EXCLUSIVE:
While we deck the halls this holiday season, others are trying to strip them of anything that hints of God—Page 10
Craig Parshall looks at the great cities of Jesus’ day—Page 14

Plus:
Herod the Not-So-Great—Page 18
Part 2 of Brigitte Gabriels incredible story—Page 26
Your favorite Christmas carols—Page 30
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In our radicalized, cultural drive toward phony political correctness, public displays of Christ’s birth are being driven from town squares, schools, and public premises. Well, we make no apology for being Christians. Our cover depicts the entry of Christ into the world as the foundation upon which Western civilization is built. Also in this issue, Craig Parshall takes us on a journey through the great cities of Jesus’ day. Plus we’ll learn more about the infamous Herod, who ruled Judea when Jesus was born. And with Christmas around the corner, you can even sing along as you read the stories of your favorite Christmas carols. To cap off this edition, Lebanese Christian Brigitte Gabriel tells her incredible, life-changing story. Don’t miss a word!

Elwood McQuaid
Editor-in-Chief

The Treasures of the Season
by Elwood McQuaid
Tis the season when our forefathers bowed their heads and gave thanks. Oh how things have changed.

Great Cities of Jesus’ Day
by Craig L. Parshall
With Christmas around the corner, we invite you to tour four cities in first-century Israel that testify to the Savior’s power. Two of them are still there today.

Herod the Not-So-Great
by Bruce Scott
Herod murdered infants yet built a magnificent Temple Mount. What type of man was he? A brilliant madman whose life is a remarkable study in contradiction.

Jerusalem vs. Rome: Jewish Life in the Time of Christ
by Herb Hirt
Although idol worship saturated Rome, the Jewish people had rights that many of them did not want jeopardized. Thus arose a difficult conflict for Judaism.

The Carols of Christmas
by Peter Colón
Many of us love the strains of the old, familiar songs of Christmas. And you may love them even more after you learn the fascinating stories behind them.

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From Bill Sutter’s Desk
Eye on the Middle East
Editorial
They Cry in Silence
Happy Hanukkah
Brigitte Gabriel (Part 2)
What Christmas Is All About
The Book of Zechariah
The Foundations of Faith
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Notes

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Fallen Israeli Sgt. Michael Levin, 22, was buried in August on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem amid an outpouring of mourners, the likes of which are usually reserved for persons of great fame. Thousands of Jerusalemites, many of whom never met Michael, overflowed the cemetery to demonstrate their commitment to a larger family: the family of Israel.

Throng wept, and soldiers clung to each other and cried for this heroic young man who had immigrated to Israel alone at age 18 to serve in the army, leaving behind his family in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. “We are all family in Israel!” said a grieving Israeli, one of millions who knew their “son” Michael had given his life in southern Lebanon, defending them from Hezbollah. As Christians, we also understand that he died defending all of us in the worldwide cause of freedom over tyranny.

Accounts of Michael Levin’s journey from America to Israel, his heroism, and his death resonated from wire services, newspapers, and television networks both in the United States and abroad. One news source proclaimed, “Michael Levin: An Israeli hero for our time.”

There is also another side of the story of Michael Levin’s life: his connection with The Friends of Israel. Soon after he arrived in Israel in 2002 until his death on August 1, Michael spoke to and fellowshipped with hundreds of Christians who participated in seven of our “Up to Jerusalem” tours to Israel. To many, he was “their” Israeli soldier—the one whom they met, spoke with, and prayed for continually. His picture is displayed in scores of their homes.

Michael’s bravery on the battlefield was also matched by his personal initiative. A year ago he launched a special fund-raising project to supply the latest protective combat vests for members of his Paratrooper Battalion 890, Israel’s elite antiterrorism unit. Many of our tour participants contributed, strengthening their commitments to Israel, as well as to Michael and his colleagues, who were known as Israel’s bravest.

In a letter Michael presented at the closing dinner of our March 2006 tour, he and his battalion expressed their appreciation:

Not only do you help support us in good times, you stand with us in bad times as well. . . . I thank you from the bottom of my heart; I hope you understand how important your work and dedication mean to us and the state of Israel. The help you provided . . . enabled us to purchase 12 new combat vests for my platoon. We have already started using some of the new vests in missions and in our fight against terror. . . . We . . . will be forever grateful for your continued support in these troubled times.

Shortly before Hezbollah precipitated war by incursions into Israel and by pummeling northern Israel with Katyusha rockets, Michael spent several weeks with his family in Bucks County. His visit included a day at The Friends of Israel. He shared with us his belief that the Jewish state would soon experience war. His time in the States was cut short by the outbreak of the war he had predicted. Returning to Israel, he requested immediate deployment to fight in the north.

Having known Michael and his parents as neighbors and friends for many years, I would receive regular updates on Michael’s situation from his dad, Mark Levin. One such phone call came toward the end of July at the close of our Winona Lake Prophecy Conference in Indiana. Though Michael had been back with his military unit for little more than a week, he had already been in and out of Lebanon several times. Days later he died leading his fellow soldiers into a fierce battle with terrorists in a Hezbollah stronghold.

Traveling to Israel with the Levin family for Michael’s funeral, my wife, Annette, and I experienced an outpouring of sympathy and support from Israel’s El Al Airlines, the Israeli government, and Israel’s military that was beyond all expectations. As one Israeli mourner explained to us following the service, “There is not another country in the world that would give such hugs and kisses.” We understood.

William E. Sutter is the executive director of The Friends of Israel.
The late Yasser Arafat and his Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) cronies made a big mistake years ago when they chose to line their own pockets with the loot garnered from the benevolent West, rather than use it to meet the needs of the Palestinian people.

Coupled with the imposition of poverty were the declaration and execution of an unwinnable war against Israel. All the while, of course, the craggy-faced terrorist blamed Israel and the United States for the misery he heaped on his own people.

Then along came Hamas to take the play away from Fatah, which had led the Palestinian Authority. Hamas stepped in to provide for the Palestinians’ physical and social needs—a tactic as old as the existence of humans on this planet. Bread wins over ideology every time. But Hamas did something else. It invoked the Qur’an and the name of Allah. That was the trump card.

When the PLO was founded in 1964, it never mentioned Allah in its charter, nor did it claim the Qur’an as a guidebook. The 1968 Charter was brought forth as an Arabic, nationalistic document defining the goal of the Palestinians to be the destruction of Israel. By so doing, Arafat and his compadres thought to unify the Arab world around the PLO.

Although a secularist at heart, Arafat played religion as a central part of his platform. Islam was routinely featured, and prominence was given to radical Muslim clerics. Religion became a tool to incite hatred of the Jewish people and Israel, permeating every aspect of the education of Palestinian youth. As the glorification of jihad and suicide bombers took over Palestinian minds, the PLO and Fatah became masterminds of their own demise. By March 2005, polls showed a full 70 percent of Palestinians preferred Islamic Sharia law to those of the Palestinian Authority. In other words, Yasser Arafat had Islamized the Palestinian people.

On the other hand, Hamas spread Allah and the Qur’an everywhere in its charter. Religion became the driving force behind Hamas’s entry onto the political stage. And its fundamental strategy goes far beyond the destruction of the Jewish state. Its goal is a nonnegotiable commitment for Islam, in the name of Allah, to rule the world.

That fact became clear when, after the Hamas electoral triumph, Ismail Haniyeh was installed as the new Palestinian prime minister. His first act was to wave the Qur’an and shout “Allahu Akhbar” (“Allah is great”), as Hamas legislators cried, “The Qur’an is our constitution, Muhammad is our prophet, jihad is our path, and dying as martyrs for Allah our greatest wish.”

But this kind of fanatical bluster brings its own set of problems. As with their Hezbollah cousins to the north, Hamas terrorists have opened their own can of worms. Their imprudent attack on Israel and the kidnap-ping of Israeli Cpl. Gilad Shalit brought the wrath of the Israel Defense Forces down on their heads and, unfortunately, on the heads of the Palestinian people. In the short run, the Arabs may idolize the terrorists for their boldness against Israel and the hated Americans; but as the months grind on and they begin to look around, they may see a different side to the story.

It will take billions of Iranian and foreign dollars, and perhaps years, to bring back some semblance of normalcy. In addition, nations as Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia are beginning to see Hamas and Hezbollah for what they are: a threat to the stability of the entire Middle East. Add to this mix the reluctance of Arab Christians and moderate Muslims to be ruled by radical Muslim mullahs and Sharia law and, like the PLO before them, these terrorists may be designing the beginnings of their own defeat.

†
Questions That Beg for Answers

Here we go again. Just as they exploded with rage over 12 cartoons published in a Danish newspaper in September 2005, Muslims again are demonstrating that they will not extend freedom of the press and expression to people of other persuasions.

Muslims around the world reacted violently after Pope Benedict XVI quoted a 14th-century, Byzantine Christian emperor who spoke of Muhammad’s call to jihad against his enemies and his command to spread the Islamic faith by the sword. Among other things, angry Muslims firebombed five churches in the West Bank and Gaza, murdered a nun in Somalia, compared the pope to Hitler, and ludicrously blamed Israel and the United States for the remarks.

Although there is a smattering of Muslim moderates who do not stand on their rooftops hailing such deadly events as 9/11, Madrid, London, and other bombing bloodbaths as triumphs for Islam, the question is, Where among the billion-plus Muslims on this planet are those who aspire to live in peace?

Some say the “moderates” dare not speak out for fear of those who claim that a few terrorists have “hijacked” a peace-loving religion. If Islam is so peaceful, why haven’t responsible Muslims risen up to deal with the miscreants and preserve their religion’s credibility?

But a question much closer to home is this one: Where are evangelicals when it comes to addressing the threats against us? Here in America, the media and so-called Hollywood elite routinely vilify us as the world’s worst threat to peace. We are consistently compared to Nazis and the Taliban and are accused of being worse than Osama bin Laden and the most despicable types on the planet.

Meanwhile, Christians around the world are suffering and dying for their faith at unprecedented rates. A recent report stated that 200,000 more have been slaughtered in Darfur since the vaunted peace agreement in the Sudan. This tally does not take into account the well over 1 million Nuba Christians who have been slain, displaced, starved, or sold into slavery by the Islamic government in Khartoum. And Darfur is merely one example of the carnage that Christian organizations report daily.

It is a wonder the secular media completely ignore such horrific attacks. But the pressing question is why the vast majority of our evangelical brethren aren’t getting or articulating the facts and reaching out to help.

How long has it been since your church has said anything about persecuted Christians? How long has it been since specific incidents of crimes against Christians in other countries have been brought up for prayer? How long has it been since major international incidents that threaten the future of your church, children, and grandchildren are explained for what they are?

We are not asking why churches are not involved in partisan, political activities. We are asking why they show so little empathy for their Christian brethren who live in constant danger outside the Western democracies.

What can you do to make a difference? Here are some suggestions:

Become informed about Christian persecution. This is not difficult to do. Reputable organizations post verified accounts of persecution daily. Use your computer to search on the words Christian persecution. One reliable source is International Christian Concern at www.persecution.org.

Use bulletin inserts to post information of specific instances of persecution, or run brief accounts in your bulletins or church mailers. These would be constant reminders.

Make persecuted Christians a serious matter of corporate prayer. Incorporate into church prayer gatherings the specific needs of fellow Christians who are under the gun in other places.

Pray for our leaders and the troops defending us in the war against terror. This is a type of combat we have never known before. But it is real and deadly. The lives of our brave men and women in uniform—and our future as a nation—are at stake.

We live in a time when most of us in the West are still comfortable and secure with our lifestyles. Hearing unpleasant things often puts us off. But we cannot forget that our spheres are not restricted to our immediate environments. We are called to be Christians with the world in view. The Lord insists that our sphere extend in love, compassion, and service to all members of the body of Christ.
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Some of you will remember the terrible atrocity we wrote about last year when radical Islamists in Indonesia beheaded three Christian schoolgirls on their way to classes. Although the tragedy did not touch the hearts or headlines of news agencies in the Western world, fellow Christians prayed for the victims’ families and others in Indonesia who were suffering for their faith.

Perhaps the single greatest tragedy in the entire story of global violence against believers is the affliction forced on innocent children and young adults by Muslim terrorists determined to eliminate everyone whom they deem to be infidels.

A recent article by WorldNetDaily.com titled “Christian Pakistani Teen Escapes Death” gives us yet another chilling account of the horrific situations confronting young people who choose faith in Christ in a world we little understand.

It is the story of a Pakistani girl called Diana who grew up in a strict Islamic family. Her early years might be termed typical until she met a girl named Mary who was a Christian. Although difficult to do in an Islamic country like Pakistan, Mary’s life and testimony evidently evoked the New Testament principle of drawing others to Christ through a life of commitment to Him. Consequently, Diana became a believer in Jesus and began life as a new creature in Christ.

Her joy, however, was soon clouded by the hostility of her Muslim family. First came the beatings and insistence that she recant her faith and return to Islam. After she repeatedly refused to do so, an uncle decided to take matters into his own hands. He forced the girl to accompany him to a local canal where he had more than beatings in mind. He took out a pistol, pressed it to her head, and gave her one last chance to return to Islam or be shot. Voice of the Martyrs (VOM) reported that Diana courageously replied, “You can kill me if you want. I will not leave Christ.”

According to a spokesperson for VOM, “It was then that Diana’s uncle noticed an extremely poisonous black cobra swimming in the canal. Believing he could escape any prosecution for his niece’s death, he threw her into the path of the cobra.” Miraculously, Diana, unable to swim, escaped and fled.

Today Diana has joined the host of former Muslims whose faith in Jesus has forced them into hiding in order to save their lives. WorldNetDaily said she recently told VOM, “Jesus was crucified for us. Can we not endure some of the same for Him?”

Her words should be an inspiration to all of us, as well as a reminder of what so many young Christians have taught us over the centuries: Youth is no hindrance to courage, nor does it diminish the ability to stand with the Lord in the darkest of times or during the most significant tests of our personal faith.
We are approaching the most anticipated period on the Christian calendar. In the present environment, it is also the most controversial. Agnostics, atheists, and secular nonconformists have a field day in attacking any display of national reverence toward Christian observances, especially the commemoration of the birth of Christ.

For America, it is an extremely serious confrontation. In fact, it is a struggle between darkness and light.

For far too long, America and much of the Western world have caved in to the strident, consistent demands of a few vocal minorities and have allowed the enemies of anything Christian to win the day. As I write this, the issue of deleting the words under God from the Pledge of Allegiance is again before the courts, and there is no assurance they will not be stricken. This matter comes on the heels of decisions—as ludicrous as they are inflammatory—to exclude the display of the Ten Commandments in courtrooms, public buildings, and classrooms.

Although the House, citing the nation’s religious origins, voted in July 2006 to protect the words under God, the bill has a doubtful future in the Senate. And should the Senate pass it, states will still have the right to restrict it at their discretion. In Richmond, Virginia, an appeals court upheld a Virginia law requiring public schools to lead a recitation of the Pledge, observing that it is a patriotic exercise, not an affirmation of religion similar to a prayer.

Opponents of the phrase are determined to press their case until the words under God are removed, calling the House decision “an all-out assault on the Constitution.” David Remes, attorney for the man who objected to the Pledge in Virginia, complained, “The problem is that
young schoolchildren are quite likely to view the Pledge as affirming the existence of God and national subordination to God.”

Mr. Remes and his cohorts presumably prefer instilling in schoolchildren unbelief in God and abhor any acknowledgement of national subordination to God or this republic’s foundational allegiance to Judeo-Christian values.

If the words under God are unacceptable for our society, what is acceptable? To whom would we rather pledge our allegiance? It is impossible to have a unified society where it is every individual for himself or herself. Neither is it reasonable or workable to allow our multiculturalism to undercut the prerogatives of the nation as a whole.

Believers of most persuasions prefer the view held by the majority of the Founding Fathers: “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD” (Ps. 33:12).

Christianity Is Not a Throwaway Faith

It is dramatically important for us to understand that Christianity is not a throwaway faith. Nor are the observances of the most sacred celebrations of the season disposable entities. They are the priceless treasures upon which our nation and the Western world have been constructed, and to allow them to be obliterated or capriciously denigrated will spell catastrophe.

In Australia, when many of the country’s 300,000 Muslims recently began fuming about not being able to incorporate Muslim Sharia law into their communities, several high-ranking Australian officials pulled no punches in telling them to fall in line with Australian law or leave.

But perhaps the most well articulated sentiments come from Barry Loudermilk, a decorated U.S. Air Force veteran and now a member of the Georgia House of Representatives. In an article that swept the country following September 11, 2001, titled “This Is America,” Loudermilk spoke for millions when he wrote the following:

This culture . . . has been developed over centuries of struggles, trials, and victories by millions of men and women who have sought freedom. . . . We speak English, not Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, or any other language. Therefore, if you wish to become part of our society, learn the language! “In God We Trust” is our national motto. This is not some off-the-wall, Christian, right wing, political slogan; it is our national motto. It is engraved in stone in the House of Representatives in our Capitol and it is printed on our currency. We adopted this motto because Christian men and women, on Christian principles, founded this nation; and this is clearly documented throughout our history. . . . It is certainly appropriate to display it on the walls of our schools. . . . If God offends you, then I suggest you consider another part of the world as your new home, because God is part of our culture and we are proud to have Him.

The Treasure of Saying Thanks

In the New Testament book of Romans there is an explanatory passage underscoring the price paid when societies run afoul of their obligation to be thankful. Addressing the calamitous failure of the great Gentile powers of the past, the apostle Paul alluded to a primary cause of their demise: their refusal to bear a sense of gratitude to God and acknowledge that, because of His mercy and beneficence, we live, move, and have our very being:

Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened (1:21).

As children we were taught to say thank you for every gift, kindness, and act of generosity that came our way. And though we may not have known where the precept came from, it was being etched into our characters from an indispensable biblical truth. Not only did the Bible set the principle before us, but the history of the nation dignified it as well.

The official commemoration of Thanksgiving Day came to our shores with the early settlers, probably rooted in their English heritage. In these days of opulence, pleasure, and privilege, we often think of the day as one of leisure, overeating, parades, and football. I confess that I am among those who most heartily enjoy every aspect of the celebration, especially that found on the table—as well as around it with family and friends. To say that it is a special day is inadequate; it is a day that speaks to what we are and where we came from.

But lest we forget, let us return to the reason we bow our heads around our tables and give thanks. In 1621, after decimated settlers survived a witheringly bitter winter, spring planting, and autumn harvest, Gov. William Bradford of Plymouth Colony issued the first Thanksgiving proclamation. The three-day event was a celebration of survival, sustenance, and the promise of better things to come. But the focus of this Thanksgiving was unmistakably God Almighty, because those people firmly believed that it was His grace and providence that had brought them through.

On November 26, 1789, Pres. George Washington proclaimed a nationwide Day of Thanksgiving. In explicitly clear terms, the president said the day should be one of prayer and giving thanks to God. It was to be celebrated by all religious denominations to promote a “spirit of common heritage.” So prayer, along with thanksgiving to God, crafted the “spirit of common heritage” that has bound us together as a people and unified us as one nation under God.

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HAPPY HANUKKAH

On December 15, as it grows dark, our family will gather around the dinner table to light the first candle on a nine-armed candelabra and sing Macc Tov Yeshuat: “The Strength of My Rock Is My Salvation.”

It will be the first evening of Hanukkah, an eight-day celebration by Jewish people around the world to mark their deliverance from a brutal tyrant almost 2,200 years ago.

Children will play a special game called sevivon, meaning “dreiidel,” or “top.” The sevivon has four Hebrew letters on it: nun, gimel, heh, and peh. Here in Israel, the letters signify the words Nes gadol hayah poh: “A great miracle happened here.” If you examined a dreidel in a Jewish home outside Israel, you would notice that the letter peh is exchanged for the letter shin, which stands for the word sham, meaning “there.”

In every period of history, someone has wanted to annihilate world Jewry. In 167 B.C., Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes forbade the Jewish people in Israel to follow the Bible. He cruelly and violently forced them to take on the Hellenistic lifestyle, and he desecrated the Temple by sacrificing a female pig on the altar. He forbade Temple worship, Torah study, Sabbath and other observances and forced the Jews to worship idols.

These were fierce new laws touching the very heart of Jewish life. But a small group of people who lived in the hills around Modin near Jerusalem preferred to die rather than give in. The most famous such family was that of Matityahu (Mattathias), the father of the Hasmonean line of priests that ruled in the land after defeating the army of Antiochus in 164 B.C. These zealous Jews, the famous Judah the Maccabee being one of them, fought heroically and cleansed the Temple.

The rededication of the Temple is called Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication.

Why do we have nine arms on the candelabra? During their wilderness wanderings, the Israelites carried a seven-armed candelabra made by Bezalel Ben-Uri. This menorah stood in the first and second Temples. In order not to copy this “holy menorah,” the Hasmoneans built the hanukiyah with nine arms: eight to hold the celebration candles that are lit—one for each evening as the holiday progresses—and one with which to light the other candles. This particular candle is called the shamash, meaning “servant.”

The hanukiyah is usually set in the window so that all can see it and be reminded of the victorious and heroic deeds of the Maccabees.

by Anat Kalisher
in Jerusalem, Israel

The Treasures of the Season
from page 11

The Treasure of Returning to Bethlehem

A few years ago I stood with a group of fellow Friends of Israel Christian travelers in an observation tower overlooking the shepherds’ fields on the terraced hillsides ascending to the town of Bethlehem. Night had fallen, and we stood together holding candles and singing the familiar carols that illuminate the season and remind us of what was transacted in a stable there more than 2,000 years ago. Although I’m not easily moved by emotions of the moment, I confess that I was deeply affected by the experience.

As we left, a sense of unity, worship, and that “spirit of common heritage” that our first president spoke of enveloped us. There was no thought of the trivialities that may have divided us, considering we came from several evangelical denominations. Our focus unified us. It was on the One who gave us all a reason to be there. Jesus came to Bethlehem, and we had returned to celebrate His coming. Above all was a humble feeling of gratitude—thanksgiving, if you will—that God had remembered us and moved to extend grace that none of us deserved.

The ride back to our hotel was muffled in silence. I think we probably were all contemplating where we were when the Messiah found us. And what we might have been if He had not given us new life.

It is brutally demeaning to witness the ever-diminishing respect for Christ and Christianity and the increasing hostility that drives the forces determined to wipe God from the nation’s public institutions. Strange, indeed, that we have come to a time when the only politically correct utterance of the name of Jesus Christ is as a curse.

In the assault on biblical Christianity and its Christ, a genocidal spirit is at work. It may not be identical to the bloodlust of Iran’s Mahmoud
Ahmandinejad, who aspires to wipe Israel off the face of the earth. But the goal is much the same: to end the nation’s right to celebrate the Person and goodness of the God who has brought us to the heights of prominence, prosperity, and privilege that we have historically enjoyed as a free people.

One of the most dispiriting phrases in the whole of Scripture regards the condition people reach when God is forced to turn His back:

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting (Rom. 1:28).

What this verse tells us is that there is a time, under given circumstances, that repudiation of God results in God allowing societies to have what they want: being left to themselves and their own evil desires. Can you imagine what godless people would celebrate in a God-free environment? We don’t need to wonder. It is on display in all of the ancient archives containing the pagan rights and debauchery of peoples who, left to themselves, worshiped gods of their own making, served their own lusts, and eventually destroyed themselves by drowning in their own dissipation. Humankind, left to itself, provides only a dreadful chronicle of folly and failure.

Therefore, is it straining credibility to assert that we have, in this most wonderful season of the year, treasures to be cherished, guarded, and passed along to those who will come after us? Indeed not. Thanksgiving and the Christmas celebration of the nativity are nonnegotiable. They represent the basis of our freedom. And whether you are Jewish or Gentile, they stand as a guarantee of security and “the spirit of common heritage” that binds us together.

So, as the hymns say, “Come ye thankful people come,” and let us sing together “joy to the world.”

Elwood McQuaid is editor-in-chief for The Friends of Israel.
There are endless reasons, if you have never been there, to plant your feet squarely on the land of Israel at least once in your life. With Bible in hand, you can walk through four ancient cities that bear particular witness to the miraculous presence and power of Jesus the Messiah. Two of them still survive as thriving centers of modern life. The others remain only as breathtaking archaeological artifacts. But they all have one thing in common: They tell a story of people impacted by the Messiah, if we take the time to listen.

The City of Convergence

At the northwestern tip of the Sea of Galilee lie the ruins of Capernaum. With the blue waters of the Galilee stretching out in the background, rimmed by the hills that surround it, this peaceful-looking resort area may seem an odd choice for the Lord’s first base of ministry; but choose it He did, shortly after it was learned that John the Baptist had been arrested (Mt. 4:12–13). And there are at least two good reasons why Jesus picked Capernaum. One had to do with people; the other, with placement.

Capernaum was home to His future disciples Peter and Andrew (Mk. 1:29); it was where Jesus called several fishermen and a tax collector into service for Him (Mt. 4:18; 9:9). But the city also had a strategic importance. Capernaum was a bustling fishing town and commercial center. It housed a high-ranking government official (Jn. 4:46) and a Roman centurion with a detachment of 100 soldiers serving under him (Mt. 8:5–13).

It also was intersected by the all-important convergence of two main highways: the Great Trunk Road to Damascus, which in turn intersected the King’s Highway that followed the mountain ranges east of the Jordan, ending at the Gulf of Aqaba. Thus Jesus’ powerful message and the stories of His stunning miracles of healing in the Galilee could be carried quickly to major cities through these established trade routes.

Archaeologists have reconstructed what Capernaum may have looked like in Jesus’ time. Numerous stone piers jutted into the harbor. Houses and shops crammed the shoreline. The largest and most prominent structure was probably the synagogue. Today, nestled in a quiet grove of trees, ancient pillars and partial walls from a second-century synagogue now stand exactly over that place of worship that Jesus had visited a century earlier.

I have had the opportunity to stand in these ruins and preach a message from Mark 1:21–28. It is an amazing gospel story. Jesus entered the synagogue and began to teach. He astounded His listeners by preaching directly, powerfully, and on His own authority—not at all like the scribes who were fond of endlessly citing other religious sources. Suddenly, pandemonium broke out. Loud cries disrupted the worship service. They were emanating from a demon-possessed man in the crowd. The demons shrieked out against the
of what lay in store for Him: illegal arrest, torture, and cruel execution. But He also boldly stated that the tomb would not hold Him and that on “the third day He will rise again” (v. 34). In that city, His mission would be completed.

Jesus’ ministry of sacrifice for our sins was finished on the cross at Golgotha—the place of the skull—on a hill just beyond the outskirts of ancient Jerusalem. His death was the ultimate act of healing for everyone—past, present, and future—who accepts His shed blood as the atonement for sin, confesses Him as the Son of God, and receives Him as Savior.

After Jesus’ burial, slightly before the break of that monumental day, a shocking yet unmistakable sound echoed out: the low, rumbling, grinding sounds of the massive tomb-closing stone being rolled away from the entrance of Jesus’ grave. Against the rantings of his political enemies; against the nay-saying of the religious establishment that had raised Lazarus from the grave; the crying from the passersby and shopkeepers and the warnings from the guards down the winding, narrow Via Dolorosa as the Lord Jesus, on the way to His crucifixion, was made to shoulder His heavy cross after a vicious scourging.

But there is also a quieter place in Jerusalem where Jesus’ healing power was vividly illustrated. Archaeologists have unearthed what convincingly seems to have been the pool of Siloam where the Lord gave sight to a man who was blind from birth (Jn. 9:1–11). Hershel Shanks, editor of Biblical Archaeology Review, in an article in the September/October 2005 issue, laid out the amazing excavation. The pool (likely a miqveh, a Jewish ritual bath) had multiple sets of steps leading down to it. These steps have now been uncovered. We are told that bathers would have had an expansive view of the Kidron Valley in the background.

The healing story associated with the pool of Siloam is one of the most elaborately described in Scripture. The blind man had been a well-known beggar in the Temple area. One day Jesus encountered him, spat on the ground, mixed the spittle with clay, and applied it to the man’s eyes. Then He told the man to wash his eyes in the pool. When the man did so, he could see.

But the Pharisees were outraged, as the act had been done on the Sabbath. After being grilled extensively about his healing, the beggar wondered aloud (in an exquisite display of humor) whether the Pharisees were asking so many questions because they might want to be Jesus’ disciples too! But his naiveté only further enraged Jesus’ accusers, and the now-seeing beggar was tossed off the Temple grounds.
attitude adjustment. After being spewed out onto dry land, he made his way to Nineveh, preached God’s message, and witnessed a sizable civilization rescued from immediate destruction.

North of Joppa was the rival seaport of Caesarea, the home of a devout centurion named Cornelius. Cornelius received a vision from God to send messengers to locate Peter, who had been staying in Joppa with a tanner named Simon. Obedient to the Lord, Cornelius ordered his men to track Peter down. By the time they knocked on Peter’s door in Joppa, the apostle was finishing a vision of his own. God’s timing is always perfect. On the rooftop of Simon the tanner’s house, God had shown Peter that “what God has cleansed you must not call common [unholy]” (v. 15).

So Peter, a Jewish follower of Jesus the Messiah, and several fellow believers traveled up to Caesarea to the home of the Roman centurion (an act of faith in itself—though the Holy Spirit had already assured Peter that this was God’s doing). By then Peter had finally gotten the point,
and he declared to the Gentile (and therefore technically “unclean”) centurion,

You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him (vv. 28, 35).

Peter preached the gospel to Cornelius, and the Roman soldier and others gathered with him embraced Christ by faith—even receiving the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the believing Jews had done at Pentecost.

Thus the stage was set for the great missionary outreach from the Jewish to the Gentile world.

**The City of Confession**

Caesarea was built by Herod the Great to honor Caesar Augustus, his political patron. It took him 12 years to construct. By the standards of the day, it was a feat of architectural and engineering genius and served as the Roman capital of Judea. It had a magnificent marketplace, a great port on the Mediterranean, government buildings, a Roman circus for chariot races, and a huge amphitheater that is splendidly preserved.

Visitors today can roam the mammoth, stone-terraced theater and get a feel for what the apostle Paul might have encountered. Arrested and dragged around in chains because of his preaching, Paul was finally released and granted a hearing before Felix, the Roman governor in Caesarea (Acts. 23:33—24:27).

In his court hearing, Paul was prosecuted by a well-known lawyer named Tertullus, who apparently had been hired to represent Ananias and the Sanhedrin from Jerusalem. They were fed up with Paul’s gospel preaching. As some trial lawyers are wont to do, Tertullus began his opening statement by heaping flattery on the tribunal (24:2–3). Then he went for the jugular. I can imagine his powerful oratory as he

_continued on page 25_
Easily swayed, Hyrcanus agreed to put Herod on trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin. Herod appeared, but not without an intimidating contingent of bodyguards. He escaped condemnation by fleeing to Syria, vowing never again to go before the Sanhedrin. In fact, when he took power as king years later, one of Herod’s first acts was to kill all but one of the Sanhedrin members who had put him on trial.

Herod continued to climb the political ladder. Through bribery, he purchased a promotion to general of the
people, including his personal family and relatives. Herod encouraged them as they went and brought them safely to Idumea, though not without having to fight a number of skirmishes along the way.

Herod also was an excellent hunter, a skilled horseback rider, and an accurate marksman. Whenever a battle needed to be engaged, Herod was there.

On one occasion Herod was bringing military reinforcements to Antony. Suddenly, a large force of barbarians ambushed Herod’s forward soldiers. While his men retreated, Herod charged the enemy, attacking ferociously. Herod’s men rallied and, with Herod in the lead, gained the victory.

Herod once fought the Arabians who had stopped giving their required tribute to Rome. Herod’s victory seemed sure until a foreign general unexpectedly swooped down on Herod’s army and soundly thrashed it. Around the same time, a great earthquake shook Judea, killing 10,000 people. Herod’s men were completely dispirited. Josephus recorded that Herod mustered up his courage, gave a rousing speech to his men, and went on to defeat the Arabians.

**Herod the Beneficent**

Although it seems incongruous with much of his character, Herod frequently performed great acts of kindness. During some of his travels he satisfied the physical or financial needs of the people he visited. He helped a town rebuild after a devastating war. He helped numerous cities and regions construct temples. He also reinstated olympic games.

For his own subjects, Herod provided grain during a major famine. He cut taxes at least twice. He appealed to higher authorities and won a judgment on behalf of the Jewish people in Asia, who were being deprived of their rights.

Herod’s motives and methods of accruing wealth, however, overshadowed his philanthropy. Most of his kind deeds were self-serving—a means to ensure good relations and

Syrian forces. And he demonstrated eagerness in collecting Roman taxes. When Jewish leaders complained to Mark Antony about Herod usurping Hyrcanus’s authority, Herod bribed Antony into not hearing their charges. He also bribed Antony into making him tetrarch (governor of one-fourth of a province).

In 40 B.C. Hyrcanus’s nephew, Antigonus, with the aid of the Parthians, attacked Judea. Outmaneuvered, Herod fled to Antony at Rome. While there, Antony appointed Herod king of the Jews since (1) Antony already hated Antigonus; (2) Herod’s father, Antipater, had once befriended Antony; and (3) Herod offered Antony more money. The Roman senate approved the appointment. Nevertheless, it took Herod another three years before he could defeat Antigonus and claim the throne in 37 B.C. Herod later bribed Antony to execute Antigonus.

**Herod the Brave**

Despite Herod’s egregious political maneuverings, he occasionally demonstrated courage and leadership. When he fled from Antigonus, Herod escaped Jerusalem by night, leading an entourage of almost 10,000 dispondent
pacific the disgruntled minions. He taxed his people heavily, stole from the wealthy, and on one occasion even raided King David’s tomb!

Herod the Builder

When it came to construction, however, Herod was without peer. In Antioch, Syria (the eventual location of Paul and Barnabas’ sending church), Herod repaved the 2.5-mile-long main street with polished stone, putting cloisters along both sides.

In Judea, Herod created the enclosure surrounding the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron, where the Jewish patriarchs are buried. He also constructed the magnificent seaside city of Caesarea that included a temple for Augustus, a theater, and a man-made harbor of more than 656,000 square feet.

Especially intent on building fortresses, Herod fortified ancient Samaria, renaming it Sebaste; rebuilt Macherus, east of the Dead Sea, where Herod’s son Antipas later beheaded John the Baptist (Mt. 14:10); restored Alexandria, a fortress 17 miles north of Jericho; and revived Hyrcania, a citadel nine miles northeast of Jerusalem that became his center for imprisonment, torture, and execution.

Herod also built and named after himself a fortified palace called Herodium. Located five miles southeast of Bethlehem, it sat on a man-made hill in the middle of a plain—the spot where Herod had defeated a contingent of Jewish soldiers who had attacked his company as he was fleeing from Antigonus. The fortress was circular, had high towers, and was accessible only by climbing 200 steps of polished stones.

Herod’s most impressive fortress was Masada. A natural mountain stronghold on the southwestern shores of the Dead Sea, Masada rises 1,300 feet into the air. The Hasmoneans originally constructed the fortifications, but Herod completely refurbished them.

An imposing structure, Masada had a 4,500-foot-long double stone wall intersected by more than 30 towers, with enough weapons to outfit a small army. Masada was also Herod’s winter palace, having all the comforts of home.

But Herod’s greatest work was in Jerusalem. There, on the northwest corner of the Temple Mount, he built for himself a magnificent palace fortress and named it Antonia, after his friend Mark Antony. This was the fortress where Paul was later examined with flogging (Acts 21:22-24).

And Jerusalem was the site of Herod’s crown jewel of construction: the Temple Mount itself. He doubled the size of its platform. Some of the stones used for the retaining walls were up to 35 feet in length and weighed as much as 70 tons. New gates were created, as well as beautiful cloisters around the perimeter. And the Temple building itself was modified.

Herod began work on the Temple compound in 20 B.C. The building renovations were finished in 18 months. The cloisters and outer enclosures took eight years to complete. However, certain aspects of the project were still under construction in the days of Jesus (Jn. 2:20) and were not fully completed until A.D. 63, seven years before the Romans burned it to the ground.

Herod the Butcher

Whatever Herod’s virtues, they were decidedly overshadowed by his profound paranoia. He was the classic paranoid tyrant. His fortresses reflected his mentality. He lived with constant fear and suspicion. He had spies everywhere, looking for seditious activity. Herod would occasionally disguise himself as a commoner and mingle among the people at night, listening for conspiracies. Suspected dissidents were captured and tortured. Anyone who did not swear allegiance to Herod was persecuted and/or killed.

To be sure, Herod had no qualms about killing. He killed the 2,000 survivors of five cities that had rebelled against him. He had his brother-in-law drowned. He executed his uncle, his wife’s grandfather, his wife, his mother-in-law, and three of his sons. He murdered faithful followers, servants, friends, soldiers, pious men, and relatives—often on the flimsy evidence of rumors or coerced confessions.

In the last days of his life, Herod arranged for all the prominent Jewish leaders of the country to be rounded up, placed in a hippodrome, and executed upon word of his demise. He wanted to ensure there would be mourning throughout the land after he died. Fortunately, those orders were never carried out.

One of Herod’s most barbaric acts is recorded in Matthew 2:16. Shortly after Jesus’ birth, Herod had all males two years old and under in and around Bethlehem slaughtered. He was endeavoring to exterminate the promised Messiah.

In the spring of 4 B.C., at almost 70 years of age, Herod died of an excruciatingly painful and foul disease. He had reigned 34 years as an Idumean who had no biblical right to the throne. Insecure in his identity, Herod’s chief desire was to leave a lasting legacy. As Josephus described him, “For being a man ambitious of honor, and quite overcome by that passion, he was induced to be magnificent, wherever there appeared any hopes of a future memorial, or of reputation at present.”

Herod’s actual legacy was that of a godless, selfish, ambitious man controlled by fear. His relationships were sown with lies and distrust. And lies and distrust are what he reaped in his own family and among those who served him. (See Proverbs 29:12.) Herod exemplifies what happens when power, pleasure, and prestige take precedence over people.

Despite his architectural accomplishments, Herod will always be remembered as the imposter king of the Jews who attempted to murder the true King of God’s Chosen People. And for that act alone, Herod was not so great. No, not great at all.

ENDNOTE

1 Josephus, Antiquities 16.5.4

Bruce Scott is a field representative with The Friends of Israel in New Hope, Minnesota.
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And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.” This statement from Luke 2:1 begins many a Christmas story and is so familiar to us that we often miss a significant point: Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world (Jn. 4:42), was born under the rule of the first true Roman emperor, Augustus, whom his subjects called “savior of the world.” Thus begins a story that climaxes with Jesus’ trial before Pontius Pilate and a discussion over who really is the King (Jn. 18:28—19:22).

The Caesars who ruled in Jesus’ day—Augustus (30 B.C.–A.D. 14) and his adopted son, Tiberius (A.D. 14–37)—are mentioned only once in Luke’s Gospel, but the implication is clear: the Jewish people were under Roman domination.

As the Roman Empire spread from west to east, with General Pompey entering Jerusalem in 63 B.C., the Romans established local kings who would be loyal to Rome. Thus the Jewish people, like those of other countries, were subject not only to Caesar’s whims but also to the infighting of local kings.

In the case of Judea, this king was Herod the Great, who was installed as king of the Jews by the Roman Senate in 37 B.C. Herod had married into the Hasmonean Dynasty through Mariamne I, though his father, Antipater, was Idumean (Edomite). (See “Herod the Not-So-Great,” page 18.) Under Herod, the Jewish high priesthood was for sale to the highest bidder, and so the Jews sensed that even their Temple in Jerusalem was corrupted. The Essenes, for example, tried to separate themselves from the corruption by settling in Qumran. The result of this situation was a Messianic hope for the one who would come to free the Jewish people from Caesar, their local king, and corrupt religious leaders.

Rome’s pagan religious system sharply conflicted with Judaism. This conflict deeply affected Jewish life in the first century A.D., resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70,
Jerusalem vs. Rome: Jewish Life in the Time of Christ and continued until the beginning of the second century, when the Jewish people were banned from Judea.

The Paganism of the Roman Empire

The religion of the Roman Empire developed in conjunction with the empire’s expansion. Initially, Romans worshiped their own gods centered in Rome. The mythology of the founding of Rome is located in Virgil’s Aeneid (19 B.C.). The hero, Aeneas, flees from Troy and ultimately lands in Italy. Through the priestess of Apollo, called the Sibyl, he sees his descendant Romulus found the city of Rome (753 B.C.). Thus Rome’s very origin was understood as an act of the gods who would then direct Rome to rule the world.

Initially, Roman religion came from the recognition of the sacred powers of 20 or so chief gods and goddesses. The most prominent Roman gods were Jupiter, the chief god; Juno, his wife, known as the queen of heaven; and Minerva, goddess of trade and the arts. Since the temple to Jupiter in Rome was placed on the most prominent hill, the Capitoline Hill, this triad was known as the Capitoline gods—the protector gods of Rome to whom Rome owed its power and favor in the world.

As Rome conquered first Carthage, then Greece, Asia Minor, and finally Syria and Egypt, it assimilated many peoples into the empire and many religions as well. Being pagan, Rome...
did so with no problem as long as the cults did not violate Roman morals. Thus the Greek pantheon of gods was adopted into the Roman pantheon simply by matching the various divine functions. The Greek Zeus was now Jupiter; Hera, now Juno; Athena, now Minerva; and as recorded in Acts, Ares was now Mars, and Artemis became Diana.

Other Eastern cults, like those involving the pagan deities of Cybele, Isis, and Mithras, were either adopted or rejected depending on their followings or the whims of the emperor. As Rome grew larger and more decadent, certain observers tied the decline of traditional Roman values to the infusion of these alien superstitions.

The daily religious life of most people can be discerned from Paul’s compliment to the Athenians—that they were very religious—the city being full of idols (Acts 17:16–23). As pagans, they could worship many gods; and most people hedged their bets by making sure they did not offend any they believed may have a bearing on their lives, including the spirits of their ancestors. The common way of showing one’s devotion was through sacrifice. And according to one’s means, the appropriate sacrifice would be offered at the temple devoted to the appropriate god, mediated by a priest.

Temples to certain fertility goddesses, like Artemis/Diana in Ephesus and Aphrodite/Venus in Corinth, were served by hundreds of priestesses who functioned as cult prostitutes. The sexual aspect of pagan worship derived from the belief that the god or goddess would act based on the actions of the worshiper—in this case, bringing fertility and blessing. People also practiced the Roman civil religion, with its monthly feasts to the gods, along with their local religion—all without conflict. However, Greek philosophy, traced from Socrates through Plato through Aristotle, offered an alternative to irrational paganism. Stoicism, a rational pantheism, was popular among the elite and offered another way for educated Romans to maintain the civil religion of Rome by finding their roles in the universe.

Meanwhile, as Roman rule radiated from Rome, Roman culture permeated the empire. In Philippi (in Macedonia) the apostle Paul and Silas experienced the effects of being in this Roman city, under Roman law. Contrary to the apostle’s experience with the Jews, Roman reaction to the gospel was more socioeconomic. Many trades and trade unions were tied to certain gods. When men turned to the gospel and ceased worshipping those gods or purchasing the accoutrements of paganism, the city’s economy suffered, as in Ephesus, where a riot erupted (Acts 19:21–41). Thus the question for the Roman judges in those cities was whether preaching Jesus was illegal or deleterious to the public good.

It wasn’t until the middle of the first century A.D. that Roman emperors began to see themselves as divine. Initially, even the thought of an emperorship was seen as a betrayal of the republic; in fact, it precipitated Julius Caesar’s assassination. But after his death, the Roman Senate declared Caesar a god. Thus the tradition was established that emperors became divine after they died. This tradition continued until Caligula, who turned himself divine apppellations but who was also seen as insane. By the end of the first century, Domitian, in an attempt to return the Roman Empire to its ancient religious roots, demanded that he be worshiped as “master and god” and inflicted punishments on Jews and Christians. He was assassinated as a result of a senatorial plot in A.D. 96.

The Jews Under Rome

Judaism under Rome was conflicted. On the one hand, many understood that Rome was the fourth empire designated by God in the book of Daniel to rule over Judea; and so Messianic hopes were high to overthrow the pagan Romans and bring in the Kingdom. On the other hand, because Antipater had helped Julius Caesar win in Egypt, Judaism received legal status in the Roman Empire; and the Jewish people were protected with rights. This tension divided Jewish society. Those in power—the Herodian dynasty, the high priestly families, and the Sadducees—were not looking for a Messiah, since that would upset the present order and the Romans who had placed them in power. This mindset explains the chief priests’ declaration to Pilate: “We have no king but Caesar!” (Jn. 19:15). The zealots, on the other hand, sought to bring in the Kingdom through violent resistance. In modern terminology, they would be considered terrorists, their weapon of choice being the knife.

But on the whole, most Jews in Judea and the Diaspora (outside the land) simply tried to live between their obligations to God and the state. As they fought for their independence...
from Syria in the Maccabean revolt (166–164 B.C.), their nationalistic cry was that they would rather die than worship other gods. This commitment to monotheism and keeping the Mosaic Law, mainly the Sabbath and dietary portions, were the main concerns of Jews both in Judea and the Diaspora.

Cæsar gave them the right to keep the Sabbath and keep kosher. He also gave them the right to meet regularly (have synagogues), decide their own affairs, and contribute money to their own causes.2 Their success in maintaining these rights depended on their relationship with the local ruler. In Judea, their success depended on the relationship between the Roman procurator and the designated Jewish authorities: the members of the Sanhedrin, led by the high priest. In the Diaspora, the Jewish people depended on their local elders ingratiating themselves with the local Roman authority. If they felt the local ruler was unjust, they could appeal to Cæsar.

The Jewish philosopher Philo told the harrowing tale of leading a group of Alexandrian Jewish elders to meet with Emperor Caligula after the local Roman prefect in Alexandria had caused anti-Jewish riots and had restricted Jewish rights. Knowing the emperor could have them executed on a whim, they were fortunately dismissed by Caligula as simply ignorant people who did not recognize his divinity.

From Jewish sources in the first century, it is not difficult to discern that anti-Semitism was already part of the Roman mindset. Much of Josephus’ writing was an apologetic for the Jewish people, written especially to demonstrate that they were not all terrorists as perceived due to the first Jewish revolt, but were actually an ancient people who witnessed to the one true God and who should be honored as such. But it is easy to see, even in Luke’s account in Acts, that the Romans regarded the Jewish people as troublemakers, which is what Paul, as a Jew, was considered (Acts 16:20–21).

The Jewish people’s relationship with Rome in Judea descended into disaster when tensions became unbearable for both groups. In A.D. 66, the proconsul in Caesarea, Gessius Florus, no longer cared about maintaining civil order but purposefully inflamed Jewish passions and hostility against Rome. The Jews revolted and captured the Antonia Fortress at the Temple in Jerusalem, which led to Vespasian’s invasion of Galilee and Titus’s destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. A later emperor, Hadrian, evicted the Jews from Jerusalem in A.D. 135 after the Bar Kokhba revolt and thus ended the conflict when Jerusalem was rebuilt as Aelia Capitolina, a pagan Roman city, and the province of Judea was renamed Palestina.

A First-Century Tragedy

The Jewish story of the first century A.D. can best be described as a tragedy. God’s people were looking for their Deliverer; but when He came, they did not recognize Him. And it was only a matter of time before the civil relationship between imperial Roman rule and the absolute monotheism of Judaism became untenable. After Judea’s dissolution, the Jewish people became scattered around the empire, still waiting for their Messiah. When He comes again, this time from heaven, Israel will recognize Him (Zech. 12:10), thus ending the reign of the future Roman Empire spoken of in Daniel and completing the Times of the Gentiles (cf. Lk. 21:24). In the end, the God of Israel will reign, while the gods of Rome are scattered into dust (cf. Dan. 2:44).

Endnotes


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Great Cities of Jesus’ Day from page 17

accused Paul of provoking civil unrest and attempting to “profane the temple,” pointing out that he was a “ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (vv. 5–6).

Then Paul spoke. He was probably more subdued, less theatrical, and (by the text of Scripture) much more logical (vv. 10–21). Paul’s defense was twofold: (1) that the accusations of fomenting a riot (a serious charge in ancient Rome) failed for total lack of proof and (2) that the real gist of the matter was theological, not legal:

“I have hope in God . . . that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. I cried out, standing among them, “Concerning the resurrection of the dead and chiefly the resurrection of Jesus I am being judged by you this day” (vv. 15, 21).

Felix, who apparently had some understanding of The Way (the original label for followers of the Messiah), decided to delay the matter indefinitely. Or, as a court clerk might say today, Paul’s case was “placed at the foot of the docket.”

That, of course, was an understatement. Paul would languish for more than two years in the jail in Caesarea, while outside, Romans and visiting merchants dined lavishly, attended the Roman games, and enjoyed the opulence of this well-healed commercial center (v. 27).

Later, when Festus replaced Felix, Paul again confessed his innocence and professed his faith in Jesus the Christ—but with an additional caveat: this time he would appeal to Cæsar (25:11–12). Thus began Paul’s harrowing, forced missionary journey to Rome. As he went, he continued to carry the healing message of Jesus as Savior, taking it ultimately throughout the Gentile world.

Four ancient cities—but one King of kings and Lord of lords. As we travel through our own cities, may we spread the amazing message of the Messiah, born in a manger, who will someday return to rule the world.

Craig L. Parshall is a highly successful trial lawyer and writer in the Washington, D.C., area. He is married to radio and television personality Janet Parshall.
**Editor's Note:** In our last issue, we ran a portion of a print interview with Brigitte Gabriel. We continue with portions of a transcribed interview that Ms. Gabriel gave us permission to use. She is a former Jerusalem news anchor for *World News Tonight*, and her story will astound you.

From age 10 to 17, Brigitte lived in a bomb shelter, hiding from the Muslims who were torturing and murdering Christians in Lebanon. Taught to hate and fear the Jews, she is so loyal to Israel today that she buried her parents there and founded AmericanCongressforTruth.com. Her book *Because They Hate: A Survivor of Islamic Terror Warns America* is now available.

We will briefly recap events in Lebanon before Brigitte found herself in a hospital in Israel.

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**Brigitte Gabriel**

*(Part 2)*

When the Palestinians started fighting in Lebanon [in the 1970s], the war took on such savagery that it was inconceivable. They would massacre the Christian cities. City after city. A signature Palestinian way to kill a Christian man is to cut the man’s genitals, stick them in the victim’s mouth, and cut a cross with a knife on his chest. That’s how they used to kill the Christian men and leave them lying on the ground.

The Palestinians would park a cannon in front of our bomb shelter and shoot at Israel, fully knowing that Israel was going to retaliate and that we were going to die, because the way they would do it is they would shell Israel, then drive their tank away. So when Israel would shell back, we [Christians] would die and make great evening news, great ratings.

And that is a tactic that Palestinians use over and over. They hide between civilians. And they always chose the Christian homes only, not the Muslim homes, because they wanted us to die. It was unbelievable for us as Christians to even fathom the barbarisms and monstrosities that they committed, because we have no point of reference for such savagery.

We were raised in Lebanon thinking that Israel was the devil and the Jews were evil. But a few people from my town went to Israel and begged for help. And that’s how we stayed alive. Israel would come in the middle of the night and bring supplies to the Christians. That’s how we stayed alive for seven years.

In 1982 Israel entered Lebanon. And notice how I say “entered” Lebanon, not “invaded” Lebanon. The Christians were praying for Israel to enter Lebanon and liberate them from the Palestinians. And the only reason Israel came into Lebanon was because Hezbollah was working with the Palestinians, and also with the Syrians; and we had a lot of other Muslims from a lot of Arabic countries that came to Lebanon to fight Israel. While Israel entered Lebanon, the Muslims and Palestinians were shelling us frantically. One of their bombs exploded in front of my bomb shelter as my mother was running for the shelter; she became wounded.

Our only lifeline was Israel. That’s where all the wounded went to get treated. For seven years, medical treatment was free of charge to anyone who needed it, when Israel took care of us.

We put my mother in an Israeli-donated ambulance and drove her to the border. It was a 10-minute drive. When we got to the border, the Lebanese driver asked me for money for the fee. Like an innocent teenager, I pulled all the money my daddy had given me out of my pocket and showed it to him. “Give me $30,” he said. It was half the money I had. I gave it to him, and I thanked him from the bottom of my heart.

They transferred my mother into another Israeli ambulance inside Israel. The driver was an Israeli soldier. He was so nice to me. He treated me like his own daughter. He put me at such ease because I was afraid. I didn’t have anyone in Israel. My mother was half conscious in the back of the ambulance. And I was stunned at how nice that Israeli driver was.

We got to the hospital. They took my mother into the emergency room. I walked around to the Israeli driver to pay him. He looked at the money and said, “What is this?”

I said, “Don’t you need the fee for the ambulance?”

And he said, “No, this is a free service from us to you. Keep your money, and I wish you well. I hope your mother recovers.” I thought, *This is unbelievable. Maybe this is an exception.*

They took my mother to the fourth floor of the hospital, and we were in the room maybe five minutes...
when I heard all this commotion outside our window. I went to see what was happening. Two Israeli helicopters had just landed, bringing in Israeli soldiers wounded in Lebanon. I stood on the balcony looking at that scene, and I felt ashamed. I felt embarrassed. I felt out of place. After all, these people were wounded because of the war with my country. I didn’t look at anyone around me. There were a lot of people. There were mothers of wounded soldiers, fathers who were in the hospital with their children, and nurses. I didn’t make any contact with anybody around me and kept looking at the floor.

Then I felt this tapping on my shoulder. I looked, and there was an Israeli nurse looking at me. She said, “You are new here, aren’t you?”

I said, “Yes. They just brought in my mother. She’s in this room.”

She could see the fear in my eyes, and she just put her arm around me and said, “Don’t worry. We’ll take good care of her. Everything will be fine.”

For the first time in my life, I experienced civilization. I broke out crying, sobbing, because I experienced the compassion and the love and humanity that I knew my society would not be able to show its enemy. I knew for a fact that if I were a Jew standing on the fourth floor of a Lebanese hospital, I would be lynched and thrown down to the ground as shouts of joy, of Allahu Akhbar [“Allah is great”], echoed through the hallways of the hospital and down the streets.

When the Israelis found out there were Lebanese wounded in Israeli hospitals, they came bringing presents. They came extending a peaceful hand. They came bringing chocolates. They would visit the wounded families and ask, “What can we do for you? What can we bring you? Our homes are your home. If you need to sleep, if you missed bringing something from home, please let us bring it to you.”

It was unbelievable. I became friends with the families, with the mothers and the sisters of the wounded soldiers in the hospital. One in particular was Rena Potashnick. I’ll never forget her name. Her only son, Amir, was 19 years old and wounded in his eye. He lost sight in that eye.

She became like my surrogate mother. I spent a lot of time with her because I was with my mom in the hospital for 22 days. I would visit Rena, and one day in particular the Israeli army band came to play national songs to lift the Israeli soldiers’ spirits. I was visiting in her room when they came. They stood around Amir’s bed. And I felt so out of place that I started walking out of the room. Rena started crying, listening to the music. And when she sensed that I was walking backwards to leave the room, she pulled me by my hand, bringing me back inside. And she hugged me and said, “It’s not your fault.” And we both stood there crying.

I thought to myself, What a contrast between her, a mother looking at her only child, now deformed, and still able to love me, the Arab. What a contrast between her and the suicide bomber’s mother who sends her only son and
daughter to strap bombs around themselves and blow themselves to smithereens just to kill a Jew or a few Jewish children.

I spent 22 days at the hospital. Those days changed my life. They changed the way I believe information, watch television, and listen to the radio, because I realize I was fed fabricated lies about the Jews and Israel that were so far from reality. I realize that it was my culture that taught hate. It was my culture that was unable to love and show compassion to its enemy in their time of need. I miss my father so much. We had been gone for a while. But it was a double-edged sword because I did not want to go back to Lebanon. And the minute we crossed the border, I felt I was crossing back into the gates of hell. I remember grabbing onto the barbed wire to the point where it cut the palm of my hand. I was bleeding, crying, telling my mother, “Please don’t take me out of here [Israel]. I do not want to go back to Lebanon.”

She looked at my face and said, “And who is going to take care of me and your dad?” I was an only child. I had to go back to Lebanon. And I felt I was being sentenced back to hell. I went into deep depression. I didn’t want to leave the house. I stayed home.

All I thought about were my days in the hospital because I had left my heart in Israel. I left my heart with people who taught me respect for humanity, respect for human life. I was able to see a side to the Israelis that I knew for a fact did not exist where I came from. They had respect for humanity that I didn’t know of until I went to Israel. They had compassion. They had values. They had principles that were foreign in my culture. I was so depressed, and I vowed that one day I would return to Israel because those are the type of people I want to be like. I ended up going back to Israel three years later to work in Jerusalem.

Facing Death for Reporting the Truth

I got a job working as news anchor for World News Tonight in Jerusalem. It was a dream come true. In my wildest dreams I never thought I would be able to work in Israel in such a profession that gave me the ability to meet world leaders and be exposed to information that was not filtered through Arabic filters and Arabic propaganda.

I was able to make decisions and learn about situations in the world where I could evaluate and form an opinion, my own opinion, based on factual information without the exaggeration and the propaganda of the Arabs. It also gave me insight into the Palestinian and Israeli cultures.

Jerusalem is the pinnacle of East meets West. In Jerusalem you have the western side of the city where the Jewish people live, and you have the eastern side of the city where the Arabs live. And the contrast is blinding.

I learned about the exaggeration of the Arabic media and what truly was happening in the territories. We would visit our Christian friends in Bethlehem. And it got to the point where the Christians were afraid for their lives because they were so intimidated by the Palestinian Muslims.

The Palestinian Muslims would go into the Christian cemeteries, break the crosses, and dig up the bodies. When we would interview these Christians, we had to disguise their faces because their lives were threatened just because they were telling the truth. If a neighbor ever found out that they were speaking about what they were being subjected to, they would be killed. The intimidation and death threats were unbelievable.

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As a reporter, I was afraid for my life because in the Middle East, when you speak the truth, when you report honestly, your life gets threatened. If the Palestinian media cannot control what you’re saying, you are a major threat to them because you are informing the population of what is truly happening. And that’s what I did when I worked for Middle East Television. They tried to assassinate me in Lebanon.

One day they shot at me when I was walking home.

They thought I was dead, but I played dead in a ditch until they left, and then I crawled home.

They chased me in Israel. Twice I was chased for two hours between Tel Aviv and Haifa. I traveled wearing wigs so people would not recognize who I was. I would always disguise my appearance.

People in America do not realize that, in this country, we can voice our opinions; we can even curse the president on national television and never fear for our lives because we have freedom of press, freedom of speech. In the Middle East there is no such thing. Many journalists in the Middle East have been shot, killed, or lost their jobs; it’s a well-known tactic in the Palestinian territories. You do not go against the Palestinian media or you will be killed. And the tactic they’re using right now is that they’re accusing reporters of being traitors, of being informants to the Israeli army; and they’re killing them publicly. Hezbollah published my picture in the Hezbollah magazine in Lebanon along with the Israeli news anchor from the evening news, calling me a traitor and saying I should be killed, calling me an Israeli informant, an Israeli spy. It was very dangerous for me to even travel within the security zone inside Lebanon.

Before I left Israel and came to the States, I wanted to make sure both my parents were buried in Israel. My father was living with me before he died, and I buried him in Jerusalem at Mount Zion. But my mother had died a year and a half earlier. So before I came to the States, I went back to her grave, dug her out of her grave, took her out of her casket, put her in another casket in my car, drove her to Israel, and buried her with my father. I wanted to ensure that my children, yet unborn, will always know where my loyalty lies and will always be drawn to Israel. 

In the Palestinian territories, you will pass my parents’ graves on your way to his tomb.

The PA Doesn’t Want Peace

People need to realize that when the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] was formed in 1964, Gaza was illegally invaded and occupied by Egypt, and the West Bank was illegally invaded and occupied by Jordan. It wasn’t Gaza and the West Bank that Yasser Arafat was fighting to get. It was Israel proper. Today under the Palestinian Authority [PA], when you see maps of Palestine, Israel doesn’t exist. The maps show the whole area as Palestine. They want the whole land. They do not want Israel to exist in the Middle East. They do not want any Jews living in Arabic territories.

Yet look at Israel. Israel has Muslim-Israeli citizens. They have Muslims in parliament in the Knesset. Show me one Arabic country in the world that has a Arab in its leadership in refugee camps like rats without dignity. They live on top of each other.

The least the Palestinian leaders could do if they care about their people is take some of that money and allocate it to improve the Palestinian territories. Let them build townhouses for the people. Let them go to the bathroom in decent bathrooms. But instead, it goes for bribery, for driving the Mercedes, for driving the BMW, for fancy vacations, for fancy homes. Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas] has a $1.5 million home in Gaza. How many Palestinians live in Gaza in a $1.5 million home?

The Palestinians need to wake up and kick their leaders out. The world cannot do it for them. They need to realize they are being used as puppets in the hands of a corrupt leadership. And they need to kick that leadership out and start negotiating with the Israelis if they want peace.

Hamas in America

The Palestinians learned to manipulate the media. They know how to play the West like a violin. When the Israelis, for example, go after Hamas leaders, those Hamas leaders hide among Palestinian civilians. They [Hamas] are basically killing their own people. But when you watch the news at night, and you realize that when Israel kills a Hamas leader and 14 other people are dead, some of them children, the West thinks, “Oh my gosh. Israel is doing a horrible thing here.” People need to realize that these leaders are hiding among these children. They’re killing their own people. The West does not understand how the Middle East thinks.

We are in a state of war. We are fighting a holy war that’s been declared on Jews and Christians worldwide. Yet in this country we are burying our heads in the sand. You have organizations such as Duke University, which are

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The Carols of Christmas

by Peter Colón

It began with praise! “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (Lk. 2:14). Since then, the birth of Jesus the Messiah has inspired many wonderful songs. Although some would argue that singing carols began with the angels’ pronouncement in Bethlehem, the exact origin of the Christmas-carol tradition remains a mystery.

The word carol comes from the Italian word carolare. It refers to a “circle dance” accompanied by songs of praise and joy. However, these melodies were actually associated with Celtic pagan fertility rites and festivities of medieval Europe. Later, as churches were established, carols—with pagan words and sentiments replaced—were incorporated into Christian liturgy. At first only the priests and choirs sang them in Latin. But by the end of the Middle Ages, the tunes were fused with common folk songs; and traveling singers and shows throughout Europe popularized the carol.

According to church tradition, Christmas carols should adhere strictly to Luke’s narrative, which has three distinct points: the proclamation of an angel of the Lord, the chorus of the multitudes of angels, and the response of the shepherds.

Today Christmas without carols is almost unimaginable. The histories behind many known songs are lost in obscurity. However, for some, knowing their amazing stories will make the carols all the more dear.

Irish poet James Montgomery (1771–1854) was six years old when his Moravian missionary parents died in the West Indies. Astonishingly, at age seven he began seminary training at Yorkshire near Leeds, England. There he made a public profession of faith and united with the Moravian Church. As he grew, he began writing poetry and became active in foreign missions and the abolition of slavery. In 1816 he penned the words to the familiar carol “Angels From the Realms of Glory.” His missionary heart is seen in stanza one by his call to the angels to tell the whole world about Jesus’ birth:

Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o’er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation’s story,
Now proclaim Messiah’s birth:
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!

John Byron (1692–1763) truly loved his little daughter, Dorothy. One day, using his own system of shorthand, he penned some choice words for her. (His shorthand system later became the Universal English Shorthand method.) When Dorothy awoke on Christmas morning 1745, she found the poem among her gifts. The original title was “Christmas Day for Dolly.” Later, when music was added, it was changed to “Christians Awake Salute the Happy Morn!” His inspiration was Luke 2:10, when an angel of the Lord said, “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.” Stanza two:
Then to the watchful shepherds it was told
Who heard the angelic herald’s voice: “Behold,
I bring good tidings of a Saviour’s birth
To you and all the nations upon earth
This day hath God fulfilled His promised word;
This day is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord.”

There is at least one author and one composer who today might not recognize a carol they both helped pen. Charles Wesley (1707–1788), brother of John Wesley who founded the Methodist Church, was a great hymn writer. When the English Puritan parliament came to power in the 17th century, it had abolished Christmas festivities as too pagan and worldly. Eventually the church was left with a void of hymns and carols. To help fill this need, Charles wrote his most famous carol that opened with the words  

Hark how the welkin (heaven) rings.

But over Wesley’s objections, his friend, the great revivalist George Whitefield, changed the words to  

Hark the herald angels sing.

Later, in 1840, Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847), a Jewish believer in Jesus, composed a secular cantata to celebrate Johann Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press. In 1855 English musician William H. Cummings put Wesley’s words and Mendelssohn’s music together to create the well-known carol “Hark the Herald Angels Sing.” Through this combination, the fundamentals of the faith—the virgin birth, the incarnation, and eternal life through Jesus Christ—are reaffirmed in the hearts of the faithful even today. Stanza one:

Hark the herald angels sing
“Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled”
Joyful, all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim:
“Christ is born in Bethlehem”
Hark! The herald angels sing
“Glory to the newborn King!”

The Mexican-American War (1846–1848) had ended. But racial and political skirmishes waged throughout the frontier of the United States. In 1849 a Unitarian minister in Wayland, Massachusetts, was encouraged to write a carol. As a “humanist,” Edmund Sears specifically emphasized the social significance of the “on earth peace, goodwill toward men” message. His tune was later put to a traditional English melody, and the familiar carol “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” was introduced. The fourth and final stanza anticipates the peace on Earth that shall come someday:

For lo! the days are hastening on,
By prophet-bards foretold,

When with the ever circling years
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors flowing,
And the whole world send back the song
Which now the angels sing.

A 15-year old boy complained to his father that church hymns were boring and meaningless. His father, a member of a strict Independent Congregational church, challenged his son, Isaac Watts (1674–1748), to do better. At 18 Isaac wrote his first hymn. By the end of his life, he had written more than 700. He is considered the father of English hymnody. In 1719 God impressed Psalm 98 on Isaac’s heart. He wrote only the words to his carol, called “Joy to the World.” In 1839 Lowell Mason, an American composer and music educator, took the lyrics and wove them into two musical phrases from George Frederick Handel’s (1684–1759) “Messiah, Lift Up Your Head” and “Comfort Ye.” The result is the familiar tune used today. Of all the sacred carols, “Joy to the World” is perhaps the most uplifting declaration of the Christmas message. It speaks of Messiah’s First and Second Comings. Stanza one through four:

Joy to the world! the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heav’n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love.

The organist at Holy Trinity Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, could not sleep. His pastor, the Rector Phillips Brooks (1835–1893), had penned a poem in 1865 when he had visited Bethlehem. Now, in preparation for a special Christmas service for children, Lewis H. Redner (1830–1908) was asked to compose a simple melody for the poem. He struggled all night. Tired, he fell asleep. The story goes that during the night, he awoke with “an angel strain” sounding in his ears. He immediately jotted
down the melody, which he called “a gift from heaven.” Later that day, in December 1867, the children’s choir of the church introduced the modest and now classic “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” Interestingly, people outside the church did not learn of the carol until it was published in a newspaper 10 years later! Stanza one:

O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

A mood of severe melancholy overtook American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. His wife had accidentally set her clothes on fire while lighting candles and died in 1861. The American Civil War had broken out in April the same year. Longfellow’s oldest son ran off and enlisted in the Union Army. On November 27, 1863, while in a skirmish during the battle of New Hope Church, Virginia, 17-year-old Lt. Charles Appleton Longfellow was severely wounded. His father brought him home to care for him. Reflecting on all the horrors associated with the bloody conflict and the wounding of his son, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow sat at his desk on Christmas Eve 1863 and penned a poem he called “Christmas Bells.” Originally, it was a strong antiwar tune. But later some of his political partisan phrases were modified when it was put to music in 1872. Today it is known as “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.” It is a classic carol offering a message of hope that God is in control and that peace will return to the earth. Stanzas four and five:

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
“For hate is strong. And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!”
Then pealed the bells more loud and deep;
God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!
The wrong shall fail, The right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!

On December 24, 1818, priest Joseph Mohr (1792–1848) was in trouble. He needed a hymn for the midnight Christmas Eve service at St. Nicholas in Oberndorf, Austria. The story goes that the organ of his church was broken. So he walked more than a mile in the cold to the neighboring town of Arnsdorf to visit Franz Gruber (1787–1863), the church’s organist and choirmaster. Two years earlier, in 1816, Mohr had written a simple poem. He hoped his friend could put it to music. According to popular legend, Gruber composed an uncomplicated melody arranged for two solo voices, choir, and guitar. Just in time for the midnight service on a snowy evening in 1818, the most famous Christmas carol of all time was sung. It literally became a song that was to be heard around the world: “Stille Nacht,” or “Silent Night.” The song has been translated into a multitude of languages. Its dominant message of heavenly peace has crossed all borders and cultures, and it has conquered the hearts of people everywhere. Stanza three:

Silent night, holy night!
Son of God love’s pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

Quoteworthy

“I know war very well. I know what it means to live in terror, to run under air strikes and cannonades, to see people killed and houses destroyed, to starve and dream of a piece of bread. . . . I know it because I belong to the Second World War generation and because, as a member of the Resistance, I was myself a soldier. . . . I do not believe in vile acquittals, phony appeasements, easy forgiveness. Even less, in the exploitation or the blackmail of the word Peace. When peace stands for surrender, fear, loss of dignity and freedom, it is no longer peace. It’s suicide.”

—Oriana Fallaci, Italian journalist who raged against Islamic fascism. She died in her native Florence, September 15, 2006, at age 77.
I S R A E L   M Y   G L O R Y

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a specific place where the long-expected promise of God would be fulfilled. Bethlehem Ephrathah, located in Judah, was so small that it was not listed among Judah's holdings. Yet at the First Advent, it eclipsed all other towns. As the carol says, "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight." For in Bethlehem, God fulfilled Micah 5:2: that someone who would be from "everlasting"—literally, timeless eternity—would be born. That divine One would save us from our sins (Isa. 53: 4–6; Mt. 1:21). And someday He will rule Israel and the entire world (Isa. 9:6; Mic. 5:2). That's what Christmas is all about.

by Thomas C. Simcox, Northeastern States director for The Friends of Israel.

Brigitte Gabriel from page 29

supposed to be intellectual places where people come to learn and be tolerant about each other. Yet a university like Duke allows a hate fest, basically, where people can stand up and spew hate toward the Jews and say, "All the Jews need to be killed."

How come we allow such talk? If I, as an American citizen, got on television or organized a rally and said, "All gays need to be killed because all gays are terrible," would I survive a day? I would be thrown in prison or sued. When you refuse to condemn suicide bombers, terrorism, and violence, your hands are soiled with the blood of the innocents just as much as any suicide bomber who blows himself up.

The Middle East should be the most important matter to all Americans, especially after 9/11. For the last 20 years Americans have not paid attention to what’s been going on around the world. Where do you think Islamic Jihad came from? Where do you think Hamas came from? To focus only on al-Qaeda is a fatal error. Al-Qaeda is a transnational organization made up of different groups. We have proved that Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah have established linkages with al-Qaeda in the United States. And of all terrorist organizations in the United States, Hamas has the largest American infrastructure. Hamas is not an Israeli problem. Hamas is the United States’ problem. Hamas is a world problem.

If Americans would read the Hamas charter, Article 22 mentions the Lions Club as a secret organization to be destroyed. The Lions Club, Rotary Club, the Freemasons, the Kiwanis. How many Lions Club members in the United States know they are mentioned in the Hamas charter? Hamas has chapters in 40 states. And that’s what America needs to wake up and start learning about.

The average American can become involved and make a difference by becoming a member of American Congress for Truth, which keeps you informed about the threat you are facing. Our organization is dedicated to informing the American public.

Brigitte Gabriel can be contacted through her Web site: AmericanCongressforTruth.com.
Israel's Glorious Kingdom

As Zechariah's prophecy neared its conclusion, the prophet described a number of physical changes that will take place in Israel immediately prior to the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom. Israel's topography will be dramatically altered when the Messiah returns, preparing not only Israel but the world for the Lord's Millennial rule.

The moment Messiah's feet touch the Mount of Olives (v. 4), an earthquake will ensue, flattening the land around Jerusalem and greatly elevating Jerusalem itself above the surrounding area.

The Mighty River

Changes in Jerusalem's topography will radically alter the water situation within the city. A mighty river will be created that flows from Jerusalem and feeds the entire Judean desert:

And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur (v. 8).

This massive subterranean river will flow from Jerusalem into the Dead Sea to the east and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. The river will irrigate the desert surrounding the city, causing the Negev to blossom like a rose with foliage and produce (Isa. 35:1, 6). Many prophets foretold of the same event (Ps. 46:1-4; Ezek. 47:1-12; Joel 3:18).

According to Ezekiel, the river will flow from the Temple in Jerusalem, emptying into the Dead Sea and turning it into a fresh-water lake that will produce a great multitude of fish, to the delight of fishermen in that day (Ezek. 47:1-12).

Although this is a physical river, it is called "living waters" because it will flow year-round (v. 8). Living water is an Old Testament expression that refers to a flowing river in contrast to a stagnant one. During His ministry, Jesus gave the phrase living water spiritual significance when He used it to speak of the fullness of eternal life (Jn. 7:38-39), especially when dialoguing with the Samaritan woman (4:10, 14).

The Messiah's Rule

Zechariah continued: "And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—The LORD is one, and His name one" (v. 9).

When Jehovah establishes His earthly reign through the Messiah, Satan will no longer have any control as the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). He will be bound and cast alive into the bottomless pit where he will remain for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-3). Messiah alone will take rightful rule over all the earth and make the city of Jerusalem His capital (Jer. 3:17).

The phrase The LORD is one, and His name one describes the Lord's universal rule and reign. (See Zechariah 4:14; 6:5.) It does not mean that Jehovah will possess things in the future that He has no control over today; He controls everything. But in the Millennium, Jehovah will be recognized as the one and only sovereign Lord.

The word for "one" in verse 9 is the Hebrew echad, which speaks of a unique oneness possessed only by Jehovah—the compound oneness of the triune God as expressed in the Shema, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!” (Dt. 6:4, emphasis added). The Shema embodies the very essence of Israel's covenant confession and faith, encapsulating Israel's faith in the monotheistic God.

In the Millennium, God will be universally recognized, accepted, and worshiped as the only unique, solitary, and incomparable God in the universe. Never since the fall of man will humankind so recognize the triune God. There will be no ambiguity concerning whom humanity should believe in and worship. Notice that Zechariah does not refer to our God, because Jehovah—the one and only true God—will be the one in whom all men and nations will believe.

As mentioned, Jerusalem and the surrounding area will be significantly altered at the Lord's return: All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be raised up and inhabited in her place from Benjamin's Gate to the place of the First Gate and the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses (v. 10).

The city will be greatly elevated and expanded beyond its size and height today. Jerusalem, in all its pristine beauty, will tower over the area and be visible from a great distance, as people make their pilgrimages to it.

What will the area look like? First, the plain surrounding Jerusalem will reach from Geba of Benjamin, situated six miles to the northeast corner of Jerusalem (Josh. 21:17; 2 Ki. 23:8), to Rimmon in the southwest, situated 35 miles from Judah (Neh. 11:29). This plain is the Arabah, a flat valley about 100 miles in length that runs between the Dead Sea (1,300 feet below sea level) and the Gulf of Aqaba (300 feet above sea level), making the Arabah the deepest valley on Earth.

During the Millennial Kingdom, Jerusalem will be rebuilt and greatly
enlarged to adequately provide for the Messiah’s capital, government, and new worship system. Zechariah envisioned a Jerusalem far larger than the Jerusalem of his day or even the city before its destruction by Babylon. In the Millennium, Jerusalem will extend from Benjamin’s Gate on the north wall (the Gate of Ephraim mentioned in 2 Ki. 14:13) to the First Gate on the northeast corner, from the Corner Gate on the northwest corner to the Tower of Hananel (perhaps in the southeast corner) “to the king’s winepresses” in the king’s gardens south of the city near the Valley of Hinnom. These dimensions give us, as they did the people of Zechariah’s day, an indication of Jerusalem’s size during the Messiah’s rule on Earth.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem will live in safety and security: “The people shall dwell in it; and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited” (v. 11). In other words, Jewish people living there during the Millennium will never fear destruction again.

The words plague (Hebrew, maggephah) and strike (Hebrew, mag-aph) come from the same Hebrew root and mean to “strike” or “smite” with a supernatural pestilence, that is, to slaughter with divine judgment. Both people (v. 12) and animals within the enemy’s camp are marked for destruction. The plague will fall “on the horse and the mule, on the camel and the donkey, and on all the cattle that will be in those camps. So shall this plague be” (v. 15).

All those who attack Jerusalem will be eradicated because of God’s curse. The plague will consume the enemy soldiers while they stand on their feet, leaving only skeletons. It will strike so quickly that men’s eyes and tongues will decay instantaneously, an indication of how rapidly this plague will kill the army in the moment of its victory.

Such destruction is not unlike what happened when the atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945.

Second, the Lord will send panic, or confusion, on the invading nations:

*It shall come to pass in that day that a great panic from the LORD will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, and raise his hand against his neighbor’s hand (v. 13).*

God will confound the armies that war against Jerusalem. The armies will panic; turn their weapons on each other; and in their madness, kill their own soldiers. As God confounded Israel’s enemies to destroy themselves in the past, so will He do again (Jud. 7:22; 1 Sam. 14:20; 2 Chr. 20:23).

Third, God will give Judah power to utterly destroy the armies that invade Jerusalem, and “Judah also will fight at Jerusalem” (v. 14). The Jewish remnant that initially escaped the invasion of Jerusalem through a valley divinely opened by Jehovah (vv. 4–5), will return to Jerusalem and kill the invaders who survive God’s wrath during the campaign of Armageddon.

Once the invaders are dead, Israel will gather the wealth of the surrounding nations, “gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance” (v. 14). The spoils of war will be enormous.

The prophecies of Zechariah 14 are not presented in chronological order. Here is the proper order of their fulfillment.

1. All the nations of the world will invade Israel in a campaign of battles culminating in what is commonly called Armageddon. During the invasion, Jerusalem will be captured, houses ransacked and plundered for spoil, women raped, and half of the population exiled into slavery (vv. 1–2).

2. At the Messiah’s Second Coming, phenomenal changes will occur in the heavenly luminaries (vv. 6–7; cf. Mt. 24:29).

3. In Israel’s darkest hour, the Messiah will appear and destroy the nations coming to war against it (v. 3). The armies will be destroyed by three means: a plague (vv. 12, 15); panic, causing them to turn on themselves (v. 13); and later, by the divine power Israel will receive to annihilate those who remain (v. 14). Israel then will gather the spoils of war (v. 14).

4. When the Messiah arrives, His feet will step on the Mount of Olives, causing it to split apart and form a large valley that will allow a surviving remnant to escape the carnage of Jerusalem (vv. 4–5).

5. A mighty river will flow from Jerusalem, watering the Negev and emptying into the Dead Sea and Mediterranean Sea (v. 8).

6. The Messiah will rule the earth from Jerusalem, and its inhabitants will live in safety forever (vv. 9–11).

7. In the Millennium, nations will be required to appear in Jerusalem to worship the Lord and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (v. 16). We will cover this topic in the next article.

**ENDNOTES**


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

**ISRAEL MY GLORY**
God Is Moral
(Part 8)

Our previous article showed that, historically, governmental law and the Bible regard murder as the willful, premeditated killing of a human being by another. In light of this truth, an issue that must be addressed in the 21st century is this: How does the concept of murder relate to the killing of infants? Are infanticide and abortion murder?

God’s Relationship to Human Procreation, Conception, Development, and Birth

God has a significant relationship to human procreation, conception, development, and birth.

**Human Procreation.** God created male and female human beings and commanded them to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth (Gen. 1:27–28). This command indicated His intention that people use their sexuality to procreate other human beings to populate the planet. *Procreate* means “to produce (young); beget (offspring).” After the flood, God emphasized this intention again by commanding Noah and his descendants to procreate abundantly and fill the earth (9:1, 7).

**Conception.** God has sovereign authority to control when human conception occurs as a result of sexual union, and when it does not. When King Abimelech innocently took Sarah, Abraham’s wife, as a result of Abraham and Sarah misleading him, God judged the king by preventing the women in his household from conceiving (20:2–5, 18). After Abimelech restored Sarah to Abraham, God healed the women; and they bore children (vv. 14, 17).

God enabled Sarah to conceive and bear a son after she and Abraham were beyond the age for procreation (17:15−19; 18:9−14; 21:1−2). God opened Leah’s womb to conceive children for Jacob (29:31−35). Rachel’s extended barren state prompted Jacob to conclude that God had prevented her from conceiving (30:1−2). Later God opened Rachel’s womb, and she conceived (vv. 22−23). God closed Hannah’s womb for several years (1 Sam. 1:5−7). In response to her prayers, God enabled her to conceive and bear Samuel (vv. 10−11, 19−20).

**Development.** The Bible identifies God as the maker of people. God promised Abraham, “I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you” (Gen. 17:6). He said He would make Ishmael “fruitful . . . multiply him exceedingly,” and “make him a great nation” (v. 20). God claimed He “gave” Isaac to Abraham and “gave” Jacob and Esau to Isaac (Josh. 24:3−4). He promised to “make” Jacob “fruitful,” to “multiply” him, and to “make” of him “a multitude of people” (Gen 48:4). Jacob testified that God had “given” him children (33:5). God told the people of Israel, “I will . . . make you fruitful [and] multiply you” (Lev. 26:9).

Job called God “my Maker” (Job 32:22) and asserted God “made” him “in the womb” and made other people (31:15). The psalmist called God “the LORD our Maker” (Ps. 95:6). Proverbs calls God a person’s “Maker” (Prov. 14:31; 17:5) and states, “The rich and the poor have this in common, the LORD is the maker of them all” (22:2). Isaiah referred to a man looking to “his Maker” and to people who “forget the LORD” their “Maker” (Isa. 17:7; 51:13).

The major Hebrew word translated “make,” “made,” and “Maker” in these passages emphasizes “the forming of the object. . . . When used of God, the word frequently emphasizes God’s acts in the sphere of history . . . effecting his sovereign purpose.” Thus these passages imply that, since it is God’s sovereign purpose that children be conceived and born to populate the earth, He personally fashions the development of the conceived child in the womb to bring it to birth. Thus Job asked, “Did not the same One fashion us in the womb?” (Job 31:15). The psalmist said God’s “hands have made me and fashioned me” (Ps. 119:73). These statements indicate “God’s role in forming the human body is significant.” The suffering servant asserted that God “formed” him “from the womb” (Isa. 49:5). God told Jeremiah that He “formed” him “in the womb” (Jer. 1:5). The word translated “formed” in these passages basically refers to “various forms of craftsmanship.” In the Old Testament, it is used primarily for “the divine activity of creating and shaping . . . specific parts of the human body, such as the heart (Ps. 33:15)” and the eye (Ps. 94:9).”

David stated God “formed” his “inward parts” (internal organs) and “covered” him (“weaved” or “shaped” his body together) in his “mother’s womb” (Ps. 139:13). He indicated that God’s work of making him in the “secret” (“hiding place”) of his mother’s womb was so “wonderfully” (“set
apart" as exclusively God’s work) “marvelous” (“beyond human capabilities”) and “skillfully” (“diversified”) that it prompted a reverential fear of God (vv. 14–15). God saw David’s “frame” (“bones”)11 and his “substance” (“embryo”)12 in his mother’s womb before God began to form it into a fully developed body (vv. 15–16). God determined the course of David’s life before he was born (v. 16). This fact indicated God’s intention that nothing prevent David’s birth.

**Birth.** The Bible reveals that God is actively involved with the birth and delivery of children. Job claimed God “brought” him “out of the womb” (Job 10:18). David declared God “took” him “out of the womb” (Ps. 22:9). The psalmist said God “looked out of my mother’s womb” (71:6), and the apostle Paul said, “God . . . separated me from my mother’s womb” (Gal. 1:15).

**Conclusions.** God’s extremely significant relationship to human procreation, conception, development, and birth prompts several conclusions. First, God is the ultimate source (“creator or originator”)13 of all human beings. The biblical declaration “children are a heritage [“gift”14] from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward” substantiates that conclusion (Ps. 127:3).

Second, a human being is a work of God from the time of conception through birth.

Third, the willful, premeditated killing of an infant at any point from conception through birth and afterward is an attack against a work of God.

Fourth, the willful, premeditated killing of an infant at any point from conception through birth and afterward violates God’s commandment that human beings be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth.

### Definitions of Infanticide

**The Oxford English Dictionary** defines infanticide as “the custom of killing newborn infants, which prevails among savages, and was common in the ancient world.”15 It is “the crime of murdering an infant after its birth. Perpetrated by or with consent of its parents, esp. the mother.”16

**Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English Language** defines infanticide as “the killing of a newly or recently born child; the practice of killing infants; child murder.”17

#### God and Infanticide

In light of our previous conclusions, it should be obvious that God opposes infanticide. In at least two ways, the Bible reveals His opposition.

1. When the king of Egypt commanded the killing of all Hebrew, male children immediately after birth, God nullified that infanticide command by causing the Israelites to multiply in greater numbers (Ex. 1:15–22; Acts 7:19).

2. God sternly forbade the Israelites to follow the pagan, Gentile practice of offering their children as burnt sacrifices to honor and worship their false gods (Lev. 18:21). Tragically, the people of Israel and some of their kings disobeyed God and adopted this perverted practice of child sacrifice (2 Ki. 16:3; 21:6; Ps. 106:35–38; Ezek. 23:37–39).

Three factors seem to indicate that the victims of these child sacrifices were infants. First, the word translated “children” in Isaiah 57:5, which refers to the practice of “slaying the children,” was “generally used for very young children.”18 Second, the verb form of this word is strongly related to the subject of birth. Third, in a context that refers to “burnt offerings,” the question is asked, “Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Mic. 6:7). The question seems to indicate that it was primarily infants who were offered as burnt offerings to false gods.

God called child sacrifice evil and an abomination that He hates and that provokes Him to anger (Dt. 12:31; 2 Ki. 21:6; Jer. 32:35). God declared that all who sacrifice their children are an abomination to Him (Dt. 18:10–12). God required the Israelites to execute any Israelite or Gentile living in their land who gave their children for a sacrifice (Lev. 20:1–5).

Child sacrifice had the following consequences for Israel: it polluted the land, defiled those who practiced it, stirred up God’s wrath against the Israelites, caused God to abhor them, and subjected them to enemy rule and desolation (Ps. 106:38–43; Jer. 7:31–34).

Psalm 106:37–38 indicates that child sacrifice to a false god is, in reality, sacrifice to demons (evil, fallen angels who serve Satan). This practice seems to imply that demons desire child sacrifice. If so, then they probably motivate people to sacrifice children. Consequently, those who sacrifice their children or encourage their children to sacrifice themselves in order to honor or worship a “god,” are demonically motivated to honor or worship a false god.

The Bible’s revelation about God’s attitude toward child sacrifice indicates that the God of the Bible does not motivate people to sacrifice their children or encourage their children to sacrifice themselves to honor or worship Him.

#### Endnotes

1. Webster’s New World Large Print Dictionary, s.v. “procreate.”
5. Ibid., 260–61.
7. R. D. Patterson, “seter,” in Harris et al., 2:636.
14. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
19. Ibid., 378–79.

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Growing up I always loved to dance the hora, a Hebrew folk dance that was stomped to merrily while singing “Hava Nagilah.” We also danced to another Hebrew song. The words go like this: Dovid melech Yisrael chai chai v’kayam. They are usually translated “David, king of Israel, lives forever.” But they actually say, “David, king of Israel, lives, lives, and exists.”

How can he exist if he is dead? Some say the phrase merely implies that David lives in the hearts of the Jewish people. But in Psalm 23 David wrote, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (v. 6). Either David dwells today in the house of the Lord, or he was deceived by his faith in God and in life after death.

The Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4 no doubt believed as David did. In fact, she had such great faith that she even believed God would raise the dead.
Out of her wealth, generosity, and kindness, she cared for the prophet Elisha by providing meals for him in her home and then building a private room for him on the roof of her house, where he would stay when he came to town. And God rewarded her by giving her a son.

But her son created a need she never had before. When the boy was old enough to go to the fields to help his father, he was struck ill (4:19). His father told a servant, “Carry him to his mother” (v. 19). The Bible says the boy sat on his mother’s lap until noon, then died (v. 20).

It is difficult to imagine how this woman must have felt. When she had no child, she was content. She asked for nothing and needed nothing. Then God gave her the one thing she never dreamed she would have: a son to love. Then He snatched him away.

Despite this dreadful loss, the woman evidenced no emotion. She did not weep. She did not complain. She did not cry out to God and ask Him why He had visited this great tragedy on her. In fact, she did not even tell her husband.

Instead, she carried her son to Elisha’s room on the roof of her home, “laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him, and went out. Then she called to her husband, and said, ‘Please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and come back’” (vv. 21–22).

When her husband asked why she was going, all she said was “shalom,” meaning, “peace,” or “everything is okay.” She commanded her servant, “Drive, and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you” (v. 24). Their destination was Mount Carmel, about 20 miles west.

The Shunammite was on a mission: bring back Elisha. And she could have had only one reason to muster such fierce determination and strength. She believed unequivocally that God would raise her son from the dead.

When Elisha saw her coming, he sent his servant, Gehazi, to meet her. But this time was not like the others, when she spoke to Gehazi as an intermediary. This time her need was so great that she went straight to the prophet himself and fell at his feet.

“Her soul is in deep distress, and the LORD has hidden it from me, and has not told me” Elisha said (v. 27). So she said, “Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, ‘Do not deceive me?’” Then he said to Gehazi, “Get yourself ready, and take my staff in your hand, and be on your way. . . . And the mother of the child said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.” So he arose and followed her (vv. 28–30).

Gehazi arrived at the house first and realized the boy was dead. Then Elisha arrived, went to his room on the roof where the boy lay on the bed, shut the door, prayed to the Lord, and brought the child back to life (vv. 31–35). When Elisha called the woman to get her son, “she went in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; then she picked up her son and went out” (v. 37).

So ends the account. But its relevance extends far beyond Shunem. Many people claim to believe in God, but they depend on Him for nothing. They are self-sufficient, trusting in themselves. But self-sufficiency is not faith; nor does it please God. He wants God-sufficiency: “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jer. 33:3).

King David wrote, “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” (Ps. 34:8).

It is during our greatest need that God gives us the greatest opportunities to trust Him and experience His deliverance. When the Shunammite had no real need, she had no reason to seek God’s help. So God created a need to draw her close to Him, then purposely hid her tragedy from Elisha so that she would ask for help. In the end, He rewarded her incredible faith with an even greater miracle than He had blessed her with previously.

All of us have different needs. But we all have one in common: the need to be purified from sin. But before we can receive the cure, we must admit we have a problem. Before we can experience God’s cleansing, we must see our inadequacy to cleanse ourselves. And before we can receive His gift of eternal life, we must ask for it.

But such faith requires another ingredient: belief that God can raise the dead.

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Rom. 10:9).

Twenty-six years ago at Christmas-time, I understood that Jesus died in my place. Never before had I had assurance about forgiveness of sin. Jesus offered me assurance. Like King David, I wanted to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. But I struggled to believe Jesus arose from the dead. Suddenly I realized Why His death was an acceptable sacrifice: He was without sin because He was God (Mic. 5:2). Isaiah had foretold Jesus’ death and resurrection 700 years before Jesus was born (Isa. 53). God can do anything, even rise from the dead.

The Shunammite woman never doubted that God would bring her son back to life. And if she believed God would do that for her, why is it so difficult for so many today to believe that He loves them enough to come to Earth to become their final sacrifice for sin, so they can have everlasting life?

I was overjoyed when I realized the truth about chai, chai, v’kayam—wonderful words that testify to life after death. When you die, you die. But when you’re dead, you’re still not dead. God affirmed that the patriarchs are alive when He told Moses at the burning bush, “I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex. 3:6). He is the God of the living, not the dead.

Today the Shunammite dwells with David and the patriarchs in the house of the Lord. Someday she will receive a new, immortal, resurrected body. And someday, so will I.

Lorna Simcox is senior editor for The Friends of Israel.
UN cooperated with Hezbollah

The father of an Israeli soldier abducted and killed in 2000 says he has proof the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) filmed the kidnapping, sold the film to Hezbollah, and then denied everything.

Arutz-7 reported that the film shows Hezbollah terrorists training and then kidnapping Avi Avitan, abducted with Omar Souad and Benny Avraham in October 2000 along the Israel-Lebanon border. The men’s bodies were returned to Israel for burial in 2004.

Arutz-7 reported that Avitan’s father said a UNIFIL member filmed the kidnappings and sold the film to Hezbollah terrorists. Avraham’s father said Hezbollah murdered the soldiers in cold blood.

At first the UN denied the film existed but later admitted the truth.

More rockets

Arutz-7—Two extra-powerful Hamas rockets fired from Gaza hit Sderot, wounding a female soldier. Hamas said it will fire Kassam rockets deeper into Israel than ever before. “First they will hit Ashkelon,” said a Hamas spokesman, “and then we will act to ensure that they go farther than that.”

“We carefully tracked what Hezbollah did,” he said. “The bottom line is that there are some positive points that we must follow, such as the... secrecy with which they surprised the enemy, and the gradual escalation of their clash with the enemy; they did not show all their capabilities at the start. At the same time, we must take into account that the Palestinian resistance [terrorism] was more imaginative than the Lebanese—and despite the fact that it operates under fire, it had great achievements and was able to kidnap [Israeli] soldiers from within their tanks and fortifications.” (Based on Palestinian Media Watch)

Raid nabs terror money

Arutz-7—Israeli forces raided a bank in Shechem recently and confiscated computers, telephones, documents, and receipts that formed part of an operation that funneled foreign money to terrorists.

A Hamas member arrested earlier said the money was transferred from Syria and Lebanon to Hamas and Islamic Jihad via Arab money-changers in Judea and Samaria.

Dr. Martin Sherman of Hebrew University told Arutz-7 that Hamas mixes charity funds and terrorism monies in the same bank accounts. He said that throughout the world, “it is known that Hamas and Hezbollah receive their money from transatlantic drug deals, based in South America. The money goes to support families of terrorists who committed suicide attacks.” It also pays for training and attacks, including arms and explosives.

No to Red Cross

Arutz-7—Hamas still refuses to let the Red Cross visit Israelis in captivity, but Arab terrorist prisoners in Israeli receive weekly visits from their families.

The International Committee of the Red Cross reported that it visited the three captured Hezbollah terrorists being held in Israel, but no Israeli prisoners held by terrorists. The organization made no mention of any efforts to see Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser, being held by Hezbollah in an undisclosed location. Neither has it met with Cpl. Gilad Shalit, a prisoner of Hamas in Gaza. Hamas has rejected a Red Cross appeal to permit its representatives to visit him to ascertain his condition. But Israel has allowed the Red Cross to visit the terrorists.

Glass road laid

Jerusalem Post Internet Edition—A new road surface about two inches deep and made with recycled glass mixed with asphalt was to be laid in Holon, following lab research at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology that shows it is as effective as conventional pavement.

Twenty tons of ground-up waste glass were to be mixed with 400 tons of asphalt to comprise the upper layer. The glass-asphalt mixture was found in experiments to function well in all types of weather and heavy traffic. Up to 10 percent of the surface can be made of glass, researchers said.
**The Palestinian ‘Wag the Dog’**

The master control room of Al Manar, a Hezbollah-owned TV station. It was created in 1991 for the psychological war against Israel by...  

So you think you’re watching real events every time you tune into the news and see Palestinians fighting a war with Israel? Think again. Much of what you’re seeing is the Arab version of the Dustin Hoffman film *Wag the Dog*. Someone needed a conflict, and a movie producer obliged.  

In a recent article that ran in the *National Review Online*, respected journalist Tom Gross wrote: “CNN senior international correspondent Nic Robertson admitted that his anti-Israel report from Beirut on July 18 about civilian casualties in Lebanon was stage-managed from start to finish by Hezbollah. He revealed that his story was heavily influenced by Hezbollah’s ‘press officer’ and that Hezbollah have ‘very, very sophisticated and slick media operations.’”  

In fact, an 18-minute online video titled *Pallywood* (short for “Palestinian Hollywood”) shows how Arab film crews—complete with sets, directors, and all the fixings—fake Israeli attacks and peddle the film to the Western media. Absent from the footage, of course, are any Israelis.  

Although Gross never mentions *Pallywood*, he had plenty to say about media manipulation:  

“When pressed a few days later about his reporting on the CNN program *Reliable Sources*, Robertson acknowledged that Hezbollah militants had instructed the CNN camera team where and what to film. Hezbollah ‘had control of the situation’, Robertson said. ‘They designated the places that we went to, and we certainly didn’t have time to go into the houses or lift up the rubble to see what was underneath.’ Robertson added that Hezbollah has ‘very, very good control over its areas in the south of Beirut. They deny journalists access into those areas. You don’t get in there without their permission.’”  

Wrote Gross: “Robertson is not the only foreign journalist to have misled viewers with selected footage from Beirut. NBC’s Richard Engel, CBS’s Elizabeth Palmer, and a host of European and other networks, were also taken around the damaged areas by Hezbollah minders. Palmer commented on her report that ‘Hezbollah is also determined that outsiders will only see what it wants them to see.’”  

One reason some journalists allow themselves to be manipulated is because there is no freedom of the press in Arab countries. If you print something the Arabs don’t like, you may pay for it with your life.  

“Another journalist let the cat out of the bag last week,” Gross wrote. “Writing on his blog while reporting from southern Lebanon, *Time* contributor Christopher Allbritton, casually mentioned in the middle of a posting: ‘To the south, along the curve of the coast, Hezbollah is launching Katyushas, but I’m loathe to say too much about them. The Party of God has a copy of every journalist’s passport, and they’ve already hassled a number of us and threatened one.’”  

The lesson for the West is that you can’t believe everything you see on TV, even if someone calls it news.  

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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.  

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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 Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved* (Ps. 55:22).  

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ISRAEL MY GLORY  

64.6  

41
Living in Israel, we know what it means to fight for our lives. For 2,000 years my people dreamed of returning to Eretz Yisrael; and in the 1948 War of Independence, God answered our prayers. For 2,000 years we prayed “Next year in Jerusalem.” And in the 1967 Six-Day War, God gave us back our holy city.

But winning did not come easily. We paid with our blood. I was in the army, and I saw our enemies come against us like the mighty locusts of Egypt, certain they would cast us into the sea. But God was on our side.

Now we are at war again. This is a hard life to live. But as we say here, truth conquers all things. We are not like our enemies, who do not value human beings. They try to show the world how “good” they are, and how “cruel” Israel is, by sending their own children as suicide bombers to kill us. They do not tell the world that for each son they send, they receive $10,000.

But we know that they live in deep darkness. Where there is no faith, there is hate. I have lived in Israel 58 years. For 32 years I have lived in the same neighborhood. Many of my neighbors are Arabs. We used to be friendly and have long conversations. But they have been taught to think only of revenge, and today they come to me with great hatred. “Our day is coming,” one told me recently. “We are such a great majority, and you are nothing more than a little worm.”

“You are right,” I replied. “We are a poor, little worm. But we are not forsaken.” I read to them from Psalm 124, where it is written, “If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive” (vv. 2–3).

“Of course we know!” they all answered. I had an Arabic Bible with me, so I opened it to Deuteronomy 7:17 and handed it to the sheik. “Now read!” I told him. “Read loud enough so all your friends can hear!”

There it is written,

If you should say in your heart, “These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?”—you shall not be afraid of them, but you shall remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and the wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. Moreover the LORD your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left, who hide themselves from you, are destroyed (vv. 17–20).

He began to read. But when he saw what was written, he grew quiet and told the others, “This is not for you.” But they were interested and wanted to know why their sheik was afraid to read. Someone took the Bible out of his hands and began to read loudly.

The sheik told him, “Have a good look and see if this Bible is an Israeli forgery.” So they looked, and one replied, “No, this is the true Bible.”

“Speak to them in their own language, I asked, “Do you know what is written in the Bible?”

The aftermath of a Palestinian suicide bombing in a fast-food restaurant in Tel Aviv (Uriel Sinai/Getty Images).
So I started from the beginning. I explained that Abraham lived about 2,700 years before Muhammad and that Genesis was written more than 2,000 years before the Qur'an. “So how could Abraham have been a Muslim?” I asked.

You must go slowly with such people, step by step. This information was new to them. At first there was much shouting. They even wanted to beat me up. But as it is written in 2 Timothy 2:24–25, “A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.”

Finally they asked me how I came to know the Lord Jesus, particularly because I am Jewish. So in the end, God gave me a wonderful opportunity to teach them the truth about Him and His salvation. They listened, and we had a long conversation.

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