More Than a Prophet
book Ad
(Waveline)
IN THIS ISSUE

The Tyranny of Minority Rule
by Elwood McQuaid

What’s wrong with calling America a “Judeo-Christian” nation? “Everything,” say some people whose voices grow stronger every day.

Joshua: Profile in Courage
by Bruce Scott

Sometimes the odds aren’t in our favor. But when it comes to God’s work, the “odds” don’t matter. Joshua learned what really counts.

How Big Is Your God?
by Peter Colón

Who hasn’t heard of the Battle of Jericho? This article takes a fresh look at that amazing victory and the powerful God who won it.

The Consequences of Spiritual Failure
by Herb Hirt

Although God promised success, the Israelites suffered a crushing defeat at Ai. Explore the reasons for such failure—both then and now.

Joshua’s Farewell
by Thomas C. Simcox

In a touching goodbye, Joshua reviewed Israel’s history and issued both a warning and a challenge that are still relevant today.

TIME TO RENEW?

Check the mailing label on the back cover of this magazine. The date in the upper right corner of the label indicates the end of your current subscription.

Call during business hours 8 A.M. to 9 P.M. (Eastern time) 800-345-8461

Subscription Rates:
USA: $16.95 for 1 year, $25.95 for 2 years
Overseas: $19.95 for 1 year, $31.95 for 2 years
(U.S. dollars only) Single copies $4 each
Canada: $21.95 CAD for 1 year, $31.95 CAD for 2 years

Israel My Glory is also available in Spanish.

ABOUT THE COVER

Nestled between the twin mounts of Ebal and Gerizim is the town of Nablus (ancient Shechem). It was on the slopes of these mountains that the children of Israel gathered, after Joshua brought them into the land, to recite the blessings and curses dictated by the Lord to Moses. Obedience with peace and prosperity, or rebellion with anguish and chastisement—these were their choices. Centuries later, those choices are still very much in view. (Richard T. Nowitz/Corbis)

ALSO FEATURING

From Bill Sutter’s Desk .......................... 4
Editorial ........................................... 6
David Bar-Illan .................................... 7
Caleb’s Enduring Faith ............................ 17
The Book of Nahum .............................. 26
Eye on the Middle East ......................... 29
The Foundations of Faith ....................... 30
An Evangelical View of the Jewish People .. 33
The Crescent and the Cradle ................... 34
They Cry in Silence ............................. 36
Women of the Bible ............................ 38
Israel in the News ................................ 40
Zvi ............................................. 42

To contact us, call 856-853-5590 or 800-257-7843.
We’ve redesigned our Web store!
There’s never been a better time to visit www.foi.org.

NOTE: No materials contained in this magazine may be reproduced in any form without the permission of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc. For all permissions, please write to Mrs. Vera Bowker, The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08039.

Israel My Glory (ISSN 8755-402X) is published bimonthly for $16.95 per year by The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1170 Almonesson Road, Deptford Township, Westville, New Jersey 08093. Periodicals postage paid at Westville, NJ, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Israel My Glory, P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08039-9900.

Tune in to The Jerusalem Post’s weekly interview with Elwood McQuaid on “Holy Land with Elwood McQuaid” at jpost.com. And don’t forget, you can listen to our broadcast each day, hosted by Elwood McQuaid, on foi.org/radio.

© Copyright 2004 The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA by Waveline Direct.
The continued, self-inflicted decline of mainline Protestant denominations was rarely more evident than during 2003.

While awaiting a flight at the Denver, Colorado, airport in May, a headline from The Denver Post captured my attention: “Opening service unites Presbyterians.” Eric Gorski, the newspaper’s religion writer, was reporting the start of the weeklong, 215th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) being held at the Colorado Convention Center.

Rev. Fahed Abu-Akel, the first Arab-American to lead a major denomination, played a key role in the service, completing his year as assembly moderator. In a burst of anti-Israel rhetoric, this Presbyterian leader addressed the assembly.

Gorski wrote, “He said Palestinian Muslims and Christians need to forgive Israeli Jews for conquering them and taking their land, and Israeli Jews need to refrain from violence and recognize lasting peace hinges on both parties having peace.”

In total disregard of the facts, Rev. Abu-Akel chose to depict Israelis as the violent conquerors of the Middle East who are victimizing their peace-loving, Palestinian neighbors.

My initial reaction was to marvel that the leadership of the Presbyterian Church (USA) would be so publicly bent on hastening the exodus of people from its pews. History bears witness that truth-seeking churchgoers will not sit indefinitely under clergy who consistently spin national and international events according to the dictates of political and theological liberalism. Presbyterian congregants have a vote, albeit a different type of vote, than that of their convention delegates. They vote with their feet.

According to PCUSA statistics, it has lost 328,437 members over the past ten years, or 11.8 percent of its congregants. Although not everyone left because of liberal theology, sociology professor Ken Sanchagrin told The New York Times, “When I looked at those [churches] that were declining, most were moderate or liberal churches. And the more liberal the denomination, . . . the more they were losing.”

A second bombshell detonated in August, this time at the triennial general convention of the Episcopal Church, USA (ECUSA). At the center of this explosion was the convention’s vote to approve the election of V. Gene Robinson as bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire. Robinson is an active homosexual. In a further assault on biblical standards, the convention officially sanctioned same-sex unions.

Headlines about these events ranged from “Formally Heretical” (World, 8/16/03) to “A House Divided” (Time, 8/18/03) to “Gays Force the Issue” (U.S. News and World Report, 8/18-25/03).

Conservative ECUSA leaders, including clergy delegate Kendall Harmon from the Diocese of South Carolina, fought unsuccessfully on the side of biblical orthodoxy. Harmon, editor of the Anglican Digest, summarized the significance of the convention’s actions: “A major line was crossed,” he said. ECUSA “is now formally heretical in its teaching about the family.”

Opinions vary on the future of the ECUSA and its larger and more conservative international body, the Anglican Communion. However, it is clear that the membership losses the ECUSA has experienced in recent decades will persist. In the 1990s, the Episcopal Church shrunk by 5.3 percent.

Yet the problem here is not the ECUSA’s loss of members or its divisions and splits. The real tragedy is that a major “Christian” denomination can so officially disregard the Bible and so flagrantly violate God’s standards.

A friend of mine told me recently she used to attend a large ECUSA church in South Jersey until the wife of the former minister told her one day, “I don’t believe in God. And Father [the presiding minister] doesn’t either. I’m very sure of that.” My friend said she left and never turned back.

God will surely hold these leaders accountable for supplanting the authority of His Word with the quicksand of political correctness.

As we enter the new year, we may find it increasingly unpopular to support Israel. But God’s Word is clear, and His way has never been popular. The Friends of Israel has consistently proclaimed the glorious, “unpopular” truth of the Bible throughout its worldwide ministries for sixty-five years. And with this issue of Israel My Glory, you will see how God loved the Jewish people years ago—just as He loves them today.

Our prayer is that God’s truth about His people and His standards of righteousness will fill your life—for His glory.

William E. Sutter is the executive director of The Friends of Israel.
Ryrie Study Bible Ad
(Waveline)
A New Kind of War in a New Kind of World

Talk to most people over sixty and you’re apt to detect an air of nostalgia in the conversation after a while. References to “the good old days” bore younger listeners to tears but are rewarded by nods of agreement from elderly contemporaries.

What is really at issue is the fact that those “good old days” were lived in a different world from the one we now inhabit. And though some elements are better forgotten than remembered, there are aspects whose passing we can justifiably lament—among them the stability and security of living in a predictable society. One knew how things were supposed to be; and, most of the time, that’s how they were.

For example, when America was forced to go to war, the objective was victory. Armies fought armies until one side surrendered. “Unconditional surrender,” in fact, was the national watchword in the conflict we know as World War II.

The extent to which things have changed can be seen in the current situation in Iraq. Today a nation with superior technology and weaponry can, in a matter of weeks, pound an aggressor into submission with negligible casualties. But then a second front opens, and the fight continues. The enemy’s objective in this guerrilla phase is to drag out the conflict, up the casualty count, and break the will of the victors and the nations they represent.

Thus, when all is said and done, the basic question is, Which of the combatants have the will to finish what brought them into the field in the first place?

President George W. Bush is correct in saying that Iraq has been chosen by the enemies of democracy and the West as the arena to stage a fight to the finish. Osama bin Laden and his ilk have confidently taken a stand—one based on the conduct of American leaders after such tragedies as the loss of some 240 U.S. marines in a suicide bombing in Beirut and the death and humiliation of U.S. troops in Somalia. The enemy’s premise is that, after a significant number of casualties, America will cut and run. Islamists bent on global domination have poured terrorists into Iraq to make that happen.

What many politicians and liberals in the United States and Europe have unfortunately missed is that (1) this war involves a monumental clash of cultures; and (2) if we fail to win in this theater, the ramifications will be global and the consequences will visit the cities and streets of America and Europe.

While wishful thinkers somnambulate in a state of self-induced, disorienting denial, the conflict broadens. And make no mistake, it is about religion and the desire of fanatical Islamists to dominate and rule over democracies in what they perceive is the decadent and weak-willed West.

The proof lies in what secularists choose to ignore and fail to acknowledge or address with any degree of sympathy, namely, the relentless and deadly war Muslims are waging against Christians in a host of countries where the casualties have mounted in genocidal numbers. The most ever said is that Christians are being slaughtered in areas experiencing “civil conflict.”

Apply this mentality to what is taking place in Iraq and the Middle East and the issues are reduced to costs, casualties, cynical assertions about unscrupulous political motives, and foolhardy suggestions that appeasement and a quick withdrawal can save the day. It is delusional thinking; and it fails to calculate the endgame or consider why we are in the war at all.

Meanwhile, the perpetrators of terror watch and listen and are led to believe that it’s just a matter of time before they’ll win.

So, yes, this is a new kind of war. And, yes, we do live in a new kind of world. And, yes, neither is it pleasant or filled with short-term solutions. At the moment, millions of Christians, along with their fellow countrymen, prefer to see life through rose-colored glasses or take a heads-in-the-sand approach to problems that offer no easy solutions. But this is the type of world we inhabit.

If the Lord does not intervene, will a future generation of over-sixties folk look back on these as “the good old days”? That’s an interesting question.
I
n 1998 David Bar-Illan was the policy and planning director for the administration of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel. He also was a primary spokesman for the prime minister. Below are portions of an interview Elwood McQuaid conducted then with Mr. Bar-Illan, whose brilliant insight and consistent courage will be sorely missed.

EMQ: The two words that we are hearing consistently from Mr. Netanyahu and yourself are security and reciprocity. You’ve talked about security, but many people do not seem to understand why this insistence in the absolute of reciprocity.

DB: That’s precisely what is at issue. If the Palestinian state is created and remains dedicated to destroying the State of Israel, then we are allowing an entity to become dangerous to us. As I said before, they are right across the street from us. Our country is very small—about the size of New Jersey. It is totally unacceptable to have in our midst a fully sovereign state that can develop a large army and equip it with heavy weapons, tanks, planes, and canons, not to mention nonconventional arms. A sovereign entity that can make pacts with such regimes as Iraq and Iran, which are avowedly dedicated to the destruction of Israel, must not be allowed to be our neighbor. It is like allowing a fifth column, a Trojan horse, to grow up among us without any kind of control. Such a state would be able to regulate our water sources and invade our air space. It would be impossible to insure Israel’s survival under such circumstances. So we want the Palestinian entity to become as independent as possible, as long as it does not threaten our security.

EMQ: What impact do you think it would have on the peace process if the United States carried through on the decision of the Congress to move its embassy to Jerusalem? Would it make a difference in the peace process? How important is this embassy matter after all?

DB: It’s extremely important. First of all, it is really quite disconcerting that it hasn’t been done already. Did you know that Israel is the only country in the world that doesn’t seem to be able to designate its own capital? In every other nation, the American embassy is located in the capital designated by that country. Our capital is Jerusalem. It has not been a capital of any other nation for the past 3,000 years. For the past 3,000 years it has only been the capital of the Jewish people. Even when they did not have sovereignty or control over the area, they considered Jerusalem their only capital. In fact, there is no parallel in history to the attachment between the Jewish people and Jerusalem.

From a purely political point of view, it would be advisable to move the American embassy to Jerusalem. We

Continued on page 43

REMEMBERING
David Bar-Illan

The loss of men possessing character, integrity, and rare talents inevitably leaves a void that is seldom filled by others of equal stature. That can be said with certainty about David Bar-Illan, who passed away late last year in Jerusalem.

I first met David when he served as editor-in-chief of The Jerusalem Post. He left the newspaper in 1996 to become director of communications and policy planning under former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. David’s insights on international affairs and his superb critiques of the secular media’s failures set a new standard for journalism.

Of immense importance to me as an evangelical Christian was that his door was always open for extended conversations on critical issues affecting Christians and our relationship to Israeli leaders.

Of particular importance was David’s leadership in preventing a harmful bill from reaching the Knesset floor. The bill would have restricted Christians from expressing their faith in Israel.

For his friendship, understanding, and bond in the belief of Israel’s God-given right to possess the land promised to the children of Abraham, we are grateful. An example of David Bar-Illan’s insights can be seen in the adjacent article, excerpted from an interview we did while he served in the government.

Elwood McQuaid
On September 20, 2003, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell told a group at the UN in New York that the United States is a “Judeo-Christian” country. Immediately Powell felt compelled to amend his statement by saying America is “a country of many faiths.” Scratch Judeo-Christian and insert country of many faiths. This qualification put the secretary back on the politically correct side of the ledger, and that was that. Or was it?

Powell’s obvious slip of the tongue and his quick attempt to rectify it demonstrate the administration’s prevailing mood of indecisiveness and its penchant to appease the rabid minorities that are fast calling the shots for the rest of us in the “land of the free.”

What is wrong with referring to America as a Judeo-Christian country? After all, the basis of our traditional concepts of law, morality, civility, and social order have been rooted in Judeo-Christian principles and ethics, and then translated into personal lifestyles and community mores. For more than two centuries the international community referred to the United States as a “Christian nation.” And though it may not have been accurate in the most biblical sense of the term, no one seemed to object.

Who takes to the streets in Muslim countries with the expressed intent of wiping the landscape clean of Muhammad’s visage? And who lambastes Islamic representatives at the UN for saying, “Ours is a Muslim country”? Not once has a Muslim recanted with “Uh-h-h, check that. Ours is a country of many faiths.”

When the Minority Rules

For decades Americans have stood silently by while a fundamental change has transpired. Our democratic dictum, “the majority rules,” is rapidly sliding by the boards. The fashion now is becoming “the minority rules.”

And a militant minority of rabid radicals who detest what America is all about is racking up an impressive series of victories mandated by judges and legislators who march in lockstep with it. Directly in the line of fire of this minority of malcontents are—you guessed it—Judeo-Christian commitments.

When the first volleys discharged over the issue of prayer in school, a story began making the rounds. A sixth grade teacher saw a group of boys in a circle on their knees at the back of the classroom. She immediately summoned her assistant to ask what was going on.

“Oh, the boys are shooting dice.”

“That’s a relief,” said the teacher.

“Check Those Pencils at the Door

In April 1998, 4-year-old Daniel entered his New Jersey kindergarten with a fistful of pencils. It was party day, and all of the children had brought treats.
and gifts to share with their classmates. When the teacher saw the inscription on Daniel’s pencils, she promptly confiscated the lot of them. His mother, chaperoning the event, asked why they were taken. She was informed that materials bearing a religious message were prohibited in the classroom.

When Mrs. Walz appealed to the principal, she was told Daniel’s pencils could only be distributed during noninstructional time because the school did not want to be held responsible for endorsing Christianity.

A court case ensued and was argued before the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The panel ruled in favor of the school. The subversively offensive message on 4-year-old Daniel’s pencils: “Jesus loves the little children,” with a heart symbol substituted for the word love.

Giving Moses the Gate

In a much-celebrated case in Alabama last year, Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore was suspended for defying a court order to remove a 5,300-pound monument of the Ten Commandments from the rotunda of the Alabama Supreme Court building. Although attacks on displaying the Ten Commandments in classrooms and public places have become common in the United States, this case contained elements of particular interest.

Judge Roy Moore was a duly appointed Alabama Supreme Court chief justice. He contended the monument did not violate the First Amendment—and even some who opposed him agreed. This fact, however, did not deter his opponents or Montgomery Circuit Judge Charles Price, who ruled Judge Moore’s display of the Ten Commandments unconstitutional.

Predictably, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) heralded the ruling as a great victory for the Constitution and rule of law. The ACLU was also elated that Judge Price’s ruling came on the heels of his earlier verdict that all state-sponsored courtroom prayer in Alabama must immediately “cease and desist.” Apparently nonsectarian prayer for justice and equity is out of order in the courtrooms of Alabama.

Evangelicals came down on both sides of the issue. While Focus on the Family’s James Dobson said the fight is about “an unelected, non-accountable, arrogant, imperialistic judiciary determined to shove their beliefs down our throats,” others disagreed. Pat Robertson, chairman of the Christian Broadcasting Network, stated, “The tactics used by Judge Moore have just not been well advised in my opinion.”

Tactics aside, the point is that militant minorities are on a crusade to destroy the underpinnings of our Judeo-Christian heritage.

In the end, Judge Moore’s magnificent monument was shunted off to an obscure room adjacent to a janitorial closet—which may say a great deal about what this struggle is all about.

Someone asked why it would not be equally appropriate to display texts from the Qur’an in American courthouses. Because America is not Arabia. And though many naive Americans may not recognize the difference, Islamic Sharia law, based on the Qur’an, is the stuff of insufferable agonies endured by non-Muslims in Sudan, Afghanistan, and other Islamist regimes. It has no compatibility.
Equal Justice Under the Law?

Last July, Federal Judge Napoleon Jones, Jr. ruled that the Boy Scouts of America’s lease of an 18-acre tract in Balboa Park, California, violates the provisions of the U.S. and state constitutions governing the separation of church and state and is, therefore, unconstitutional.

The judge’s ruling voided a 50-year, dollar-a-year lease on the property. That the Scouts used its own money to construct and maintain Camp Balboa; build nine campsites; bring water to the property; and build a swimming pool, parking lot, restrooms, and showers was of no consequence to the judge.

The organization’s major transgression, in the eyes of Judge Jones: its requirement that scouts express a belief in a Supreme Being. The Boy Scouts, therefore, was deemed a religious organization—a church, if you please. After all, the Scouts used public land—an absolute anathema in the eyes of left-wing purists.

Around the same time, the Muslim Youth Camps of America (MYCA) was granted a lease on federal property in North Liberty, Iowa, by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The former Girl Scout camp will feature a mosque, minaret, and a 17,500-square-foot convention center.

In response to a flood of objections within the community, the Corp of Engineers said MYCA director, Jalel Aossey, has already cleared an FBI background check. One wonders why a background check on an Islamic leader would be any more satisfactory than a check on Boy Scouts of America officials. But no matter, Muslims seem to have an unfair advantage over organizations that have been an integral part of the American scene for decades.

Eco-Terrorism

According to the FBI, groups calling themselves the Animal Liberation Front and Earth Liberation Front (ELF) staged six hundred clandestine attacks on property between 1996 and 2001, causing $43 million in damage. Criminal justice professor Gary Perlstein, who has studied domestic terrorism for twenty-five years, noted that ELF has progressed from logging issues in the Pacific Northwest to attacking urban sprawl and gas-guzzling SUVs. MSNBC reported that in the last year, supporters have torched or attempted to torch several new homes, fast-food restaurants, and SUVs in the Midwest and East Coast.

To these hysterical, self-anointed guardians of the environment, humans are the lowest and most dangerous species in the “animal” chain. Accordingly, these fringe elements are attempting to mandate what we eat, where we live, what we can drive, and what sources of energy we will be granted permission to develop.

These pluralistic mutations unite in one way or another with the secularist spirit that fuels the anti-Christian, anti-God, minority-rules mentality that is rapidly shredding the fabric of American life.

Abortion is now an enshrined “right” that constitutes the litmus test for virtually every aspirant to public office or the judiciary. Same-sex marriage is approaching equal status with heterosexual unions. And public objections to the phenomenon are increasingly categorized as potential “hate crimes.”

The furor over removing the words Under God from the pledge of allegiance is symptomatic of the relentless war on the rights of Christian public expression. Freedom of expression is routinely denied or challenged in every venue, from invoking the name of Jesus in a presidential inaugural prayer to mentioning God in a high school valedictorian address to Daniel sharing his pencils in kindergarten.

At present we have a mixed bag of prayer before congressional sessions, the words In God We Trust on our currency, and the singing of “God Bless America” at public functions. But make no mistake about it: The militant anti-Judeo-Christian forces will not rest until every evidence of the foundation upon which this country was built is destroyed.

We have often referred to the present war on terror as an all-out fight to the finish. This is a war of another kind, but a war nonetheless. It is an all-out clash of cultures, and there will be winners and losers. This conflict is not fought in the streets with guns and grenades. But in the final analysis, the stakes are the same: our individual freedoms, democratic governance, and majority rule. Will a focused minority strip us of these and win in imposing its will on the majority of citizens who unfortunately were too distracted or indifferent to care until it was too late?

The process is nothing new. It has recurred time and time again over the course of history. And it inevitably will continue as long as societies accumulate enough wealth, power, prestige, and honor to make them worth captivating or conquering.

For discerning Christians, this should be a word in season. Hallmarks of the last days, we are told, are international chaos and spiritual apostasy. That so few seem to pay attention is also a sign of the times. Perhaps the best description of the prevailing situation in America and the majority of Western countries is found in Christ’s message to believers at Laodicea in chapter 3 of the Book of the Revelation.

Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (3:17).

Their problem was not material deprivation. It was a lack of spiritual comprehension—the inability to make right choices and serve, wholeheartedly, the right Master. The problem for this generation of Christians is the same; and so are the solutions.

Elwood McQuaid is editor-in-chief for The Friends of Israel.
By the end of May 1967, Israel was surrounded by 250,000 enemy soldiers, two thousand tanks, and seven hundred jetfighters. Egypt had closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Syria was bombarding the Galilee with heavy cannon fire, as it had for nineteen years. And Jordan had expelled all Jews from Judea and Samaria.

Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser told his parliament, “The problem presently before the Arab countries is not whether the port of...
Eilat should be blockaded or how to blockade it—but how totally to exterminate the State of Israel for all time.”

Outgunned and outnumbered, Israel faced annihilation.

Despite the odds, however, Israel fought courageously. The result was breathtaking. In what became known as the Six-Day War, Israel completely overwhelmed her enemies. A few weeks later, then-General Yitzhak Rabin reflected, “Our soldiers in various branches of the Israel Defence [sic] Forces who overcame our enemies everywhere, despite the superior numbers and fortifications—all of them revealed not only coolness and courage in battle but a burning faith in the justice of their cause. . . . This army . . . prevails over all enemies by virtue of its moral and spiritual strength.”

More than 3,300 years earlier, another Jewish general also faced superior forces, plus giants and fortified cities (Num. 13:28). Moses had just died. Encamped on the eastern side of the Jordan River, the sorrowing congregation waited to see what stuff Joshua was made of. It was then God reminded this general that true courage is not grounded on human foundations, but on the promises of God.

**Joshua’s Commission**

Originally named Hoshea (Num. 13:8) like the prophet Hosea, Joshua was the son of Nun, an Ephraimite. Moses changed Hoshea (“salvation”) to Joshua (“Yahweh is salvation”), a name that praises God as the true source of deliverance (Num. 13:16).

God had been preparing Joshua for leadership for many years. As a young man, he served the prophet Moses (Ex. 33:11). It was Joshua whom Moses assigned to lead the attack on Amalek (Ex. 17:9–10, 13). Joshua also accompanied Moses partway up the mountain when Moses received the original stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments (Ex. 24:13).

Before the Tabernacle was constructed, Moses pitched a tent outside the camp of Israel and met with God there (Ex. 33:7). Joshua stayed close by and would not depart from the tent, even after Moses returned to the camp (Ex. 33:11). On another occasion, when others in the camp prophesied, Joshua was jealous for Moses’ reputation (Num. 11:28).

But young Joshua is probably best remembered for his profound faith in God. He was among the twelve spies sent from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land of Canaan, and only he and Caleb returned with a good report (Num. 13—14). Consequently, God rewarded them for having “wholly followed the LORD” (Num. 32:12). Forty years later they were the only two people who were twenty or older at Kadesh-barnea who lived to enter the Promised Land.

All these events prepared Joshua for what God had in store for him. Shortly before he died, Moses himself asked God to appoint a leader for Israel (Num. 27:15–17). God chose Joshua, “a man in whom is the Spirit” (v. 18).

God actually commissioned Joshua more than once. In Numbers 27, Moses publicly laid his hands on Joshua, signifying identification as well as the transference of authority and wisdom (v. 23; Dt. 34:9). Moses then publicly exhorted Joshua to lead the congregation into the Promised Land (Dt. 31:7–8). Finally, in Moses’ presence, God Himself commissioned Joshua at the Tabernacle (Dt. 31:14, 23).

Joshua’s call carried great responsibility. He was to lead the people into the Promised Land (Dt. 3:28), apportion it as an inheritance to nine and one-half tribes on the western side of the Jordan River, and insure that the two and one-half tribes on the eastern side helped in the fight (Num. 32:20–21). It is no wonder Joshua was commanded no fewer than six times to “be strong and of good courage” (Dt. 31:7, 23; Josh. 1:6–7, 9, 18).

Yet it is one thing to be told to have courage and quite another to possess it. Joshua’s courage was not predicated on wishful or positive thinking. It was predicated on the immutable promises of God.

**Courage for the Journey**

No one who fights God’s battles goes it alone. Moses pointed to the defeat of the two Amorite kings as a demonstration of what God could do to all the Canaanite kingdoms. He admonished Joshua not to be afraid, “for the LORD your God shall fight for you” (Dt. 3:22); and he promised that God would precede Joshua into the Promised Land, be with him, and not fail or forsake him (Dt. 31:8).

The Lord Himself also bolstered Joshua, promising, “I will be with thee” (Dt. 31:23). When God is with you, nothing more is necessary. Joshua understood that fact and must have felt greatly encouraged.

In Joshua 1, however, Joshua’s situation changed. Moses was dead. The mourning period was over. And the mantle of leadership had passed to
Joshua. It was now time to act. But would he have the courage? It was then God gave to Joshua what would become the platform for his success for the rest of his life.

The Lord began by commanding Joshua to get up and get going, he and all Israel. The Promised Land was already theirs. God already had given it to them. Their possession of it depended only on how far they were willing to step out in faith (Josh. 1:2–4).

Next, Yahweh dealt with Joshua personally and directly. He gave him a succession of promises: (1) Joshua would be invincible; (2) as God was with Moses, so He would be with Joshua; and (3) God would not fail or forsake him (v. 5). Then God commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous. The basis for that courage was the surety that Joshua would be an instrument in God’s hands to fulfill the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (v. 6).

Joshua was also commanded to be especially careful in observing God’s law (v. 7). The Lord even told Joshua how to be careful:

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (v. 8).

First, Joshua was to saturate himself in God’s Word. Just as he did not depart from the tent of meeting (Ex. 33:11), so God’s Word was never to depart (same Hebrew word) from his entire being. The word mouth in 1:8 is an idiom for internalizing the Word to such a degree that it comes out of one’s mouth. Second, Joshua was to meditate on the Word all day. He was not merely to accumulate knowledge; he was to reflect on what he was putting into his mind and heart, learn from it, and apply it. Thus he would be guaranteed success.

Finally, God concluded His encouragement with a rhetorical question: “Have not I commanded thee?” (v. 9).

The question implied that with God’s command comes the resource to fulfill the command. Therefore, God has the right to command Joshua to be strong, courageous, and fearless, for the resource God provides is Himself: “for the Lord thy God is with thee wherewith thou goest” (v. 9).

**Performance With Courage**

Joshua was subsequently filled with courage because in the immediate context he began to act. He delegated responsibility (v. 10). He prepared the people (v. 11). And he followed up on his promise to remind the tribes east of the Jordan to help their brethren fight (vv. 12–15).

The tribes expressed loyalty, but with qualifications. The Israelites wanted a strong, courageous leader who evidenced God’s presence in his life: “Only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses. . . . Only be strong and of good courage” (vv. 17–18). Such qualifications would commend any godly leader in any age.

We also know that Joshua was filled with courage because of his actions throughout the rest of the book. He led the children of Israel into the Promised Land, defeated their enemies, and apportioned the land among the tribes.

He had courage, indeed; and his courage was based on the faithful Word of God. As he reminded the people of Israel years later, when an old man, “Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof” (Josh. 23:14).

**Principles of Courage**

Like Joshua, whatever personal struggles we face, whatever battles loom in our lives, we can be strong and have courage—not because we are inherently brave, but because as believers, our courage is rooted in God’s unchanging promises.

We can be strong and courageous because “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37). Jesus promised, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age [world]” (Mt. 28:20). Truly, God has promised, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5).

In our modern world of terror and uncertainty, we still can be like Joshua and fix our courage in the bedrock of the Word of God and in the certainty that whatever God calls us to, He will give us the resource to accomplish: “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Th. 5:24).

**Whatever personal struggles we face, whatever battles loom in our lives, we can be strong and have courage—not because we are inherently brave, but because as believers, our courage is rooted in God’s unchanging promises.**

---

**ENDNOTES**


Bruce Scott is a field representative with The Friends of Israel in New Hope, Minnesota.
boisterous shouts of celebration could be heard from Arabs throughout Jericho in May 1994. Delegates from the United States, Russia, Egypt, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) met in Cairo, Egypt. Bullied and coerced, Israel signed away the Gaza Strip and Jericho. It was part of a “peace agreement” to pacify her enemies. All it took was the stroke of a pen to relinquish a city that was a personal gift from God to Israel.

Jericho was a gift with an eternal message: The God who enabled the Israelites to overcome the seemingly insurmountable obstacle of Jericho in the fifteenth century B.C. is still big enough to tackle the issues of today. The city’s ancient ruins teach three vital lessons to help us face our personal Jerichos. First, only the God of Scripture is all-powerful. Second, in everything we must trust God, even when His plans don’t make sense to us. Finally, God is merciful, yet full of grace. This astonishing combination of mercy and grace assures true rest and peace to all who believe in Him.

God Knows No Obstacles

A story is told about an astronomer who had concluded his lecture about the Milky Way when a lady came up and asked him a question. “If our world is so little and the universe is so great,” she asked, “can we believe that God pays any attention to us?”

The astronomer replied, “That depends, madam, entirely on how big a God you believe in.”

Jericho was a fearsome fortress. Militarily, it was the eastern door to the conquest of Canaan. If the city could be taken, the Israelite army could advance westward from the Jordan Valley and divide the country. Once divided, the Israelites could then destroy the opposition to the south and then the north.

More than three thousand years later, the brilliant British general, Edmund H. Allenby, came to the same conclusion. He applied this ancient strategy in 1917 and the result was the liberation of Israel’s homeland in World War I.

Jericho was indeed an intimidating obstacle. But it was no match for the God of Israel. While Joshua “was by Jericho,” possibly surveying the situation, a man appeared with a sword in his hand (Josh. 5:13). The man identified himself as “captain of the host of the LORD” (v. 14).

His appearance was a Christophany, a preincarnate appearance of the Second Person of the Triune God, Jesus Christ. It is also called a theophany, a visible manifestation of God. (See page 19.)

Joshua immediately fell with his face to the ground in worship and was told to remove his sandals. The ground had become holy because of God’s presence (cf. Ex. 3:4–5).

This unique manifestation was designed to teach Joshua two truths. First, God was his Commander in Chief; and it was God’s duty alone to devise the plan to take Jericho. Clearly, Joshua acknowledged his submission as indicated by his question: “What saith my lord unto his servant?” (v. 14).

Second, Joshua was to believe in his Supreme Commander’s unlimited power and resources. As captain of the “LORD’S host” (v. 15), his Commander had an unlimited number of angels He could call into the conflict. Only the God of Scripture is referred to as El Shaddai, “God Almighty.” This name means that He is all-powerful and able to do anything consistent with His own nature.

The many Jerichos that obstruct our personal claims to God’s promises cannot stand against such an omnipotent God. The sword of the Spirit today is God’s Word (Eph. 6:17); and our commander in chief is still God, who came in the flesh—Jesus Christ. To Him alone is all power
given (Mt. 28:18). Therefore, our victory is already won. He alone saves and keeps (Heb. 12:2). What Jesus did for Joshua at Jericho, He can still accomplish today: “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

Strategy for Spiritual Warfare

The assault on Jericho would not be with the usual implements of war, such as battering rams and scaling ladders. Rather, for six days the army marched silently around the city, once each day. Seven priests, carrying and blowing their shofars (ram’s horns), walked in front of the Ark of the Covenant. On the seventh day the entire procession marched seven times around the city. Then the priests gave one long blast on their shofars, signaling the Israelites to give a mighty shout:

And it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, . . . and they took the city (6:20).

It was a strange strategy that won’t be found in any military textbook. And it reinforced Joshua’s faith in God. To make it easier for Joshua to trust Him, God told him, “See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and its king, and the mighty men of valor” (6:2).

It is possible God wanted Joshua to recall another occasion, some forty years earlier, when Moses stood by the Red Sea and told the Israelites,

Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD which he will show to you today; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace (Ex. 14:13–14).

The victory was already accomplished. All that was needed was to believe that it was so and to walk forward in faith.

Spiritual warfare cannot be fought in the flesh. It must be fought in the power of God’s Spirit (Zech. 4:6). Victory requires trusting in His power and the dependability of the whole armor of God to help us stand firm (Eph. 6:10–18). This truth contradicts the propensity of our hearts and minds. Yet God admonishes us against leaning on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5–6). We are to trust Him even when His plans appear to make no sense.

The promise is sure. The victory that overcomes the issues of this chaotic world first starts in Jesus as God’s Son and our faith in Him (1 Jn. 5:4–5): “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down” (Heb. 11:30).

An unknown author once stated,

Trust Him when dark doubts assail thee, Trust Him when thy strength is small, Trust Him when to simply trust Him, Seems the hardest thing of all, Trust Him, He is ever faithful, Trust Him, for his will is best, Trust Him, for the heart of Jesus Is the only place of rest.2

Showcase for Faithfulness

Jericho was a showcase for God’s faithfulness. The Lord keeps His promises. The ancient rabbis taught, “Had not Israel sinned, only the Torah (the Five Books of Moses) and the book of Joshua would have been given” (Talmud, Nedarim 22b). In their view, the Torah spoke of the promise, and Joshua was its fulfillment.

However, Israel failed to continue in the faith that began at Jericho. Yet God’s tender mercies are over all His works (Ps. 145:9). There’s another old Jewish saying, “The All-Merciful turns the scale of judgment towards...
mercy” (Tosefta: Sanhedrin, 13:3). In the midst of judgment and destruction, the Canaanite woman Rahab was shown mercy.

In Old Testament times the concept of God’s mercy was a source of great comfort (Ps. 40:11; 119:77). In fact, a popular refrain in the ancient Jewish liturgy was “for his mercy endureth forever” (Ps. 136).

The New Testament equivalent of mercy is grace. Jesus Christ came to save individuals from the power of sin, give eternal life, and enable believers to experience abundant life (Jn. 10:10). Only in Him is there true mercy and grace.

The conflict at Jericho teaches that though we will face many personal Jerichos, victory depends not on our own strength but on God’s power, faith, mercy, and grace. The same God who enabled the Israelites to overcome the seemingly insurmountable obstacle of Jericho is still at work through His mercy and grace in our lives today. He is big enough for any challenge:

*“Tis far, far better to let Him choose
The way that we should take:
If only we leave our lives to Him
He will guide without mistake.
We, in our blindness, would
ever choose
A pathway dark and rough,
And so we should ever find in Him,
“The God Who Is Enough.”*3

Jericho is believed to be one of the oldest cities in the world. Ironically, Jericho, along with the Gaza Strip, was the first territory given to the “Palestinians” by Israel as part of a 1994 peace agreement. PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat maintains a home in the Jericho area.

It is unfortunate that Israel was forced to give up a city so deeply rooted in sacred heritage and symbolism. Yet, despite the present circumstance, the lessons of belief, trust, and confidence in His mercy still echo from the ancient mount. The meditations of Samuel Rutherford, a seventeenth-century Scottish clergyman, are practical:

*Duties are ours, events are God’s;
when our faith goes to meddle with events, and to hold account upon God’s Providence, and beginneth to say, “How will Thou do this or that?” we lose ground; we have nothing to do there; it is our part to let the Almighty exercise His own office, and steer His own helm; there is nothing left for us, but to see how we may be approved of Him, and how we roll the weight of our weak souls upon Him who is God omnipotent.*4

---

**ENDNOTES**


2 “Trust Him,” [www.bible.org/illus/t/t-83.htm](http://www.bible.org/illus/t/t-83.htm).


---

Peter Colón is the Southeastern States director for The Friends of Israel.

---

**Archaeology Confirms the Walls ‘Fell Flat’**

In 1997 two Italian archaeologists hired by the Palestinian Department of Archaeology excavated for one month at ancient Jericho. Their conclusion was not surprising, considering who hired them: No evidence supports the Jewish conquest of Jericho. But information gathered from previous digs not only contradicts these claims but also verifies the truth of Joshua 6.

Joshua sent two spies to gather information about the land of Canaan and Jericho in particular (Josh. 2:1). When they returned, they would have told him that Jericho was centered amid a beautiful, vast grove of palm trees, covering about 8.5 acres.

Surrounding the entire city was an enormous earthen embankment with huge, stone retaining walls at its base. At the top of the embankment stood a colossal, 46-foot-high mud-brick wall. The houses were actually built on those massive, thick walls.

Extraordinary archaeological discoveries have been made at Jericho. The Bible says the walls “fell down flat” (6:20). Piles of mud bricks from the collapsed wall were found in 1997, confirming the walls were not destroyed by a battering ram, but that they collapsed. The Bible also says the entire city and everything in it was burned (v. 24). A layer of ash three feet thick with remnants of burnt timbers and debris was found.

Of particular interest to excavators was that Jericho showed no signs of having been plundered. The Israelites were under strict orders not to take anything from the city (v. 18). Among the destroyed buildings were found many large jars full of charred grain. Normally, ancient conquerors carried off grain as spoils of war. But not at Jericho. The grain also indicated the city was not under siege for long. Had it been, the food would have been gone.

However, the most fascinating discovery was on the north side of the city. The wall and houses built against it were preserved. When the spies came to the city, a Canaanite prostitute named Rahab hid them (Josh. 2). In return she asked that she and her family be spared.

Rahab was instructed to gather her family and stay inside her house during the assault. The Israelites rescued her, and her house was spared. Is it possible her house was located on the north side?

All this data from the excavator’s spade confirms the genuineness of the biblical account.

*by Peter Colón*
Caleb and Joshua were kindred spirits when it came to faith. Of the twelve men Moses sent to spy out the land, only these two had faith that God would deliver Canaan into Israel’s hands (Num. 13:26—14:10).

Caleb was the son of Jephunneh (Num. 13:6) and, at age 40, was the spy chosen to represent the tribe of Judah (Josh. 14:7). He is also called the son of Kenaz (Jud. 1:13) or the Kenizzite (Num. 32:12).

The Kenizzites were originally from Edom, meaning they were outside God’s covenant promises to Israel. Caleb’s ancestors either married into a family in Judah or became proselytes before Israel went to Egypt. Caleb was a descendant
of Hezron, who descended from Pharez (1 Chr. 2:5), thus putting him in Christ’s earthly lineage (Mt. 1:3).

His first wife, Azubah, bore him three sons; his second wife, Ephrath, bore him one son; and he had numerous sons by concubines (1 Chr. 2:18–19; 46, 48).

Caleb must have evidenced leadership, courage, confidence, and conviction to have risen to leadership within the tribe of Judah. But more important, he manifested a compelling faith.

**HIS Character**

Scripture says Caleb “had another [different] spirit” (Num. 14:24) than the other spies had. He did not go along with the crowd but thought for himself and withheld those who disbelieved God’s promises. He was quick to exhibit faith and obey the Lord. He possessed an honest heart, great integrity, and never compromised his commitment to God.

Caleb also had the courage of his convictions. He boldly attempted to still the voice of rebellious Israel: “Let us go up at once, and possess it [Canaan]; for we are well able to overcome it” (Num. 13:30). “If the Lord delight in us,” Caleb said, “then he will bring us into this land, and give it us: a land which floweth with milk and honey” (Num. 14:8).

When Moses chose Joshua as his replacement to lead Israel, Caleb never exhibited a spirit of rivalry, jealousy, or envy. He wholeheartedly supported Joshua and loyally submitted to his leadership. He was unselfish and humble; did not seek personal honor, position, or possessions; and was not greedy for reward. Indeed, these are attributes that Christians are repeatedly admonished to manifest.

**HIS Land Claim**

Joshua and Eleazer the priest parceled out portions of Canaan to each tribe by lot (Josh. 14:1). When it came time for Judah to receive her portion, Caleb reminded Joshua of the promise Moses had made to him: "Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses . . . concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea. . . . Surely the land wherethon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children’s forever. . . . Now, therefore, give me this mountain, of which the LORD spoke in that day” (Josh. 14:6, 9, 12; cf. Dt. 1:36).

Caleb had spied out, and was promised, Kiriath-arba, which today is Hebron. After blessing Caleb, Joshua gave him Hebron for his inheritance, as Moses had promised (Josh. 14:13–14).

Caleb had waited patiently for the Lord’s timing to claim the land he desired. How easy it would have been to doubt and become discouraged, especially at eighty-five years old. Yet he never questioned, murmured, or doubted God during the forty years he waited for his reward while suffering the same difficulties of wilderness existence as the other Israelites. He even had to listen to his countrymen as they complained of their plight and criticized Moses. Yet, unlike them, who would die in the wilderness, he would receive an inheritance in the land.

There is no indication that as the years passed Caleb’s faith wavered. The opposite, in fact, seems true. He kept his eyes on the Lord and envisioned the day he would enjoy the inheritance of Hebron, where his feet had trod.

Like Caleb, Christians, too, are pilgrims on Earth and must pass through the “wilderness” of this life before receiving the eternal inheritance God has promised.

**HIS Courage**

To conquer Hebron took a commitment of courage and strength. The area itself was located three thousand feet above sea level, between Beersheba and Jerusalem. And the Anakites were giants whose cities were large and well fortified.

Caleb could have shrunk back in fear, knowing he was old, unskilled in war, and without proper weapons. But none of those factors deterred him from believing he could take the mountain: “If so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said” (Josh. 14:12). Some forty-five years earlier he had said something similar: “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (Num. 13:30).

At eighty-five years old, Caleb told Joshua,

> I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in (Josh. 14:10–11).

Caleb was fit for the task, not only spiritually, but also mentally and physically. What a wonderful testimony he gave before Joshua and the tribe of Judah. He did not see the obstacles, but the opportunities that the Lord put before him. With his eyes on God, not the problems, he faced the fight of his life with faith, spiritual vision, physical vitality, and an attitude of valor. And Caleb defeated the giants and drove out the three sons of Anak (Josh. 15:14). He successfully conquered each obstacle and took possession of the land promised to him.

In the spiritual warfare of life, Christians can learn a lesson from Caleb. We must not focus on the “mountains” to be overcome or our own ability to conquer the enemy or the “giants” that need to be defeated. We must look instead to the spiritual provisions provided by the Lord. Victory in the Christian life comes to the one who trusts in God’s Word, rests in His promises, and focuses on the Lord.

**HIS Commitment**

The reason for Caleb’s spiritual success is no secret; he yielded his life to the Lord. Five times Scripture says...
God always encouraged ancient Israel to look ahead. The King and Kingdom were coming. During this dispensation of grace, believers are admonished to keep looking up in expectancy of the blessed hope. Caleb “wholly followed the Lord” (Num. 32:12; Dt. 1:36; Josh. 14:8–9, 14). And the decision Caleb made affected his posterity for years to come. Caleb’s commitment was total. He never wavered in his belief that what the Lord promised He would also provide. Each Christian faces defining moments that determine the direction his or her life will take for decades to come. Decisions made without being wholly committed to the Lord could mean years of wilderness experiences in our lives. Like Caleb, it is important that each of us decide to be men and women of faith, no matter what—or how great—the opposition may be in accomplishing what the Lord has called us to do.

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

WHO IS THE ‘ANGEL OF THE LORD’?

Some say the Angel of the Lord in the Hebrew Scriptures is no different from other angels. But He is far different. In fact, He is God Himself.

He Speaks as God. “I will multiply thy seed” (Gen. 16:10); “I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me” (Gen. 22:12); “And the angel of the Lord said unto him [Balaam] . . . I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me” (Num. 22:32).

He Is Identified as God. Genesis 16:11 says, “The angel of the LORD” spoke to Hagar, Sarah’s Egyptian handmaid. “And she [Hagar] called the name of the L ORD who spoke unto her, Thou God seest me” (v. 13, emphasis added).

However, the clearest proof of this special Being’s deity came when Moses met the Angel of the Lord in “a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush” (Ex. 3:2). Here the “angel” identified Himself unmistakably:

“I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God” (3:6).

Thereafter in this encounter, the “angel” is called “the L ORD” and reveals His covenant name: “I AM THAT I AM,” also known as Jehovah, Yahweh, or Yahveh.

He Accepts Worship. Under no circumstances is man to worship anyone or anything other than the true and living God (Ex. 20:3–5; Mt. 4:10). God’s angels reject worship. However, the Angel of the Lord accepts it, indicating He is God.

When Joshua met a man who identified Himself as the “captain of the host of the L ORD,” Joshua “fell on his face to the earth, and did worship” (Josh. 5:14).

Balaam did likewise when he saw the Angel of the Lord (Num. 22:31), Samson’s father, Manoah, and his wife “fell on their faces to the ground” (Jud. 13:20); and Manoah told his wife, “We shall surely die, because we have seen God” (Jud. 13:22).

Before the Incarnation

The Scriptures are exceedingly clear that Jesus existed before His physical birth in the manger of Bethlehem. Sometimes He appeared on Earth for specific purposes. These unique appearances are called theophanies or Christophanies. Both refer to visible, preincarnate manifestations of Jesus, the Second Person of the triune God.

Creator. He actively formed the world: “All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made” (Jn. 1:3). The apostle Paul called Jesus the “image of the invisible God” and said, “By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth” (Col. 1:15–16).

Eternal One. Jesus Himself declared His deity when He said, “Before Abraham was, I am” (Jn. 8:58). And the prophet Micah announced that Israel’s Messiah would be the Eternal One Himself:

But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth [actions or activities] have been from of old, from everlasting [literally, “the days of timeless eternity”] (Mic. 5:2).

Jesus, the Eternal One who came to Earth to be born in Bethlehem, was involved in every aspect of creation and Israel’s history. He was the One Jacob wrestled with and who changed Jacob’s name (Gen. 32:28).

Jacob told the Angel of the Lord, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me” (Gen. 32:26). The Angel then changed Jacob’s name to Israel (Gen. 32:28), which means “he who strives with God” or “a prince of God.” Jacob then declared, “I have seen God face to face” (v. 30).

Living Word. John’s Gospel begins, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Jesus was, is, and forever will be the Living Word of God. Prior to God’s Word appearing in print, the definitive Word, who later became flesh (Jesus), often provided the necessary revelation through His appearance as the Angel of the Lord.

by Thomas C. Simcox
The Lord had also commanded the Israelites not to take any of Jericho’s riches because the city was under the ban (Hebrew, *cherem*). Because the Lord was the real Victor, all Jericho’s riches were to go to Him (Josh. 6:17–19).

But when Achan saw a beautiful mantle from Shinar, two hundred shekels of silver, and a fifty-shekel bar of gold, he must have thought something like, *I have hit the lottery! The Lord has blessed me with early retirement.* Unfortunately for Achan, taking the Lord’s riches was an act of unbelief and disobedience.

Joshua and the other Israelites were unaware of what Achan had done when they attacked Ai the first time. Since Ai was a small town compared to Jericho, the Israelites did not even bother to send the whole army, only a few thousand men. Imagine their shock when they were defeated.

At first they blamed the Lord, saying He had abandoned them. But the Lord was not unfaithful. Israel, specifically Achan, was. A lot was cast, Achan was chosen, and eventually he confessed to his sin. The stolen riches were found, and he and his family were stoned to death and all his possessions burned. After the sin was

YEARS AGO WHEN I WAS A YOUNG CHRISTIAN, I WAS, OF COURSE, KEEN ON LEARNING HOW TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. AN OLDER BELIEVER TOLD ME THE SECRET TO VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING WAS TO TRUST IN THE LORD COMPLETELY AT EVERY MOMENT, JUST LIKE JOSHUA.

But my question was, “What happens after a week and I fail? Does that mean I have now lost God’s blessing? Am I now on the path of the Lord’s ‘second best?’”

Many Christians are confused, as I was, about their relationship to God and spiritual failure. Or, to be more blunt, they are confused about sin. They wonder, *How can I have a relationship with God and be blessed when I am still a sinner and still sin?*

The Israelites faced the same dilemma. What does it mean to be in covenant relationship with God whereby God promises to bless (Abrahamic Covenant, Gen. 12:1–3) while at the same time expecting you to be responsible to Him in faith or be disciplined for your unbelief (Mosaic Covenant, Ex. 20—24)? The answer is depicted in the history of Israel.

The book of Numbers is a history of unbelief and failure as seen in the first generation of Israelites (those freed from Egypt in the Exodus) who turned back at Kadesh-barnea and then died in the wilderness. Their children, the second generation, are the ones Joshua led to victory.

But was Joshua always victorious? What we find in the book of Joshua is that the road to victory is a bumpy one, and learning to live by faith is not easy. Yet God is faithful and keeps His promises.

**DEFEAT AND VICTORY AT AI**

The story of the Israelites’ battles at Ai is really a continuation of the Battle of Jericho. Jericho is a high point in the Israelites’ faith in the Lord and His miraculous working on their behalf. The whole point of the event is that, despite the odds (Jericho was a strong city militarily), when Israel trusted God and obeyed His word, He gave the victory.
dealt with and the Lord’s justice meted out, Joshua wrote, “The Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger” (7:26).

The Lord then encouraged Israel to attack Ai again. This time Joshua took no chances. He not only used his whole army, he used great military strategy to defeat the men of Ai and capture the city. The inhabitants of Ai were killed and the city burned, and Israel was victorious again. Thus defeat was turned into victory.

**Spiritual Lessons from Ai**

The Israelites’ experience at Jericho and Ai teach much about one’s responsibility to the Lord and the consequences of sin while in covenant relationship to Him.

1. Achan’s actions clearly depict the process of sin. Achan himself confessed that when he saw the mantle, silver, and gold, “I coveted them” (7:21), a direct violation of not only the Lord’s command to the Israelites at Jericho, but also the tenth commandment (Ex. 20:17). As with all sin, Achan’s behavior was an act of unbelief. In taking the riches for himself, Achan denied that he could trust in the Lord to take care of him.

2. Achan’s sin affected the entire community of Israel. The Lord did not look at Israel as a number of individuals but as a nation with whom He had a covenant relationship. Therefore, when one Israelite sinned, the entire community was punished.

   Although our relationship to the Lord as a church under the New Covenant is much different, the principle of an individual Christian’s sin affecting the community still applies. As Paul told the Corinthians, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6). Sin is never just an individual, personal matter. It affects all those around us. In Achan’s case it affected all of Israel, and eventually his entire family perished.

   One caveat: We must be careful to discern between suffering as Christians, which is “normal,” and suffering because of sin. Apparent lack of “victory” is not necessarily due to sin. If two Christian schools have a soccer match and one loses, does that mean a member of the losing team was an “Achan in the camp”?

   Perhaps we need to redefine what it means to be victorious. After Paul referred to suffering for Christ, he said we “are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37, emphasis added). Conquering means being victorious over sin in our hearts, not “making it to the top” outwardly.

3. Although Achan’s sin had negative consequences for Israel according to the Mosaic Covenant, it did not affect God’s promises to Israel in the Abrahamic Covenant.

   Thus Achan’s sin did not sever the relationship between the Lord and Israel. Rather, God’s discipline of Israel is part of the relationship. As the author of Hebrews wrote, quoting Proverbs 3:12, “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth” (Heb. 12:6).

   God disciplined the Israelites with defeat to teach them about the
seriousness of sin and its consequences, so they would be “a holy people.” The Lord, as a good father, does not shun His children who sin but, rather, like a good father, is most concerned about getting them back on the right track. Therefore, the negative consequences of sin, although painful, are not mere punishment but are intended to lead us to repentance and faith.

**The Lord, as a good father, does not shun His children who sin but, rather, like a good father, is most concerned about getting them back on the right track. Therefore, the negative consequences of sin, although painful, . . . are intended to lead us to repentance and faith.**

---

**Deception and Victory with the Gibeonites**

In contrast with the Israelites’ experience at Ai, their failure with the Gibeonites was not so much due to willful sin as negligence.

The Gibeonites had learned from watching what had happened to the Canaanites at Jericho and Ai. They knew they could not defeat the God of Israel by force. So they decided to try tricking the Israelites into making peace with them by pretending to live outside of Canaan and thus not under God’s ban.

They succeeded. Joshua recorded candidly that Israel did not consult the Lord before making a treaty with them (Josh. 9:14). Therefore, they did not take advantage of His knowledge.

The consequences of this treaty are quite remarkable. On the one hand, although the Israelites were tricked into making peace, they still felt obligated to keep their word to the Gibeonites. This fact is demonstrated by Israel’s willingness to fight to protect the Gibeonites from the other Canaanites who attacked them for making such a treaty. Because Israel came to Gibeon’s rescue, the Lord gave Israel a great victory over the five Canaanite kings who attacked Gibeon. Essentially the whole southern half of Canaan was conquered as a result of this deceptive treaty. One could say the Lord turned Israel’s negligence into victory, a case of all things working together for good (Rom. 8:28).

On the other hand, the Gibeonites were Canaanites who were allowed to live and become Israel’s servants (Josh. 9:21–27). This arrangement was the best solution to the problem of being in covenant relation with the Gibeonites while wanting to punish them for their deception. But this policy of allowing enemies to become servants initiated a dangerous precedent. As recorded later in Judges 1:28, it became Israel’s downfall in the land because the Israelites thought the Canaanites were not a threat once they were out of military power. Unfortunately, the Israelites did not realize the consequences of violating the Lord’s command (Dt. 7) or the power of evil resident in the Canaanites’ idolatry.

**Spiritual Lessons from the Gibeonites**

As with Achan, Israel’s dealings with the Gibeonites was another learning experience in becoming a holy people. And here are some lessons for us.

1. Jesus says believers are to be “wise as serpents, and harmless [innocent] as doves” (Mt. 10:16). This means recognizing that Satan also knows what the Gibeonites knew, namely, that he cannot defeat Christians by spiritual force but may be able to deceive us into sin.

Paul warned against “the wiles [schemes] of the devil” and told us how to combat them (Eph. 6:11–18). Paul told believers to stand firm in the truth of God’s promises so we are not deceived, but then also to pray and be on the alert. Just because Christ is the Victor and the outcome of the war with Satan is clear, the battle is not over yet.

2. Jesus also said, “If thy right eye offend thee [makes you stumble], pluck it out”; and “if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off” (Mt. 5:29–30).

By that He meant that sin cannot be tamed. It cannot be made to serve you. It must be totally eradicated. Any thought that conscious sin can be kept in check in one’s life demonstrates the deception of sin. As Paul said in Romans 6:12–23, you cannot serve the Lord and sin. God wants us to be free from sin’s mastery by presenting ourselves to the Lord to be used as instruments of righteousness.

Victorious Christian living means focusing on what Christ has done for you, not on your own experiences. John referred to believers as “overcomers,” victors over the world, because of our faith in Christ (1 Jn. 5:4–5).

Believers will battle with sin all their lives. When we fail and confess our sin, the Lord is there to forgive us and cleanse us (1 Jn. 1:9—2:2). As His children, we know He will never forsake us. But shall we “continue in sin, that grace may abound [increase]? God forbid!” (Rom. 6:1–2).

Sin, although forgiven, always has negative consequences for our families, our fellow believers, and certainly for us. And although there is restoration, the effects of sin, like the Gibeonites, may be with us a long time.

Herb Hirt is the director of The Friends of Israel’s Institute of Jewish Studies.
The Bible is replete with commandments to live by. The most-often repeated ones are to love the Lord and obey His Word. Obedience produces blessing. Disobedience produces judgment. Joshua understood these principles well and, at the end of his life, restated them for Israel and admonished the nation to serve the Lord.

At 110 years old (Josh. 24:29), Joshua still remembered when he had marched through the Red Sea with Moses. He had seen water flow from a rock, manna fall from heaven, and the sun stand still. He had witnessed all the many wonders Almighty God had done for His people, and he knew it was vital this new generation of Israelites not forget them. So when he was old, he summoned the people to bid them farewell and encourage them before he died.

Israel’s Obligation

And ye have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the LORD your God is he who hath fought for you (Josh. 23:3).

Joshua began by reminding the Israelites of the victories they had won because of the Lord, and he encouraged them to trust the Lord and move forward in faith to possess all the land God gave them: “The LORD your God, he shall expel them [the remaining nations] from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land” (v. 5).

But there was one major condition. They were to remain absolutely loyal to Jehovah alone. The children of Israel were to “keep” and “do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses” and “turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left” (v. 6). The Lord promised victory, possession of

Ruins of the Canaanite city of Megiddo in Israel. (www.israelimages.com)
the land, safety in it, and His abiding presence if they obeyed His Word. In fact, God has always required His people, including Christians today, to obey His Scriptures and walk in His ways.

So Joshua instructed Israel, “Cleave unto the LORD your God” and “love the LORD your God” (Josh. 23:8; 11). The Israelites were to serve no other gods (Ex. 20:3) and be entirely devoted to Jehovah, who loved them and redeemed them.

Many people today believe God no longer loves the Jewish people because they failed to obey the law. But the Lord did not decide to love them based on their merit; He loves them because He loves them (Dt. 7:7–8). And Scripture teaches that God is not fickle, like men. The Lord does not change (Mal. 3:6); “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

The eternal God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is immutable. And His love for Israel is as loyal and steadfast today as it was thousands of years ago. But God’s love in no way abrogates His discipline.

**Joshua’s Warning**

As Moses had done with the previous generation, Joshua warned the Israelites to stay away from the Canaanites. They were not to marry them, worship or assimilate with them, or cling to them in any way. If they disobeyed, “know for a certainty,” said Joshua, “that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of those nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you” (Josh. 23:13).

Since the beginning of time, “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth” (Heb. 12:6). One of the most difficult realities to understand from Israel’s history is the Israelites’ recurring disobedience and turning from the one true God to false gods in the face of all the Lord had done for them. Had Israel been faithful to Him, it would have been the chief of nations; and all of human history would have been different. Instead, Israel was chastened.

Moses tried to warn the nation in Deuteronomy 28—29:

*If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth* (Dt. 28:1).

Yet from Deuteronomy 28:15 through 29:29, the Lord enumerates the terrible tragedies that will overcome His beloved people if they “wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God” (28:15). God did not want to chasten Israel, but He had no choice.

**The eternal God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is immutable. And His love for Israel is as loyal and steadfast today as it was thousands of years ago. But God’s love in no way abrogates His discipline.**

Later, in Ezekiel 36, He says He ultimately drove them from their land in punishment because He “had pity [concern] for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations [Gentiles], to which they went” (Ezek. 36:21). Yet He never fails to say that He will bring them back (Ezek. 37:21–22).

**Clean House and Choose**

Before he died, Joshua reminded the Israelites that God deserved their complete loyalty and devotion because He was faithful to them. What God had promised, He delivered:

*Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof* (23:14).

So he summoned the twelve tribes of Israel to Shechem “and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God” (Josh. 24:1).

Joshua recounted Israel’s beginnings, all God had done for the nation, and gave it a “choice” that was really no choice at all:

*Now, therefore, fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river [Euphrates], and in Egypt, and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD* (vv. 14–15).

They could either serve the false gods that could not deliver their enemies or they could serve the Lord, who was all powerful and had delivered them.

Unfortunately, most people today still serve idols. Some worship manmade objects; others devote themselves to the objects of materialism and financial security. But God said, “Be not conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2). The world desires to stamp its image on everything it owns. Yet God’s people do not belong to the world. They are to be imprinted with the image of the Lord.

Like Moses, Joshua warned the Israelites of the consequences of following the world. Just as God would
keep His promises to do them good if they were faithful, so would He keep His promise to punish them if they were not.

So the Jewish people made a covenant with their leader that day, “and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD” as a reminder (vv. 25–26).

Thus, after a lifetime of service to the Lord, Joshua the son of Nun died. He was buried “in the border of his inheritance in Timnathserah, which is in Mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash. And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, and who had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel” (vv. 30–31).

The Significance of Shechem

In Hebrew shechem means “shoulder,” an apt description of the town’s location in the narrow valley between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, approximately 40 miles (65 km.) north of Jerusalem.

Today the world calls it Nablus, a Palestinian Authority city in the so-called West Bank and destined to become Judenrein, “clean of Jews,” in a future Palestinian state.

But Shechem was once a very Jewish city; and it was no accident that in his farewell to his people, an aged Joshua gathered the Israelites there to beg them to follow God (Josh. 24).

Joshua took Israel back to its roots, physically as well as historically, in a powerful object lesson to reinforce the nation’s ties to generations past and all God had done.

Scholars Carl Keil and Franz Delitzsch noted the magnitude of this meeting: “For this solemn act he [Joshua] did not choose Shiloh, the site of the national sanctuary, . . . but Shechem, a place which was sanctified as no other was for such a purpose as this by the most sacred reminiscences from the times of the patriarchs.”

Why was Shechem so important? Because it was there that Moses, many years earlier, had told the Jewish people, This day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God. . . . These shall stand upon Mount Gerizim to bless the people, . . . and these shall stand upon Mount Ebal to curse (Dt. 27:9, 12–13).

Thus, after a lifetime of service to the Lord, Joshua the son of Nun died. He was buried “in the border of his inheritance in Timnathserah, which is in Mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash. And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, and who had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel” (vv. 30–31).

Thomas C. Simcox is the Northeastern States director for The Friends of Israel.

---

ENDNOTES


2 Ibid.
Nineveh’s Demise

Assyria’s unrelenting violence, extortion, and brutality are well documented in the records of its history. More important, however, God kept track of such savagery; and He judged it.

In chapter 3 Nahum continued his vivid description of God’s destruction of Nineveh and the reasons for it.

Deceitful

Nahum pronounced a series of woes, or warnings, concerning Nineveh: “Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not” (v. 1).

Nineveh was a corrupt city of blood. Assyria’s cruelty is amply documented on unearthed cuneiform tablets. Assyrian kings even boasted of their cruelty. Prisoners were impaled alive, flayed, beheaded, or dragged to death with ropes attached to rings that pierced their bodies. They were blinded by the king’s own hand and hung by their hands or feet to die slowly. Others had their brains beaten out or their tongues torn out and were left to bleed to death. Still others had the bleeding heads of the slain tied around their necks while waiting their turn to be tortured.

These atrocities are similar to those Saddam Hussein reportedly inflicted during his rule as president of Iraq.

Nahum also said Nineveh was full of “lies and robbery” (v. 1). Assyria deliberately deceived other nations. It would enter into binding treaties that it had no intention of keeping. Once the Assyrians gained the confidence of another nation, they would break their treaty with it and demand tribute from its leadership.

The word robbery means to “rend in pieces.” It denotes a wild beast tearing its prey to pieces and connotes the type of deceit, violence, and bloodshed that Assyria used against the nations it conquered. Their “prey departeth not” (v. 1) means Assyria never stopped functioning like such an animal in plundering other nations.

Depraved

Nahum provided a detailed description of Nineveh’s collapse as the Medo-Babylonian coalition attacked the city. In verses 2 and 3 the battle is already in progress. As the machinery of war rolls through Nineveh, there is the sound of whips cracking, wheels clattering on the stone pavement, horses galloping through the city, and chariots jostling each other for position as they speed through the streets. The sun’s reflection off the swords and spears strikes terror in the Ninevites as they try in vain to flee from imminent slaughter.

The invading army and the people of Nineveh stumble over the thousands of corpses that fill the streets during the battle.

Nineveh was destroyed because she practiced the crimes of religious prostitution and witchcraft. Nahum said, “Because of the multitude of the harlotries of the well-favored harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her harlotries, and families through her witchcrafts” (v. 4).

Nineveh is portrayed as a beautiful prostitute standing in the public square. Like a prostitute, the city is decked in all its meretricious finery. Nineveh used her natural charm; and in so doing, she enticed and seduced other nations into her diabolical religious system. This is an apt picture of Ishtar, the goddess of sex, fertility, and war. Nineveh used the tactics of a prostitute to lure surrounding nations into her control. She used her glamour, beautiful palaces and temples, mighty army, fabulous wealth, and imposing art and architecture to tempt nations to their destruction.

But God saw everything and pronounced sentence: “Behold, I am against thee, said the LORD of hosts, and I will uncover thy skirts from thy face, and I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame” (v. 5).

For the second time in as many chapters, God revealed His opposition to Nineveh and vowed to punish her fully (cf. Nah. 2:13). Her disgraceful acts against other nations will cause God to disgrace her. The Lord will throw Nineveh’s “skirts” over her face, exposing her to the world, stripped of her pride and glory.

Worse yet, God said, “And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing-stock” (v. 6). Assyria would parade its captives through the city—sometimes nude—while people pelted them with stones and garbage. Thus God will visit the same ignominy on Nineveh. It will be treated like a naked harlot, fastened to stocks in the public square, and pelted with human excrement. Assyria, in fact, was disgraced and degraded before the world in the worst kind of humiliation.
All who look on Nineveh in its degradation will flee from the city and say, “Nineveh is laid waste; who will bemoan her? Where shall I seek comforters for thee?” (v. 7). Gazing on Nineveh’s horrible appearance will make the nations shrink back in horror. And no one will show sympathy or have pity on Nineveh; no one will step forward to comfort her.

When Nahum prophesied of Nineveh’s doom, there was no hint of its coming destruction. The city was strong, self-confident, and recognized for its splendor by the surrounding nations.

Defenseless

When Nahum prophesied of Nineveh’s doom, there was no hint of its coming destruction. The city was strong, self-confident, and recognized for its splendor by the surrounding nations. Nahum asked,

Art thou better than populous Noman [Thebes], that was situated among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart [defense] was the sea, and her wall was from the sea? Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was unlimited; Put and Lubim were thy helpers (vv. 8–9).

Thebes was located on both sides of the Nile River, surrounded by moats, canals, and water channels providing great defense against an invading army. It was the most powerful city in Upper Egypt. Confederating with Ethiopia, Put (present-day Somalia) and Lubim (Libya) appeared to guarantee Thebes’s safety from invading armies. Yet it fell to the Assyrians under Ashurbanipal in 663 B.C.

Nahum described the fate of Thebes:

Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity; her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets; and they cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains (v. 10).

This is exactly what the Assyrians did to the people of Thebes. They murdered innocent children, divided up their leaders and hauled them off in chains, and marched the survivors to Nineveh as slaves.

Thus God will force Nineveh to drink the same cup of terror she had poured out on Thebes: “Thou also shalt be drunk; thou shalt be hidden, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy” (v. 11). During the attack the Ninevites will reel to and fro, disoriented like a drunk in a stunned state, because of the calamity overtaking their city. Nineveh will be so completely destroyed that it will be “hidden” or vanish from the face of the earth. While being attacked by the Medo-Babylonian coalition, Nineveh sought “strength,” or protection, from surrounding nations, but found none.

In the remaining verses, Nahum described the process of Nineveh’s eventual destruction.

Nineveh’s defenses will be weak: “All thy strongholds [fortifications] shall be like fig trees with the first-ripe figs; if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater” (v. 12). Nineveh, ripe for the taking, will fall to the invaders like spring figs shaken from a tree.

Nineveh’s defenders will be women: “Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women; the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies; the fire shall devour thy bars” (v. 13). Those left to defend the city were either women or men who were weak, afraid, and powerless, acting like women. Those guarding the city fled, leaving the country wide open to attack. During the conflict the bars on Nineveh’s gates were destroyed, allowing the enemy to flood into the city.

Nineveh’s workmen will work in vain: Nahum taunted the determined workmen, bidding them to do everything possible to spare the city:

Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strongholds; go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln. There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm. Make thyself many like the cankerworm, make thyself many like the locust (vv. 14–15).

No matter what the people do to help Nineveh, whether it be gathering water to drink, repairing the city walls, or increasing the army, nothing will save them. The invaders will devour everything in their path like a swarm of locusts.

Nineveh’s wealth will disappear: “Thou has multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven; the cankerworm spoileth, and flieth away” (v. 16). Nineveh’s traders and merchants were many, like the stars of heaven. And Nineveh’s wealth, gathered from worldwide conquest and trade, would vanish like locusts stripping an area of its vegetation and quickly flying away.

Nineveh’s disloyal warriors will vanish during the conflict: “Thy princes [guards] are like the locusts, and thy captains like the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are” (v. 17).

Locusts hide in hedges for protection in cold weather, but they quickly fly away when warmed by the sun. In like manner, Assyria’s guards and military officers will hide from attacking soldiers and quickly flee in the heat of battle.

Nineveh’s leadership will die in the war: “Thy shepherds [political and
News
From a Biblical Perspective

What will the Middle East look like a year from now?
Does your local news offer a biblical view of what is happening in our world today?

Join the Tape-of-the-Month family and get the news you’ve been looking for. What does the future hold for Israel? Will the Palestinians get a state? What will happen regarding the Temple Mount? What does the Bible say? Join Elwood McQuaid and his guests as he follows these and other key issues of vital importance to the world and believers in particular.

Each month you’ll receive an audiocassette with up-to-date information concerning the Middle East, theological trends, situations of importance to believers, and inspiring Bible messages. Regularly featured are interviews with special guests, including Israeli officials, news correspondents, and believers living in that turbulent part of the world. As the need arises, we’ll also send you a special bonus tape.

The $49.95 cost includes at least 12 full-length updates and first-class postage to insure timely delivery. If you wish to store your tapes after you’ve shared them with friends, you can purchase a sturdy vinyl storage binder for only $5 extra.

Please use the enclosed envelope to become a Tape-of-the-Month member.

Don’t be left wondering what’s happening in the Middle East. Join the Tape-of-the-Month family today—and be informed!

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

Destroyed

Nineveh later suffered a “fatal wound” and died. None brought aid to the dying city. Upon hearing of Nineveh’s destruction, nations rejoiced, especially Israel, because they had continually experienced Assyria’s sadistic savagery and subjugation. God destroyed the capital city of this tyrannical and bloodthirsty people, and it was never rebuilt.

God was longsuffering with Nineveh in the days of Jonah, giving the nation time to repent. Nineveh did repent and was spared. But one hundred years later it returned to its sinful ways. Assyria’s inhumane practices, so graphically described by Nahum, met with God’s wrath and judgment. The lessons in the book of Nahum need to be heeded by other nations. For all nations that turn a deaf ear to God’s warning will suffer a similar fate as Nineveh.
With an egregious degree of hypocrisy that has become all too familiar to this generation, Syria demanded, and was granted, an emergency session of the UN Security Council. There Syrian diplomats aired their grievances before international delegates who were, in the main, as unscrupulous as the Syrians. Few seemed to remember that this regime has slain thousands of its own citizens; heartlessly occupied Lebanon in what amounts to annexation; sheltered, armed, and trained the Hezbollah terrorist organization; and reportedly granted terrorists free passage into Iraq on a mission to kill Americans. Syria serves as the Middle East’s major host to the worst of the terrorist lot.

The UN, of course, castigated Israel for going to the source in its attempt to protect its innocent citizens. Incidentally, no resolutions condemning the terrorists were presented on behalf of those victims whose “crime” was sharing a festive meal with family and friends at Maxim’s on the eve of Yom Kippur.

The great lesson here is that survival demands preemptive action when there is no other reasonable recourse. The Israelis were returning to an essential element in their quest for survival on a planet that looks more like a jungle than a harmonious, gleaming city on a hill.

Israel learned this lesson the hard way in 1973. When it was apparent that the nation was about to be attacked by Syria and Egypt, the High Command minimized warnings from intelligence sources. And then-Prime Minister Golda Meir made a fateful choice. Stung by the international criticism following Israel’s preemptive strike in the June 1967 Six-Day War, she stated that this time Israel would wait and let the world see who the aggressors were. That decision, humanly speaking, nearly cost the nation its life.

It has been said more times than we care to remember that those who refuse to learn from history are destined to repeat it. We are in the throes of the potentially deadly process of repeating what we have refused to learn.

In the name of international civility, tyrannical butchers are given safe haven while they prepare to wreak death and destruction on unsuspecting masses. To make matters worse, they occupy seats at the United Nations and are treated with unwarranted dignity and respect—that is, until it will become too late to prevent the inevitable.

Recently one of the television networks ran a program on the life of the late Russian dictator Joseph Stalin. Stalin engineered the deaths of twenty million people. But it was said that, though that fact was true beyond rebuttal, in the course of that genocidal spree Stalin had “brought stability to Russia.” For twenty million unfortunate victims, that “stability” was permanent.

In striking where the enemy trains people to kill, Israel did the right thing. But will anyone learn from it? The answer is up for grabs.

Following the brutal suicide bombing that took twenty-one lives and wounded sixty others at the Maxim restaurant in Haifa on October 4, 2003, Israel went on the offensive.

The terrorist group Islamic Jihad quickly claimed responsibility for the murder that ended the lives of two entire Israeli families plus infants, children, and Arabs.

Israel reacted by dispatching planes to bomb a terrorist training camp for Hamas and Islamic Jihad members in Syria. For years the Syrians have refused to honor their promises to close offices and facilities of terrorist organizations that have pledged to destroy Israel. Longsuffering Israeli officials decided that enough was enough and opted to strike the camp outside Damascus where terrorists had enjoyed the hospitality of their Syrian hosts with immunity from attack.

With an egregious degree of hypocrisy that has become all too familiar to this generation, Syria demanded, and was granted, an emergency session of the UN Security Council. There Syrian diplomats aired their grievances before international delegates who were, in the main, as unscrupulous as the Syrians. Few seemed to remember that this regime has slain thousands of its own citizens; heartlessly occupied Lebanon in what amounts to annexation; sheltered, armed, and trained the Hezbollah terrorist organization; and reportedly granted terrorists free passage into Iraq on a mission to kill Americans. Syria serves as the Middle East’s major host to the worst of the terrorist lot.

The UN, of course, castigated Israel for going to the source in its attempt to protect its innocent citizens. Incidentally, no resolutions condemning the terrorists were presented on behalf of those victims whose “crime” was sharing a festive meal with family and friends at Maxim’s on the eve of Yom Kippur.

The great lesson here is that survival demands preemptive action when there is no other reasonable recourse. The Israelis were returning to an essential element in their quest for survival on a planet that looks more like a jungle than a harmonious, gleaming city on a hill.

Israel learned this lesson the hard way in 1973. When it was apparent that the nation was about to be attacked by Syria and Egypt, the High Command minimized warnings from intelligence sources. And then-Prime Minister Golda Meir made a fateful choice. Stung by the international criticism following Israel’s preemptive strike in the June 1967 Six-Day War, she stated that this time Israel would wait and let the world see who the aggressors were. That decision, humanly speaking, nearly cost the nation its life.

It has been said more times than we care to remember that those who refuse to learn from history are destined to repeat it. We are in the throes of the potentially deadly process of repeating what we have refused to learn.

In the name of international civility, tyrannical butchers are given safe haven while they prepare to wreak death and destruction on unsuspecting masses. To make matters worse, they occupy seats at the United Nations and are treated with unwarranted dignity and respect—that is, until it will become too late to prevent the inevitable.

Recently one of the television networks ran a program on the life of the late Russian dictator Joseph Stalin. Stalin engineered the deaths of twenty million people. But it was said that, though that fact was true beyond rebuttal, in the course of that genocidal spree Stalin had “brought stability to Russia.” For twenty million unfortunate victims, that “stability” was permanent.

In striking where the enemy trains people to kill, Israel did the right thing. But will anyone learn from it? The answer is up for grabs.
We have examined the fact that God exercises sovereign rule over the universe, angels, history, nations, rulers, counselors, judges, ministries, nature, and individuals. Now we will consider another sphere of God’s sovereign rule.

**Sovereignty Over Time**

**Time Cycles.** When God created the universe, He established time cycles (day, night, seasons, years) to benefit life on Earth (Gen. 1:14–18; 8:22). He ordained when the land promise He swore to Abraham would be fulfilled (Gen. 15:7, 13–16; Acts 7:17), set the time of Isaac’s birth (Gen. 17:21; 18:14; 21:2), and appointed a set time to destroy Egypt’s cattle (Ex. 9:5–6).

**Calendar System.** God established a unique calendar system for the nation of Israel that consisted of the following features: seven-year cycles with six years of sowing the land and reaping the harvest and each seventh year being sabbatical (letting the land rest and no harvest reaping—Ex. 23:10–11; Lev. 25:1–7); weeks consisting of six work days and a seventh day sabbath (a day of rest—Ex. 23:12); and each fiftieth year being a jubilee (letting the land rest and no harvest reaping, plus restoring lost land possessions to original owners and acquired servants to their families—Lev. 25:8–17).

God appointed three times each year for Israel to keep God-ordained feasts (Ex. 23:14–16) and three times each year for all Israelite males to appear before Him (Ex. 23:17; Dt. 16:16).

**Duration of Punishment.** Because of Israel’s unbelief at Kadesh-barnea, God sentenced the nation to forty years of wandering in the wilderness before it could enter the Promised Land (Num. 14:26–34).

As a result of King David’s sin of numbering the people of his kingdom, God inflicted three days of pestilence on Israel (2 Sam. 24:13, 15).

The **“Indignation.”** The angel Gabriel told Daniel that the end of the indignation would take place at “the time appointed” (Dan. 8:19). The expression “the indignation” refers to the period of history during which God is indignant or angry with Israel because of its rebellion against Him. It is the time when God chastens Israel, usually at the hands of the Gentiles.

It included Israel’s conquest and cruel treatment by Assyria (Isa. 10:5, 25) and conquest and captivity by Babylon (Lam. 2:5–6; Zech. 1:12), and it will continue through the end of the Tribulation (the end of Antichrist’s rule at the Second Coming of Christ, Dan. 11:36). The indignation basically parallels the times when the Gentiles are the predominant world power. Gabriel’s use of the word appointed for the time of the end indicates that God sovereignly determined the time of His indignation against Israel. He ordained when Israel would be chastened and when that chastening would end.

**The Great Tribulation.** Several other time-related items over which God exercises sovereign rule are closely related to Gabriel’s comment about the indignation and its end. Daniel 12:1 refers to a future, unparalleled time of trouble that will have terrible implications for Israel. Jesus applied the term great tribulation to this time (Mt. 24:21). He indicated that time will begin when the Antichrist instigates “the abomination of desolation,” which, according to Daniel 9:27, will start in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation (Mt. 24:15).

In Daniel 12:5–6 an angel asked how long this time of trouble will last. A heavenly being raised both hands toward heaven, swore an oath by God to assert the truthfulness of the answer to the angel’s
question, and gave a twofold answer: The unparalleled time of trouble will last “for a time, times, and an half” (12:7). In Daniel this refers to three and one-half years, the latter half of the seven-year Tribulation (Dan. 7:25; cf. Rev. 11:2; 12:6, 14; 13:5). Second, it will end when Israel’s rebellion against God is finally shattered.

Clearly this unparalleled time of trouble, the Great Tribulation, will be the last phase of the indignation—the period of history during which God is indignant or angry with Israel and chastens it because of its rebellion against Him. Since God sovereignly determined when His indignation against Israel will end, He obviously ordained how long the Great Tribulation, the last phase of the indignation, will last: three and one-half years after Antichrist begins the abomination of desolation in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation.

The Abomination of Desolation. In Daniel 9:27 Gabriel also indicated that Antichrist’s abomination of desolation against Israel will continue “even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” This verse signifies that Antichrist will be able to desolate Israel until the complete chastening that God has sovereignly determined for it has been poured out.

Israel’s worst time of suffering will be God’s sovereign means of breaking the nation’s stubborn rebellion, shattering its unbelief, and bringing it to faith in the Messiah.

“Shortened” Days. After referring to the unparalleled time of trouble in Mark 13:19, Jesus said, “And except the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect’s sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days” (v. 20).

This statement does not mean that God will shorten the Great Tribulation to less than the full three and one-half years foretold in the Bible. New Testament scholars indicate that the tenses of the verbs in Jesus’ statement indicate the following: God in the past had already shortened the Great Tribulation, determining to cut it off at a specific time (three and one-half years) rather than let it continue indefinitely.

God knew that if the Great Tribulation were to continue indefinitely, all flesh would perish from the earth. To prevent that from happening, God sovereignly set a specific time for the Great Tribulation to end.1

Times of the Gentiles. Jesus said, “Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Lk. 21:24). The expression the times of the Gentiles refers “to the whole period during which the Gentile world-powers are in command, until the time comes for the ‘saints of the Most High’ to possess the kingdom.”2

Thus the expression relates to the indignation, when God chastens Israel, usually at the hands of the Gentiles. Jesus’ reference to the times of the Gentiles being “fulfilled” indicated that “an end of the time of dominion of the Gentiles has been fixed by God.”3

Course of History. Daniel declared that God “changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings” (Dan. 2:21). Daniel said this after God revealed to him the content and interpretation of the dream

Daniel 12:1 refers to a future, unparalleled time of trouble that will have terrible implications for Israel. Jesus applied the term great tribulation to this time (Mt. 24:21). He indicated that time will begin when the Antichrist instigates “the abomination of desolation,” which, according to Daniel 9:27, will start in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation (Mt. 24:15).
He gave to King Nebuchadnezzar, revealing the course of Gentile world dominion with its rise and fall of kingdoms and rulers from ancient Babylon to Christ’s Second Coming.

Thus, in that context, Daniel referred to God’s sovereign rule over the course of history. His point was, “God determines when in history events are to take place and how long each process or phase in history is to endure. . . . The rulers of earth may imagine they have attained power by their own might, but it is only by God’s choice that they are permitted their transient authority. At any time he may remove them from their throne and set up others in their place.”

The apostle Paul declared that God “hath determined the times before appointed” for mankind (Acts 17:26). Gerhard Delling claims that here the word for “times” refers to a “historical epoch.” Thus Paul asserted that in eternity past God determined the epochs of time that would impact mankind throughout history.

God revealed ahead of time that the Babylonian Captivity of the Jewish people would last for seventy years (Jer. 25:11–12; 29:10). Daniel indicated that God told Jeremiah He “would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:2). The word translated “accomplish” signifies “the completion of a fixed time.”

The significance of this word and the fact that God revealed ahead of time the specific length of the captivity indicate that He sovereignly determined its duration.

God revealed that after the end of the Babylonian Captivity He would continue to chasten Israel for an extended time. Through the angel Gabriel, God signified that seventy weeks were “determined” upon Daniel’s people (Israel) and their holy city (Jerusalem, Dan. 9:24). The word translated “weeks” literally means “sevens,” referring to the seven-year cycles of Israel’s God-ordained calendar system. Thus God revealed that He had sovereignly determined this chastening program for Israel to consist of seventy periods of seven years (a total of 490 years).

God sovereignly “appointed” times related to Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 11:27, 29).

The apostle Paul wrote, “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. 4:4). This statement, together with the comparison phrase “until the time appointed of the father” (v. 2), implies that in the past God had determined the point of time in history that would be right for sending His Son to the world.

The fact that Christ knew beforehand the time of His rejection and death (Mt. 26:18; Jn. 7:8) and the Father knows the day and hour of Christ’s Second Coming (Mk. 13:32) indicates that God sovereignly set those times.

The language of 2 Thessalonians 2:6–8 signifies that God has determined the time of Antichrist’s revelation to the world.

Continued next issue

ENDNOTES

Renald E. Showers is an author, professor, and international conference speaker for The Friends of Israel.
An Evangelical View of the Jewish People

The subject was about anti-Semitism in the United States and what, as a Jewish businessman and state senator, the gentleman being interviewed had encountered personally. He spoke about exclusions from local clubs and a number of minor and major slights he and his family had endured over the years.

Then, after a moment’s hesitation, he said, “I suppose every Jew, whether he is consciously aware of it or not, from time to time looks around at his circle of friends and acquaintances and asks himself a question. It is this: ‘If an Adolf Hitler ever rises in America, who among these people will give me a place to hide?’”

Whether we like it or not, anti-Semitism is still being used to bludgeon Jewish people. In the Middle East in particular, the notorious and viciously anti-Semitic forgery, The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion, is now widely circulated.

Here in the West, including the United States, there has been an alarming proliferation of anti-Israel/anti-Jewish activism. A recent telephone poll asked 7,500 Europeans to state what they considered to be the greatest threat to world peace. Fifty-nine percent said, “Israel.” Among the Dutch, 74 percent named Israel as the number one threat.

On the campuses of major universities in Europe and America, attacks against Jewish students occur with increasing regularity. Some may regard these trends as nothing more than the inevitable evolution of contemporary activism on the part of frustrated minorities. But in fact they are dangerous throwbacks to eras of oppression that made scapegoats of those they considered undesirable and placed entire societies in jeopardy.

Contrary to these disturbing trends, most evangelical Christians feel a sense of gratitude and indebtedness for what has passed to us through the Jewish people: the Savior, the Book, and the heritage. When we think of the riches that have accrued to us through the Jewish prophets—revelation of the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the promises—we should have a profound sense of appreciation. Of course, for evangelical Christians the consummating consideration is found in the Bible’s phrase “and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came” (Rom. 9:5).

Evangelicals have no qualms about Jesus of Nazareth being Jewish. Moreover, His descent impacts dramatically our view of the Scriptures and how they should be interpreted. Our theology gives Israel and the Jewish people the place properly appointed them by God. Recognizing that Jesus came to earth as a Jew buttresses the concept that Scripture can best be understood by studying it through the historical and cultural context in which it was given.

There was a reason why Jesus was Jewish. Therefore, it is vital to view His life and teachings through the prism of His people and the culture in which they lived. Above all, it is important to connect His associations with the Hebrew Scriptures and the great, festive commemorations that were at the heart of the religious and social life of the nation of Israel.

From time to time I have heard Jewish people say that Christians have so “Gentilized” their approach to the Scriptures that Jews can find little in Christian teaching that relates to the Jewish people. Unfortunately, in much of Protestantism this analysis is true. It is also true that certain Protestants hold significant misconceptions about some of the New Testament’s teachings.

The vast majority of evangelicals understand that God’s stated purposes for Israel and Jewry are irrevocable, that Jesus came to us as a Jew, and that He was careful to address us from a Jewish frame of reference. Once we comprehend these facts, it seems inevitable that we should sense a kinship with and appreciation for the Jewish people.

‘I Am a Debtor’

Interesting words, these. The apostle Paul, referring to his burden to deliver his message to the world, said, “I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise” (Rom. 1:14). Such were the sentiments of this Jewish man toward unregenerate Gentile pagans whom he described as “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

It is an admirable statement of dedication to his mission, and each of us believing Gentiles can affirm that we are direct beneficiaries of Paul’s commitment. Should we not, therefore, understand that we, too, are debtors and take Jesus’ message of love and life to all men everywhere?
The main role of the Muslim mother is to raise children according to the wishes of her husband. With that said, she desires to rear children who will become good Muslims in hopes they will receive the ultimate heavenly reward from Allah, the ultimate reward being Jannah (paradise). Likewise, a Muslim mom believes she will be rewarded for bringing up children who keep the commandments of Allah.

For Muslims, their hope of salvation is based on works. So no matter how hard they try, there is no real assurance of attaining paradise. This translates into every arena of their lives. Therefore, Muslim mothers have the burden of works not only for themselves, but for their children too.

They see most akāfir (infidels) as bad mothers, sending their children off to daycare so they can work away from home for worldly gain or acceptance. In Muslim countries, such as Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan, males are at the top of the familial pyramid. Even in wealthier homes the boys are given more than girls are, from proper nutrition to adequate health care. Also, the mother and father will show how the brothers come first in everything, regardless of age.

Jan Goodwin, in her book, The Price of Honor, shares several stories of the male dominance in the Muslim family unit. While visiting a Muslim family in Pakistan, she watched how a nine-year-old boy, by just glancing at his seventeen-year-old sister, caused her to get up out of her chair for him to sit. The sister proceeded to sit at his feet. On another occasion Goodwin watched as a seven-year-old told his mother that she was not allowed to attend a parenting class. The mother acquiesced.

Birth of a Child. In Muslim countries the birth of a boy is met with heartfelt joy and pride. If a girl is born, it is an occasion for mourning. Some mothers have received a slap in the face from their husbands for giving birth to a girl. Relatives will offer words of encouragement, “Next time, you’ll give him a son.” A Muslim man has the right to take a second wife or divorce his wife if she does not produce a son. The birth of a daughter is seen as the woman’s fault. It is believed that the woman determines the sex of the child. As one can see, discrimination for Muslim women starts at birth.

Khitan, or circumcision, is performed on the seventh day [of a child’s life]. The Judaic tradition is to circumcise as a symbol of God’s covenant with His people. For Muslims, circumcision is an act...
of taharah (purity and cleanliness). It in no way symbolizes a covenant with Allah. In Islam, circumcision is also performed on girls. For example, in Egypt over 80 percent of the female population is circumcised.

During the 1994 Population Conference in Cairo, CNN reported on the circumcision of a 10-year-old Egyptian girl. The young girl’s wrists and ankles were bound. Gathered around her were her family, including her mother, who was singing. After the circumcision was completed, she asked her father, “Why did you do this to me?”

Islamic leaders believe female circumcision is necessary to control a woman’s sexual appetite, which in turn will keep the rate of extramarital affairs down, and thus, ultimately preserving the Muslim family.

Witnessing. Christian women can readily find a number of bridges into the life of the Muslim woman, so as to earn a hearing for the precious gospel of Jesus Christ. In an era of lax morality, the Muslim woman follows explicit instructions so as to avoid raising a rebellious child. In fact, Muslims look upon the unruly children in Christian homes as clear evidence that we are on the wrong path and do not have the truth. “If the Christian God is real,” they will ask, “why can He not control your child?” The teaching of the prodigal son is a tremendous text (Lk. 15:11–32). The encouragement of a God who not only cares for the wayward son, but actually stands watch waiting for him to return, is an encouragement that Islam does not offer.

What hope does Islam offer? Only the absolute judgment and punishment of a god who is not personal, only judge. Yet, in Christianity, the God of the Bible not only judges and chastises, He also lovingly awaits the return of His children and accepts them back lovingly and graciously upon repentance. The biblical God is not only Judge and Sovereign, but He desires to be their Father. This is the fundamental distinction.

Secondly, we have seen the diminished worth of the female in Islamic society. Yet deep within their hearts, they cry out for a God who does not relate to them only in relation to their husbands or male children, but intimately, as those created in His image and loved precisely as women. Point them to Galatians 3:28.

Finally, the constant angst of hoping that her good works outweigh her bad works is exponentially expanded to include the scales that await her children. The Muslim woman can be pointed to the assurance we have in Christ Jesus—the hope that dwells deeply within us and gives us hope when the darkest days envelope us.

ENDNOTES

2 Jan Goodwin, Price of Honor (Plume, 1994), 44.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 43.
7 Geneive Abdo, No God But God (Oxford University Press, 2000), 59.

Jill Caner is the wife of Ergun Caner and the mother of their son, Braxton.
A pastor from an evangelical church was ordered to appear before local security police on August 20, 2003. Upon his arrival, he was forced to stand “like Christ was hung on the cross,” with arms outstretched but with only one foot on the ground, from 8 until 11 A.M. When he moved to put his other foot down, he was taunted, punched, and kicked.

After he was carried away, unable to move, by an elder from his church, the authorities ordered the dismantling of the assembly he served.

In another incident, a Christian evangelist was summoned to police headquarters and ordered to renounce his faith and pastoral activities. When he refused, Vietnamese police threatened to use another “method.” Calling him a “very hard-headed boy,” they beat him viciously, opening a deep wound in his leg. Fortunately, a Christian brother was able to stem the bleeding and nurse him back to health.

When we read of the terrible abuse and brutality our Christian brothers and sisters endure, the critical question remains: Are we listening? And beyond that, what are we willing to do about it?

One thing we can all do is to make our concern and compassion known to those about us. Let me give you an example.

While ministering in a fine church in Virginia recently, I spoke on the persecution of Christians worldwide and the apparent indifference of many believers to this all-important subject. I was wearing my Friends of Israel “Remember” pin on my lapel and told the congregants why I was wearing it and how they could obtain complimentary pins.

The response was overwhelming. It seemed that nearly every person in that service wanted to wear a “Remember” pin of his or her own. As I finished my presentation, I quoted Paul Marshall, who wrote a
fine book on Christian persecution titled Their Blood Cries Out. Remembering the Jewish people who suffered for decades under Soviet oppression, he said,

Years ago, I drove up Bathurst Street on my way to work in Toronto. I would pass synagogues of varying strictness, but each one had a sign for the passing cars, “Remember Soviet Jews.” I did remember, since I was reminded every working day. Christians too need to be remembered. Where are the signs on the churches?

That’s a good question. Where are the signs on the churches? The pastor of the church in Virginia had an answer. He stood to say that the congregation he served had been negligent in remembering its brothers and sisters who are under severe persecution in other lands. “I promise you,” he said, “we will have a sign in front of our church saying, ‘Remember Suffering Christians Around the World.’”

Is that much? It may not seem so to some people. But it is a start. And I am convinced that if such signs would begin to blossom across the face of the American landscape, millions of Christians might begin to remember; and it will make a difference.

What I am asking you today is, Will you join us? It may seem like a simple gesture to wear a lapel pin or put a sign in front of a church; but I assure you, it will make a difference—if not in the eyes of the secular world, in the eyes of God. And, after all, He’s the one who matters.

ENDNOTE


Elwood McQuaid is editor-in-chief for The Friends of Israel.
Why do some people have so much trouble believing in miracles? Even when they claim to believe in God, they sometimes wince if someone mentions the wonders God has done.

To them, everything in the Bible has either a logical or scientific explanation. And if it doesn’t, then it certainly could not have happened the way the Bible said it did.
Biblically speaking, Gentiles probably have more right to question God’s miracles than do Jewish people. After all, it wasn’t the Gentiles for whom God plagued Egypt or parted the Red Sea. It wasn’t the Gentiles to whom He gave the Ten Commandments atop a mountain obscured by smoke so thick and lightning and thunder so frightening that “all the people that were in the camp trembled” (Ex. 19:16). It wasn’t the Gentiles He led through the wilderness for forty years with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21). It wasn’t for them He made the sun stand still on Gibeon (Josh. 10:12).

The list could go on and on. Even a man as brilliant as Chaim Potok (1929–2002)—a rabbi whose wonderful novels, such as The Chosen and My Name Is Asher Lev, plumbed the world of Hasidic and Orthodox Judaism and gained him worldwide recognition—seemed to have trouble believing in miracles.

In a scholarly, nonfiction work called Wanderings: Chaim Potok’s History of the Jews, Potok tried to provide logical explanations for many biblical events; and he struggled with the ones he could not explain.

When Jochebed placed her infant son Moses in a basket in the Nile, “The child was given over to fate,” Potok wrote. He saw nothing remarkable in the fact that Jochebed then became Moses’ nurse after Pharaoh’s daughter fished the baby from the water.

Of the ten plagues God unleashed on Egypt to deliver Israel from slavery, Potok wrote: “Something of a chaotic nature must have occurred in Egypt for the escape to have succeeded.”

In discussing the “drama at Mount Sinai,” he wrote: “Are the cloud, the fire, the thunder, a dramatic touch of a later teller of the event? We shall probably never know.”

And of Sarah, who became mother of the nation of Israel by giving birth to Isaac at age ninety, he wrote simply: “To the astonishment of everyone, Sarah then has a child.”

Astonishment indeed. The entire history of the nation of Israel is wrapped in astonishment—miracles for which there are no explanations apart from the sheer will and power of God. One of those miracles was the birth of Sarah’s son.

Scripture does not say how old Sarai was when she married Abram (later called Abraham) in his hometown of Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen. 11:31), modern-day Iraq. She was ten years his junior and was the daughter of Abram’s father, Terah, but not his mother (Gen. 17:17; 20:12).

God first called Abram in Ur, then called him again after he had started out for Canaan but went only as far as Haran. In Haran the Lord promised to make of Abram “a great nation” (12:2). He was seventy-five; Sarah, sixty-five.

In Canaan the Lord appeared to Abram again and told him, “Unto thy seed will I give this land” (v. 7). But Abram had no seed. Sarai was still barren.

Later God told Abram, “For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever” (13:15). Then He added, “And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered” (13:16).

Yet Sarah still went childless. Even Abram could not comprehend how God would fulfill His promise, and he begged the Lord to do something or else Eliezer of Damascus would become his heir, because “to me thou hast given no seed” (15:3).

Yet God assured him, “He that shall come forth out of thine own loins shall be thine heir” (v. 4). And Abram believed Him. So God declared Abram righteous based on his faith alone and made an unconditional covenant with him, sealing forever God’s divine vow to produce a nation from Abram and to give that nation the land of Canaan (15:7–21).

Yet Sarai remained barren. Finally, at age seventy-five, she gave up. She knew what God had promised. But ten years had passed since He had spoken in Haran, and Sarai was having trouble believing in miracles. So she did what seemed logical—and made a big mistake.

Continued next issue

ENDNOTES

2 Ibid., 67.
3 Ibid., 76.
4 Ibid., 32.

Lorna Simcox is senior editor for The Friends of Israel.
IAF pilots oppose freeing Dirani

Forty-eight veteran Israel Air Force (IAF) pilots held captive in Syria or Egypt last year have petitioned Prime Minister Ariel Sharon not to free terrorist Mustafa Dirani, who tortured IAF navigator Ron Arad, still in captivity, then sold him to the Iranians.

In a letter to Sharon, the pilots stated, "As people who have suffered only a small portion of what our comrade-in-arms Ron Arad has gone through and is going through, we protest against any intention to free Mustafa Dirani in an exchange of captives. He was the one who held Arad for two years, abused him, tortured him, and at the end sold him to the Iranians for money.

"It is forbidden to harm even the smallest chance of returning Ron Arad back home. [Arad has been missing for 17 years.] The release of Dirani will send the negative message that capturing Israelis is a profitable business that involves no risk or punishment. Do not lend your hand to the release of the kidnapper and torturer while the one he kidnapped and tortured is still rotting in captivity."

Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, uses the kidnapped and the bodies of the murdered as bargaining chips to get Israel to free terrorists. His current plan calls for Israel to free 20 Lebanese prisoners and some 400 Palestinians in exchange for the release of four Israeli soldiers.

Hezbollah has killed 242 U.S. Marines by suicide bomber in Beirut; 58 French soldiers at about the same time; 63 people in a suicide attack on the U.S. embassy in Beirut; U.S. Marine Colonel William Higgins; and kidnapped and killed people in the attack on the Israelis embassy and the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It has also killed hundreds of Israeli soldiers and held Ron Arad, whom Hezbollah “sold” to the Iranians.

Apology demanded

Jerusalem Post Internet Edition — Palestinians marked the 86th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration by demanding an apology from Britain for promising “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

Palestinians throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip marched in the streets and held rallies to condemn the role Britain played in the establishment of Israel.

Youssef al-Kazzaz, the director of the Voice of Palestine, the Palestinian Authority’s official radio station, also demanded an apology from Britain for the “criminal” Balfour Declaration.

Kazzaz called on Palestinians and Arabs living in Britain to pressure the British government to issue a similar declaration acknowledging the Palestinians’ right to establish their own state. “Otherwise, the Palestinian people in their homeland and elsewhere would continue to hold Britain responsible for this crime in favor of Israel,” he said.

Is U.S. funding PA hate crusade?

Itamar Marcus of the Palestinian Media Watch (PMW) and Morton A. Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America, told a group of U.S. senators recently that the PA uses American and foreign aid to fund hate and violence.

Speaking before a Senate subcommittee, Marcus explained how the PA summer camps named for Dalal Maghrabi, a terrorist who participated in the murder of 36 including an American, was funded by USAID.

The hearing opened with the screening of a 20-minute PMW documentary entitled Ask for Death, depicting how the PA uses music videos and other means to teach its children to kill. The video can be seen at www.pmw.org.il/new/Latest%20bulletin.html#senate1.

Marcus said incitement is advanced by the PA through the entire social-educational structure, including sporting events and summer camps, and the media, including music videos for children and schoolbooks. Jews and Judaism are presented as inherently evil, Israel’s existence as a state is delegitimized and denied, and fighting Jews and Judaism is presented as justified and heroic.

“Regularly broadcast PA music videos have actors depicting Israelis carrying out execution-style murders of old men, women and children, or blowing up mothers with their babies,” he said. And children who have achieved death through suicide missions have been turned into heroes and role models.

Palestinian representative Hassan Abdel Rahman told the senators the PA wants to live in peace with Israel. In response, ZOA President Klein held up a piece of Rahman’s own official PA stationery, which shows a map of all of Israel labeled “Palestine.”

And when Rahman claimed that Israel had stolen Arab lands from “Palestine,” Klein explained that there never was an independent country called Palestine and challenged Rahman to “name one Palestinian king or queen.” Rahman did not respond.

Israel ‘greatest’ threat to peace

Despite the fact that Palestinians preach hatred, indoctrinate their children to kill Israelis and now Americans, and send suicide bombers into Israel, a new poll commissioned by the European Commission shows that Europeans in 15 countries believe Israel to be the greatest threat to world peace.

The poll gave 7,500 people—500 in each of the 15 EU member states, a list of 15 countries and asked if these countries present a threat to world peace. Israel was
Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) said a governmental organization, Rep. of Palestinian and other non-Jewish Telegraph Agency (JTA) into the Ford Foundation’s funding following an investigation by the Justice Department official said the agency is reviewing Ford’s support for these groups for possible Justice Department action.

Ford Foundation gave millions to Palestinians

Following an investigation by the Jewish Telegraph Agency (JTA) into the Ford Foundation’s funding of Palestinian and other nongovernmental organizations, Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) told a foundation that the group should stop giving grants to organizations that engage in anti-Israel and anti-Semitic activity.

The foundation insists it opposes such activity, but gave millions of dollars to Palestinian and other groups that oppose Israel. The JTA investigation revealed that the Ford Foundation was heavily involved in the Durban conference on racism in August 2001, which equated Zionism with racism.

Ford Foundation gave millions to Palestinians

Following an investigation by the Jewish Telegraph Agency (JTA) into the Ford Foundation’s funding of Palestinian and other nongovernmental organizations, Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) told a foundation that the group should stop giving grants to organizations that engage in anti-Israel and anti-Semitic activity.

The foundation insists it opposes such activity, but gave millions of dollars to Palestinian and other groups that oppose Israel. The JTA investigation revealed that the Ford Foundation was heavily involved in the Durban conference on racism in August 2001, which equated Zionism with racism.

JTA reported that a State Department official said the agency is reviewing Ford’s support for these groups for possible Justice Department action.

It is well known that Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company, was a strong anti-Semite. The Ford Foundation operates independently from the Ford Motor Company.

Construction workers needed

A lack of skilled construction workers is forcing Housing & Construction Holdings, Israel’s largest construction company, to lay off 430 employees.

“’It’s absurd,’” said Housing & Construction CEO Uzi Vardi-Zer. “We are firing people because we do not have enough workers.” He claimed the government was responsible.

“If you don’t want us to use foreign workers, fine, but then you need to provide us with skilled Israeli workers, and there aren’t enough. We managed to hire only 400 workers in the past year.”

Arabs to fight even after statehood

Giving the Palestinians a state of their own may do nothing to appease them, according to a recent poll that shows the majority want the fight to continue.

The Jerusalem Post reported that 59 percent of Palestinians believe Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad should continue their armed struggle against Israel even if Israel leaves all of the West Bank and Gaza, including East Jerusalem, and a Palestinian state is created.

Similarly, 80 percent of Palestinians say the Palestinians should not give up their so-called “right of return.”

The poll was conducted by two polling firms, the Public Opinion Research of Israel and The Palestinian Center for Public Opinion.

Also, 42 percent of Palestinians and 61 percent of Israeli-Arabs said they support the people who are attacking Americans in Iraq.

Zero percent of Israeli Jews said they did.

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

In addition, that same gift can increase your personal income and reduce your future tax payments. If your heart’s desire is to invest in the Lord’s work, yet at the same time, you need to make the most of your current financial resources, then you may want to consider purchasing a gift annuity from The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc.

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

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

Name ____________________________
Address __________________________
City/State/Zip ______________________
Date of Birth (month/day/year) ________ (Suggested minimum age of 60)
Name of Joint Annuitant ________________
Date of Birth (month/day/year) ________ (Suggested minimum age of 60)
Relationship to First Annuitant _________
Phone ( ) __________________________
Possible Amount of Annuity $ __________ (Minimum annuity amount is $5,000)
Income to be paid:
○ Quarterly ○ Semianually
○ Annually
○ I would like a Friends of Israel representative to contact me.
History has shown us that where there is no faith there is hate. So it was with Hitler when the Nazis in Germany sang, “Today Germany belongs to us. Tomorrow, the world.”

Then came Saddam Hussein. Was he better than Hitler? No! Yet in all this, we are not forsaken. The Lord has said, “Fear not, thou worm, Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee” (Isa. 41:14).

Many times the Arabs have come against us. They greatly outnumber us and seek to kill us. But God tells us not to fear them because He keeps us from being destroyed.

Where I live there are many Arabs. They are so sure they will have victory over us. Here in Israel they have full freedom to say what they want, not as in Muslim countries. And they use this freedom to speak with great hatred. But I never reply to them in that way.

I have lived in this neighborhood for thirty years and have good relationships with all my Arab neighbors. My children played with their children. But now things are different.

Every day these Arabs are taught to hate the Jewish people and kill us. So one day I went out to speak to some of my neighbors.

“You speak in the name of Allah and shed blood,” I said. “But we who believe in the living God want peace. We do not have such hatred. And even now, after all you have done to us, we are ready to forgive you and become friends. Why? Because the Lord has forgiven us for all we have done. So all of us who believe in Him according to the Bible are ready to forgive all of you.”

Soon more Arabs arrived. One said to me, “You came here to Palestine and by power you occupy our land. Where is it written that this land belongs to you?”

This was the question I had been waiting many hours for them to ask.


“Now,” I said, “you show me in your books where it is written that this land does not belong to the Jewish people but to Islam. Also, tell me where Islam was when this was written.”

As everyone knows, the Qur’an did not exist when the Bible was written. The Qur’an was not written until thousands of years after God promised this land to the children of Israel. “God chose the Jewish people to bring His salvation to the ends of the earth and to be a light to the Gentiles,” I told them.

“You hate us because we are not with you,” one replied. “How long will we continue to be your enemies?”

Saddam Hussein’s statue is toppled during the war in Iraq. (AP/Wide World Photos)
This was my opportunity to show them what God, by His grace, has done. I read them John 3:16. It was a big surprise to them.


So I turned to Deuteronomy 18:15: “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.”

“About whom does this speak?” I asked. Now I had a chance to talk about the Lord. They wanted to know how I came to believe in Jesus, and I explained that I came to believe because I read the Bible.

“And if we would all believe in Him,” I said, “we would not speak about war and hate, but about love. Because in Him is no hate. The Bible tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves. There is only one God, the Lord. He is the One you must worship.”

Then someone asked, “How can you say that we can all believe in this One in whom you have believed?”

“Everyone can be saved,” I said. And because they always want to see everything in black and white, I showed them Jeremiah 31:34, where it is written,

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

It is important that they know in whom we have believed and how they can be saved. They are a stiff-necked people and more stubborn even than the ultra-Orthodox. But God can save them. As we say in Israel, “If God wills it, even a broom can shoot.”

Interview David Bar-Illan, from page 7

are never going to give up Jerusalem as our capital. There is practically a wall-to-wall consensus on this in Israel. We are never going to allow the city to be divided. It is going to stay the undivided capital of Israel for all time. The sooner the United States recognizes this as a fact and moves the embassy, the sooner this sore point will disappear.

Moreover, as long as the United States does not move the embassy to Jerusalem, the Palestinians will continue to nurse the hope that they will be able to acquire half of the city and make it their own capital, even though it’s never been either a Muslim capital, an Arab capital, or anything like that. As long as the United States does not move the embassy, this kind of hope can be nurtured and will remain a source of irritation and conflict. It would be better for everyone concerned for the embassy to be moved and for the facts of life to be made clear, so that we can move on from there with a realistic approach to other problems.

EMQ: It’s been my opinion from the beginning, David—and I’d like your comment on this—that moving the embassy would really strengthen and buttress the peace process, rather than detract from it. Is that a fair assessment?

DB: Absolutely. There is no question that it will reinforce what is already a fact on the ground. American recognition of that fact will make it much easier for us to proceed. As long as there is doubt, and as long as there is false hope about the future of Jerusalem, it is difficult to make progress. As soon as that false hope disappears and the facts are recognized by the United States, progress will be possible.

EMQ: Having said that, I have one last question: Where do we go from here?

DB: There are two possible scenarios. If the Palestinians really live up to their obligations, if there is compliance on their part and reciprocity, if they particularly fulfill the commitment to fight terrorism and, in fact, to abolish the covenant that calls for Israel’s destruction, there is a very good chance that we will be able to reach a peaceful arrangement.

If, on the other hand, they continue to ignore these obligations or just pretend to discharge them and “make believe” rather than act upon the commitments they have made, the chances for real peace are slim. At this point, I can’t say for sure which scenario is more likely. But of course, living in the Middle East, we are all optimists by nature; otherwise, it would be very difficult to live here.

Our first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, said, “Anyone who doesn’t believe in miracles in the Middle East is not a realist.”