 Jewish people from the early 1980s until 2005 when the Israeli government expelled them, hoping to end rocket attacks by Gaza terrorists who have killed and wounded hundreds of Jews.

Now Hamas blames their departure for its lack of peaceful protests. However, Hamas also has said the Jewish expulsion from Gaza and the release of more than a 1,000 terrorists for kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in October 2011 prove violence is the Arabs’ only recourse.

China builds railway to Eilat

The Chinese government will help Israel build an extension of its railway from Nahal Tzin to the southern city of Eilat. The 180-kilometer (112-mile) route is expected to expand tourism to the Red Sea resort town.

China, which built Haifa’s Carmel Tunnels, has been tapped to develop the city’s Haifa-Carmel railway as well.
**North Korea No. 1 Persecutor of Christians**

North Korea tops the Open Doors 2012 World Watch List for the 10th straight year as the country where Christians face the most severe persecution, while Islamic-majority countries represent nine of the top 10 and 38 of the 50 countries on the annual ranking.

Afghanistan (2), Saudi Arabia (3), Somalia (4), Iran (5), and the Maldives (6) form a bloc where indigenous Christians have almost no freedom to worship openly. For the first time Pakistan (10) entered the top 10. Also in the top 10 are Uzbekistan (7), Yemen (8), and Iraq (9).

Defiantly Communist, North Korea built a bizarre quasi-religion around the country’s founder, Kim Il-Sung. Anyone with “another god” is automatically persecuted. The country’s estimated 200,000 to 400,000 Christians must remain deeply underground. An estimated 50,000 to 70,000 are held in ghastly prison camps.

Sudan moved up 19 spots to No. 16. Nigeria jumped 10 spots to No. 13. Egypt, racked by violent protests and upheaval during the Arab Spring, rose four positions to No. 15. Increased Islamic extremism triggered the upward movement of Sudan, Nigeria, and Egypt.

In July 2011 southern Sudan, which is mostly Christian, seceded to become the independent country of South Sudan, leaving the Christians of North Sudan much more isolated under President Omar al-Bashir. Al-Bashir now vows to make his country even more Islamic. The military has attacked and killed many Christians there.

Nigeria remains the country with the worst atrocities in terms of lives lost. More than 300 Christians were martyred last year in Nigeria, though the actual number is believed to be double or triple that figure. The total is probably greater in North Korea but impossible to confirm due to its isolation.

China still has the world’s largest persecuted church of 80 million, but it went from No. 16 to No. 21 primarily because pastors are learning how to play “cat and mouse” with the government.

An estimated 100 million Christians worldwide suffer interrogation, arrest, and even death for their faith in Christ, with millions more facing discrimination and alienation. For the entire article, go to www.tinyurl.com/seecopendoorslist.

_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.
Living in Israel is like living on an active volcano. It has been this way ever since I came here more than 65 years ago. More than 150 million Arabs wait for an opportunity to destroy us.

And who are they? They are people without faith. They are filled with superstitions and do not know the meaning of forgiveness. They have false beliefs and worship a false god; yet they are full of confidence that, if they kill as many Israelis as possible, they will be big heroes on Earth and bigger heroes in heaven. Sadly, they do not realize only the gates of hell await them.

I speak to such people regularly. As one who believes in Christ, it is my duty to bring them the full truth about our Lord and Savior so that they can find true peace with God and others.

We live in an area in Jerusalem surrounded by Arabs. I do not know how I came to know Arabic. Yet I speak well enough to have long conversations with my Arab neighbors. They often tell me the end of Israel is near. I show them differently from God’s Word.

Recently one asked, “What do you think about this situation here in Israel? Do you think Israel will give us back the land it took from us?”

“It is not our obligation to give you our land,” I replied.

“But you have no right to be here!” he declared. “You must leave! And it will be better for you if you leave now.”

Then I asked, “Do you believe in God?”

They all said yes, but “not in your God.”

“So you think there is more than one god,” I replied. “We believe there is only one God. From Him we have received the land of Israel, and there is no power in the world that can take this land from us.”

“Where is such a thing written in your Bible?” he demanded.

“You asked me the best question,” I replied. “Here is what the Lord says to His Chosen People Israel.” I began with Genesis, where it is written, And the LORD said to Abram, ... “Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you” (13:14–17).

I also showed them Exodus 23:31, where God told the Jewish people, “I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.”

While we were talking, Jewish people in the neighborhood began listening, surprised I was speaking Arabic. “What are you doing?” one asked. “It is not good that you speak to them about the Holy Bible. They are not part of our nation. And what is worse, they are our sworn enemies.”
“That is why they need to know to whom this land belongs,” I replied. “The Bible is not political. It is God’s Word. I showed them where it is written. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed’ [Gen. 12:3]. These people need to know that even though we are but a tiny nation, God has not forsaken Israel.”

I told the Arabs, “You have 2 billion people, and we are but 5 million. But you can see for yourself what the Lord tells us:

You, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen. . . . Fear not, for I am with you; . . . Behold, all those who were incensed against you shall be ashamed and disgraced; they shall be as nothing, and those who strive with you shall perish. “Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I will help you,” says the Lord and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel (Isa. 41:8, 10–11, 14).

“You speak these words with such confidence,” one said. “But look at your situation!”

I told them my confidence is in the Lord. “The best example I can show you is 1948,” I said. “You were so sure you would destroy us when eight Arab armies came against us—150 million Muslims against 500,000 Jews. Yet you fled before this poor worm, Israel. So what have you to say now? Are you still confident you will destroy us?”

Then one asked, “Are you certain that what is written here will be fulfilled?”

“Yes. His Word is eternal and settled in the heavens. I am not reading you fictional stories. I fought in all of Israel’s wars through 1973. We did not have the many weapons you had. Yet it is clear who fought on our side.”

One asked, “Can you tell us where we can buy a Bible in the Arabic language?” So I told them about a store in the Old City. “We will come to speak with you again,” one said.

“Read the Bible,” I told them. “The Holy Spirit will show you the truth.”

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