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Big thinkers are reportedly working to perfect a rocket capable of transporting people to Mars. Colonizing the red planet is the objective. The reason is that many are looking for a place to go to get away from the problems of crumbling societies and the uncertainties of the future here on Earth. However, strip malls on Mars will not feed the desire for something more lasting and secure. The truth is, God is not finished with planet Earth, and there is a better day and a new world ahead. The Word of God confirms it. There is a Kingdom coming, a King for the throne, and a people for His name. It’s a transforming certainty, and you can learn how to make the trip in this issue of Israel My Glory.

Our cover is a photograph of snow-covered Mount Hermon in the north of Israel (Harel/Israelimages).

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Israel My Glory (ISSN 8755-402X) is published bimonthly for $18.95 per year by The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1179 Almonesson Road, Deptford Township, Westville, New Jersey 08093. Periodicals postage paid at Westville, NJ, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Israel My Glory, P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099-0908.

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“Thus says the Lord God: ‘This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her’” (Ezek. 5:5).

Every trip to Israel is a life-impacting experience. God’s Word comes alive there, especially at the Sea of Galilee and in the towns to its north, where much of Jesus’ ministry took place. Even seemingly insignificant places spring from the Bible’s pages, like the Valley of Elah where Israel’s young shepherd David defeated Goliath, the Philistine champion of war.

Arriving in Jerusalem, you sense there’s no place like it. From the Orthodox Jews to the Muslim Arabs to the blaring traffic, everything seems upfront.

It was at the Western Wall in Jerusalem on my first trip to Israel more than 20 years ago that I experienced my most emotional response to the many sites we visited. Amid large crowds engaged in religious and ceremonial activities, I was struck by the truth of the prophet Ezekiel’s words. I was in the center of the world.

Jerusalem is mentioned 600 times in the Old Testament and 160 times in the New Testament. In Scripture, to go north means to go north from Jerusalem. To go south means to go south from Jerusalem. Several ancient world maps reflect this truth. One even depicts Europe, Asia, and Africa as three petals of a flower, with the center stamen being Jerusalem.

In fact, the Institute for Creation Research (ICR, www.icr.org) has done a fascinating computer-based study confirming Jerusalem’s geographic centrality. In addition to its geographic significance, a huge measure of Jerusalem’s importance rests in its role as the spiritual center of the world. Its existence today is a powerful witness that God is in control. Jerusalem has repeatedly been fought over, plundered, burned, and destroyed. However, God made a covenant with the city in Ezekiel 16:8: “Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine.”

Jerusalem today testifies that God keeps His covenants. It is the salvation center of the earth. Jesus said, “Salvation is of the Jews” (Jn. 4:22). Jerusalem is where Christ died, was buried, and rose again—it is the focus of His plan of redemption. Jerusalem is the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus’ Palm Sunday entry, the way of the cross, the empty tomb, and Jesus’ ascension into heaven (Acts 1:9–11).

Prophecically, Jerusalem is the promise center of the world. Our destiny as believers is linked to the city of Jerusalem. Our most dramatic moment of promise will be when we return there with our Savior. Then Israel will be fully restored, both politically as a nation and spiritually to the Lord. We look forward to the tremendous promise of Isaiah 2:3:

Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”

Today we study prophecy and are blessed. Then we will participate personally with our Savior.

Unfortunately, Jerusalem continues to be a storm center. Though its name means “foundation of peace,” its history has been marked by war. It has been destroyed by the Romans, the crusaders, and the Muslims. It has been divided by walls, barbed wire, and fences. Israel unified Jerusalem in 1967, making it available to all people. However, world leaders continue to talk about dividing it again. The UN seems to work day and night to deny a Jewish/Israeli Jerusalem, and UN efforts are under way to “internationalize” the city by wresting it from Israel’s control.

U.S. President Barack Obama periodically puts forth concepts that would bar the Jewish people from significant parts of the city. And radical Islam has rallied its forces in opposition to God’s covenants with Israel and its capital, Jerusalem.

The world’s desire for Jerusalem directly conflicts with God’s design, making it even more important that we heed His injunction in Psalm 122:6: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May they prosper who love you.”

William E. Sutter is the executive director of The Friends of Israel.
T he late Golda Meir, fourth prime minister of the State of Israel, once said, “If Moses had turned right instead of left when he led his people out of the Sinai desert, the Jews would have had the oil; and the Arabs would have ended up with the oranges.”

That was Golda’s humorous explanation of Israel’s energy deficiency, while energy-rich neighboring countries hold billions of barrels of the world’s oil reserves: Saudi Arabia, 262.2 billion; Iran, 136.3 billion; Iraq, 115 billion; Kuwait, 101 billion; United Arab Emirates, 97.8 billion; and Libya, 41.5 billion.

These nations effectively use their oil reserves as a weapon to influence oil-dependent Western countries to oppose Israel.

However, that reality may be about to change. Israel is sitting on at least 250 billion barrels of oil. The oil is not liquid but solid, formed in a rock called shale. Thirty miles southwest of Jerusalem lies the Shfela basin, which holds the second largest deposit of oil shale in the world. Although Israel has long known of the oil shale’s existence, it has been unable to extract the oil due to the expense and potential harm to the environment.

The online magazine *Business Weekly* said, “Oil shale has broken many hearts” because it is difficult to extract the oil safely and profitably. So what has changed in the Middle East?

Enter Howard Jonas, ardent Zionist, philanthropist, and founder of IDT Corporation, a telecom company. Jonas said he believes that sitting under Israel “is more oil than under Saudi Arabia.”

Several years ago, while working on oil shale in Colorado (the largest deposit in the world), Jonas began to think about the oil in the Shfela. So he started a spinoff company called Israel Energy Initiatives (IEI). He knew oil companies would be reluctant to explore the oil business in Israel for fear of adversely affecting their relationships with Muslim-controlled oil suppliers.

So Jonas assembled a veritable who’s who of investors and oilmen who have no such concerns and are longtime friends of Israel:

- **Michael Steinhardt**, experienced hedge fund investor, Zionist, and philanthropist.
- **Lord Jacob Rothschild**, banker and philanthropist whose family has a long history of Zionist support.
- **Eugene Renna**, former president and chief operating officer of Mobil Corporation and retired executive vice president of ExxonMobile.
- **Allan Sass**, former president of Occidental Oil Shale, a subsidiary of Occidental Petroleum.
- **Dick Cheney**, former U.S. vice president and former president of Halliburton, one of the world’s largest providers of products and services to the oil and gas industry.

Jonas then lured Dr. Harold Vinegar, retired chief scientist with Royal Dutch Shell, to lead the team. Vinegar pioneered oil extraction from rock and holds some 240 patents. IEI believes that, under Vinegar’s leadership, extracting the oil will cost $35 to $45 a barrel and will keep the environment safe.

Investors on Wall Street seem to agree. Through the establishment of Israel Energy Initiatives, IDT stock—which had dipped to a low of 66 cents per share—rose (as of this writing) to $20 per share. Investors are not the only ones paying attention. European and Asian countries, new customers of Israel due to Israel’s recent discovery and production of natural gas, also are watching.

If Israeli technology can extract its own shale oil cheaply and safely, it could then market its know-how to help extract the more than two trillion barrels of shale oil around the world. Israel, a stable democracy, would become a wonderful alternative source of oil and related technology.

Imagine the prophetic implications of Israel as a world-class producer of oil. Little did Golda know: Moses made the right turn after all.

by Steve Herzig
Chasing Arafat’s Dream

During the fiasco over the Palestinian Authority’s all-out push at the UN in September for a unilaterally forged Palestinian state, the implausible morphed into the incomprehensible. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon eloquently illustrated how far off the table reality had fallen when he admonished Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He told him to “act with restraint” and invoke “wisdom” regarding the Palestinian bid to begin, essentially, the destruction of Israel.

Others joined the fray. They insisted Israel forfeit “occupied” land it allegedly swiped from the Palestinians and now rules (so they claim) with apartheid-like oppression. Israel must be prepared, they insisted, to make significant concessions, with no evidence the Palestinian Authority (PA) will reciprocate.

All of America’s fumbling efforts, along with those of a few weak-kneed Europeans, to cajole PA leader Mahmoud Abbas into thinking twice before going it alone were slapped down. Interestingly, the insult didn’t seem to ruffle a feather of indignation among the countries (chief of which is the United States) that annually pour billions of dollars into the PA’s ill-managed coffers.

Why would Abbas—former lieutenant of Yasser Arafat, the late terrorist leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)—eschew negotiations in favor of a course that may well lead to war? It doesn’t make sense—unless one realizes that, in essentials, Abbas is an unreconstructed PLO devotee. The perceived difference between his persona and Arafat’s is more one of image and style rather than substance.

Unfortunately, Western societies fail to evaluate substance and underlying ideology. Instead, they fall for altered images and readjusted externals that give the illusion of change. But make no mistake: Behind the smiles, wardrobe makeovers, and retooled rhetoric lies the same old stuff.

No recognition ever of the right of a Jewish state to exist. A massive “return” of Palestinian “refugees” to Israel would do in a few short years what Arab armies could not do in a succession of wars. If you want proof, log on to www.weeklystandard.com and check out Anne Bayefsky’s exposé on the logo of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations. The logo displays the flag of “Palestine” with an image of the proposed country stretching from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. No Israel anywhere. Why? Because according to the plan, Israel will no longer exist.

Judrenrein Bounces Back

Judrenrein, a German word meaning “clean of Jews,” was thought by most to have hit the dustbin when Adolf Hitler and his Third Reich fell to the allies in 1945.

American attorney Alan Dershowitz recently expounded on the duplicity of the PA’s claim that it would create a “secular democratic state.” The draft constitution for a state of Palestine, he said, declares, “Islam is the official religion in Palestine”; and Sharia law will be the “major source of legislation.”

Furthermore, the Muslim state would prohibit Jewish people from becoming citizens or owning land—or even from living there. Furthermore, when the Palestinian ambassador to the United States was asked whether “any Jew who is inside the borders of Palestine will have to leave,” his answer was, “Absolutely!”

All this sounds exceedingly familiar. When the Jordanians used military force to occupy Judea and Samaria (West Bank) and East Jerusalem in 1948, they played by the same rules. In defiance of UN entreaties, they systematically destroyed 58 Jewish synagogues; removed 38,000 Jewish tombstones from the Mount of Olives, which they then used to pave roads and floor latrines; and barred Jewish access to the Western Wall and Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. Jerusalem became a divided city until the Israelis liberated it during the 1967 Six-Day War.

What makes people believe that an Islamist Palestinian state—which boasts the added dimension of wanting world domination—would be a better, more benevolent neighbor to a Jewish state than were the Jordanians?

Name of the Game: Win It All

Clearly, Palestinians and Islamist radicals throughout the region believe their time has come and that they are now positioned to take it all. We hear as much in their not-so-veiled threats that rejecting the imposition on Israel of a Palestinian state will likely mean war. This calculated tactic is designed to create a panic response among weak leaders who would rather capitulate than fight to ensure security and stability. Like it or not, sometimes you have to fight; and this is a battle we can ill afford to lose.
STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP


1. Date of filing: September 1, 2011.
2. Title of publication: ISRAEL MY GLORY.
3. Frequency of issue: Bimonthly.
4. Location of known office of publication: 1179 Almonesson Road, Westville, NJ 08093.
5. Location of headquarters of general business and publishers: 1179 Almonesson Road, Westville, NJ 08093.
6. Names and addresses of publishers, editor, and managing editor:
   Publisher: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1179 Almonesson Road, Westville, NJ 08093.
   Editor-in-Chief: Lorna Simcox, 1179 Almonesson Road, Westville, NJ 08093.
   Managing Editor: Lorna Simcox, 1179 Almonesson Road, Westville, NJ 08093.
8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None.
9. N/A
10. Extent and nature of circulation.
   A. Total No. Copies Printed................
   B. Paid and/or Requested Mail Circulation ...........
   C. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation................
   D. Free Distribution..............................
   E. Total Distribution ............................
   F. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing ......................
   G. Total...................................................

   I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. William E. Sutter, President

Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date SEPTEMBER 1, 2011
A. Total No. Copies Printed................. 213,667 220,000
B. Paid and/or Requested Mail Circulation .......... 193,877 189,316
C. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation .......... 193,877 189,316
D. Free Distribution................................. 6,040 6,111
E. Total Distribution.............................. 199,917 195,427
F. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing ......................... 13,750 24,573
G. Total................................................... 213,667 220,000

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NRB: Google, iTunes, Facebook All Censor Christian Views

If you think you can place overtly Christian content on the ubiquitous Internet giants Google or iTunes, think again. The National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) has publicized its first report of the John Milton Project for Religious Free Speech, exposing how most web-based platforms censor Christian views. And it says the situation could get worse.

Written by Craig L. Parshall, senior vice president and general counsel for the NRB, the report, unveiled recently at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, catalogs what it calls “viewpoint discrimination by new media platforms and draw[s] attention to the censorship that is quietly (but firmly) taking hold.” It also suggests solutions, such as voluntary compliance with free-speech laws or, if that fails, federal regulation.

“With the sole exception of Twitter,” the report says, “the written policies of all of the other web-based communications platforms evaluated in this paper show a callous disregard for the free speech rights of users.” It says they clearly intend to prohibit “hate speech,” a vague, politically correct phrase that “has become a code-term indicating disapproval for the views of traditional, biblical Christianity, particularly regarding Christian doctrine related to issues like abortion and the orthodox rejection of homosexuality.”

To read the entire report online, go to tinyurl.com/nrbMiltonProject.

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Although they knew God, they did not glorify [honor] Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools (Rom. 1:21–22).

Place: Aspen Institute conference, Colorado
Date: August 4, 2011

Former U.S. vice president and environmental-disaster activist, Al Gore, stepped onto the stage and began a veritable tirade against all who doubt what he sees as the absolute truth about global warming and the catastrophe he claims man-made carbon emissions are creating.

Gore’s “rant” (as it was described by the Los Angeles Times) was so filled with profanities that most newspapers couldn’t print extensive excerpts. He proclaimed that, because of global warming, “the very existence of our civilization is threatened.” His real complaint, though, seemed more fundamental: “There’s no longer a shared reality on an issue like climate.”

By “shared reality,” I take Mr. Gore to have meant that he is crestfallen over the American public’s refusal to close the debate on climate change. In other words, he vehemently believes his worldview on environmental issues should be the “shared reality” for everyone. And if you disagree, you are now a target of his four-letter epithets. A clearer picture of political correctness gone wild is harder to imagine.

The issue here is not the validity of the global-warming theory. It is the transformation of trendy ideas about “greenhouse gases” into a belief system that resembles a secular religion. Those who doubt are infidels.

Case in point: When Republican presidential candidate Rick Perry of Texas dared to question that man-made carbon emissions cause catastrophic global warming, he was skewered by the press. Columnist Scott Stroud of the San Antonio (TX) Express-News said Gov. Perry “breezily dismissed the science behind global warming,” something Stroud equated with opening a “can of crazy.”

This type of totalitarian approach makes politically incorrect dissent a crime against humanity. Even cultural heroes become enemies when they question the sacred cows. Before his death, Michael Crichton, a medical scientist and novelist who wrote blockbuster science-fiction novels like The Andromeda Strain and Jurassic Park, had the courage to question radical global-warming theories in his novel State of Fear. In response, climate alarmists lashed back, calling him a “global warming denier”—a label that implies something morally and intellectually terrible, as “Holocaust denier” does, for example. Such are the slings and arrows from those who have turned a scientific speculation into a form of nature worship.

I recall a point once made by Dr. Donald MacKay, a late, brilliant brain physiologist in England—and a Christian—who wrote a book refuting the behavioral theories of the atheist B. F. Skinner. He noted that what often passes for rational dispute over truth is, in reality, merely a preference for what is “palatable,” dressed up in rational garb.

Because of our fallen natures, people are prone to gravitate to conclusions that are palatable. We like what is convenient or what appeals to our pride and our desire to “be like God” (Gen. 3:5). Which is why futile thoughts (to quote Paul in Romans), or “speculations,” as the New American Standard Bible puts it, can be so dangerous; human reason must be reined in by clear, irrefutable facts, not merely inferences. Furthermore, our reasoning has to begin with the presupposition that, if we observe orderliness in nature, it is because such order was created by the Creator. The more we push aside the Creator and deify the creation, the more futile and dangerous our thoughts become.

None of these points are meant to diminish the role of true science. Rather, they are a reminder of what many good Bible teachers tell us: The only things we can afford to be totally absolutist about are those things that God has absolutely decided to reveal in His Word.
Rev. Franklin Graham ended his prayer at the 2001 inaugural ceremony of U.S. President George W. Bush with these words: "Now, O Lord, we dedicate this presidential inaugural ceremony to you. May this be the beginning of a new dawn for America as we humble ourselves before you and acknowledge you alone as our Lord, our Savior and..."

"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

(Josh. 24:15)
God-hating nightmare. American dream into an anarchist, neo-paganism designed to refit the intensity of opposition to Christianity, events. The clamor exemplifies the persona non grata at public both a lawsuit and calls to declare Rev. Graham persona non grata at public events. The clamor exemplifies the intensity of opposition to Christianity, as atheists and others mine society in a neo-paganism designed to refit the American dream into an anarchist, God-hating nightmare.

Jesus Christ Is Not a Silent Partner

The story of the Gospels is the incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, and coming again of Jesus Christ. When God stepped into time in the person of His Son, He did not appear as a sidebar to history. While pagan devotion convulsed around Him, Jesus moved as the singular solution to the human dilemma. He cannot be minimized, marginalized, or ignored. He is the deciding factor in whether we live or die, prosper or perish. In biblical terms we are told that God the Father raised Him [Christ] from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come (Eph. 1:20–21).

One of the greatest scenes played out on the stage of history was the clash of dominions in Jerusalem as Jesus stood condemned before Rome’s emissary, Pontius Pilate. After sparring verbally with Jesus’ accusers, Pilate confronted the Christ:

“Are You the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world.” . . . Pilate therefore said to Him, “Are You a king then?” Jesus answered, “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.

Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” (Jn. 18:33, 36–38).

It matters little whether the perplexed prefect posed the question out of ridicule, sarcasm, or sincerity. His question still hangs heavy in the air today. What, indeed, is truth?

Unbeknown to him, Pilate stood before the Source of truth and had heard the essentials concerning the God-Man’s entry into this world, His birth, His mission, and His Kingdom.

Jesus’ Birth

The current all-out war against the mention of Jesus’ name, the details of His birth, and all public displays of the nativity is beyond comprehension. If someone does not believe in the incarnation, why harass public officials, wear out the courts, and infuriate Christians (and Americans in general) with furious attacks? After all, if nothing else, Christ’s birth is a wonderful story.

But His birth isn’t the issue. The issue is Jesus Christ Himself. A crusade is afoot to search and destroy every aspect of His personage because of who He is and all He and His followers represent. The words of the late H. G. Wells may illustrate the enigma Jesus has become to intellectual elitists pursuing His destruction:

I am an historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.

Confirmations of the imminent nativity were etched in the Old Testament with such intimate detail that there could be no mistake that God was indeed invading humanity through the coming of His Son. The Hebrew Scriptures even identified, thousands of years before the fact, the precise location of His arrival:

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Kuler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting (Mic. 5:2).

It is with the utmost confidence, therefore, that believers the world over congregate in great hosts and unity of spirit to remember and revere His birth. Christians should never surrender to the forces of denial by muting their joy over Him who came to Earth, provided their spiritual fulfillment, and changed their lives and the course of human history. His arrival in Bethlehem laid the first great stepping stone to eternity, affirming that God had not left the scene and that a plan was in motion to make all things right.

His Mission

He laid His mission before Pilate: “I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth” (Jn. 18:37). Everything in God’s economy is based on truth—truth that is personified in Christ.

As I write this article, nations stagger directionless through a morass of uncertainty and confusion. The big questions are, “Where are we going?” and “What will the future hold for our children, grandchildren, and the generations that will follow?”

A cataclysmic loss of understanding concerning why we exist inevitably results in a loss of purpose and direction. The biblical word lost precisely describes this world’s dilemma. Humankind was not created to go it alone; and when people attempt it, catastrophe results. Some individuals succumb to a functional nihilism—the belief that traditional beliefs are useless and that there is no objective ground of truth, particularly moral truth.

Some believe things have so bottomed out that the destruction of the entire social and political system is a desirable end to pursue. Is it any wonder that forces are at work from both within and without to destroy America and all of its historic biblical moorings, moral precepts, and social order?

In this frame of reference, the Bible and Christ must be cast out because Christ personifies truth and the Bible resonates with essential moral order. In a sense, when Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and
the life” (Jn. 14:6), He threw down the gauntlet. The annual down-with-Christ-and-Christmas crusaders, so successful in banishing everything Christian from the public square, have more in mind than ripping up manger scenes and scattering sheep from living Christmas displays.

Is There a Way Back?

Today it is not unusual to be asked if we’ve gone so far down the wrong road that there is no way to return to what once made America great. Have we seen the passing of what has been called the Greatest Generation?

When I was a grammar-school child growing up in a small town in Michigan, I don’t recall a great deal of religious emphasis in the classroom. Every morning we said the Pledge of Allegiance and respectfully honored the American flag. It was a time in our history that now seems worlds away.

America was in the waning grips of the Great Depression that knocked the props out of more than the stock market. Veterans of World War I who had endured the terrors of the trenches were still among us, telling their stories of the “war to end all wars.”

Prohibition had ended a few years earlier and left behind thugs and gangsters seeking new avenues of illicit employment. The flappers’ legacy was a “new breed” of American women who were not exactly models of moral propriety. It was a time when some may have questioned where we were going.

Then one morning, we were told there would be a special program in the gymnasium after lunch. The guests were the America Back to God quartet. The repertoire blended patriotic and spiritual music, a good measure of it calling for the nation to turn back to the God of our fathers and emphasizing America’s need for a Redeemer.

The call of this hour is to return to the Book that sets the parameters for all things right and true. We need to hear the voice of the prophet in the land—a voice that replaces the self-betterment homilies currently passing as sermons with “For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Lk. 2:11). The ramifications of that message are the needs of the hour, trumpeting that Christmas is alive and well, for He has arrived!

The Last Word

Pilate heard another word: “You say rightly that I am a king” (Jn. 18:37).

What does the future hold? On this matter there need be no confusion. The world will not end in a fog of carbon gases or with too many mouths to feed and not enough bread. No, the King is coming; and the future is assured (though we hear far too little of it from pulpits today). At this very moment there is a desperate need for a Redeemer who will buy back from the slave market of sin the individuals who turn to Him by faith.

And to a world gone mad, One will come who can judge the nations, establish equity and justice, and rule with unerring truth and righteousness. We are acutely aware that such a ruler is not presently available. His credentials are defined in the prophetic Scriptures. His peace is the song of our hearts. His hope is the Blessed Hope of His return for which we long.

Perhaps God is asking you today to decide between truth and error, the broad path and the narrow way. As the great Jewish leader who succeeded Moses declared, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve… But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORd” (Josh. 24:15). That choice is yours.

Elwood McQuaid is consulting editor for The Friends of Israel.

Thank G-d for Israel Day is an important event. It is an opportunity for the Christian community to come together and support Israel and learn from the guest speaker and the speakers representing the pro-Israel activist community. Seeing and hearing the Hebrew songs sung by volunteers who do not know Hebrew and spent the time and effort to learn is one of the highlights. Most important is seeing and talking to those who attend. Today the demonization of Israel on the world stage by people and nations who choose to ignore historical and present facts on the ground is most frightening, while the heartfelt support for Israel from the attendees at this event is most encouraging.”

—E. G., who attended a Friends of Israel event in Michigan
Kidnapped Christian Girl in Sudan Escapes. Hiba Abdelfadil Anglo, 16, has escaped from Muslims who kidnapped her in June 2010, beat and raped her, and tried to force her to convert to Islam. She has been reunited with her family.

“The man who put me in his house on several occasions tortured me and threatened to kill me,” she told Compass Direct. After a year, she had given him enough of an impression that she had converted to Islam that he left her unguarded. She fled the house and begged a motorist to take her to her home two hours away. “I had tried to escape three times before, but they captured me every time and beat me a lot,” she said, sobbing.

Her widowed mother, Ikhlas Omer Anglo, told Compass the kidnappers targeted them because they are Christians. When the girl’s mother went to the police, they told her she must first leave Christianity for Islam.

Hiba was initially locked in a room and beaten unconscious. The gang leader raped her, and she still suffers pain in her right eye from a blow he recently dealt her. “Whenever I try to pray, I find it difficult to forget. I ask believers to pray for me for inner healing,” she said. She fears the Muslims are still trailing her.

Hiba, who would like to become an accountant, was kidnapped while going to the Ministry of Education in Khartoum to obtain her transcripts for secondary school. Her mother is still jobless after being fired for taking time off to search for her daughter, even though she was given permission.

Ugandan Girl Loses Use of Legs After Leaving Islam for Christ. A 14-year-old girl in western Uganda is still unable to walk almost a year after her father locked her in a room with no sunlight for six months and with almost no food or water because she left Islam for Christ.

Susan Ithungu has been hospitalized since October 2010 after neighbors and police rescued her. Her father was arrested but was quickly released, sources said.

In March 2010 an evangelist spoke at Susan’s school, and she trusted Christ. “I heard the message of Christ’s great love, of Him dying for us to get everlasting peace, and there and then I decided to believe in Christ,” she said from her hospital bed. “After a month, news reached my father that I had converted to Christianity, and that was the beginning of my troubles with him. Our father warned us not to attend church or listen to the gospel message. He even threatened us with a sharp knife that he was ready to kill us in broad daylight in case we converted to Christianity.”

When their father was away, her brother roasted bananas for Susan. “I also dug a hole under the door, where I could pour water through,” he said. “My sister could drink the water using her tongue. But most days she could only feed on mud.”

“The miserable young Susan was bony, very weak, and not able to talk or walk,” said a pastor. “Her hair had turned yellow, she had long fingernails and sunken eyes,” and she weighed only 44 pounds (20 kilograms). “Though she can’t walk, she can now talk,” he said. And she “is still strong in the Lord Jesus Christ. She needs prayers and support, so that she can resume her education soon.”

Compiled by reports filed by Compass Direct News.
In the introduction to his book Who Wrote the Bible? Bible critic Richard Elliott Friedman declared, 

People have been reading the Bible for nearly two thousand years. They have taken it literally, figuratively, or symbolically. They have regarded it as divinely dictated, revealed or inspired, or as a human creation. They have acquired more copies of it than of any other book. . . . It is at the heart of Christianity and Judaism. Ministers, priests, and rabbis preach it. Scholars spend their lives studying and teaching it in universities and seminaries. People read it, study it, admire it, disdain it, write about it, argue about it, and love it. People have lived by it and died for it. And we do not know who wrote it.¹

We don’t? The apostle Paul seems to have made the authorship quite clear when he said, “What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:1–2). God entrusted His entire revelation to the Jewish people. Consequently, through Israel, the world received a great gift.


The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.

Isaiah 40:8
**Jewish People Penned the Bible**

“For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). These consecrated men did not decide to sit down and write an attractive religious document. Rather, God’s Spirit “moved” them to speak and record His Word. Consequently, the Bible says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

The Bible has been called the Book of books. It stands alone, wrote Dyson Hague, “unapproachable in grandeur; solitary in splendor; mysterious in ascendency; as high above all other books as heaven above earth, as the Son of God above the sons of men.”

Forty divinely inspired men from all walks of life wrote over a span of 1,600 years. Moses wrote the first five books, called the Law or Torah: “And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD” (Ex. 24:4; cf. 17:14; 34:27; Num. 33:1-2; Dt. 31:9, 24). The final book, Revelation, was written by John, a Jewish disciple of Jesus: “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this” (Rev. 1:19).

Some like to argue that the New Testament is a creation of pagan Roman authors. However, all the writers, with the possible exception of Luke, were Jewish. God chose these individuals from different regions of the ancient world. Scottish novelist and poet Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) once said of them, “Written in the East, these characters live for ever [sic] in the West; written in one province, they pervade the world; penned in rude times, they are prized more and more as civilization advances.”

The Bible tells a single story from Genesis to Revelation. It is God’s disclosure of truth. If it were not for the Jewish people, there would be no Bible. Thank God for the Jewish pen!

**Jewish People Preserved the Bible**

An old rabbinical treatise called Soferim ("Scribes") is a detailed how-to book that lists the many rules the Jewish scribes—Bible copyists—had to follow painstakingly.

For example, they had to use a special mixture of black ink. The transcription had to be done on the parchment of a clean animal. The exact number of words and letters on each line had to match the original.

Every word and letter was counted. Each column had to have no fewer than 48 and no more than 60 lines. Scribes were not allowed to copy from memory. Nor could they copy sentence for sentence or even word for word. Scripture had to be copied letter for letter.

The work was inspected by at least three senior specialist scribes. If there was an omission or if two letters touched, the entire script was rejected.

Other particulars involved width and height; exact spaces between letters, words, and pages and between numbers of columns and lines to the column; and much more. The process was scrupulously strict. Such was the standard to maintain the integrity of the copied work.

The first prime minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973), observed, “We have preserved the Book, and the Book has preserved us.”

Even the New Testament was meticulously copied following rigid rules. Thank God for Jewish scribes who preserved the Bible.

**Jewish People Prove the Bible**

“The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those who proclaimed it” (Ps. 68:11).

Israel’s history and that of the Bible are linked. Both are eternal. Wrote Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910),

*The Jew is the emblem of eternity. He whom neither slaughter nor torture could destroy; he whom neither fire

nor sword, nor inquisition was able to wipe off the face of the earth; he who was the first to produce the oracles of God; he who has been so long a time the guardian of prophecy, and who has transmitted it to the rest of the world—his nation cannot be destroyed. The Jew is as everlasting as eternity itself."5

As many have sought to destroy the Jewish people, so, too, have many wanted to destroy the Bible. The infamous American atheist/agnostic Robert Ingersoll (1833–1899) once boasted, “I am going to put the Bible out of business.” Ingersoll faded away like grass; yet the Bible he attacked remains. “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Isa. 40:8; cf. 1 Pet. 1:24-25).

Consider the vain declaration of Voltaire (1694–1778): “Another century and there will not be a Bible on earth!”? How ridiculous he now looks in light of Jesus’ words, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Mt. 24:35; cf. Ps. 119:89).

The existence of the Jewish people and the Bible prove the existence of God and the eternal influence of His Word.

Under God’s guidance, Jewish people penned, preserved, and proved the Bible. The result is the infallible (1 Ki. 8:56), inexhaustible (Dt. 17:19), and indispensable (Mt. 4:4) Word of God that we call the Bible. Thank you, Israel!

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**Endnotes**

4. Ibid., 34.
7. Ibid.
A stylus in Jesus’ day was a writing tool made of metal, ivory, or bone. The writer would press the pointed end of the stylus down on a waxed-surface tablet. However, a more permanent method of documentation was used for the Bible.

The Hebrew Scriptures were written with an iron pen-like object, possibly on stone or lead (Job 19:24). Clay and leather parchments were also used.

New Testament manuscripts probably were written originally with reed pens on pressed sheets of papyrus fibers. Papyrus was common and inexpensive. A dry reed stalk was cut to a small pen size, sharpened to a point on one end, and slit to dip into ink. The ink was made of lamp-black and gum dissolved in water.

by Peter Colón
In 2009 New Jersey high school student Danielle Flaum decided she couldn’t stand by and do nothing while Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad developed the capability to wipe Israel off the map and threaten the United States with a nuclear holocaust. So she founded the teen group No Nukes for Iran.

Today the movement has chapters in 26 states on both high school and college campuses, and the groundwork is being laid for chapters in South America, Europe, and Israel.

Danielle, now in college, said Ahmadinejad poses the same type of threat as Adolf Hitler who murdered 6 million Jewish people without nuclear weapons.

“Ahmadinejad, armed with the power of nuclear weapons, can definitely be as destructive,” she said.

Danielle started the movement with a few programs and a simple car magnet made available for purchase to raise awareness. At a local event, she met Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren. From that day on, she said, the cause took off.

With guidance from the Israeli embassy, the organization produced banners, buttons, and a website: NoNukesForIran.org. Meetings keep members informed while planning ways to get more people involved in trying to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

A large Jewish newspaper featured No Nukes for Iran in an article that resulted in many people signing a petition on the website. More than 500 buttons were also distributed in Israel.

Danielle believes that crippling Iran’s economy would force the country to halt its nuclear projects and focus on its basic needs. To that end, the group has partnered with United Against Nuclear Iran (UANI), which has successfully pressured multinational corporations to stop doing business with Iran. UANI launched a series of campaigns urging New York area venues to refuse to host Ahmadinejad when he addressed the UN General Assembly in May 2010.

No Nukes for Iran members have gone to synagogues, churches, and other organizations; lobbied legislative officials; and participated in press conferences. Danielle has been heard on the radio and has appeared on television.

She even manned a booth at The Jewish Federation of North America General Assembly meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, where she met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Danielle’s organization also works closely with a group in Israel to distribute the movie Iranium that details the threat America and the world now face. Teens are encouraged to open a local chapter, join an existing chapter, or make a 10- to 15-second video stating their position on Iran for a YouTube video petition that is being prepared, also with the help of the Israel-based group. No Nukes for Iran is also on Facebook.

“We need to care about something bigger than ourselves,” Danielle said. “We must unite and stand up because it’s our future. We want a peaceful world, not terror.”

Recently a number of prominent Israelis each chose a Scripture verse that they felt is significant for today. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu chose Isaiah 2:4: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” Netanyahu explained,

The Bible has a universal aspect, but first and foremost it is the Book of Books for the people of Israel. The Bible captures the hearts and minds of men with its ideals, with faith, and with its unique content. No other book or composition is like the Bible. This verse from Isaiah is our greatest aspiration, but at the moment we do not see these things happening before our eyes. Yet this was and is our sublime goal, one of the goals also of our prophets. We hope that one day true peace will reign among all the nations and no nation will lift up the sword against another.

by Israel Today, www.israeltoday.co.il
Can Christians and Jewish people come together for a joint program supporting Israel without fear, suspicion, or ulterior motives? At The Friends of Israel we have seen this very thing happen at our Thank God for Israel events. We have held them from coast to coast in churches, schools, synagogues, and hotels; and the results are always the same. All who attend leave rejoicing.
The Proof

When we began holding these events many years ago, we discovered that, in addition to encouraging our Jewish friends, they also have a surprisingly positive impact on Christians. Following an event in Detroit, Michigan, I received a telephone call from a woman who told me through her tears, “God broke my heart for Israel yesterday! I am praying more for Israel and the Jewish people now than ever before.”

When I lived in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, our church hosted a Thank God for Israel event. We ran it for two weeks, and our pastor urged us to invite our Jewish friends. After the first week, a man wrote Pastor, “I was skeptical of this idea at first. But after seeing the service today, I am inviting my Jewish friend for next Sunday.”

All three divisions of the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament) show how we as evangelical Christians ought to conduct ourselves toward the Jewish people. In the Torah (Pentateuch), we are told to bless them, not curse them (Gen. 12:3). In the Prophets we are told not to harm them: “For he who touches you [Israel] touches the apple of His [God’s] eye” (Zech. 2:8).

There it is also written, “I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, and give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Isa. 62:6–7).

Finally, the Writings admonish us, “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May they prosper who love you” (Ps. 122:6). The Writings are Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

As Bible believers, we strongly believe these passages. We also believe that holding a Thank God for Israel day complements Scripture’s directives to us, as it touches and changes lives.

The Purpose

A Thank God for Israel event allows a church to encourage its local Jewish community and take a public stand for Israel. Not long ago, a church in suburban Detroit held a Thank God for Israel day for its nearby Russian-Jewish community. During the service a woman approached the platform. “We came from Russia and anti-Semitism,” she told the pastor. “I think you are our very best friends, and I think our relationship will only get closer and closer.”

As she spoke, a murmur went through the crowd because people wanted to hear what she was saying. When she told them she believed the people in that church were her people’s best friends, the entire audience burst into applause.

When a Bible institute held a Thank God for Israel day, a rabbi told the director, “It was amazing, really, how much love was shown to us.” Later, when Bible institute students attended the rabbi’s synagogue for a Sabbath service, he introduced them and told his congregants the school is a true friend of the Jewish community.

In 2004 we held a Thank God for Israel day in South Bend, Indiana. We had a wonderful time as 10 churches and two synagogues participated. Two years later, following the 2006 Second Lebanon War in Israel, one of the rabbis requested another Thank God for Israel day to bring hope and encouragement to the community. As a result, either a Thank God for Israel day or a Standing With Israel night occurs annually in South Bend.

The Participants

Those who attend these events quickly make their opinions known. Here are some comments: “What I saw last night wasn’t about politics or economics but something much deeper. It was from the heart, something that won’t be shaken.” (Honolulu, Hawaii)

“This is the greatest day in my Jewish life.” (South Bend, Indiana)

“This was spectacular!” (Detroit, Michigan)

“I am eager to hear more after what I have heard here tonight.” (Cincinnati, Ohio)

These comments reflect only a small portion of the thoughts and feelings of those who attend a Thank God for Israel event, but they show the impact this outreach has had.

At first, people may be skeptical. But afterward, both Christians and Jewish people feel a sincere appreciation for one another that, Lord willing, will last a lifetime. Thank God for Israel forges an alliance and strengthens ties between the Jewish and Christian communities; it builds bridges, increases understanding, and touches hearts. And that is a result we can all live with.

Our closest Jewish friends started arriving 45 minutes before the start time of our first Thank God for Israel celebration. They were smiling, waving, and hugging and were excited about the evening. Next came our Jewish acquaintances. They were quiet, guarded, and wary—not sure what was about to transpire.

Our teen choir started the evening with the Israeli national anthem, “HaTikva,” sung in a much-practiced and nearly flawless Hebrew. As the program progressed and our guests realized that a Baptist church was indeed offering friendship and support, polite and restrained applause turned into enthusiastic standing ovations.

Highlights of the evening were warm and heartfelt speeches by a local rabbi who said he never dreamed it possible that Christians would welcome Jewish people and affirm their love and support for the State of Israel, and by U.S. Congresswoman Shelley Berkley (D-NV) who said she was pleased to be a part of something so “unique” and “wonderful.”

An amazing 187 of the 300 people in attendance were Jewish. In the days that followed, we received countless calls and messages from our Jewish friends, all so pleased to have been a part of the event. It was an incredible and unforgettable evening in Las Vegas, Nevada.

—Jonathan Craft, with The Friends of Israel in Nevada
It was the first time in the history of the Mayerson Jewish Community Center of Cincinnati, Ohio, that any Christian group had been invited to its facility to share the platform with the Jewish leadership. The evening, titled "Standing Together: An Evening for Christian-Jewish Support of Israel," was cosponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council of Cincinnati, the Cincinnati Jewish Federation, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry.

The American Israelite, the largest weekly Jewish newspaper in the United States, ran a full-page article promoting the event. Two Hebrew Union College students presented about 30 minutes of Jewish folk music before the start of the program and then led in the singing of the "Star-Spangled Banner" and Israel's national anthem, "HaTikvah."

We had prepared for 130 people. The day of the event, seating was increased to 150. However, 15 minutes before the program began, we were already out of seats and had to set up for an additional 60 people—and still there were some who had to stand.

So on the evening of November 4, 2010, a total of 220 people—a mixture of Jewish people and Christians—fellowshiped together and stood in solidarity with the State of Israel.

We were encouraged and impressed by the positive, grateful responses we received from those who attended. One lady told me, "I cried through the entire program because it was the first time in my life that I heard there were Christians who truly loved us and cared about us instead of just wanting to hate us or kill us!" We praise God, for He truly answers prayer.

—Robert Johnssee, with The Friends of Israel in Ohio
Covenant Theology is the dominant theological system of most mainline Protestant churches and maintains that God has replaced the Jewish people with the church. On the basis of two or three “covenants” that are found nowhere in the Bible, it claims that Christians are now God’s chosen people and that the Jewish people have no claim to the land of Israel.

When examining this theology, what matters most is whether it can stand when tested by Scripture. It cannot.

What God’s Word Actually Says

♦ God’s Word says the church began after Christ. Jesus Christ said, “I will build [future tense] My church” (Mt. 16:18). Christ was looking to a future day when the church would begin. Clearly, it had not yet begun or He would not have used the future tense. So the church must begin after Matthew 16. It began at Pentecost with the baptism of the Holy Spirit whom Christ promised to send after He was gone (Jn 14:16–17; Acts 1:8).

First Corinthians 12:13 says all believers are put into the church through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, when Peter referred to Pentecost in Acts 11:15, he called it “the beginning.” Obviously, he meant the beginning of the church.1

♦ God’s Word distinguishes between Israel and the church. In the Old Testament, Israel was a nation. In the New Testament, the church is never called a nation but, rather, an assembly or gathering of believers from many nations. Saved Jews in the Old Testament were never called the church, but they are part of the church in the New Testament. For example, Paul said, “Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks [Gentiles] or to the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32). The words Jews and Greeks encompass all the unsaved (unredeemed). The words church of God refer to the saved, which include both Jews and Greeks.2

♦ Scripture calls Israel the wife of God (Isa. 54:5–6) but calls the church the Bride of Christ (Rev. 21:9; 22:17). These concepts are never interchanged. They refer to two distinctly different relationships.

♦ God’s Word says there will be seven years of tribulation following the Rapture of the church. Covenant Theology claims there is no need for the Tribulation and no need to restore the nation of Israel and bring it to repentance because God is finished with Israel. According to Covenant Theology, there also is no reason for God to judge the Gentile nations for their treatment of the Jewish people.

Scripture begs to differ. Paul taught that the church will be caught up before the wrath of the Day of the Lord (1 Th. 4:16–17). In 1 Thessalonians 1:10, he spoke of our waiting for God to send His Son from heaven, “even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” First Thessalonians 5:9 says, “For God did not appoint us to wrath.”

The Tribulation is a literal seven years, according to Daniel 9. The Antichrist will usher in that period by entering into a covenant with Israel. Divine judgment will flood the earth. Revelation 6—18 explains God’s twofold purpose: to punish the Gentiles and bring Israel to reconciling faith in the Messiah.

The prophet Jeremiah referred to the Tribulation as “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7). He said Jewish men will hold their loins like women in labor because of the great trouble on Earth. Christ referred to the time as “great tribulation,” the greatest trouble the earth has ever seen (Mt. 24:21). Unless God stopped it, He said, no one would survive. It will culminate at the battle of Armageddon (Joel 3:9–17; Rev. 16:14–16), in which Satan will bring the armies of the world against Israel to destroy the Jewish nation. Then Christ will return to deliver Israel (Zech. 14:1–5; 2 Th. 2:8; Rev. 19:11–21).

♦ God’s Word promises Christ will rule from His throne for a literal 1,000 years. Covenant Theology, of course, sees no reason for this. Covenant theologians have developed two views that spiritualize the texts. The first is Amillennialism. Augustine developed it about 400 years after the church began. It maintains the Church Age merely continues until Christ returns to judge all men and then take believers to the eternal future. The second view is Postmillennialism. It takes what it considers to be a more positive outlook: The church will continue until the entire world becomes Christian, thereby opening the door for Christ to return to take all believers to the new heavens and new earth. Both these views are contrary to the explicit Word of God.

Six times in the first seven verses of Revelation 20 there are references to the 1,000-year reign of Christ here on Earth. God promises to establish His Kingdom on Earth with the Messiah sitting on the throne to rule over Israel (Isa. 9:6–7; 11:1–2; Lk. 1:31–33) and the nations (Ps. 72:8–11; Dan. 7:13–14; Zech. 14:9). The Bible says Messiah will govern as God’s King—God’s representative to do God’s will (Ps. 72:8; Zech. 14:9; Rev. 11:15). Since the time Adam
fell in sin, there was no qualified human representative to administer His rule until Jesus came. When Jesus returns, His purpose will be to reestablish the theocratic Kingdom on Earth. The beginning of the Millennial Kingdom is called a time of restoration of all things, a season of refreshing (Acts 3:18–21). Christ referred to it as the time of regeneration, in which He will restore the environment to its pre-sin condition. He will do away with droughts, wars, pestilence, disease, and illness and bring the world back to the way it existed before man sinned (Isa. 2:2–4; 9:6–7; 11:2–5, 6–9; 33:24; 35:5–6; 55:13; Ezek. 34:25–29; 47:1–12).

Covenant Theology is a fabrication based on supposed covenants found nowhere in Scripture. However, the Bible does have covenants that are clearly defined. They include the Abrahamic Covenant, the Land Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant. We do not have to say that God implied these covenants; they are all recorded. They are clearly defined in Scripture. They were all initiated by God. They were given to the Jewish people, and they see their ultimate fulfillment through Israel. They also are unbreakable because their fulfillment is not based on Israel’s obedience but on God’s faithfulness. And they are everlasting covenants (Gen. 17:7–8, 19; Ps. 105:8–11).

These covenants guarantee that Israel will be restored to the Promised Land as a nation and its place of blessing. Someday all of Israel will be regenerated. The Messiah will return to establish God’s Millennial Kingdom on Earth and will rule from His throne in Jerusalem. And Israel will be the most blessed nation on the earth (Isa. 2:1–4; 60:1–3; 61:4–9; Zeph. 3:20; Zech. 8:23). All this will happen because God clearly says so in His Word. And His Word will endure forever!

Continued next issue

ENDNOTES

1 Renald E. Showers, There Really is a Difference (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1990), 171, 180.
2 Ibid., 183–6.
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Inside the IDF: The Most Humane Army in the World

Clockwise from left: Col. Gruber (left) in the field (Courtesy, Frederic Brenner). Booby-trapped Palestinian kitchen. Col. Gruber ministers to young people through his Chesed in the Field project (Courtesy, Bentzi Gruber).
**Situation 1.** Your mission is to bomb a house in enemy territory occupied by known terrorists. Inside they have stockpiled an enormous cache of munitions solely for use against your country. Seconds before you drop the bomb, you notice from your airplane that people are gathering on the roof. What do you do? Do you bomb the house and risk killing the people? Do you abandon the mission? You have eight seconds to decide.

**Situation 2.** Your mission is to fire a missile and destroy a jeep driving a group of known terrorists who have already murdered many of your countrymen. Suddenly the jeep begins to turn into the enclosed carport of a building in enemy territory. You know nothing about the building. Is it a school? A nursing home? Who is inside? What do you do? Do you bomb the vehicle and risk killing the people inside? Do you abandon the mission? You have eight seconds to decide.

**Situation 3.** Your mission is to kill a known terrorist in enemy territory who is fleeing with his AK-47 assault rifle. He spots you. Suddenly he runs over to a group of children wearing backpacks who look like they’re waiting for a school bus. With his right hand, he randomly snatches a little boy by the back of the shirt collar with such force that he jerks him off the ground. AK-47 in one hand, child in the other, he runs for cover into a crowd. They don’t dress like soldiers, wearing backpacks who look like men have the luxury of being civilians.

Gruber, a tall, well-spoken, handsome man in his 50s, is married with five children. He is a computer engineer working on his doctoral thesis in behavioral science. But in Israel, few men have the luxury of being civilians. In a country as small as New Jersey, a scant six miles separate Samaria (West Bank) and the Mediterranean Sea. Furthermore, 600 million Muslims surround Israel’s 5.6 million Jews. So Israel must always fight to protect itself from well-armed enemies sworn to its destruction.

Gruber is a 30-year career veteran with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). He has 20,000 soldiers under his command, has seen much combat, and knows first-hand how diligently Israel protects enemy noncombatants despite news reports that paint the Israelis as murderers. In an effort to get the truth out, he put together a presentation, “Ethics in the Field,” using aerial footage shot from Israeli airplanes and, in many cases, film shot by the Palestinians themselves who regularly video suicide bombers leaving on their missions.

“We don’t want to kill civilians,” Gruber said. So prior to situation 1, where a building in Gaza was the target, the IDF dropped thousands of leaflets in various languages 48 hours in advance of the strike, telling the Palestinians when the building would be bombed and to evacuate. Then the Israelis made telephone calls and sent text messages. Usually they obtain the numbers of most people in the neighborhood. This is standard Israeli procedure.

“It’s unthinkable,” said Gruber, “for an army to tell the enemy in advance when you are going to attack. But we do it to avoid collateral damage. We risk our own lives to protect the Palestinians.”

However, the Palestinians have figured out a way to take advantage of Israel’s mercy. When the hour for the attack approaches, they gather on the roof of the targeted building, knowing the IDF will then not bomb it. So Israel invented a procedure called “knocking on the roof.” It shoots a rocket at the roof’s edge as a warning that the big bomb is coming next. Then the Palestinians scatter.

In situation 2, when the jeep filled with terrorists detoured into the carport, the Israeli soldier in charge had eight seconds to divert the rocket; it exploded in a barren area. “This happens hundreds of times,” Gruber said. The terrorists got away.

“We are taking the risk,” he said. “The goal isn’t to kill for what someone did in the past, but to prevent him from doing something in the future.”

In situation 3, the terrorist who grabbed the little boy also got away. When terrorists know they are being pursued through the streets, “they send [Palestinian] kids outside to play football [soccer] because they know we won’t shoot,” Gruber said.

He explained that Israel has two main rules with regard to collateral damage: (1) use force only to accomplish the mission and (2) don’t harm the innocent—meaning women, children, civilians, and noncombatants.

However, determining who is a non-combatant is not always easy. The Palestinians, Gruber said, purposely wear jeans, T-shirts, and anything else that makes them indistinguishable within a crowd. They don’t dress like soldiers, as the Israelis do. Furthermore, when one gets killed or injured, another quickly snatches away the weapon to make it look as though the IDF shot an unarmed civilian. It’s all there on film.

Gruber also showed footage of what looked like an ordinary bathroom in a home in the Gaza Strip until IDF soldiers removed the sink’s cabinet, exposing a well-concealed tunnel and hundreds of explosives, including liquid TNT. The residents also took advantage of the leaflet drop and used the 48 hours advance notice to booby-trap the kitchen.

Smuggling-tunnels, Gruber said, are big business. Four families in Rafah, located in the southern part of the Gaza Strip, own 900 tunnels so big the Palestinians drive through in trucks and jeeps, smuggling weapons. “They are like the Holland Tunnel” in New York City, he said.
Gruber also showed film of a clearly marked UN ambulance with two terrorists already inside. Seven more climbed in with their weapons. He said the UN has a yearly budget of $1.3 billion in Gaza, and from it came the ambulance driver’s salary and the funds to maintain and gas up the vehicle.

“We send everything to Gaza,” Gruber said, “including food and medicine. Thirty-five percent of the electricity in Gaza comes from our power station in Ashkelon [Israel], which they try to hit every day with their rockets.”

Unfortunately, being in a constant state of semi-war is taking its toll. Yet the tiny Jewish state will not compromise its principles or stoop to the level of the terrorists. Col. Gruber said post-traumatic stress is a serious problem, and the nation loses 45 soldiers a year to suicide—that would be the equivalent of 2,500 American soldiers. Most had unavoidably caused collateral damage and could not live with the memory. “When you kill an innocent person, you carry that person on your back for the rest of your life,” Gruber said.

In fact, Col. Gruber has founded an organization called Chesed (Hebrew for “lovingkindness” or “mercy”) in the Field that brings together IDF soldiers and the terminally ill or disabled for experiences that educate and inspire. “When our soldiers are good people, that is when we have a strong army and secure country,” he says on his website, bentzigruber.com.

Gruber has spoken at Harvard, the University of California at Berkeley, and at a host of other American universities that are overtly unfriendly to Israel. Yet he continues to bring his message. “When you hear the lies, you need courage to stand up.”

“It is a privilege for me,” he said, “to be in the army to protect my family, to protect Israel, and to protect the Western world.”

Lorna Simcox
is editor-in-chief
for The Friends of Israel.
If you are 18 or older and would like to volunteer your time, effort, and resources to help the people of Israel, then you may want to join us in March as we go to the Promised Land on our first Hesed Project trip.

Headed by The Friends of Israel Executive Vice President James A. Showers, the Hesed Project is an exciting, new, Christian adult-volunteer program in Israel that gives Bible believers an opportunity to help the Jewish people in a practical way and make friendships that will last a lifetime.

The project’s name comes from the Old Testament Hebrew word hesed (pronounced heh'-said), which means “lovingkindness.” Unlike our biannual Up to Jerusalem trips, the Hesed Project is designed to provide extra hands to help Israelis tackle manual labor tasks, while giving believers an opportunity to perform acts of lovingkindness and live out God’s instruction in Genesis 12:3 to bless the Jewish people.

Hesed volunteers may be asked to garden, clean equipment or buildings, paint furniture or rooms, organize storage areas, wash dishes or floors, or do a host of other manual tasks. “We’ll work at the direction of the Israelis, doing whatever they assign,” said Showers.

Since a typical work week in Israel is Sunday through Thursday, that’s when Hesed Project volunteers will work. However, on Fridays and Saturdays they will attend worship services and do a little sightseeing.

The first Hesed Project will be a two-week stint at the Kaplan Medical Center in Rehovot, a major regional medical complex serving people in the south of Israel. However, the project can accommodate participants who can only serve for one of the two weeks.

The hotel will provide breakfast and dinner. Lunch will be provided on site or can be acquired nearby. Transportation will be provided between the hotel and job site.

“This would be a great way for a parent and adult child, or grandparent and adult grandchild, to serve the Lord together,” Showers said. “There is nothing better than taking your beliefs and putting them into action as a family.”

Interested believers must fill out an application and medical reference form and provide a referral from a pastor or ministry leader. The Friends of Israel will notify all applicants as to whether they have been accepted.

Showers said the number of positions is extremely limited. “We will not be able to accommodate all who apply. Certainly, those who apply sooner have a better chance of being accepted.”

The Hesed Project’s first trip is scheduled for March 9 through 24. The cost of the trip is $3,650 per person. Since this is a ministry, participants may raise support that is tax-deductible to the donor to defray the cost.

For more information or to obtain an application, log on to www.foi.org/hesed. Or call The Friends of Israel at 800-257-7843 to request a Hesed Project brochure and application be mailed to you.
In February 2011 the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit did a regretfully predictable thing: It upheld a lower court ruling that an Ohio judge cannot post the content of the Ten Commandments in his courtroom. The case has gone to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Church/state legal disputes about the Decalogue are common today. But beneath such issues lies a larger question: What relationship is there between the Ten Commandments and the history of American law? The answer is that the relationship is substantial; and the United States should be grateful to the Jewish people for being the conduit through which God gave the Ten Commandments, which have significantly influenced the system of American jurisprudence.

When George Washington delivered his First Inaugural Address as president of the United States in 1789, he affirmed that America’s laws must be based on the private morality of its citizens; and that morality, in turn, must be based on biblical principles—“the external rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained.” It is ironic that an argument even has to be made concerning the Decalogue’s sizable impact on America’s judicial system. After all, inside the Supreme Court chambers, in open view, is a frieze of Moses with the Ten Commandments.

David Barton of WallBuilders.com, a good friend and astute historian of Christianity’s influence on early America, has documented the commandments’ importance in the nation’s development of law and government. He outlined much of it in an extensive affidavit for a lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union against McCreary County, Kentucky, regarding the public posting of the Ten Commandments.

The U.S. Supreme Court in 2005 decided the case unfavorably. In his dissenting opinion, Justice Antonin Scalia said it is illogical to ban the Decalogue from public buildings and noted the “popular understanding that the Ten Commandments are a foundation of the rule of law, and a symbol of the role that...
Old Testament Rules for Criminal Procedure

Both the Hebrew Scriptures and Mishnah, the first-century rabbinical commentaries that interpreted those Scriptures, contain an impressive catalog of legal protections for the accused in a criminal case. Their resemblance to American criminal procedure is unmistakable. Because Leviticus 24 demands uniformity of law in criminal cases, the Mishnah required that, in both capital (death-penalty) and noncapital crimes, the judicial process regarding examination of witnesses and process of inquiry be fundamentally the same. Uniformity of criminal process is a hallmark of Western law.

In capital cases, the Mishnah required more judges for conviction; and evidence for acquittal had to be considered first, creating, in effect, a presumption of innocence and placing the burden of proof on those arguing for guilt. Guilty verdicts required a majority vote. However, in capital cases, a super majority was required.

In capital crime cases, arguments for guilt could be reversed, but not arguments for acquittal. Once an argument for acquittal was made, the arguer was barred from advancing any evidence of his innocence to come forward. If such evidence surfaced, the sentence would be stayed; and the case could be reopened.

The Supreme Court has acknowledged the Bible’s influence on the American judicial process. In Taylor v. Kentucky, 436 U.S. 478, 483 (1978), the court traced the presumption of innocence “from Deuteronomy through Roman law, English common law, and the common law of the United States.”

In Memorial Hosp. v. Maricopa County, 415 U.S. 250, 261 (1974), the court emphasized the need for uniformity in the law as applied to all citizens and linked it to Leviticus 24:22.

When the Supreme Court affirmed the right of an accused to exercise his privilege against self-incrimination in Miranda v. Arizona, 384 U.S. 436, 458–59 (1966), it noted that the “roots” of such a right stretch all the way back to Maimonides (famous 12th-century Jewish rabbi and philosopher) and his Mishnah Torah and the preceding first-century Jewish Sanhedrin.

In Griffin v. Illinois, 351 U.S. 12, 16–17 (1956), when the Supreme Court affirmed the concept of equal justice for poor and rich alike, it quoted Leviticus 19:15.7

The Law As Spiritual Schoolmaster

It is a travesty that some in our culture want to deny the significant contribution that the Bible and the Ten Commandments, in particular, have made to American law. Sadly, most law schools in our country have been willing conspirators in this enterprise. The result is not merely historical ignorance; it is the erasure of our moral and legal first principles. Once the ship of law has lost its compass and rudder, it not only ceases to interpret the law in a fair and predictable manner, but it also loses the very instruments that can prevent it from drifting into dangerous, uncharted territory.

Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 teach that the purpose of government and law is to promote good and restrain evil. When we lose all memory of the fact that God instituted government and that His laws are morally binding, we can no longer define the difference between what is good and what is evil.

Yet there is another tragic consequence. The apostle Paul argued in Galatians that we are (1) all under the law of God and (2) all guilty under the law as transgressors and sinners. Yet by God’s grace and through the exercise of faith in Messiah Jesus as the final sacrifice for sin, we can be saved from condemnation. He came to redeem people who are lost in trespasses and sin—meaning everyone (Ps. 14:2–3; Rom. 3:23). But we can hardly be ready to repent and acknowledge our sin and our need for a Redeemer if we have willingly blinded ourselves to the possibility that we have transgressed. We can’t seek forgiveness for having broken God’s law if we refuse to believe that He has delivered it to us in the first place.

God used the Jewish people to reveal His moral law to the world through the Ten Commandments. Unfortunately, we are moving farther away from God in every respect. And when America forgets the Lawgiver and His law, it faces a double tragedy: it not only shows itself to be lawless, but it also shows itself to be lost.
There is no greater declaration of love than “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (Jn. 3:16). Each year as December unfolds, our world is caught up in all that it believes makes the celebration of Christmas special. There are presents to be purchased, cards to be written, and parties to attend with family and friends. Yet these things are not what the holiday is about.

Christmas is about God’s love, first promised centuries ago to a faithful man named Abraham who, at the Lord’s instruction, departed “Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan” (Gen. 11:31). The Lord promised Abraham many wonderful things, including, “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (12:3).

Through Abraham, God promised to manifest His love to humanity. His promise revealed a hint of what was ultimately to become the incarnation: God Himself becoming man in the person of the Messiah.

The Lord established a covenant with Abraham, making him the progenitor of the Jewish people: “I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly” (17:2). Abraham and Sarah were childless. But God is omnipotent; and the following year, when Abraham was 100 and Sarah 90, He blessed them with a son. God told them to name the baby Isaac; and the Lord declared, “I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him” (v. 19).

God then gave the promise to Isaac’s son Jacob (28:13–14). Later He revealed the Messiah would come from Jacob’s son Judah (49:10) and, ultimately, from Judah’s descendant King David (1 Sam. 13:14). To David God said, “Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:16).

Long after David was dead, the promise lived on: The prophet Isaiah declared, “There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse [David’s father], and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (Isa. 11:1). “For unto us a Child is born [speaks of Messiah’s humanity], unto us a Son is given [addresses His deity]” (9:6).

The Lord had created an entirely new nation, the nation of Israel, to bring to the world the reality of the one true God, His Word, and His love.

That love appeared on the first Christmas night in the form of a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger (Lk. 2:7). Divine love is the message the angel shared with the shepherds who were “keeping watch over their flock by night.” “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (2:8, 10–11).

Though argued by some to be accurate, December 25 may not be the exact day when the long-promised Messiah entered time and space in the manger of Bethlehem. However, the fact that there remains a day to remember and commemorate His arrival is truly appropriate because, on that night, God gave to a world of sin-laden people a Savior, a sin-bearer, who was God Himself.

The Almighty created the Jewish nation as His special treasure to bring a final remedy for sin to a hopeless, needy world. His gift of salvation through the Messiah is free to all: As many as receive Him, to them He gives the right “to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (Jn. 1:12).

This Christmas, as we celebrate God’s sacrificial love, we should also thank Him for His beloved people Israel, through whom He brought our Redeemer. “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Ps. 122:6).

*by Thomas C. Simcox, Northeastern States director for The Friends of Israel.*
It’s rarely easy being Jewish. From the time the Babylonians destroyed Solomon’s Temple in 586 B.C., the Jewish people have been under Gentile domination. Even today every country on Earth thinks it has the right to tell the State of Israel what to do—where to place its capital, where it can build housing for its people, and how much force it can use to defend itself. The list goes on.

For centuries the Jews have suffered persecution, torture, and murder; yet God preserves them because He loves them (Dt. 7:8; Rom. 11:28). And they continue to be an example to the world of perseverance in the face of adversity.

At sundown on December 20, Jewish people around the world will begin the eight-day celebration of Hanukkah by lighting the first of eight Hanukkah candles. Most of us know the story of Hanukkah. In the second century B.C., the evil Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV, tried to assimilate the Jewish people into Greek culture and destroy Judaism. He forbade circumcision and Torah study, desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem by sacrificing a pig on the altar, dedicated the Temple to Zeus, and murdered anyone who did not conform. Some estimate he killed more than 100,000 Jews. He was so wicked and depraved that he is considered a type of the future Antichrist in the book of Daniel.

In the village of Modiin in Judea, the Jewish priest Mattathias refused to cooperate. He and his five sons, one of whom became known as Judah the Maccabee, courageously stood up for truth. They killed the soldiers trying to force them to forsake Yahweh and led a rebellion that resulted in the Jewish people retaking the Temple in 165 B.C. and restoring worship of the one true God: the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

When Mattathias and his sons decided to defy the authorities, they had no idea how things would turn out. They could easily have been killed. Yet they decided they would rather die fighting for truth and freedom than debase themselves serving a false god.

Today many Christians around the world find themselves in a similar situation. In fact, Christian persecution is so severe that Raymond Ibrahim, with the David Horowitz Freedom Center and Middle East Forum, has begun writing a monthly column about it. “Most religious persecution in the Muslim world is by far directed against Christians,” he wrote.

The accounts he provides can make you cry. Wrote Ibrahim, “Then there are the countless atrocities that never make it to any media—the stories of persistent, quiet misery that never make it to any media—the stories of persistent, quiet misery that never make it to any media—the stories of persistent, quiet misery that never make it to any media—the stories of persistent, quiet misery that never make it to any media—the stories of persistent, quiet misery that never make it to any media.”

More Christians are dying for their faith today than at any other time in history. Only God Himself knows how many are taking a page from the Maccabees’ book and putting devotion to the true and living God over the expediency of converting to Islam.

Hanukkah is a story of Jewish courage, of men who stood for truth despite the cost and of almighty God who blessed their efforts. As the lights of Hanukkah burn brightly in windows this holiday season, may we Christians remember the Maccabees’ bravery and pray for our persecuted brethren, asking God to give us the same courage to stand up for our faith.

by Lorna Simcox
Israel’s economy is booming. Every year thousands of evangelicals around the world contribute to that economy by traveling there. Israel’s demography is growing. Every year evangelicals donate millions of dollars to organizations that help thousands of Jewish people make aliya (immigrate) to Israel.

Israel’s allies are dwindling. Yet their most faithful and loyal friends are probably evangelicals who are not afraid to speak up on their behalf. Many evangelicals love Israel, and Jewish people wonder why.

Evangelical support is driven by Scripture, which is why some Jewish people question Christian motives. They admit to being limited in their knowledge of the “Christian” Bible; but what they know—or think they know—is that, in the last days, they lose.

Here is a typical Jewish explanation of the Christian view of Israel’s future: A massive, worldwide Jewish aliyah occurs, bringing all Jewish people back to the land of Israel. Soon they are slaughtered as punishment for their rejection of Jesus when He came the first time. Jesus returns a second time, and all the people left on Earth convert to Christianity.

Consequently, many Jewish people believe Christian support for Israel is a ruse to expedite Jewish aliyah and see them annihilated. That is also why Jewish people often think, Christians want to complete what Adolf Hitler and the Nazis began.

### Setting the Record Straight

Christians are shocked to hear that anyone would think such things. First of all, most evangelicals believe Israel’s future, as well as that of all humanity, was determined by God in ages past and recorded in the Bible: “Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done. . . . Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it” (Isa. 46:9–11).

Second, God’s plans cannot be hastened by human action. Israel’s future is prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures—the same Scriptures read by both Bible-believing Jews and Bible-believing Christians. And events will transpire when, where, and how God dictates.

Differences center on the identity and arrival of the Messiah. Teddy Kollek, late mayor of Jerusalem, put it this way: “When the Messiah comes we will ask, ‘Sir, is this your first time here or your second?’”

Third, and perhaps most important, is the fact that the Messiah is not coming to destroy the Jewish people at His arrival; He is coming to rescue them. Both Old and New Testaments speak of a vile anti-Semite disguised as a popular, smooth-tongued politician who will rule the world in the last days. He will be evil incarnate and use every means available to rid the earth of God’s Chosen People and establish his own demonic throne for eternity.

God, however, will not let that happen. Great tribulation will fill the earth during this time, and more than 50 percent of the world’s population will perish (Rev. 6—19). Such is the price of worldwide war, famine, and pestilence.

When the Jewish people need Him most, God the Father will send the Messiah back to Earth to rescue them and reestablish the throne of King David of Israel, which will endure forever: “The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the [Messianic] kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these [Gentile] kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Dan. 2:44).

Israel’s Messiah, who is the world’s Savior, will sit on King David’s throne. His abilities will exceed David’s, and His wisdom will exceed King Solomon’s. He will establish world peace and replace poverty with prosperity, disease with good health, and famine with plenty. Humanity will finally enjoy peace, long life, and abundance.

Our eschatology is driven by the belief that the Jewish prophets accurately foretold Israel’s future, as they were told it by God. Scripture points to a Messiah who would be the “seed” of a woman (Gen. 3:15).

Since only men are spoken of as having seed, this prophecy implies no man would be involved in His conception. He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14) as a member of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10) and as a descendant of David. He also would become the only acceptable sacrifice for the payment of man’s sins (Isa. 53:5, 8), be raised from the dead (vv. 10–12), and become the only Intercessor between man and God because He would be the God-Man (9:6). Someday He will return to sit on an eternal throne (2 Sam. 7:16); and that is good news indeed.

The prophet Zechariah explained that when the Lord (the God-Man) returns to fight for Israel, His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4). He will come “with power and great glory” (Mt. 24:30) and with fire in His eyes and judgment in his mouth (Rev. 19:11–12).

He will come as the Lion of Judah to destroy Israel’s enemies. King David wrote prophetically about Jesus coming to rule:

> Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory (Ps. 24:7–8, 10).

The future of Israel and the Jewish people is not a lost cause. It is, rather, a glorious certainty guaranteed by God (Jer. 31:35–37). Christians can do nothing to hasten Christ’s Second Coming; we can merely wait prayerfully and expectantly for Him to come, while we communicate the truth about Christ to those around us.
A few weeks before Easter this year, Susan was playing a video game in the privacy of her own home. She had received an opponent by sending her signal out into cyberspace. She didn’t know if she was playing against a man or woman, boy or girl.

Things were going well until there was a lull in the action, and her opponent asked, “Do you want to hear a joke?”

“Sure,” she replied.

The “joke” turned out to be so extremely anti-Semitic that Susan, who is 23, was shocked. She barely knew what to do. “That’s horrible!” she replied. “I had family who died in the Holocaust, and I don’t think that’s funny!”

To which the person on the other end replied, “That’s what they get for killing Christ.”

I was appalled when I heard this story. As a pastor, I have tried to lead my congregants to love the Jewish people and have urged them to understand Jewish history, culture, customs, and worship.

That’s why we celebrate holidays that some churches might find unusual, and God has used these events to produce a flock that loves Israel and understands its biblical place in God’s plan for the ages.

I would like to think that no one in my church would call the Jewish people “Christ-killers.” Jesus said, “I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (Jn. 10:17–18). No one killed Christ. He willingly gave His life as a final sacrifice for sin.

My church observes Passover. Tom Simcox, with The Friends of Israel, came to my church three years in a row to host a Passover seder. I became so engrossed in the celebration and so fascinated by the details that I wanted to lead one myself. Tom trained me, and we now host our own Passover observance annually.

Church members organize, cook, and promote the event, to which we invite the community. We learn and grow together as we walk step-by-step through the details and the seder dinner. We learn as we eat the bitter herbs and unleavened bread. The children laugh and shout as they search for the afikomen. We reflect as we drink the
four cups of sanctification, praise, redemption, and acceptance.

Together we have come to see the Messiah in the Passover celebration. Our own monthly Lord’s supper observance has become more meaningful, as we consider the traditions and culture of the Passover table.

Our church has celebrated Purim. Purim commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish nation from destruction at the hands of the ancient Persians. Our understanding of the book of Esther has deepened through this celebration. With Tom’s help, congregants organized, cooked, and invited the community. People in my church baked hundreds of hamantaschen (triangular, fruit-filled pastries). They even produced a play based on the story of Queen Esther, Mordecai (hero of the book of Esther), and the wicked Haman.

The children especially enjoyed this celebration, which has games and events just for them. We have even learned a few tips about Purim parties from local synagogues. It is a great time of rejoicing, and we have developed a greater appreciation for the divine preservation of the Jewish people through the ages.

We’ve also celebrated Hanukkah, called the Feast of Dedication in John 10:22. Jesus participated in this tradition: “Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon’s porch” (vv. 22–23).

The menorah lights, the holiday songs, and the story of the Maccabean revolt against the evil Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV in the second century B.C. teach us Jewish history and culture and remind us how important it is to stand for truth. The latkes (potato pancakes) fried in oil remind us that there was found oil for the Temple lamp sufficient for only one day. Jewish tradition states that the oil lasted eight days until more was ready.

Folks in my church handmade hundreds of latkes, and we enjoyed the fellowship of eating them together (with applesauce and sour cream, of course!) and learning about this important intertestamental period.

I have found that there’s no better way to help a congregation understand and appreciate the Old Testament than by preparing for and conducting these events in our church.

A few of us also have celebrated Tu B’Shevat. Since the 15th century A.D., Tu B’Shevat has commemorated the coming of spring in the Holy Land. It strengthens the ties between Israel and Jewish people living in other countries and is a demonstration of loyalty to the Holy Land.

Children in my church provided funds to plant 100 trees in Israel. One of my sons, who was eight at the time, presented the check to a rabbi who is a friend of mine. He nearly wept as he accepted it and bent to kiss my son on the cheek. It was a tender moment for all of us, as well as a tangible statement of our church’s solidarity with Israel and its children.

The epitome of all of these experiences has been my involvement in Thank God for Israel events. I have participated in them in banquet rooms and in houses of worship. They have been a highlight of my ministry, as I am able to communicate my gratitude to and love for the Jewish people. Some years ago, Tom Simcox and I organized a Thank God for Israel event at a local synagogue. For generations Christians entered Jewish homes and houses of worship to torture and destroy. We had the privilege to enter to express gratitude, support, and love.

A few years ago I had lunch with an elderly Jewish friend. I invited him to visit our church and assured him he would be warmly received. His expression became grave as he leaned over the table and looked me in the eye. With extreme seriousness he asked, “Don’t you think I’m a ‘Christ-killer”? Don’t you consider all Jews ‘Christ-killers’?”


My entire church came to love him dearly, and I was privileged to speak at his funeral.

It is a tragedy today that so many churches fail to educate their congregations about Jewish history and culture.

They miss out on the joy and richness that can be theirs when studying the Old Testament. God is true to His Word. As He promised Abraham, “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). We have truly been blessed.

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Faith
at Jericho

After 400 years in Egyptian captivity, the Israelites prepared to enter the Promised Land. The Lord commanded Moses to send one representative from each of the 12 tribes to search out the land of Canaan. Ten of the spies returned with a bad report and plunged the nation into sin: “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we... and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight” (Num. 13:31-33). Only Joshua and Caleb had faith in both God’s promise and power to deliver the land to Israel (14:6-8).

The Lord pardoned Israel’s sin of unbelief, but He made the nation wander 40 years in the wilderness until the generation coming out of Egypt died (vv. 20-38). Only Caleb and Joshua survived.

Hebrews 11 says nothing of Israel’s wilderness wandering and jumps directly from the Red Sea crossing (v. 29) to the nation’s exercise of faith at Jericho (v. 30)—probably because Israel exhibited little faith during its 40 years in the desert.

A Commander’s Faith

Though Hebrews does not mention Joshua, he was a tower of faith in Israel’s odyssey. His character was impeccable, never marred by scandal or sin during the years he served the Lord under Moses. His life, in fact, is filled with lessons on how to live vigorously and victoriously by faith.

Joshua was selected to serve Moses as a leader during Israel’s wilderness wandering. He was with Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:13), and he faithfully submitted to Moses’ leadership until Moses died. Joshua was also a soldier, chosen by Moses to lead Israel in vanquishing the Amalekites (17:8-16). God chose Joshua to succeed Moses, and Moses charged Joshua to be a strong and courageous leader because God promised to use him to bring Israel into the Promised Land (Dt. 31:14, 23).

For the task, God gave Joshua supernatural skills, empowering him by filling him with the “spirit of wisdom” (34:9). Joshua implemented the spiritual strategy God gave him, waiting patiently until God parted the Jordan River so that Israel could cross into the land. Once there, he circumcised the men, kept the Passover, and received divine instructions from the Commander of the Lord’s army before invading Jericho (Josh. 5).

A Conquering Faith

Concerning Jericho’s destruction, Hebrews briefly states, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days” (11:30).

Jericho is 853 feet below sea level. It is located four miles west of the Jordan River and is known as the City of Palm Trees. The many springs around Jericho make it ideal for habitation. In Joshua’s day, Jericho was considered a frontier town and the key city to the land of Canaan after crossing the Jordan River. It was absolutely mandatory that Israel conquer Jericho if it were to take possession of the Promised Land. Humanly speaking, the city’s massive walls and heavily equipped army would have seemed invincible and immune to attack by an untrained horde of men who had spent 40 years wandering the Sinai Desert. But the real impediment to victory was spiritual: Would Israel put complete trust in God to provide it with the right plan, wisdom, and strength to conquer Jericho?

The story of the city’s fall under Joshua is described in Joshua 6. When the Israelites arrived they found Jericho securely shut up because it greatly feared Israel.

The Lord gave Israel a plan for conquering the city once the huge walls collapsed. He promised Joshua that He had given Jericho, its king, and its mighty men to Israel (14:6-8).

The Lord gave Israel a plan for conquering the city once the huge walls collapsed. He promised Joshua that He had given Jericho, its king, and its mighty men to Israel. All Israel had to do was exercise faith in God’s plan and be obedient to what He required of them.

So God instructed the Israelites to march around Jericho in silence once a day for six days. On the seventh day they were to march around the city seven times. On the seventh day, seven priests marched around Jericho before the Ark of the Covenant, with a shofar in hand. Then, at a given signal, the priests blew the shofar with one long blast. The people, who previously had been silent, shouted loudly; and the mighty walls of Jericho collapsed. Then the Israelites attacked the city and...
destroyed all the people, oxen, sheep, and donkeys (Josh. 6:1-5, 20-21).

The new generation was different from the one that came out of Egypt. It was full of faith, believing it could take Jericho. These Israelites put their future into God’s hands, and He honored their faith by giving them Jericho.

A Courageous Faith

With the stroke of his pen the author of Hebrews almost shocks us by including the story of a Jericho harlot named Rahab: “By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace” (Heb. 11:31).

Rahab’s faith manifested itself before Jericho’s destruction (Josh. 2). Before taking the city, Joshua sent two men there on a reconnaissance mission. They lodged at Rahab’s house, located on the city’s wall. When the king of Jericho heard they were there, he sent men to capture them. So Rahab quickly hid them under flax on her roof.

She admitted to the king’s emissary that the spies had come, but she also said they had already fled. After the spies promised that the Israelites would spare Rahab and her family after they conquered Jericho, Rahab helped the spies escape. She told them to hide in the mountains for three days until their pursuers gave up the search.

The men told Rahab to bring all her relatives into her house and to tie a scarlet cord in the window; she and all in her house would be spared. During the invasion, the spies kept their word: “And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father’s household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho” (6:25).

Many people wonder how God could use a prostitute to accomplish His will. Some have suggested that Rahab was not actually a prostitute but an innkeeper or a hostess. However, the text clearly calls her a harlot. Rahab is not praised for what she was but for her great faith in God within a pagan culture. There also is no indication she continued her wicked life as a harlot after becoming identified with Israel.

It is hard to believe that a person like Rahab, an Amorite living in a totally pagan society apart from the covenant promises of Israel, could have exercised such great faith. Herein lies a supreme example of God’s mercy and grace. He is able to reach down and save the most unlikely person, even someone whom most people of faith would deem hopelessly lost.

Joshua 2 reveals that Rahab had knowledge of Jehovah God. She was well-informed concerning Israel’s recent history and miraculous deliverance from Egypt. How she heard the news of God’s grace, mercy, and mighty miracles is unknown. The important point is that she believed it. Rahab’s faith and belief in God, like Abraham before her, was imputed to her for righteousness.

A few examples of Rahab’s faith are recorded in Hebrews and Joshua. She “received the spies with peace” at the peril of her own life (Heb. 11:31). James wrote, “Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works [meaning her works proved that she was a believer] when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?” (Jas. 2:25).

Rahab declared her faith when she used the word LORD (Josh. 2:9), meaning “Jehovah,” speaking of the one true God of Israel.

- She saw Jehovah as the personal God of Israel when she called Him “your God” (v. 11).
- She believed Jehovah who had given the Israelites the land (v. 9).
- She believed in God’s divine redemptive power that miraculously delivered Israel at the Red Sea and from two Amorite kings (v. 10).

Quoteworthy

“Peace is not the absence of pain. Peace is confidence that God knows what He’s doing. It’s confidence in God’s competence.”

—Richard D. Emmons
The Love and Mercy of God (Part 2)

The Greatness of God’s Mercy

When the Israelites complained and threatened to return to Egypt after their spies reported that Canaan could not be conquered because it was filled with giants, God threatened to destroy them and start a new nation through Moses (Num. 13:31—14:12). Moses pleaded with God, “Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now” (14:19).

When Nehemiah contended with the nobles of Judah and the merchants outside Jerusalem who profaned the Sabbath, he prayed, “Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Your mercy!” (Neh. 13:22).

King David wrote the following concerning the greatness of God’s mercy:

“He has not dealt with us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him (Ps. 103:10‒11). The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy (145:8). For great is Your mercy toward me, and You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol (86:13).

Another psalmist wrote, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples! For His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!” (117:1‒2).

King Solomon, David’s son, declared to God, “You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father” (1 Ki. 3:6).

The Permanency of God’s Mercy

Although God permitted the kingdom of Judah and the city of Jerusalem to be chastened by enemies because of their rebellion against Him, He declared,

“With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,” says the Lord, your Redeemer. “For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, who has mercy on you (Isa. 54:8‒10).

A psalmist wrote the following exhortation: “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever” (Ps. 136:1). The expression “For His mercy endures forever” appears 26 times in this psalm.

After God had delivered David from all his enemies, including King Saul, David spoke the words of a song to God: “Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name. He is the tower of salvation to His king, and shows mercy to His anointed, to David and his descendants forevermore” (2 Sam. 22:50‒51).

David also wrote, “But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him” (Ps. 103:17).

When the builders laid the Temple’s foundations after the Israelites returned to their homeland from their captivity in Babylon, “the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord. . . . And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord: ‘For He is good, for His mercy endures forever toward Israel’” (Ezra 3:10‒11).

The Abundance of God’s Mercy

God said concerning Himself, “The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression” (Num. 14:18).

David declared to God, “I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy” (Ps. 5:7).

When David had many enemies who hated him without cause, wanted to destroy him, and spoke against him (Ps. 69:4, 12), he fasted, clothed himself in
sackcloth (vv. 10–11), and said, “But as for me, my prayer is to You, O Lord, in the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy, hear me in the truth of Your salvation. Deliver me out of the mine, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from those who hate me” (vv. 13–14).

On another occasion David begged God, “Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I cry to You all day long. Rejoice the soul of Your servant, for to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You. . . . But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth” (86:3–5, 15).

In Psalm 103:8 David wrote, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.”

Another psalm writer told God, “Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; they did not remember the multitude of Your mercies, but rebelled by the sea—the Red Sea” (106:7). This writer indicated that God was so angry with His people that He allowed their Gentile enemies to oppress them many times (vv. 40–43). “Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry; and for their sake He remembered His covenant, and relented according to the multitude of His mercies” (vv. 44–45).

After rehearsing the rebellion against God referred to in Psalm 106, Nehemiah declared, “But You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.”

The prophet Jeremiah said, “You show lovingkindness to thousands” (Jer. 32:18).

God described Himself as the One “showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Ex. 20:6).

Lamentations 3:32 declares, “Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.”

Jonah told God that he fled to Tarshish instead of going to Nineveh to preach judgment because “I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm” (Jon. 4:2).

The Keeping of God’s Mercy

There are two words for “keeping” in the Old Testament: nasar and shamar. Nasar has “the meaning ‘keep’” in the sense of observing “through close (visual) attention in action.” As God continually observes people’s activities and circumstances, He continually keeps or maintains the attitude of mercy for those in need.

When Moses was on Mount Sinai, “the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands’” (Ex. 34:6–7).

Shamar conveys the idea of exercising “great care” over something. “One of the most frequent uses of the verb is to express “the careful attention to be paid to the obligations of a covenant.”

Moses used this word when he told the Israelites, “Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments” (Dt. 7:9).

Solomon used this word when he said, “Lord God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts” (1 Ki. 8:23).

After Nehemiah heard that the Jewish people who had returned to their homeland from Babylon were in great affliction and reproach and that Jerusalem’s wall was broken down and the gates burned, he wept. He mourned for several days and used shamar in the introduction of his prayer: “LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments” (Neh. 1:5).

When Daniel observed from the writings of Jeremiah that Israel’s 70-year captivity in Babylon was nearing its end, he fasted, wore sackcloth and ashes, and prayed to God. He used shamar in the introduction of his prayer as well: “O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments” (Dan. 9:4).

The ‘Better Than Life’ Quality of God’s Mercy

After God delivered David from his enemies, David declared, “Your lovingkindness is better than life” (Ps. 63:3). There are many times when a person is not capable of saving himself from a life-threatening situation. Only God’s mercy can do so. Old Testament scholar Terry L. Bresnimmer wrote, “Life takes on a new perspective when it is about to be lost, perhaps even to excessive extremes. This would seem to be the case in Ps. 63:3, when, in a word of thanksgiving following an answered prayer, the psalmist reorients his priorities and acknowledges that God’s faithfulness is better than life.”

Action Determination of God’s Mercy

The author of Psalm 119 said to God, “Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy” (Ps. 119:124). And the author of Lamentations wrote the following: “Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not” (Lam. 3:22). “Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies” (v. 32). These statements indicate that God’s mercy, or lovingkindness, plays a significant role in the determination of His actions.

ENDNOTES


2 Ibid., 548.


4 Ibid.


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Man arrested for praying

A 76-year-old Jewish man was arrested for reciting a brief blessing over a bottle of water while touring Jerusalem’s Temple Mount in September. Israel National News reported that Yosef Hacohen was part of a group of religious Jews visiting the holiest site in Judaism when he fell ill. Being religious, he wanted to say a quiet blessing before drinking his water in hopes that both the prayer and refreshment would help him feel better.

Muslim watchmen trailing the group immediately complained to nearby Israeli police that a Jew had dared to pray atop the Temple Mount, which is today occupied by two mosques. The officers arrested the elderly Hacohen and another group member who had helped him recite the blessing and took them both in for questioning. (www.israeltoday.co.il)

Arabs torch olive orchard

Hebron-area Arabs set fire recently to an olive orchard at Karmei Tzur in Judea, located between Gush Etzion and Hebron-Kiryat Arba. Karmei Tzur, literally "Stalwart Vineyards," is home to 125 families. The word karem (possessive, karmai) in Hebrew denotes both olive groves and vineyards, which have surrounded the area from biblical times. Community residents said the Arabs arrived in four vehicles from Highway 60 and torched the orchard when most residents were praying in synagogue on the Jewish Sabbath morning. Residents fear the arson is a harbinger of worse things to come. (IsraelNationalNews.com)

Ungrateful ally?

Former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates called Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu an "ungrateful ally," journalist Jeffrey Goldberg wrote recently on his blog, published by Bloomberg News. Goldberg, whose columns have been extraordinarily negative toward Israeli nationalists and in favor of most Palestinian Authority demands and the "peace process," quoted Gates as saying Netanyahu’s refusal to accept American demands proves Israel is ungrateful.

Gates, like most American government officials, often has pledged to bolster Israel’s security but also has stated what he thinks should be Israel’s domestic policies.

In fact, Netanyahu has offered to surrender most of Judea and Samaria and expel up to 100,000 Jews living outside major population centers. Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas has insisted that all large areas of Jerusalem, including the Old City and Western Wall, as well as all of Judea and Samaria, be under Palestinian sovereignty. (IsraelNationalNews.com)

Israelis rescue Palestinians

When Gaza-based terrorists opened up a fresh mortar attack on the Erez Crossing border terminal between Gaza and southern Israel recently, three Palestinian women and two infants were passing through. They had been in southern Israel for medical treatment at an Israeli hospital.

The attack caused a power outage, preventing the electronic terminal gates from opening and leaving one woman and her baby trapped between two gates. Israeli soldiers at the crossing acted quickly to free the trapped woman and her child before more shells hit the building.

All three women and their infants were then rushed to an adjacent bomb shelter where they were provided with a meal for the end of their daily Ramadan fast. (www.israeltoday.co.il)

Youcef update

Iran has altered its apostasy charges against Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani and said it will execute him because, among other things, he loves Israel. Legal documents obtained by CNN accuse him of “turning his back on Islam, the greatest religion.”

With international pressure mounting for Iran to cease its brutal repression of religious freedom, Gholomali Rezvani, the deputy governor of Nadarkhani’s home province, announced that the charges have been changed. He “is a Zionist,” declared Rezvani. And just in case, Nadarkhani also had charges of rape and extortion tacked onto his rap sheet. Both CNN and Fox News later pointed out that the original 2010 conviction for leaving Islam did not contain one mention of rape or extortion. (www.israeltoday.co.il)

Cyberwar begins

Amid the diplomatic impasse between Ankara and Jerusalem, Turks hijacked some 350 Israeli websites recently, launching a Domain Name System ( DNS) attack on dozens of other websites as well. Israeli tech analysts said the DNS hijacking is likely a test run ahead of a major attack on Israeli domains.

Visitors to some of the sites were diverted to a page declaring it was “World Hackers Day.” At least seven high-profile websites outside Israel were also hijacked, including The Telegraph, Acer, National Geographic, UPS, and Vodafone.

Hackers calling themselves the TurkGuvenligi (meaning “Turkish security”) claimed responsibility. (IsraelNationalNews.com)

Hillary blames Israel again

Even when the Palestinian regime openly identifies itself as an impossible peace partner, it never takes long before the international community again finds an excuse to blame Israel for the lack of a peace agreement. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has returned to the rhetoric suggesting construction of a few apartments in Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem is what’s really blocking peace, calling them “counter-productive to our efforts to resume direct negotiations between the parties.” (www.israeltoday.co.il)
American tax money is helping to fund the salaries of terrorists who are in Israeli prisons. Those who committed the worst crimes receive the longest sentences and, therefore, the most money. Israel Today filed the following report:

Itamar Marcus of Palestinian Media Watch explained to U.S. congressional leaders in July how financial aid from America, Israel’s greatest ally, is being cynically used to encourage the slaughter of Israeli Jews. Marcus said the PA pays a generous monthly salary to nearly all of the Palestinian terrorists in Israeli jails.

The salaries total $5.2 million each month and are heavily dependent on incoming foreign aid. The Palestinian Authority (PA) receives roughly $1.5 billion in foreign aid every year. The U.S. contributes about $200 million to $300 million in direct budget assistance and another $400 million in various other forms of assistance and investment.

Marcus said the aid violates federal law to provide financial assistance to a terrorist or terror-supporting entity.

A week earlier, congressional leaders had put forward a bill that would end U.S. financial aid to Pakistan, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, and the Palestinian Authority unless they meet a list of stringent requirements.

In the case of Lebanon, the terrorist militia Hezbollah would not be able to hold positions of political power. Hezbollah currently dominates the Lebanese cabinet.

Fully aware that these nations are never going to meet the conditions outlined—in other words, are never going to stop supporting terrorism—U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton lashed out at Congress.

The new bill “would be debilitating to my efforts to carry out a considered foreign policy and diplomacy, and to use foreign assistance strategically to that end,” Clinton wrote in a letter to congressional leaders.

Years ago, when a senator from New York, Clinton stood beside Marcus as he presented a worrying analysis of the anti-Jewish Palestinian school curriculum. Clinton staunchly supported Marcus and demanded reform in the Palestinian education system.

It would seem she no longer holds to those convictions.
Miracles do not happen every day. But one happened recently while I was in a clinic waiting to see a doctor. Usually there are long lines, and it is difficult to speak to people. But that day there were few people, and it was easy to see those walking in. And who should come through the door but two Orthodox men who ran to me and greeted me with great joy. However, I did not recognize them.

“Do you remember us?” one asked. When I said no, he told me they fought in the Israeli army with me in the 1948 War of Independence. Now they lived in Jerusalem.

“So, what are you doing in your old age?” he asked. “We have heard about you, that you are much changed. You are not the same man who was so faithful to the land of Israel. It is hard for me to believe.”

“What are you talking about?” I asked. “Why do you say that I am not faithful to my country?”

They became extremely serious, and one said, “We have heard about you from our good friends. They say that you and your friends are trying to brainwash our people to leave their faith and to join with those who are against us. You have believed in the Christian God.” I knew he was referring to Jesus.

“You are dreaming,” I replied. “I will show you.” So I reached into my small sack and took out my Bible. They do not understand that Jesus is not a separate God. He is the third person of a three-part Godhead; consequently, He is the Lord—the God of Israel.

“Take this and read. Especially Deuteronomy 6:13–14, where it is written, ‘You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him. . . . You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you.’” I show this verse to many people who have lost their way and no longer see that they are listening to men rather than God.

They were surprised. They had heard so much about me that they were interested in speaking with me and wanted to understand exactly what I believe.

“Is it so? Have you believed in the Christian God?” one persisted.

“For me there is only one God,” I replied. “As it is written in the Shema, ‘Shema Yisrael: Adonai eloheynu, Adonai echad! Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!’” (v. 4).

“Well, then, how come we heard that you believe in This One [Jesus]? The One who has caused us to pay a high price of suffering for a long time. You will not find it written about Him in the Holy Bible!”

We had finally come to the important part of the conversation. I asked, “What will you do when I show you where it is written about Him?”

“We are waiting impatiently,” he replied.
I want to tell you that, for me, this is the greatest honor God gives me—to serve Him according to His will and show people the truth about Him. So I opened the Bible to a very important section, Isaiah chapter 53, and read:

But He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (vv. 5–6).

“Do you want to know more about Him?” I asked. “Read the entire chapter, and then you will know about whom it is written.”

“We have never seen this chapter,” one said.

I was not surprised. I have been told the same thing over and over by others. “You see what is written here in black and white. It is no secret. It is here for everyone to read,” I said. I explained that they place too much faith in their rabbi and do not think for themselves. They must have faith in God and trust Him to teach them His Holy Scriptures.

Then they wanted to know how I came to know the Lord. I told them, “I was interested to know what was written in the Bible, and I read it myself. It was written by the Holy Spirit of God. So how can someone say a section is forbidden? Are we not the Chosen People of God?” I asked. They were not so sure, so I read from Isaiah 49, where it is written, “You are My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified” (v. 3). I read only eight verses, yet they were eager to read more. They wanted to see everything I showed them in the Bible.

When we parted, they thanked me for spending so much time with them and explaining the Holy Scriptures.
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