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Many of us grew up with the Saturday ritual of watching B-movie matinees at the local cinema. The plots never changed. Every show had the same beginning, middle, and end; and the “suspense” was only in seeing the costumes and determining whether we were looking at a canvas Sahara or studio jungle as we watched blank-shooting cowboys chase villains across the landscape. Our cover photo of North Korea’s recent military parade, juxtaposed with fascist displays of bygone days, shows the real-life corollary to history’s recurring plot. Few things change. By contrast, the Bible reveals what lies beneath the great human drama—beginning, middle, and end. Ezekiel tells us the whole story, and it’s nothing like a B-movie. It’s all in this issue of IMG. (Background: Keystone/Getty Images. Insets: top, AFP/AFP/Getty Images; bottom, Kim Kyung-Hoon/Reuters/Corbis)
Our attention never wavered as Maway Ananya told her dramatic story recently at The Friends of Israel headquarters in New Jersey. Born in 1982 into an Orthodox Jewish family in Ethiopia, Maway remembered how her parents spoke secretly about going to Israel: “We had only the Bible. We knew Ethiopia was not our home. Israel was our home.”

As Ethiopian Jews who knew only hostility from their community and government, Maway vividly remembers her father’s dramatic announcement: “We are going to Israel.” With eight children and only the barest necessities, the family began its long journey.

“For two and a half months we spent the day in hiding and the night walking. Miracle—it’s the only word that can describe that we even survived,” Maway said.

Seven-year-old Maway and her family finally reached a Sudanese refugee camp where they lived for the next nine months, pretending not to be Jewish. “There things went from bad to worse,” Maway continued. “My best friend died in the Sudan. I wanted to cry but couldn’t.”

Then came her father’s second striking announcement: “Tonight we are going to Israel.” Together they started to run in what seemed like the middle of nowhere. “I was so tired,” she said. “I thought we would never make it. My family heard many stories of those who didn’t. Then a truck picked us up and drove for hours to the airplane that took us to Israel. When we arrived in Israel we celebrated by singing ‘Jerusalem of Gold.’ We knew we were home.”

Maway’s transformation from a child in Ethiopia’s primitive society of peasant farmers to a third-year law student at Bar Ilan University took time. Initially, she experienced culture shock. With a note of humor, she declared, “I was shocked to see white Jews in Israel!” Many things we consider to be normal conveniences were incomprehensible to her at first.

Maway visited The Friends of Israel through Israel at Heart, a nonprofit organization that promotes a better understanding of Israel by sending Israelis ages 21 through 27 around the globe to tell their stories.

Joining Maway were David Marks and Ayelet. David was born in London in 1983 and moved to Israel with his family at age two. “My father is a Zionist who wanted to raise his children in Israel,” said David, who now lives with his family in Kfar Shmaryahu, a small village eight miles north of Tel Aviv.

From 2001 to 2004 David served in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) where he was assigned to the multi-launch rocket systems unit. His last two years of service were divided between combat duty and training younger soldiers. In July 2006 the IDF recalled him to serve on Israel’s border with Lebanon during the war with Hezbollah. “As reservists following active military duty, all of us in Israel can be called to serve at any time,” he said.

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and Samaria to help keep the peace. Thus some strategic areas were left open to terrorist attacks while Gay Pride was under protection.

Homosexual organizers did not choose Jerusalem by a random draw from a hat. Proponents were making a point. They intended to sponsor an in-your-face event in Jerusalem, the municipal Holy of Holies in Israel, knowing full well that a massive display of their perversion of choice would inflame passions and gain a place in the world media spotlight.

The Jerusalem event was a rerun of what occurred in Rome in 2000. The march there, which brought an estimated quarter of a million to half a million participants to the city, was scheduled to coincide with the jubilee year celebration of the Roman Catholic Church. Ignoring the Vatican’s protests, Gay Pride ambled through the streets of Rome, hailed as a triumphal event. Building on the Rome model, organizers decided to use the Holy Land for the largest “gay” event ever.

So what are we to make of these bellwether demonstrations by practitioners of same-sex perversion and “gay pride”? First, let it be said that usurping the terms gay and pride as watchwords for the movement does not mean they reflect a societal reality for the vast majority of people in the Western world, especially in Christian and Jewish communities. And it is regrettable that a sliver-like minority of the population, pushing an agenda designed to compel universal acceptance of its chosen way of life, could virtually eradicate from writing and public discourse the word gay and all it legitimately implies.

Furthermore, what the homosexual lobby in Rome, Jerusalem, or wherever proved is how profoundly the minority-rule syndrome now afflicts the world we live in. To criticize or even question the legal or biblical legitimacy of such minority groups brands one a bigot or worse. Aggression, belligerency, and the indifference or ignorance of people who should know better too often win the day. It did in Jerusalem a few months ago.

Unity is not a word often bandied about in Middle East circles. For whatever it’s worth, however, there has been a rare occurrence of unity in a coalition of Conservative and Orthodox rabbis, Muslims, and Christians. The convergence came when homosexuals announced plans to hold a World Pride Day march in Jerusalem. The unlikely religious coalition called the event, which took place November 10, a deliberate affront and provocation to millions of believers the world over.

As police, politicians, and judges sparred with Gay and Lesbian Center organizers, protest demonstrations that at times turned violent attempted to foil plans to make the Holy City a showplace for the homosexual lifestyle.

The Jewish Sanhedrin, a group of rabbis who believe they have reestablished the ancient religious-legal assembly that disappeared in A.D. 425, called for synagogues to hold Sabbath services on the streets and for rabbis to close their doors and pray outside “as a sign of shame, warning and pleading for the abominable march to be canceled,” Arutz-7 reported. “We must not continue our regular routine while the police and courts force a march of abomination in Jerusalem upon millions of Jews against their faith and belief in the holiness of the city and the Torah’s dictates,” the organization declared.

In the end, their opposition did not prevail; and after delays, appeals, and a rerouting of the parade route, the march went on. Anticipating possible violence, officials marshaled 6,000 police to guard the marchers, and they called in another 2,000 border guardsmen from Judea

Even ultra-Orthodox girls showed up outside the Knesset building in Jerusalem to protest November’s Gay Pride parade, which inflamed both Jewish and Muslim communities. The girls brought donkeys and other farm animals to symbolize the abomination of homosexual activities (Uriel Sinai/Getty Images).
The Certainty of Our Security

As the year turns, Americans find themselves moving into a new political reality. The operative word in most quarters is uncertainty. Where will the “new direction” take us? No one seems to know. But one thing is certain: a change of direction in the political wind does not alter the facts. Islamists are still gearing up to destroy Israel, the West, and moderate Arab states.

Christians in too many places are still dying, suffering deprivation, struggling to survive, and being driven from their homes and churches. Iran and Korea, assisted by radical compatriots, believe they are on their way to nuclear parity with the West. And, for good measure, the Russians are moving to regain power and prestige of imperial proportions.

So where can we find the kind of certainty that overcomes all of these seemingly insurmountable obstacles? This certainty is as old as the Book, runs in a river of divine immutability, and is bestowed on us by the God who of divine immutability, and is old as the Book, runs in a river of obstacles? This certainty is as certain.

The Certainty of Our Security

For Christians, the certainty we so desperately seek is found in the integrity of the One who stands by His Word with impeccable ability. His track record is affirmed by every action and verified by every promise He has kept throughout the ages. Succinctly put, our certainty comes from this:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8).

An attitude much in evidence in the recent elections was the quest for change for the sake of change. Interestingly, this phenomenon is not restricted to politics. It is symptomatic of an affliction affecting major segments of the population: a generational hyperactivism aggravated by a short attention span. And it goes without saying that the evangelical church is as susceptible to the malady as are our secular counterparts.

The recent elections demonstrated again that evangelical Christians are not a mindless, monolithic body of automatons marching to the orders of one or two self-proclaimed leaders who call the shots for the rest of us. Evangelicals are motivated by their individual evaluations of the issues, and they vote their convictions at the ballot box—a right that our liberal critics don’t wish to grant us.

Nevertheless, as citizens of this uniquely blessed nation, we have an obligation to participate in the political life of our country, upholding our Christian values in the here and now even as we anticipate so doing in the hereafter.

Which, by the way, is the crucial difference between believers and serve-the-moment secularists who see life only through the prism of the immediate. When asked about their futures, especially what lies beyond their brief tenures in this world, they betray an air of uncertainty. So, more often than not, their bottom line is to grab all the gusto they can today and let the future take care of itself.

I suppose one could summarize this life in a vacuum with a few words from the cover of humorist Art Buchwald’s new book, Too Soon to Say Goodbye: “I don’t know where I’m going. I don’t even know why I’m here.” Although Buchwald was probably referring to some humorous episode, the idea strikes at the core of the current spiritual state of millions.

Many years ago I was given a wonderful little booklet titled Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment by George Cutting. His words are never infused with despair over a life too soon gone and empty in the living of it. Far from it.

“Rest assured of this,” Mr. Cutting said, “that the blessed One who has won your confidence will never change. . . . The work He has accomplished will never change. . . . The word He has spoken will never change. . . . Thus the object of my trust, the foundation of my safety, and the ground of my certainty, are alike eternally unalterable.”

He speaks, of course, of Jesus Christ. Let’s say it this way: His provision, my safety; His supply, my certainty; His way, my enjoyment. What more can we ask or seek?

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Even before the State of Israel was established, Jewish leaders consciously sought to avoid the situation that prevailed in South Africa. As David Ben-Gurion told Palestinian nationalist Musa Alami in 1934:

"We do not want to create a situation like that which exists in South Africa, where the whites are the owners and rulers, and the blacks are the workers. If we do not do all kinds of work, easy and hard, skilled and unskilled, if we become merely landlords, then this will not be our homeland" (Shabtai Teveth, Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs: From Peace to War, London: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 140; Haaretz, September 23, 2003).

Today within Israel, Jews are a majority, but the Arab minority are full citizens who enjoy equal rights and are represented in all branches of government. Arabs are represented in the Knesset (parliament) and have served in the Cabinet, high-level foreign ministry posts continued on page 21
Before the November elections in the United States, politicians burned the roads and airwaves trying to convince voters they had the solution to the dilemma Saddam Hussein and his henchmen brought to Iraq and the Middle East. But murder continues in Iraq, and many of those being killed are Christians. In fact, a particular group of Iraqi Christians is in danger of being wiped out.

So-called insurgents (they actually are nothing more than an army of terrorists with an agenda to rule or ruin) have seized a long hoped-for opportunity to drive Christians from their midst. Reliable reports tell us that as many as 60,000 Iraqi Christians—probably a low figure—have fled the country since the insurgency began in 2003. In 1987 the Iraqi census listed 1.4 million Iraqi Christian citizens. Today only 600,000 or so remain.

According to a UN report, 200,000 Assyrian Christians, whose Christian roots are particularly ancient, have emigrated, leaving only 20,000 in the country. Iraq's Christian communities are among the oldest in the world, said to exist since A.D. 34. Many Christian Iraqis still speak Aramaic—a language Jesus and the apostles spoke.

The cause of the exodus is militant discrimination. Christians have become regular victims of harassment, severe persecution, intimidation, and murder.

According to an article by British foreign affairs spokesman Charles Tannock, vice president of the Human Rights Subcommittee of the European Parliament, Christian women are frequently threatened for not obeying strict Islamic dress ordinances. Some have had acid thrown in their faces; others have been killed for wearing Western clothing or for refusing to wear a veil. The article, posted on the Web site of International Christian Concern, said Iraq’s Assyrian Christians are “at risk of annihilation.”

Last year, Islamic extremists car-bombed six churches in Baghdad and Kirkuk. Six more were simultaneously bombed in Baghdad and Mosul. Wrote Tannock: “Over the past two years, 27 Assyrian churches have reportedly been attacked for the sole reason that they were Christian places of worship.”

Many of the refugees who have hoped to gain asylum in the United States or other Western countries are in Jordan, where they live in poor conditions. They cannot work, pursue an education, or receive any public benefits.

According to Assyrian International News Agency, a 30-year-old woman who fled Iraq with her eight-year-old son still languishes in Jordan. She left Baghdad after her husband was imprisoned and her family threatened. They surrendered all of their money and valuables to one of Saddam Hussein’s soldiers to make it across the border into Jordan, intending to stay temporarily before being reunited with family in America, the news agency reported. That was six years ago. Today she and her son hide in a one-room apartment. She fears she will be discovered and returned to Iraq, where her husband is likely dead and where she will be severely persecuted.

“We are only two people,” she said. “Me and my little boy. We have no family, no future here. I don’t understand why it has to be so hard.”

But it is hard, and it will remain so until radical Islamist terror is no more.
We are all appropriately weary with the old saw “They who do not learn from history are destined to repeat it.” Most of us tend to shrug off the adage as an innocuous relic of the past, born when people were less capable of assessing danger than are the sophisticates of this generation. After all, aren’t we, as Westerners, covered by a mantle of democracy and economic affluence that stands as a bulwark against the forces of fanaticism? And doesn’t an ocean separate us from the pestiferous terrorists operating on the other side of the world?

So away with the cheerless admonitions of a generation past its prime. Yesterday’s gone. Let’s not stop thinking about tomorrow, and let’s get on with building bridges to that new “global village.”

Of course, this philosophy is nothing new; it is merely history repeating itself. For if one searches the pages of the past, ancient and modern, every one appears to be the same. Every one reveals a succession of surges of evil being hurled against the dreams, desires, and accomplishments of decent, peace-loving people. And, sorry to say, this situation will never change; and we only deceive ourselves by thinking it will.

A Look Back Is a Look Ahead

Solomon the wise was dead:

Then Solomon rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place (1 Ki. 11:43).

The issue now became which course to take. The old men said one thing; the young men, another:

Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon while he still lived, and he said, “How do you advise me to answer these people?”

And they spoke to him, saying, “If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.” But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him (12:6–8).
well for church leaders to take a page from the annals of the Israelites and consider the fact that wisdom and experience are never out of date. Godly counsel from those saints who have lived long enough to attain these indispensable attributes is worthy of consideration and provides a source of stability that we can ill afford to dismiss as irrelevant.

Chilling Reminders of the Past

As a child of the ’30s, I remember the newsreels featuring the massive torchlight parades and pageantry of the Nazi propaganda machine preparing a nation for war against the world. Hitler’s mesmerizing hate speeches were actually prophecy in the making. But the adoring crowds saw only the hundreds of thousands of banners and torches that ended up lighting a road that would lead some 50 million people to their graves.

A short time ago the lights were on again, this time in the streets of North Korea’s capital city, Pyongyang. They were displayed in a spellbinding exhibition of military pomp, pageantry, and power, buoyed by pronouncements from the tiny state’s dictator who declared that he will soon have his hand on the triggers of weapons capable of destroying millions of innocent people.

All of the ingredients needed to incite the masses were in evidence. Perfectly symmetrical blocks of uniformed troops marched in lockstep through the city streets. Lines of missile-bearing trucks trundled along the parade route. The declaration of intent was broadcast via the hands of soldiers gripping rifles and the arsenal of missiles and other materials forged to wage war. Like proverbial sheep hurrying to their destruction, the people cheered and waved their little flags hysterically, while the author of their impending calamity preened before them on the stage.

Rational people see all of this and, perhaps, remember. Others—the neo-Neville Chamberlains of the 21st century—wave paper promises and declare that we can achieve “peace in our time,” refusing to believe that dictators and tyrants actually mean what they say. In 1938 Britain’s Chamberlain inscribed his infamous place in history by returning from appeasement-driven negotiations with Adolf Hitler, deluded that he and his French colleagues had won the day and saved Europe from “Armageddon.” They were wrong; and as we should have learned from that ignominious chapter in history, there is no “war to end all wars” in the current conduct of international affairs.

A Query That Merits an Answer

Things being what they are, one may wonder, Why, indeed, does every page look the same to us? When someone asks,
“Why can’t we all just get along together?” the question is considered naïve and simple. It is, however, a reasonable query that deserves an honest answer. In fact, there are two reasons why we can’t all just get along, neither of which is given credence by the secular movers and shakers of this age.

(1) **Depravity.** The first is the depravity of humanity brought on by the Fall. The Fall infused a sin nature that is passed down through the lineage of the human species. The Scriptures define that nature; historical reality confirms it.

*Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (Rom. 5:12)*.

(2) **Denial.** Pagan cultural and political icons, along with liberal religionists, refuse to believe the first reason. Their mantra is the inherent goodness of man and the redemptive effects of education, interaction, and compromise.

Together, these two incendiary elements are the lethal combination, one that has delivered the Adolf Hitlers, Joseph Stalins, Saddam Husseins, Mahmoud Ahmadinejads, and Kim Jong-ils to the stage of human history. And it will one day indulge the Antichrist, who will perfect evil in the Armageddon chapter of this planet’s history.

But there is a third element, one the “intelligentsia” scorns and disregards as heartily as the aforementioned duo. It is also delineated in Romans 5 and is the antidote for mankind’s otherwise incurable sin malady:

*For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (vv. 17–21)*.

God’s grace and mercy are contrasted with perpetual sin, death, and deprivation. Those who refuse to trust God are destined never to trust one another. It’s a simple fact of history, and one that has caused immeasurable suffering and death. Unfortunately, the future does not bode a better state—that is, until the Lord and His Christ intervene.

### Citizens of Another Country

If all there is were the here and now, with its downward spiral into chaos, we would have every reason to plummet into a deep state of despair. The apostle Paul put it this way: “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Cor. 15:19).

I choose to think of it like this: If all our dreams and hopes were bound by earth and time, if all our lives were fading, frail today, then even crowned with robust length of years Our lives would prove a pilgrimage of tears. All the good, the best that this world gave, Would end in muted dirges at the grave. But if all our dreams and hopes are fixed on Jesus Christ, If all our lives are rooted in His Word, Then all that’s bright in life looms fairer still As we become the subjects of His will.

I have been deeply affected by the extremely vitriolic nature of the recent campaign season here in the United States. Of course, our politicians only reflect the national mood. Unfortunately, a malicious tendency toward violence seems to be breaking out around the world, and it is reaching America. Some have even suggested that we are engaged in the opening phases of World War III.

Many Christians despair the outcome and wonder if there is any acceptable remedy for the national affliction that seems to be upon us. The answer is yes. And it will do us all good to remember what it is: As believers, we hold dual citizenship while we sojourn through this little while we call life.

Certainly, we have a solemn responsibility to participate in the affairs of our democracy. Those who told us to stay home during the recent, critical elections sold us short. Voting is not an option; it is an obligation, one that we are privileged to enjoy during our pilgrimage here. But that is the point; we are, if you will, on a pilgrimage in a far country:

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them (Heb. 11:13–16).*

*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20).*

And though we may rightly observe that, in this world, every page in history may look the same, we are moving toward a better country where we will be home at last.

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Ezekiel, whose name means “God strengthens,” was born in 627 B.C. to a priestly family in Judah. His father’s name was Buzi (Ezek. 1.3). Ezekiel was married (24:18), owned a house (3:24; 8:1), and in 597 B.C. was exiled to Babylon. At age 30 he was called to be a prophet (1:1).

God commissioned Ezekiel to be a watchman to Judah, preach His Word concerning Israel’s apostasy, and warn of Jerusalem’s impending demise (3:17). He also told Ezekiel that his message would go unheeded: “The house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted” (3:7; cf. 2:5).

Nevertheless, God instructed the prophet to stand squarely against all opposition and not to fear the Israelites, because he would receive the strength needed to confront their verbal and physical opposition (3:8–9).

It took great character, strength, and courage to stand boldly and speak God’s Word to a people suffering humiliation and exile at the hands of the wicked Babylonians.

His life was not easy. Ezekiel was confined to his house by the Holy Spirit, bound with ropes by his countrymen, and made mute by God until the Lord opened his mouth (3:24–27). When he did speak, he communicated the message God gave him using allegories, parables, and symbols. His illustrated prophecies must have seemed bizarre, but they got his countrymen’s attention and left an indelible impression.

Here are some of the things he had to do:

1. Ezekiel sketched the layout of Jerusalem on a clay tablet, placed siege weapons around it, and erected an iron plate between the city and the invaders to depict the barrier that existed between God and sinful Israel (4:1–3).

2. He reclined on his bed, bound with ropes so that he could not move for a number of hours each day for 430 days. These days represented the total number of years that the houses of both Israel and Judah sinned against God, from King Solomon’s reign until Jerusalem’s fall in 586 B.C. The binding with ropes meant that Israel would be unable to free itself from Babylon’s invasion (vv. 4–8).

3. Ezekiel took specific ingredients and baked bread over a fire of cow dung to symbolize Israel’s defilement. He ate only measured amounts for 390 days to prophesy of the impending famine during Babylon’s siege of Jerusalem (vv. 9–17).

4. He shaved his head and beard, then weighed and divided the hair into three parts to show that Judah would be destroyed in three ways: by famine, sword, and dispersion (5:1, 12).

5. He packed his belongings as the people watched, dug through the wall of his house, climbed through with belongings in hand, and covered his face so he would not look on the land. His action was a sign to Israel of its coming deportation and captivity (12:1–11).

6. The Lord told Ezekiel to shake when eating and to tremble with fear when drinking water to symbolize the anxiety and despair Israel would feel when the Babylonians stripped the land, leaving it desolate (vv. 17–20).

7. He was to preach against Jerusalem, Solomon’s Temple, and the land of Israel while picturing God as a swordsman and Babylon as His sharp, polished sword to slaughter the righteous and wicked alike (21:3–4, 19). During his message, the prophet groaned with a broken heart in bitter grief, symbolizing the great emotional stress that would accompany Israel’s demise (v. 6). Then Ezekiel struck his hands together, portraying the ferocity with which Babylon would destroy Jerusalem (v. 14).

8. Ezekiel was to record the date (now known to be January 15, 588 B.C.) when Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem. At the same time, he was to utter a parable, instructing the rebellious house of Israel to cut up choice pieces of meat and bone and boil them in a cauldron of water. These boiling elements symbolized the fire of God’s wrath that would consume Jerusalem. On that same day, Ezekiel’s precious wife died; yet God forbade him to mourn her death, for Judah was forbidden to mourn the loss of relatives and the beloved city of Jerusalem (24:1–27).

9. Ezekiel took two sticks. On one he wrote Judah; on the other, Israel. He then joined the sticks together, symbolizing that the 12 tribes would someday be reunited as one nation in their land (37:15–22).

It can be said of Ezekiel that he was a man of character, strength, courage, and boldness, who faithfully performed all God commanded him to do.

by David M. Levy
In the Old Testament God’s covenant name is Yahweh (YHWH or YHVH, Ex. 3:14–15). Although often translated into English as “GOD” or “LORD” in capital letters, Yahweh differs from both of these terms. God is the biblical term for the one Supreme Being who is the Source, Sustainer, and Significance of all things (Rom. 11:36). Lord is the biblical term for God’s right of sovereignty over all things. Yahweh implies that God is holy and is to be treated as such. One of the Ten Commandments is not to take the Lord’s name in vain. Consequently, many Jewish people today refer to God simply as Hashem—“the Name.” When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He told them to address their heavenly Father by saying, “Hallowed [separate, venerated] be Your name” (Mt. 6:9).

The sacredness of God’s name and reputation is a major theme in the book of Ezekiel. The first 32 chapters speak primarily of God’s judgment on Israel and the surrounding nations. But shortly after hearing of Jerusalem’s destruction by Babylon in 586 B.C. (33:21), Ezekiel began to prophesy primarily of Israel’s blessed future (chapters 33–39), including that of a new Temple (chapters 40–48).

Some of Ezekiel’s prophecies have already come to pass. But the vast majority of them disclose what will happen immediately preceding and following the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom.

Chapter 36 reveals Israel’s glorious future and how, by blessing Israel, Yahweh will sanctify His holy name.

Prophecy to the Mountains

Ezekiel commanded the mountains of Israel to hear Yahweh. Since physical terrain is incapable of hearing anything, God was obviously addressing the people of Israel indirectly, using inanimate objects. In chapter 6, He spoke to the mountains to foretell judgment; but in chapter 36, He foretells blessing.
The mountains of Israel stand in contrast to Mount Seir of the Edomites (chapter 35). When the Babylonians carried Israel into captivity, the Edomites rejoiced, made Israel's distress even worse, and claimed Israel’s land for themselves. Because they so mistreated the Jewish nation, God promised that all of Edom would become desolate:

As you rejoiced because the inheritance of the house of Israel was desolate, so I will do to you; you shall be desolate, O Mount Seir, as well as all of Edom—all of it! Then they shall know that I am the LORD (35:15).

Desolation was Israel’s condition for many years, too, and for good reason. Because of Israel’s sins, God brought calamity and made Israel the object of insults, jokes, and derision. The surrounding nations even appropriated Israel’s land with glee and contempt of soul.

But Israel’s enemies did not understand (nor do they still) that when they seized the Promised Land for themselves, they stole from God:

Surely I have spoken in My burning jealousy against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave My land to themselves as a possession, with wholehearted joy and spiteful minds, in order to plunder its open country (36:5).

He calls it “My land.” He also refers to it many times as the “land of Israel,” indicating He is the rightful owner and Israel is the rightful tenant.

But Yahweh decided that Israel will not bear forever the “shame of the nations” (36:6). In hot, righteous anger, He strongly condemns Edom and the nations, solemnly vowing that they will bear their own share of insults and reproach.

But Israel will bear (same Hebrew word) fruit, yielding bountiful produce for the sake of the people of Israel—God’s people—who will return to it. Israel’s ultimate possession of the land is assured.

God then gives a beautiful reason as to why the land will become so fruitful: “For indeed I am for you, and I will turn to you” (v. 9). Although this affirmation addresses the mountains of Israel, it is intended for the Jewish people. Yahweh is on their side. And because of that fact, He will turn to them (face in their direction), meaning, He will bless them.

God not only will cause the Jewish people to return to the land, but He also will multiply their numbers once they arrive (v. 10). All of the house of Israel will be there, meaning, all 12 tribes; they will fill the cities and former waste places (cf. Ezek. 48). The restoration sequence is thus: first the mountains and lands, then the people, then the structures.

An abundance of life—in vegetation, people, and animals—will characterize
Israel in those days. God promises to treat the land of Israel better than ever before and will do so by ensuring that Israel will always inhabit and possess the land. Never again will the land bear insults or disgrace. All Israel will then know that He is Yahweh.

But how will Israel remain in the land if its presence there depends on obedience to Yahweh (Lev. 20:22)? The answer is found in the rest of Ezekiel 36.

Prophecy to the House of Israel

First, God wanted it known that judgment fell on Israel because Israel had defiled His land. The Israelites shed innocent blood and worshiped idols. To Yahweh, this defilement was like a woman’s monthly impurity (v. 17). Therefore, God poured His wrath on Israel, scattering His people among the nations (v. 19).

But that is not all Israel did. While they were scattered among the Gentiles, the Israelites profaned Yahweh’s name. God’s holy name is not to be profaned, and He will act to protect it.

Then God commanded Ezekiel to prophesy, not to the mountains but to the people directly (a prophecy similar to that found in Ezekiel 20:33-44). Yahweh told the Israelites that what He was about to do was not for their sakes, but for His name’s sake:

Thus says the Lord God: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, . . . And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, . . . and the nations shall know that I am the Lord,” says the Lord God, “when I am hallowed in your before their eyes” (vv. 22-23).

God’s name carries a holy reputation, which He will defend, vindicate, and hallow by performing great feats for Israel in the sight of the Gentiles. Then the Gentiles will know that He is Yahweh. God will accomplish the following in this order:

[1] I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. [2] Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; [3] I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. [4] I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; [5] I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. [6] I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and [7] I will be your God. [8] I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. [9] I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. [10] And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. . . . [11] I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt. . . . I, the Lord, have spoken it, [12] and I will do it (Ezek. 36:24-31, 33, 36).

Notice that He calls the land of Israel “your [the Jewish people’s] own land” (v. 24). He will cleanse the nation spiritually, remove its heart of stone (its nature resistant to His will and truth) and give it a heart of flesh (a new, compliant nature). God will also give the Jewish people His indwelling Holy Spirit. All of these blessings will cause Israel to follow God’s Word faithfully.

Consequently, Israel will always be able to remain in the Promised Land. The nation will finally be confirmed in a spiritual state that will preserve it from falling away. The Jews will be Yahweh’s people, and He will be their God.

He will cause the land to burst forth with life and fruitfulness so that Israel is never again disgraced by famine. Israel’s people will remember how they spurned their God and will loathe themselves for it: “Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations” (v. 31).

God emphasizes that He will do all this, not for Israel’s sake but for His own (v. 32).

A Promise Is a Promise

In closing, Yahweh recapcs what He will do for the land and for His people in that future day. The land will be rejuvenated to such a degree that passersby will say it is like the Garden of Eden (vv. 34-35). The nations will acknowledge Yahweh’s handiwork, confirming that when Yahweh makes a promise, He fulfills it.

As for Israel’s population, it will increase greatly, in contrast to how it shrank after the Israelites forsook the Lord (Dt. 28:62). Israel’s cities shall be filled with “flocks” of men; and Yahweh promises, “Then they shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezek. 36:38).

There are 61 as yet unfulfilled promises in this chapter. Most of them deal with Israel. None pertain to the church. These promises only make sense if understood literally, not figuratively.

Ezekiel 36 teaches that nations should be careful how they treat Israel. Until these promises of restoration are fulfilled, Gentile powers should not intensify Israel’s distress. They should not insult Israel or claim Israel’s land for themselves. God calls Israel His people, even though they are in disobedience and exile.

And just as He acts on our behalf, even though we do not deserve it, so will He act on Israel’s behalf, for His glory.

Despite what some claim, God is indeed knowable. In no fewer than 73 verses in the book of Ezekiel (four of them in chapter 36), God asserts that the intention behind His actions is to bring human beings—Jewish and Gentile—to the knowledge that Yahweh is God. That is His name, and it is not to be profaned.

Bruce Scott is a field representative with The Friends of Israel in New Hope, Minnesota.
David spoke frankly about the war, saying that many things went wrong. “I was disappointed with the outcome,” as were his fellow Israelis, noting that the three Israeli soldiers Hezbollah kidnapped are still missing.

Our third guest, 23-year-old Ayelet, was born in Israel but spent much of her childhood in the Philippines and Turkey, where her father served in Israel’s Foreign Ministry. She now lives in Jerusalem and studies at Hebrew University. This was her fourth trip to America with Israel at Heart. Ayelet was unaware of the widespread Christian support for Israel until she came to the United States and Canada and met many Christian Zionists. She was overjoyed at her first opportunity to speak in an evangelical church where she experienced an outpouring of enthusiastic Christian support for the Jewish state.

It was obvious that our Israeli guests were not professional public relations people. Rather, they were Israelis who love their country and represent the real diversity of life in Israel today.

Israel at Heart was founded in response to media bias against Israel. These young people travel the world to share their personal stories and answer questions about all aspects of life in the Jewish state. They have completed their military service, are educated, and speak English well.

A growing number of churches and Christian schools are welcoming Israel at Heart. If you would like to bring a group to your church, school, or other organization, you may contact the organization through its Web site, israelatheart.com; by e-mail at info@israelatheart.com; by writing to 580 Fifth Avenue, Room 2611, New York, NY 10036; or by telephoning 212-719-9020.

William E. Sutter is the executive director of The Friends of Israel.
In 1897 Theodor Herzl invited 204 Jewish leaders to Basel, Switzerland, for the First Zionist Congress. He opened the conference with these words: “There is a land without a people, there is a people without a land; give the people without a land to a land without a people.” Then he made an astonishing prediction: “In five years or fifty years, we will have a homeland of our own.” His purpose was to put in place an organization that would legally secure a homeland for the Jewish people in what had formerly been the land of Israel. Herzl concluded the conference by saying, “If you will it, it is no dream.”

Restoration of Israel

Twenty-five hundred years earlier, Ezekiel had prophesied a national resurrection for Israel. The Spirit of the Lord brought him to a huge, open valley full of dried up human bones and made him circle them (Ezek. 37:1–2). It was evident the bones had been there for a long time.

The Lord told Ezekiel, “These bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!’” (v. 11).

Clearly, these bones do not represent a general, physical resurrection from the dead or a resurrection of the church or a physical resurrection of individual Jews, but “the whole house of Israel”—both Israel and Judah (v. 19). Israelites who survived the Babylonian Captivity of Ezekiel’s day—and Jewish people down through the centuries—saw themselves as “cut off” from all hope of a national identity in what was once Israel. They saw themselves with no hope of ever being resurrected and regaining nationhood status.

The Lord asked Ezekiel, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

Ezekiel answered, “O Lord God, You know” (v. 3). The prophet knew it was impossible to answer the Lord’s question, realizing that resurrecting the bones would take a miracle. Only God knew the answer.

God instructed Ezekiel, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry
entire body of Jewish people. The coming together represents the resurrection of the sons of Jacob as an entity in their own land in the latter days. Yet the lack of “breath” means they do not possess spiritual life (v. 8).

In the 19th century, Jewish people began returning to Israel. Russian Jews founded the city of Tel Aviv and Deganiah (the first collective settlement that was called a kibbutz). Before the State of Israel was founded, thousands of Jewish people returned to settle in the land; and by 1948, about 657,000 Jewish people resided there.¹

On November 29, 1947, Theodor Herzl’s dream became a reality. The United Nations voted 33 to 13 (with 10 abstentions) to partition what was then called Palestine into two independent states: one Arab and one Jewish. Great Britain, which had administered the land since 1920 under a mandate from the former League of Nations, did everything in its power to hamper statehood for the Jewish people. But on May 14, 1948, the British evacuated; and Israel declared independence for the first time in 2,500 years.

Today Israel’s Jewish population numbers about 5.3 million.² In the past 59 years, those returning have rebuilt and cultivated the land, bringing it back to life and beauty (36:8–12). But they do so in unbelief.

Some people question whether today’s Israel is the Israel referred to in the dry bones passage and believe the prophecy will not be fulfilled until the Messiah’s return. However, other prophetic passages show that Israel must be in its land as a recognized nation before the Messiah returns:

1. Scripture clearly teaches that at the beginning of Daniel’s 70th week (the seven-year Tribulation), Israel—as a nation—confirms a binding agreement with a man who turns out to be the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27).

2. Immediately prior to the midpoint of the Tribulation, a specific group of nations will attack Israel (Ezek. 38:5–6).

3. At the end of the Great Tribulation, the entire world will attack Israel before the Messiah’s return (Zech. 14:2).
Regeneration of Israel

The Lord commanded Ezekiel to prophesy over the bones a second time: 

Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live’” (v. 9).

Ezekiel prophesied as he was commanded. Breath came into the bones, and they lived (v. 10). In that day, Israel will know that it was Jehovah who opened its graves and restored the nation (v. 13).

God said, “I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live” (v. 14). This event will take place at the Messiah’s Second Coming when the Lord will pour His Spirit on Israel. The veil that has shrouded Jewish people for centuries will be lifted:

But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away (2 Cor. 3:15–16).

At the Second Advent, when the Messiah returns to rescue the Jewish people from the Antichrist, they will look on Him “whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn” (Zech. 12:10). And they will come to faith.

Reunification of Israel

The Lord will bestow a number of blessings on the new nation.

UNITY. First, God commanded Ezekiel to take two sticks, to write Ephraim on one and Judah on the other, and to join the sticks together. The stick of Judah represents the southern kingdom, and the stick of Ephraim represents the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel (Ezek. 37:15–17). Joining the two sticks visually illustrates all Israel being regathered and reunited as one people; when this takes place, Israel will never again be divided into two kingdoms (vv. 18–22, 25; cf. Mt. 24:31).

THEOCRACY. Second, Israel will have one king over it: “One king shall be king over them all; . . . David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd” (vv. 22, 24). Some believe this passage refers to the resurrected King David who will reign with the Messiah over Israel. David is called “my servant” (v. 24), “king” (v. 22), and “shepherd” (v. 24). And under the Messiah, he will minister to the Jewish people.

Others teach that the passage refers to the Messiah, David’s greater Son, who will be King and Shepherd to the nation of Israel throughout the Kingdom Age (cf. Ps. 110:1; Mt. 22:41–46). This is none other than Jesus the Messiah, who will be given “the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end” (Lk. 1:32–33).

PURITY. Israel will be cleansed from all her defilement of sin, idolatry, and detestable things (abominations) at the Lord’s Second Coming. At that time, a redeemed remnant will reside as a holy people in the land. God will again call Israel “My people,” and the believing remnant will embrace the Lord as God (v. 23; cf. 36:24–28). Then Israel will walk in God’s judgments and observe all His statutes (37:24).

SECURITY. Israel will have all the land promised to Jacob, as spelled out in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 28:12–15). Ezekiel said, “Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children’s children, forever” (Ezek. 37:25).

SPIRITUALITY. God said, “I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them” (v. 26). This is the New Covenant promised to Israel (Jer. 31:31–34). God will cleanse the redeemed, give them a new heart, and put a new spirit within them; they will be filled with the Holy Spirit and walk in His statutes and judgments (Ezek. 36:24–26). In that day, Israel will experience the peace of God.

INTIMACY. The Lord said, “I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (37:27). This point is the most important promise given to Israel, but few commentators mention it. In this provision, God will restore the nation of Israel to intimate communion with Him and call them “My people.”

SANCTUARY. “I will set My sanctuary [Temple] in their midst for evermore,” said the Lord. “My tabernacle [literally, “habitation” or “dwelling”] also shall be with [over] them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (vv. 26–27). This sanctuary is the Millennial Temple that will be constructed on the Temple Mount once the Messiah returns. Ezekiel described the Temple and its priesthood and worship in great detail in chapters 40–46.

SANCTITY. “The nations also will know that I, the Lord, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore” (v. 28). In the Millennial Kingdom, the world will recognize that it was God who redeemed Israel, reunited the nation, and restored the Jewish people to their land. This fact, along with the erection of the Temple, will convince the nations that Israel’s God is the one true God of the universe.

Theodor Herzl said, “If you will it, it is no dream.” The complete fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy and Israel’s dream will come to fruition at the Messiah’s return. God said it, and He will perform it.

ENDNOTES


David M. Levy is the director of International Ministries for The Friends of Israel.
Is Israel an Apartheid State? from page 8

(e.g., ambassador to Finland), and on the Supreme Court.

Under apartheid, black South Africans could not vote and were not citizens of the country in which they formed the overwhelming majority of the population. Laws dictated where they could live, work, and travel. And in South Africa, the government killed blacks who protested against its policies. By contrast, Israel allows freedom of movement, assembly, and speech. Some of the government’s harshest critics are Israeli Arabs who are members of the Knesset.

The situation of Palestinians in the territories is different. The security requirements of the nation, and a violent insurrection in the territories, forced Israel to impose restrictions on Arab residents of the West Bank and (before disengagement) the Gaza Strip that are not necessary inside Israel’s pre-1967 borders. The Palestinians in the territories dispute Israel’s right to exist, whereas blacks did not seek the destruction of South Africa, only the apartheid regime.

If Israel were to give Palestinians full citizenship, it would mean the territories had been annexed. No Israeli government has been prepared to take that step. Instead, through negotiations, Israel agreed to give the Palestinians increasing authority over their own affairs. It is likely that a final settlement will allow most Palestinians to become citizens of their own state. The principal impediment to Palestinian independence is not Israeli policy; it is the unwillingness of the Palestinian leadership to give up terrorism and agree to live in peace beside Israel.

Despite all their criticism, when asked what governments they admire most, more than 80 percent of Palestinians consistently choose Israel because they can see up close the thriving democracy in Israel and the rights the Arab citizens enjoy there. By contrast, Palestinians place Arab regimes far down the list and their own Palestinian Authority at the bottom, with only 20 percent saying they admired the corrupt Arafat regime in 2003 (New York Times, April 2, 2003).

# ISRAEL’S NATIONAL RESTORATION

## Judgment of Adulterous Israel Manifests Yahweh’s Glory

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<tr>
<th>Glorious God Departs Idolatrous Jerusalem</th>
<th>Jealous God Judges Adulterous Jerusalem</th>
<th>Just God Judges Israel’s Neighbors</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Glorious God Drafts Ezekiel</strong></td>
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<td>God drafts Ezekiel from among the Israelite captives taken to Babylon.</td>
<td>The Spirit transports Ezekiel to Jerusalem.</td>
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<td>God sends Ezekiel to the rebellious captives to proclaim Jerusalem’s impending destruction.</td>
<td>Ezekiel sees God’s glory depart from the Temple and city due to Jerusalem’s idolatry.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Idolatry and iniquity will bring merciless judgment on all but a righteous remnant.</td>
<td>Ezekiel is an object lesson to the captives.</td>
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<td>Zedekiah to be brought to Babylon.</td>
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<td>False prophets and idolatrous elders are condemned.</td>
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<td>Parables of eagles and vine depict Israel’s judgment.</td>
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<td>God’s patience and judgment reviewed.</td>
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<td>Israel’s restoration promised.</td>
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<td>Samaria and Jerusalem are judged by their God.</td>
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<td>Judgment will be severe.</td>
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**Synopsis:** In exile in Babylon, Ezekiel receives visions of God’s glory and its departure from the Temple in Jerusalem. God calls Ezekiel to prophesy to the Israelite captives concerning Jerusalem’s judgment and destruction because of their gross idolatry and iniquity. Meanwhile, Jeremiah was prophesying to the residents of Jerusalem. Thirteen years after the city is destroyed, the prophet is again carried to Jerusalem, where he is shown a future Temple and its glory so

**Author:** Ezekiel, a Levitical priest and son of Buzi, was reared in Judah but deported to Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar’s second invasion. He was a contemporary of the prophets Daniel and Jeremiah, beginning his ministry in 592 B.C.

**Date:** The book of Ezekiel was completed sometime after 572 B.C. Most of the prophecies are dated relative to Ezekiel’s deportation to Babylon in 597 B.C.

**Thesis:** The future restoration of the rightly judged nation of Israel will manifest the glory of Yahweh (יהוה) as the covenant-keeping God.
**ON MANIFESTS YAHWEH’S GLORY**

**Restoration of Humbled Israel Manifests Yahweh’s Glory**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Just God Judges Israel’s Neighbors</th>
<th>Faithful God Ensures Restoration</th>
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<td>Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia</td>
<td>Ezekiel appointed as a watchman to warn Israel.</td>
<td>God promises to bring Gog to invade Israel.</td>
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<td>is judged.</td>
<td>Jerusalem falls to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.</td>
<td>He watches the Temple being measured.</td>
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<td>Israel's shepherds chastised.</td>
<td>God promises to destroy the invaders.</td>
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<td>Edom to be judged for complicity.</td>
<td>He watches the glory return and holiness restored.</td>
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<td>Israel will be blessed, renewed, and restored in its land.</td>
<td>Prince and Levites restored.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ezekiel hears of Babylon’s victory over Egypt.</td>
<td>Prince’s portion of the land allotted.</td>
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<td>Prince’s offerings.</td>
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<td>Water from Temple invigorates the land.</td>
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<td>The land is divided among all of Israel.</td>
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Application: Since God judges faithlessness and fulfills His plan to glorify Himself through righteous servants, we should obey Him, serve Him wholeheartedly, and enjoy Him and His blessings.

Richard D. Emmons is senior professor of Bible and doctrine at Philadelphia Biblical University and is senior pastor of Bible Baptist Church, Hamilton Township, New Jersey.
It is hard to believe that 2007 has arrived. Many use the advent of a new year as an opportunity to try to improve their habits or change their daily routines. But most New Year’s resolutions—those earnest declarations to amend our ways—made on January 1 are usually forgotten by January 2, and the important promise today is an abandoned idea tomorrow.

Not so with God. Unlike flawed, weak, changeable humanity, the Lord’s resolutions and declarations are sure and will come to pass exactly as He declares.

In Ezekiel 39:21–29, the Lord states His plan for the nations and for the future of His ancient, beloved Israel: I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them (v. 21).

This word comes directly on the heels of God’s promised destruction of Israel’s enemy, Gog of the land of Magog. The Lord draws a figurative line in the sand and states clearly and concisely that He is serving notice on the nations of the world that they can expect to see judgment from His hand and His glory in their midst.

The Lord refers to the Time of Jacob’s Trouble (also called the 70th Week of Daniel and the Tribulation), which is foretold in the prophetic Word. Here the sovereign God declares His intent to bring the Gentile powers to their knees and ultimately to restore Israel to its Promised Land, “so the house of Israel shall
know that I am the LORD their God from that day forward” (v. 22).

He also tells His chosen nation that the destruction of Gog’s confederation was God’s doing, so they would have no doubt who protected them from harm.

The Jewish people have struggled with trusting and loving the Lord their God throughout their history. Like so many of us, they saw His provision, ate and drank at His banquet table, and experienced His divine protection along with the numerous blessings that originate only from the one true God. Yet they did not realize where these benefits were coming from and found a way to miss the truth completely.

Where Israel Went Wrong

The Israelites were languishing in captivity in Babylon under Gentile domination when Ezekiel prophesied to them. The start of the Babylonian Captivity in 586 B.C. initiated the Times of the Gentiles to which Jesus referred in Luke 21:24, a period of history when Israel is oppressed by Gentile powers before the Messiah returns and restores it to first-class status by smashing the Antichrist’s rule and establishing God’s everlasting, Messianic Kingdom (Dan. 2:34, 44–45).

The Israelites were in Babylon for a reason: “According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them” (Ezek. 39:24). Israel was exiled from its land because of its “uncleanness and transgressions.” The nation was intended to be

Recent Aliyah Trends

American, French, and South African Jewish people are purchasing land in Israel due to rising anti-Semitism.
God’s lighthouse to a lost and dying world and to show that, within its borders, one could find rest, peace, joy, mercy, and a relationship with the only true and living God. Israel was to make the Lord known to all.

King Solomon clearly understood this mission when he prayed at the dedication of the Temple,

*that He may maintain the cause of His servant [Solomon] and the cause of His people Israel, as each day may require, that all the peoples [Gentiles, emphasis added] of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other* (1 Ki. 8:59–60).

The Lord loves all of humanity; we were created by Him and for Him. Israel was His chosen vessel to bring the knowledge of the Lord to the heathen. Instead, Israel became like the heathen and worshiped idols; sought mediums and wizards; worshiped the sun, moon, and stars; and baked cakes for the queen of heaven (Isa. 8:19; Jer. 7:18; 8:2).

God says, “I will be jealous for My holy name” (Ezek. 39:25). God expected Israel to make His great name known among the Gentiles and to represent Him in the world; instead, Israel forsook Him and went after the false gods of the pagans. Thus, God declared, Israel “profaned My holy name” (36:20).

*Proximity* can best be understood as “common” or “ordinary,” in contrast to the word *holy*, which means “unique, different,” or “separate.” God accused Israel of making His name—His unique identity—common and ordinary.

God’s names reference how multifaceted He is. He is the God Who Sees (El Roi), the Lord Our Provider (Jehovah Jireh), the Most High God (El Elyon). These names reveal merely a few of the character traits of the one great God and Savior. He is jealous for His name because to profane God’s name is to assault His character.

What God Promises

The dictionary defines *grace* as “unmerited divine assistance given humans.” Another suggested meaning is “a favor rendered by one who need not do so.” Both of these statements are true regarding God’s treatment of Israel and the church. Just as He extends grace to everyone (Jewish and Gentile) today to believe in Him, so will He someday extend grace to all Israel and restore His beloved people to their promised inheritance once and for all and to a right relationship with Him. And in doing so, He will glorify His name.

To make sure His message of grace reached His people, God not only spoke it through Ezekiel, who prophesied to the captives in Babylon, but also through Jeremiah, in the land:

For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the LORD, and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart (Jer. 24:6–7).

Meanwhile, Ezekiel prophesied:

*Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: * “Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name. When I have brought them back from the peoples [Gentile nations] and gathered them out of their enemies’ lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, then they shall know that I am the LORD their God” (39:25, 27–28).

The Jewish people will experience three specific blessings as the Lord fulfills His plan and their destiny.

1. **They Will Return.** They will depart the nations where they have lived since the Times of the Gentiles began in 586 B.C. God promises to “gather” them out of these Gentile lands.

Many see the formation of Israel in the 19th century as the start of this return. With its reestablishment as a nation in the Middle East, Israel has become home to many displaced Jewish people. Although thousands of pioneers arrived in the 1800s and 1900s, long before the Holocaust, immigration increased substantially following World War II. Jewish Ethiopians were airlifted to Israel. Russians immigrated by the thousands. In fact, Jewish people from across the globe have come back to their land—just as He promised they would.

But emigration from dispersion has yet to reach the future, epic proportion described by the prophet Jeremiah:

* ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that it shall no more be said, ‘The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’ For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers’” (Jer. 16:14–15).

2. **They Will Worship.** The Lord states that His people will hallow, or worship, Him. One day Israel “will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn” (Zech. 12:10). The Jewish people will recognize their Messiah is God and will worship Him, the Holy One of Israel.

3. **They Will Understand.** God’s Chosen People will understand why they have suffered so. Zechariah 12:11 explains, “In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem.” There will be a tremendous national mourning for sin and for past unbelief in the God of Israel. But sorrow will turn to joy, as He promises: “I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” says the Lord GOD” (Ezek. 39:29).

As the promised Millennial Kingdom begins, the Jewish people have God’s sure, unaltering promise that He will never hide His face from them again. He will be with them always. In that day, the Lord will reign over them, and they will always behold His loving countenance. What a wonderful day that will be.

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1. Merriam-Webster’s 11th Collegiate Dictionary on CD-ROM, s.v. “grace.”

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“All interpretation [of Scripture] began with the literal interpretation of Ezra... It was the accepted method used by the New Testament in the interpretation of the Old and was so employed by the Lord and His apostles. This literal method was the method of the Church Fathers until the time of Origen when the allegorical method, which had been devised to harmonize Platonic philosophy and Scripture, was adopted. Augustine’s influence brought this allegorizing method into the established church and brought an end to all true exegesis. This system continued until the Reformation. At the Reformation the literal method of interpretation was solidly established and, in spite of the attempts of the church to bring all interpretation into conformity to an adopted creed, literal interpretation continued and became the basis on which all true exegesis rests... The original and accepted method of interpretation was the literal method, which was used by the Lord, the greatest interpreter... Therefore, the literal method must be accepted as the basic method for right interpretation in any field of doctrine today.”

—J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come
Not necessarily. Israel is one country that proves those lyrics wrong. Facing war each decade since statehood, Israel knows the ravages of war and despises it. Yet a quick look at its modern history shows many good results from those wars.

In 1948 Israel preserved its independence by defeating five Arab armies bent on its destruction, establishing itself as a refuge and haven for millions of Jewish people scattered and persecuted around the world.

In 1956 Israel forced Egypt to reopen the Suez Canal, ensuring the continuation of world trade.

In 1967 Syria, Egypt, and Jordan were prevented from pushing Israel into the
Destruction seems inevitable; yet in the end, the enemies are defeated and Israel is preserved.

Not surprisingly, expositors disagree on the meaning of these passages. Some Jewish expositors say they are purely symbolic, representing good defeating evil. Others believe the battle described is literal but took place in the seventh century. Historically, observant Judaism sees fulfillment of these passages in a future, climactic battle that ends at the coming of the Messiah. That may be why this text is read in synagogues during the feast of Sukkot (Tabernacles), a holiday that signifies God’s presence with His people.

Christians are also divided regarding interpretation. But two facts are certain: Throughout history, God has preserved the Jewish people, to the glory and majesty of His name. And in this passage, He unmistakably preserves Israel again by enabling it to win this war.

Who Attacks?

The first enemy mentioned is Gog “of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal” (38:2; 39:1). Ezekiel is told to set his face against Gog and proclaim from the Lord, “I am against you” (38:3).

According to ancient Jewish historian Josephus, Magog, located north and northeast of the Black Sea and east of the Caspian Sea, corresponds to the land of the ancient Scythians. Today these central Asian nations include Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan and are dominated by radical Islam.

Translators debate whether Rosh (Hebrew for “chief” or “head”) is a simple noun or a proper name. The Septuagint, written three centuries after the book of Ezekiel, translates Rosh as the name of a place. Also “historical, ethnological, and archaeological evidence all favor the conclusion that the Rosh people of Ezekiel 38—39 were the ancestors of the Rus/Ros people of Europe and Asia.” The Rosh of Ezekiel’s time is most likely Russia of today.

Meshech and Tubal are linked to places known in ancient Greek and Assyrian inscriptions, placing them in modern Turkey.

Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops—many people are with you (38:5–6).

Persia, known as Iran since 1935, ruled over the Iranian plateau. In 539 B.C.
Persia conquered Babylon, as prophesied in the book of Daniel, and later allowed the exiled Jewish people to return to their land. In 1979, with the overthrow of the shah, the country became the Islamic Republic of Iran. On January 29, 2002, President George W. Bush listed Iran as one of three evil nations (with North Korea and Iraq) in his State of the Union Address.

Ethiopia is not modern-day Ethiopia, but Sudan. Libya, called Put in Ezekiel’s day, is the North African nation ruled by Mu’ammar Gadhafi.

Gomer, located in Asia Minor, was associated with the ancient Cimmerians. This area today is around Turkey.

Togarmah ("the far north") was a horse-trading nation listed by Ezekiel in 27:14. It, too, is located in Turkey.

Thus an attack from the north will come upon a reconstituted nation of Israel with the intent to destroy it.

When Is the Attack?

Despite the fact that some Christians believe this battle already occurred, it must take place in the future simply because nothing like it has ever happened.

Ezekiel prophesied of the battle’s timing by the use of two phrases: in the latter years and in the latter days (38:8, 16). Both indicate an unprecedented time for Israel. The phrase in the latter years appears nowhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures, while the phrase latter days is used many times—always in reference to Israel’s future trouble before the advent of the Messianic Kingdom. (For this reason, observant Jews associate this passage with Sukkot and a future Kingdom.)

Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the javelins and spears; and they will make fires with them for seven years. It will come to pass in that day that I will give Gog a burial place there in Israel . . . because there they will bury Gog and all his multitude. . . . For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land (39:9, 11–12).

Israel has never captured enemy weapons that took seven years to burn, nor has it ever needed seven months to bury the dead. So when does this war take place?

Some say before the seven-year Tribulation (Time of Jacob’s Trouble), but after the church is removed from the earth via the Rapture.

The Tribulation begins when the Antichrist signs a peace treaty with unsuspecting Israel (Dan. 9:27). The Jewish people will trust a world leader who will promise peace and whose military strength they believe will protect them so well that they allow their country to become an “unwalled village” (Ezek. 38:11).

This certainly is not the case today. The country is armed to the hilt, yet suicide bombers still infiltrate. Even now, a 400-mile-long security fence is being built to help stabilize the situation and keep terrorists out.

Some say the war will take place at the end of the Tribulation; they place the battle at Armageddon (Rev. 16). This could not be the case because Armageddon involves the entire world, while this battle only involves certain nations (Ezek. 38:5–6, 15).

Others say the war will occur at the first half of the Tribulation. There are several reasons why this view seems best. First, the agreement that initiates the Tribulation is reached with the Antichrist, causing Israel to feel safe and secure. Israel would then lower its defenses, as it places its faith in this powerful leader who promises to protect and defend the nation. Second, when Gog and his confederacy fall, a power void will appear that the Antichrist will quickly fill. He will take the credit for Gog’s defeat and ascend to world domination.

Why Do These Nations Attack?

At least four reasons for the attacks present themselves:

(1) Scripture says, to “take plunder and to take booty” (v. 12). Israel has warm-water shipping ports, well suited for year-round merchandizing. The Dead Sea contains billions of dollars worth of chemicals used in fertilizers and cosmetics.

Or the spoil may be as yet unfound. Some believe it will be the discovery of a large oil deposit. John Brown, a born-again Christian and founder of Zion Oil & Gas of Dallas, Texas, believes Israel has oil deposits where the tribe of Asher was located.

(2) Israel’s enemies will believe they will win:

You [Israel’s enemies] will say, “I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates” (v. 11).

Once Israel drops its defenses, it becomes an inviting target.

(3) Hatred of Israel: “On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan” (v. 10). Hatred alone could motivate Israel’s enemies, even as it does today.

(4) God: The Lord said, “I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen” (v. 4). He will bring these nations to attack. Most of them are Islamic today. It is easy to see how radical Islam, with its innate hatred of God’s Chosen People, could launch an all-out jihad against Israel. One of the confederated nations, Persia (Iran), refuses even to recognize the existence of the State of Israel.

Motivated by greed and insatiable hatred for Israel, these nations will attack when the time is right, confident they will win.

What Are the Results?

The results are astounding. A vast horde of troops will descend southward like a swarming cloud, confident that the battle will be one-sided. For them, Israel’s defeat is a foregone conclusion.
But these armies are overcome by unexpected events that destroy them (39:2–7). First, great earthquakes erupt in Israel (38:19). Second, the attacking soldiers become confused and actually kill each other (v. 21). Third, they are deluged with flooding rain, hailstones, fire, and brimstone (v. 22). As a result, the invaders will fall on the mountains of Israel (39:2, 4).

These unsuspecting armies will be so completely devastated that it will take seven months to bury the dead, who will become food for every type of predatory bird and beast of the field (vv. 11–12; 17–20). In addition, their accumulated weapons, abandoned on the battlefield, will supply fuel and burn seven years (vv. 9–10).

What is this war good for? Good prevails because God prevails. Unlike the other wars that Israel has fought, this war is won directly by God: “Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the LORD” (38:23).

People of many nations will recognize what happened. They will recognize the Victor. God will win, Israel will be preserved, and Satan’s armies will be defeated. It doesn’t get much better than that.

ENDNOTES
1 Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, and Michael Fishbane, eds., The Jewish Study Bible, featuring The Jewish Publication Society TANAKH Translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1,115 n.
2 My notes from a seminar titled “Messiah and the Afterlife.” The rabbi quoted many Talmudic and kabbalistic sources to show a future, final conflict described as Gog and Magog, citing Ezekiel 38—39 as his biblical source.
6 Texas oilman seeks gusher from God in Israel: Zion Oil & Gas founder using Bible to find oil,” April 6, 2005 <msnbc.msn.com/id/7404743/7CTI-6428>.

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It was one of those truly soul-rattling moments (metaphorically speaking). In the heart of Jerusalem, the Israeli Supreme Court rendered a ruling that seems to betray one of God’s clearest examples of judgment as revealed in the book of Genesis and that would have engendered the harsh condemnation of numerous Old Testament prophets. Last year the high court cleared the way for the world “pride” event held in the streets of Jerusalem in November 2006 to celebrate the rights of homosexuals and lesbians.

A Jerusalem District Court also fined Mayor Uri Lupolianski, an observant Jew, for trying to halt the Gay Pride parade. *Haaretz* reported, “Lupolianski has said in the past that such a parade in Jerusalem was comparable to ‘a pig’s head on Al-Aqsa [mosque].’”

It was only when Hezbollah began assaulting Israel in July that the event scheduled for August 2006 had to be postponed to November 10.

In a not totally unrelated incident, Israel Supreme Court President Aharon Barak said, “The lack of civil marriage in Israel is a major violation of human rights,” noting the Knesset’s failure to pass a form of civil union to accommodate nonreligious Israelis. Currently all Israelis must have religious ceremonies, and the Orthodox control the religious courts in the Jewish sector.

It doesn’t take too much imagination to figure out that if such a measure were passed, gay rights activists would quickly press for government-recognized “unions.”

The question then becomes, “How does the Christian church respond to such developments?” Should evangelicals, for example, halt their support for Israel?

Such reasoning collides with what the Bible tells us about Israel; beyond that, it reveals a lack of understanding as to why Christians should uphold that tiny, beleaguered nation in the first place.

**A Judgment Most Fearsome**

Over the years I have heard the long litany of arguments that attempt to reconcile Scripture with the practice of homosexuality. These cover the gamut from the merely unbiblical and theologically...
incompetent to the almost too ridiculous to believe. The inescapable truth is that, from beginning to end, the Bible gives a wholesale, unequivocal condemnation of homosexuality. For those who want proof, check out a reliable translation of Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17; Romans 1:26–27; and 1 Corinthians 6:9.

As for that old line about Jesus never condemning homosexuality, read Mark 10:6–8. When He spoke about intimate relationships, the Savior did not mention homosexuality. Clearly, He did not permit what He expressly omitted. The only relationships God blesses are those consistent with His design.

But when it comes to our attitude toward Israel as it dallies with the issue, a good place to focus might be that infamous event at Sodom and Gomorrah. It is an account we think we already know. We recall, for instance, the description of fire from heaven coming down and consuming those debauched cities, the inhabitants, and even the vegetation (Gen. 19:24, 28).

The destruction was so catastrophic, and the sin that provoked it so audacious, that it is mentioned in eight books of the Old Testament. And in the New Testament it is referenced in 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation. In the Gospels, Jesus authenticated the historicity of the event (Lk. 17:28–32). Significantly, He also pronounced the rejection of His saviorship as a more grievous offense by far than that committed by Sodom (10:11–12).

Yet there is something more in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah.

A Rational Lesson

When it comes to Sodom and cities like it, there has been heated debate among secular archaeologists and historians. They don’t accept the Bible account, but they do find the issue of the geographical location fascinating. For instance, by looking at the ancient linguistic references to the cities of that area, Dr. Charles Pellegrino opined in his 1994 book, Return to Sodom and Gomorrah, that those two cities could well have not been in the region of the Dead Sea, thus rejecting the popular wisdom.

On the other hand, in a November/December 2001 issue of Biblical Archaeology Review, Amos Frumkin and Yoel Elitzur concluded that there is good evidence that at least the southern part of what is now the Dead Sea (dry land back then) was the site of the battle of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah mentioned in Genesis 14:10.

One thing we do know, however: When Abraham (then Abram) separated from his nephew Lot, he chose Canaan. Lot opted for the Jordan Valley, a lush “garden” that included the “cities of the plain . . . as far as Sodom.” He chose it despite the fact that the inhabitants were notoriously known as “exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord” (Gen. 13:10–13).

Time passed. Then one day Abraham was trying to cool himself by the door of his tent when something in the shimmering desert heat caught his eye. Three men were approaching. There is reason to believe Abraham knew where they came from as he rushed out and “bowed himself to the ground” before them (18:2). Two were clearly angels. But the third is described as “the Lord” (vv. 13, 17, 20).

First, the Lord spoke about Abraham’s wife and announced that she miraculously would bear a son (vv. 9–15).

But then the Lord asked, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing . . . ?” (v. 17). It is an extraordinary moment in human history. The God of the universe was about to confide in a mere mortal and reveal His fearful and almost incomprehensible plan. God was about to visit the two decadent cities of the plains to evaluate their offenses. If they were as bad as the “outcry” He heard, He would destroy them utterly.

Why did God confide His plan to Abraham?

The answer is in verse 18: “since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.”

The Lord shared His design of justice and judgment with the man from whom the nation of Israel would ultimately spring. The lesson is clear. The nation of Israel must learn the lessons of righteousness, obedience, and moral responsibility, starting with father Abraham. That dreaded cataclysm somewhere near the Dead Sea was to become a powerful classroom for Israel. One can only wonder whether the lessons of Sodom so impressed themselves on Abraham’s heart that, years later, when called on to offer up his beloved son Isaac, he was better able to understand the need for obedience to God.

If we fast forward some 4,000 years, we see that Israel is now on the verge of a major episode of scriptural amnesia. It is a familiar story: a nation birthed by God’s hand slowly begins to drift away from Him.

Here in America we’ve “been there, done that.” Having gained our independence at the urging of men who believed in an all-powerful Creator and having established laws in conformity therewith (all 13 original states forbade homosexual conduct), our nation now seems to have forgotten the wisdom of its parentage.

In 1986, in Bowers v. Hardwick, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a clear, bold ruling that rejected the notion that homosexuality was entitled to legal protection. Then, less than two decades later, our high court reversed itself in an abrupt about-face. In Lawrence v. Texas, it ruled that Bowers had been an abject mistake and determined that it now was unconstitutional for a state to outlaw homosexual activity.

Now it seems that the scourge of political correctness has gone global (the Supreme Court in Lawrence cited international law), and Israel may soon be the next victim.

But even if that occurs, does it mean we cease our support for Israel?

The Covenant and the Conquest

There is a stunningly simple answer to the last question: Regardless of any examples of “national” immorality (or any number of other potential problems), we are still required to uphold the Jewish state. This is true because God’s covenant to grant it the land outlined in
The Messiah’s Second Coming is the dominant theme of chapter 14. His return will be sudden, unexpected, visible, personal, powerful, glorious, and triumphant. When He steps on the Mount of Olives, it will split apart (v. 4), altering the topography of Jerusalem and the surrounding area in preparation for the Kingdom. Peace will settle on the earth, as Jesus the Messiah establishes His Kingdom reign and rule.

Zechariah’s concluding section emphasizes that both holiness and worship will characterize and permeate Christ’s Kingdom on Earth.

Reverence of Christ

Gentiles living in the Kingdom will be required to attend the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem to worship the Lord:

And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (v. 16).

Who are these Gentiles required to attend the Feast of Tabernacles? They are the “sheep” that will be placed at Christ’s right hand. After His return, Christ will judge the nations that survive the Great Tribulation to determine who from among the Gentiles will enter the Kingdom. (See Matthew 25:31–46.) This judgment of the nations (not to be confused with the judgment seat of Christ or the Great White Throne judgment) is mentioned in Matthew’s Gospel:

When the Son of Man [Christ] comes . . . He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another. . . . And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left (vv. 31–33).

This judgment will take place in the Valley of Jehoshaphat between the Eastern Wall of the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives (Joel 3:2, 12).

The “sheep” are redeemed Gentiles who will be placed at Christ’s right hand, denoting a place of honor and blessing. They will inherit the Kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Evidence of their regenerated nature will be their kind treatment of the Lord’s brethren, the Jewish people, during the Great Tribulation. These righteous Gentiles are amazed that Christ honors them for ministering to Jewish people during this time of Jewish suffering. Only redeemed Gentiles, along with redeemed Jews, will be allowed to enter the Kingdom (Mt. 25:33–40).

Unlike the “sheep,” the “goats” are cursed and condemned to everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. They, too, will be astonished at the Lord’s verdict. He will inform them that their hostility toward and physical mistreatment of Jewish people during the Tribulation indicated they were unsaved (unregenerate). These unsaved Gentiles will be executed and cursed and condemned to everlasting fire (vv. 41–46). No unrighteous person will enter the Kingdom.

The redeemed Gentiles will make an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem (the world’s capital) to pray and “worship the King, the LORD of hosts” (literally, “LORD of armies,” Zech. 14:16). The post-exilic prophets used the phrase LORD of hosts to describe an all-powerful God who will accomplish what He has decreed. Although no nation will maintain an army during the Millennial Kingdom, each nation will, however, still maintain its identity (Isa. 2:4; Mic. 4:3).

In that day, the world’s population will worship “the LORD” as sovereign King over all the earth (Zech. 9). He will be loved and adored as the one and only true God. Gentiles who go to Jerusalem will grasp the corner of a Jewish priest’s garment, wanting to be taught the Word of God by him (Isa. 61:6; Zech. 8:22–23).

Religious Celebration

Gentiles will worship the Lord at the Feast of Tabernacles (14:16). Two questions need to be addressed at this point. What is the Feast of Tabernacles, and why do the Gentiles go to Jerusalem to celebrate it?

The Feast of Tabernacles, or Ingathering, as it is sometimes called, is first mentioned in Leviticus 23:33–44. It is the seventh and final feast that Israel was commanded to keep, and the third of three feasts that Jewish men were required to attend annually in Jerusalem.

In Hebrew it is called Sukkot, meaning “booths.” It was named for the temporary huts that housed the Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness (v. 42). The feast commences five days after the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), in September or October, and lasts for seven days, during which time Jewish people are supposed to dwell in booths they have constructed for the holiday. Sukkot is to be celebrated at the end of the growing season, after the ingathering from the threshing floors and winepresses (Ex. 23:16; Dt. 16:13).

During the feast, three branches (palm, myrtle, and willow) are bound together in what is called a lulav, which is held in one’s right hand. A citron, called an etrog, is held in one’s left hand. A Jewish person then recites a blessing over his sukkah (“booth”) on each of the
seven days of the feast and waves the lulav in every direction.

In biblical times the Feast of Tabernacles was a time of rest, praise, and giving of thanks; and it was celebrated with great joy for the harvest of grain and wine gathered at year’s end.

Then why do redeemed Gentiles need to celebrate this feast in Jerusalem? First, the Lord commands them to do so. Second, it will be a joyful time of worship and praise to the Lord for the fruitful harvest that He provides (cf. Amos 9:13). Third, it will also be a time when the world recognizes and worships Jehovah as King of the earth. In celebrating this festival, the nations will express their submission to Jehovah as the only true God of the universe.

Rain Control

Nations existing during the Kingdom will be required to send representatives to Jerusalem to worship the Lord at the Feast of Tabernacles. Those nations that are remiss in their obligations or rebel will pay dearly for their disobedience. Zechariah prophesied,

And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain (v. 17).

Lack of rain will bring hardship, and the entire world will know that the country disobeyed the Lord. When the Israelites refused to obey God’s commandments, He punished them by withholding rain (Dt. 11:17; 28:23–24; 1 Ki. 17:1; Hag. 1:10–11).

Egypt is specifically singled out, should it not send representatives to the Feast of Tabernacles:

If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (v. 18).

Why Egypt is specifically mentioned is unknown. It should be pointed out that Egypt was not dependent on abundant rain to water its crops because it drew the necessary water from the Nile River. Consequently, Egypt might think it would escape judgment. But God has another judgment in store for the nation; it “shall receive the plague.” Egypt knows what it means to experience plagues (Ex. 7:14—12:12, 29–30).

Prof. Eugene Merrill’s comments are appropriate regarding God’s punishment of both Egypt and the nations:

Egypt in the Bible is frequently a type of the world at large (Isa. 27:13; Rev. 11:8). Here it is not distinguished, therefore, from the nations just mentioned but appears as a synonym for them. . . . Not only Egypt, but all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, will experience the severest repercussions. The prophet views this extreme measure not as a whimsical or arbitrary act of God but as a “punishment” (v. 19). The word here is literally “sin” . . . but by use of the metonymy of effect he speaks of the result in place of the cause. That is, the plague is the aftermath of sin in the sense that it is its punishment. The sin is of the most egregious kind, for in the covenant context of the passage it is nothing short of rebellion and repudiation of YHWH’s dominion.1

Righteous Consecration

Only redeemed people—those who were made righteous through receiving Jesus the Messiah—will enter the Kingdom. Righteousness will prevail because Satan is bound in the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:1–3), and the Lord has cleansed the world of wickedness.

Holiness will characterize every area of the Kingdom, both secular and sacred. Zechariah emphasized this fact in the concluding verses of his prophecy:

In that day “HOLINESS TO THE LORD” shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the Lord’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them (vv. 20–21).

Zechariah pointed out that the phrase HOLINESS TO THE LORD will be engraved or stamped on the most mundane objects, such as the bells on the horses and the pots or bowls used in the Kingdom Temple. The engraving will declare to all that the items are fit for Kingdom use. Everything used in the Kingdom administration will be considered holy to the Lord. Even the cooking utensils of people coming to Jerusalem to worship and study will be dedicated.

Zechariah closed his prophecy by saying, “In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts” (v. 21). In biblical times, the word Canaanite referred to a person who was profane, unclean, ungodly, or—referring to merchants—dishonest. In Hosea 12:7, the word Canaanite was used of an Israelite who cheated in business. Canaanite practices were so wicked that God decreed the Canaanites’ annihilation in order to rid the land of contamination. This type of person will forever be banished from the Kingdom.

Zechariah’s name means “Jehovah remembers,” a reminder that God will not forget His covenant commitment to Israel. The prophet Isaiah beautifully phrased God’s everlasting love and commitment to His ancient people:

Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me (Isa. 49:15–16).

Zechariah’s prophecies reach far into the future. They are an ongoing testimony to Jewish people in every age that God does not forget His covenant promises to Israel. Zechariah’s prophecy began with God’s call for Israel to repent of its sin (1:1–6), and it concludes with a promise of Israel’s redemption, restoration, and a return to righteous living. Jewish people can take hope and be assured that God will fulfill His covenant promises to Israel.

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Abortion was one of the most controversial issues in society during the last quarter of the 20th century, and it continues to be so during the 21st century. The mention of the word generates strong emotions in many people, and the issue has polarized much of society into two extremely vocal, opposing camps. Pro-life people claim that abortion destroys a personal human being and, therefore, is morally wrong. Pro-choice advocates assert that abortion simply destroys impersonal tissue and therefore is not immoral. Others say they do not know which view is correct.

The conflicting assertions of the pro-life and pro-choice people indicate that the key to the issue is the point at which a human offspring becomes a personal human being, possessing a human soul.

Medical science has shed considerable light on this crucial question through its significant research concerning the development of human offspring from conception to birth. As far back as 1979, such research caused obstetrician-gynecologist Dr. Bernard N. Nathanson to reject his pro-abortion views.

Nathanson, a former atheist, once owned America’s largest abortion clinic. He crusaded to legalize abortion and in 1969 cofounded what is now the mammoth National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL Pro-Choice America). Yet in the December 11, 1979, issue of the Chicago Sun-Times, he repudiated abortion and wrote, “Science has disproved my pro-abortion views.”

“Biology,” wrote Dr. Nathanson, “requires any civilized society to react with revulsion at the Supreme Court’s policy of abortion on request for any reason when the embryo or fetus is there—alive—an inescapable part of the human community.” He concluded, “Only a life—that of the mother—can justify the taking of another life.”

In addition to the findings of science, mankind should heed divine revelation. God has given revelation concerning when a human offspring becomes a personal human being, possessing a human soul. First, God revealed that He created mankind in His image. Second, He gave revelation concerning the origin of human souls. God created mankind in His image, meaning, He made humans to be personal beings—possessing intellect, emotion, and will—and moral beings, responsible to God for their conduct. (Previous articles addressed the subject of God creating mankind in His image.)

These facts indicate two important truths. First, human beings are different from and superior to animals and plants because mankind was created in God’s image; animals and plants were not. Second, since the image of God in mankind signifies that human beings are personal and moral beings, and since the personal and moral aspects of human beings are related to the realm of the human soul, it can be concluded that the image of God in human beings is related to the realm of the human soul. Therefore, God’s statement in Genesis 9:5–6 that it is wrong to murder a human being because God made mankind in His image affirms that it is wrong to murder a human being because a human soul resides in that person.

If the soul is present at conception, then the offspring is a personal human being at conception and not merely...
impersonal tissue. Thus abortion at any time from conception on involves the taking of a personal human life and is murder. By contrast, if the soul were absent until after conception, then the offspring would merely be impersonal tissue, not a personal human being, until that time after conception when the soul would be present. Abortion before that point of time would not involve the taking of a personal human life and would not constitute murder.

The Origin of the Human Soul

Consequently, the real issue related to abortion is the point at which human offspring obtain human souls. To resolve this critical issue, one must study the origin of the human soul. Historically, there have been at least three major views concerning the origin of individual souls.

The Preexistence Theory. Proponents of the preexistence theory assert that a community of bodiless souls exists somewhere in the universe prior to each soul’s entering into a physical body. Some proponents of this theory believe that these bodiless souls have existed eternally. Others claim they were all created at one time. Still others propose that, originally, souls were not separate from each other but were all part of one universal soul. All proponents claim that each soul leaves the community of bodiless souls and enters a physical body either at conception or birth.

The preexistence theory is pagan. It has been advocated by Hinduism and other Eastern mystical philosophies and religions, by reincarnation proponents, and by some secular philosophers and psychologists.

There are at least two reasons why those who hold to the authority of God’s biblical revelation must reject the preexistence theory. First, it has no biblical support. Second, it contradicts the biblical teaching that all human beings sinned in the first human being, Adam.

According to Romans 5:12-19, sin entered the world through the first man’s original sin and physical death came to all mankind as a result of that original sin. All people are condemned to die, not because of individual acts of sin that they commit after birth, but because all human beings sinned the original sin when the first man committed it. (In Romans 5:12 the active voice of the verb translated “sinned” in the expression “because all sinned” indicates that, somehow, all of Adam’s descendants participated in his original sin.) The same truth is indicated again in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, which declares that death came by man and all human beings die “in Adam.”

Although sin negatively affects the human body, it is primarily related to the realm of the human soul. It was in the realm of his soul, where his mind and will resided and functioned, that Adam made his decision to sin against God. All mankind’s decisions to sin are made in the realm of the human soul because decisions are functions of the mind and will, which are aspects of the human soul.

Consequently, the only way all people could have sinned in Adam is if their souls were related to or derived from Adam. If, as the preexistence theory asserts, individual human souls exist somewhere in the universe before the conception of each physical human body, then each human soul could not be related to or derived from Adam—although each human body is derived ultimately from Adam by virtue of procreation or reproduction.

The Creation Theory. Proponents of the creation theory assert that each human body is procreated by human parents, but each human soul is created directly and individually by God and is embodied by Him in the human offspring either at conception, birth, or sometime between conception and birth. According to this theory, the creation and embodiment of each human soul take place at the same time. Each human body is derived ultimately from Adam through human parents, but each human soul is not derived from Adam through human parents.

The creation theory of the origin of the human soul is considerably better than the preexistence theory. Several secular philosophers have proposed it. Since it claims that human souls come into being by creative acts of God, many fine Christians have advocated it.

The creation theory has several problems, however. First, it does not explain the biblical teaching that all human beings sinned in Adam. Since sin is related primarily to the realm of the human soul, how could all human beings have participated in Adam’s original sin if God created their souls directly and individually sometime after that original sin?

Second, the creation theory does not explain the sinful nature of all human beings from the time of their conception. The Bible teaches that all people are sinful by nature (Rom. 3:9-18, 23; 5:19; Eph. 2:1-3) and that each person is in this state of sin from conception (Ps. 51:5). Since sin is related primarily to the realm of the soul, and since all people are in this state of sin from conception, then all people must have human souls at the time of conception; and each soul is in a state of sin from its beginning.

But how can the creation theory explain the fact that each soul is in a state of sin from its beginning if, as that theory asserts, God creates each soul individually and directly? Does the holy God create sinful souls? Certainly that cannot be true. It was noted earlier that the source of mankind’s sinfulness is mankind, not God.

Third, the creation theory finds it difficult to explain the fact that children often inherit the intellect and character of their parents. If God creates each soul individually and directly, why do children often resemble their parents in these qualities, which belong to the realm of the soul, not to the realm of the body?

The next article will consider the third major view concerning the origin of individual souls.

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**Endnotes**


3 Ibid., s.v. “feticide.”

Renaud E. Shoovers is an author, professor, and international conference speaker for The Friends of Israel.
Examining The Word
by MENOKALISHER

Editor’s Note: In studying the Old Testament, many people ask, “What does the Hebrew actually say?” This article is the first in a series that confirms the existence of a single, triune God based on the Hebrew Scriptures. The author, Meno Kalisher, is a native Israeli who lives in Jerusalem and is the senior pastor of the Jerusalem Assembly House of Redemption. He will explain what the Hebrew Bible actually says and, more important, what it means.

The prayer of the Shema ("Hear, O Israel," Dt. 6:4) has always been the fundamental declaration of faith of the Jewish people and the State of Israel. In one short verse, Moses presented a great truth about the Godhead as a whole. This Scripture is inscribed on parchment scrolls and placed in mezuzot (wooden or metal cases) that are fixed onto the doorposts of every home in Israel. It is a verse that calls the people of Israel to serve and worship one God: "Hear O Israel: The L ORD our God, the LORD is one (Dt. 6:4, Masoretic text)." The Hebrew Bible actually reads, "Shema Yisrael, Yehovah [YHVH] Eloheinu, Yehovah [YHVH] Ehad." Jewish people, however, do not say the word Yehovah for fear of taking the Lord’s name in vain. Instead, they substitute the words Adonai, Hashem ("the Name"), Elohim, or Adoshem. The spoken Shema is usually, "Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad."

The Hebrew words Adonai ("Lord") and Eloheinu ("our God") use plural forms of the word God. The word Eloheinu is a combination of Elohim shelanu, meaning "our God." The Word Elohim is the plural form of the word Eloah.

Why does the Lord present Himself as plural? And why, after repeating the word God three times, does Deuteronomy 6:4 end with the word one?

To understand the verse better requires examining the meaning of the Hebrew word ehad ("one") in the Old Testament.

Examples of Ehad

(1) "So the evening and the morning were the first day" (Gen. 1:5).

The Hebrew actually says "one" (ehad) day rather than "the first" day. Morn-ing and evening are two nouns that follow each other and, together, constitute one day. Ehad is the union of morning and evening.

(2) "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one [ehad] flesh" (2:24).

A man and a woman are two separate people whose joining together creates one flesh.

(3) "The whole [ehad] assembly together was forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty" (Ezra 2:64; cf. Neh. 7:66).

The “whole” (ehad), meaning 42,360 individuals gathered together, constituted one assembly.

The word ehad does not necessarily refer to a single, individual item. It also may mean a combination of items that constitutes a complete whole. The Hebrew language uses a different word to describe an undivided unity. That word is yahid.

Plural Words for God

To whom was the Lord speaking in Genesis 1:26? Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping
thing that creeps on the earth.”

He was not speaking to human beings because they were not yet created. Neither did He consult with the angels, because angels were not active partners in creation. The Old Testament states clearly that God alone created the world: You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You (Neh. 9:6).

When God interrogated Job, He asked, “Where were you . . . when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4, 7). God was telling Job that when He created the universe, the angels shouted to Him for joy.

The New Testament strongly confirms that God alone is the Creator: For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist (Col. 1:16–17).

Therefore, in Genesis 1:26 the Lord was speaking to an entity or entities equal to Himself in image and in power to create.

King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, summarized the essentials of human life by saying, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’” (Eccl. 12:1).

The word Creator appears in Hebrew in the plural form, indicating a plurality of Creators. Since the Creator is God, there must be a plurality of entities in the one true God.

Plural forms of words referring to God also appear in Isaiah 54:5 (“For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name”) and Psalm 149:2 ("Let Israel rejoice in their Maker"). In both cases, the word Maker is plural, as is the word husband.

Thus the word chad describes a wholeness that consists of several entities. The Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4 says that God is one whole who consists of several entities and that the people of Israel must worship this wholeness.

Meno Kalisher is a native of Jerusalem and pastor of the Jerusalem Assembly.

Quoteworthy

“Today’s network presidents have no journalistic experience. Their main concern is that their news divisions make money and story selection is made, in part, to please sponsors, something that never would have happened in the days of [Chet] Huntley and [David] Brinkley. [Then-NBC News President Robert] Kintner told the news division to do solid news and the entertainment division would make money. Now, news too often resembles entertainment, and the public suffers.”

—Cal Thomas, columnist and Fox News commentator

When Israel Sins from page 33

Scripture must be viewed as distinct from the issue of whether Israel has been successful in its moral conquest.

In Romans 9 the apostle Paul spoke at length about Israel. He pointed out that God’s choice of Israel was like His choice of Isaac over Esau. It was not based on anything Isaac did (“not of works”); rather, it was because “of Him who calls” (v. 11). God’s sovereignty is inscrutable.

In analyzing Romans 9, Profs. Mark Bailey and Tom Constable put it well in The New Testament Explorer commentary:

Because God’s election of Israel did not depend on natural descent (9:6–10) or human merit (9:11–13) Israel’s disobedience cannot nullify God’s sovereign purpose for the nation.

If we look at the conquest of Canaan in the book of Joshua, we see a three-dimensional picture of this principle. It shows us the distinction between God’s covenant, which granted a complete transfer of the land to Israel, and Israel’s failure to complete the required conquest of the land.

Israel’s duty of conquest is not merely a military one, though it must exercise its lawful right of self-defense against the monstrous designs of terrorists and terrorist nations that would destroy it. Yet Israel must also perform a kind of moral conquest and thereby obey the demands of righteousness imposed by the Grantor of the land deed.

When Israel fails to do so, the Lord will deal with it. But that is the divine prerogative. For those of us who are His children, we should pray for, protest, urge, and encourage Israel to be what God desires it to become.

If we are to accept the whole written counsel of God, then rejecting Israel is not an option that has been left open to us.

ENDNOTES

1 Ilan, “High Court: Jerusalem’s gay pride parade to be held November 18,” September 18, 2006 <haaretz.com/halashon/spages/764381.html>.


Craig L. Parshall is a leading trial attorney who argues cases involving civil liberties, constitutional rights, and religious freedoms. He is the senior vice president and general counsel for the National Religious Broadcasters, as well as a critically acclaimed novelist.
U.S. helps Fatah

ARUTZ-7—In a move presented as an effort to counter the growing strength and influence of Hamas, the United States has been arming and training Fatah fighters, headed by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. The premise is that Fatah and Hamas are headed for a violent civil war, and the U.S. prefers a Fatah victory.

Hamas has been gaining strength. An Israeli commander described a complex system of tunnels along the Philadelphia Route, “most of which are camouflaged and not even dug up. The minute there is an order for smuggling, they dig out an opening and connect to a preexisting tunnel; and after the smuggling is completed, they cover it over.”

He said Hamas has begun building an army-like hierarchical infrastructure, including special forces, brigades, and battalions. “It is reasonable to assume that, in the future, Hamas will put into the field a force of thousands of terrorists, organized and well armed . . . with weapons systems and night-vision systems, which will form a division. In addition to this, Hamas is constantly working to increase the range of the Kassam [rockets]—and the technology is within reach.”

PA sources said the training by Americans started last year. In the past, PA terrorists were found to have used weapons provided by the United States and Israel in attacks on Jewish targets.

In an interview with WorldNetDaily’s Aaron Klein, a Force 17 terrorist implied the U.S. weapons would be transferred to the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, a terrorist organization under U.S. law.

Ousted Jews seek justice

ARUTZ-7—Efforts by world Jewry to obtain redress and spread awareness about the eviction of about 900,000 Jews from Arab and Muslim countries received a boost when the Israeli government announced it would fund and assist the effort.

“There are not only Palestinian refugees,” Justice Minister Meir Sheetrit announced, “but there were Jewish refugees—600,000 of whom came to Israel. The State of Israel seeks to put the claims of Jews from Arab countries on the table, parallel to the extremely well-expressed claim by [the Arabs] who left in 1948 and 1967.”

“The difference,” Sheetrit added, “is that no Jews want to go back to those countries. One can say that there was an exchange of populations for the sake of peace.”

An estimated 900,000 Jews were forced to leave their homes in Arab and Muslim countries in the course of the 20th century. Furthermore, Arab and Muslim governments robbed these Jews of more than $100 billion in personal and communal assets.

Google, IBM expand in Israel

ARUTZ-7—Google and IBM will expand their operations in Israel. Google will open a research and development (R&D) center in Tel Aviv. The Internet behemoth already has one facility in Haifa. The Tel Aviv center will employ experts in algorithms, database technology, and Internet programming development.

IBM will open a software lab in Israel, and expand in Israel.

Pomelit a hit

ARUTZ-7—Some half-million crates of Israeli pomelit fruits have been exported to Japan, where they are rapidly becoming a major hit. And not only in Japan.

The pomelit is a cross between a grapefruit and a pomelo, which is also a citrus fruit. The Agriculture Ministry notes that pomelit juice has special qualities, enabling the reduction of blood pressure and cholesterol levels, as proven by studies in Kaplan Hospital in Rehovot and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Another 500,000 crates of the fruit were shipped to European markets.

Biodetector here

ARUTZ-7—Israeli scientists have taken the standard smoke detector to a new level, creating a device that alerts people when any biological hazard is in the air.

“Not only can the BAS101 alert you to airborne biological threats on the spot, but within minutes it gives a definitive answer of whether it’s anthrax or another biological hazard. Therefore, action can be taken immediately, without the need to wait for the results from the lab,” said its developer.

The BAS101 monitors airborne particles, collecting them in a receptacle and transferring them to a biological unit that traps any dangerous bacteria.

In 2001 Western intelligence agents discovered al-Qaeda’s step-by-step manual on how to develop biological and other weapons and substances that could then be introduced into ventilation systems, such as subway systems, airports, hospitals, shopping malls, and other high-traffic areas.

Oil in Israel!

ARUTZ-7—An Israeli company reports it has struck oil in the Dead Sea region, possibly worth up to $350 million.

The company, Ginko Oil Exploration, says that oil spurted from a depth of 1,800 meters (1.12 miles) and that further tests will be conducted. The oil, estimated at about 6.5 million barrels’ worth, was found just north of the Dead Sea. Ginko extracted about 120,000 barrels of crude oil from the site about 10 years ago, but then gave up.

In April 2004, Ginko discovered a seven-meter layer of natural gas in the same region. Israel has produced only 20 million barrels of oil in the last half-century, less than what the Saudis produce every three days.

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Jewish Atheist Fights AIPAC

Did you know it’s possible to give a one-time gift to The Friends of Israel—a gift annuity—that will reap spiritual fruit among God’s Chosen People?

In addition, that same gift can increase your personal income and reduce your future tax payments.

If your heart’s desire is to invest in the Lord’s work, yet at the same time you need to make the most of your current financial resources, then you may want to consider purchasing a gift annuity from The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc.

If you decide to give appreciated property, such as stock or real estate, rather than sending a check, you will pay capital gains tax on only part of the appreciation. In addition, the capital gains tax will be spread over many years, rather than all be due in the year of your gift.

Indeed, a gift annuity is a gift with benefits both lifelong and eternal, allowing you to maximize the impact of your financial stewardship. For specific details about how a gift annuity can work for you, complete this form and mail it in the return envelope in this magazine. There is absolutely no obligation on your part.

Name _______________________________________________
Address _____________________________________________
City/State/Zip________________________________________
Date of Birth (month/day/year) ________________________
(Suggested minimum age of 60)
Name of Joint Annuitant ______________________________
Date of Birth (month/day/year)  ________________________
(Suggested minimum age of 60)
Relationship to First Annuitant ________________________
Phone ( ) _______________________________________
Possible Amount of Annuity $_________________________
(Minimum annuity amount
is $5,000)
Income to be paid:
☐ Quarterly  ☐ Semiannually
☐ Annually
☐ I would like a Friends of Israel representative to contact me.

George Soros, a Hungarian-born, left-wing, American-Jewish billionaire and atheist who rarely supports Jewish causes and in 2003 told a Jewish gathering that Israel and the Jewish people are partially to blame for anti-Semitism, is trying to counteract the conservative influence of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). He is forming a lobby of his own that would influence the United States away from supporting Israel and toward supporting the Palestinians.

Forbes lists Soros, 76, as the 27th richest man in the world. In 2003 he committed $15.5 million to oust President George W. Bush. “It is the central focus of my life,” he said then. A Republican official commented, “George Soros has purchased the Democratic Party.”

Caroline Glick, deputy managing editor of The Jerusalem Post, referred to Soros’ latest brainchild as “The Jewish American anti-Israel lobby.” “Many of the individuals and organizations associated with the initiative have actively worked to undermine Israel,” she wrote in an October 12, 2006, article titled “Soros Moves on to Israel.”

“Unfortunately, unless concerted steps are taken by the Israeli government, Israeli citizens and the American Jewish community, the downward trend in relations with the U.S. will only get worse,” she said.

MoveOn.org, an extremely influential, Soros-financed organization, helped strip Connecticut’s Joseph Lieberman of the Democratic nomination for Senate last year because Lieberman backed the war in Iraq. However, Lieberman recaptured his seat as an Independent.

Wrote Glick: “Propaganda posted on the Web site was laced with blatant anti-Semitic attacks. Postings repeatedly referred to Lieberman as ‘the Jew Lieberman,’ and ‘ZioNazi Lieberman.’ These attacks were by no means unusual. Indeed, anti-Semitic slurs against Israel and Jewish Americans, and belittle-ments of the Holocaust, appear regularly in MoveOn.org Web forums.”

Glick named American Friends of Peace Now, Israel Policy Forum, and Brit Tzedek v’Shalom as hurting Israel. “Together they worked to sink the Palestinian Anti-Terror Act, which enjoyed overwhelming support in the Congress and the Senate and was backed by AIPAC.”

Furthermore, she said, “Everyone knows that organizations like Not in My Name, which acts as the Jewish American branch of the International Solidarity Movement, seeks to undermine IDF [Israel Defense Forces] operations and makes common cause with Israel’s enemies, are not Zionist organizations.”

Wrote Glick: “Far from acting to promote Israel, this new lobby will work to weaken Israel, to weaken the Israel-American alliance, and to strengthen Israel’s enemies. While its Jewish founders insist that they are pro-Israel, the fact of the matter is that they are about to establish an American Jewish anti-Israel lobby.”

Billionaire George Soros (right) walks with unidentified officials of the Open Society Institute in Washington, D.C. (Manny Ceneta/AFP/Getty Images).
Here in Israel, many people have no peace. Not only are we the victims of shootings and terrorism, but we are surrounded by countries that want nothing more than to destroy us. If that were not enough, many people have no spiritual peace either.

A number of ultra-Orthodox Jews live in my neighborhood. They do not speak to me often, for they have been told to avoid me because I will try to “brainwash” them and speak to them about the New Testament. But recently one of my neighbors came to me and asked, “Do you try to convince people that they should believe in This Man?” By “This Man,” they mean Jesus.

I told him that I speak to people about what is written in the Bible. “Please,” I asked, “tell me who This Man is whom you so fear that you do not want me to speak of Him? What I speak about is the Bible, and I do not erase what is written there, as you do. I do not tell people that they should worship according to rabbinical tradition. I tell them they must worship according to the Bible.

“When I speak to people, I speak according to the Holy Spirit of God. Is this not ‘kosher,’ as you say? You believe the Bible is not kosher [“fit for ritual use”], but all those many rabbinical traditions are?

“How shall I speak to people? Shall I use fictitious stories or the Holy Bible?”

The man listened carefully to my words. Finally he replied, “You put me in a difficult situation. I do not know how to answer you.”

As we spoke, more of our neighbors appeared, and every one of them wanted to prove that he knew more than the others. But when they began to speak, they admitted that faith must be based on the Bible.

But this was not the end. Soon more people came who considered themselves extremely religious and great scholars. But they, too, could not go against the Bible.

Because we spoke so near our homes, more of our neighbors arrived. And each one wanted to take part in the discussion concerning whether it was better to have faith according to the Bible or according to rabbinical tradition. Now we began to reach the deep heart of the matter.

“You know,” someone said, “you speak like those who believe in This Man.”

“I do not believe as you do,” I replied. “I have only this one little book, the Holy Bible. I do not mean to frighten you. But some of these people asked me if I read the New Testament. And I told them that it, too, is part of the Bible.”

“And the New Testament is where you read about This Man!” one declared.
“Not only in the New Testament, but also in the Hebrew Scriptures,” I said. From that moment, tensions increased. “Show us where such a thing is written!” they demanded.

“Read from Isaiah 53, and you will see with your own eyes about whom the prophet spoke.”

“You have made a big mistake,” they all told me.

So I opened my Bible and began reading. I particularly wanted them to hear verses 5–6:

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.

“About whom is this written?” I asked. Someone quickly took the Bible from my hands and turned it around and around, trying to determine if it was truly the Bible. But he could not find anything “unksinner” about it.

“We have to ask our rabbi what he says this means. We do not know what to say.”

But I continued to ask, “Who was this one who was pierced for our transgressions? Who was He? Do you know?” I continued to read.

Now differences of opinion arose among them. Finally someone asked me, “Who do you say this is?”

“I say we must pay attention to what is written here. This is God’s eternal Word, and no one can erase the truth. As it is written, ‘Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven’ [Ps. 119:89]. People may try to erase His words, but they stand firm. He is this one who was pierced for our transgressions. And His name is Yeshua Hamashiach [‘Jesus the Messiah’]. This is a fact.”

To my joy, they received this information well. I pray we will have more discussions about This Man, for He alone can give spiritual peace to a restless soul.

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