EXCLUSIVE:
David Dolan explains Ariel Sharon’s surprising U-Turn — Page 11

Elliot Jager of The Jerusalem Post gives you an insider’s tour of the security fence going up in the City of Gold — Page 18

Plus:
Elwood McQuaid reveals an archaeological discovery that gives the lie to the “big lie” — Page 8
Craig L. Parshall looks at God’s contract with Israel — Page 20
Jimmy DeYoung analyzes Jordan’s disengagement connection — Page 28
Never Miss an Opportunity
by Elwood McQuaid ........................................8
Was Gaza enough? Not on your life. Now Abbas is beating the drum for a move on Jerusalem, while archaeologists uncover something wonderful.

Israel: Inside the International Pressure Cooker
by David Dolan ..............................................11
Years ago, few thought Ariel Sharon would ever give up Gaza. The reasons for his dramatic U-turn, however, aren’t that difficult to understand.

The New Wall of Jerusalem
by Elliot Jager ................................................15
A top Jerusalem Post writer gives you an insider’s look at Jewish life in Israel’s City of Gold and what many feel is the only viable way to protect it.

A Lawyer Looks at God’s ‘Contract’ With Israel
by Craig L. Parshall ............................................20
What do words like inheritance, descendants, and forever mean to you? They mean a great deal to God. More, in fact, than most people realize.

Islam? Which Kind?
by Bruce Scott ................................................24
You’ve got your Sunnis and your Shiis and your Fivers and your Seveners. And the list goes on. All are Muslims. Yet all are not alike.

TIME TO RENEW?
Check the mailing label on the back cover of this magazine. The date in the upper right corner of the label indicates the end of your current subscription. Use the enclosed envelope to renew.

Subscription Rates:
USA: $16.95 for 1 year, $25.95 for 2 years
Overseas: $19.95 for 1 year, $31.95 for 2 years
(U.S. dollars only) Single copies $4 each
Canada: $21.95 CAD for 1 year, $31.95 CAD for 2 years
Israel My Glory is also available in Spanish.
Call during business hours 8 A.M. to 9 P.M. (Eastern time) 800-345-8461

ABOUT THE COVER
Art Director Tom Williams has skillfully combined images symbolizing the destruction and heartbeat following the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip of Jewish families who had maintained fruitful lives there for decades. The synagogue was a treasure to religious Jewish residents of Neveh Dekalim. It was one of 21 houses of worship destroyed or desecrated by Palestinians. The young Jewish woman depicts the biblical word, “A time to weep.” (Background, Hanan Isachar/www.israelimages.com; woman, Lacy Atkins/San Francisco Chronicle; compositing and digital enhancement, Thomas E. Williams).

ALSO FEATURING
From Bill Sutter’s Desk ....................... 4
Myths/Facts ............................................. 5
Editorial ............................................... 6
They Must Start Over—Again .............. 13
Traveling the Fence Route .................. 18
O Jewish Town of Bethlehem ............. 23
Gone With the Wind ......................... 26
What I’d Tell My Dad ......................... 27
Jordan’s Disengagement Connection .... 28
They Cry in Silence ............................ 30
The Staggering Cost of Disengagement ... 31
The Book of Zechariah ....................... 32
The Foundations of Faith .................... 34
Eye on the Middle East ...................... 36
Women of the Bible ......................... 38
Israel in the News .............................. 40
All Arab TV Comes to America .......... 41
Zvi ................................................. 42

PUBLICATIONS
Editor-in-Chief: Elwood McQuaid • Senior Editor: Lorna Simcox •
Associate Editor: David M. Levy • Contributing Editors: Steve Herzig,
Ronald E. Shovert • Publications Manager: Vera Bowker • Art
Director: Thomas E. Williams • Production Assistant: Alison Gracely

ISRAEL MY GLORY is the bimonthly publication of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., an independent, Bible-believing faith mission committed to evangelism, education, and edification for more than 65 years.

Israel My Glory (ISSN 8755-402X) is published bimonthly for $16.95 per year by The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1179 Almonesson Road, Deptford Township, Westville, New Jersey 08093. Periodicals postage paid at Westville, NJ, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Israel My Glory, P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099-9900.

© Copyright 2005 The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA by Waveline Direct.
S

o said Dr. Yuri Shtern, cochairman of the Israeli Knesset’s Christian Allies Caucus, an organization of historic proportions that underscores the growing friendship between the Jewish and evangelical communities.

And Dr. Shtern is not alone in his feelings. In July a guest at our Friends of Israel prophecy conference in Winona Lake, Indiana, handed me a copy of an informational letter released by the Jewish organization FLAME—Facts and Logic About the Middle East (www.factsandlogic.org). It discussed Israel’s enemies’ single-minded dedication to her destruction and explained that many of Israel’s supporters are found in the United States. Said FLAME President Gerardo Joffe, “This is especially true of the evangelical Christians, who are Israel’s best friends. To some degree this reflects the people’s strong Christian faith and their belief in the Bible and in God’s covenant with the Jewish people.”

This is yet another illustration that Jewish people are better understanding the biblical basis for our Christian support of the Jewish state and our opposition to anti-Semitism.

The Christian Allies Caucus, an official link between the Israeli government and evangelical Christians, is a momentous development. Twelve elected members, or 10 percent of this legislative body, from six Israeli political parties across the political spectrum, meet monthly to respond to Christian support for Israel. Members hail the Caucus as the “personification of a new relationship between Christians and Jews.”

Several of us from The Friends of Israel attended a meeting recently with Dr. Shtern and Caucus General Director Josh Reinstein. It was striking to hear Shtern declare, “We realize that Christian support is a core value.

“We understand the existence of the Jewish state is a confirmation of evangelical Christian belief.”

Given Christendom’s sordid treatment of Jewish people over the centuries, we should not be surprised that many of them have viewed our support of Israel skeptically, suspecting ulterior motives. Fortunately, this opinion is changing. Increasingly, our Christian support is understood to be unconditional—based on the Bible, God’s everlasting covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:7–8), and His unqualified love for His People (Dt. 7:7–8).

Even as Israel’s legislators are reaching out to us, we are also hearing from the nations’ executive branch. When Israel’s ambassador to the United States, Daniel Ayalon, invited a group of Christian leaders to an hour-long private meeting recently with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, his choice of participants was revealing. All 18 of us were evangelical Christians. A smiling Sharon quipped, “You don’t need a guidebook when you come to Israel. You have the Bible in your hands. You know your knowledge of the Bible is very great—with you I have to be very careful.”

One of the most amazing developments within the American Jewish community is the formation of a Jewish organization dedicated to fighting anti-Christian bias in our culture. Known as Jews Against Anti-Christian Defamation (JAACD), its members include Marx, Ayn Rand, or Jane Fonda . . . and that’s okay, but as soon as you say your worldview is based on the Bible, that’s considered an illegitimate basis for embracing certain political views.

These people understand that our Christian morality comes from the Bible, given by God through the Jewish people; and they stand side-by-side with us on behalf of our Judeo-Christian values.

JAACD members said they are united in their determination to support “our beleaguered brothers and sisters in the Christian community.” At a press conference Feder said,

We understand that Christians are the last remaining obstacle to the moral deconstruction of America. . . . By maintaining their loyalty to the eternal values revealed at Sinai, Christians have become pariahs in the eyes of the establishment, but heroes in our eyes.

We at The Friends of Israel believe that these movements, so counter to history, cannot be explained apart from the Lord. We are witnessing the stage being set for that future time when God will carry out His plan through Israel as described by the prophets in Isaiah 62, Ezekiel 36, and Zechariah 8.

William E. Sutter is the executive director of The Friends of Israel.
When serious negotiations begin over the final status of the West Bank, battle lines will be drawn over which settlements should be incorporated into Israel and which must be evacuated.

In Gaza, Israel’s intent was always to withdraw completely, and no settlements were viewed as vital to Israel for economic, security, or demographic reasons. The situation in the West Bank is completely different. The disengagement from Gaza involved only 21 settlements and approximately 8,000 Jews; more than 100 settlements with a population of roughly 240,000 are located in Judea and Samaria.

Any new evacuation from the West Bank will involve another gut-wrenching decision that most settlers and their supporters will oppose with even greater ferocity than the Gaza disengagement. Most Israelis, however, have no opposition to withdrawing from small and isolated communities. About half of the settlements have fewer than 500 residents.

Approximately two-thirds of the Jews in the West Bank live in five settlement “blocs” that are all near the 1967 border; one-third live outside these blocs. Most Israelis believe these blocs should become part of Israel when final borders are drawn. These are considered the “consensus” settlements.

As the table shows, these are large communities with thousands of residents. Evacuating them would be the equivalent of dismantling major American cities the size of Maryland’s capital, Annapolis; Juneau, Alaska; or Augusta, Georgia.

Ma’aleh Adumim is a suburb of Israel’s capital, barely three miles outside Jerusalem’s city limits, a ten-minute drive away. It is not a recently constructed outpost on a hilltop; it is a 30-year-old community that is popular because it is clean, safe, and close to where many residents work. It is also the largest Jewish city in the territories, with a population of 27,300. Approximately 6,000 people live in surrounding settlements that are included in the Ma’aleh bloc. Israel has long planned to fill in the empty gap between Jerusalem and this bedroom community (referred to as the EI project). The corridor is approximately 3,250 acres and does not have any inhabitants, so no Palestinians would be displaced. According to the Clinton Plan, Ma’aleh was to be part of Israel.

The Gush Etzion Bloc consists of 18 communities with a population of more than 42,000 just 10 minutes from Jerusalem. Jews lived in this area prior to 1948, but the Jordanian Legion destroyed the settlements and killed 240 women and children during Israel’s War of Independence. After Israel recaptured the area in 1967, descendants of those early settlers reestablished the community. The largest of the settlements is the city of Betar Illit, with more than 24,000 residents.

The Givat Ze’ev bloc includes five communities just northwest of Jerusalem. The city called Givat Ze’ev, with a population of nearly 11,000, is by far the largest in the Givat Ze’ev bloc.

Modiin Illit is a bloc with four communities. The city of Modiin Illit is by far the largest with more than 26,000 people situated just over the Green Line, about 23 miles northwest of Jerusalem and the same distance east of Tel Aviv.

Ariel is now the heart of the most populous bloc of settlements. The city is located just 25 miles east of Tel Aviv and 31 miles north of Jerusalem. Ariel and the surrounding communities expand Israel’s narrow waist (which was just nine miles wide prior to 1967) and ensure that Israel has a land route to the Jordan Valley in case Israel needs to fight a land war to the east. It is more controversial than the other consensus settlements because it is the farthest from the 1949 Armistice Line, extending approximately 12 miles into the West Bank. Nevertheless, former Prime Minister Ehud Barak’s proposal at Camp David included Ariel among the settlement blocs to be annexed to Israel; the Clinton Plan also envisioned incorporating Ariel within the new borders of Israel.

Most peace plans, including former U.S. President Bill Clinton’s, assumed that Israel would annex sufficient territory to incorporate 75-80 percent of the Jews currently living in the West Bank. Using the figures in the accompanying table, however, it appears that Israel would fall short of that demographic goal even if these five blocs were annexed. The total population of these communities is approximately 160,000, which is roughly 68 percent of the estimated 236,000 Jews living in Judea and Samaria. The expectation, however, is that roughly one-third of the Jews living in other settlements will move into these blocs, which would bring the total close to 80 percent, but still require Israel to evacuate another 50,000 people.

*continued on page 31*
What’s So Special About Christmas?

When it comes to the holidays, and I’m asked to name a favorite, it’s not difficult. Thanksgiving is the day. It’s a time when the air is crisp and clear, the bugs are off the screens, and sunburns and summer barbecues are over. Kids are back in school, sweaters are in, and maples allure us with their annual fashion show. It’s a day when kitchen is king; and smells of turkey, pumpkin, and dressing bring on an irrepressible surge of desire to strap on a napkin and do what real men are made to do. South Beach, Jenny Craig, Weight Watchers, and Dr. Atkins are all on the shelf. Family chatter, sessions of sharing the bundles of blessings we have to be thankful for, and that special grace around the table with hands clasped and hearts at rest, make Thanksgiving all that it should be.

But what about Christmas?

When it comes to Christmas, I feel like the man (I think it was Sir Winston Churchill) who was once asked to name the 10 most important people in the history of the world, as he reckoned them. His list was impressive. When he finished, he was asked why he had not named Jesus Christ. “Oh,” he said, “because He doesn’t belong on that list. You see, Jesus Christ is incomparable.” He was right, of course.

That’s how it is with the celebration of the nativity. It is the singular event on the calendar of Christians the world over that has no equal. Even my beloved Thanksgiving falls way down on the scale. Christmas is everything.

I am aware that people grouse about the claptrap of commercialization, exploitation, and degradation associated with the secularization of the season. But that’s of little concern to me.

For those who are proper believers, Christmas is the premier season of the year that can be said to have a heart. Name all of the rest, yes, including Thanksgiving, and you’ll find something unique about each. But Christmas is special. It is a day when no one is left behind. It is, and I have no intent to be sacrilegious, the true Jesus day for one and all.

Children anticipate it throughout the year—and for more reasons than just a pile of wrapping paper and toys that will too soon be cast aside. The baby Jesus in the manger, the songs, the stories, and the celebration indelibly mark the soul in an incalculably wonderful way. And if you take the time to think about it, there’s something quite miraculous in how young children are drawn to Jesus with an instinctive kind of love. That is as true today as it was when He took them in His arms and blessed them, as only deity could.

But what about the rest of us? Well, it’s our day, too, and I’ll tell you why. We are living in a frightful time in the history of our planet. There’s talk about wars, natural disasters, a culture gone mad, and a clash of civilizations the likes of which we have never seen before. Sit down with any parents or grandparents and ask them what they think their offspring will experience, as opposed to what we have known of life. Most likely you’ll see an etching of concern and uncertainty on their faces. And there is reason for concern and uncertainty. We live in a world where moorings have been shaken, morals corrupted, and millions of people exist about whom it can be said that they are souls adrift. It’s not a pretty picture, but it’s an accurate one.

But, be that as it may, it isn’t all there is. And that’s because of Christmas. Not just a cheery few days to break the icicles off a dreary month or dampened spirits. It’s the reality of what took place in a stable two millennia ago. The world talks and sings of love it actually knows nothing about. God delivered love in Bethlehem that day. There is endless talk of peace in a world incapable of achieving it. Peace, true peace, arrived by special delivery among wondering shepherds and caroling angels. We hear platitudes about the goodness and fraternity of humankind that are more shallow rhetoric than reality.

Goodwill—God’s goodwill, if you please—nestled in the arms of a young Jewish mother in the dusty little town we sing about. The peace, joy, and goodwill He brought to all who would receive Him are ours to have. And with them, everything else—good, bad, or indifferent—becomes less relevant. Therefore, Christmas separates itself from every other season of the year. Why? Because the Incarnation is indispensable. Without His coming, we are irreparably lost.

Merry Christmas!
STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP


1. Date of filing: September 12, 2005.
2. Title of publication: ISRAEL MY GLORY.
3. Frequency of issue: Bimonthly.
4. Location of known office of publication: P. O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099.
5. Location of headquarters of general business and publishers: P. O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099.
6. Names and addresses of publishers, editor, and managing editor:
   Publishers: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., P. O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099
   Editor-in-Chief: Elwood McQuaid, P. O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099
   Managing Editor: Lorna Simcox, P. O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099.
8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None.
9. N/A
10. Extent and nature of circulation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months</th>
<th>Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date September 12, 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Total No. Copies Printed</td>
<td>176,167</td>
<td>184,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Paid and/or Requested Mail Circulation</td>
<td>157,612</td>
<td>165,782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation</td>
<td>157,612</td>
<td>165,782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Free Distribution</td>
<td>6,670</td>
<td>6,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Total Distribution</td>
<td>164,282</td>
<td>172,385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing</td>
<td>11,885</td>
<td>11,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Total</td>
<td>176,167</td>
<td>184,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. William E. Sutter, President
The oft-repeated adage, “The Arabs never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity,” has never been more evident than in the Palestinian reaction to Israel’s huge sacrifice in giving up its legitimate rights in the Gaza Strip and parts of northern Samaria. Rather than a simple thank you and show of determination to turn the slum that is most of Gaza into a productive, functioning society, there came an outburst of belligerence that would have made Yasser Arafat proud.

Even before Israelis began their traumatic evacuation, Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas was issuing a battle cry to the Palestinian Legislative Council in Ramallah. First he called the withdrawal from Gaza simply a preface to further Israeli retreats. Then he claimed Jerusalem as the capital of the new “Palestine.” The leader derived great encouragement from ill-advised statements by Western leaders who demanded Israel give up more territory and quicken the pace toward capitulation to Arab and left-wing political demands.

While Mr. Abbas was beating the drum for a move on Jerusalem, the ultraterrorist Hamas organization and its compadres boasted that the end was near for the Jewish state. Hamas leader Khaled Mashal called the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria the beginning of the end of the Zionist dream.

Mahmoud Zahar, Hamas’s overall leader in the Gaza Strip, added his vision of the future:

Neither the liberation of the Gaza Strip, nor the liberation of the West Bank or even Jerusalem will suffice us. Hamas will pursue the armed struggle until the liberation of all our lands. We don’t recognize the state of Israel or its right to hold onto one inch of Palestine. Palestine is an Islamic land belonging to all the Muslims.

A disquieting element in the terrorists’ preparations to move their campaign to the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) is Mahmoud Abbas’s resolve not to disarm them and to allow these organizations to continue stockpiling weapons for the fight.

So determined are these terrorists to carry on the battle that they are recruiting women into their military wings and training them to assemble and plant explosives, use missile launchers and mortars, and conduct assault maneuvers.

When President George W. Bush, in a weekly radio speech, said the next step after disengagement is to establish a working Palestinian government in Gaza, PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei cried foul. Said Bush, “Now that Israel has withdrawn, the way forward is clear. The Palestinians must show the world that they will fight terrorism and govern in a peaceful way.”

Qurei decried the president’s call for responsible leadership that would stow the guns and develop Gaza’s infrastructure. Instead, he saw the very idea of the PA proving itself a competent manager and peaceful neighbor as a violation of the basic principles of the Road Map plan for peace. His remarks translate into this: Israel must beat a quick retreat to the pre-1967 armistice lines.
In view of these facts, one must conclude that the aim of the Palestinian leaders and their terrorist cousins is to keep Israelretreating under fire until the area is swept clean of Jews from the Jordan to the Mediterranean. In other words, until the Jewish state is driven into the sea.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Charles Krauthammer suggested a sane solution to the post-Gaza quandary: the withdrawal in August from Gaza and areas in the West Bank should end Israeli concessions. Future realities must be based on security, barrier creation, separation, and fortifications.

How will the world react if Israel says, “Enough is enough”? With predictable dismay and anger. Wrote Krauthammer, Far from Israel getting any credit for this deeply wrenching action, the demand now is for yet more concessions—from Israel. The New York Times called the Gaza withdrawal “only the beginning” and declared sonorously that Ariel Sharon “must also be forewarned” that giving up the West Bank must be next. This is a counsel of folly. The idea that if only Israel made more concessions and more withdrawals, the Palestinians will be enticed into making peace is flatly contradicted by history.

The Big Prize: Jerusalem

The holy grail of the Palestinian and Muslim quest to conquer Israel and best the Western world is Jerusalem. Although the Holy City is never mentioned in the Qur’an and has been brought into the game of Muslim world domination as merely third behind Mecca and Medina, it is being billed as the big prize in the fight against Israel. It is the place where Palestinians aspire one day to prostrate Israel, put a foot on its neck, and declare victory. By taking the Old City, with its Temple Mount and fabled Western Wall, Muslims intend to reduce the Jewish people to second-class Dhimmitude. Under Islamic sharia law, Dhimmis (Christians and Jews allowed to live in Muslim lands) are subjected to humiliating regulations designed to cause them to “feel themselves subduéd” (surah 9:29).

Adolf Hitler’s chief propagandist, Joseph Goebbels, was diabolically correct when he said, “If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.” The big-lie tactic was not lost on Yasser Arafat, the late PA chairman and terrorist, when he made the extraordinarily preposterous claim that there has never been a Jewish presence on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem or a significant Jewish attachment to the city. Arafat reinvented history by claiming the Jewish people look for their Temple in the mountains of Yemen—but never mind Jerusalem; they were never there. Furthermore, Palestinians and the Arab world argue that Temples were in Jerusalem, they were never on Moriah. Or, as the Arabs did recently during digs at the Mount, they destroy the evidence.

But regardless of the magnitude of the lies played to a historically illiterate and willfully indifferent international community, the truth is there. It is no coincidence that one of the greatest adversaries of historical prevarication is the archaeologist’s spade. Thrilling confirmations of the Bible’s accuracy have again been uncovered in the City of David near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Archaeologist Dr. Eliat Mazar has discovered a large palace believed, by its size and architecture, to be that of King David—the same biblical David declared a mythical figure by Palestinian and Arab “scholars.” The site also yielded pottery shards and other artifacts dating from the time of David and Solomon, as well as the seal of a prominent government official, Jucal the son of Shelemiah, mentioned in Jeremiah 38:1.

She also discovered the remains of the original Pool of Siloam where Jesus healed the blind man in John 9. The pool, located about 200 yards from the smaller one tourists see today, is huge—about 225 feet long, with a series of steps that go down to water level.

These amazing finds give the lie to the big lie that they never existed. For the patrons of denial in Arab, Palestinian, and liberal theological circles, these confirmations of biblical and historical veracity pose a problem. They dismantle the Palestinian fiction of first claim to the Old City and Temple Mount and bring undeniable clarity to Israel’s claim to Jerusalem as the undivided, eternal capital of the Jewish people.

However, like the persistent fabrication of Holocaust denial, the lie will not die. A Palestinian professor of archaeology has already charged Israelis with trying to “fit historical [archaeological] evidence into a biblical context. . . . They have a button, and they want to make a suit out of it.”

You figure that one out.

The Heart of the Matter

What we can glean from all of this is that a magnificent convergence is taking place before our eyes. On the one hand is the determination of Israel’s enemies to achieve the total destruction of the Jewish state, either piece by piece or by military onslaught, and to seize Jerusalem and reappropriate it the exclusive domain of another god—Allah. On the other hand is the emergence of undeniable evidence of biblical, prophetic disclosures of end-time events.

Humanly speaking, it is distressing to live in a time when so many evangelical believers shun prophecy. There are at least two overriding reasons for this rather bizarre situation. (1) Many living in the Western world are distracted by the siren song of the materialistic culture of the now. (2) Many are victims of biblical teaching gone awry. Consequently, they lack an understanding of the foundational issues.
confronting believers in the end-times. Heading the list of erroneous doctrines is Replacement Theology, a fad that has enamored many of our leaders and deprived thousands of Christians of indispensable information, discernment, and corresponding responsibility.

Contrary to what Replacement Theology teaches, the church has not replaced Israel in the ultimate plan of God. To espouse this doctrine of denial is to lose virtually the entire prophetic perspective essential for coping with current events.

The Scriptures are decisively clear. Israel will be at the center of the stage in the end-times:

Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it (Zech. 12:2–3).

For believers, these times promise to test the metal of Christian commitment and dedication to our Lord:

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! (2 Tim. 3:1–5).

However, remaining within the bounds of biblical revelation there is no hint of a doomsday message. For Israel, battered and beleaguered as it may be in the interim, there is a steadfast promise of deliverance and future glory:

And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom. 11:26).

For believers, there is the moment-by-moment expectancy of being called home in the Rapture:

In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also (Jn. 14:2–3).

In the end, for Israel and believers in the Messiah alike, it will never be said that we’ve missed the opportunity.

ENDNOTES

Elwood McQuaid is editor-in-chief for The Friends of Israel.
Israel has faced many traumas during its 57 years as a small country located at the center of the perennially troubled Middle East. No other modern nation has experienced a war every decade. But tiny Israel has been forced to endure this enormous hardship. And with the expulsion program known as disengagement, the hardship continues.

The world’s only Jewish-run state was born in violent struggle. The 1948 War of Independence began when several Arab countries launched a concerted attack several months before David Ben-Gurion proclaimed Israel’s official appearance on the world map. This was followed by the 1956 Suez conflict, the short and stunning 1967 Six-Day War, the surprise 1973 Yom Kippur assault on Israel by Soviet-backed Syria and Egypt, the 1982 Lebanon war, and the 1991 Iraqi Scud attacks on Israeli coastal cities.

The current decade has been no exception, with the Palestinian al-Aqsa attrition war beginning just two months after Yasser Arafat, then leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), rejected Israel’s compromise peace proposal, brokered in July 2000 by U.S. President Bill Clinton at Camp David. In some ways, this conflict—although not universally considered a full war—has been Israel’s toughest
protracted battle, producing more Jewish civilian casualties than all the other wars combined.

To make matters worse, the sustained Palestinian terror blitz began just a few years after world leaders joined many Arab and Israeli officials in proclaiming an end to the long regional conflict. Optimism flowed from the Oslo peace accords, signed by Arafat and Israel’s Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on the White House lawn in September 1993. But the vaulted “land for peace” process turned out to be “peace, peace, but there is no peace” and poured stinging salt on Israel’s metastasizing, terrorist-inflicted wounds.

The fresh Palestinian violence also led the traumatized Israeli public to turn to a veteran politician whom most commentators had long written off as a potential prime minister—former army general and defense minister, Ariel Sharon. His early 1991 victory over embattled Prime Minister Ehud Barak was followed two years later by a second electoral triumph, this time by a massive landslide over another ex-army general, Labor party leader Amram Mitzna.

**Sharon’s U-Turn**

Political pundits attributed the overwhelming voter endorsement of Sharon to two main factors: his relative success in dealing with an unprecedented Palestinian terrorist onslaught in 2002 that left more than 100 Israeli civilians dead and hundreds more injured in one month alone, and his firm opposition to yielding to intensifying world demands—accepted by Mitzna’s Labor party—for a quick Israeli evacuation from the densely populated Gaza Strip.

Therefore, it was all the more stunning when the Likud party leader totally reversed course and announced in December 2003 his plans to uproot more than 8,000 Jewish settlers from their homes in the contested Mediterranean coastal zone, along with all Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers stationed there. Adding to the surprise of his bombshell announcement, Sharon added that he would also tear down four Jewish communities in the pristine hills of northern Samaria, located northeast of Tel Aviv near the Arab town of Nablus.

Many top Likud politicians sharply denounced the so-called unilateral disengagement plan, including Sharon’s own finance minister and longtime political nemesis, Benjamin Netanyahu. The U.S.-educated former prime minister argued that a one-sided withdrawal would only reward Arab terror while securing nothing from the Palestinians in return. International approval was not enough to counter the potential negative effects of the proposed pullback, Netanyahu argued, especially if Arab rockets launched from Gaza came crashing down with regularity on Israeli cities after the evacuation was completed.

Sharon’s sudden about-face left many reeling right-wing politicians and voters asking what could have possibly motivated the aging warhorse to completely reverse course and adopt the very Labor party plan he had denounced during the election campaign one year earlier. This was not an idle question, given that no other prime minister had ever ordered a forced removal of Israeli civilians from their homes inside Israel’s ancient heartland.

True, another Likud party leader and longtime Sharon associate, the late Menachem Begin, had uprooted several thousand Jewish people from their homes in the northern Sinai Peninsula as part of the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace accord. But those settlers had resided in Sinai’s dry desert sand dunes for just over 10 years. No one had dared to evacuate Israelis from their homes in the contested Gaza Strip where they had lived for decades, a mere 25 miles south of the country’s main urban area in Tel Aviv. And certainly no other Israeli leader had vowed to order Jews out of their communities in northern Samaria—at the top of the history-soaked spine running through the Jewish people’s biblical homeland.

Ariel Sharon was still a widely respected military commander when Israeli forces captured Jordan’s self-annexed “West Bank” in the lightning 1967 war, including the eastern half of Jerusalem, along with the Egyptian-ruled Gaza Strip and Syria’s Golan Heights. In the nearly four decades since then, he had always stood firm in his insistence that Israel could not evacuate Jewish settlements built in any of those areas in the years following the Six-Day War without gravely endangering the future security of the small state surrounded by hundreds of millions of mostly hostile Muslims.

More than that, the portly politician was the prime mover and shaker behind the establishment of many of the contested settlements. Widely known as the “bulldozer” for his steely tenacity in pursuing his goals, Sharon was the most trusted Likud politician in the nationalistic settler community. That he would end up directing a forced disengagement from 21 Jewish communities in the Gaza Strip and four others in northern Samaria was a sight that very few thought they would ever see.

**International Pressure**

So what was behind the prime minister’s seeming sudden change of heart? Although many things undoubtedly factored into it, Sharon himself gave the main answer when he presented his unilateral pullout plan to his divided cabinet for the first time in February 2004. The international community would impose crushing economic sanctions upon tiny Israel if a settlement pullout did not get under way in the near future, he maintained.

Second, Sharon noted that his ministers had previously endorsed the Road Map peace plan, sponsored primarily by the United States and the European Union—Israel’s two main trading partners. It called for the Israeli government to evacuate Jewish settlements in exchange for the Palestinian Authority (PA) disarming and dismantling several terrorist groups, especially
Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the PLO-linked al-Aqsa Martyrs’s Brigades. Even withdrawal skeptics like Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom could not dispute Sharon’s contention that the tiny Middle East country would face punishing UN-backed economic sanctions if no further land transfers to the Palestinians took place. All realized that such sanctions would be devastating.

However, pullout opponents quickly pointed out there were absolutely no signs that then-PA leader Arafat was making the slightest effort to curb Islamic or PLO terrorism, despite having also officially signed on to the Road Map peace plan. Although there was a temporary spike in hope that the PA would finally do so when Mahmoud Abbas was elected its

Nisanit was the second largest of the 21 Gaza Strip Jewish communities destroyed in August. The oldest was Kfar Darom, erected in 1946, two years before Israel became a state. It was destroyed by Egyptian forces in 1948 and rebuilt in 1970, three years after Israeli forces captured the entire Gaza Strip from Egypt during the dramatic Six-Day War.

Established in 1984, Nisanit grew to more than 1,000 residents by early 2005. Among those living there were Moshe and Tina.

After moving to Israel from Massachusetts in 1994, Tina met her future Sabra (native-born Israeli) husband through a mutual friend. The couple spent their first married years in rented quarters in Gadera, south of Israel’s Ben-Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv.

Moshe and Tina were eventually drawn to the northern Gaza Strip community of Nisanit, located just a few miles north of Gaza City and about the same distance south of the growing Israeli coastal town of Ashkelon. They bought their newly built home in the mixed religious-secular community in 1999.

A warmhearted American, Tina noted that she and her husband, like many of their former neighbors, had moved to Nisanit for quality-of-life reasons rather than ideological ones. “We really couldn’t afford a house in most parts of the country,” she said, adding they “believed God led us here and opened the door for us to buy our own home.” Tina’s cream-colored house was located close to the beautiful Mediterranean Sea and “came with a private fenced yard, and at a price we could afford.”

When Moshe and Tina purchased their home, the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian Oslo peace accord was on increasingly shaky ground. Yet it was more or less still in effect. However, by the time they finally moved in during the second half of 2000, the Palestinian al-Aqsa attrition war had begun.

“We realized that Nisanit was near several Gaza Strip Palestinian towns and that our community was now being subjected to terrorist infiltrations and rocket attacks. Still, it was our home, and for whatever reason, it was where God wanted us to live.”

Tina’s newly built home needed lots of work, especially to transform the sandy yard into a beautiful garden. In time, she and Moshe were able to “walk along stone paths in our garden, lined with rose bushes and flowering vines, and to eat the fruit from our pomegranate tree.” All that has now been bulldozed into the ground.

Just weeks before they were evacuated from Nisanit, along with all of their neighbors, Moshe and Tina worried about the practical aspects of the Likud-led government action. “The piece of paper that says we own this home is suddenly worth virtually nothing, yet our bank will expect continued monthly mortgage payments. We think the best option would be if we can apply the mortgage toward the purchase of another home.”

Like all of the estimated 3,000 Israeli adults and 5,000 plus children removed from the Gaza Strip, Tina and Moshe were notified of several potential housing solutions. Tina said most of the proposals were either inadequate or ephemeral. “Do we move to a house we really haven’t had time to search for or to a temporary apartment or trailer home? And do we rent or buy with the compensation money we are due to receive—even though we aren’t sure when it will arrive? These are just a few of the issues we’re being forced to grapple with while dealing at the same time with the emotional trauma of being evicted from our home.”

Speaking while Palestinian rockets and mortar shells fell on Nisanit and surrounding Jewish communities one month before the scheduled pullout, Tina said she and Moshe might move to northern Israel with several other area families. While she noted that the potential destination is also near the lovely Mediterranean coast and that the area is greener than the Gaza Strip—getting much more annual rainfall—it is also not far from Israel’s often volatile northern border with Lebanon.

“We’ve wondered if we might be exchanging Palestinian rockets for Hezbollah missiles,” she said. But she stated firmly, “If the door to reside in the north opens, we will walk through it.”

Whatever threats the couple might encounter in the future, Tina affirmed that she and Moshe will “continue to trust in God for our well-being.”

by David Dolan
new leader in January 2005, the facts showed otherwise.

Sharon put forth another crucial argument in trying to secure support for his withdrawal plan from his largely reluctant Likud party. He pointed out that U.S. President George W. Bush had promised in April 2004 to back Israel’s mainstream goal of maintaining full control over at least some of the large Jewish settlements near Jerusalem and Tel Aviv—such as the growing towns of Ariel and Ephrat—as part of any final Israeli-Palestinian peace pact. But he also noted that America’s support hinged on a total Gaza pullout in 2005 and probably from a few other outlying portions of Judea and Samaria in the future.

Disengagement Turmoil

As the mid-August date for the summer evacuations neared, Israeli public opposition to the unilateral action grew. Opinion polls that had shown at least 60 percent support for the disengagement plan when it was first announced by Sharon revealed that such backing had dropped to barely half of all Israeli voters.

Many said they changed their minds when they realized the Gaza and northern Samaria withdrawals might spark internal dissention bordering on civil war. Others said they reconsidered their initial approval because of the likely prospect that chaos would engulf the Gaza Strip after an Israeli army pullout and growing fears that Hamas would take over the area (more than 1 million Palestinians reside there, many in abject poverty) and use it to fire deadly rockets into nearby Israeli civilian centers.

The loudest complaint voiced by Likud Knesset opponents of the pullout plan—numbering over one-third of the party’s legislators—was that the controversial and divisive proposal was not put to the voters. Many noted that Sharon had promised to hold a referendum when he met with Likud politicians soon after unveiling his plan. “If a majority of Israeli citizens endorse disengagement, then we will accept that and stand down” said Uzi Landau, leader of the anti-pullout Likud camp, who was fired as a cabinet minister, like several others, after voicing his fierce opposition. Landau contended that a nationwide vote was especially necessary since Sharon had run, and won, on a platform that opposed a unilateral Gaza withdrawal.

As the summer began, right-wing charges that Sharon was acting like a third-world dictator became routine. This fueled concerns that the aging premier might be assassinated, as Yitzhak Rabin was 10 years earlier by an anti-Oslo, Israeli Orthodox Jew. While most prominent rabbis spoke out against violent attacks on pro-withdrawal politicians, many also issued rulings that Jewish religious law absolutely forbade the evacuation of Jewish communities inside Israel’s God-given, biblical borders.

With the terror-weary and ever-struggling country of Israel seemingly poised on the edge of a dangerous precipice, a number of prominent Christian leaders in Israel and abroad noted that Sharon had mainly proposed his contentious unilateral pullout plan because of intense international pressure, especially from Europe and the United States. Some warned that if the plan led to an explosion of civil violence inside Israel or to a new wave of Palestinian terror and rocket attacks from the evacuated lands, then world leaders would answer to God for their role in dividing up the Holy Land.

After all, the Lord Himself warned many centuries ago, through the Hebrew prophet Joel, that such a foreign-imposed land division would be one of the main reasons why He will judge the nations at the end of the age (Joel 3:2).
Despite fierce opposition, Israel continues to construct a nationwide security barrier, and nowhere is the complexity of the task more apparent than in Jerusalem.

Walls have been part of Jerusalem from time immemorial. By the end of the 19th century, with housing in the Jewish Quarter of the Old (walled) City scarce, new arrivals were forced to settle in recently established Jewish neighborhoods north and west of the city walls, beyond the Jaffa and Damascus Gates. In the late 1880s, Jerusalem had about 46,500 residents: 29,000 Jews, 8,500 Muslims, and 9,000 Gentiles of various Christian denominations. Over the years the demographics have shifted, but the lay of the land has not.

Topography

One of the first things you’ll notice on the ascent to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv is that Israel’s capital city sprawls hills and valleys. As a born-and-bred New Yorker, I still can’t get over the fact that Jerusalem has no grid system and that one always seems to be walking up or down, but seldom on level ground.

My in-laws, frequent visitors to Jerusalem since the 1950s, are struck by the city’s phenomenal growth, but more so by the disappearance of the ugly wall that once separated the Jewish side of town on the west from the Arab side on the east. Lisa’s folks...
used to stay at the King David Hotel overlooking the Old City. But that was all they could do—look—because between Israel’s War of Independence in 1948 and the Six-Day War in 1967, most of the hills and valleys lying to the north, east, and south of Jewish west Jerusalem, including the Old City, were under Jordanian occupation and off-limits to Jews.

Now, unhappily, Israel has been compelled to construct a colossal nationwide security barrier—in some places a wall, elsewhere a chain-linked fence monitored by sensors and abutted by patrol roads. The goal of the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is to enclose as much of the Jewish population as possible (including many who live in Judea and Samaria), while keeping out as many West Bank Palestinian Arabs as possible.

The Palestinian leadership, which wants to create a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, says it can live with the barrier only if Israel builds it exactly where the old 1949 armistice lines were. But, argues Israel, those lines are hard to defend militarily. We cannot be cut off again from the central coastal city of Netanya.

After the city’s reunification in 1967, scores of Jewish neighborhoods, such as Ramat Eshkol in the north and East Talpiot and Gilo in the south, were developed on the once-barren hills to the east, north, and south of the city in areas the news media often calls “Arab east Jerusalem.” It’s a misleading catchall, since “Arab east Jerusalem” frequently lies anywhere but east.

Indeed, Jerusalem’s Arab neighborhoods, such as Beit Zafafa, Beit Hanina, and Asawiya, are located respectively on the south, north, and east sides of pre-1967 Jewish west Jerusalem. After Israel reunified the city during the Six-Day War, its Arab residents were given the freedom to become Israeli citizens. Even though most opted to retain their Jordanian citizenship, Jerusalem Arabs may vote in municipal elections. Unfortunately—for them and for us—they refuse to participate because that would condone the Israeli “occupation.” They pay municipal taxes but contend that any further involvement in city affairs would undermine Arab national claims to the city they call al-Quds.

Most of the 171,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites possess blue Israeli identity cards, drive cars with yellow Israeli license plates (meaning the restrictions that apply to West Bank Palestinians do not apply to them), and are entitled to national health insurance and free education. In short, they enjoy most of the privileges of the city’s 470,000 Jewish citizens, with the exception of the right to vote in Knesset elections. The fact that they have chosen not to vote in municipal elections means, of course, they have little political or social clout within the city.

Rabin’s Fence

The inspiration of a barrier to encircle Jerusalem—part of the much larger project to separate Palestinian and Israeli populations up and down the land—took off some months into the current intifada that began in September 2000. The barrier was conceived as a way of stopping suicide bombers and explosives-laden vehicles from entering pre-1967 Israel from the West Bank.

The right wing initially opposed the idea because it handed the Palestinians a psychological victory (the satisfaction of Jews cowering behind a ghetto wall) and might place Jewish settlements that were not part of the major towns adjoining pre-1967 Israel on the “wrong” side of the wall.

Israelis on the rational left opposed the idea, claiming such unilateral action could prejudice the outcome of future negotiations with the Palestinians.

The idea of hunkering down behind a protective barrier in the face of implacable Arab opposition is nothing new to Zionist history. As early as 1923, the great Zionist visionary, Ze’ev Jabotinsky, employed the term metaphorically: “A voluntary agreement between us and the Arabs of Palestine is inconceivable now or in the foreseeable future. . . . Settlement can thus develop under the protection of a force that is not dependent on the local population, behind an iron wall which they will be powerless to break down.”

For Jabotinsky, the “iron wall” meant Jewish might. Over the years, though, it began to look like Jewish might alone was not enough. In January 1995—two years into the Oslo Accords, with Palestinian Authority (PA) Chairman Yasser Arafat ensconced in Ramallah and “only” 118 Israeli dead since his arrival from Tunisia—Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin resurrected a modified “iron wall” idea in reaction to a terrorist attack near the central coastal city of Netanya.

Rabin called for “a separation, though not according to the borders prior to 1967. We want to reach a separation between us and them. We do not want a majority of the Jewish residents of the state of Israel, 98 percent of whom live within the borders of sovereign Israel, to be subject to terrorism.”

Writing in the AJAC (Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council) Review in August 2004, former Jerusalem Post editor David Makovsky argued, “In many ways, Rabin was the intellectual father” of the security fence idea.

After Rabin’s assassination in November 1995, the proposal was put on a back burner. Prime Minister Ehud Barak, wrote Makovsky, revived the scheme shortly before the failed Camp David talks in July 2000. Like Rabin, Barak wanted the separation to be achieved by mutual agreement with the Palestinians as part of a process that created a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza living alongside Israel in peace.
Arafat rejected Barak’s extraordinarily munificent concessions at that fateful Camp David summit brokered by U.S. President Bill Clinton. Just a few weeks later, in September 2000, Arafat used the pretext of Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount to launch the current war (“second intifada”).

The Camp David debacle, plus Barak’s ineptitude in dealing with the escalating Palestinian violence both inside Israel and in the territories, contributed to his landslide defeat by Sharon in 2001.

But, as Makovsky recounted, Barak did have these parting words of wisdom to offer Sharon about the security fence: “When there are 70 dead Israelis, you can resist the fence, but when there are 700 dead Israelis, you will not be able to resist it.”

Barak was right. Since September 29, 2000, enemy forces have wounded more than 5,000 Israelis in various attacks against commuters, restauranant patrons, and other “soft” targets. As I write these words—during a relative lull in the killing—the number of Israeli fatalities stands at a staggering 1,073.

As Israeli casualties mounted, the idea of building a barrier to keep out terrorists gained momentum. The Gaza Strip, geographically manageable from a security viewpoint, was completely reencircled with an effective anti-infiltration barrier.

**Blame Arafat**

When we first heard about it, Lisa and I were dubious that a barrier could be built in and around Jerusalem. Lisa works at the Hebrew University’s historic Mount Scopus campus, northeast of the Old City. The enclave opened in 1925 but was inaccessible from 1948 until 1967. Her route to work takes her across the old armistice line.

Thankfully, there is nothing left of the 1967 demarcation lines nor the wall Lisa’s parents remember; Jewish residents live in and traverse the former “east” Jerusalem, and Arab residents have become integrally linked to “west” Jerusalem. Post-1967 Jerusalem did not lend itself to being redivided.

What could be done, however, was to separate metropolitan Jerusalem from the West Bank. And that essentially has become the route of the security fence. Part of it is now in place, with various stretches under dispute, and completion is expected in 2006 at the earliest.

You would think that Arabs on both sides of the security fence would flock to “their” side to finally be rid of the yoke of “Zionist occupation.” But if anything, they are moving toward “our” side.

To be fair, Jerusalem’s Arabs oppose the fence partly because they don’t want to be cut off from the West Bank. They have a web of personal, economic, cultural, and social ties to the West Bank; and many Arabs in the West Bank depend on Jerusalem for schools and medical care. The fence will make it difficult for some Arab farmers to get to their olive groves and for some children to reach their schools; it will be a hassle to visit family only minutes away in, say, Ramallah.

To complicate matters further, some villages that spread out over distinct hills will be cut in two by the barrier. And some residents with Israeli ID cards will be stuck on the “wrong” side.

One would have to be hardhearted to dismiss the human suffering—even the annoying inconvenience—the barrier will cause Jerusalem’s Arabs. But one cannot let those concerns override the benefits. Remember: there would be no barrier were it not for years of ferocious, relentless, Islamist-inspired Palestinian terrorism.

**From Gilo to Kalandiya**

For the Arabs, every Jewish neighborhood built on the hills liberated in the 1967 war is part of “occupied East Jerusalem.” or the media misnomer, “Arab east Jerusalem.” This is true of Gilo, East Talpiot, French Hill, Pisgat Ze’ev, Har Homa—you name it.

Take Gilo, for example. At the start of the second intifada, gunmen from Bethlehem and Beit Jalla unleashed a bombardment on Gilo. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) responded by bringing tanks into Gilo to lob shells in the direction of the incoming fire. You can still see the gaping holes caused by the IDF’s retaliatory fire in some of the Beit Jalla buildings.

All is quiet now. The tanks are gone. But the Gilo residents’ windows that face the Arab areas below have been bulletproofed.

Gilo is the starting point of the southern section of the barrier that will, with any luck, envelop all of metropolitan Jerusalem on a route that runs along an eastern semicircle and terminates in the north near the city’s disused airport in Atarot.

Topography and security will dictate the character of the barrier: A wire fence with adjoining patrol road will handle places like Gilo, where large tracts separate Arab and Jewish neighborhoods; elsewhere, where it’s necessary to separate densely populated areas or where a wire fence can be easily circumvented, ugly concrete blocks are going up.

**Mr. Sharon: Finish This Wall**

The separation fence, security barrier—call it what you want—is very much a “shrine” to Yasser Arafat’s sullied life. Offered Ehud Barak’s hand in peace, “Mr. Palestine” tried to chop it off. Not only that, he inspired his minions to blow themselves up; to slaughter as many Jewish men, women, and children as they could; to revel in their victimhood; and to engage in bloodlust.

One day, please God, a physical barrier between Israelis and Palestinians will be unnecessary. But for now, it is desperately needed. And Lisa and I fervently hope Mr. Sharon can get this wall up and secure—the faster the better.

Elliot Jager is deputy editorial page editor of The Jerusalem Post. He and his family live in Jerusalem.
Traveling the Fence Route

Elliot walks along the security fence in Abu Dis, a Jerusalem neighborhood now cut in two. Inset: Elliot and Lisa Jager visit the security fence to get a firsthand look at the situation on the Israeli side (Sara Levin).

On a hot, dry, Friday morning in July, my wife, Lisa, and I traveled the entire length of the route of the fence that will envelop metropolitan Jerusalem. Starting in Gilo, we headed east toward Har Homa, Jerusalem’s newest neighborhood of high-rise apartment blocs situated on a ridge that, like Gilo, faces east toward Har Homa, Jerusalem. Starting in Gilo, we headed east toward Har Homa, Jerusalem’s newest neighborhood of high-rise apartment blocs situated on a ridge that, like Gilo, faces east toward Har Homa, Jerusalem. Starting in Gilo, we headed east toward Har Homa, Jerusalem’s newest neighborhood of high-rise apartment blocs situated on a ridge that, like Gilo, faces east toward Har Homa, Jerusalem. Starting in Gilo, we headed east toward Har Homa, Jerusalem’s newest neighborhood of high-rise apartment blocs situated on a ridge that, like Gilo, faces east toward Har Homa, Jerusalem. Starting in Gilo, we headed east toward Har Homa, Jerusalem’s newest neighborhood of high-rise apartment blocs situated on a ridge that, like Gilo, faces east toward Har Homa, Jerusalem.

Next we followed the eastern arc through the Arab neighborhoods (really villages) of Um Tuba, Jabal Mukhaber, and Tzur Baher. The Arab sector is Jerusalem’s poorest. The infrastructure is decrepit, and municipal garbage trucks can’t navigate the winding, hilly, poorly paved streets. Construction is slapdash.

Residents make ends meet by shopping in the West Bank where goods are much cheaper than in Israel. But when the barrier is fully in place, what is today a dash over to the West Bank to pick up some potatoes for dinner will become incomparably more difficult.

We continued over bumpy roads toward the outskirts of the Old City from the Arab—eastern—side of town. The closer we got, the more urban and densely populated the area became.

Just downwind from the Mount of Olives and Temple Mount is the Ras el-Amud neighborhood, home to 11,000 Jerusalem Arabs. We passed an incongruous compound created by the American Jewish millionaire Irving Moscowitz, who bought property here and built an urban Jewish settlement of 119 apartments called Ma’aleh Har HaZeitim (Mount of Olives Heights). I doubt that Ma’aleh Har HaZeitim, implanted as it is smack up against Ras el-Amud, is of any security value (there’s already a police station there anyway). What it does accomplish is to feed into the Muslim suspicion that the Jews are trying to displace the Arabs. It seems unnecessarily provocative.

‘Dirty of Dirties’

Shortly before noon we finally arrived at the “Eastern Wall,” the “dirty of dirties”—the ugliest section of the security fence and the segment that foreign journalists, photographers, and sundry “progressive” visitors come to in order to “witness” what Israel has “done.” I spotted Arik Ascherman of Rabbis for Human Rights, guiding a guest through the area.

We were in Abu Dis, a Jerusalem neighborhood that’s been cut down the middle by the security fence. The Palestinian parliament building stands on the Arab side.

Our side of the wall is vandalized by graffiti. “Witness the Jewish shame,” someone has scrawled. Someone else has painted a Palestinian flag. Pro-Arab propagandists have turned this section of the barrier into a “one-picture-is-worth-a-thousand-words” condemnation of Israel. You’re supposed to look at this monstrosity and see the Berlin Wall or maybe the Warsaw Ghetto wall. Whatever.

Meanwhile, as the wall becomes a reality and fewer terrorists are able to infiltrate from the West Bank, the less authority the Palestinian leadership will have on the Arabs on our side of the fence. That’s why Palestinian leaders are doing whatever it takes, from international pressure at The Hague to backing violent protests at barrier building sites, to keep the wall from being completed.

As for the ugliness, Israeli authorities say that after its completion, the fence will have several well-appointed, air-conditioned border crossings plus scores of regular new checkpoints for farmers who need to reach their fields.

But for now, with the barrier still porous in many spots, Palestinians who don’t want to walk to the existing crossing points can be seen squeezing through tight crevices or climbing over cement blocks. Lisa and I watched as Israeli Border Police tried to control the inflow by inspecting identity cards.

When it is finally completed, perhaps in two years, the barrier will go all the way north to Kalandiya and Atarot. The former is the final checkpoint before Ramallah; the latter is the defunct Jerusalem airport, unusable because of its proximity to enemy territory.

Some Arab areas, such as the Shufat refugee camp, will be outside the fence (and thus in what is likely to become the state of Palestine). On the day we were there, residents had just set up a protest tent demanding to stay on the Israeli side. Meanwhile, the nearby Arab neighborhood, also called Shufat, will wind up inside the fence, and residents there are angry at being cut off from the West Bank.

With all the hassle, hundreds—perhaps thousands—of Arabs with blue Israeli ID cards are voting with their feet to be on the Israeli side of the security barrier. Others are trying to marry people who already have blue cards. The mad rush to remain under Israeli “occupation” is under way.
This Page
Is Intentionally
Left Blank
If ever there is a time to return to first principles concerning the nation of Israel and its claim to the land, it is now. While the Sharon administration continues its unilateral disengagement policy that began in August, Palestinian leaders wait in the wings, buying time with promises to rein in the terrorism of Hamas and other indigenous groups bred on violence. Their promises are still unfulfilled.

A Lawyer Looks at God’s ‘Contract’ With ISRAEL
And behind the Palestinians there is, as always, the Arab League. Positive steps toward democratization in Iraq, and smaller steps still in Saudi Arabia with local elections, cannot mask the fact that Arab/Muslim antagonism toward Israel continues—unabated and unchanged.

The Christian church needs to decide, therefore, where it stands on Christian Zionism. In so doing, it will have to decide where it stands on Israel.

**Down With Zionism?**

Like a religious, geopolitical earthquake, the tremors are cracking open an abyss along major fault lines: liberals versus conservatives, denominational "moderates" versus "fundamentalists"; Reformed versus non-Reformed evangelical theology.

During the 2004 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, Christian Zionism was formally rejected as “not consistent with the basic tenets of Reformed Theology.” Worse still, that body has begun investigating economic sanctions (“divestment”) against Israel for its policies toward Palestinians regarding Israeli land and borders, its construction of the security fence, etc. Divestiture has picked up tentative support from liberal Jewish commentators like *Tikkun* magazine’s Michael Lerner.

Part of the muddled thinking on all of this seems to been generated by forgetting or interpreting away the nature of Israel’s most basic claim to the land. This evidence came to me recently while I was perusing the May 2005 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*. In an article titled “Will Israel Live to 100?” Benjamin Schwarz, one of its editors, stated that in 1947, UN resolution 181 made “an Arab land into a Jewish state.” His conclusion that “Palestine” was effectively Arab is highly curious, as he admitted that at least 100,000 more Jews than Arabs lived there at the time. If demographics determine land rights, why was it not “a Jewish land made into a Jewish state”? But demographics do not determine the question. That issue must be resolved, as far as Christians are concerned, by a far more transcendent standard.

**God’s First Will and Testament**

Some of those who object to Christian Zionism do, in fact, resort to Scripture for support. And they deserve a reasoned response. For instance, one argument goes like this: Although God did, in the Old Testament, “promise” possession of certain lands to ancient Israel, that promise was fulfilled in the book of Joshua (21:43–45). They argue that possession was never intended to be permanent. Further, they contend that this merely “temporary” possession terminated with the Roman assaults of A.D. 70 and afterward; and they assert that their view is corroborated by the New Testament writers’ supposed failure to speak (as the Old Testament prophets did) of a future gathering of Israel into the land.

In the law, there are parallels to this situation. If I were to grant to my children a “life estate” in certain lands I owned, their possession and enjoyment of it would only exist for a finite time, to end with their deaths. Then their interest would revert back to me (or to my estate), thereafter to be assigned according to my written intent. They would have no right to transfer the land—and no ultimate claim of permanent possession in the sense of passing it down to their survivors and successors. They would lack what lawyers sometimes call a “fee simple absolute” interest in the land.

Ultimately, then, the issue gets down to what kind of “contract,” what type of covenant, God made with Israel regarding the land of Canaan. If we want to look up a deed to property, we go to the public land registry. If we want to determine God’s grant to Israel, we go to the Bible. As I study the issue, I see at least three reasons why God’s granting of a specific, physical landmass to Israel cannot be read as a merely temporary, mostly Old Testament idea that ceased in A.D. 70.

**An Inheritance to Israel**

Because the Old Testament authors were “moved by the Holy Spirit” and spoke as instruments of God (2 Pet. 1:21), we must conclude that the words of Scripture are divinely
intentional. That said, it is dazzlingly clear that the land grant from God to Israel was not couched in terms that suggest a transitory contract with a short-term expiration date. Just the opposite: the conveyance of the Promised Land to Israel was structured as an “inheritance.” When the Israelites entered Canaan, they were told that the cities they would conquer, “the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance” (Dt. 20:16).

In the book of Numbers the land of Canaan, according to “its boundaries,” was given as “an inheritance” (34:2). The word inheritance is also used in 34:17–18 and 35:2. This is significant because the law of inheritance and the legal implications of that term were of divine origin. In the Old Testament (unlike the later Roman practice under civil law), land was not devised to successors by a written will. Instead, it was conveyed to each generation under the system set by God Himself. A firstborn son received a double portion (Dt. 21:17). If there was no son, daughters inherited; if no daughters, the land went to brothers, etc. (Num. 27:7–11).

The use of inheritance in describing the grant of Canaan to Israel was no accident. It carried the full freight of meaning, denoting a transfer of land rights by God Himself and signifying that the transfer was not based on merit, but on birthright.

**A Grant to Israel’s Descendants**

This fact is corroborated by another word: descendants.

“Then the LORD said to him, ‘This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, “I will give it to your descendants”’” (Dt. 34:4). A similar statement appears in Genesis 13:15: “For all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.”

This word indicates a continuing right to the land, from generation to generation, to be held not in temporary or conditional possession but in perpetuity. God did not grant the land to Israel because of its meritorious service, obedience, or righteousness. Just the opposite: “Therefore understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people” (Dt. 9:6). God’s providential hand provides in grace and mercy that which is not deserved; and at their essence, His ways (as well as His land covenants) are inscrutable.

**An Everlasting Covenant**

Contrary to those who see A.D. 70, or any other time, as the termination of divinely granted rights of possession, God’s grant of Canaan to Israel is described as permanent—indeed, eternal. The land is given to Abraham’s descendants “forever” (Gen. 13:15). It is an “everlasting possession” (17:8). How can we diminish the meaning of those clear statements without diminishing the value of God’s Word? To do so involves an Olympian exertion of tortured exegesis.

The creation of the modern State of Israel is astonishing proof that the Lord is not confounded by demographics or international politics. What He says, He will accomplish. No purpose of His can be thwarted (Job 42:2).

Yet, while His Word is sure and the land of Israel surely belongs to the Jewish people by divine birthright, that right can still be lost by human abdication or abandonment. Esau traded his inheritance for a steaming pot of savory stew, realizing too late that his blessing had been lost (Gen. 25:29–34; 27:38). His weeping was bitter and inexpressible.

The temptation for Israelis to abdicate lands rightfully theirs is understandable. The motivation comes not from a momentary appetite like Esau’s, but from international pressure and a national soul that has weared of suicide murderers and the sickening sounds of sirens echoing in the streets. Yet, even so, Israel must not forget what God has promised. It must not give away that which was God’s alone to give and ignore the finality with which He gave it.

But even more, woe be to the church of Jesus Christ if we encourage or, even worse, extort Israel into relinquishing its birthright of lands and boundaries. God’s title deed to Israel is filled with geographical boundaries. He takes such things seriously. And what concerns the Lord God, that which occupies His heart and consumes His eye, should concern us:

But the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year (Dt. 11:11–12).

Craig L. Parshall is a highly successful trial attorney in the Washington, D.C., area. His novels are available in bookstores.

**Quoteworthy**


“We do not and will not recognize a state called Israel. . . . This land is the property of all Muslims in all parts of the world. . . . Let Israel die.”
David not only was born in Bethlehem, but 1 Samuel 16 also records that the prophet Samuel anointed him king there. And the Jewish prophet Micah boldly proclaimed that the Messiah would be born there:

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

Matthew 2 and Luke 2 record Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem as the fulfillment of Micah’s prophecy.

Around A.D. 338, Helena, mother of Roman Emperor Constantine, had a church built on the site Christian tradition regarded as the exact location of Jesus’ birth. This Church of the Nativity is a place of pilgrimage for millions of Christians even today.

Christianity spread under Roman rule and flourished further when the Empire was divided east and west. Later, under Muslim rule, many Christians suffered, but the Church of the Nativity was respected. In 1099 the Crusaders captured Bethlehem and made it a fortified outpost.

The Crusader presence ended in 1291. In 1517 the Muslim Ottoman Turks conquered the Holy Land and ruled it as part of the greater Ottoman Empire until 1917, when British General Edmund Allenby conquered the entire region, east and west of the Jordan River, including the little town of Bethlehem, located just five miles south of Jerusalem.

In 1948, after the British left, Jordan seized control of Samaria and Judea (including Bethlehem), and they became known as the West Bank of Jordan. The Six-Day War of 1967 brought Bethlehem back under Jewish control.

In September 1993, U.S. President Bill Clinton, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and Palestinian Authority (PA) leader Yasser Arafat signed the Oslo peace accord that transferred Bethlehem from Israeli to PA rule. On December 23, 1995, a huge crowd gathered to witness the transfer. In his official pronouncement from the roof of the Church of the Nativity, Arafat proclaimed, “Welcome to Bethlehem, birthplace of the first Palestinian Christian, Jesus Christ.” Arafat never let the truth get in his way.

Jesus was no more a “Palestinian” than was King David. At Jesus’ birth the area, called Judea, was part of the Roman Empire. Furthermore, Jesus was every inch a Jew—from the tribe of Judah, “the Son of David, the Son of Abraham,” “born under the law” (Mt. 1:1; Gal. 4:4). Had He walked the earth in Hitler’s Germany, He would have worn an armband bearing the yellow Star of David, along with the rest of His Jewish brethren.

When Arafat arrived in Bethlehem on December 23, he professed with great fanfare to bring peace. Yet within a few years, the Christian majority there had fled en masse. Arafat’s Fatah and intelligence network intimidated and persecuted most of them. The London Times reported in December 1997, “Life in Bethlehem has become insufferable for many members of the dwindling Christian minorities. . . . Tensions have left some Christians reluctant to celebrate Christmas in the town at the heart of the story of Christ’s birth.”

One of the saddest events in Bethlehem’s history took place on April 2, 2002, when 200 Palestinian gunmen forced their way into the Church of the Nativity, seized it, and used it as a refuge. Israeli soldiers surrounded the building but were under strict orders to refrain from damaging it. The siege lasted 39 days, finally ending with the deportation of the militants to Cyprus and Gaza.

Yasser Arafat is no longer on this earth, and Bethlehem never saw his promised peace. Yet God promises a future peace, when the *Sar Shalom*, the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus, will return to His home country of Israel. And when He does, He will not be wearing a kaffiyeh.
There are 1.2 billion Muslims in the world. They all worship Allah, not Jehovah, and most recognize the five pillars of Islam: profession of faith in the oneness of Allah and in Muhammad as his final prophet, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage. However, not all Muslims are identical in faith or practice. The tree of Islam has many branches.

**Sunni**

*Name:* Derived from *sunnah* ("tradition"), referring to Muhammad’s so-called exemplary behavior as found in the Hadith (stories and teachings concerning him not found in the Qur’an).

*Adherents:* 1 billion (83 percent of the world’s Muslim population). This is the largest branch of Islam. Followers include U.S. boxing legend Muhammad Ali; basketball star Kareem Abdul-Jabbar; Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, grand imam of the al-Azhar Seminary/University in Cairo, Egypt; and archterrorist Osama bin Laden, who follows Wahhabism. The late Yasser Arafat was also a Sunni.

*Primary Locations:* Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Turkey, Egypt, and Nigeria.

*Distinctions:* Sometimes referred to as traditional or orthodox Islam, it maintains that the line of Islamic authority descended not from Muhammad’s family but from his companions, particularly the four caliphs who succeeded him. Sunnis also believe in four primary sources of Islamic law: the Qur’an, Hadith, analogical reasoning, and consensus among their religious and legal scholars. They believe Muslims have direct access to Allah without the need for intermediaries. They also permit men to have multiple wives and concubines.

*Schools of Legal Thought:* Four schools, all acceptable within the Sunni community, differ concerning the interpretation of the holy texts and how a Muslim should live.

1. **Hanafi:** has 530 million followers; is considered more liberal in its decisions; and allows for exceptions to strict, literal interpretations, especially if a strict interpretation would bring hardship to the Muslim.

2. **Maliki:** has 222 million followers and is known for its more rigid, conservative decisions.

3. **Shafii:** has 240 million followers and attempts to reach a middle ground between the schools of Hanafi and Maliki.

4. **Hanbali:** has 2.3 million followers, is the strictest of all four Sunni schools, and holds to literal interpretations of the Qur’an and Hadith.

**Wahhabism** is a form of Hanbali and has 7 million followers. Wahhabis see themselves as reformers attempting to return to a purer, idealized form of Islam. Wahhabism’s founder “taught that Muslims had a duty to fight non-believers and to establish a Muslim society based solely on Islamic law.” The modern-day Islamic state of Saudi Arabia bases its official policy and jurisprudence on Wahhabism.

**Online Resource:** www.islamicity.com.

**Shii**

*Name:* Derived from *shiah* (“followers”).

*Adherents:* 170 million; includes Sayyid Ali-Sistani, the grand ayatollah in Iraq; Ibrahim Ibn Muhammad al-Wazir
of Yemen, leader of the Zaydi; Aga Khan, 49th imam (an Ismaili).

**Primary Locations:** Iran, Iraq, India, Pakistan, Yemen, and Lebanon.

**Distinctions:** Whereas Sunnis believe the right to Muhammad’s succession lies with his early companions, Shiis (also called Shittes or Shiah) believe it lies with the prophet Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law. In opposition to Sunni Islam, Shií Islam regards the imam (spiritual-political leader) as an intermediary between Allah and man, and thus infallible. To Shiis, the imam’s word, not consensus, is a primary source of Islamic law. Shiis also identify with the suffering and martyrdom of their spiritual leaders through commemorative rituals, such as graveside visits and reenactments of martyrdom that include self-flagellation. Shiis permit “temporary” marriages for the purpose of pleasure.

---

**Divisions:** There are four principal divisions:

1. **Zaydi:** Named after the fifth imam, it has 8 million members who are sometimes called Fivers. Like the Sunnis, its followers do not believe the imams are supernaturally endowed or infallible and require them to reason independently in matters of the law and to wield the sword against Islam’s enemies.

2. **Ismaili:** Named after the seventh imam, it has 23.7 million members who are sometimes called Seveners. It was influenced by early Gnosticism; is secretive and esoteric; and believes Allah is incomprehensible and known only through a series of emanations, with physical matter being the lowest form.

The **Druze** began as an offshoot of the Ismailis but are not considered a part of Islam. They originated in the 11th century under a caliph who believed himself an earthly manifestation of God. They keep much of their teachings secret and do not proselytize, acknowledge Muhammad as the final prophet, or keep the five pillars of Islam. They do believe in the oneness of Allah and in reincarnation. There are roughly 834,000 Druze today, located mostly in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel.

3. **Ithna Ashari:** Adherents believe there were 12 imams in the line of succession and are called Twelvers. The largest division of Shií Islam, it numbers 137 million and is predominant in Iran. Along with Ismailis, Twelvers believe that one of the original imams (in their case, the 12th) never died but remains hidden until the end-times, when he will reappear as a messianic figure known as the Mahdi. Until the Mahdi’s appearance, certain religious scholars, called ayatollahs, serve as the Mahdi's representatives. Twelvers believe in taqiyyah, an insincere denial of one’s faith when life or property is threatened. They also believe the Jewish people poisoned Muhammad, causing his death. U.S. Congressman Curt Weldon (R-Pa.) says Iran is plotting a catastrophic terror attack against the United States and has labeled it *Ya Mahdi, Ad Rekni*, which means, “Mahdi, save us!”

4. **Alavi:** It has 1.6 million members and is a small, secretive Shii group in northwest Syria. Considered extreme by other Muslims, it interprets the Qur’an allegorically and believes in reincarnation of the soul.

**Online Resource:** http://al-islam.org.

---

**Sufism**

**Name:** Derived from sufi (“one who wears wool”), Sufism refers to Islamic mysticism.

**Adherents:** 237 million.

**Primary Locations:** Throughout the Muslim world; strong in Sudan but prohibited in Saudi Arabia.

**Distinctives:** Sufism crosses all Islamic denominational boundaries. Numerous orders meet for prayer, meditation, and recitation of poetry and Qur’anic passages. As with all forms of mysticism, Sufism seeks to unite man with God (meaning Allah, of course) through the senses. Since traditional Islam focuses more on legality rather than theology, Sufism seeks to replace cold rationalism with warm experientialism. Sufis claim that union with God’s presence is achieved through self-denial and repetitious, ritual prayers often accompanied by music, frenzied dancing, and even self-inflicted pain to achieve the desired ecstatic state. Sufism’s emphasis on experience has helped to spread Islam worldwide.

**Online Resource:** www.sufism.org.

---


---

Bruce Scott is a field representative with The Friends of Israel in New Hope, Minnesota.
Top: Jewish Gaza is no more. The beautiful towns of Gush Katif, which you saw in our previous issue, are all gone, reduced to rubble. The two photos above show Neveh Dekalim before disengagement and after (Hanan Isachar). More than 8,000 Israelis are now homeless after being evacuated from the Gaza Strip. These heart-wrenching photos barely scratch the surface of tearful goodbyes. Their homes are now rubble; their communities, gone. How will they begin again? That chapter of the story is yet to be written (Lacy Atkins/San Francisco Chronicle).
I’ve never known a time when there was not an Israel. As a child I’d look up at the big map on my Hebrew School wall and knew it was the country that belonged to my people. When I was five, the only other nation whose shape I could recognize as easily as that skinny slice of land in the Middle East was the United States of America, where I was born.

Israel was barely six years old then, yet it represented hope and a new beginning for the Jewish people—people like my parents, who had seen so much vicious anti-Semitic hatred and murder that they wondered where on earth God was through it all.

The Holocaust of World War II had turned my father into an atheist. “If there were a God,” he told me, “He would not have allowed the Nazis to murder 6 million Jews.” But my mother, who grew up Orthodox, never stopped believing, even after she learned how Adolf Hitler’s Einsatzgruppen (“death squads”) had infiltrated the Ukraine, where she had grown up, and ferreted out Jews and slaughtered them in cold blood. The Nazis killed her brother, two sisters-in-law, and all her nieces and nephews.

Jewish history overflows with tragedies. And for a reason probably known to God alone, many of them occurred on Tisha B’Av (ninth day of the Jewish month of Av), which falls in July or August. A solemn fast day was established on that date primarily to mourn the Tisha B’Av destructions of both the first Temple in Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the second Temple in A.D. 70.

On Tisha B’Av 1492 my people were ejected from Spain. The expulsion destroyed the largest, most prominent Jewish community in all of Europe. In 1939 the Nazis walled up a section of Warsaw, Poland, that became known as the Warsaw Ghetto and forced more than half a million Jewish people into that tiny area to die of starvation and disease. Three years later, on Tisha B’Av 1942, they began deporting the 300,000 who remained to the Treblinka extermination camp.

As a child in Hebrew School, I thought, All that is ancient history. Never did I dream a Tisha B’Av catastrophe would strike in my lifetime. This year the ninth of Av fell on August 14. The next day began the heart-wrenching expulsion of more than 8,000 Israelis from their homes in the Gaza Strip. I watched on television as Jewish mothers wailed; Israeli soldiers carrying out the “disengagement” wept; and religious men wrapped themselves in their prayer shawls, begging God to perform a miracle and stop the evacuation. But He did not.

I’m glad my father wasn’t here to see all this. It would have torn his heart out and convinced him all the more that anti-Semitism will never cease and that God does not exist.

But I know something my father did not. I know that faith means believing even when everything we see in this evil, upside-down world would strip us of that faith. Scripture says, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). It also says, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Isa. 40:8).

Whereas my father didn’t know God’s Word, I do. And it says God has given the land of Israel to the Jewish people forever:

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 (Jer. 24:5–7).

Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore (Ezek. 37:26–28).

Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs. (Isa. 61:7).

The Tisha B’Av tragedy of disengagement does not signal the beginning of the demise of the Jewish nation, because God said Israel will never die. Israel’s destiny is to live forever in the Promised Land of its forefathers. The Holy One of Israel has decreed it, and His Word stands.

My father died in 1970. If he were here today, this is what I would tell him: “Things may not look too good right now. But don’t worry, Daddy. In the end, we win.”

by Lorna Simcox

(www.israelimages.com)
As the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in August forcibly evacuated Jewish settlers and their families from the communities where they had lived, many of them for more than 30 years, the leaders of the Arab nations watched closely. There are 23 Arab nations in the Middle East that have for years wanted the Palestinians to have their own state within the borders of the Jewish State of Israel. As they observed the Israeli pullout, they witnessed the first signs that their goal of Palestinian statehood is closer than it’s ever been.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s disengagement plan was of special interest to Israel’s closest neighbor philosophically, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Jordan’s 43-year-old, reform-minded king, Abdullah II, has much at stake in the Palestinian takeover of the evacuated Gaza Strip and the plans the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Palestinian terror group Hamas have for this area in the near future.

The son of King Hussein, who ruled Jordan as an absolute monarch for 47 years until his death in 1999, King Abdullah has the same heart as his father in his desire to bring peace between the Jewish State of Israel and the Arab nations in the Middle East. That fact was evident in Abdullah’s behind-the-scenes work recently as he prepared an initiative in which all the Arab countries would make peace with Israel in exchange for Israel promising a viable Palestinian state.

The initiative is an upgraded version of the plan proposed by Saudi Crown Prince (now king) Abdullah and adopted by the Arab League at a summit in March 2002 in Beirut, Lebanon. Jordan’s King Abdullah presented this revised initiative at the most recent Arab League summit in Algeria in March of this year.

Turmoil in neighboring Iraq, terrorism in Israel, and plots against Jordan all have King Abdullah keeping a close watch as the Palestinians take control of the disputed areas with a promise to continue their armed struggle against the State of Israel.

Abdullah realizes that economic stability comes better with peace, and he has been working diligently to bring economic prosperity to Jordan by trying to entice high-tech industries to make Jordan their business hub in the Middle East. In January of this year, the country’s official unemployment rate was 15 percent; the unofficial rate, 30 percent.

But Abdullah rules in a dangerous neighborhood. According to a recent poll by the Pew Research center, 100 percent of the Jordanians surveyed view Jews unfavorably, 60 percent support Osama bin Laden, and 57 percent support suicide bombings. Abdullah’s Western views have not endeared him to Palestinian Muslim extremists who are out to topple his government plus those of Egypt and Saudi Arabia—all longtime American
Petra in Prophecy

It is interesting to me as a student of Bible prophecy that this special conference hosted by Jordan’s King Abdullah took place in the stone-carved city of Petra, a city built by Nabatean Arab nomads some 2,000 years ago. Petra is a city with a unique past and an understandable, prophetic future.

This recent gathering of Nobel laureates in Petra, plus the summer evacuation of Jewish settlers from their homes in a land that many believe was given to them by God, may mean that we are approaching the time for the Lord’s return. The land evacuated, the Palestinian people who now get the land, and the desire to destroy the Jewish state and anyone who helps the Jewish people are all factors in the last-days drama found in Bible prophecy. The people involved in these recent events are those whom the ancient Jewish prophets said would be the players in the last days. The Jewish people will be the focus of all prophetic scenarios, today and in the future. And the Palestinians constitute another group having a role in the end-times.

The Jewish people, God’s Chosen People, were promised a land that God, through the ancient Jewish prophets, told them they would possess at the time of the coming of the Messiah. The land, promised in 38 different passages of Scripture, includes the Gaza Strip and the area in northern Samaria that the Israelis evacuated over the summer.

As for the Palestinians, leading Orthodox Jewish Bible scholars believe they are the descendants of Amalek, the grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:12). These are the people whom God said He would have war with throughout all generations (Ex. 17:16).

The Jewish prophet Malachi revealed that the Edomites (all of the descendants of Esau) would one day return and rebuild; and the Lord would call their borders the “Territory of Wickedness” (Mal. 1:4). The Edomites were once headquartered in the city of Petra in Edom, the biblical name for the lower third of modern-day Jordan.

According to many Bible prophecy scholars, Petra is where the Jewish people will be housed and protected during the last half of the future seven-year Tribulation (Isa. 63:1–6; Rev. 12:6). This may well be the reason Jordan is spared from destruction during the first half of the Tribulation (Dan.11:41).

The recent IDF withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the evacuation of the Jewish settlers there, and the transfer of that land to Palestinian control seem to be setting the stage for Bible prophecy to be fulfilled.

Add to that mix the peace efforts by Jordan’s King Abdullah in the ancient rose-red city of Petra and you have all the players and places set on the Middle East stage where the end-times drama found in Bible Prophecy will be played out.
Good news and bad news are coming out of Indonesia. As you may know, this is a country dominated by Muslims (88 percent), many of whom are radically opposed to Christians and any others who differ from their beliefs. The Laskar Jihad, said to be allied with Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaida, and the Islamic Defender Front (FPI) have severely persecuted believers in that far-flung island nation.

Despite laws banning people from taking matters into their own hands and afflicting the innocent, police in West Java have admitted to helping hard-liners close dozens of churches in Bandung. More than 30 churches have been shut down and its members traumatized by fanatical Islamists.

Relief for the Christians has appeared from a totally unexpected source. Former Indonesian President Kiai Haj Abdurrahman Wahid, Indonesia’s most renowned Muslim leader, warned the extremist FPI to stop all hostilities against Christians in Indonesia. Wahid, better known as Gus Dur, leads the largest Muslim group in the country, said to have more than 40 million members.

Mathias Hariyadi reported for AsiaNews that Gus Dur warned he “would not hesitate” to send a paramilitary force to help defend the Christians if the violence did not cease. “I strongly urge FPI leaders and its members to consider seriously my warning,” Gus Dur said. “I want this message clearly understood.” Hariyadi reported that Gus Dur called it a “serious mistake” that the extremists closed the churches.

On the other hand, three Indonesian housewives have been convicted of “Christianizing” Muslim children and were sentenced to three years in prison. The women taught the children in “Happy Sunday” clubs and Sunday school, with the parents’ permission.

International Christian Concern reported, “The verdict may actually have spared the three a worse fate.” Jeff Hammond, director of Bless Indonesia Today, told ASSIST News Service (ANS) the witnesses and judges were “constantly under the threats of violence from hundreds of Islamic radicals who threatened to kill the three ladies, witnesses, pastors, missionaries—and even the judges—if the women were acquitted.”

Islamic radicals were bused to the trial daily, shouting “death to Christianity,” and demanding Islamic-style justice. Storming the courtroom with cries of Allahu akbar (“God is great”), they did everything to disrupt the proceedings.

If the three were acquitted or given light sentences, Muslims vowed to bring Islamic justice and shed their own “sweet-smelling” blood as martyrs in jihad, John M. Lindner reported for ANS.

Islamists told the teachers they will never forgive them or let them return home in peace. They also promised to punish their supporters.

Keep in mind that these housewives were convicted of teaching youngsters the Bible and the simple stories it contains for children. The case is yet more evidence of the magnitude of the struggle now taking place across the face of the globe. Yes, a scattered few moderate Muslims are beginning to react to the relentless persecution of Christians. In Indonesia it may well be that Western aid and the unstinting efforts of Christians in helping the country’s tsunami victims have favorably altered their thinking. But the fact remains that there is still a war on. It is global in scope, vicious in nature, and believers worldwide are the targets. Thus it behooves each of us to pray for our persecuted brethren and do all we can to make their plight known.
THE STAGGERING COST OF DISENGAGEMENT

Removal of the Jewish communities from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria is costing Israel an estimated $2 billion—about 3.5 percent of its 2005 state budget. It also means:

- 42 day-care centers, 36 kindergartens, seven elementary schools, and three high schools have closed.
- 5,000 schoolchildren now need to find new schools.
- 38 synagogues were dismantled.
- 166 Israeli farmers have lost their livelihoods—as have some 5,000 of their Palestinian workers.
- 48 graves in the Gush Katif Cemetery, including those of six residents murdered by terrorists, were exhumed and moved to Israel proper.

The cost of family relocation alone is estimated to be nearly $1 billion of the country’s annual health budget or approximately one third of the budget for education.

Sheikh Muhammad Ali, director of the Palestinian Clerics Association, in an interview with Hezbollah’s al-Manar TV and translated by The Middle East Media Research Institute (www.memri.org):

“Allah willing, we will enter [Israel] as conquerors and liberators, not through negotiations, but through Jihad and resistance, because the hadith goes: ‘And the Muslims would kill the Jews’—there is killing involved.

“Any land, any piece of land, over which flies the banner of ‘There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger,’ and which at a certain point belonged to the Muslims...it is the duty of the Muslims to liberate.”

Israel’s Messianic King

When Alexander the Great conquered the Middle East, he did not lay siege to Jerusalem. The Jewish people survived his conquest because God kept His promise to protect the city (9:8). After Alexander’s death however, cruel Grecian and Roman rulers subjugated Israel, while the nation hoped for deliverance by a military Messiah.

Zechariah revealed that a Messianic King was coming to deliver Israel, both physically and spiritually; and Zechariah described how the Jewish people would recognize Him.

**Messiah Presented to Israel**

The prophet began by announcing that Israel’s King is coming to them:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foil of a donkey” (9:9).

Both Judaism and Christianity embrace this verse as a reference to Israel’s Messiah riding victoriously into Jerusalem. Christianity sees this prophecy fulfilled on what is traditionally called Palm Sunday (Mt. 21:4–5), whereas Judaism believes it will be fulfilled when the Messiah delivers Israel and establishes His Kingdom in Jerusalem.

Zechariah did not call Him “a” King, but “your” King (v. 9). He is Israel’s righteous Savior-King, its long-awaited Messiah. Such news should have evoked great joy in Israel. Verse 9 personifies the people of Jerusalem as a young woman who is commanded to shout with ecstatic joy at the news of the nation’s coming King. When Zechariah presented this revelation, there was no king on Israel’s throne, nor will there be one from the royal line of David until the Messiah comes.

Zechariah then revealed three characteristics of the Messianic King. First, “He is just,” that is, righteous by nature in conformity to God’s standard of morality and ethics. Messiah’s righteousness will be manifested in both His character and reign. The Messiah is righteous because, at His First Advent, He was supernaturally virgin-born (Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:23), possessing no sin nature. The same cannot be said of any other king who ever lived, especially Alexander the Great, who was wicked, capricious, violent, and unjust.

Second, the Messiah will be revealed as “having salvation,” or endowed with salvation, showing Himself as a Savior-Deliverer. This was the reason for His First Coming, as He bore the guilt and paid the penalty for man’s sin. Today He is able to save completely and forever all who come to God through Him because He is the “author of eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:9; cf. 7:25). At His Second Coming, a remnant in Israel will be redeemed and delivered (Zech. 12:10; Rom. 9:26). Such was not the case with Alexander the Great, who destroyed and subjugated those he conquered.

Third, He is “lowly” in His soul and outward state. The Hebrew word for “lowly” means more than being humble or meek; it refers to one brought low by affliction, poverty, persecution, or bereavement (Ps. 22:6–7; Isa. 53:3–4; Mt. 8:20; 11:29; 2 Cor. 8:9). It seems out of character to speak of the Messiah-King in such a paradoxical way, for kings exude pride and pomp.

This Messiah-King did not ride into Jerusalem on a horse but “on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” This prophecy was fulfilled in what is traditionally called His Triumphal Entry (Mt. 21:1–5). Early in Israel’s history a donkey was the animal on which kings and judges rode (Jud. 5:10; 10:4; 2 Sam. 16:1–2). By the time of Solomon, kings rode horses—symbols of pride, pomp, and power; plus they were instruments of self-reliance and strength in time of battle. Today the donkey is regarded as a lowly beast of burden.

Jesus instructed His disciples not only to get the young donkey but to bring the mother as well. The donkey was a young colt, never ridden and still running behind its mother. Jesus’ royal entrance into Jerusalem on the back of a young, untrained donkey symbolizes His coming in peace and humility and sheds light on Zechariah 9:9 in three ways. First, it is a Messianic prophecy. Second, Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah mentioned in this verse. Third, this prophecy was fulfilled at Jesus’ First Coming.

Zechariah then took a gigantic leap from the Messiah’s First Advent (v. 9) to His Second (v. 10). The Messiah rode humbly into Jerusalem at His First Advent. At His Second, He will descend from heaven on a white horse as Israel’s Redeemer-King to inaugurate His worldwide Kingdom rule.

Zechariah gave Israel reasons to rejoice over the Messiah’s Second Coming:

“I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; the battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth” (v. 10).

First, Messiah will establish worldwide peace. Second, He will destroy the weapons of war. The chariot of Ephraim, the horse of Jerusalem, and the battle bow all speak of weapons used in ancient warfare. These will be destroyed and the materials converted into implements of peace (Isa. 2:4; 9:4–5). Third, Ephraim and Judah will be united into a single kingdom of peace (Ezek. 37:15–22) for the first time since the days of Solomon. Fourth, He will establish peace among all the nations of the
world, something not experienced in the annals of human history. Fifth, His reign and rule will begin in Jerusalem but shall cover the earth (Ps. 72:8–11).

A striking contrast can be made between the Messiah and Alexander the Great. Alexander was a depraved monarch who came riding on a horse in pomp and power with military brutality to make war, smiting and subjugating nations. Conversely, Messiah is the God-man who, at His First Coming, rode into Jerusalem in humility and peace, presenting Himself as Israel’s long-awaited King of righteousness and peace. At His Second Coming, Messiah will establish a righteous Kingdom of universal peace and prosperity.

Messiah’s Promise to Israel

Before the Messiah establishes His kingdom, He must deliver and restore the nation of Israel. The Lord said, “As for you also, because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit” (v. 11). God will deliver the Jewish people on the basis of the blood covenants He made with Israel: the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants (Gen. 15:8–21; Ex. 24:5–8). The “waterless pit” refers to an empty cistern that functions like a prison, as where Joseph was incarcerated by his brothers (Gen. 37:24). Release of the prisoners may have been an immediate reference to Jewish exiles freed from Babylon, but the prophecy ultimately refers to the regathering of the Jewish people at the end of the Great Tribulation.

The exiles in Babylon were called “prisoners of hope” because God promised them deliverance after their 70-year captivity (Jer. 25:11): “Return to the stronghold, them deliverance after their 70-year captivity by your brothers” (Gen. 37:24). Release of the prisoners may have been an immediate reference to Jewish exiles freed from Babylon, but the prophecy ultimately refers to the regathering of the Jewish people at the end of the Great Tribulation.

In verse 13, the Lord pictures Himself as a mighty warrior using Judah as His “bow” and Ephraim (the northern kingdom) as His arrow to defeat His and Israel’s enemies. Power was (and will be) given to Israel, “like the sword of a mighty man,” to destroy her enemies, especially “Greece,” but also her enemies at the end of the Tribulation (v. 13; 14:14).

Many scholars say the word Greece refers to the terrible period of Grecian persecution under Antiochus IV (Epiphanes). Antiochus desecrated the Temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar. He also tortured Jewish people and forbade them to practice their religion. An Israelite family led by Mattathias revolted against Antiochus’ domination. In a three-year conflict with Antiochus, Mattathias’s son Judah liberated Jerusalem, cleansed the Temple from heathen desecration, and reestablished Jewish worship (168–165 B.C.). The family became known as the Maccabees, from the Hebrew word for “hammer.” The Jewish holiday of Hanukkah (Feast of the Dedication) was established to commemorate this event.

Messiah’s Protection of Israel

In verses 14–15 the Lord is depicted as a mighty warrior ready to do battle with His enemies, while hovering over Israel to protect it:

*Then the Lord will be seen over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning. The Lord God will blow the trumpet, and go with whirlwinds from the south. The Lord of hosts will defend them.*

He will marshal His troops with the sound of the “trumpet,” and His “arrow” will strike the enemy at the speed of lightning. The Lord will sweep away His enemies with hurricane force, like “whirlwinds from the south.”

Verse 15 says, “They shall devour and subdue with slingstones. They shall drink and roar as if with wine; they shall be filled with blood like basins, like the corners of the altar.” Commentators interpret this two ways. Some teach it refers to Israel devouring its enemies with God’s protective help. Others teach that the verse describes a banquet to celebrate God’s victory over His and Israel’s enemies.

The latter interpretation seems best in this context. Those celebrating will trample the “slingstones,” or spent weapons, of their enemy. Israel will roar in joyful exuberance like a person drunk with wine and filled with food from a victory banquet. The text simply states that banquet provisions will be plentiful, and participants will be filled with drink like sacrificial basins and with meat like the corners of the sacrificial altar.

This prophecy was partially fulfilled when the Maccabees defeated Antiochus Epiphanes. But its ultimate fulfillment will occur when the Messiah’s enemies are destroyed at His Second Coming.

Messiah’s Provision for Israel

Zechariah revealed what will take place at the Messiah’s Second Coming. First, the Lord will bring spiritual life, or “save,” the remnant of Jewish people who survive the Tribulation (v. 16; 12:10–13:1, 9; Rom. 11:26). Then the Lord will shepherd “the flock of His people” as a shepherd does his sheep, guaranteeing Israel safety and security (v. 16). He will look on redeemed Israel as a sparkling stone—His treasured possession—that will glitter “like the jewels of a crown” (v. 16; cf. Ex. 19:5) in the Millennial Kingdom and set Israel as a “banner,” or standard, over His glorious Kingdom rule (v. 16).

In that day, the great splendor of the Lord’s “goodness” and “beauty” will shine throughout Israel (v. 17). Sowed seed will produce a great harvest because of abundant rain. (See Zechariah 10:1.) “Grain shall make the young men thrive, and new wine the young women” (v. 17). Grain and wine symbolize productivity, plenty, and prosperity that all will enjoy during the Kingdom Age.

There is an innate longing in Jewish hearts for the coming of their Messianic King. When the Messiah comes, He will bring redemption, deliverance, and establish His Kingdom of universal peace.

David M. Levy is the director of International Ministries for The Friends of Israel.
Thus God alone has the authority to determine what constitutes marriage and the proper use of sexuality. God intends all human sexual relationships to be male-female and to take place exclusively within the bonds of male-female marriage. He also intends marriage to be a lifelong union of a man and a woman.

All of this indicates that when God created mankind as male and female, He thereby revealed the fixed, unchanging, inflexible moral order that He, the sovereign King of the universe, determined and established for human sexuality. Any deviation from that order would violate and pervert what God intended and would have dire consequences for mankind. The Bible addresses several violations and perversions of God’s established order for human sexuality.

Fornication. The Scriptures use the term fornication in both a general and specific sense. In the general sense it refers to any type of voluntary sexual intercourse that does not take place exclusively between husband and wife in male-female marriage. For example, in 1 Corinthians 5:1 it refers to a relationship of incest, and in Jude 7 it refers to homosexual relationships.

In the specific sense it refers to voluntary sexual intercourse between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. For example, Matthew 15:19 and Galatians 5:19 distinguish it from adultery; and 1 Corinthians 6:9 signifies that fornicators are distinct from adulterers and homosexuals.

The Bible clearly indicates that fornication violates God’s moral absolutes and order and therefore deserves judgment. While God’s Mosaic Law was in effect with Israel, if a man discovered that his wife was not a virgin when he married her, she was to be stoned to death for the evil of her premarital fornication (Dt. 22:13–14, 20–21). Jesus stated that fornications defile a person and are evil (Mk. 7:20–23). Romans 1:29, 32 declares that people who commit fornication are worthy of death.

The apostle Paul asserted that the Christian’s body does not exist for the practice of fornication, but for the benefit of Christ. Believers need to know that, as a result of their spiritual union with Christ, their bodies are extensions of Christ in the world. Since fornication involves a physical union with an immoral person, believers who fornicate thereby unite the members of Christ with an immoral person. That thought was so repulsive to Paul that he exclaimed, “God forbid” and commanded Christians to “flee” fornication. He also stated that a person who commits fornication sins against his or her own body (1 Cor. 6:18). Because the Holy Spirit permanently indwells the believer, the Christian’s body is the Spirit’s temple. The believer should not defile that temple with fornication. In addition, since God purchased the believer through the shedding of Christ’s blood, God owns every part of the believer. Therefore, believers are responsible to glorify God with their bodies and spirits (vv. 13–18).

Galatians 5:19 indicates that fornication is one of the lustful works of humanity that are divorced from the controlling power of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:3 says fornication should never be associated with Christians: “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints.” First Thessalonians 4:3 emphasizes that one aspect of God’s will for the sanctification of Christians is that they abstain from fornication.
Scripture clearly indicates that anyone who has been guilty of fornication will not inherit the Kingdom of God but will have a part in the Lake of Fire and Brimstone (1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:19–21; Rev. 21:8). This is so if a person fails to receive God’s forgiveness for violating and perverting the order He determined and established for human sexuality. God will forgive and deliver people from that judgment if they personally trust Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin (1 Cor. 6:9–11).

**Adultery.** The American College Dictionary defines adultery as “voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and any other than the lawful spouse.”

Webster’s New International Dictionary defines it as “sexual unfaithfulness of a married person; voluntary sexual intercourse of a married man with another than his wife or by a married woman with another than her husband.”

The Bible has various ways of emphasizing that God considers adultery a grievous sin. One way was God’s response to Abraham and Sarah misleading Abimelech, King of Gerar, by hiding the fact they were husband and wife. Abimelech, in integrity of heart, innocently took Sarah for himself (Gen. 20:1–2, 5). But before he even touched her, God warned him that he was about to die because “the woman whom you have taken, . . . is a man’s wife” (v. 3). God had already closed the wombs of all the women in the king’s household (vv. 17–18). The warning was to prevent Abimelech from sinning against God (v. 6). God ordered Abimelech to restore the wife to her husband and indicated that, if he did not, he and all his household would die (v. 7). The king recognized that Abraham’s deception had brought a “great sin” on him and his kingdom (v. 9).

Through His response, God revealed that (1) adultery is a sin—not only against a spouse, but also against God because it violates what God ordained for marriage and sexuality—and (2) that adultery can bring serious consequences.

In the Law God gave to Israel through Moses, He commanded, “You shall not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14; Dt. 5:18). God had Moses tell the Israelites the consequences of both obeying and disobeying this and all the other commandments of the Law. If they listened and obeyed, they would be blessed more than any other nation. Israel would be the head nation, not the tail, and the world would recognize that Israel’s blessing resulted from its obedient relationship with God (Dt. 28:1–14).

But if Israel disobeyed the commandments, the nation would be cursed severely (Dt. 28:15–68). Israel would become “an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword” among the nations (v. 37). God’s twofold way of dealing with Israel indicates that adultery has dire consequences for a nation.

In Leviticus 18 God revealed that adultery defiles a person (v. 20). The ancient nations that became characterized by adultery and other defiling practices thereby defiled their land. As a result, they were cast from their land in judgment (vv. 24–28).

When God administered His rule over the nation of Israel through the Mosaic Law, He required the death penalty for both parties involved in adultery (20:10). This was His means of removing evil from the nation (22:22–24).

He also devised a means to expose the adulterous relationship of a woman who had kept it hidden from her husband and to confirm the innocence of a woman whose husband wrongly suspected that she was guilty of adultery (Num. 5:12–31).

Proverbs 6:32 asserts that any person who commits adultery “lacks understanding” and “destroys his own soul.”

Because in the time of the prophet Jeremiah many Israelite men committed adultery with harlots and pursued their neighbors’ wives, God threatened to punish them and avenge Himself on that adulterous nation (Jer. 5:7–9).

Jesus Christ declared that adultery proceeds from a person’s heart (inner control center, where the issues of life are determined; Mk. 7:20–23). In addition, He said adultery defiles a person and is evil (v. 23).

The apostle Paul stated that adulterers are unrighteous and will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9–10). But he hastened to indicate that they can be washed, sanctified, and justified and thereby escape that judgment by trusting Jesus Christ to be their Savior from sin (v. 11). God will forgive them for violating and perverting the order He determined and established for human sexuality.

In Galatians 5:19 Paul identified adultery as a lustful work of humanity that is divorced from the controlling power of the Holy Spirit. And again he emphasized that those who practice adultery will not inherit the Kingdom of God (v. 21).

The apostle Peter declared that false teachers who have eyes “full of adultery” and cannot “cease from sin” (2 Pet. 2:14) will “utterly perish in their own corruption” (v. 12).

Christ declared that He will throw a false prophetess “into a sickbed,” and those who “commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds” (Rev. 2:20–22).

Jesus stated, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whosoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt. 5:27–28).

Thus adultery can be committed in thought as well as deed. This fact relates significantly to Jesus’ declaration that adultery proceeds from a person’s heart (Mk. 7:20–23). Accordingly, Webster’s New International Dictionary signifies that in the Bible, adultery is “lewdness or unchastity of thought as well as of act.”

The next article will continue to examine examples of violations and perversions of God’s moral absolutes and His fixed order of moral law.

**Continued next issue**

1. The American College Dictionary, s.v. “adultery.”
3. Ibid.

 Renald E. Showers is an author, professor, and international conference speaker for The Friends of Israel.
you will find in years to come huddled in refugee camps or ghetto-like resettlement trailers.

During the disengagement phase, people wondered whether Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had sold the country out. “What is he up to?” they asked. They even questioned whether he had any plan at all for Israel’s future. His answer came in a speech while laying a cornerstone for the new settlement of Nurit on Mount Gilboa.

During the difficult days of the evacuation we repeatedly heard claims that leaving Gaza meant an end to the settlement enterprise, and some added that it meant the end of Zionism. These were claims meant to imbue despair and loss of hope. These were false claims, and we will prove it . . . through action.

For Ariel Sharon, disengagement is not the beginning of the end. It represents a new era in the phenomenal history of this phenomenal people. “The government,” he added, “considers developing the Negev, the Galilee, and greater Jerusalem a primary national mission.”

If you travel across the broad stretch of Israel known as the Negev, it appears a barren wilderness. If you are fortunate enough to be there after a rain, it is a carpet of green. The Negev has need of two elements: water and hands. Water is on the way. Massive desalination plants are gearing up to help supply it. And the Jewish people of the Gaza are uniquely qualified to provide the hands to transform this desert into a garden. They are a tightly knit group and possess a vast knowledge of agriculture and science. And to say the least, they have an ability to develop strong community institutions—educational, public health, and social—under remarkably adverse conditions. In short, these pioneers are up to the task.

The issue is not what we won’t see in the future, but what we will see. I can assure you, there will be a desert bursting with roses.

Eye on the Middle East

For Israelis, Gaza is history—it’s over. The tears have been shed, and lingering, bitter memories still distress many of the displaced. For example, the evacuees from Kfar Darom will not forget the heavy price exacted from them when they were forced to pull up stakes and get out of Gaza.

Jewish settlers purchased the land for Kfar Darom in 1946. The state of Israel was still a dream at the time. During the 1948 War of Independence, they defended their kibbutz there, blocking the advance of the Egyptian army for days. When they ran out of ammunition, they filled tefillin bags (pouches that hold phylacteries) with TNT and hurled them at the enemy. Their heroism bought precious time for the embattled Jewish forces and helped save the state. Yes, the families of Kfar Darom carried with them memories of much spilled blood as they took to the roads in August in search of a new beginning.

But Kfar Darom is gone now, and the biblically mandated “time for weeping” is over. Bitterness and recriminations will not bring back the well-manicured towns, lush gardens, and lovely beaches. The question now is, Where do they go from here?

Israel’s terrorist enemies have proclaimed disengagement the beginning of the end for the Jewish state. But they could not be more mistaken. Giving up is totally inconsistent with the character of these deeply committed people who left the Gaza Strip. These are Israelis, cut from pioneer stock. They went into Gaza when it was nothing but sand, bush, and beaches—a veritable wasteland. And their ingenuity, hard work, and commitment to their piece of the Promised Land turned it into a landscape their Arab neighbors coveted. These are not people whom you will find in years to come huddled in refugee camps or ghetto-like resettlement trailers.

Desert agriculture project near Kibbutz Hatzerim in the north Negev (Israel Talby/www.israelimages.com).
What does it take to convince someone that he believes a lie? Cold, hard facts? A visible, bona fide, supernatural occurrence? Sometimes even these don’t work. They didn’t work with Jezebel even after the greatest showdown in history. And unfortunately, they don’t work with others who, in some respects, are just like her today.

For three and a half years God withheld the life-giving rains that the northern kingdom of Israel so desperately needed. The severe drought produced acute famine. Yet Jezebel, King Ahab’s Sidonian wife, murdered the prophets of Jehovah, the true and living God who alone could bring rain, and promoted worship of the Canaanite idol Baal that could do nothing. Finally the Lord summoned His prophet, Elijah, telling him the time had come to confront King Ahab (1 Ki. 18:1).

What resulted was a spectacular confrontation on Mount Carmel between 450 prophets of Baal; 400 prophets of Asherah, another Canaanite deity; and Elijah, the prophet of the living God.

And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD [YHVH] is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people answered him not a word. Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God” (vv. 21–24).

Baal’s prophets went first. They prepared the bull and, from morning to noon, jumped and leaped around the altar, cutting themselves with knives and lances, “as was their custom, . . . until the blood gushed out on them,” shouting and screaming and crying out to their impotent god (v. 28). But no one answered (v. 29).

It must have been a sight. Hundreds of men cavorting like animals, bleeding and hollering in a futile attempt to provoke a nonentity into action. Elijah watched and ridiculed. “What’s the matter with your god?” he asked (loosely paraphrased). “Is he out to lunch? Maybe he’s asleep and you need to wake him up, or he’s out of town” (v. 27). We might as well add, “Maybe he’s at the mall or stuck in traffic!”

Finally Elijah had had enough. He built a stone altar; made a large trench around it; put the wood on the altar; and cut the bull and laid it on the wood, commanding that 12 potfuls of water be poured on the sacrifice, drenching it completely (vv. 32–34). “So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water” (v. 35).

Then Elijah extolled Jehovah (YHVH) and asked Him to show that He alone
was God. What happened next only the Lord of Hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, could have accomplished:

*Then the fire of the L ORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The L ORD, He is God! The L ORD, He is God!”* (vv. 38–39).

Elijah killed the false prophets and told Ahab to get going because, after three and a half years of blistering drought, God was sending a thunderous rain.

Ahab hurried home and told Jezebel everything that had happened on Mount Carmel (1 Ki. 19:1). He told her of the dramatic contest, of Baal’s inactivity, of Jehovah’s spectacular feat, and of the demise of the prophets of Baal. The facts were on the table. Baal not only failed to end the drought, but he also failed to consume his sacrifice and protect his prophets. There was not a single shred of empirical evidence that even proved Baal existed.

Did Jezebel now embrace the truth? Far from it. Furious, she sent word to Elijah that he was as good as dead (v. 2). Her arrogance and pride had so hardened her against the truth that she didn’t even consider that the same God who struck His altar with fire could strike her as well.

The Lord, of course, protected Elijah. Concerning Jezebel, however, God promised, “‘The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel’” (21:23). And so they did (2 Ki. 9:30–36).

Apart from everything else that can be said of this vilest of women, Jezebel is one of Scripture’s most vivid examples of someone who witnessed the power of the Most High God and categorically rejected it, willfully choosing to believe a lie. In that respect, many people are like her today: They (1) exchange the truth of God for the lie and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:24), (2) do not like to retain God in their knowledge (v. 28), and (3) practice evil and approve of others who do the same (v. 32).

The path is an easy one to follow because it is the natural inclination of the heart: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). Jesus said, “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (Jn. 3:19).

Today animosity toward the God of the Bible grows exponentially. He is being eradicated from our culture by people who are willing to believe everything conceivable except the truth because they love darkness rather than light and their deeds are evil.

The Pharisees asked Jesus to prove He was the Messiah (Mt. 12:38; Mk. 8:11). But they had already seen Him make the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the blind see. Yet they accused Him of performing these miracles in the power of Beelzebub, and they refused to believe (Mt. 12:24).

Someday Jesus will sit on His throne in Jerusalem, meting out perfect, instant justice throughout the world (Isa. 9:7; 11:3–5). Yet a multitude, “whose number is as the sand of the sea,” will rebel against Him (Rev. 20:7–8). They still will refuse to believe.

Today a Baha’i temple sits on Mount Carmel. The Baha’i faith believes Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, Muhammad, the Bab [1819–1840], and Bahau’llah [1817–1892] “are divine teachers sent by one God to educate humanity through teachings and laws suited to its stage of development. . . . Baha’is believe that religious revelation will continue in the future to provide guidance to an ‘ever-advancing civilization.’”\(^1\)

It seems to me civilization has not advanced at all since the days of Jezebel.

---


Lorna Simcox is senior editor for The Friends of Israel.
Arabs burn synagogues; Israel blamed

Arutz-7—As the Israeli flag was being lowered over Gaza to mark the end of Israel’s 38-year-presence in the area, teenaged Arabs threw rocks at Israel Defense Forces (IDF) troops near the demolished Neveh Dekalim community. During the midnight hours, mobs began swarming onto several formerly Jewish areas even before the last Israeli soldiers had left.

They poured into Neveh Dekalim, Morag, Kfar Darom, and Netzarim, setting out for the synagogues and trying to burn them down. The buildings are mainly concrete and therefore did not catch fire, but black smoke darkened the skies above the former Jewish towns. The IDF had hung orange signs on the 21 synagogues in Gush Katif, declaring them a “holy place.”

The United States, which takes credit for disseminating the concepts of freedom of religion and respect for religious sites, condemned Israel for its decision not to destroy Jewish places of worship in Gaza. “The decision places the Palestinian Authority in a no-win situation,” said a State Department spokesman.

Former Gush Katif spokesman Eran Sternberg warned that the PA’s enabling of the burning of the synagogues gives an “appearance of legitimacy for any Jew to strike out against Moslem holy sites, including the [mosques on the] Temple Mount.”

Many justified the government decision not to blow up the synagogues, and many were not surprised at the Arabs’ violent response. Yesha Rabbis Council: “This proves it’s a religious war.” Defense Minister Sha’ul Mofaz said that despite the Arabs’ violent behavior towards the synagogues, the decision to leave the buildings standing was the correct one.

Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said, “The desecration of the synagogues is a barbaric act by people who have no respect for holy sites.”

Knesset Member Gila Finkelstein: “The Palestinians had an unusual opportunity to show their change by displaying their good will—but they preferred destruction. More than they want a state, they want to destroy every Jewish trace.”

Israel to supply Gaza’s water

Although Israel has left Gaza to the Arabs, it still plans to supply water for Arab agriculture and will allow thousands of Arab workers to enter mainland Israel.

Arutz-7 reported that the beautiful greenhouses built by the Jews of Gush Katif will need water if they are to continue to produce fruits and vegetables. Some of them still had fresh plants inside when Israel handed them to the Palestinians. The prized greenhouses supplied annual export income of $100 million for Israel.

Arutz-7’s Hillel Fendel wrote, “In accordance with Shimon Peres’ vision that well-off Arabs want only peace with Israel, the government is hoping that the Palestinian Authority (PA) will be able to operate the greenhouses. For this purpose, however, water is needed, and in great amounts. The PA cannot supply it, because its wells have become very saline following the 11 years of unsupervised pumping since the Arabs took over the area under the terms of the Oslo Accords. The solution is, therefore, that Israel will continue to supply water to Gaza even after the withdrawal is completed.”

In addition to supplying water, Arutz-7 reported that Israel will also let some 10,000 Arab workers from Gaza cross over daily into Israel. This, despite the claim by many pro-disengagement elements that Israel must separate itself from Gaza, along the lines of, “We’re here and they’re there.”

Gov’t leaves much behind

When Israel left Gaza, it left behind hundreds of millions of shekels’ worth of property that terrorists can use or sell. Arutz-7 reported that Israel transferred to them “infrastructures and equipment worth many tens of millions of dollars, which they will be able to sell and then use the money. This includes fences of all types, including electric and warning fences, concrete blocks that can be used to protect their headquarters against Israel Defense Forces attacks, antennas, hundreds of kilometers of metal cables, waterpiping, pumps, irrigation systems, sewage systems, and electrical equipment, including substations, transformers, and cables, and more.”

One thing the government tried not to leave behind was garbage. It made some 1,500 Israeli soldiers clean the area of trash.

Gaza terrorists now turn to Sinai

Arutz-7—More than 15,000 Arabs from Gaza have moved into the Sinai Peninsula, and many plan to infiltrate the 200-kilometer (124-mile-) long Egyptian-Israeli border. Israel may build a new security system, at a cost of $900 million.

The massive unregulated entry to the Sinai came immediately after Israel surrendered the Gaza region to the Palestinian Authority (PA). Intelligence officials have warned Israelis not to travel to Sinai because of concrete evidence of terrorists in the region.

Infiltration from Sinai, where the lengthy border is not hermetically sealed, would give terrorists free access to urban centers without having to pass border checkpoints. Security officials also have reported an increase in cooperation between terrorists and Negev Bedouin. The Bedouin, many of whom served in the IDF, have in the past limited most of their smuggling to drugs but recently have turned to weapons and ammunition. Several Bedouin were arrested in the past few months for planning attacks against Israeli targets.
A MEMORIAL GIFT to The Friends of Israel is a special and lasting way to honor the life and testimony of a loved one or friend who has passed on. It also serves as a vital investment in precious lives as God’s Word is proclaimed to Jewish and Gentile people alike through the worldwide ministries of The Friends of Israel.

When you send a memorial gift of any amount, we will send a lovely acknowledgment card to the bereaved. It will tell them of your memorial expression of love and sympathy during their time of sorrow. The amount of your gift will not be mentioned. Your tax deductible gift will go immediately into the work of the Lord through The Friends of Israel, and your memorial will be recorded in our book In Remembrance, on display in the chapel of our international headquarters in New Jersey.

To receive a copy of our Memorial Gift brochure, simply check the appropriate box on the enclosed order form and return it in the self-addressed envelope in this magazine. For further information, call toll-free 1-800-257-7843 between 8:30 A.M. and 4:30 P.M. (Eastern time).

Cast thy burden on the L ORD, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved (Ps. 55:22).

---

MEMORIAL GIFT to The Friends of Israel is a special and lasting way to honor the life and testimony of a loved one or friend who has passed on. It also serves as a vital investment in precious lives as God’s Word is proclaimed to Jewish and Gentile people alike through the worldwide ministries of The Friends of Israel.

When you send a memorial gift of any amount, we will send a lovely acknowledgment card to the bereaved. It will tell them of your memorial expression of love and sympathy during their time of sorrow. The amount of your gift will not be mentioned. Your tax deductible gift will go immediately into the work of the Lord through The Friends of Israel, and your memorial will be recorded in our book In Remembrance, on display in the chapel of our international headquarters in New Jersey.

To receive a copy of our Memorial Gift brochure, simply check the appropriate box on the enclosed order form and return it in the self-addressed envelope in this magazine. For further information, call toll-free 1-800-257-7843 between 8:30 A.M. and 4:30 P.M. (Eastern time).

Cast thy burden on the L ORD, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved (Ps. 55:22).
This time of year Christians think about the birth of the Messiah. We know what the Bible teaches, and we understand who He is. But in Israel there is great confusion about the Messiah. The ultra-Orthodox wait for Him to come as they go from house to house teaching what is not so.

I have lived in Israel almost 60 years, but my neighborhood has many new immigrants from Russia. Recently several men with long beards knocked on my door, thinking I was a new immigrant. Our home is always open. So I welcomed them. But I was not willing to believe their “news.”

“Do you believe in our messiah?” one asked me. “We are waiting for him. Do you believe he will come?”

“Yes,” I said. “I believe the Messiah will come back.”

They were surprised to hear my news that the Messiah was here and will return. “Are you even normal?” one asked me.

“Yes, I am,” I said. “You, on the other hand, do not know for whom you are waiting. I know for whom I wait.”

Of course, they then wanted to know what I meant. So one asked, “Where is it written, what you are telling us? In which book have you read about the Messiah?”

I was happy to hear these questions asked so soon in our conversation. Usually it takes much longer to arrive at the right subject. And here we were! I quickly opened the Bible and went straight to Isaiah 53. When I started to read, they became quiet. Then I reached verses 5 and 6, which say,

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.

Here is what was most important for them to understand: “The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” This time I asked them, “About whom is this written?”

They did not say a word. Then one asked, “About whom do you think it was written?”

This was my best opportunity to explain that they were following false teaching. “Be sure that it is not written about the rabbi from New York, whom you regard as a savior and messiah.”

It saddens me to see so many ultra-Orthodox here in Israel praying to the late Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson of Brooklyn, New York, calling him king-messiah and addressing him as adoneynu (“our Lord”) and moshiaynu (“our messiah”).

“I believe what is written here, by the Holy Spirit of God. His Word is eternal. It stands firm in the heavens. The truth is written here. And this is what I believe.”

They were surprised when I spoke of the Holy Spirit because they know Christians speak of Him. So one asked, “You are not like those who believe in This Man [Jesus], are you?”

“How did you conclude that I believe in Jesus?”

“So I asked them, “Do you believe in the Lord according to the Bible or according to fictitious stories and rabbinical traditions? Perhaps you can see how blind you are after so many years of study. You do not know in whom you believe. Who is your God, that you are so afraid of the truth? Do you realize whom you are against? You are against King David, because he spoke of the Holy Spirit.”

They were shocked. So I handed them the Bible and asked them to read Psalm 51:11–12, where it is written,
“Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.”

“Read it again,” I told them. “Now tell me, where is this written? Did it come from a Christian book or from the Holy Bible?”

“But it is only written about the Holy Spirit one time,” one replied.

So I showed them more and told them, “Read this for yourselves.” I opened the Bible to Ezekiel 18:31 and 36:26–27.

“How did you find out all this?” one asked.

“Because I read the Bible, not commentaries, as you do. I do not believe in commentaries, only in what is written here. The Bible is what is holy for me. You see, you do not worship God according to His will. You are like those about whom it is written in Isaiah 1:2–3:

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.

They replied, “We have not read this.”

“That is why you are walking in such great darkness,” I said. “So open your eyes and your hearts, and, as the Lord said, He will give you a new heart and put a new Spirit in you. And He will do so not because I say so, but because it is written here, in the Word of God.”

They told me they learned more from me in a short time than they had learned in all their years of study. “We will be very happy if you can come to our Yeshiva,” one said.

“Be sure,” I replied. “If you want me to, I will be happy to come.”

Please pray that next year at this time, when we celebrate the birth of the true Messiah, they will celebrate as well because they will finally know for whom they are waiting.